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INDUSTRIES AND INDUSTRIALISTS OF MERRICKVILLE, 1792-1979

by

Richard Tatley

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INDUSTRIES and INDUSTRIALISTS

OF MERRICKVILLE, 1792-1979

Parks Canada Manuscript Report 423

by Richard Tatley

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Mary Ann Stienberg of the Rideau Canal Office of Parks Canada was instrumental in obtaining Parks Canada permission for Friends of the Rideau to make this digital document available to the public. Thanks to Ellen Manchee of Parks Canada for making the original copy of this report available to Ken Watson for high quality image scanning.

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Shortly after Parks Canada took over the administration of the Rideau Canal in 1972 (previously under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transport) they tasked several of their high quality researchers and historians with detailing various historical/heritage aspects of the Rideau Canal. This resulted in a series of research reports on the Rideau Canal, produced from the mid-1970s through to the mid-1980s.

Intended mostly for internal use, these reports were produced in limited numbers with only a few receiving broader distribution through the History and Archaeology series of books published by the Ministry of Environment (National Historic Parks and Sites Branch of Parks Canada).

A few copies of the manuscript reports were also distributed to "various public repositories in Canada for use by interested individuals" – but today can generally only be found in the local Rideau region libraries of Parks Canada.

General Map of the Rideau Canal Waterway

Map by Ken W. Watson, 2011

NOTE: Volumes I, II and III are included in this single digital document
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Industries and Industrialists of Merrickville, 1792-1979

by Richard Tatley

1979

Volume I

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Many of these reports will be published in Canadian Historic Sites or History and Archaeology and may be altered during the publishing process by editing or by further research.

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of Merrickville, 1792-1979
by
Richard Tatley

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Prologue and Resumé

The industrial history of the Village of Merrickville is probably much the same as those of countless other mill towns in eastern Ontario, and very like the other leading nodules of manufacturing and commerce on the Rideau waterway over the years. Like its neighbours, Merrickville has known the shriek of the band saw, the clattering of the woollen mill, the line-ups of farmers with grain to be gristed, as well as the smoke of the iron foundry and the stench of the tannery. It has seen oatmeal mills, shingle mills, furniture factories, aluminum works and electroplating works, besides scores of smaller shops manufacturing for the local scene. Over the course of 189 years the village has hosted at least 58 industrial operations, all of which required water, steam, or electric power. Until the 1840s Merrickville was probably the most important centre between Kingston and Bytown (Ottawa): by the 1880s it had definitely lost out to Kemptville and Smiths Falls, especially after the latter became a major railway junction and division point. Today Merrickville[1]s population, sustained by three manufacturing industries, stands at about 900 as against 1,060 in 1857: a poor performance compared to Perth, Smiths Falls, or Kemptville, but better than those of Newboro, Westport,

Manotick, or Burritt's Rapids. The most remarkable feature about Merrickville is that it was the oldest manufacturing centre along the entire Rideau River and one of the oldest in Ontario, being senior to Smiths Palls, Kemptville, Ottawa, and even Perth and Richmond. Fortunately, extensive vestiges of several of its ancient industries remain.

Of these various industries, most can be considered "primary" in that they were concerned chiefly with converting raw materials of various kinds into useable products, although a few — particularly the more recent foundries and machine shops — should be called "secondary" in that they used refined metals to make commodities for outside markets. For convenience the industries are grouped together (in each chapter) under wood processing industries, food processing industries, clothing and textile industries, and metallurgical and manufacturing industries: in addition a few others, such as the two electric power plants, belong in categories by themselves.

To summarize the 58-odd industrial enterprises between 1793 and 1979 very briefly, there is evidence of six north shore sawmills and two island sawmills, as well as two island shingle mills, a snath factory, a sash and door factory, an axe factory, and an island furniture factory or planing mill. There were in addition perhaps seven grist- or flour mills on the north shore and one more on the island, plus an island oatmeal mill and several tanneries. Textiles were represented by two or three carding mills, two woollen factories, one

shoddy mill, and a short-lived felt works. There were also seven foundries or metallurgical works within the core industrial area of the island and north shore, besides several in other parts of the village, as well as a number of transitory related manufactures, such as a name factory, fence factory, boat works and brass works. Other miscellaneous establishments could be cited as well.

Merrickville: Wood Processing Industries

The first manufacturing establishment anywhere on the Rideau was the sawmill (No. 1) on the north shore of the "Great Falls" at Merrick's Mills, built by William Merrick, Sr. and Roger Stevens in 1793. Owing to complicated misunderstandings and large debts assumed by some of the partners, plus the near impossibility of moving sawn lumber to outside markets at that time, the sawmill had to be abandoned by 1795 along with an unfinished gristmill. After trying for several years to untangle government red tape and secure another mill site at Andrewsville, William Merrick rebuilt his old sawmill or established a new one (No. 2) on the north shore at Merrick's Mills by 1803 and afterwards secured a clear title to the property.

The second sawmill was quite successful and once serviced regions as distant as Perth and Richmond. It apparently stood until William Merrick's death in 1844, but by 1847 it appears that his sons Aaron and Terence removed it and established a

new one (No. 3) at another site close by. The third sawmill, sometimes sublet to Ransom Stone, burned in 1855 but was replaced by another (No. 4) at the same location: this one was long sublet to Edward Errett. The fourth mill seems to have lasted from 1856 to 1908, but in 1890 it passed out of the Merricks[1] hands and became one of the holdings of Patrick Kyle. In 1908 the fourth mill also burned, but though the lumber trade was very much past its prime by then the mill was again rebuilt on the same site. No. 5 sawmill lasted into the 1920s, perhaps as late as 1925 before it too apparently succumbed to fire. The site is now the front lawn of the Alloy Foundry Company.

Apparently no sawmills were built on the island until around 1898. Nonetheless, William Merrick, Jr. is known to have established a shingle mill there (at an unknown site) in 1850. In 1858 Hiram Easton purchased much of the island industrial area and probably carried on with the shingle mill until about 1861. He continued to manufacture shingles during the 1870s, eighties and nineties, probably in a new stone plant, but in 1899 a disastrous fire engulfed all his mills which were never rebuilt. Meanwhile a small sawmill wing was added to the island gristmill probably by Alex Mills around 1898: this sawmill (No. 1 on the island) was evidently destroyed in the holocaust of 1899, but Alex and A. L. Mills lost little time rebuilding it. When the property was sold to the Watchorn Company in 1921 the sawmill was undoubtedly pulled down, but Alex Mills built himself another on the north shore above

the hydro dam. This mill, apparently powered by steam, seems to have operated only from about 1921 to 1930. In 1933 Judson Watchorn bought the property and (apparently) dismantled the mill. Today the cement foundations support the house of Mr. Arthur Virtue.

Merrickville also had a small steam (later electric) powered custom saw- and shingle mill built before 1925 near the railway station by Rogert Dougall of Hallville. This mill, operated by Frederick Dougall after 1929 burned during the Second World War, though Dougall continued to do a little more cutting in a makeshift shelter until the 1950s. Besides this, a number of other wood-related enterprises are known; including an island cooper shop owned by William Merrick, Jr. around 1848-58, a steam powered stave factory in North Merrickville run by Robert Tripp around 1858-61, an island snath factory founded by Frederick Dangerfield (fl. 1871-76), an island sash and door factory (fl. 1901-08?) run by Albert Brinston, and a very successful furniture factory and planing mill founded in 1873 directly east of the woollen mill by John Mills: this enterprise, inherited by A. L. Mills around 1913 survived until the early 1930s. Partly related to the above was an axe factory established at the east end of the island around 1848 by William Porter Welton: in 1859 this enterprise was relocated in South Merrickville next to the Anglican church, but disappears from the records after 1862, For that matter, an ashery is also recorded around 1846-52.

Merrickville: Food-Related Industries

Most of the food-related enterprises at Merrickville were grist- and flour mills which were first attempted in the 18th century. William Merrick and Roger Stevens planned a gristmill around 1793, but financial problems and the premature death of Stevens frustrated their efforts to complete it, while an attempt to convert Merrick's original sawmill into a gristmill does not seem to have been very successful. In 1803 or shortly afterwards, however, Merrick managed to complete a gristmill on the north shore. This mill lasted until the arrival of the work crews building the Rideau Canal when — judging from circumstantial evidence — William Merrick rebuilt it of stone probably in 1828-29. This gristmill which stood about where the Alloy Foundry Company's front lawn is today survived until William Merrick's death in 1844, but by 1847 for some reason Aaron and Terence Merrick replaced it with a new mill (No. 4) at the site of the earlier sawmill. No. 4 gristmill evidently burned in 1855, but the Merrick brothers seem to have responded by building two new mills to replace it. No. 5 gristmill has been tentatively identified with what later became Patrick Kyle's main foundry building; No. 6 apparently replaced No. 4 at the site of the present Alloy Foundry office. Both were perhaps built by 1856. No. 5 gristmill was probably converted into a foundry for the Malleable Iron Works by 1868 while No. 6, acquired by Patrick Kyle in 1890 was gutted by fire in 1895. It was rebuilt (as No. 7) probably in 1899, but neither Kyle nor

various tenants were able to run it very profitably. In 1927 Canada Brass Products bought the building, only to have it burn the following year. They had it rebuilt but could not pay the bill and in 1930 the building went to the Dougalls who had little use for it. In 1943 it was leased to Alloy Foundry Incorporated for war work, then sat vacant from 1945 to about 1950 when Stan Daly briefly used it as a dog food plant. Finally in 1958 the building went to the present Alloy Foundry Company which uses it as an office.

The island gristmill was built by William Merrick, Jr. as early as 1839. In 1859 it went to Hiram Easton whose family lost possession of it in 1895. In 1898 it went to Alex Mills, was burned out in 1899 but rebuilt and carried on as a combined saw- and gristmill until 1921. Then the Watchorn Company bought the building and converted it into an office and annex to their woollen mill. Fires in 1930 and 1941 twice damaged the roof. In 1965 George Willner acquired it for an electroplating business and when the roof collapsed dismantled the top storey and capped it with a flat roof. He also filled in the bottom storey. In 1977 the property was purchased by Parks Canada.

Merrickville also had an oatmeal mill built on the island by Hiram Easton probably in 1861. This large stone structure succumbed to the holocaust of 1899 and was never rebuilt. Three electric powered feedmills are also known within South Merrickville during the 1930s, forties and fifties.

Merrickville: Textile Industries

The village has hosted several textile mills over the years. William Merrick may have opened a carding mill on the north shore as early as 1817. His sons, however, re-established this operation on the island after 1844. The island carding mill evidently burned in 1855 though a successor mill is mentioned in 1859.

One of Ontario's first woollen mills was also built on the island at Merrickville in 1848 as an adjunct to the gristmill. Owned by Stephen H. Merrick it entered production in 1849, apparently with great success despite two fires in 1850 and 1860 respectively. Stephen Merrick's death around 1861 led to several years of uncertainty until Thomas and Robert Watchorn leased it from Henry Merrick in 1874. Robert Watchorn bought the mill outright in 1885 and ran it with energy and success (despite a few brief closings) until about 1921 when his son Judson Watchorn took over. Fires again damaged it in 1930 and 1941. In 1954 the woollen mill had to be closed. In 1965 it went to George Willner, but for lack of proper maintenance the roof collapsed around 1968-69 and today the old mill faces demolition.

Merrickville's only other woollen mill was also located on the island, built by Hiram Easton around 1861. This plant does not seem to have been very successful and in 1899 was destroyed by fire along with Easton's other mills. A shoddy

mill closely affiliated with the Watchorn mill flourished briefly in South Merrickville during the 1930s, and in 1945 a felt works was attempted in the old tannery building on the north shore. Merrickville has seen several tanneries of which the north shore operation was established in 1850. Amongst its various proprietors were John Hall, John Campbell, George Towner and Henry Merrick. In 1881 the tannery went to Patrick Kyle who seems to have used it in that role until the 1890s. By 1900, however, the building was converted into a moulding shop for Kyle's Malleable Iron Works and afterwards served similar roles until the Alloy Foundry Company bought it in 1958. It now serves as a grinding shop for the foundry. The company carpentry shop today may also have been a tannery before 1894.

Merrickville; Metallurgical Industries

Like most of its neighbours Merrickville has had its share of foundries and metal-working enterprises. The first was apparently a foundry run by Messrs. William Lilly and William Hogg around 1851-52. This was replaced by Henry D. Smith's foundry in South Merrickville (fl. 1852-71), and by a third established by William Henry Magee in partnership with Smith around 1856. In 1859, however, Magee opened a new(?) foundry on the north shore at the present site of the Ayling boat works in partnership with William Pearson, Smith's former bookkeeper. The Magee and Pearson works, producing plows and stoves, proved

very successful and carried on until Magee's death in 1887. In that year it was sold to Roger Croft Percival who established the Percival Plow and Stove Company which became the largest works in Merrickville. In 1895 the business was sold to Harvey Percival under whom it reached its zenith. Harvey in turn sold the operation to a syndicate called the Percival Plow and Stove Company Limited in 1906 under whom the business went to ruin. In 1914 its assets were sold to the P. T Légaré Company Limited of Quebec which carried on under the Percival name until about 1935 when the growing obsolescence of its horse plows and wood stoves forced it to close. In 1938 a firm called Eureka Alloys and Stainless Steels occupied the old Percival premises until 1942, to be followed by Henry Tainsh's Merrickville Engineering Limited (1943-48) which did war work and other special jobs. The Leonard Belaire works which made steel balls for concentrating iron ore moved in until about 1952 when it closed. In 1960 William Watson opened a marina at the site which was adapted into a boat works by Peter Ayling and Associates in 1964.

Next door just to the west a malleable-iron works was established apparently in 1868 by Abel R. Ward, Jr. and partners, probably taking over an old Merrick gristmill (No, 5). By 1876 this enterprise seems to have been sold to Patrick Kyle who formally purchased the property from the Merricks in 1881; he also bought the adjacent gristmill (No. 6) and its append-aged sawmill in 1890. Kyle developed a large industrial

complex which he ran until his death in 1911: parts of this complex were sublet to other firms such as the Merrickville Hame Company (1888) and the National Fence Company of Prescott (1899-1908). Following Kyle's death his son Thomas acquired the complex in 1914 but he failed to make it pay. In 1920 the main building was gutted by fire. Seven years later the eastern half of the property went to the Percival Company which adapted the ruined main building into a foundry and opened a brass works in the nearby ex-tannery. In 1943-45 the property was taken over by Alloy Foundry Incorporated, a division of Héroux Industries Limited of Montreal for war work: the present Alloy Foundry Company was founded by J. A. Héroux and his son Arthur in 1946 and is still in business today making iron and aluminum castings despite a fire that devastated the foundry building in 1948. In 1958 the company also took over the adjacent former gristmill from Frederick Dougall for an office. Merrickville's other post-war foundry works is, of course, Grenville Castings Limited. Established in 1945 in an old creamery building in North Merrickville, the company is now the largest in town: the firm now occupies spacious modern quarters and specializes in aluminum castings.

A foundry was also established on the island by William Merrick, Jr. around 1851. It may have been identical with a wrench factory mentioned in 1874 and with a foundry being run by Henry Merrick by 1881. The foundry apparently went to one William Millar during the 1890s, but seems to have been vacant

by the turn of the century until the Watchorn Company acquired it in 1919 for a picking shop and later a machine shop. It may have housed Harold Miller's brass works briefly around 1943, and in 1965 George Willner adapted it into a carpentry shop until the government acquired it in 1977. The village has also seen several blacksmith shops and small machine shops.

Merrickville: Utilities

As early as 1894 Merrickville had its own electric light works established by Edward J. Kyle, a son of Patrick, in an old north shore tannery building. By 1898 the dynamo was definitely located in a small stone building now used as a carpentry shop by the Alloy Foundry Company. The Kyle plant went out of business in 1916 when the Rideau Power Company began generating its own power in the present island generating station. This company was founded in 1914 by a group of Merrickville industrialists including the Kyles, Percivals, Watchorns and the Mills brothers to keep their respective enterprises competitive by purchasing surplus water power from the canal authorities (who built the present dam in 1914-15) and generating electricity. However, the Merrickville manufacturers were forced to relinquish their enterprise to other parties in Smiths Falls in 1916. The Rideau Power Company was bought out by .Ontario Hydro in 1949-50. Rebuilt after a fire in 1929, the generating station still remains in service.

* * *

Thus the quiet little village of Merrickville today can look back upon a bustling past and a wide range of diversified industrial activities, several of which were among the first of their respective types in the province. The community's best days apparently coincided with the prime of lumbering and agriculture in the area plus the period of ascendent water transportation by way of the Rideau Canal (all of which peaked before 1870). As these factors faded and railways redefined the routes of commerce Merrickville found itself in a backwater and decline became inevitable.

Introduction

Merrickville, Ontario is a quiet little mill village, partly in Wolford Township, Grenville County, and partly in Montague Township, Lanark County: the dividing line is the Rideau River and Canal, which neatly bisects the community. It lies about ten miles east of Smiths Falls, 19 miles west of Kemptville, 25 miles north of Brockville, and about 45 miles south-west of Ottawa, and has a population of approximately 900. A quaint and picturesque — rather than beautiful — village, Merrickville today is most remarkable for its past, which extends back almost two centuries, leaving its indelible stamp upon the community as a whole: few places in eastern Ontario retain so much of a 19th century character. Now a small residential village with a handful of local industries, Merrickville was once a major milling and manufacturing centre, with a population considerably larger than it is today.[1] Indeed, it is the oldest industrial centre on the entire Rideau watershed: its beginnings can be traced back to 1792, if not earlier. Once it was a vigorous, busy little town with over a dozen industrial enterprises at work at one time, and its leading men built sturdy, rugged, durable, often picturesque mills, stores, churches and residences (many of which still survive), imparting an air of steady, sober, Victorian middle-class self-confidence that still characterizes

the outward appearance of the village. The fact that Merrickville, despite its promising head start, was not able to sustain enough acceleration to remain ahead of some of its neighbours meant that the community's vitality gradually waned after about 1870, and while Merrickville declined or just barely held its own rival centres such as Kemptville/ and more especially Smiths Falls, forged ahead into the spotlights of the 20th century. The reasons for both the growth and decline of Merrickville form parts of the subject matter of this study.

How much of an industrial centre was Merrickville? This question cannot yet be answered with any degree of precision, since the total number of industrial enterprises within the village is not known, nor is it clear (in most cases) how many people were employed at the various enterprises. In several instances, profit and loss figures are not available, nor the quantities or value of the products made. For that matter, sometimes it is also a problem trying to classify certain types of businesses: is a shop employing a few hands to manufacture dresses, wooden chairs, or iron pots and pans to be considered an "industry" or not? Should the smaller shops be reckoned as part of the "industrial scene" or not? At what point should the line be drawn? This writer has chosen to concentrate on manufacturing establishments which used water or hydro-electric power (rather than human or animal muscle power), and also on

enterprises that seem to have aspired to wider markets than just the local scene at Merrickville.

Even the above constraints do not exhaust all the difficulties. The question of Merrickville's importance as an industrial centre begs comparison with other places. We might list all the major manufacturing enterprises of which there is record within the village, and suppose the total to be very impressive — or inconsequential, as the case may be — but only a similar list for several other centres, along with a lot of related data, can enable us to decide whether Merrickville deserves to be considered an important industrial centre at one time. Such summations are largely beyond the scope of this study, although for reference a number of comparisons are made with two other Rideau corridor communities with which Merrickville — initially, at least — had a fair amount in common: Smiths Falls and Kemptville. Both of these towns occupy a somewhat similar setting to Merrickville, respecting adjacent farming land, available local timber and natural resources, and accessibility to metropolitan centres. All three have good water power, all are roughly the same distance inland from the St. Lawrence River, and all were comparatively isolated before the Rideau Canal was built. As we shall see, Merrickville is much the oldest of the three, and from 1792 to about 1850 it seems to have led the other two in population and sheer numbers of manufacturing operations, though it did not maintain that lead for long.

Apparently it was the excellence of the water power at the site, plus promising soil, which led the first entrepreneurs Roger Stevens and William Merrick to select Merrickville (in preference to Smiths Falls, Andrewsville, Burritt's Rapids, or Kemptville) as a setting for saw- and gristmills. After 1850, however, Smiths Falls and Kemptville slowly began to overtake and pass Merrickville, apparently because superior roads were built to the above two centres, and when railways from the St. Lawrence followed the roads, Merrickville, finding itself bypassed, was put at a very distinct disadvantage. Then, after 1886, when Smiths Falls became a junction of two major rail routes, as well as a division point on the CPR, its fortunes were made with a vengeance, eliminating any hope of Merrickville or Kemptville ever again challenging that ascendency. Merrickville, fortunately, was able to entice the CPR to complete its main line directly through the village (in contrast with other towns on the route such as Kemptville and Winchester, which were practically bypassed), and it would appear that the rail option improved the competitive prospects of Merrickville1s mills and factories by relieving them from almost total dependence on the Rideau Canal. The same held true of the Rideau Light and Power Company, organized in 1914 by five leading Merrickville industrialists to upgrade and modernize their plants.[2]

Despite these hopeful developments, however, the village resumed its decline after 1900. The unfortunate truth is that

Merrickville now has comparatively little going for it as a potential manufacturing centre or place of importance. Water power is no longer of great consequence. Most of the terrain around it consists of poorly-drained limestone plains covered with a rather thin layer of topsoil which means that it can be used, at best, as pasture land, favouring a dairy industry but not very much else: the climate is unsuitable for wheat farming.[3] (There are, of course, some reasonably good mixed farms near the village, mostly in close proximity to the Rideau, but much former farmland in both Wolford and Montague has been abandoned or reverted to bush.) All of the prime timber in the area including the formerly extensive stands of cedar growing in swampy ground around Merrickville and Burritt's Rapids, making possible a once thriving shingle industry was logged out by the 1870s,[4] thus undermining the local lumber trade. The decline of sheep farming, plus various national and international factors have ruined the local woollen textile plants. Though Merrickville has had foundries and metal working establishments for nearly 125 years, and still has a few today, it is rather poorly placed for such works in the modern world, because almost all components have to be imported, and the market for such products is now to be found almost exclusively in the cities. The village has been essentially in a backwater area since the Rideau Canal lost its importance as even a local corridor of commerce (as of the 1930s).[5] Today, paved highways plus the railway have helped to offset those trends, but the

community no longer has a station, and goes largely unnoticed by the travelling public. Smiths Falls forms the obvious picture of what Merrickville might have been, but the comparative lack of good soil or minerals in the hinterland mean that only a few towns in the region can aspire to the importance of Smiths Falls. For reasons clear to those who have seen the village, however, Merrickville possesses considerable potential for tourism.

Despite all these drawbacks — some of which developed only within the last century — Merrickville was probably one of the foremost industrial centres in the entire interior of eastern Ontario during the first half of the 19th century, and for a time it was definitely in the forefront on the Rideau waterway. This study has uncovered evidence of at least nine sawmills in the village between 1792 and the 1950s, besides two shingle mills, two furniture factories, several cooper shops, one stave factory, one snath factory, and one sash and door factory. Despite the disadvantages of soil and climate, the community seems to have had eight grist — or flour mills, three electric feedmills, and one oatmeal mill — to say nothing of a brewery, a distillery, a cheese factory, a few dairies, and even a dog food plant. In the textile tirade it has seen two woollen mills, a shoddy mill, and (apparently) three carding mills. There have also been at least three tanneries. In metallurgy and related lines the village has had ten foundries (with two still in business), as well as a very successful malleable-iron works,

two brass works, two plow companies, a hame factory, a wire fence factory, two axe factories, two electroplating works, and at least four machine shops. There was also (and still is) a boat building and rental business. There have also been two electric light and power companies. All that, in addition to scores of shops and minor manufacturing concerns. Impressive though this list may sound for a village of only 900 or more people, the impact is nullified when it is noted that almost every industrial enterprise in Merrickville had its counterpart in both Smiths Falls and Kemptville, and no doubt the same would hold true of other communities such as Perth and Carleton Place were these to be investigated.

If Merrickville can be considered remarkable as an industrial centre, it can only be for two reasons. First, almost all Merrickville firms, whether of short or long duration, appear to have developed locally, with little or no outside involvement, and almost all remained autonomous and independent to the end, even when trends within the various industries often resulted in the absorption of small firms by larger ones. Secondly, and more interestingly, Merrickville can look back on a long list of industrial "firsts" or near-firsts in the Rideau corridor. It hosted the first saw- and gristmills on the Rideau River, the first woollen mill on the canal, and perhaps the first shingle mill and foundry on the waterway, as well. It seems to have been the second community in the corridor to generate its own hydro-electric power, and the only one to have a combined plow

and stove works. Fortunately, enough of the old industrial buildings still survive to give the modern visitor some idea of the hive of activity that was Merrickville in its heyday.

The comparative economic stagnation which gripped the village since the First World War — at least until recent times — has meant that Merrickville has been left, to a great extent, unchanged by the passage of time. Yet, if the old village has largely missed the 20th century, it has thereby been fated to retain a great deal of its past and today, as the little town finds itself being tugged closer and closer into an orbit around Ottawa, it confronts a choice between being remodelled in the image of the 20th century, or trying to retain some of its 19th-century flavour.

It seems that Merrickville has only recently begun to see itself in this light, and one of the results has been a new interest in its past, by both visitors and local residents alike. As yet, however, no real history of the village has ever been written—or of the industries which (along with the canal) were the bases of its existence. This hastily conducted study cannot be considered more than a start in that direction, but notwithstanding its limitations, it is hoped that it will add a little more useful data to the available record of the industries and industrialists of Merrickville.

The Pioneer Period (ca. 1792-1845)

The Founding of Merrickville and the Mid-Rideau Settlement (ca, 1792-1845)

The early history of what was to become the village of Merrickville, Ontario is practically identical with the efforts of Roger Stevens and the Merrick family to establish saw- and gristmills on the "Great Falls" of the Rideau River, and any attempt to treat the village and the mills separately would be something like a performance of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. However, for convenient reference we shall be presenting a separate subsection on each of the industrial enterprises known to have existed in Merrickville since 1792, and consequently the first mills and their foundations will be dealt with in some detail later. At this point we shall content ourselves with some general observations about Merrickville's place with the early "Rideau Settlement," which covered, roughly, the region around the Rideau River from Kilmarnock to Burritt's Rapids,[6] later spreading towards Perth, Smiths Falls, and Kemptville.

Aside from visits by bands of nomadic Indians and nameless trapper and coureurs-de-bois, human settlement in the

Merrickville district begins with the arrival of the Loyalist refugees in Upper Canada after the conclusion of the American War of Independence. In 1784 over 6,000 emigrés from the new United States of America were relocated along the valley of the St. Lawrence River, the Niagara frontier, and various points on the north shore of Lake Ontario; many more were to follow over the next few years.[7] Most of the Loyalists were subsistence farmers of German, Dutch, Scottish and Irish descent; few of them had skilled trades.[8] Not surprisingly, almost all of them settled along the waterways where they could maintain some contact with their fellows and with established centres such as Montreal. Few ventured inland and growth in the interior was very slow for many years.

Yet if settlement around the Rideau lagged for a time, the region did not fail to arouse interest. Champlain had noted the curtain-like falls of the Rideau River at its confluence with the Ottawa on his exploration trips of 1613 and 1615, and as early as 1688 the river was marked on a French map as the "R. du Rideau."[9] In the fall of 1783 when the British authorities in Canada were first starting to give serious consideration to the idea of relocating some of the stranded Loyalists in Canada the Governor at Montreal, General Frederick Haldimand, began sending expeditions to explore the wilderness lands west of Montreal to see if any of them were fit for settlement.[10] One party, commanded by

Lieutenant Gershom French, was sent up the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers and down the Gananoque. French commented that.

> From the Mouth of the Rideau to its Head, a Distance of at least Eighty Miles, the Lands are good on both sides of the River and may be all cultivated, except a few Swamps and Stony ridges, which in the whole, will not amount to more than five Miles on a side. However, there is not many streams of Water to be found, back from the River, and the Lands fit for Meadows hardly bears proportion to the Plow Land ...[11]

In spite of this mildly favourable report none of the Loyalist settlers who were moved in the following spring took up land in the Rideau Valley since there was plenty of satisfactory land to be had along the St. Lawrence and the Bay of Quinte. By the autumn of 1784 there were 576 settlers in Grenville County, of which 166 were located in Edwardsburg Township, 228 in Augusta, and 182 in Elizabethtown (which lies adjacent to Brockville) and by 1812 these numbers had swollen to about 1,000 in Edwardsburg, 1,700 in Augusta, and 2,200 in Elizabethtown.[12] In 1789 Gananoque was founded by Joel Stone, while the village of Johnstown (near Prescott) was laid out the same year.[13] By 1812 Brockville, in Elizabethtown, had at least one store, a mill, about 26 buildings (including barns),[14] while a few houses existed at

both Maitland and Prescott.[15] Also, a mill had been built at the inland site of Lyn, near Brockville, as early as 1788.[16]

Yet it did not take long for a few hardy, intrepid souls in search either of land or of water power to find their way overland to the banks of the Rideau. It often comes as a surprise to discover that the Rideau waterway, wandering so far inland from the Ottawa, comes to within a mere 25 miles of the St. Lawrence at a point directly opposite Maitland and Brockville. By a fortunate coincidence some of the finest waterfalls on the entire stream happen to lie just where the river is most easily accessible from the St. Lawrence. Waterfalls were, of course, highly prized as mill sites since the crying needs of the early settlers were first and foremost sawmills to cut trees into lumber and gristmills to turn grain into flour.

As early as 1790 some of the Rideau lands were beginning to attract settlers. By Orders-in-Council in 1788 and 1790 the half pay Loyalist officers had become entitled to grants of extra lands and a number of them began to contemplate homesteading along the river.[17] Moreover, a growing number of new settlers, lured in by Governor Simcoe's proclamation of 1792 (and rather scornfully dubbed "late Loyalists" by the original arrivals), were arriving from the United States looking for land[18] and were willing to take the oath of allegiance to get it. Since the "front" townships were filling up, the demand for additional lands was augmented.

Consequently in April 1790 the Land Board of the Lunenburg District (which included the modern counties of Leeds and Grenville) sent a request to the Governor that two townships be laid out along the Rideau River "for the immediate commendation of the half Pay Officers, and other now waiting lands, as well as those expected from the States, in the course of Next Summer,"[19] Action was taken the following year, when Oxford and Marlborough Townships were surveyed into lots by two Provincial surveyors, Jesse Pennoyer and Theodore DePencier.[20] That the pair carried out their assignment in a rather free and easy manner is suggested by the following extract from DePencier's journal:

> Sunday, Aug. 31st, 1791 We took the precaution this forenoon to bring with us a bottle holding five gallons to assist us in our work, which was commenced, and which being finished, we reckoned the distance to the boundary line, as was accustomed to be done.[21]

These none-too-precise surveys were to lead to considerable problems and readjustments as settlers later tried to figure out just where some of their locations were centred. At the "forks" where the Rideau met the (present) Kemptville Creek, the surveyors set aside a plot of one square mile for a town site,[22] though in fact no town or village ever developed there.

Further work was done in 1795. In that year Wolford Township (wherein lies most of the present village of Merrickville) was laid out, west of Marlborough.[23] The adjacent lands across the Rideau were surveyed as the Township of Montague the following year.[24] Kitley Township followed in 1797, South Gower was partly laid out in 1799 (and completed in 1830), and in 1803-04 North and South Elmsley, on both sides of the Tay River, were also demarcated as settlement spread westward.[25] Meanwhile, two administrative impediments to settlement were removed. In 1791 the Constitutional Act, which created the separate Province of Upper Canada, also abolished the old restrictions on the establishment of private mills, such as existed under the old feudalistic seigneurial system of French Canada (which had hitherto been applied to Upper Canada), while the new Governor, John Graves Simcoe, began actively encouraging settlers to build mills.[26] The other improvement, inaugurated in 1795, was the issuing of actual land patents to settlers, instead of mere certificates.[27] Now nothing was lacking to populate the region, except roads and mills and people willing to brave the forbidding loneliness and isolation of the area.

As was usual in such cases, settlement did not wait for surveys and official permission to proceed. As early as 1790 a half pay Loyalist officer, Ensign Roger Stevens by name (q.v.), who had come to Canada from Vermont in 1783 after serving with distinction in the Revolutionary War, had moved

to the Rideau, where he began clearing land at what later became Lots 1, 2 and 3 in the front range of Montague (now For eight months, as the present site of Andrewsville).[28] Stevens later reported, he lived totally without a neighbour in a virgin wilderness.[29] Within a few years, however, a number of settlers had moved into the region, including Colonel Daniel Burritt of Vermont, who, with his brothers Stephen and Edmund, seems to have "made a pitch" for land at the (present) site of Burritt's Rapids, even before Marlborough Township was surveyed in 1791:[30] by 1793 the Burritts were definitely established at Burritt's Rapids, where (amongst other things) they engaged in a little fur trading with the Indians, with whom they got along very well.[31] In 1792 William Mirick (or Merrick, q,v.), a millwright from Massachusetts, arrived with his brother Stephen and began construction of a saw- and gristmill at the modern site of Merrickville, in co-operation with Roger Stevens.[32] For obvious reasons the initiative of the trio was of supreme importance to the Rideau settlers, and the speedy failure of the enterprise (1795?) was to prove a great blow to the infant settlement, as a petition to the Executive Council of Upper Canada in 1796 bears witness.[33] Nonetheless, the popu1lation continued to grow. In 1795 Joseph Easton, probably from Connecticut, began moving in a large party of settlers (including some of his own children and grandchildren) to the western part of Wolford, at his own expense, and thus founded

the community of Easton's Corners.[34] within the next few years other notables such as Samuel Dow (who became the first blacksmith at Merrickville), Joseph Haskins, Richard Olmstead and Caleb Edmunds, had also settled in Wo1ford.[35] Haskins and Olmstead were both destined to open sawmills in later years, while Edmunds would build a gristmill and Easton would erect a tannery.[36] In time, too, Burritt's Rapids would develop into a thriving mill site. All this lay in the future during the 1790s, however, and for nearly a decade the Rideau settlements had to do without mills of any kind, excepting those around Brockville, about 30 miles distant.

In spite of the handicaps, by 1801 Wolford Township was reckoned to have 165 inhabitants, as compared with 90 in Kitley and a mere 14 in Oxford (in the latter case, speculating absentee landowners were held to blame for the slow growth of population),[37] Montague is said to have had 348 inhabitants by 1802.[38] Also, as early as 1792 a "road" of sorts (which was really more like a trail) had been slashed through the bush from the vicinity of the "windmill," below Prescott, north into Oxford Township, coming out near Burritt's Rapids:[39] very likely this route (later called the "Lower Road")[40] was that used by the Merricks and Burritts when they first trekked overland to the Rideau.

Yet the fledgling settlement still desperately needed mills; without them the settlers practically had to do without flour for nine months of the year.[41] William Merrick was more

than prepared to build them, and the settlers to support his petitions, but for years the Massachusetts millwright was paralyzed by financial troubles stemming from his first attempt to establish mills at the "Great Falls" of the Rideau (now Merrickville), and by repeated delays in his efforts to secure a title to some other suitable site, such as Andrewsville. Not until 1802 or 1803 was the persevering Merrick at last able to erect a sawmill (q.v.) at his original intended location (Merrickville), and soon afterwards a gristmill (q.v.) as well.[42] By 1804 he had formally acquired deeds granting undisputed title to a property comprising almost all of the present village of Merrickville,[43] and very valuable property it was to prove in later years!

By this time there was a considerable population in the area: in 1806 the population of Wolford is said to have climbed to 503,[44] which was over three times the figure of 1801, though by 1819 it had declined to 310, and Montague's to 224.[45] This slow or even retrograde pattern was blamed, once again, on land speculators in the United States: in 1817, in answer to Robert Gourlay's questionnaire inquiring (amongst other things) as to the factors possibly retarding the growth and prosperity of the area, William Merrick, along with Stephen, Daniel and Henry Burritt, attached a letter which alluded to Governor Simcoe's proclamation of 1792, inviting American settlers to apply for land in Upper Canada. The results, said the letter, were as follows:

> A number applied and obtained such titles as the government were at that time giving, and sold them, and returned to the States; and the purchasers have obtained titles of the same, and hold their lands at so high a price that the poor are not able to purchase. This is the reason that we have to offer, and what impedes the settlement of this province, of this place.[46]

For some time it would appear that Merrickville or Merrick's Mills, as it was originally called was the only site on the Rideau that could not be considered purely rural, with the possible exception of Burritt's Rapids. Besides the Merricks (who seem to have come to stay around 1802), a number of other families took up residence in the vicinity of the "Great Falls" during the 1790s and afterwards, including the McCreas, Staffords, Chesters and Dows.[47] Samuel Stafford of Saratoga Springs, New York, is said to have been the first settler in Montague Township, whither he arrived in 1794; he died 14 years later, at the age of 49.[48] John Chester is said to have opened a bush store at the falls by 1797;[49] this store seems to have been taken over or replaced by another, Also, during the run by John L. Reed during the 1810s.[50] Also during the 1790s Samuel Dow (who died in 1805) established a blacksmith shop in the area.[51] By 1803 too, as noted earlier, William Merrick at last had a dam built at the falls, and a sawmill and gristmill in commission, and by 1806 he also had a log

house erected on the north shore.[52] By 1812 a "road" had been blazed through Augusta Township, from Maitland to Wright's Corners (now Algonquin), and thence north, at least to the eighth concession line:[53] it cannot have been long afterwards that the road was extended up to Merrick's Mills, By 1816 roads are said to have been opened from Bastard and Kitley Townships eastward to the Merrick settlement,[54] though lakes and rivers were then the preferred arteries of transport and with good reason! So far as is known, Merrick's Mills had neither a church, a post office, nor a regular school until after 1820.[55] On the other hand, a distillery owned by a Mr. Lukes was in existence by 1826, as well as a brewery owned by a Peter Cornish before 1828: both of these were flooded out when the Rideau Canal was built,[56] and seemingly neither was rebuilt. Lukes is said to have received £600 in compensation, but Cornish was jailed three years for debt (1828-31).[57] Upon such fragmentary and limited circumstantial evidence we must try to judge the gradual early evolution of Merrickville.

Though Merrick's Mills was little more than a hamlet early in the 19th century, it at least enjoyed a decided head start on some of its potential rivals. Kemptville apparently received no permanent inhabitants until 1813, when Lyman Clothier of South Gower arrived at what was called "the Branch" of the Rideau and built a dam and sawmill there.[58] A gristmill followed, and later a blacksmith shop, harness

shop and general store, and finally, around 1829 the settlement of "Clothier's Mill" was renamed "Kemptville, " in honour of Sir James Kempt who was Administrator of Canada, 1828-30.[59] Merrickville's other major rival. Smiths Falls, got off to an even slower start. This site was granted to Major Thomas Smyth, U.E.L., as early as 1804, but nothing was done to develop it until 1823, when Smyth built a dam and sawmill at the falls.[60] In 1825 Charles Jones of Jones Falls (and previously, Brockville) bought Smyth's lands at a sheriff's sale, and later resold them to a lumberman named Abel Russell Ward who, with his partner James Simpson, became the real founder of Smiths Falls.[61] A town site was surveyed there in 1829[62] (by which time the Rideau Canal was under construction), but growth at Smiths Falls was slow for many years.

In other quarters, meanwhile, settlements were being sponsored that would have considerable bearing on Merrickville. In 1815, following the Battle of Waterloo, an expensive scheme was devised to redirect emigration from Britain to Canada (rather than elsewhere), by granting free passage to the New World aboard empty troopships, and free land, tools and supplies to the new settlers on arrival. The plan was meant both to rid Britain of several thousand unemployed people (including soldiers facing discharge) and, in Canada, to reinforce the perilously thin corridors of settlement along the American frontier, especially west of Montreal.[63] The result, in 1816, was the Perth Military Settlement on the Tay River;

consisting mostly of Scots and ex-soldiers.[64] Similarly Richmond, on the Jock River, was founded two years later by half pay officers, and at the same time a road was blazed from Richmond to Perth.[65] Shortly afterwards, Franktown, north of Smiths Falls, was established midway between Richmond and Perth. In 1820 about 2,000 unemployed Scots were settled by the government in the Rideau corridor.[66] By 1822 the military settlements totalled almost 11,000 people, of whom perhaps 30 per cent were disbanded soldiers.[67] (The new settlements are said to have been initially dependent on the store and sawmill at Merrick's Mills for lumber and supplies.)[68] In 1824 Kingston is reckoned to have had a population of 2,849, while Perth had about 500-600, Hull (Quebec) had 250, Richmond 200, Merrick's Mills about 50, and Smiths Falls around 25.[69] In 1820 a road was opened north from Brockville towards Smiths Falls, and four years later another road was declared open from Kingston to Perth and proclaimed impassable by wheeled vehicles in the same breath.[70]

By 1824, on the eve of canal construction, the Rideau corridor is said to have had a population of 18,246 souls; about 12 per cent of the provincial total of 150,066.[71] Robert Gourlay, writing in 1822, noted that most of the people were Anglo-American, who mixed in together fairly well.[72] Cheap land and light public burdens, he added, were attracting many American farmers and business entrepreneurs, and relations with kin in the United States remained friendly. Politics were then

of minor importance. Homes were usually log shanties or single-storied log houses, sometimes with two rooms.[73] Clothing usually consisted of warm woollens, and occasionally buckskin. The roads were poor, though government grants and statute labour were starting to bring about improvements. Smoking, drinking and fighting were said to be common, though on the decline. Amusements were of course few, but dancing, sports, neighbourly visits and teas were popular. Fishing was very common.[74]

Transport facilities were most inadequate, especially east of Kingston. A trip by batteau up the St. Lawrence, from Lachine to Kingston, still took about two weeks as late as 1820, and many immigrants preferred to walk to Prescott to avoid the discomfort and monotony of boat travel.[75] Inland settlements, including those on the Rideau, were much worse off, since hauling out grain or potash to Brockville or Prescott usually cost more than the commodities were worth.[76]

Great changes were in store, however, when the British Army Ordnance Department – for purely military reasons – decided to proceed with building a canal system along the Rideau and Cataraqui Rivers, to link Kingston with the Ottawa River, starting in 1826, Recent studies have cast much light on the impact of the canal – in economic and demographic terms – on the surrounding corridor, both during the period of construction (1826-32) and afterwards; restating the obvious, let us note briefly that the

Rideau waterway, once completed provided shippers, forwarders, home-seekers, lumbermen and the military with a superbly-built, well-engineered system of still water navigation, effectively by-passing the St. Lawrence (where locks had yet to be built), and placing the entire corridor, from Bytown (Ottawa) to Kingston, on a direct line with Montreal via the Ottawa River. Around 1835, for example, it was estimated that almost all traffic entering Upper Canada was coming in by way of the Rideau.[77] Since locks were not completed past the rapids of the St. Lawrence until 1846, the Rideau waterway, despite its 47 lockstations, became the preferred route of entry to Upper Canada until about 1850.[78]

Did the Rideau Canal system stimulate the growth of settlement in its environs? V. A. George, in his investigation of the subject, finds that the population of the Rideau corridor climbed from 18,246 in 1824 to 30,505 in 1834: a growth rate of 11.7 per cent during the period of canal construction, as compared with 11.4 per cent for the province as a whole, and concludes that the canal probably had a positive effect on population growth.[79] In later years, however, George finds a slower rate of population increase around the canal than for the province as a whole (for example, 8.64 per cent in the canal corridor from 1834 to about 1851, as compared with 11.55 per cent for the province during the same interval).[80] Furthermore, he finds that the growth rate slowed even further over the period of 1850 to 1880, wherein the

population of the corridor increased at less than half the provincial rate, and in many instances the corridor townships were actually losing people, especially after 1870, when the lumber trade was petering out and the canal deteriorating.[81] Numerous factors have been adduced to explain the sluggishness or reversal of growth: government land policies which once allowed absentee, speculating landowners to hold vast tracts of land without developing them; the dismal appearance of all the drowned land and dead trees along the canal;[82] the lack of any systematic campaign to attract settlers to the Rideau (while the Canada Company was busy luring immigrants to western Ontario);[83] the reluctance of forwarding companies to see their passengers stop and get out along the Rideau, instead of continuing on to Kingston and paying higher fares for so doing;[84] the shortage of satisfactory roads acting as feeders to the canal until the 1850s;[85] and the lack of enthusiasm for commerce or milling shown by the Ordnance Board, which administered the waterway until 1857.[86] To all this should be added the obvious factor that most of the land in the Rideau corridor is unfit for farming, except parts of the stretch from Smiths Palls to Ottawa, and much of this is suitable only for pasturage. It is against this sort of backdrop that we must consider the growth or stagnation of some of the corridor communities, such as Merrickville.

Most of the village centres along the waterway gained in population during and after canal construction, but only

Kingston and Bytown (Ottawa) grew very extensively.[87] Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that Merrick's Mills, as a community, prospered a great deal as a result of the Rideau Canal. A map dated 25 October 1827, drawn by Lieutenant-Colonel John By, R.E. (overseer of the canal-building project), showing the installations proposed at Merrick's Mills, indicates very little at the site, except a 12-foot-high mill dam, a sawmill, gristmill, tavern, smith's shop and shed(7), along with a house owned by William Merrick.[88] (All of these buildings stood on the north side of the river: probably on the opposite side there were additional buildings which were not shown on Colonel By's map.) (See Figure 1.)

Nearly seven months earlier (5 February 1827), a contract for three boat locks, each with a lift of eight feet four inches, plus considerable rock and earth excavations, wing dams and side retaining walls, and a new dam at the head of Merrick's snye, was granted to H.[A?] C. Stevens and Co., contractors, who had the works underway by 7 July 1827.[89] Work progressed steadily during 1828, and by 1829 the chopping and clearing was completed and excavations well advanced.[90] Despite some drastic changes in the original plans, and a few violent flare-ups amongst the workmen (as in the so-called "Battle of Merrickville" in September of 1829),[91] the works at Merrick's Mills were all completed by 1831.[92]

As for the village itself, the effects were dramatic. By the spring of 1829 Merrick's Mills was said to be flourishing. Only a few months earlier (we are told) the place had consisted of a mere few straggling huts, but by 1829 the community boasted several general stores, "three or four respectable taverns," and over 50 houses.[93] The boom was attributed entirely to canal construction.[94] The community was also lucky in that the mills which had been the raison d'être for its existence did not stand in the way of the new canal works (which were built along the opposite side of the river), nor were they (the mills) doomed to be flooded out once the waterway was completed; consequently the Merrick mills escaped the demolition that befell about half of the existing mills along the Rideau at that time.[95] An obvious sign of the community's transformation from a hamlet into a village, was its adoption of a new name, apparently in 1828. A public meeting, held at the home of a local resident, recommended this step "for the further growth and respectability of the citizens," and "for reasons of propriety and common courtesy," (we are told) Captain William Merrick — referring to his rank in the militia during the War of 1812 — was invited to suggest a new name, as having been the founder of the village,[96] Merrick, who must have been rather embarrassed, declined "from reasons of delicacy"[97] (though he no doubt had a name in mind!) and the meeting then proceeded to snub the family by choosing the name "Colborne," after the lieutenant-governor

of the day.[98] Very soon, however, it was learned that a village in Cramahe Township, Northumberland County, had just opted for the same name, and that residents of Prince Edward County also favoured it.[99] As a result, the people of Merrick's ills settled on the name that really should have been chosen in the first place: "Merricks Ville," or "Merrickville. (A post office bearing that name was opened up in 1829.)[100] Until 1862 the townspeople usually spelled it "Mirickville," following the preference of the family,[101] though everyone else seems to have used the modern form, but finally both the village and the family apparently succumbed to outside pressures, and "Mirickville" at last officially became "Merrickville." Another indication of Merrickvilie's prosperity can be found in Colonel By's report of progress on the canal works in 1831. To quote him,

> Merricks Ville as it is now named, being a very flourishing Village, very much on the increase not arising from the Workmen employed by Government, but in consequence of the Canal passing through it, and the thickly settled state of the County in its vicinity, and as the High road from Brockville also crosses the Line of Canal at this place, immediately over the Locks.[102]

In February of 1830 a passing traveller, on his way from Kingston to Bytown, had the following remarks to make about the community: " ... This place is admirably situated for a village, the ground rising by a gentle acclivity from the banks of the Canal and several houses and shops have been already erected."[103] (It is also alleged that several of the men of the Tenth Regiment of Royal Engineers settled around Merrickville following their discharges and that some of their descendants still live there,)[104]

By 1832 then it appears that Merrickville had grown into a considerable village with perhaps 300 inhabitants. In contrast with its former isolation, it was (at least during the navigating season) now in direct regular communication with Kingston, Bytown and Montreal. (The trip from Montreal to Kingston which took about 20 days in 1826 took five in 1832!)[105] Hitherto it had been impossible to profitably ship out surplus products such as grain, potash and lumber, which a pioneer region might have available for export. Now millers, merchants and farmers could move bulk cargoes efficiently and cheaply to distant centres. Lumbermen could now exploit the forests along the entire waterway, with the sole restrictions of not obstructing navigation, damaging installations, or draining off too much water when passing logs over waste weirs.[106] The way was opened for the development of many new extractive industries, and even manufacturing

Other amenities of village life were developing apace. The first church — a Presbyterian — had been opened in 1821.[107] In 1832 a frame Roman Catholic church was built, to be followed by an Anglican church in 1837.[108] (Until that time the Anglicans and various other denominations were prone to use the canal blockhouse, built in 1832 on the recommendation of Colonel By, and usually used as the lockmaster's residence.)[109] By 1840 a stone-built school, for boys only, was in existence;[110] very likely some form of regular education was being provided long before then. Several merchants had moved in, and by 1849 the village is said to have possessed no fewer than five inns, more than any other place in Leeds and Grenville, with the sole exception of Cardinal.[111] The Merrickville post office, opened in 1829, was the seventh to appear in the two counties; two years ahead of Kemptville and ten years ahead of Burritt's Rapids.[112]

Yet we must be wary about overestimating the speed with which Merrickville grew. A map of the lock station, drawn on 18 April 1835 by Captain Daniel Bolton, R.E., who succeeded Colonel By as canal superintendent, indicates scarcely any new developments on the north (Montague) side of the river at all, though about 15 homes, plus several stores and barns (?) are shown along the south side, facing the canal.[113] Not too much is indicated south of Main Street, although this may signify only that Captain Bolton did not see fit to show anything more: he did not bother to mark William Merrick's

extant house on the north shore either.[114] Direct evidence for the next 15 years (1835-50) is scanty, but it is noteworthy that the village was apparently not surveyed for streets until 1846 and 1849 respectively, shortly after the death of William Merrick (Sr.),[115] with whose passing in 1844 we may reasonably mark the ending of the pioneer period. A commentary, dated 1850, estimates Merrickville's population at 700, and adds that its progress had been "rather slow."[116]

The slow expansion of Merrickville was paralleled by its neighbours on the Rideau (except Bytown, where the population quadrupled between 1835 and 1850),[117] Though exact figures are hard to find before 1851, it would appear that both Kemptville and Smiths Falls were creeping ahead of Merrickville by that time: Smiths Falls is reckoned to have had about 700 inhabitants as early as 1845, and about 800 by 1849,[118] while Kemptville had about 1,000 residents by 1852.[119] Another ominous sign, from Merrickville's perspective, was the macadamizing of part of the road from Brockville to Smiths Falls (now Highway 29) as early as 1837: the work was completed by 1852, by which time the road from Prescott to Kemptville had been partly planked and partly macadamized.[120] By contrast, the road from Maitland to Merrickville seems to have remained unimproved until the late 1850s.[121] This and other evidence(to be considered more fully in the next chapter) suggests strongly that there was less overland trade and traffic south from Merrickville than from both its rivals after the 1830s.

To sum up: though the pioneer period is not very well documented, it seems clear that Merrickville deserves its claim to be one of the oldest villages in Ontario. Except for Andrewsville and perhaps Burritt's Rapids, it was the first settlement to develop on the Rideau. Though the initial attempt to establish mills there in 1793 failed a new saw- and gristmill were in service by 1803, and for a time Merrick's Mills was apparently servicing the entire Rideau Settlement, as well as places as far distant as Perth and Richmond.[122] The community seems, however, to have remained a small hamlet until the construction of the Rideau Canal suddenly transformed it into a hive of activity, and left it a prominent village with an expanded hinterland and enviable avenues for trade and commerce. Afterwards its growth seems to have been steady but not spectacular (primarily because its hinterland is none too attractive), while both of its two younger neighbours, Smiths Falls to the west and Kemptville to the east, were gradually starting to surpass it by the 1840s.

Sawmilling During the Pioneer Period

With the sole possible exception of fur trading, sawmilling was the first industry in Upper Canada; certainly it was the first to follow European settlement. Initially, during the late 18th century, all the lumber sawn was used locally; no demand for Canadian forest products existed outside of

Canada.[123] The early settlers, of course, urgently needed cheaply sawn lumber, and to clear their lands as quickly as possible, and were always pleased to have a mill close to their clearings.

The government, however, began by reserving all mill sites to itself, along with the right to build mills: this was in conformity with the old French civil law, which remained in effect until the Constitutional Act detached Upper Canada from the old Province of Quebec. By French law and the old seigneurial system it embodied, only the local seigneur or his designate could build and operate a mill, and no sawing or gristing was allowed, except at his mill.[124] The seigneurial system, needless to say, did not work very well in Upper Canada where (for one thing) there were no seigneurs, and the government had to act in their stead;[125] besides, the American Loyalists did not find such paternalism at all congenial, nor could they afford to wait for the government to build mills for them. As objections mounted, the Land Board Rules and Regulations were revised in 1786 to allow settlers to petition for permission to build mills; the petitions were usually closely scrutinized.[126] Finally, in 1791 the Constitutional Act was passed, removing the old French laws and the restrictions they imposed. The new Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, actively began encouraging settlers to build mills.[127]

The first sawmill to be built anywhere in the Rideau corridor was undoubtedly the old government mill at Kingston Mills, which was completed in 1784.[128] The second, seemingly, was built at Merrickville. Additional sawmills followed, but not until the 19th century; however, by 1826, at the time canal construction was about to start, there were sawmills running at Brewers Mills, Washburn, Davis Station, Morton, Kemptville, Olmsteads (near Jasper), Westport, Perth, Smiths Falls, Kars, Chaffeys. Long Island, Old Slys and Jones Falls; all of which, along with those at Kingston Mills and Merrickville,[129] represented a total of 16; in addition, the frame for a mill had just been erected at Andrewsville.[130] Most of these mills catered to purely local demand, although a few brave operators, before 1832, were known to try selling lumber or ashes to the new settlements on the Ottawa River; Braddish Billings was a well-known case in point.[131] A few entrepreneurs, like Philemon Wright of Hull, were even prepared to take the greater risks of rafting squared timber down the Ottawa River to Montreal, in the hope of greater profits:[132] some of that timber eventually found its way as far as the markets in Britain, which had granted tariff preferences to Canadian lumber in response to Napoleon's Berlin Decrees of 1806, which cut off timber from the Baltic.[133] For most of the local lumbermen on the Rideau, however, the problems of moving their lumber to outside markets were almost insurmountable (as William Merrick was to discover around 1795): except during

the springtime floods, the river was simply too small for extensive log drives, and worse, its intermittent rapids, shoals and waterfalls could delay things as much as four or five weeks.[134] Stories have been told of lumbermen who preferred to drag their logs out over the winter snows, rather than risk running the Rideau River.[135]

The entire situation was transformed once the Rideau Canal was completed in 1832. Naturally, the canal was not an unqualified blessing to the lumbermen: its construction required the demolition of no fewer than eight of the above-listed sawmills, including Abel R. Ward's newly-completed mill at Smiths Falls and the unfinished mill at Andrewsville.[136] Some of the other mills were subject to damage during canal work. Even when completed, the canal remained a nuisance to lumbermen, in that they were required not to obstruct navigation with their drives, nor clog the channels with sawdust and refuse from their mills, nor (above all) drain off too much water when feeding logs through the waste weirs:[137] many were the wranglings and hot-tempered confrontations between millers and lock staffs over these issues. Another irritant, of course, was the tolls charged by the Ordnance Board, which the lumbermen always insisted were too high![138] Yet the negative effects must not be overstated. The canal, as a whole, was an immense help to the lumber trade, which never became really big business on the Rideau until the waterway was completed:[139] it was the old story of outside demand combined

with accessibility by canal creating a boom. By 1845, so we are told, about 1,400,000 feet, or ten per cent, of the lumber being exported annually to the bottomless British market from Québec City came from the Rideau Valley,[140] thanks primarily to the canal. Until about mid-century most lumber and squared timber not intended for domestic consumption went to Britain; afterwards there was a gradual shift towards the American market.[141]

By 1835 the sawmilling industry in Upper Canada was getting nicely into its stride: the provincial Blue Book for that year lists 843 sawmills in the colony, of which at least 50 are known to have stood in the Rideau watershed.[142] Many of these were only temporary structures. Others were combined with lath and shingle works, and later with planing, sash, door or other plants. The early mills were always built of wood, and hence were highly perishable. Detailed information on them is hard to find.

With this preamble in mind, let us take a closer look at the first sawmills at Merrickville.

Merrickville: North Shore Sawmill No. 1 (1793-179?)

The attempt to establish a sawmill at the "Great Falls" of the Rideau in 1793 marks the first episode in the history of the village of Merrickville. Aside from tradition our main source of information on this event is found in some of the Upper

Canada Land Books, in the form of petitions and records of leases. Those unearthed by this writer leave a number of important questions unanswered, including the precise chronology of events, but nonetheless the records do throw a flood of light on an enterprise fraught with hardship, risk, and unbelievably complex problems.

Founding a saw- and gristmill complex on the Rideau should have been a fairly straightforward venture, although not an easy one in such a wilderness. The first attempt, however, was a failure on account of the limited capital of the partners, the unwise accumulation of debts by some of them, and the near impossibility of selling lumber to outside markets because of transport difficulties; compounded a little by misunderstandings, bureaucratic slowness, and more than a little dose of bad luck. Central to the story was William Mirrick, or Merrick (q.v.), a millwright by profession, whose forebears had settled originally in Massachusetts.[143] From the start the family showed a tendency to migrate to the fringes of settlement, and during the 18th century some of them moved westward to Connecticut and New York State.[144] William Merrick himself came from New York to Canada apparently in 1788, and thus qualified for free lands as a Loyalist.[145] He seems to have spent a year or two at Sorel and New Oswegatchie (Johnstown);[146] what is more certain is that on 3 May 1791 William Merrick, in response to a petition, was granted 200 acres of land in Matilda Township, in the Lunenburg District

in the vicinity of the modern town of Morrisburg.[147] At an unknown time he was joined by his older brother Stephen, with whom he soon embarked on his mill venture on the Rideau.

Though tradition claims otherwise, and represents William Merrick as paying his first exploratory visit to the Rideau as early as 1790, or even 1788,[148] the truth seems to be that it was Stephen Merrick who first set off into the bush to scout out the Rideau region, apparently in 1792.[149] In the course of his explorations, Stephen (perhaps proceeding on a raft) discovered the Great Falls at what would later become part of Lot 8 Concession A, Wolford Township: no doubt rumours about these rapids had already been filtering back to the front. The falls seemed to offer a drop of about 14 feet, which could be increased to about 20 by building a dam; not a difficult task since much of it would be on dry land.[150] Stephen Merrick apparently examined other sites, which only confirmed his belief that the Great Falls was the best of the lot Here, he decided, the Merricks would apply for 400 acres, to which they were entitled as Loyalists,[151] and erect both a sawmill and a gristmill as soon as possible.

While in the course of his investigations Stephen Merrick met Roger Stevens (q.v.), formerly of Vermont, who had been a scout and secret agent during the Revolutionary War[152] and who had since taken up land on the Rideau around the modern site of Andrewsville. Merrick confided his plans for new mills to Stevens who became highly enthused and asked to join the

project. He offered to pay one-third of the costs and wished to obtain part of the mill site for himself: therefore, he proposed to petition for another 400 acres of land which he hoped the Executive Council would grant considering that he (Stevens) had been the first settler on the Rideau. Stevens proposed further to transfer part of the mill site property to the Merricks should he succeed in acquiring it.[153] This was apparently was satisfactory to Stephen Merrick.

At first everything went well. Roger Stevens was granted the 400 acres at the "Great Falls" on 30 May 1793 by Order-in-Council;[154] whereupon, as promised, he gave the Merrick brothers a bond conferring on them a title to two-thirds of the property. Since Stevens was no mechanic, he agreed to provide irons for the mill, whereupon he went to Elizabethtown and mortgaged his portion of the mill site property to Thomas Sherwood (under whose father he had served in the war) to get the money for the irons.[155] Before long, however, Stevens decided - or was induced—to sell his share for £300. He then went to Montreal with Stephen Merrick, where they made a contract to supply a quantity of planks, and meanwhile purchased supplies and materials valued at £300 or more, on credit; mortgaging the property as collateral, and posting a bond carrying a penalty of £100.[156] William Merrick, who was apparently still busy at the mill site, was not involved with the contract.

At this point things began to go sadly awry. Roger Stevens became discouraged about the mill project which was still unfinished.[158] Perhaps he was disheartened because of the failure of a scheme he had been nurturing to secure an entire township from the authorities and colonize it with the aid of several acquaintances in the United States. (The authorities it turned out did not approve of the idea and Stevens never got the township he applied for[159] — though such deals were not unknown at the time.) In any event Stevens ceased exerting himself over the mills (though in his application to the government he was careful to claim sole credit for erecting a sawmill on the Rideau!).[160] Finally he offered to sell out his interest in the mills if William Merrick would agree in turn to pay off the Montreal debt and Sherwood's mortgage. Merrick agreed, having (as he reported later) received nothing for his labour and expenditures.[161] Sometime afterwards—apparently in the fall of 1793 — Roger Stevens was drowned in a creek now named for him, near the modern village of Kars,[162] under somewhat mysterious circumstances; tradition says he and William (or Stephen?) Merrick had made a trip down the Rideau by canoe to study the water power at the Chaudière Falls, and that the mishap occurred on their way back,[163] but it seems unlikely that an exploration trip by the two men — if it was ever made — would have been undertaken for that reason as late as 1793, nor is there any authentic evidence that either of the Merricks was present

when the tragedy took place. Stevens, therefore, must have taken his ill-fated trip down the Rideau for private reasons.

Apparently William Merrick did not realize fully what he was making himself liable for when he agreed to assume Stevens' debts. It would appear that he was soon under pressure to discharge them, and it seems to have come as rather a shock to discover that Stevens had mortgaged his share of the mill site for more than it was worth.[164] Matters were not improved any when Stephen Merrick fell ill in the spring of 1794 and consequently was unable to take any further part in the mill project.[165] The mills were still unfinished[166] and apparently the gristmill wasn't even started. However, William Merrick still had a few cards left to play. First, he felt qualified for some additional free land as a Loyalist: had he not in effect purchased Stevens' lands when he assumed his partner's debts?[167] That being so the lands at the mill site did not constitute a free grant. Secondly, he seems to have made good progress on the sawmill; perhaps it could be used to generate some revenue.

The first alternative was certainly the easiest and most promising and it appears that on 18 March 1795 Merrick applied to Solomon Jones who was perhaps a member of the Land Commission at Johnstown and asked for a grant of another 400 acres, specifically Lots 1 and 2 between Wolford and Montague Townships including a "gore" of land unintentionally left by the surveyors between Oxford and Wolford:[168] this sounds like the area of

Stevens' old homestead at Andrewsville. Possibly Merrick's idea was to lease or sell the lands to pay his debts. On 3 July 1795 Merrick's petition-presumably the same one just mentioned-was ready by the authorities at Newark:[169] their Honours were nothing if not cautious about the whole affair and decided to do some extensive checking before taking any action. One of the parties they chose to consult was William Chewitt, one of the senior government surveyors, who on 19 November 1795 sent them the following information:

> I have the honor to inform you relative to William Merricks Petition and which I could only obtain from Mr. Stegman [another surveyor] who says that Mr. Merrick has every material for a Grist Mill on the spot and it is true every word he reports. He says that there is a Gore between the Townships of Oxford and Wolford or rather a stripe [sic] of Land occasioned by Mr. Depencier's making the front of Marlborough too long or that of Mr. Penoyer making the front of Oxford too short by about half a Lot.[170]

Still not completely satisfied, the commissioners asked for a report from the Surveyor General's office on how much land had already been granted to Merrick in the Johnstown District, and whether there were any impediments barring the

granting of the lots requested.[171] Neither the text nor the date of the reply have come to light, but it appears that the Surveyor General's office reported — after a considerable delay — that one of the lots in question had already been allocated, while the other was being reserved.[172] By the spring of 1797 Merrick was informed that his request for another 400 acres had been approved, but that he must seek them elsewhere. Consequently he selected other vacant lands,[173] and — apparently — mortgaged them to get money to finish the sawmill.

In the meantime the struggling millwright was attempting to discharge his debts. Though the chronology of events is confused it appears that he returned to Elizabethtown either in 1794 or 1795, called on his old acquaintance Daniel Jones and related his troubles including the depressing prospect of having to forfeit the mill.[174] Jones tried to reassure him with encouraging news from Montreal. Stevens's creditor it seemed was willing to forego the interest on the debt if the principal were repaid. Therefore, Jones advised, Merrick should hold on to the mill if possible, accept the terms offered, pay off the debt as soon as possible, and be released from the £100 forfeiture bond.[175] Probably about the same time Merrick called on Sherwood who also proved reasonable: he too would accept his principal without interest.[176] Perhaps it was around this time that Merrick learned that his appeal for another 400 acres had been granted (even if not for the property he wanted). In any case he was able to pay off

about £410 on his debts and also spent around £150 more (using 177 mortgage money?) to complete his sawmill.[177]

This, alas, did not mean that William Merrick's troubles were over. Far from it. He still owed money to one or more parties in Montreal and it seems that in an effort to pay them off he now resolved to try a risky, almost desperate gamble transporting lumber from the remote Rideau Valley to Montreal by water.[178] Apparently this decision was made during the season of 1795 when Merrick's Mills still had no other access to Brockville and the "front" settlements than a bush road. Hauling timber overland in any quantity was nearly impossible. Merrick nonetheless gathered up sawlogs from an area up to 15 miles in extent, sawed them up into boards and formed a raft, intending to float his lumber down the Rideau and the Ottawa to Montreal![179] (It should be remembered that this was about 16 years before Philemon Wright — who had yet to appear on the Ottawa — was to try the "impossible" but much simpler feat of floating a timber raft down the Ottawa River from Hull. One would like to know whether tradition is correct in claiming that Merrick had already made an exploratory trip down the the Rideau with Stevens;[180] if so he probably never passed Rideau Falls or the Hogs Back!) In any event Merrick and his men found the passage down the river far more dangerous than he had been led to expect and consequently he lost £300 worth of timber:[181] whether a single stick of it ever reached Montreal is not stated. Worse was to follow upon his arrival: at

Montreal he found a debt of £310 contracted, besides the £100 bond forfeited on the contract, plus a further debt of £210![182] Merrick returned to Elizabethtown convinced he was totally ruined.[183] Surely he would soon have to give up his mill, upon which he had lavished so much labour, worry, and money.

The following winter (1795-96?) , Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe chanced to pay a visit to Johnstown, where he called on Daniel Jones (who was one of the prominent men in the district), and asked about the progress of the "Rideau settlement."[184] Jones frankly informed the Governor that the settlement was badly handicapped for lack of mills, and proceeded to explain Mr. Merrick's misfortunes.[185] His Excellency in turn observed that Mr. Merrick might care to find a suitable new setting for a mill to replace the unfortunate old one; in any case, said the Governor, the authorities would be prepared to grant him another mill site if he were to apply for one.[186] Jones was asked to pass the word on to Merrick,[187] This news must have encouraged Merrick a bit, since on 28 June 1797 we find him petitioning the government at York for a lease of the lots fronting on the rapids at Andrewsville,[188] where he evidently hoped to re-establish his mills.

As for the original sawmill, built at Merrickville between 1793 and 1795, very little more can be said. It must have been a wooden structure located at the falls, but no particulars about it are known. It was probably built in conjunction with a wooden dam — which would help to explain why

it took so long to complete it — but there is no proof that a dam was built as early as the 1790s. Even the site of the sawmill is uncertain, and its later history is vague: how long William Merrick kept it, or whether his creditors took it over and ran it themselves, has not been determined. A petition, quoted by Ruth McKenzie in her history of Leeds and Grenville, implies that the old mill frame was converted into a gristmill during the late 1790s, but apparently not very successfully.[189] All that is known for certain is that Merrick, by 1803, had a sawmill in operation at the falls,[190] about where the Alloy Foundry Company now has its office. It may even have been identical with the 1793 mill, in which case Merrick would simply have restored it. We do not know.

Merrickville: North Shore Sawmill No. 2 (1803-1844?)

The ill-success of William Merrick in attempting to establish his first sawmill at the "Great Falls" was bad news for the residents on the Rideau who were gradually increasing in number. In 1796 a group of them petitioned the government, pointing out that they were "daily suffering from the want ...of a mill's being erected on the River Rideau" and requesting that William Merrick be permitted to build one;[191] perhaps it was a gristmill that they had in mind. Merrick himself had, for the time being, entirely given up on the mill site that now bears his name and was currently engaged in trying to acquire the Andrewsville site. On 28 June 1797 he

petitioned for 400 acres at Andrewsville, and — after the usual delays — received 400 acres, but at a different location.[192] On 31 May 1799 the patient millwright tried once more, this time requesting only a lease of the Andrewsville property. His appeal, addressed to Peter Russell, Administrator of the Government of Upper Canada at York, reads as follows:

> The Petition of William Merrick humbly sheweth That on the 28th of June 1797 your Honor's Petitioner solicited a grant of Lots No. 1 & 2 in Montague, & the gore between the Townships [sic] of Wolford & Montague [now the site of Andrewsville]
> That in consequence of such Petition he received a Location of 400 Acres which does not include the Lots prayed for
> Your Petitioner therefore prays that the broken fronts of No. 2 in the Townships of Montague & Wolford may be issued to him under such terms, restrictions, & conditions as to your Honor may appear meet, & as in duty bound he will ever pray.
>
> Wm Mirick[193]

Once again, the government reacted with characteristic caution — and slowness. On 13 August 1799 it received two

more petitions from two other individuals, David Nettleton and William Leaky; both asking for the same property.[194] In the meantime — according to Ruth McKenzie — some eight local settlers on the Rideau, evidently giving up on Merrick, sent another petition of their own to Russell, asking that a mill site be granted to a Loyalist settler named Rice Honeywell,[195] who had settled with his family in Augusta Township in 1785: one of his sons, Ira Honeywell, later became one of the first settlers around Ottawa.[196] Rice Honeywell himself petitioned for the Andrewsville site on 21 June 1801, as did one John Butterfield(?) on 30 September 1800.[197] Finally on 27 August 1801 the Land Board decided to settle the matter, and resolved "that all persons claiming to have a Lease of Lot 2 in front of Wolford or Montague appear at this Board in support of such claims on the 19th of Octr, next."[198]

The 19th of October came and went. Nearly a year later, on 14 September 1802, the Board chairman noted that "The other Petitioners having neglected to appear on the day appointed, the Board recommends that the Lots prayed for be leased to William Merrick, as being the oldest applicant."[199]

Even this did not end the matter, and on 31 January 1804 Merrick had to send still another appeal to H.E. Peter Hunter, who was now the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. The letter states,

The Petition of William Mirick

Montague Millwright

Humbly sheweth

That Your Petitioner is desirous to obtain a Lease of Lot No 2 in the 1st Concession and Broken front of the Township of Montague, and also of Lots No 2 in the Broken fronts A and B of the Township of Wolford

Wherefore Your Petitioner prays that Your Excellency may be please [sic] to Grant him Leases of the aforesaid Lots on the terms of the 16th October 1802.

And Petitioner will ever pray

William Mirick[200]

The government, as usual, took its time, but an investigation disclosed that Lot No. 2 Concession 1 and the broken front of Montague had already been reserved for the clergy, while Lot No. 2, with the broken front A and B in Wolford, was reserved for the Crown; therefore, it seemed, Mr. Merrick could not have them, even for lease.[201] Noting that Merrick had already been promised a lease (as of 14 September 1802), some official mentioned the idea of granting him some other lots in Elmsley, by way of compensation.[202] However, the last commentary in the record (apparently dated on or about 1 February 1804), adds "But Febr, [?] a Grant of 400 acres

heretofor made in lieu of these very Lands -- ."[203] And with that, the matter rested.

Back on the Rideau, however, there was much less procrastination. It seems that by 1803, if not earlier, William Merrick actually had both a sawmill and a gristmill in operation — not at Andrewsville, but at his original location at the "Great Falls" of present-day Merrickville.[204] How he managed to reacquire the property is not clear. Very likely the site had been left vacant and unproductive for several years. Very likely, too, the local settlers kept prevailing upon Merrick to rebuild his sawmill and complete a gristmill at the upper site. Quite possibly, Merrick was growing unbearably frustrated with trying to get permission to build at Andrewsville. He may, therefore, have yielded to the clamour and decided to erect squatter mills at his old location. Perhaps he was awarded the lands there because he had provided mills, or as a compensation for the Andrewsville disappointment. The land patent records at Prescott tell us only that William Merrick secured patents for Lot No. 8 Concession A in Wolford on 2 February 1804 (= 100 acres), and for Lot No. 8 Concession B in Montague the same day, and that he also obtained a patent for another 140 acres in Lot No. 9 Concession A in Wolford on 18 October 1810 from the Crown.[205] These grants amounted to almost the whole of the modern village of Merrickville, and left Mr. Merrick and his heirs in the enviable position of having a complete monopoly of all the water power at the site.

However he obtained the property, there is clear evidence that Merrick already had both his mills completed before any of these grants were made. The Upper Canada census of 1803 states that William Mirick was then the owner of a sawmill and a gristmill.[206] The County Atlas of 1861 records that a local settler named Nicholas Haskins was accidentally killed while helping to erect Merrick's sawmill:[207] since Nicholas and Joseph Haskins are listed as residents of Wolford in May of 1802,[208] and the mills are likewise unmentioned in the census of that year, it seems likely that the mills were started in 1802 and completed by 1803.

Unlike the original mill, the second sawmill seems to have been quite successful, and also — unless destroyed and rebuilt without record — quite long-lived: so far as is known, it stood until the 1840s. It is mentioned in the census of 1814,[209] along with the gristmill, and again in the assessment rolls of Montague in 1820, 1829 and 1833;[210] in addition, it is indicated on Lieutenant Joshua Jebb's sketch map of Merrick's Mills in 1816.[211] Similarly, the map of the site drawn by Lieutenant-Colonel John By on 25 October 1827 shows the sawmill very clearly, on the north shore of the river beside the water,[212] and apparently on the approximate site of the modern Alloy Foundry Company's office — or slightly east of the same. The building was a rather small rectangular structure, perhaps about 35 x 20 feet, judging by

the comparative size of the locks as shown on the map.[213] There appears to be a flume and jack ladder running to its west end from the dam, and presumably a water wheel within the building drove the machinery. (The gristmill stood just to the west, beside the road and alongside the flume.)[214] (See Figure 1.) The wooden mill dam, located approximately where the present hydro-electric dam now stands, was 12 feet high at the middle of the channel.[215] The only pictorial evidence of the mill seems to be a wash drawing by William Clegg, about 1832: the picture shows a large cluster of buildings with peaked roofs and two or more stories.[216] One of these buildings seems to occupy the position of the sawmill, but it scarcely looks like one, having three-and-a-half stories, while most of the other six structures are difficult to account for. In short, evaluating the Clegg drawing is highly problematical.

Until the completion of the Rideau Canal we must presume that the sawmill cut only for the local market. Tradition reports a number of its activities. Logs are said to have been felled by the local settlers and floated down to the mill by way of all the local rivers and lakes, including Irish Creek[217] — at least, until the Olmsteads mill was built. The Merrick family is said to have moved rafts of lumber to Richmond by way of the Rideau and Jock Rivers at the time of the new military settlement there in 1818.[218] How many other places were also provided for is uncertain, but probably the entire "Rideau Settlement" was once dependent on them. As

late as 1826, when canal construction was imminent, there were few competing mills in the area, except those at Olmsteads, Kemptville, Old Slys and Smiths Falls.[219]

The coming of Colonel By and his royal engineers, building contractors and construction gangs to the Rideau in 1827 and afterwards had a profound impact on the Merrick enterprises. On the positive side, canal construction led to a sudden demand for additional sawn lumber, not only for lock gates and other canal appurtenances, but also for new buildings to house labourers and provisions — to say nothing of the building boom, triggered off in the village itself, as merchants and entrepreneurs moved in, following the construction crews.[220] In general, the value and importance of the Merrick property increased immensely as a result. The mills were fortunate, too, in that they did not stand directly in the way of the canal; Colonel By deliberately decided to avoid molesting them, by laying out the canal works on the opposite side of the river; parallel to the snye channel.[221] Very wisely, too, Colonel By chose neither to demolish the mill dam nor to incorporate it into the canal works (the latter arrangement would have left the allocation of canal waters at Merrickville entirely at the discretion of the Merricks, and in that event there would have been no end to all the disputes and lawsuits that would have arisen).[222] Instead, By ordered a new stone dam to be built upstream at the head of the snye, over which the canal authorities would have complete control, leaving the

millers just such surplus waters as the canal staffs felt could be spared.[223]

That the mutual co-existence of the canal and the mills might easily lead to conflicts was illustrated graphically by a virtual cause célèbre at Merrickville in the summer of 1831. Colonel By indeed had expectations of seeing the entire waterway completed that year, only to have his hopes dashed: he had failed to take into account the fact that William Merrick could still legally control the flow of water past his dam. To continue in By's own words, in a report written to his superiors on 19 August 1831,

> After exerting myself with the hope of opening the Rideau Canal on 21st inst. from Bytown to Burritts and having everything ready to pass SteamBoats I find the navigation impeded by the supply of water being cut off by Mr. Merrick having dammed up the River to enable him to perform repairs to this Mill;
>
> I therefore respectfully beg to observe that if individuals are allowed to control the waters of the Rideau Canal, the great expenditure that has taken place already will be rendered of little value; consequently it appears indispensably necessary that Mr. Merrick should be written to, on the subject and that the Law Offices of the Crown should be authorized to take such steps as will effectively prevent

> such interruptions in future, waiting for instructions.[224]

According to a study made in 1970, the Ordnance officers at Quebec relayed the problem to the Governor, requesting that in future such practices be remedied "without waiting for legal intervention; as the delay to be experienced in such cases, must be productive of the greatest injury to the Rideau navigation."[225] The Governor apparently acted accordingly[226] and, though other disputes were to arise later, we never hear of any of the millers taking such drastic unilateral action again.

From the viewpoint of William Merrick and his sons, the coming of the canal was a mixed blessing. It created a hive of activity at Merrickville for about six years, left a viable village behind it (built on land owned by the Merricks), and opened the way to the safe export of lumber to Bytown, or even Montreal, with comparative ease and complete safety. On the other hand, though the mills were unscathed by canal construction, they were somewhat inconvenienced by it. In 1828 the sum of £1,000 was authorized for damage or disturbance to the Merrick mills,[227] and on 12 September 1833 (with construction completed) William Merrick estimated damages to his lands (of which 57 acres had been flooded) as amounting to £425, to which he added another £150 to compensate him for time lost when water to his mills was cut off:[228] he did not mention any

actual physical damage to his plant. There followed a very lengthy and protracted flow of letters on the subject and memoranda within the Ordnance Department for at least the next 20 years, and though the evidence is incomplete, it appears that the canal authorities did their best to stall over acknowledging Merrick's claims, that they looked around for excuses for not accepting them, and that they refused to allow arbitration on the matter.[229] It is not even clear, from the records examined by this writer, whether the Merricks ever received any compensation at all. (William Merrick apparently never did: he died in 1844, and the matter was still unresolved in 1860.)[230] Compounding the problem was the fact that the Ordnance Department itself, in later years, could not even determine how much land had been requisitioned from the Merricks; as for example, whether the island at the falls (where so many mills were later erected) really belonged to the department or to the family.[231] In October of 1848, for example, the canal superintendent, Captain Charles Ford, R.E., was considering taking over the island, apparently as a means of forestalling the Merricks1 claims;[232] such action was never taken. On 25 September 1852 too, William Merrick, Jr. and his brother Stephen, in a letter to the Ordnance complained that they had already sent several appeals for settlement to the department without ever receiving an answer, though they were still professing a willingness to resolve things amicably, or to submit to arbitration,[233] and their complaint is corroborated by Ordnance memos admitting

that the department had neglected to let the Merricks know that their claims had not been entertained.[234] A number of times the authorities implied that the Merricks were not entitled to any compensation because they had prospered so greatly from the Rideau Canal,[235] though seemingly this was never announced in public. On 11 February 1853 — 20 years after compensation claims were first submitted — the Ordnance' storekeeper at Bytown, P. Monsell, wrote to the commanding royal engineer in Montreal, suggesting that the matter be settled without any further delay, by arbitration or otherwise, " ... especially as from the great improvement that has taken place in Merrickville, which has become a prosperous Village, since the opening of the Rideau Canal, it is conceived that the Messrs. Merrick can substantiate their Claims for little or no compensation."[236] It is hard to avoid suspicion that the Ordnance Department had a bad conscience in its dealings with the Merricks, and thus refused to be candid or straightforward with them. The Merricks in turn appear to have resented the treatment they received, which in turn poisoned their relations with the lock staffs and the authorities as the years went by.

If the handling of the land claims by the department was shabby, the Merricks at least sometimes got the benefit of the doubt respecting divisions of water. The amounts of surplus water that millers were entitled to, after the interests of navigation had been met, were frequently a bone of contention. The millers usually argued that they had the right to draw off

all the water that they wanted, provided that the levels remained high enough for shipping, whereas the canal officials insisted that some waters be held in reserve during the spring times and early summers to cover the late season, when the waters were low.[237]

The department was generally less than enthusiastic about having to share the waterway with mill owners, but it was not disposed to go out of its way to create problems for them: on 20 March 1837, for example, the canal superintendent, Captain Daniel Bolton, sent a memo to Lockmaster Johnston at Merrickville station, instructing him to allow enough water to pass down the system to keep Mr. Merrick's mills at work until the flood came down.[238] Later that same season, Bolton sent Johnston a similar directive:

> 9 June 1837:
> Mr Merrick has permission to pass his Saw Logs over the Dam at Merricks Mills as formerly until the water is sufficiently low to allow of his building a Slide any Damages which may be done Mr Merrick is to make good.[239]

No further reference has been found to a timber slide, and since during the 1840s and fifties we find more wranglings between the mill owners and the canal staffs over the passing of logs over the dam, it may be assumed either that no slide was ever built, or that it did not last long and was soon abandoned

William Merrick's second sawmill seems to have stood for over 40 years, but exactly how it interrelated with the canal is uncertain. Naturally, it cut fresh timbers for bridges and lock fixtures when required,[240] and thus was of benefit to the waterway. Nonetheless, the nature and the amount of work done by the mill is obscure. The Merricks are said to have brought logs in from as far as Big Rideau Lake at one time,[241] but whether they held timber reserves in the area, or merely bought sawlogs from the local settlers is not clear. Nor do we know whether the mill cut just for local needs, or whether it also prepared planks for the Montreal and British markets: very likely it did both, but proof is lacking. All that can be said in addition is that William Merrick evidently leased the mill to his son William, Jr. by 1833,[242] and that the sawmill, along with the other north shore industrial enterprises, passed to the elder Merrick's sons, Aaron and Terence Hamilton Merrick, on the death of their father in 1844.[243] Sometime between 1844 and 1847 it appears that the Merrick brothers interchanged the positions of the saw- and gristmill; moving the sawmill a short distance west to the head of the highway bridge, and shifting the gristmill (q.v.) a little to the east.[244] No explanation for these changes has yet been discovered.

Gristmillinq During the Pioneer Period

In the life of pioneer communities, probably nothing was more essential for survival than a gristmill. Along with the sawmill {and the distillery!), the gristmill was usually the first manufacturing entity to appear. Gristing, i.e., the grinding of grain for flour intended for local markets (as opposed to flouring, which may be defined as grinding grain for more distant markets) was the first primary food production industry in Upper Canada: later it would be joined by others such as brewing and distilling, dairying, cheese-making, cider production, honey-making and maple sugar manufacturing, all of which were — and are — practised in the Rideau corridor.

Originally, the restrictions on the private ownership of sawmills as laid down in seigneurial law also applied to gristmills, and probably helped to hinder settlement to a certain degree. One result was that, for some time, the only gristmill in the Rideau-Cataraqui corridor was the government mill at Kingston Mills, built in 1784.[245] The abolition of the restrictions, as entailed by the Constitutional Act of 1791, meant that settlement could start spreading into the corridor.

Again, it would appear that Merrickville was the first site on the Rideau to have a gristmill. An attempt was made to build one in 1793-95; it failed, but by 1803 a gristmill was definitely completed and operational.[246] During the next few decades before canal construction, additional mills were built

at Burritt's Rapids, Brewers Mills, Morton, Kemptville, Chaffeys Mills, Smiths Falls and Perth; others may have been underway at Jones Falls and Andrewsville.[247] The procedure was usually for the millers to grind (cleaned) farmers' grain, taking one-twelfth of the flour in payment.[248] Because these small local mills were performing custom service, they were often known as "custom mills."[249] They did not have to have the elaborate machinery and extra runs of stones needed by flouring mills that ground high-quality flour for the export market.[250]

The construction of the Rideau Canal in 1826-32 had much the same disruptive effects on the local gristmills as it did on the sawmills. Of the ten completed or partially completed gristmills in the corridor in 1826, six had to be taken over and demolished to make way for canal installations, including those at Smiths Falls and Andrewsville.[251] Additional mills were, of course, built along the waterway after 1826; at least 30 have been documented between 1832 and 1900, not counting those at Kingston, Ottawa and New Edinburgh.[252] Merrickville altogether had at least eight grist-, flouring or feed mills, as well as an oatmeal mill, in the course of its history, despite the fact that the Rideau corridor, with respect to climate and soil, is entirely unfit for wheat farming.

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill No, 1 (1797-1797) (ex-Sawmill)

The first attempt to open a gristmill at Merrick's Mills went part-and-parcel with the efforts of William and Stephen Merrick to build a sawmill there, in partnership with Roger Stevens. The history of the first gristmill was, therefore, closely tied in with that of the sawmill, with the important difference that the gristmill may never have ground a speck of flour.

Very little is known about this mill. It was intended to be built immediately after the sawmill became operational and, as mentioned earlier, a government surveyor noted on 19 November 1795 that "Mr. Merrick has every material for a Grist Mill on the spot";[253] indeed, Roger Stevens, in a petition to the government dated 13 May 1793 makes a similar claim by stating that he had "made preparations to build a Grist-mill next fall;[254] — though perhaps Stevens was exaggerating a little in order to impress the authorities. There is, however, no evidence to show that William Merrick was ever able to finish his gristmill: it too, along with the sawmill, apparently had to be given up around 1796 when Merrick, as outlined earlier, found himself overwhelmed by the debts he had inherited from Stevens. Our only other source of information is a petition from the late 1790s quoted by Ruth McKenzie in her history of Leeds and Grenville, and signed originally by eight settlers, stating that.

> Your Petitioners have since their first settlement upon the River Rideau suffered great inconvenience for the want of a good grain mill upon said River, having been obliged for several years to go to the settlement upon the River St. Lawrence to get their grain ground through a rough road for the distance of thirty miles or more, being accomodated [sic] with no other than a mere mill by name, fitted up in the old saw frame erected by the late Lt. Roger Stevens upon lots number nine in Wolford and Montague. ... [255]

This seems to suggest that the sawmill had been stripped of its machinery (perhaps by Merrick's creditors), and that an attempt had been made by unknown parties to convert it into a gristmill. Evidently the attempt was not very successful, and the fledging Rideau Settlement was obliged to manage without a gristmill until after the turn of the century.

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill No, 2 (1803?-1828?)

The second gristmill at Merrickville, again, was built by William Merrick in conjunction with a dam and a sawmill and, like the second sawmill, this mill seems to have been highly successful. It is first mentioned, along with the sawmill, in the Upper Canada census report of 1803,[256] and this date is reaffirmed by the Lanark County Atlas which states that William

Merrick, no doubt with local assistance, raised the frame of a gristmill in that year.[257] The mill is vouched for in the 258 259 assessment rolls of 1807,[258] and again in 1814 and 1827.[259] Colonel By's map, drawn in the latter year, shows the gristmill on the north shore of the river, directly at the head of the dam, right beside the road (on the east side), and a short distance west of the sawmill;[260] all of which seems to place it partly where the modern Alloy Foundry Company has located its front lawn. (See Figure 1.)

Scarcely any particulars about the gristmill are known today. The Montague assessment rolls of 1825 mention that the mill was wrought with one pair of stones, and that it was valued at £491.[261] Presumably it was built of wood, perhaps squared logs, which would have been the handiest material available. If Colonel By's map of 1827 is accurate as to scale, it may be inferred (by comparing the outline of the building with the size of the proposed locks) that the mill was approximately 40 x 24 feet, and thus a little larger than the sawmill. The gristmill stood with the flume directly along its south wall, and it may be supposed that it drew its (water) power from that source. Since the most efficient type of wheel then available for sites like Merrickville (where the head of water at the dam was well over ten feet) was the overshot vertical water wheel,[262] we may also guess that the old gristmill was equipped with such a device, either alongside the building or inside it. Until the Rideau Canal was built, the Merrick

gristmill was probably used exclusively for grinding grain for all the adjacent settlements, until other mills were built to take up some of the load.

The coming of the canal suddenly put great additional demands on the mill. Suddenly there were several hundred more mouths to feed; so many, in fact, that the contractor, H. C. Stevens, found he couldn't obtain anywhere near enough grain and flour from the local farmers to feed his workmen, and consequently had to ask for duty-free imported grain and flour from the United States: a request that was supported by Colonel By.[263] To start the season of 1829, Stevens estimated that he would need 350 to 400 barrels of flour and 1,000-1,200 bushels of wheat immediately,[264] and assuming that he got what he wanted, the Merrick gristmill must have been very, very busy around this time. It is possible that these new demands, along with the rapid growth of the village, convinced William Merrick that he needed a new mill, and if so the second gristmill at Merrickville would have ceased to exist in the late 1820s

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill No. 3 (1829?-1844?)

The evidence that William Merrick demolished the gristmill of 1803 and replaced it with a new one around 1829 or thereabouts is purely circumstantial, but fairly convincing.

First of all, as explained earlier, it seems likely that the old pioneer mill was having trouble keeping up with the

new demands placed on it by canal construction. Secondly, the old mill was probably built of wood, as the early mills usually were, and besides, Merrick would have had neither the time nor the money to build out of stone in 1803. Perhaps after nearly 30 years the old mill was starting to deteriorate. Thirdly we find a reference in the Brockville Gazette on 23 April 1830 to a "stone grist mill" at Merrickville[265] and, since there is no definite evidence of two gristmills at the village at that date (and some clear indications that there was only one!),[266] it therefore seems likely that the stone mill was then a new structure, replacing the old. Fourth, Merrick was riding high on a wave of prosperity, derived largely from selling pieces of his lands, and thus had money to invest. Finally, it may be noted that canal construction would have resulted in large quantities of loose stone and rubble lying around, from which materials for a new mill could easily be obtained.

The new stone gristmill seems to have occupied the same site as the old one: Captain Bolton's sketch map of 18 April 1835 shows a cluster of buildings near the head of the dam on the north shore, in approximately the same positions as the mill buildings on Colonel By's map of 1827.[267] Presumably the machinery and equipment from the original mill were transferred to the new, but with new additions: in 1836 the gristmill is said to have had two run of stones, and to be valued at £526.8.0.[268] William Clegg's wash drawing of 1832(?), if it

can be trusted, indicates that a large number of multi-storied buildings with peaked roofs were then in existence on the north shore;[269] one of these may be the gristmill. Otherwise, no further particulars about this mill have been discovered.

The assessment rolls of 1833 mention a gristmill, owned by William Mirick (Sr.),[270] and in later years there are frequent references to it. On 12 September 1833, after canal work was completed, we find Merrick, in an itemized list of damages, claiming £124.0.0 from the Ordnance Department "For Stopping the Water from Grist Mills, 62 Days, at 40 £ per day,"[271] and as was mentioned earlier, there is no evidence to show that he ever received any compensation. During the later 1830s and 1840s, several further glimpses of the mill's activities can be discerned. Dr. Edward J. Barker, on a tour through the Rideau in 1834, makes the following passing commentary: "Merrick's Mills are on the bed of the river before the village, and consist of Grist and Saw mills in active operation."[272] From the Cobourg Star of 30 December 1835 (copying from the Kingston British Whig) comes the interesting information that, "A good deal of flour is ground at the Mills of Messrs. Merrick & Co., chiefly for home consumption and lumber trade."[273] (The latter detail may be an indication that the Merricks were already selling flour as far away as the Ottawa Valley, where lumbering was then more extensive than along the Rideau.) The growing tendency to mill flour for outside markets could lead to friction, as R. B. Sneyd has noted: he observes from the

Provincial Secretary's correspondences of 1837, that the residents of Merrickville were growing dissatisfied with the monopoly enjoyed by the village flour mill, and complained that the Merricks seemed more interested in flouring "for market" than in selling locally in small quantities.[274] Shortly afterwards — apparently by 1839 — a second grist- mill was built, probably on the island,[275] but this too was another Merrick enterprise. (Discussion of this mill — which operated for nearly a century — is reserved for the next chapter.)

The stone north shore gristmill remained officially in the hands of William Merrick (Sr.) until his death in 1844, after which it was inherited by his sons Aaron and Terence, who appear to have been running it as far back as 1837.[276] There is a reference to a gristmill in 1845 and afterwards, but it would appear that the gristmill was moved a short distance east by 1847, as part of a general rebuild of the north shore mills by the Merrick brothers about this time. The replacement mill is discussed in Chapter 2.

The Textile Industry During the Pioneer Period

The woollen textile industry also made its modest beginnings in Canada during pioneer times. It started out as a cottage industry, centred on the family spinning wheel and loom:[277] as nearly as possible, the early settlers had to be self-

sufficient, and the severe climate made good coarse woollens essential.[278] Consequently many pioneer homesteaders tried to acquire a few sheep, from which they derived raw wool which could be put through what are called the primary phases of woollen manufacturing: these consist of picking and sorting the wool fleeces, then scouring them (i.e., washing to remove dirt and lanolin), followed by oiling or greasing to make carding easier.[279] Next came carding (i.e., combing with two wire brushes to get rid of more dirt, mats and short fibres, and to get all the strands running roughly parallel to one another), and finally, spinning the fibres into yarn.[280] From here the pioneer housewife could proceed to the secondary phases, which meant weaving the yarn into cloth, then fulling (i.e., washing the cloth in warm water and alkali, combined with stretching and wringing it out, to clean and shrink it), and finally -- if desired -- napping the cloth to produce a suitable downy surface for blankets or the like. The last step was turning the cloth into garments, or whatever.[281]

At first, every phase of the work had to be done at home, usually by the women. Only gradually were some portions of the process taken over by mills. Later on the factory system, combining all operations under a single roof, was introduced, but only around 1845 and afterwards, when the pioneer period had passed in most localities.[282]

Of all the phases of woollen manufacturing, the most tedious and time-consuming were scouring, carding and fulling.

Hence, it is not surprising that the first phases of the operation to be mechanized were carding and fulling, and that the first mills set up to make the process simpler were carding and fulling mills.[283] These were usually founded in conjunction with or as additions to local saw- and gristmills,[284] and like the others, they did custom work for the local settlers, often keeping a portion of the fleeces or yarn in payment, or bartering yarn for wheat.[285] Characteristically then, the early carding mills were small in size, powered by water, limited in their markets, and fleeting as to their existence.[286] They might help to form the nucleus of a village, but even so it was only a matter of time before they were superseded by the all-inclusive woollen factory.

In general, the first carding and fulling mills of Upper Canada are not very well-documented (and those at Merrickville are no exception), but it would appear that they usually appeared in any region shortly after the critical stages of settlement were over, and farmers were fairly well-established. Quite a number of these mills were built in eastern Ontario, where there were abundant mill sites, and where much of the land was too hilly or rocky for anything other than sheep-raising.[287] As early as the 1820s, a carding mill was built at Chaffeys Mills as part of an overall mill complex, only to be demolished around 1827 to make way for the Rideau Canal.[288] By 1835 John Haggart of Perth was running a carding mill which operated until the 1850s.[289] Abel R. Ward opened another at Smiths Falls.[290]

Altogether at least 13 carding mills and five fulling mills (sometimes located together) are known to have existed in the Rideau corridor between 1826 and 1880.[291] Once again, Merrickville seems to have led the way.

Merrickville: North Shore Carding Mill (1817-1848?)

The Merrickville carding mill was the third and final milling enterprise undertaken by William Merrick, but exceedingly little is known about it. The carding mill is first mentioned in Robert Gourlay's (revised?) Statistical Account of Upper Canada dated 1817 which notes that it was the only such facility in Wolford Township.[292] It can hardly have been erected much before 1817 since it is unlikely that the local settlers would have had many sheep before that time. Colonel By's map of the mill site dated 1827 makes no mention of a carding mill, but it does show an unlabelled rectangular building right beside the water on the north shore, along with the gristmill and saw-mill, and perhaps 50 feet east of the latter.[293] The building, by comparison to the locks, should have been about 44 x 24 feet[294] and must have stood approximately where the present Alloy Foundry Company carpentry shop is today — although it is also very possible that the actual site of the old building has been washed-away by erosion and flood waters. That the third unmarked building on Colonel By's map may have been the Merrick carding mill becomes more likely when reference is made

to a sketch of the site by John Burrows around 1827: Burrows indicates the same three buildings and marks the third one as a carding mill. (Originally he labelled it a gristmill, but then crossed that out.)[295]

Another oblique reference to the carding mill can be found in 1833 when William Merrick was submitting his claims for damages to the canal authorities. The last item states, "To damages done by stopping the Water from my carding Machine, 26 Days ... " (during canal construction), followed by a demand for £26.[296] This statement is a reminder that the carding mill was probably doing a very limited business, since it apparently averaged profits of only £1 per day — and would have been in use only part-time anyway.

Little more can be said about the carding mill. If a statement about Haggart's operations in Perth can be applied to Merrickville, it would have required only two men at most to run the mill.[297] The carding mill is mentioned again in 1845,[298] but by 1848 a new such mill (q.v.) seems to have been erected on the island,[299] while the old one disappears from the records. By that time the pioneer period was past and factories were starting to appear in Merrickville.

Summary of the Pioneer Period

The years 1792 to 1845 may be considered the formative years in the history of Merrickville. With its splendid water power, its fairly close proximity to the St. Lawrence, and its not-too-

forbidding hinterland, the site proved a magnet for millers and settlers from a surprisingly early date. Though the initial attempt by the Merricks and Roger Stevens to open saw- and gristmills became bogged down and ultimately failed, William Merrick was finally successful in reacquiring the property and -- by 1803 -- erecting the two mills the settlement so badly needed. Much later he also built a carding mill. All these entities stood on the north shore near the present dam and bridge. It can thus be said that sawmilling, gristing and some primary woollen manufacturing were all firmly established in Merrickville by the 1820s, but that no other industries were represented in the pioneer period, except blacksmithing.

The construction of the Rideau Canal (1826-32) suddenly converted Merrickville from a small hamlet into a prominent village, gave it convenient access to Kingston and Bytown, and put it directly along the main corridor of commerce from Montreal to Upper Canada for over 15 years. The pioneer mills seem to have benefited immensely, especially the gristmill which apparently had to be rebuilt around 1829. Except perhaps for the island gristmill of 1839 (?), discussed in Chapter 2, none of the industrial buildings from this period have left any visible traces.

All in all, Merrickville's early history is most remarkable for its great antiquity (by Ontario standards), and its early pioneer mills have the distinction of having been the first ones erected anywhere on the Rideau watershed, and amongst the first to appear anywhere in the province.

Biographic Sketches

Ensign Roger Stevens, U.E.L. (17 -1793)

Roger Stevens, who became the first settler on the Rideau River, and almost founded Montague Township before his premature death, is an interesting, if little-known character. He was a landowner in Vermont until the Revolutionary War,[300] during which he was arrested and imprisoned at Litchfield, Connecticut, "there to lay in Irons during the Warr" as he wryly put it later, because he had refused to join the rebel American army.[301] With the connivance of a friendly guard he managed to escape, and in July 1777 joined General John Burgoyne's British Army during its invasion of New York State.[302] After the defeat at Saratoga, Stevens again became a prisoner, and again escaped with the help of his brother, Abel.[303] Arriving in Quebec, Stevens joined the Loyal Rangers, where he attracted the attention of Captain Justus Sherwood (later a founder of Brockville), and was soon employed as a scout on forays into American territory, and later as one of 50 secret agents employed by Sherwood behind enemy lines.[304] With the end of the war and the defeat of the Loyalist cause, Stevens returned to Canada to begin a new life as a settler.

Like many other Loyalists, Stevens at first proposed to settle in the Missisquoi area of southern Quebec, but Governor Haldimand did not favour this idea, and Stevens' petition for

land was disallowed.[305] In 1788 his commander, Sherwood, was appointed to the Land Board of the Lunenburg District of what soon became Upper Canada,[306] whereupon Stevens left Montreal and staked out a claim for 2,000 acres (to which he was entitled as a Loyalist) in Lunenburg, but again, without success.[307] None the less, he did receive 400 acres by 1790,[308] and in that year — true to his adventurous spirit — he trekked inland through the bush to the River Rideau, where he selected a site for a home near the present hamlet of Andrewsville. At that time, reportedly, there wasn't a single white man anywhere in the vicinity of the river.[309]

That same year Stevens petitioned for the balance of his 2,000 acres "in two different lotts on the North side of the main branch of the Rideau, on the Creek above the junction of the two rivers, supposed to be about eight miles above the Branches."[310] This was near the (present) border between Marlborough and Montague Townships, but neither had been surveyed as yet, and the petition had to wait. In 1791, or shortly thereafter, Stevens apparently brought his wife and family out to his new home. The Burritts arrived within a few years, and indeed, Stephen Burritt married Roger's daughter, Martha.[311] In 1792 apparently Stevens also met the Merricks, which in turn led to his ill-fated attempt to build mills upsteam in partnership with them. (See North Shore Sawmill No. 1.)

In the meantime the restless Stevens had become involved in another scheme: that of securing an entire township from the authorities, and supervising a settlement there.[312] (Such a practice was not unknown at the time, and indeed, Abel Stevens has gone down in history as the founder of Bastard Township, in the vicinity of the village of Portland.)[313] A petition asking for what is now Montague Township and signed by 127 individuals, mostly from Vermont — who supposedly wished to become settlers — was sent to the governor on 26 February 1793.[314] Two more followed, on the 13th and 30th of May respectively, wherein Stevens also requested 400 acres at the (future) site of Merrickville[315] -- where the mills were then under construction. The authorities, perhaps sensing another flood of American land speculators posing as bona fide settlers, granted Stevens only the mill site, but not the township.[316] Later that year Stevens sold out his share in the mills to William Merrick. That same fall — according to one account — the would-be colonizer went duck hunting by canoe, down the river in the region of North Gower Township, and was drowned in a tributary stream now known as "Stevens Creek": apparently the recoil of his gun caused the canoe to upset.[317]

His widow petitioned the authorities for 800 acres for herself and her three children, near Andrewsville, and finally in 1812 her son Christopher managed to obtain 200 acres in Osgoode.[318]

In recent years, appropriately enough, a side road in the vicinity of Kars, Ontario, where the unfortunate Stevens met his death, has been renamed "Roger Stevens Road. "

William Merrick (Sr.) (1763-1844) and his Family

William Mirick or Merrick, as we shall call him -- the millwright from Massachusetts who founded the Village of Merrickville, was born at Springfield, probably in 1763,[319] though some sources say 1762, or even 1760:[320] the date of his birth is given as 30 April. Like the Burritts, the Merrick family ancestry was aristocratic Welsh: the family seat is still at Bodorgan, Anglesea.[321] The name "Merrick," originally written "Meyrick," means "guardian";[322] William always called himself "Mirick," but most of his contemporaries seem to have known him as "Merick" or "Merrick" and since the latter form is embodied in the name of Merrickville, and was formally adopted by his heirs around 1862, we shall use that spelling it throughout, for consistency.

The Merrick family traces its ancestry back to Meyrick op Llewellyn, who was Captain of the Guard at the coronation of King Henry VII (himself a Welshman!) in 1485, and also first high sheriff of the County of Anglesey.[323] A total of six Merricks received knighthoods from various English sovereigns, and in 1617 Sir John Merrick became the English ambassador to Russia.[324] One branch of the family moved to Philadelphia in

1766; another, consisting of four brothers, crossed over to Charleston, Massachusetts in 1636.[325] Of these the youngest Thomas, who was born in Wales in 1620, became the direct forebear of the founder of Merrickville.[326]

Thomas Merrick was a pioneer. He lived for a time in Roxbury and Hartford before becoming one of the founders of Springfield (then called Agawan) in January 1638.[327] He married one Sarah Stebbins, by whom he had no male offspring, and afterwards (in 1653), Elizabeth Tilley, who gave him seven sons, most of whom became judges or ministers.[328] The youngest son, Thomas, was born at Springfield in 1664 and married one Hannah Dumbleton in 1690.[329] One of their sons, Ebenezer Merrick, was born at Springfield in 1703.[330] Ebenezer married Mehitable Moore of Northfield, Massachusetts, and true to the family tradition of migrating to frontier areas, he moved to Canaan, Connecticut and later shifted to Oblong, New York and finally to Cazenovia, New York: he also stayed briefly at Ballston, New York and Saratoga Springs.[331] One of Ebenezer's sons, Charles, an uncle of the founder of Merrickville, owned land at a place called "Deer's Lick" on the Ka-ya-derosseras Creek near Saratoga Springs: this site, which became known as "Factory Village" after the Revolution, is said to have been called "Merricks' Mills" at one time.[332]

Another of Ebenezer's sons, William by name, was born at Canaan in 1730.[333] He lived for a time at Union, New York, where he seems to have married, but eventually he returned to

Springfield.[334] William had a total of 12 children, including seven sons, of whom at least three Stephen, William and Moses eventually became Loyalist settlers in Canada.[335]

William Merrick the younger, the principal subject of this sketch, was born at Springfield in 1763 or thereabouts. Of his early life little is known, except that he moved back to New York[336] and learned the millwright's trade. Nor is it known exactly when or why he left New York for Canada: his name does not appear on the list of original Loyalists who left the United States during the war or immediately afterwards and though he is said to have arrived in Quebec in 1789,[337] he is apparently not mentioned in official records until 3 May 1791, when he was granted 200 acres in Matilda Township in the Lunenburg District near the present town of Morrisburg.[338]

Family traditions help to fill in the gaps. Merrick is said to have stayed for a time at Sorel before moving on. to Johnstown and Elizabethtown (Brockville).[339] It was probably here that he met and married Sylvia Comstock, who is believed to have been the daughter of a Loyalist settler named Levi Comstock, who took up land near Brockville around 1785;[340] many of his descendents still live there. Sylvia, who was born in or around 1773[341] (the records not being consistent!) eventually gave William nine or more children; Charlotte (born 1791), William (born 1793), Charles (1796), Pamela (or Paula, 1798), Aaron (1801?), Lavinia (1804), Stephen Hedger (1807), Aurelia(1810), and Terence Hamilton (1813).[342] It may be noted in

passing that two of the daughters, Pamela and Aurelia, both died young,[343] that Charles later became a farmer near Carleton Place,[344] and that all of the other sons were to become prominent figures in Merrickville. It is also interesting to note that Sylvia Comstock's sister, Lavinia (or Lyvinia?) married Lieutenant (later Major) Thomas Smyth, for whom Smiths Falls was named:[345] by another coincidence, Abel Russell Ward, who really put Smiths Falls on the map as a mill town, married Lavinia Merrick, daughter of William and Sylvia, in 1826.[346]

Apparently it was in 1792 that William Merrick and his older brother Stephen first visited the Rideau. Why the Merricks decided to open up mills in such an isolated wilderness is not entirely clear, since millwrights were very much in demand at the "front" settlements along the St. Lawrence; however, it will be noted that moving to the fringes of settlement seems to have been a frequent habit of the Merrick family — and William was no exception. He seems to have built a cabin near the falls at Merrick's Mills right at the start, but apparently he did not take up permanent residence there for several years, perhaps wishing to spare his wife and family some of the rigours of bush life: the three oldest children were born at Elizabethtown.[347]

Merrick1s first ill-fated attempts to establish saw- and gristmills at Merrickville, the business quagmire he inherited from Roger Stevens, and his interminable troubles with the government in attempting to acquire another mill site at

Andrewsville, have all been discussed elsewhere. One is left with the impression that Merrick was an exceedingly patient, plain-dealing, hard-working man who was also imbued with a sense of adventure and a willingness to take grave risks. It is gratifying to find that in the end his perseverance was rewarded and that he had the double satisfaction of erecting successful mills, and also founding a village that now bears his name. By 1812 he had progressed to living in a two-storey frame home on the north shore of the Rideau.[348] His brothers, Stephen and Moses, meanwhile seem to have taken up land nearby in Montague, along with their families[349] and at times, until they established themselves, William seems to have shared his home with them.

Though the Merricks did not leave the United States until 1789, their loyalty to Britain was genuine, and they proved it during the War of 1812. At the outbreak of hostilities William Merrick volunteered his services and was appointed foreman and overseer of the carpenters and axemen who built the original military stockade at Fort Wellington (Prescott) in July of 1812;[350] apparently he became an honorary captain in the militia at this time. His son. Captain William Merrick, Jr. also served in the war, as did several of their neighbours, including Colonel Stephen Burritt of Burritt's Rapids, the Nicholsons of Andrewsville, the Eastons of Easton's Corners, the Stevens, Newmans, McCreas, Tallmans, Vaughns, DePenciers, Meikles, Collars (or Colliers), and many others.[351] (Several of these families later became linked with the Merricks by marriage.)

The Rideau militiamen served as guards, scouts and snipers; some took part in the raid on Ogdensburg and the preliminaries of the campaign that ended at Crysler's Farm.[352] After the war Merrick returned to his mills and added a carding mill to his complex. In 1823 he assisted Major Smyth (who was his wife's sister's husband) and his sons, Terence and Henry, in raising a sawmill on Lock Island, Smiths Falls:[353] Terence Smyth afterwards became the first postmaster at Merrickville.[354]

The coming of the Rideau Canal, as noted elsewhere, brought great prosperity to William Merrick and his family, as well as some inconvenience. Merrick was active on the Montague Township Council for several years (sometimes the meetings were held in his home), and variously assumed such offices as pound-keeper, town warden and pathmaster.[355] Undoubtedly, he was the community's most prominent citizen. Like the Burritt's he apparently got along well with the Indians, and tradition reports that he regularly allowed them to spend the nights in his coach house, especially in the winters.[356] By this time, of course, William Merrick was now living in some style: by 1821 he had replaced his old log house with a small, one-and-a-half-storey Georgian-style home, which is now the oldest stone house in Merrickville.[357] By 1829 he was able to afford a much larger and statelier home of mixed Georgian and Neo-Classical style, built close to the earlier building, on a huge hilltop property in North Merrickville, looking down on his three mills.[358] This house, well-preserved (though somewhat remodelled at a

later period), gives an impression of "solid and prosperous sobriety, with few frivolous touches."[359]

During the 1930s William Merrick gradually retired from business, leaving the operations of his mills to his sons. Finally, on 10 April 1844, at the age of about 81 the old man prepared his will, settled his estate, and divided his lands; leaving money to his daughters, the mills to his sons Aaron, Terence, William and Stephen, and an annuity to his wife.[360] He died sometime later that same year. Sylvia followed him in 1848 and today they lie side by side in stone box graves of Welsh style at Collar Hill Cemetery, Merrickville, along with their eldest daughter. Charlotte, and her husband, Elisha Collar.

Merrickville During the Canal or Pre-Railway Period (ca, 1845-1885)

Introduction

The above demarcation of 40 years provides a fairly convenient interval for studying the further growth of Merrickville and its industries. Though the Rideau Canal was completed 13 years earlier and though Merrickville and its environs seem to have done a little exporting as soon as the canal was operational it was during the mid-1840s and after that the village really began to mature and emerge from the pioneer period. Commercially this was the time when canal traffic was at its height. Industrially the new era was characterized by the rapid proliferation of mills partly geared for the export markets and the appearance of large factories which began supplanting the old cottage industries and combining a great many operations under one roof usually using water powered machinery. For example, when William Merrick, Sr. died in 1844 he left behind a sawmill, two gristmills and a carding mill. Within about six years his sons were to rebuild all of the above (except the island gristmill) and also open a cooper shop, machine shop, shingle mill and a large woollen mill. Other entrepreneurs would establish numerous other industries after 1850. In some respects the above period seems

to have been the most prosperous in Merrickville's history: its population reached its maximum size and the village seems to have felt fairly confident about its future. Though information is highly elusive it would also appear that the mood in Merrickville had changed somewhat by the years following 1885, when competition from other places was starting to hurt and railways were redefining the corridors of commerce.

The Growth of Merrickville During the Canal Period

On 10 April 1844 the old pioneer millwright, William Merrick prepared a final will and testament that would have considerable impact on the busy little mill village he had founded 52 years earlier.[1] In that will Mr. Merrick settled the disposition of the various mills in Merrickville (all of which were his) and also most of the lands now occupied by the village. In large measure it was the beginning of the decentralization (and eventual disappearance) of the Merrick family's tight control on the community and its industrial prospects.

A map of the divisions of William Merrick's lands may be found in Figure 3 (q.v.). Summarizing briefly, Merrick left his property to his wife Sylvia and to his sons William, Jr., Aaron, Stephen and Terence. To Sylvia went to use of Lots No. 7 and 8, broken Concession B, Montague; except for parts of No. 8, awarded to Aaron and Terence: in addition she was to have rent money paid regularly by her sons.[2] To William, Jr.

and Stephen went parts of Lots No. 8 and 9, broken Concession A, Wolford, lying north of the Queen's Highway, or the north side of Main Street to the south side of the river including the island and the south side mill site:[3] theoretically this also included the locks and basins and blockhouse of the Rideau Canal which had apparently never been paid for.[4] To Stephen went also the south side of the Queen's Highway (Main Street), or parts of Lots No. 8 and 9, broken Concession A, Wolford — which amounted to most of South Merrickville east of St. Lawrence Street.[5] To Aaron went the remainder of Lot 9 south of Main Street which covered all of South Merrickville west of St. Lawrence Street except the river frontage.[6] To Aaron and Terence jointly were awarded parts of Lots 8 and 9, broken Concession B, Montague, covering most of North Merrickville including the north shore mill site and sawmill: in addition Terence was to inherit his mother's lands.[7] The remainder of Lot 9, Montague, forming a wedge between the other lands, went to William, Jr.[8] The elder Merrick's two surviving daughters, Charlotte Collar and Lavinia Ward, each received some money while the remaining son, Charles, who had long since left to take up farming in the upper Ottawa Valley was given some land in Kent County plus £800.[9]

The most puzzling feature about the will is the omission of any reference to the numerous portions of these lots — especially on the Wolford side — which must already have been sold off to the various residents of Merrickville. Indeed

the will makes the whole of Merrickville sound like so much farmland: an in-depth, lot-by-lot study of the various properties in town would probably give a detailed picture of the growth of the community and also provide a clearer idea of how much William Merrick and his sons prospered from sales of their lands, but such a study was beyond the scope and duration of this report. It is known, however, that the Merrick brothers lost little time in taking advantage of their property's potential. In March 1846 South Merrickville (i.e., parts of Aaron and Stephen's properties) was surveyed into streets and lots by one William Campbell and the same was done in North Merrickville by John Booth in April 1849.[10] (in 1863 a fresh survey based on the older ones was conducted by John Burchill, P.L.S., a full-time resident of Merrickville.)[11] About 1851 a visitor named W. H. Smith visited the village and wrote the following description of it:

> Merrickville, which is on the canal, is rather prettily situated, and contains some good buildings. Its progress, however, is rather slow. It contains about seven hundred inhabitants, two grist mills, having seven run of stones, a saw mill, woollen factory, making from three to four hundred yards of cloth per day; two shingle factories, two tanneries, a foundry, axe factory, ashery, etc. There are two churches in the village. Episcopal and Roman Catholic.[12]

Smith goes on to describe the nearby farms which, he says, are mostly poorly run; being littered with decaying stumps and half-starved cattle, with few orchards. He also gives the population of Montague as 3,022 — a slight increase over 1842.[13]

A similar though somewhat rosier account was written by the Reverend Adam Lillie in February 1852 for a Toronto audience. He states that,

> Merrickville, in Wolford and Montague, on the Rideau River Canal; population about 700; distant about 29 miles; the River offers most valuable water power, second only to Gananogue, and which has been improved by the erection of saw and flouring-mills, cloth manufacturing, shingle and other useful and profitable machinery. It has its post office, churches, school houses, merchants' stores and mechanics' shops in great number and variety; an agency of the Provincial Insurance Company is also established here. This is an improving Town, and a good point for capitalists to invest in. The country about is very good for farming purposes, more particularly on the east [Wolford] side of the River.[14]

Elsewhere Lillie notes that Smiths Falls then had a population of about 800 and Kemptville about 1,000. He also may have been guilty of some slight exaggeration respecting the roads

in that four years later the Mirickville Chronicle noted that the road from Merrickville to Maitland was then being macadamized though (in the editor's opinion) in a rather slipshod way.[15] In 1851 we also hear of macadamizing being done on St. Lawrence Street and discussions about wooden sidewalks in front of the merchants' stores.[16]

Further developments are mentioned during the 1850s. Several inns and hotels were opened, and by September of 185717 a new township hall was ready for use.[17] That same year Merrickville became the first community in Leeds and Grenville to incorporate a mechanics' institute, "its purpose the general diffusion of Knowledge by means of a Library, News Room, and Public Lectures." Aaron Merrick became its first President.[18] (Such institutes became the forerunners of modern extension courses and public libraries.) In 1859 the editor of the Kingston Daily News, fresh from a trip through the Rideau, was left with mixed impressions about Merrickville which he vented in the following words:

> The outside view of Mirickville, embracing the three locks and grounds attached, is agreeable from any quarter, but few persons would find anything to admire in the laying out of the streets or the style of the buildings generally. ... The farms on each side of the canal from this point to Burritt's Rapids are of the best description, and the

> substantial and neat stone houses of the occupants have an air of thrift that is pleasant to contemplate.[19]

The same article also notes that the brothers, Aaron, Stephen and Terence Mirick were the leading businessmen in town and that they were running

> a grist mill, saw mill, cloth manufactory, shingle mill, tannery, stores for the sale of the merchandize" [sic], besides a lawyer's office, all under the control of the brothers. These mills are situate on the left bank of the canal, which threatens to out-grow the village proper on the opposite side.[20]

Also mentioned is a new, four-storey stone building then being built by Aaron Merrick at the two main thoroughfares in South Merrickville which when completed "will be an ornament to the place."[21]

The following year (1860) — six years after Smiths Falls and three years after Kemptville — Merrickville was incorporated as a village; with Aaron Merrick becoming the first reeve.[22] The community then had at least four hotels[23] and was reckoned to have a population of 900 souls though an official count taken in 1861 revealed a figure of 1,040![24] We also hear that the village had a lively social life, that parties and dances were common as were regattas and strawberry

socials in the warm seasons and ice skating and sleigh riding in the winters.[25] On the other hand we also hear of drunkenness, swearing and rowdiness often turning the streets into bedlam, especially at night: in those days the community had no constables.[26]

Though all this might seem impressive we have been examining the fortunes of Merrickville out of context. The growth of the village was in fact lagging behind that of its neighbours Smiths Falls and Kemptville. Around 1852 when Merrickville is reckoned to have had 700 people, Smiths Falls is said to have had 800 and Kemptville 1,000.[27] Both of these towns were incorporated ahead of Merrickville despite the fact that in 1850 complaints were being made that land subdividers in Smiths Falls were retarding growth by demanding exorbitant prices for lots.[28] In 1850 Smiths Falls had only a slight edge industrially over Merrickville having an oatmeal mill and one sawmill more than Merrickville — though it might be added that Smiths Falls then had five churches to Merrickville's two.[29] By 1865, however, Smiths Falls had an estimated population of 1,600 compared to 1,175 for Kemptville and about 1,000 or more for Merrickville.[30] (Burritt's Rapids, never a serious contender, trailed with about 400.)[31] What advantages did the other places have over Merrickville?

One major difference may have existed with respect to convenient access to the St. Lawrence. Though overland distances are not notably different in the three cases, Smiths Falls

tends to lie opposite Brockville, and Kemptville opposite Prescott. Merrickville, though closely connected with Brockville (indeed it can be argued that Merrickville was partly dependent upon Brockville before the canal was built), nonetheless happens to lie more directly opposite Maitland which has never been a very important place: Maitland started to develop only after 1826, when George Longley built his first mill there, and by 1852 it still had only 200 inhabitants.[32] Perhaps this helps to explain why the road from Maitland to Merrickville remained unimproved until the 1850s whereas the roads from Brockville to Smiths Falls, and Prescott to Kemptville, were both being planked or macadamized during the 1840s if not earlier:[33] Brockville and Prescott perhaps were big enough to press for road improvements to their hinterlands whereas Maitland perhaps could not. True, in 1850 the United Counties Council agreed that four county roads should be improved, including the Maitland-Merrickville road,[34] yet as late as 1856 the work had not been finished and on 28 November of that year the editor of the Mirickville Chronicle was grumbling because both the road and its bridge were in such wretched shape: gravelling and ditching were then underway, but only in a slipshod way, and the new toll gate near Maitland was (in the editor's view) a crowning insult.[35] The fact that Maitland had just become a station on the new Grand Trunk Railway, of course, gave new importance to the road. Yet perhaps all this is to misjudge conditions in the

mid-18th century. It may be that road traffic (except in winter) was negligible compared with commercial navigation on the lakes, rivers and canals, in which case Merrickville would not have been seriously affected even if roads to the St. Lawrence were bad: further research might be useful in this area. One further point, at the very least, may be ventured: according to tradition, the road from Maitland to Merrickville was once known as "Smugglers' Highway," because it was extensively used for smuggling such items as rum, whiskey, tea, tobacco, cotton and the like from the St, Lawrence to Bytown, sometimes with the friendly connivance of local farmers: the route was preferred (so we are told) because it was direct, but little used.[36] If road traffic creates communities, rather than vice-versa, such a situation did not bode well for Merrickville.

But if roads were then of minor importance, compared with the waterways, the same could hardly be said about that revolutionary new 19th-century phenomenon, the railway. Railways could, and usually did, divert a lot of trade and commerce away from the waterways, and they could do it all year round. In Leeds and Grenville, the first railways, alas, tended to follow the main roads. Thus the old Bytown and Prescott Railway (one of the first lines built in Canada West), opted to take a route by way of Kemptville: the line was opened to Bedell Station, near Kemptville, by August 1854, and by the end of the year it had reached New Edinburgh.[37] In 1865 the line became

the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway, and in 1884 the CPR absorbed it.[38] This twice-a-day rail service can hardly have done Kemptville any harm.[39] Within a few years Brockville, too, was busily planning a railway up to the Ottawa Valley, with the idea of siphoning off some of the trade of the valley through Brockville, In January of 1859 the Brockville and Ottawa Railway reached Smiths Falls, and was soon extended to Carleton Place and Almonte.[40] (This line was later taken over by the Canada Central Railway, which in turn was also absorbed by the CPR.)[41] Neither line, of course, went through Merrickville and the initial advantage enjoyed by its two neighbours was thus reaffirmed.

Though Merrickville failed to get a railway (at least until 1886), it was not for lack of effort. As early as 1853 the community — still unincorporated — was conducting negotiations with the Brockville and Ottawa Railway for a branch from Smiths Falls, for which Merrickville (or Wolford Township) was prepared to advance the sum of £25,000, to be borrowed from the Consolidated Municipal Loan Fund for Upper Canada.[42] (Whether this lure was ever translated into a bylaw or not is uncertain, but in any event, the branch was never built.)

In 1871, many Merrickville industrialists became active supporters of the abortive Merrickville and Westport Railway project, which was hoped might be built by the Brockville and Ottawa, but again, nothing came of the scheme.[43] Merrickville

thus remained dependent on the Rideau, which by this time had completely lost out to the canalized St. Lawrence system — though there was still an extensive, even growing trade in wood products and other bulk cargoes along the waterway.[44]

It would appear that Merrickville was not slow to feel the effects of being bypassed by the railways. A business directory, dated 1865, hints at this in the following commentary:

MERRICKVILLE

> An incorporated village situated on the Rideau Canal, in the Township of Wolford, and County of Grenville. It possesses good water privileges, and contains several somewhat extensive manufacturers. At one time, and not many years ago either, it was one of the most brisk business places in the Province of Upper Canada; it would scarcely be true to say that it is so now, although, in the course of time it may, and probably will, recover its former position. It is distant from Brockville, the County Town, 30 miles, and from Perth 26 miles. Population about 900.[45]

The same directory lists 75 professional people in town including four hotel-keepers, one blacksmith, one tinsmith, three tailors, four shoemakers, two leather manufacturers, three iron founders, three coopers, three flour millers, three

lumber or shingle manufacturers, besides storekeepers, clergy-men, teachers, doctors and lawyers.[46] We also find reference to a few "luxury" trades, including baking, confectionery, book selling, photography and carriage-making,[47] which suggests a modest degree of affluence amongst some of the population.

The census of 1871 implies a similar but more extensive picture: here we have 924 names listed under Merrickville including several merchants, five millers, five doctors, six coopers, seven teachers, and a dozen blacksmiths and tailors.[48] There are also numerous carpenters and painters, as well as harness-makers and shoemakers, and a few more "luxury" tradesmen, such as gardners and watchmakers.[49] Under the list of industrial establishments we find 32 entries, ranging everywhere from a bakery shop on St. Lawrence Street (which probably engaged no more than one or two employees), to fully fledged foundries and factories — not to mention mills.[50] It may well be that Merrickville was still growing around this period: times, in general, were prosperous, there was still a good deal of traffic on the canal, and the lumber trade was still active around the Rideau.[51]

Our next description of Merrickville, dated 1876, tells us very little more. To quote it,

> Merrickville — An incorporated Village in the Township of Oxford [sic], and County of Grenville, situated on the Rideau Canal, and has extensive

> water power, which is utilized to a very considerable extent. It is 9 miles from Irish Creek station [Jasper] on the B & O Railway, and 15 miles from Kemptville on the St L & O Railway, It contains 4 churches, 3 hotels, grist, saw and shingle mills, 3 iron-foundries, a woollen factory, a large number of stores, and a population of about 1,110.[52]

A list of 110 names of professional people follows, but, since the list is obviously not all-inclusive, we cannot use it to judge whether the village was growing or declining during the 1870s. It might be noted, however, that there was now one less hotel in the community than formerly,[53] and that Merrickville was still trailing Kemptville and Smiths Falls: the former is reckoned to have had a population of 1,200 in 1876, and the latter, about 1,865.[54]

By 1881, however, it seems definite that Merrickville was losing population. The census of that year gives us only 819 names,[55] and, though this figure is probably not all-inclusive, it does indicate a drop of over 11 per cent from the figure of 1871. V. A. George has observed that the lumber trade, which had hitherto formed the backbone of the economy in most of the Rideau corridor, had begun to decline after 1871, and that many of its sawmills had to shut down during those years for lack of logs.[56] He also notes that the canal itself was allowed to deteriorate physically around this time, since military

obsolescence and declining traffic made it harder and harder to justify large outlays from the public purse for its upkeep.[57] Concurrently, he finds that practically all of the corridor communities and townships, whose prosperity was all too heavily dependent on the lumber trade and the canal, were losing people after 1871.[58] Only Kemptville and Smiths Falls (and perhaps Perth?) were exceptions to the general picture, perhaps because they had the advantage of being railway towns. By 1884 Smiths Falls found itself directly linked with Toronto, by way of the Ontario and Quebec Railway (which again was speedily absorbed by the CPR):[59] by 1881 the town had a population of 2,087, which rose to 2,248 in 1886.[60]

As Merrickville found itself becoming more and more subordinated to Smiths Falls, the older village renewed its efforts to offset its losses by securing a railway. Another chance came in 1886, when it was announced that the 0. & Q. Railway was to be extended east from Smiths Falls to Montreal. That the new line would go through Merrickville was by no means a foregone conclusion: as it happened, a number of towns on the route including Kemptville and Winchester, found themselves practically bypassed when the rails were laid, though they did get stations.

On 17 March 1886 the village council voted to raise $10,000 to induce the railway to come to Merrickville: specifically, it was offering to purchase an entire right of way through Wolford and Oxford Townships as far as Bedell, on condition that the

railway build a station and freight shed within the village and have the line in operation by 1 July 1888.[61] The railway accepted the offer, and on 9 June 1886 the Merrickville Council approved a bylaw to raise debentures, with varying sums to be paid to the railway annually until December 1904.[62]

Thus did Merrickville at long last secure a railway, and a main line at that, even though the village was only a way-station. In Chapter 3 there will be some discussion as to the apparent effects of the railway on the community and its industries. Local tradition even asserts that Merrickville was considered as a possible division point by the CPR, but even if true, this plum also landed in the lap of Smiths Falls; along with the usual accoutrements of a depot, yards and a roundhouse:[63] perhaps Smiths Falls offered a bigger bonus for it. Along with the division point facilities came all sorts of industries which migrated to Smiths Falls as a result: in 1888 the town's population jumped to 3,555, and by 1891 it was up to 3,864.[64] Merrickville at best grew slightly, or just held its own.

To summarize briefly, it looks as if Merrickville enjoyed fairly steady, if modest, growth and prosperity from the 1840s to the 1870s, and that its population increased from about 700 in 1852 to 1,040 in 1861, the year of incorporation. It never seems to have risen much higher, and after 1871 it apparently began to decline. Its best years seem to have coincided with the best years of the Rideau lumber trade, though, undoubtedly

the village benefitted far more from the exertions of its own industrialists, the sons of William Merrick and their successors who opened dozens of mills, shops and factories there after 1845. The village seems to have been heavily dependent on the canal during this period rather than on roads possibly because the roads from Brockville to Smiths Falls, and Prescott to Kemptville, attracted more traffic: certainly they were better maintained. The coming of the railways in the 1850s only reinforced this trend in that they were built through Smiths Falls and Kemptville instead of Merrickville. Probably for this reason Merrickville ceased to grow very much during the 1860s and during the 1870s (which were largely years of depression) the village began to decline along with the timber trade. There is reason to believe that the belated arrival of the CPR around 1886 proved a modest stimulus to the village during some of the years that followed.

Sawmilling During the Canal Period

In Chapter 1 the beginnings of the lumber trade in the Rideau watershed were briefly discussed, along with something of the role of the canal in facilitating that trade. As noted earlier most of the lumber exported went to Britain until the middle of the century. Much of this was in the form of squared timber, which was prepared by skilled axemen in the bush,[65] and as such did no require any cutting by sawmills. However, the British.

market also developed a willingness to accept sawn planks called "deals" (each about three inches thick),[66] in addition to square timber, and these required sawmills to prepare them. The square timber trade flourished until about 1870 then gradually fell into decline,[67] while the deal trade began to decline around mid-century, as the American market slowly supplanted the British.[68]

The reasons for the shift were numerous. Starting in 1842 and continuing in 1845, 1846 and 1851 the British government progressively reduced the tariffs set up during the Napoleonic Wars against Swedish and Russian timber until finally all protective tariffs were eliminated in 1860.[69] This, however, did not spell the end of Canadian exports to Britain, since the British market was both immense and expanding,[70] though it did encourage Canadian lumbermen to seek other markets during the 1840s and fifties. They did not need to seek very far. Much of the eastern United States had been fairly thoroughly logged out by that time[71] and, inevitably, demand began to extend across the border. In 1848 and afterwards, a number of American entrepreneurs began building huge new mills in Canada, notably E. B. Eddy and the Bronsons in Hull and Bytown,[72] while local Canadian mills found it possible to export across the border.[73] The Reciprocity Treaty of 1854, which remained in effect until 1866, was highly beneficial to the lumber trade.[74] Unlike the British, who would accept only the highest quality lumber, the Americans were not choosy, and were

willing to take almost anything that Canada had to offer; also, they wanted sawn lumber, not square timber.[75]

On the Rideau the results were a thriving lumber trade from the 1830s to the 1870 subject, of course, to periodic fluctuations.[76] A number of prominent lumbermen such as Philemon Wright of Hull became active in the canal corridor[77] while thousands of local settlers, discovering that their lands were poorly suited to farming were quite happy to augment their meagre incomes by cutting and selling timber to the lumbermen or to local sawmills.[78] There were, of course, always some problems. The lumbermen complained about the tolls exacted by the canal authorities, though the original tolls of April 1832 were cut in half by June of that year;[79] still the complaints continued.[80] Also, the canal locks required that cribs and rafts of timber be dismantled and reassembled again with every lockage, which was always a nuisance.[81] However, after 1835 as the demand slowly shifted from square timber to other specialized products such as planks, shingles, cordwood, telegraph poles and railway ties (bound more and more for the United States) transport became easier since most of the new commodities could be shipped out in scows towed by steam tugs.

Of course, the expanding American market meant that more saw- and shingle mills would be built on the Rideau. The best-known milling complexes were those of Thomas McKay at New Edinburgh and Benjamin Tett at Bedford Mills:[82] but others were also built at Upper Brewers, Morton, Newboro, Westport and

Kingston Mills after the canal was opened.[83] Many of the Rideau mill owners, Tett especially, sold the bulk of their lumber to the United States by way of Kingston,[84] and indeed one historian has noted that most of the forest products being exported through the Narrows lock station between 1861 and 1875 were bound for Kingston rather than Ottawa.[85]

The Rideau lumber trade, on the whole, flourished until the early 1870s, but by then most of the watershed had been largely logged out, and the trade migrated elsewhere.[86] Matters were not improved by the cancellation of the Reciprocity Treaty in 1866, or by the great depression of 1873-78, which led to a five-year collapse of the American market.[87] As the timber trade moved elsewhere, agriculture suffered, since many farmers had been engaged in selling hay and crops to the lumbermen.[88] Indeed, the corridor communities have never fully recovered from the disappearance of what had long been the backbone of the region's economy.

Merrickville had a number of saw- and shingle mills during the above period, as did its neighbours Smiths Falls, Perth, Andrewsville, Burritt's Rapids and Kemptville,[89] but these enterprises appear to be poorly documented, compared to those of Benjamin Tett. How many mills did Merrickville have? And how did they relate to the overall scheme of things outlined above? We turn now to the evidence at hand.

Merrickville: North Shore Sawmill No. 3 (184 -1855)

The third north shore sawmill stood directly alongside the highway crossing the Rideau on the east side right at the water's edge.[90] (See Figure 4.) Unless the shoreline has been extensively eroded it must have been located exactly where the Alloy Foundry Company's front lawn is today and where two successor sawmills were to be built later. Its neighbour, the fourth north shore gristmill (q.v.) stood just a short distance away to the east, also beside the shore.[91] This is simply one way of saying that the Merrick brothers, Aaron and Terence, had decided to interchange the positions of the two mills they had inherited from their father in 1844: the gristmill stood where the former sawmill had been, and the new sawmill stood close to where the former gristmill had been though somewhat closer to the water.

No information has surfaced to explain why the brothers made this change. Their father's gristmill had been a substantial stone building and gristmills of that sort are not usually very suitable for sawmilling: for example, gristmills may have several stories which sawmills seldom need. Perhaps an unrecorded fire forced them to rebuild. Whatever the reason the Merricks had interchanged the positions of their mills by 1847 and presumably rebuilt them.

This conclusion has been drawn from an Ordnance map of the "Mirrickville Station";[92] undated, but appearing to show

the mill buildings as they were about 1847: the woollen mill of 1848, for example, is not shown. (The map also indicates a few features dating from about 1861, which suggests that it is a copy of an earlier drawing.) The above map, summarized in Figure 4, shows a cleanly marked building, perhaps about 55 feet long by 35 in width, with what may have been a wing on the south side. To the north, running from the road east to an inlet from the river, is a structure that looks like a covered water flume, with a branch leading to the gristmill:[93] such a flume would have suited the old mills perfectly, given their positions, but the sawmill (No. 3) was not served by it and, by inference, it had a water wheel in the river, or a small intake flume of its own.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that this sawmill was generally quite busy. A lockmaster's record book notes numerous drives, containing as many as 9,379 sawlogs in one season, being passed at the Merrickville lock station during the 1840s and fifties; either by A. and T. Merrick, or by Ransom Stone[94] (q.v.), who appears to have leased the mill from 1847 (or earlier) until 1852. In 1853 the Merrick brothers appear to have repossessed the mill,[95] and in 1855 we find them passing 2,606 sawlogs to their plant,[96] though whether this represented the entire season's cut is not clear. The third north shore sawmill met with disaster that same year. On 20 September 1855, a brief news item appeared in the Carleton Place Herald, cryptically announcing that "Fire at

Merrickville destroyed the extensive mills of A. Merrick Co.[97]

Merrickville: North Shore Sawmill No. 4 (1856-1908?)

The old mill had apparently proved a most profitable project and it should come as no surprise that the Merrick brothers lost no time in rebuilding it. The new mill occupied the same site as its predecessor, at the head of the highway bridge and judging from the Walling map of about 1860, it was about the same size as the earlier mill and like its predecessor it did not abut against the gristmill, which was apparently rebuilt at the same time.[98] (See Figure 5.) The new mills were both completed by 1856, since an advertisement by the Merrick brothers dated 25 July 1856 announces that they are proprietors of saw- and flour mills, and general dealers in grain and lumber.[99] On 27 January 1859, Lockmaster John Johnston of Merrickville station noted the existence of a sawmill with a single saw, three circular saws and one planing machine, capable of cutting one million board feet of lumber per year.[100] (A similar description of the plant is found in the records of the Department of Railways and Canals in 1863.)[101] It was being leased in 1859 for £125,[102] presumably to Ransom Stone, who was busy with log drives that year:[103] as the proprietor of the mill on Walling's map of about 1860,[104] and for added confirmation, one of Johnston's letters (dated 12 August 1863) comments that Stone was renting the Messrs

Merricks's sawmill.[105] He never purchased it and the mill remained in Merrick hands until 1864.[106]

How much lumber did that mill cut and where was it sold? No answers to these questions are available though it seems likely that if the plant was busy most of the time some of the products must have been exported to outside markets and if so it would have been by canal barge. On the other hand there are hints as to where the logs came from: in 1853, 1854 and 1855 the lockmaster noted that some of the sawlogs owned by Stone or the Merricks had passed through seven locks in transit while others had gone through nine and in 1853 we are definitely informed that some of the logs were from Rideau Lake.[107] The scale of operations — 2,520 sawlogs in August and September of 1859[108] for example — suggests that the mill operators had camps in the bush of the central Rideau Lakes district, which in turn indicates that they had secured timber limits in that area.

Johnston's letterbooks also record a number of clashes between the lock staffs and the sawmill proprietors, usually over water rights. On the night of 16 October 1849, for example, the lockmaster discovered that some of the stop-logs at the waste weir had been illegally raised to allow the sawmill to continue cutting at night.[109] Johnston, a former sergeant with the Royal Sappers and Miners, reacted in a truly military manner: he roused all his lock labourers, armed them, posted some as sentries, with orders to make prisoners of any persons found

and—naturally—replaced the stop-logs. He also caught the mill foreman, Edward Errett, with an employee, in the act of placing a sawlog, though someone had apparently warned the mill men of what was happening. Johnston threw the blame for the incident on Ransom Stone, who then had custody of the sawmill.[110]

Other examples of conflict of interest could be cited, and presumably the problems grew worse as the lumbermen continued to lay waste the forests around the canal, which naturally led to faster run-offs in the spring times and lower waters in the autumns as the protective mantle of the forests disappeared. In August of 1853, Johnston had to forbid the Merrick brothers from passing any more sawlogs through the waste weir until the bents had been sheeted with new hemlock planks when the waters were low.[111] In some instances the sawmill proprietors were forced to shut down the mill when they could not obtain leave to pass their logs — or face the heavy expense of hauling them overland.[112]

Tempers really flared in December of 1856, when the lockmaster ordered his section of the canal de-watered to make repairs over the winter: this did not suit the mill owners, particularly Aaron and Terence Merrick, who wrote to Ottawa condemning Johnston's actions, and forcing Johnston in turn to write to his boss, the canal superintendent, Lieutenant-Colonel Chaytor, asking him to order the mill men to stop interfering with the lockmaster in the execution of his duties.[113] Perhaps this was done, since on 5 February 1857 nine mill owners — including Aaron and Terence Merrick — sent Johnston a frosty

but formally polite letter, asking him if he would be kind enough to arrange to have more water run down through the system.[114] As a rule, the canal authorities (at least during this period) seem to have been inclined to oblige the mill owners as much as possible[115] and Johnston himself usually took a similar attitude

Sometimes the problem for the mill men was not too little water, but too much. In April of 1861 the water levels were so high that some five of the mill wheels in the various plants were partially submerged and hence unable to function normally and the Merrickville industrialists had to appeal to Johnston to hold back the waters as much as possible.[116] (At the same time the reeve of Wolford, upset because of flooding in the area of Jasper, was pressing to have the bywashes opened.)[117] The lockmaster seems to have acted with restraint, knowing full well what a sudden release might do to the stations downstream.

During the 1860s, by which time the canal had been transferred to the Canadian authorities (who were reluctant to spend anything more than the bare minimum on it), water problems were sometimes worsened by deteriorating installations, such as rotting lock gates and waste weirs that leaked.[118] Another chronic problem was the mill men's habit of dumping shavings, sawdust and other rubbish into the canal, which sometimes led to the clogging of channels. On 6 July 1864, Johnston was ordered to remind the mill owners of Merrickville that such practices were contrary to the Rideau Canal Act, and that any

further infractions would be reported to Ottawa.[119] This did not end the problem, and in November of 1874, Lockmaster Matthew Johnston (who had succeeded his father in 1869) testified in court that he observed sawdust being dumped into the river from the Merrickville shingle mill (q.v.), after had warned the owner to desist.[120] The magistrates dismissed the case, on the grounds that charges should have been brought against the mill hands, rather than the owner himself.[121]

It would be misleading, of course, to imply that the mill owners and the lock staffs were always at odds. The elder Johnston seems to have been on generally friendly terms with some of the industrialists, and at times the two groups helped each other. In late April of 1847, when flooding threatened the canal dam at Merrickville, the villagers, led by Aaron Merrick, worked most of the night of the 25th and 26th to fill a small break in the structure.[122] "Had it not been for this timely assistance of the Inhabitants, amongst whom prevailed the greatest excitement, to secure the Canal works," acknowledged the official report, "most serious damage would have been done"[123] (The break was later properly repaired with stone and rubble)[124]

To return to the sawmill: the Merrick brothers, or Ransom Stone, continued to run the plant until 1864, but then the mill changed hands. Ransom Stone died that year,[125] and on 27 February the mill site — along with most of the north shore property — was sold by Terence Merrick to his brother-in-law,

Abel Russell Ward,[126] the prime founder of Smiths Falls who still owned numerous mills in that town.[127] The reasons for the sale can only be guessed at, but Aaron Merrick — who had a great many other business concerns — was then on the eve of retirement, while Terence was a barrister by training and thus unlikely to tackle the business alone. In a business directory of 1865 we find Abel R. Ward listed as a sawmill owner (amongst other things)[128] though he is not stated to be the owner of the Merrickville mill.

Abel R, Ward did not keep the sawmill very long. He was by then in his sixties and on 10 December 1866 he and his wife sold all of their extensive north shore properties to their son Abel R. Ward, Jr.[129] who lived at Merrickville and — briefly — took up the flour milling and foundry trades; of which more later. Within just two years (9 November 1868) the younger Ward in turn sold the sawmill to William Henry Magee and William Pearson[130] who were developing a large foundry works east of the sawmill where the Ayling boat works is now located. Magee and Pearson in turn speedily came to terms with Mrs. Mary Ferine Merrick, wife of Aaron, and on 20 January 1869 they partitioned their property, assigning eight acres at the western end along with "mills, houses, outhouses ... ways, water and water courses, Mill Stones, bolting machines, gearing and other Machinery" to Mrs. Merrick for $5,000[131] — slightly less than half what they paid Abel Ward for the entire property.[132] This left Mrs. Merrick with the sawmill and gristmill as well as land on both sides of Mill Street, the main artery through town.

It also meant that Mrs. Merrick's new holdings straddled the water flumes from the millpond, and consequently, the deed of partition spelled out terms for dividing the water power. It granted Mrs. Merrick three-quarters of all the waters passing the north side outlets from the mill dam, as well as the right to extend and deepen all cuts and water courses, and uninterrupted access to all dam bulkheads. In return, Magee and Pearson were promised one-quarter of the north side water power, as well as access to the north bulkhead of the dam, Mrs. Merrick's lands from Mill street, as well as a 12-foot right of way along the east end of Mrs. Merrick's lands.[133] It was further agreed that Mrs. Merrick would pay 75 per cent of the costs of maintaining or altering the water courses, with Magee and Pearson paying the balance. Mrs. Merrick, "at her own cost and charges," was left responsible for the south or sawmill bulkhead.[134]

Mary Merrick, who was about 49 in 1869, kept possession of the sawmill and gristmill until 1890. In 1877 she came to a new agreement with Messrs. Magee and Pearson to remodel the water courses at the site.[135] It was decided that both parties would draw their water from the south bulkhead, through a new (underground?) flume, to be constructed the length of the Merrick property to the iron foundry; the said flume was also to have a divider in it. It was also stipulated that an additional flume should be built from the north bulkhead to the foundry (at Magee and Pearson's expense), and that the foundry men could have any excess water coming from the north exit.[136]

Work on the new project was underway by 1878. Apparently construction led to difficulties with the public, since by September the village council was being bombarded with complaints that the makeshift road bridge thrown across the excavations for the flume was dangerous, especially for horses and wheeled vehicles.[137] Since a village bylaw made mill owners responsible for providing safe crossings when water courses were being cut the clerk was instructed on 24 September to notify Messrs. Magee and Pearson, and Mrs. Merrick, that they must make the crossing safe, and would be held liable for any damages.[138] Three days later, the council was advised by a lawyer that the mill owners must either build a bridge, or that the council must do it and charge the expense to the mill owners. The council passed a resolution to that effect.[139] On 9 October 1878 W. H. Magee in a letter to council accepted the liability and agreed to proceed with a new bridge.[140] (Mrs. Merrick sent her own letter on 28 November: its contents evoked no controversy.)[141]

Mrs. Ferine Merrick, now a widow, continued to hold the sawmill until 1890 when it was sold.[142] By 1881, however, she had moved away to Kingston[143] and presumably the mill was leased to a tenant. Indeed this appears to have been the case from the very start. Lockmaster Johnston, in a memo to his superiors dated 5 August 1864 comments that Edward Errett (q.v.) who had been Ransom Stone's foreman was then holding the lease of Messrs. Merrick's sawmill[144] — though the mill had already been sold to Abel Ward. In the aforementioned Directory

of 1865, Edward Erratt [sic] is listed as a lumberman and general merchant, along with a partner, John Hill: their office was located on St. Lawrence Street.[145] For some reason Hill and Errett went bankrupt in 1868, apparently following a default on a mortgage by Hill to parties in England and Montreal.[146] Yet Errett somehow recovered from this setback since he is listed once more as a lumber manufacturer in the census of 1871,[147] and again in a business directory of 1876.[148] The Merrickville Council Minutes Book mentions payments made to Edward Erratt for lumber — usually used for bridges and sidewalks — during the years 1876-79,[149] and again in 1886-88; during which period he was apparently in partnership with a D. Crozier of Merrickville.[150] Another directory, dated as late as 1895, still contains a line: "Erratt Edward, saw mill,"[151] Thus it would appear that the third north shore sawmill was leased (continuously?) by Errett throughout the times that the Wards and Mrs. Merrick owned it, and even afterwards (there being no other mill in Merrickville that can be assigned to him)

From the census of 1871 also comes the following information about "Edward Errett's Saw Mill."[152] It seems that the mill operated on a year round basis, and that it employed a total of seven men, who were paid, in total, $2,100 per year. It represented a fixed capital of $4,000. It ran on water power, could process about 12,000 logs per year (valued at about $6,000), to produce up to 1,200,000 pieces of lumber worth about $9,600.[153] (Unfortunately, there is no description

of the machinery.) On another page is the additional news that Edward Errett used 300 pine logs per year, and 200 of other types:[154] these figures seem exceedingly low, especially as much larger numbers are mentioned during the 1860s.

Little else can be said about the sawmill, unless it could be established definitely that it was identical to the mill on the same site that burned in 1908. The neighbouring gristmill seems to have been rebuilt before 1881, and the same may have been true of the sawmill. The mill from the early 20th century — to be discussed in some detail in Chapter 3 — was a long, narrow, board and batten building, with one-and-a-half stories and a medium-pitched gabled roof.[155] No doubt the third 19th-century mill was much the same.

Shingle Milling During the Canal Period

Shingle milling and lath milling in Upper Canada represent a sign of specialization within the overall wood products industry. We first hear of shingle factories in the census of 1848: between 1852 and 1880 at least 14 shingle and lath mills were built in the Rideau corridor, of which one was in Ottawa, and another in New Edinburgh.[156] Most of the early shingle and lath mills were part of a larger sawmill complex like that of Thomas McKay at New Edinburgh, which also included a stave factory and a blacksmith shop.[157]

Shingles, of course, were made from cedar, which (naturally) meant that shingle mills would have to be located close

to existing stands of cedar forest. By chance, Smiths Falls, Burritt's Rapids and Merrickville all happened to lie in the heart of a great cedar swamp area, with the result that all three places became major shingle manufacturing centres, as well as suppliers of railway ties and telegraph poles.[158] (By contrast, the region of the Rideau Lakes was better known for sawn lumber.)[159] Shingles and ties could, of course, be easily exported by canal barges.

Not a great deal is known of the Rideau shingle mills, but again, it would appear that the first one in the corridor was built on the island at Merrickville.

Early Island Buildings at Merrickville

Before proceeding with the first island shingle mill, it is essential to make a few observations about the island itself in the early days, and about the first buildings known to have been built on it.

It is very difficult, after the passage of nearly two hundred years, to imagine what the "island" at Merrickville must have looked like in the 18th and 19th centuries. Not only have vast quantities of fill been dumped at the west end (a process still continuing today, as the Department of Highways is currently rebuilding two of the road bridges), but also, the island's shorelines have been continuously changed, both by nature and by the hand of man. No two maps of the island in the 19th century give it the same shape, and

indeed some of them suggest that originally there was no island at all.[160]

For example, if we begin with Colonel By's map of 1827 we find instead of an island, a broad expanse of river below the dam, littered with boulders and labelled "Very rapid and shallow."[161] Then again if we refer to John Burrows' sketch of Merricks Mills around the same time we find not only an island, but also a building marked on it; on the north shore, close but not adjacent to the dam.[162] (The building is indicated by a rectangle smaller than the north shore sawmill and gristmill, but larger than the north shore carding mill.)[163] One is inclined to suspect that it was the dam that "stabilized" the island at its upper end along with quantities of rock added at various times as breakwaters[164] although this does not explain why a site that looked like an island to Burrows seemed only a shallow rapids to Colonel By.

Subsequent evidence is difficult to interpret. The wash drawing by William Clegg (supposedly around 1832) shows a low-lying island between the snye channel and the main channel of the river but no buildings are indicated on it.[165] A survey map apparently sketched by Captain Daniel Bolton around 1832 marks an island with a single five-sided building on the north side; the building is adjacent to the mill dam without touching it with the north-east and north-west walls forming an angle projecting towards the river.[166] Captain Bolton's sketch map of 18 April 1835 shows a cluster of three buildings on the

island: one of these stands at the site of the existing grist-mill building (beside the hydro station and directly fronting the highway), the second is immediately to the east right at the water's edge and partly at the site of the existing woollen mill building, while the third, a little to the southeast faces the snye channel partly where a woollen storehouse was later built.[167] (See Figure 2.) Finally a look at a water colour painting by John Burrows (which looks like a copy of Clegg's earlier picture and is tentatively dated 1844 or soon afterwards) again shows no buildings on the island.[168]

Can any of these early buildings be identified? Presumably they were all built by the Merricks, but for what purposes? No definite evidence of any island mills prior to about 1839 has yet been found. An island storehouse (q.v.) is known from the 1840s on the same site as the second of Captain Bolton's buildings[169] while the first could conceivably be identical with the first island gristmill (q.v.). The third snye building was probably another storehouse.

In 1844, in accordance with William Merrick, Sr.'s will the island at Merrickville passed to William Merrick, Jr. (q,v) and his brother Stephen.[170] Shortly afterwards it was surveyed into lots with a road allowance running east-west at right angles to the street. From this period it seems we must date the first shingle mill at Merrickville.

Merrickville: Island Shingle Mill No, 1 (1850-1861?)

The first shingle mill at Merrickville — and perhaps on the entire Rideau — was apparently built in 1849-50[171] and though its existence is fairly well attested most of its operations are unknown; indeed its very site is uncertain though it must have been on the island.

None of the records listing William Merrick, Sr.'s holdings in 1844 mention a shingle mill. The first reference to it occurs in the F. P. Smith Papers on Leeds and Grenville dated 28 February 1850 which mention that "There is a shingle factory ready to begin working" at Merrickville.[172] The census of 1851-52 for Wolford lists one shingle factory owned by Messrs, E. Burritt and Merick [sic] "Containing four Machines driven by water power."[73] The mill we are told cost £250 to build, employed 11 men and could produce 2,400 (?) shingles per year valued at $900.[74] The Canada Directory of 1851 gives us one more detail: William R. Mirick was the owner of a shingle mill[175] (W. H. Smith's description of the village in 1851 even lists two shingle mills)[176]

A few inferences can be drawn from the above. First, "E. Burritt" must be identical with Edmund Burritt who was one of the sons of Colonel Stephen Burritt of Burritt's Rapids and who is listed as a shingle manufacturer in Wolford in the census of 1851-52.[177] The Burritt family had much in common with the Merricks in that both were originally aristocratic Welsh and

both had lived in New England before the Revolutionary War.[178] Each, of course, had pioneered on the Rideau since the 1790s and each had founded a mill village. Reputedly the Burritts and Merricks had always been on friendly terms and indeed Aaron Merrick married Mary Ferine Burritt, a sister of Edmund.[179] Thus it is not surprising that Edmund Burritt should have become a business partner with his brothers-in-law even if only for a short time.

The other co-founder of the shingle mill was apparently William Roach Merrick, a son of William Merrick, Jr. and grandson of the founder of Merrickville although it may also have been William Merrick, Jr. himself who had inherited the island in 1844 along with Stephen.[180] Mill advertisements from the mid-1850s mention only the name "William Mirick" which sounds like the father[181] yet the Canada Directory of 1851 gives the name "William R. Mirick, shingle mill [owner]."[182] William R. Merrick is also listed amongst the mill owners of Merrickville in 1857[183] (whereas his father is not) and it may also be noted that Edmund Burritt and William Roach Merrick were both about the same age, each having been born around 1827.[184] On this basis it seems likely that William Roach Merrick with or without his father was the founder of the shingle mill along with Edmund Burritt.

The site of the shingle mill is problematic. It must have been on the island which was part of William Merrick, Jr.'s holdings, but where? One possibility is that it shared the island gristmill building (q.v.), part of which still stands

directly facing the road and adjacent to the dam. The gristmill was, of course, another Merrick enterprise built around 1839 and in 1856 we find advertisements for William Mirick's shingle factory, flouring mills and machine shop[185] all lumped together in what sounds like a very extensive manufacturing complex. Another possibility is that the shingle mill occupied an entirely separate building on the south side of the island facing the snye channel where Hiram Easton (q.v.) was later to erect his mills: one of Easton's mills as we shall see was a shingle mill and it seems to have occupied the south side of the island near the snye bridge.[186] Easton's mill could have been built on the same site as the Merrick shingle mill.

There are further references to the shingle mill during the 1850s and by inference it was very busy and probably furnished shingles for a wide area. On 25 July 1856 the following announcement first appeared in the Mirickville Chronicle:

WILLIAM MIRICK
FLOORING MILLS,
Shingle Factory & Machine shop
MIRICKVILLE, C. W.

Cash paid for Wheat.

Shingles, Flour and Pork Barrel
Staves, &c., constantly on hand.[187]

On 28 November 1856 we also find William Mirick advertising for "two good, steady COOPERS"[188] a further hint as to the scope

of his operations. Edmund Burritt's name does not appear in any of these ads evidently because he had long since dissolved his partnership with Merrick.

On 6 August 1858 we find a change in the format of William Merrick's newspaper advertisements: he now mentions only his shingle factory and machine shop, though he repeats the line about having flour et al. constantly on hand.[189] A clue as to what was happening turns up in the land patent books at Prescott which note that on 15 February 1858, William Merrick and his wife sold all their island property to Hiram Easton, along with a road allowance and the water rights.[190] A petition, dated 23 November 1858 and signed by all the mill owners, lists the name of Hiram Easton in place of that of William Merrick.[191] With the arrival of the Eastons, a new set of industrial developments was soon underway at Merrickville.

Very little more is heard of the island shingle mill. A gazetteer dated 1860 lists a shingle manufacturer named Marinus G. Easton (one of the sons of Hiram) as having an office, or the like, on St. Lawrence Street[192] in Merrickville, and in 1863 Hiram Easton speaks of himself as a shingle manufacturer,[193] but otherwise no references to a shingle mill have been found for the 1860s. The later picture is different: a shingle mill under Hiram Easton's ownership is described in 1871[194] and succeeding years, but the records of the late 1860s are silent. This may be nothing more than a coincidence, but another may be noted: in 1861 Hiram Easton built a woollen mill (q,v.) on the island at Merrickville,[195] but this operation does not seem to have been

very successful, and after the 1860s it fades from the record. In contrast, we find the Eastons engaged again in shingle milling by 1871.[196] Perhaps it may be conjectured that Hiram Easton, after running the old shingle mill for a few years, decided to tear it down in 1860 and build a stone woollen mill on, or near its site; then, after this venture failed, he abandoned it and converted the woollen mill (at least in part) into another shingle mill. Alternately, he may have erected a new shingle mill along with the woollen mill. In either event, we may also surmise that the old Merrick shingle mill was simply a frame building (on stone foundations?), pulled down by the Eastons who preferred to build their factories out of stone.

Merrickville: Island Shingle Mill NO. 2 (1867-1899)

If the Easton family shingle mill from the 1870s was a new operation and not just a continuation of the earlier one we may tentatively place it in the small, double-sectioned stone building that once stood behind and adjoining the island oatmeal mill (q.v.); a conjecture strengthened by the fact that the shingle mill shared a water flume with the oatmeal mill.[197]

The first clear reference to a new(?) shingle factory comes from the census report of 1871. The mill owned by Hiram Easton was water powered and represented a fixed capital investment of $4,000 and employed another $2,500 in floating capital.[198] It employed (on the average) three men and five boys 12 months of the year for total wages of $1,200 and used about 2,000(?)

shingle boards, valued at $2,500, to produce 14,000 shingles per season, valued at about $6,000.[199] Though these are merely approximations, they do not tally very closely with those given for the Merrick shingle mill in 1851.[200]

Unfortunately, little more is known of the Easton shingle mill. It is said to have had a water wheel, supplied by a flume from the mill dam.[201] The Bradstreet Report of 1873 mentions that W. H. Easton was running a shingle factory in Merrickville;[202] this must have been William Henry Easton, a younger son of Hiram. McAlpine's directory of 1875 also alludes to "shingle mills" in Merrickville,[203] as does the Woodburn directory of 1876.[204] In 1881 the village council agreed to reduce the assessment on Hiram Easton's shingle mill from $1,400 to $1,000 for the current year[205] and in 1882 Captain Simon T. Easton another son of Hiram -- was listed as the tenant of the old Easton shingle mill.[206] A deed, dated 15 January 1884, also mentions the shingle mill, as well as the neighboring oatmeal mill, which appear to have been sold to Roderick Myles Easton at that time.[207]

Very dimly, a few of the Easton operations can be perceived. The shingle mill was just one component in an industrial complex which also included a flour mill, oatmeal mill and woollen factory. Hiram Easton also built a steam screw tug, named after himself, to tow scows of shingles, lumber and flour down to Ottawa, where he had a warehouse beside the canal basin.[208] By 1869 his sons Roderick Myles and William Henry were engaged in the forwarding business to Ottawa, though the partnership was dissolved on 23 December of that year.[209] It would appear that the sons were

less astute in business than their father, or simply less fortunate, since William Henry Easton went bankrupt in July of 1869,[210] and the same fate befell Roderick Easton in 1871.[211] The firm of W. H. Easton and Company, Forwarders and Commission Merchants, seems to have carried on notwithstanding, and is said to have been engaged in shipping as far as Montreal and Kingston at one time.[212] The Eastons, hence, were the only entrepreneurs known to have done their own forwarding from Merrickville by way of the Rideau Canal.

Other glimpses may be found in the lockmaster's letterbook. In December of 1860, Easton requested to lease the land between the canal embankments and the snye, for the storage of wood for his factory (and other purposes): he offered to pay an annual rent of £3 to the authorities, provide any necessary fencing and (if need be) vacate the premises anytime on a month's notice.[213] The lockmaster, in passing the request on to Superintendent Slater, comments that "Mr. Easton has caused great improvements at this place since he arrived, induces me to recommend him for any indulgence that the Royal Ordnance and Civil Engineers Departments can confer to him."[214] The superintendent, in reply stated that Mr. Easton could not have a lease of the said lands (apparently because the Merricks' old claim on them had still not been settled), but he did grant permission, in principle, to pile wood on the property, providing that this did not inconvenience the lock staffs.[215] In 1863 Hiram Easton also made arrangements to build a storehouse on Ordnance lands, for his lumber, shingles and flour.[216] (See Canal Storehouses.)

Easton's expanding industrial operations on the island also brought him into conflict with some of the other mill owners, notably Terence Merrick and his partner, Dr. Christopher Leggo and also with William Millar,[217] who once ran a foundry (q.v.) on the island. The feud, which may have started as early as 1869 evidently dragged on for years, as a suit and countersuit were filed in the Court of Chancery; eventually Henry Merrick (q.v.) inherited the dispute which was settled only in May of 1884.[218] It would appear that Hiram Easton objected to the amounts of water being drained off by the north shore mill owners.[219] Furthermore the Merricks may have contemplated building new flumes on their lands, at a lower level than Easton's:[220] evidently Easton had built or inherited a flume of his own to service his factories on the southern half of the island. It is also possible that the Merricks rebuilt the mill dam during this interval (perhaps in 1878?); in any event, they apparently backed up the water so much that sometimes part of the water wheel in the shingle mill was submerged,[221] to the detriment of its owner. Easton demanded that the entire dam be removed; the Merricks refused.[222] The result was a lengthy, tedious litigation, demanding endless technical information and expensive testimonies from expert witnesses, called by the two sides, until both parties nearly went bankrupt.[223] Finally, on 2 May 1884, a compromise was reached.[224] Merrick agreed not to raise the stop-log level of Easton's shingle mill water wheel. Easton dropped his demand that the dam be removed.[225] Easton was granted one-quarter of the total waterpower from the mill pond; he could also remove the stop-logs if

he chose.[226] Merrick was permitted to build a new flume on his own lands, but not at a lower level than Easton's. Merrick also promised to notify Easton in advance in the event of any plans to raise the water levels. Finally, the respective suits and claims for damages were to be withdrawn.[227] (This did not prove the last time that water rights became a bone of contention amongst the mill owners, as was to be shown again in 1894.)[228]

For the rest, the remaining history of the island shingle mill is almost a blank. It appears that the mill was officially sold to Roderick Myles Easton on 5 January 1884,[229] and by 1900 the site went to George Byron Magee, to whom Roderick Easton and his father had contracted a mortgage on part of their property.[230] Probably the old shingle mill had already been forced to shut down by then as the local stands of cedar ran out. In any event, fire seems to have swept the oatmeal mill (q.v.) sometime in 1899,[231] and very likely it claimed the shingle mill as well. The last reference to it seems to be a brief commentary in the Merrickville Star, dated 20 March 1902, which states tersely that "Mr. C. Emmonsis engaged taking down the ruins of the old mill, better known as the Easton shingle mill."[232]

Merrickville: Ashery (fl. 1846-1852)

With the lumber trade burgeoning on the Rideau around the middle of the last century, it is not surprising that various related industries also appeared at the same time. One that may be mentioned briefly in passing was the selling of potash

Potash and pearlash manufacturing started off as a byproduct of land clearing by the early settlers, who could thus make a little money while getting rid of the timber cluttering their new farms. The first reference to potash and pearlash factories is found in the census of 1842, and one historian has found evidence of eight asheries in the Rideau corridor plus four more at Kingston.[233] A table in the records of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, dated 1883, indicates that exports of potash declined from 22,168 barrels in 1868 to 7,801 barrels in 1883, while the price per barrel remained essentially unchanged at about $30.00.[234] During the 1880s large new potash deposits were discovered in Germany, and the nature of the world industry changed.[235]

Merrickville possessed one ashery around mid-century according to the census of 1851-52. It was set up at a cost 236 of £50, and could produce 20 barrels a year. Presumably it had vats or large barrels for leaching the potash to purify it somewhat. The owner of this enterprise and the site where it stood are unknown, but apparently it was somewhere above the locks. In 1846 Lockmaster Johnston noted the departure of 14 barrels of potash from Merrickville to Bytown by canal in September and October of that year.[237] As yet no further information on this early enterprise has been discovered.

Merrickville: Cooperage Shops

Cooperage and stave-making shops first came into focus in the Rideau corridor during the 1850s, sixties and seventies as another by-product of the wood processing industry, and partly in response to the growing demand for potash, pork, and flour barrels. The census of 1861 lists only two cooper shops in Leeds County, plus a stave factory in Grenville.[238] From 1860 to 1873 there were at least 16 coopers in business at 11 different locations in the corridor,[239] though the lists may not be complete.

In Merrickville there is more evidence of coopers than of coopers' shops. Neither are mentioned in the business directory of 1861-62.[240] In 1865 we find one cooper, James Eagly by name, engaged in making barrels, tubs, churns and the like.[241] The census of 1871 lists five coopers, of whom three were sons of Elijah Cummings, who had a shop in Merrickville.[242] That Cummings' operations were on a small scale is suggested by the fact that his shop represented an investment of $50.00 (with another $50.00 floating), that a year's output was valued at $450.00, and that he had only a single employee to help him.[243] Another shop currently run by Albert Cummings, one of Elijah's sons, likewise employed just one man, to produce about $500.00 in barrels per year.[244] Albert's shop represented a fixed investment of $100.00, with another $200.00 floating.[245] Both men are also listed in Woodburn's directory of 1876,[246] but

there are no coopers mentioned in the directories of 1895 and afterwards. Apparently the trade had migrated to the cities by then.

There were, however, other stave and barrel manufacturers at Merrickville or vicinity perhaps as early as the 1840s. A number are listed in Wolford in 1851-52 including Elijah Cummins[sic] and two of his apparent kin.[247] A fourth was Robert Tripp who by 25 July 1856 was advertising a shop on St. Lawrence Street for making flour barrels, pork barrels and butter firkins.[248] During the same period William Merrick made an attempt to run a cooper's shop on the island.

Merrickville: Island Cooper Shop
(1847-185?)

William Merrick's cooper shop on the island has already been alluded to in connection with the island shingle mill (q.v.).Very little is known of the cooper shop. It is marked on the Ordnance map of about 1847[249] (see Figure 4), but there is no record of a cooper's shop amongst the holdings of William Merrick, Sr. at the time of his death in 1844 from which we may deduce that the island cooper's shop was built sometime between 1845 and 1847 either by William Merrick, Jr. or his son, William Roach Merrick.

On the map the cooper's shop appears on the west side of the road near the head of the snye bridge with its south wall directly at the water's edge (though the snye channel is marked

"Dry in Summer"). The shop is the only building shown on the small triangle of land west of the road, which is protected along all of its shores by stone embankments.[250] (One is reminded at once of Hiram Easton's dyke work of 1860, which may be an indication that not all the features marked on the map dated back as far as 1848.) As for the shop itself, all we can say is that it was a small rectangular building, approached by road at the east end. Its position at the snye entrance may be an indication that it had water powered machinery, though there was little need for that in assembling barrels unless the shop also manufactured staves. It is also possible, of course, that the cooper's shop was later used to house the aforementioned first island shingle mill, which (as we saw) was opened for business in 1850: the shingle mill does not appear on the Ordnance map.

Scarcely anything more can be added. We have noted William Merrick's advertisement in the Chronicle, starting on 28 November 1856, for "two good, steady COOPERS, immediately";[251] he evidently had trouble finding any, since the announcement continued to run until October of 1857.[252] It is also note worthy that Merrick never advertised his cooperage as he did his shingle and flour mills, and machine shop, though he does mention that he has pork barrel staves on hand. The cooper's shop disappears from the record after this point, although Walling's map of Merrickville indicates that there was still a building owned by Hiram Easton at the site of the cooper's shop around 1860.[253]

About 1914 when the present hydro dam was under construction the setting of the old cooper's shop was dynamited away and now lies submerged beneath the waters of the mill pond.

Merrickville: North Shore Stave Factory (fl. 1861)

Tied in closely with the cooperages was the above short-lived enterprise about which little is known beyond its dissolutionment.

The stave factory was established somewhere in North Merrickville prior to 1861 by two individuals by the names of Mirick and Tripp.[254] Since Aaron and Terence Hamilton Merrick then owned most of North Merrickville it may be surmised that one of them was the "Mirick" of the partnership. Tripp was probably the aforementioned Robert Tripp who is listed in the census of 1851-52 as a cooper in Wolford: he was then 34, married and had a daughter.[255] By 25 July 1856 – as previously noted – Robert Tripp was advertising his own cooper's shop on St. Lawrence Street in downtown Merrickville.[256] Presumably he made a partnership with one of the Merricks soon afterwards with Tripp no doubt running the plant and Merrick supplying most of the capital and perhaps the site. The Walling map of 1860 or thereabouts shows no stave factory but it does mark two buildings on Lot 20 Willian Street (on the north side) as belonging to an R. Tripp.[257] Very likely the factory was located there.

The stave factory had some machinery, powered by a steam engine,[258] and was one of the first industrial enterprises in Merrickville not to be dependent on water power. Whether it simply manufactured staves, or whether it also assembled barrels and tubs, we do not know. In any event, the factory did not last long. Most of what is known about it is contained in the following announcement in the Mirickville Chronicle dated 8 November 1861:

> FOR SALE
>
> THE firm of Mirick & Tripp being about to enter on liquidation, offer for sale their SPLENDID ENGINE, of 20 horse power; the same being in excellent condition and good working order. Also, all the machinery, plant, and material on their premises, known as the North Mirickville Stave Factory. Full particulars can be learned on application to Mirick & Tripp. Mirickville.
>
> TERMS LIBERAL
>
> Mirickville, C. W., 6th Nov. 1861[259]

Little more can be added at present, but it is possible that the factory remained in business after 1861. The village council minutes of 20 June 1862, when discussing street repairs mention "the culvert on the hill near R. Riddel's Stave Factory"[260] – which sounds more characteristic of North Merrickville than across the river, where the ground is mostly

level. Robert Riddle is known to have run a cabinet shop on Brock Street from about 1851 to 1862 or later;[261] possibly he purchased the stave factory for a short time. One more fragmentary piece of evidence appears in the Directory of 1865 which lists two individuals named James and Thomas Ballantyne as stave manufacturers in the village.[262] They are not listed in the 1871 census and with that stave manufacturing fades from the scene at Merrickville.

Merrickville: Axe Factories (184?-186?)

Various tool manufacturing operations developed in the Rideau corridor around the mid-19th century and afterwards, but most were directly related to lumbering or agriculture.[263] Of these, the most prominent were axe factories. By 1863 Smiths Falls had an axe factory, and ten years later an axe-maker is listed at Perth.[264] The oldest such factory in the corridor, however, may have been built at Merrickville.

The first Merrickville axe factory appears to have been housed in a rather small stone building, built at the north eastern corner of the island. It is marked on the Ordnance map tentatively dated at 1860,[265] though in fact probably copied from an earlier map drawn about 1847. (See Figure 4.) At that time the island was owned by William and Stephen Merrick (who inherited it in 1844), and it seems likely that the axe factory was established between those two dates. The building was

rectangular and narrow, with the long axis running north-south. Close by, forming a cluster, were two much smaller wooden buildings; one of which stood south-west of the axe factory near the snye bank, while the other stood almost due south, at the south-east corner of the island. The two wooden buildings were very narrow, and must have served as storage sheds.[266]

The proprietor of the axe factory was a Canadian named William Porter Welton, who appears to have purchased land near Merrickville as early as July 1841;[267] he was then about 31 years of age. He is mentioned again in the census of 1851-52 along with his family: by this time he is already described as an axe-maker.[268] His factory was actually owned by Stephen Hedger Merrick, to whom Welton paid an annual rent of £7.10.0 – according to a statement made by Lockmaster Johnston in January of 1859.[269]

By 1856 W. P. Welton was well enough established to run the following advertisement in the Mirickville Chronicle:

William P. Welton
MANUFACTURER OF AXES AND
OTHER EDGE TOOLS,
MIRICKVILLE, C. W.[270]

(The ad was published continuously from 25 July 1856 to the following January, or later.)

The details of Welton's operations can only be guessed at. Judging from its position, the factory used no water power, and if it simply manufactured axe handles and imported the heads (which seems likely), water powered machinery was probably not needed. We may assume that Welton found a ready and extensive market for his axes, but no production figures for his factory have come to light.

Johnston's statement of 27 January 1859 confirms that the axe factory was still in business on the island at that date.[271] During the course of that year, however, something forced the factory to move. Perhaps there was a fire, or perhaps Welton had some sort of disagreement with Stephen Merrick. Whatever the reason, the factory had to shut down for a time in 1859. On 2 December 1859, however, Mr. Welton put another advertisement in the Chronicle:

AXES! AXES!
WELTON
ON HAND AGAIN!!

THE Subscriber would respectfully
inform his friends and the public
generally, that he has reopened his

AXE FACTORY,

> in the rear of the English Church, Mirickville, where he is prepared to execute all orders entrusted to him, in the same workman-like manner as heretofore. Call and See.
>
> W. P. WELTON. [272]
>
> Mirickville, Nov. 26, 1859

The above announcement apparently did not mean that Welton was using part of the church building, since the Walling map of about 1860 shows W. P. Welton occupying a lot on Main Street immediately east of the Anglican Church.[273] The map does not indicate an axe factory, but as late as 20 June 1862, the village council minutes mentioned street repairs to be effected "from the corner of Mr. Smith's Foundry (g.v.) toward Welton's Axe Factory."[274] (Around 1860 Henry D. Smith was operating a foundry at the corner of Elgin and Wellington Streets, about a block away from the Anglican Church.)[275]

Nothing more has been discovered about the axe factory or about William P. Welton who disappears from the records after 1861. He is not mentioned in the census of 1871 though his wife Sarah still owned the Main Street property at the time of her death in 1893.[276] Presumably her husband died or moved away in the 1860s and the axe factory died with him.

Merrickville: Island Snath Factory

(fl. 1871-1876)

Evidence exists of a number of small manufacturing shops in Merrickville that catered to the farming community during the mid-19th century; including a shop that made sifters and separators on Brock Street during the 1860s.[277] (See Carriage Works.) The only such operation to be designated as a factory, however, was the island snath works.

Very little is known of this enterprise. It was founded before 1871 by an Englishman named Frederick Dangerfield,[278] perhaps in partnership with one A. W. McCrea. The firm of Dangerfield & McCrea is first mentioned in the Merrickville Chronicle on 2 February 1869, but with no hint as to the nature of the business. The same, unluckily, applies to the following announcement from the Chronicle, dated 10 November 1869:

Dissolution of Partnership

> WE, the Undersigned, give notice that the late Firm of DAGERFIELD [sic] & McCREA was this day Dissolved, and in future the business will be carried on by A. W. McCREA, who is authorized to Collect all Debts owing to the said Firm, and will pay all lawful demands against the said Firm.
>
> FREDERICK DANGERFIELD,
>
> A. W. McCREA.
>
> Merrickville, Oct. 11, 1869.[279]

Nothing more has been learned of A. W. McCrea whose kin were very numerous around Merrickville. Frederick Dangerfield is a little better known. Apparently he and his brothers emigrated from England (bringing a little capital with them) and took up land as farmers in the area of Kemptville and Oxford Mills.[280] Fred evidently moved to Merrickville and after dissolving his brief partnership with McCrea lost little time re-establishing himself in business. The census of 1871 lists him as a manufacturer and also as the owner of a shop and warehouse.[281] The industrial section of this census further describes him as the owner of a snath factory.[282] We are told that the factory manufactured snaths (or scyth handles) to a number of 606 dozen per year valued at about $4,500 and that it used $800 worth of timber pieces, bolts (for attached the scyth heads) and about five tons of iron. The plant cost $1,000 (with another $3,000 in floating capital), operated 12 months of the year and employed five men, three women and four boys at wages of $3,000 per year. Its machinery was powered by water.[283]

Little more is known of the snath factory. The fact that F. Dangerfield is listed again in the Woodburn directory of 1876 as a manufacturer[284] is an indication that the business survived at least until that date. Miss Kathleen Pearson, one of Merrickville's oldest residents, knows a little more: she recalls a family tradition that the Dangerfield factory stood on the island near the Watchorn woollen mills (q.v.), a

tradition reinforced by the marriage of Miss Eva Dangerfield (a daughter of Frederick) with Samuel Pearson, a brother of William Pearson (q.v.) of the Magee and Pearson foundry works around 1880.[285]

The exact site of the snath factory is a problem and the land patent books do not help since they do not record leases. Presumably Dangerfield leased a site with mill power either from Henry Merrick or Hiram Easton, but whether the factory was just east of the Watchorn woollen mill or was housed in (or close to) one of Easton's factories we cannot say: conceivably it occupied part of Hiram Easton's (unused?) woollen mill.

The factory probably did not operate much past 1880 if at all. Frederick Dangerfield, then in his forties, left Merrickville for the west apparently to take up farming.[286] Just once around 1889 he returned to Ontario to revisit his relatives; his niece, Mrs. Lillian Somerville of Kemptville recalls that he seemed to enjoy flouting his apparent prosperity.[287] Sometime later he died in the west where his descendents are said to be living still.[288] Nothing more has been learned as yet about this entrepreneur or his snath factory in Merrickville.

Merrickville: Cabinet Shops

(fl. 1851-1876)

Cabinet shops and furniture factories the two terms seem to have been used more or less interchangeably developed in all

the major centres along the Rideau during the latter half of the 19th century only to decline during the twentieth.[289] In general they represent an intermediate stage in a maturing society; coming after the pioneer phase when people were getting fairly well-established and before the general migration of industry to the cities and larger towns. Cabinet works flourished on the whole when there was still enough suitable timber available locally for furniture and people were becoming affluent enough to furnish their expanding homes and discriminating enough to grow dissatisfied with the rustic, handmade items inherited from their parents.

Apparently the first official recognition of cabinet-ware factories comes from the census of 1861.[290] By 1873 there were at least nine cabinet-makers in the Rideau corridor (not counting Kingston and Ottawa); of which two were in Newboro, three were in Perth, one each in Kemptville and North Gower Village and two were in Merrickville.[291]

Merrickville is known to have had a number of resident cabinet-makers as early as 1851-52; the census for that year mentions two which might suggest a single shop since the younger man, Elisha Starkweather, an immigrant from the U.S.A. was then only 17 while the older man, Samuel Lankford [sic =Langford?], had no children of age to help him.[292] (Langford may have been a son of another Samuel Langford, a joiner and house builder who reputedly worked on canal construction for Colonel By and afterwards built several homes in Merrickville.)[293]

Also around 1851 a Robert Riddell, Riddel or Riddle bought lot on west Brock Street from Aaron Merrick and established a furniture shop there:[294] on 25 July 1856 the Mirickville Chronicle carried an advertisement for R. & J. Riddell, manufacturers of chairs and other cabinet-wares.[295]

During those years Robert Riddell apparently engaged a young man from North Gower, John Mills by name (q.v.) as an apprentice and taught him the cabinet-maker's trade.[296] Around 1860 Mills felt confident enough to buy out Riddell[297] who may have purchased the North Merrickville stave factory (q.v.) afterwards[298] for a short time. The Walling map of about 1860 indicates two cabinet shops both on Brock Street owned by J. Mills and S. Langford respectively.[299] It appears that Mills built a new home on Brock Street and used it partly as a store from which to sell furniture built on the back lawn and finished in the upstairs section. Two-to-three horses on a turntable provided the power.[300] (The building still stands and is now (1979) the spacious home of Miss Belle Mills.) In 1864 and 1865 John Mills was advertising bureaus, sofas, chairs and tables assuring his readers that his products were unequalled for style and quality and inviting them to come over and see for themselves.[301]

By 1871 Merrickville had four resident cabinet-makers of whom John Mills seems to have had the largest establishment; employing four men and producing $2,500 worth of furniture on the average every year.[302] (Langford is not mentioned in the

1871 list, and probably some of the others were working for Mills.) The Woodburn directory of 1876 lists two cabinetmakers, James Brownlee and John Mills,[303] both of whom appear on the 1871 list. By the 1890s, however, only John Mills was still in the furniture business, and by that time he had a factory operating on the island.

Merrickville: Island Furniture Factory and Planing Mill (1873-193?) (Start)

The island furniture factory (sometimes described as a planing mill)[304] was established by John Mills in 1873. It was a direct continuation of his shop on Brock Street, which he shut down as soon as his new plant was ready. (The Brock Street building was later used as a carriage house and stables.)[305]

Mills made his move as soon as he was able to make satisfactory arrangements with Henry Merrick (q.v.), from whom he purchased 60,000 square feet of land on the island, including part of the road allowance, for $2,500.[306] The island property included a large piece of land facing the north shore, due east of the Merrick woollen mill (q.v.). Included in the deal was the right to use the surplus water flow, left over from the grist- and woollen mills; this being the main reason why Mills decided to seek a site on the river.[308]

The purchase was finalized on 23 July 1873, and Mills lost no time in erecting a wooden factory[309] and transferring his operations there. A fair amount is known about the factory

but most of our information dates from after the turn of the century, and it is debatable how much data from later times can be applied to the 1870s. For example, by the 1890s the factory consisted of two distinct sections, each with two stories and a medium-pitched gabled roof (though one section is much larger than the other): the larger section was apparently built first, since originally a road allowance to the flume was left between the furniture factory and the woollen mill,[310] whereas later the two buildings abutted against each other. The factory kept manufacturing right up until the Depression of the 1930s,[311] but all that can be said definitely about the early period is that the plant made beds, dressers, tables, chairs, couches, washstands and unupholstered furniture, generally (excepting sofas).[312] As a rule, John Mills employed about three men or boys full-time, taking on extra hands whenever business picked up.[313] Suitable timber was usually cut locally by arrangement with the owners of the bushlands, hauled in by sleigh in the wintertimes and piled outside the factory to be cut up in the spring, and dried:[314] in the early years it may have been floated down the canal system. A small wooden drying kiln building was also built for drying the lumber, usually in the summertimes; a steam heat process that usually took about ten days.[315] The drying kiln with its wood-fuelled furnace was, of course, a major fire hazard and consequently it was built as far away from the factory as possible, at the extreme east end of the island,[316] close to the site of the former axe

factory (q.v.). Despite all precautions, fires sometimes did get out of control.[317]

In addition to the furniture factory, John Mills also opened a brick store at the corner of Brock and St. Lawrence Streets to distribute and sell his products.[318] As the years went by, he left the operation of the factory more and more to his son Abraham Lincoln Mills (g.v.) and began concentrating on a new venture, a funeral parlour.[319] Apparently there was little overlap between the two (the factory, for example, never made caskets), except that funeral accoutrements were stored in the downtown store.[320]

The furniture factory remained in the possession of John Mills until December of 1913.[321] The balance of its history is described in the next chapter.

Merrickville; Carriage Works

(fl. 1850-1895)

Carriage works were another industry closely affiliated with wood processing industries though they also required the assistance of specialists such as blacksmiths, wheelwrights and carriage trimmers.[322] Like the cabinet shops carriage works reflected a developing, maturer, better-established and more affluent society and like furniture works carriage shops became common in the latter half of the 19th century. In large centres such as Kingston and Ottawa carriage works were usually part of livery stable establishments which boarded

horses and made saddles and harnesses as well as assembling carriages.[323] Such enterprises declined, of course, with the advent of the automobile.

There were carriage works in the Rideau corridor by the 1850s. Five were in business at Morton by 1857,[324] and at least 41 shops and 45 manufacturers have been identified within the corridor between that date and 1893,[325] when (it seems) the only one left was in Westport. Kingston and Ottawa each had at least six carriage factories at one time, and needless to say there were others in most of the more prominent canal communities.[326] Merrickville was no exception.

One of the more prominent carriage- and wagon-makers in Merrickville was Obadiah Read, who was engaged as a wheelwright in town as early as 1848:[327] by 1860 he was building carriages as well[328] and was still in business in 1871[329] and 1876.[330] Another was Robert G. Eastman who started off at Easton's Corners in the 1850s,[331] soon moved to Merrickville and by 1871 was running a shop employing five men to make wagons, buggies, cutters, sleighs and the like to a value of $3,400 per year.[332] The Walling map of about 1860 indicates another carriage shop on west Brock Street owned by John Curry[333] and as late as 1895 one James Ryan was still building wagons at Merrickville.[334] For that matter two of the village's leading industrialists, William Henry Magee (q.v.) and Patrick Kyle (q.v.) both appear to have made their starts in business by making carriages.

One more shop calls for a brief commentary because of Patrick Kyle's involvement with it. By the 1860s, a resident of Dutch origin, James H. Lingenfelter by name, had gone into the carriage-making trade in Merrickville.[335] In February of 1869, along with one John Willis, Lingenfelter entered a partnership with William Lisson and Patrick Kyle, two blacksmiths who had been running a shop on Brock Street, with the idea of pooling their talents and building carriages. The new firm, which called itself Lingenfelter, Kyle & Company, set up a new shop on Drummond Street in South Merrickville, where they appear to have assembled carriages for several years:[336] Lingenfelter is listed as a carriage-maker in the census of 1871,[337] and again in 1876.[338] Kyle, too, was listed as a carriage trimmer in the Bradstreet Report of 1873.[339]

The main interest that the Lingenfelter shop poses for the purposes of this study was the part it played in promoting the career of Patrick Kyle, later to become one of Merrickville's leading men. It is not known how long Kyle remained in partner ship with Lingenfelter, but it may be remarked here that making carriage components remained one of Kyle's sideline ventures even as late as 1909,[340] when his malleable-iron works in North Merrickville (g.v.) was at its height. Discussion of Kyle's enterprises has been reserved for Chapter 3.

Gristmilling During the Canal Period

The later 19th century might be called the golden age of gristmilling in the Merrickville area but the record for the industry is rather complicated in that there is fairly clear evidence of two mills throughout the period; sometimes we find three or more firms or parties all apparently operating mills at the same time. To add to the confusion it is not always clear who was running which mill! The closest this study can come to resolving all the difficulties is to summarize the evidence at hand and to resort (when necessary) to the fascinating but risky device of conjecture in an effort to disentangle the problems involved. We begin with the first gristmill on the island.

Merrickville: Island Gristmill No. 1 (1839?-)

Compared with the north shore the island mill site at Merrickville was slow to be exploited: the Merrick family appears to have built two sawmills and three gristmills on the north shore before deciding to do anything with the island. Perhaps the low-lying "island" amid the rapids simply looked too vulnerable to floods and erosion to be considered for development; until the mill dam was built offering some protection and the north shore site simply became too crowded for comfort.

As explained in Chapter 1 there is no definite evidence of any mills on the island until after 1837 although various maps

show one or more buildings on it as early as 1827. Earlier it was noted that John Burrows in 1827[341] and Captain Daniel Bolton around 1832[342] each indicated a building on the island close to the site of the old gristmill shell that still stands next to the hydro building but the purpose of the original structure is unknown. Captain Bolton's map of 1835 also shows an "L"-shaped building about where the present gristmill building is now though the 1835 building is shown set back a short distance from the water's edge.[343]

Whatever the early building(s?) were used for it was apparently not milling. Only one sawmill is known from the 1820s and 1830s and only one gristmill (at any one time) and all of these were apparently on the north shore. One historian has noted a complaint by the inhabitants of Merrickville in June 1837 about the monopoly enjoyed by the village flour mill: it seems its owners were more interesting in flouring for outside markets than doing "custom" work for local people.[344] Sometime afterwards the first island gristmill was built.

The first reference to a second gristmill in Merrickville is found in the provincial assessment roll of 1839 which enumerates one sawmill and two gristmills amongst the holdings of William Merrick (Sr.).[345] This is reaffirmed by a report on the Rideau mill sites dated 30 October 1834 which states, "there are 2 grist mills and a carding one at work, belonging to Mr. William Merrick";[346] though this information was then outdated in that William Merrick, Sr. had died the year before.

The Ordnance map drawn apparently around 1837 gives us more tangible evidence in that it clearly shows an almost square stone building marked as a gristmill and standing exactly where the existing gristmill shell is today:[347] indeed it is probable that the two buildings are one and the same. (See Figure 4.) If the old stone island gristmill in fact dates back as far as 1839 it is easily the oldest still-surviving industrial building in Merrickville.

A certain amount is known about the island mill. It is mentioned by the Atlas of Leeds and Grenville in 1844,[348] and by an article in the Brockville Recorder on 28 February 1850,[349] and again by F. P. Smith the same year, who noted that the two gristmills at Merrickville had a combined run of seven stones.[350] Also, the census report of 1851-52 for Wolford lists a grist- and flouring mill with three run of stone, and operating on water power:[351] this must have been the island mill, since it was owned by William Mirick (Jr.), who inherited the property in 1844. The mill, we are told, employed three men and cost a very substantial £1,750.0.0.[352] In 1859 Lockmaster Johnston noted that the flour mill still with three run of stones produced 4,000 barrels of flour annually for market.[353] Pictorial evidence is lacking prior to 1885, but assuming there were no major structural changes before the fire of 1899, we may add that the mill was and is stone-built, about 53 feet in size[354] by 42, with a regular symmetrical design. It had four stories and a flume

flanking the north wall.[355] A more detailed description from the later period is found in Chapter 3.

The mill was owned and operated by William Merrick, Jr. (or possibly his son) until 1858[356] and it appears to have been the main component of a large industrial complex that also included a shingle factory, cooper's shop and machine shop (q.v.): elsewhere we have noted Merrick's advertisement in the local newspaper on 25 July 1856 announcing that he will pay cash for wheat and that he always has flour on hand.[357] On 12 September 1858 too the Chronicle carried the announcement that 5,000 bushels of wheat were wanted at William Mirick's Mills.[358] In addition in December 1847 William Merrick came to terms with his brother Stephen who afterwards proceeded to build a woollen mill (g.v.) against the east wall of the gristmill.[359]

There can be little doubt that the island mill ground grain primarily for export. A wharf and a stone storehouse for shipping flour are said to have been built by H. H. [sic = Terence H.?] Merrick before 1850 (probably on the north shore)[360] and in 1851 we are informed that lumberman John Egan's depots in the interior of Lanark County "were being supplied with flour from mills as far distant as Merrickville."[361] Undoubtedly a lot of flour was also being shipped out by canal to Bytown (Ottawa): this was almost certainly true during Hiram Easton's tenure of ownership of the mill.

On 15 February 1858, Hiram Easton (q.v.), then a newcomer at Merrickville, bought all of William Merrick, Jr.'s holdings on the island, including the gristmill, along with all the water power privileges connected with it.[362] He, or his sons appear to have retained it until 1894,[363] but, though Easton erected two or three fine buildings on the island, he does not seem to have made any serious alterations to the gristmill. In 1863, for example, Easton's gristmill is still described as having three run of stones,[364] and the same holds true for 1871: according to the census for that year, the mill still employed three men, for 12 months of the year, for the princely wages of $575. The plant is said to have cost $8,000 (which seems to accord with the 1851 figure, given in pounds), with a floating capital of $5,000.[365] We are told further that it used grains of all kinds (valued at $30,000) to produce about 855 tons of flour, cornmeal and provinder, all valued at about $31,750.[366] Since Easton had his own tug and scows, no doubt he (or his sons) included flour and feed in their regular forwarding trips to Ottawa. In 1873 the firm of Dunn and Bradstreet made note of Easton's flour- and gristmill, and gave the owner a reasonably good credit rating.[367]

There is abundant documentation reaffirming Hiram Easton's ownership of the mill during the period from 1859 to 1884 although in the latter year the premises was officially sold to Easton's son, Roderick:[368] the village council that year voted to raise the assessment on the "old gristmill" to $3,500.[369]

In 1877, however, the elder Eastern found it necessary to mortgage the gristmill, along with a shed and 2,968 square feet on the island, to William Henry Magee (q.v.) and William Pearson (q.v.),[370] owners of a foundry complex in North Merrickville: the reason for Easton's move is unknown, though it may have been connected with his lawsuit with the Merricks over water rights. (See Island Shingle Mill No. 2.) In March 1887, Roderick Easton took out another mortgage on the property to Magee and Pearson,[371] perhaps to cover payments on the first. A third mortgage for $977 on another half-acre followed in April 1889.[372] The whole affair came to a bitter conclusion in the Court of Chancery on 6 July 1893, when George Byron Magee, son of William Henry, having inherited the mortgages, sued for payment.[373] The Eastons were ordered to pay Magee $7,287.96 (of which Hiram's share was $4,766.82), or forfeit their holdings.[374] The Eastons did not pay by the due date, which led to another court hearing on 10 April 1894. This time they were ordered to pay $7,475.60 (to cover the additional costs) by 10 May 1894, or have the property confiscated.[375] They were unable to meet this demand, and soon the island gristmill had new owners — and entered a new phase in its history. (The record is continued in Chapter 3.)

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill No. 4 (fl. 1847-1855)

In Chapter 1 we noted evidence of three or perhaps even four -- gristmills on the north shore of the Rideau. In 1844 Aaron and Terence Hamilton Merrick inherited the old stone gristmill (No. 3, q.v.) from their father. Apparently sometime between this date and 1847 they completely dismantled the mill and rebuilt it at a new site as they did the old family sawmill.[376] The reason for this move — which must have been very expensive — is completely unknown. Perhaps a fire demolished both establishments. Perhaps a flood (maybe that of 1847?) had the same effects. Whatever the reason, the Ordnance map of about 1847 indicates quite clearly that the positions of the sawmill and the gristmill had been interchanged since 1835. Instead of the gristmill standing beside the road, and the sawmill lying to the east of it, we now find the sawmill beside the road, and the new gristmill (No. 4) occupying the site of the earlier sawmill.[377]

The new gristmill stood at the water's edge almost exactly where the Alloy Foundry Company's office stands today. (See Figure 4.) It was apparently a rectangular stone building close to but not abutting the sawmill and if the Ordnance map can be trusted its dimensions must have been very similar to those of the successor mill which later became the present Alloy Foundry office; that is about 66 feet by 40.[378] No. 4 gristmill also had what looks like a wood-covered flume feeding

into it at right angles from the north side: the flume (?) branched off again at a right angle from another east-west flume running from the road at the north end of the mill dam to an inlet from the river. (See Figure 4.) A wooden storage building adjoined the gristmill at the north-east corner also at the water's edge:[379] possibly this building was the former north shore carding mill (q.v.).

Unfortunately very little more can be said of this particular mill. It was apparently run by the Merrick brothers or by Aaron Merrick and Company: on 9 October 1848 the lockmaster collected £6.9.0 in fees from them for passing 500 quarters of wheat to Merrickville by canal (the wheat had been taken through 12 locks on its way to town, but from what direction is not stated; the Ottawa Valley seems most likely).[380] In 1850 the Merricks appear to have wintered a scow in one of the Merrickville locks,[381] and in April 1851 we find them despatching 216 barrels of oatmeal and 103 barrels of cornmeal downstream, through 23 lockages, to Bytown[382] – which suggests that their mill must have been both versatile and busy. In 1851 a miller named Dougall McLeod took up residence in North Merrickville, close to the mill,[383] and the following year the Merrick brothers seem to have transferred their attention to the sawmill (which had hitherto been under lease):[384] these two points may be an indication that McLeod took over the operation of the gristmill about that time. (After 1856 we find McLeod in active partnership with Terence Merrick.)[385]

Another glimpse of the gristmill is found in Smith's commentary of around 1851: he alludes to "two grist mills, having seven run of stones."[386] Since the island mill always seems to have had three presumably we can assign the remaining four to the north shore mill

The existence of the fourth mill was apparently brief. In September of 1855 according to the Carleton Place Herald the extensive mills of A. Merrick and Company were destroyed by fire.[387] The mill appears to have been rebuilt without delay and was back in business by 1856.[388]

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill
No. 5 (1856-1868?)

Though there are frequent references to gristmills at Merrickville after 1855 they are not easy to interpret because of their exceeding complexity. Starting in 1856 and continuing into the 1860s we sometimes but not always find evidence of three apparently separate flour mills in the village. One of these, of course, was William Merrick, Jr.'s island gristmill which later went to Hiram Easton. Yet in 1856, for example, we find separate advertisements in the Mirickville Chronicle for this mill as well as for two others; A. & T. Merrick's flour and sawmills and also the "Mirickville New Mills" operated by T. H. Mirick and D. McLeod.[389] This might not mean very much except that other records also suggest three or even more flouring mills or their proprietors. However, the evidence for a

multiplicity of mills is not consistent; the Walling map of (about) 1860, for instance, shows only one flouring mill on the north shore, with another on the island.[390] Any attempts to disentangle the web of data are hazardous, and must remain so until additional evidence is found.

We might begin by summarizing the record of A. & T. H. Merrick's gristmill. It was advertised as a flour mill in the Chronicle, starting on 25 July 1856, along with the sawmill but no particulars are given.[391] In 1859 Lockmaster Johnston in a report to the canal authorities, noted a flour mill, owned by A. and T. H. Merrick, with four run of stones, and capable of grinding 7,000 barrels of flour annually for (outside?) markets: the rent, he added, was £250, but there is no hint of who might have been paying it.[392] (Johnston also describes the Easton mill which had a smaller capacity but he says nothing of any third gristmill in the village, though he was asked to list them all.)[393] The Walling map of about 1860 marks a flouring mill, about the site of the Alloy Foundry office, and gives the names "A. & T. H. Merrick" in connection with it.[394] Again in November of 1863 the records of the Department of Railways and Canals mention A. & T. H. Merrick's gristmill, still with four run of stones.[395]

Another report, for the Ministry of Agriculture, dated 1864, tends to confuse the picture somewhat: it gives two sets of figures for flour mills, both of which are ascribed to A. and F. [sic = T.] Merrick.[396] One mill is said to process 35,000

bushels of wheat in a year, to produce 7,000 barrels of flour (the same figure given by Johnston in 1859); the other is said to take 40,000 bushels to make 8,000 barrels. Both are said to employ four men, and both were powered by water.[397] In 1866 Mitchell's Canada Directory mentions three flour and gristmills at Merrickville, owned (or at least operated) by H. Easton, A. and T. H. Mirick, and W. R. Mirick.[398] There is no further record of a mill owned by the Merrick brothers, or by William Roach Merrick; indeed, the Bradstreet Report of 1873 mentions only Hiram Easton's mill.[399] After this point the record becomes thin, though a business directory of 1884 gives us no fewer than four flour mill owners; Hiram Easton, R. M. Easton, B. and J. Cook, and Charles H. Tate.[400] Assuming that the Eastons had only the one mill, we are still left (by implication, at least!) with two other gristmills to account for during this period.

If we turn to the land ownership records, we find that in 1864 the Merricks largely gave up their stranglehold control of the north shore property. On 27 February 1864, Abel Russell Ward of Smiths Falls bought most of William Merrick's original north shore holdings for $4,500, including the sawmill (No. 3, q.v.), but this purchase does not seem to have included the Merrick brothers' gristmill.[401] A few months later, however, Aaron Merrick, for some reason, sold his portion of the property to George Towner, a local tanner, for $3,000 (10 May 1864).[402] Towner in turn promptly resold the property to Mary Perine

Merrick, Aaron's wife, for the same amount of money;[403] no doubt the entire set of transactions was solely for business reasons. Thus the gristmill seems to have remained in the Merrick family's hands. (There is, by the way, no record of any ownership by William Roach Merrick.)

Mary Ferine Merrick, with or without the help of tenants, retained and managed her north shore industrial properties until 1881, when she sold part of them to Patrick Kyle:[404] the remainder she kept until 1890.[405] With the exception of the statement of 1884 that Charles Tate and B. and J. Cook were both running flour mills at Merrickville in 1884,[406] we might conclude that the Merrick brothers' gristmill closed down permanently sometime between 1866 and 1871; it is not definitely mentioned as operating anytime in the 1870s.

We are now left with one very important question: where was the gristmill? To identify it with the mill at the site of the Alloy Foundry office merely begs the question of where the other north shore mill was (and it is hard to escape the conclusion that there were two of them}- If this mysterious mill was located on the property sold by Mary Merrick to Patrick Kyle in 1881, perhaps — just possibly — we may guess that it was, in fact, identical with the main building of Kyle's Malleable Iron Works (q.v.), the remains of which now constitute most of the Alloy Foundry Company's foundry building. There is, admittedly, not a trace of proof for this hypothesis. Yet the origins of Kyle's big four-storey stone building are obscure, and a study

of photographs from the 1890s show a striking resemblance between this building and the two stone gristmills built by the Merricks.[407] The iron works building was, of course, much larger, yet it was evidently built in two sections,[408] and one-half may well have been added at a later time. Since the first clear indication of two north shore Merrick mills is found in 1856, as noted above, we may tentatively ascribe the construction of the mill to that approximate date. We may also guess — from the lack of data — that this mill proved unnecessary and unprofitable, and that it was closed before 1871, Furthermore since the original Malleable Iron Works Company (q.v.) was established sometime around 1868,[409] possibly the flouring mill was converted into an iron foundry at about that time, which would explain why it is not mentioned as a gristmill after 1866. And finally, perhaps Patrick Kyle leased another of his buildings to tenants (such as B. & J. Cook) for gristing during the 1880s; he definitely did so in the nineties.[410] Almost all of the above is pure speculation but perhaps it will be conceded that it seems to solve a lot of problems without creating any new ones. Let us leave it the matter there.

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill

No. 6 (1856-1895)

If the location of the above mill is a matter of uncertainty there is at least no such problem with the "new" flour mill of 1856 which was quite evidently built on the ruins of the older mill at the modern site of the Alloy Foundry office;

the Walling map, for example, marks a flouring mill at the spot in 1860.[411] Though it is possible that some of the following data actually applies to the mill described above (No, 5), we shall offer the most coherent picture possible.

We have already alluded to the fire of September 1855 which seems to have destroyed the entire mill complex in North Merrickville.[412] While the Merrick brothers were refounding their flour mill (on Aaron's land, father east?), Terence Merrick seems to have taken charge of rebuilding the gristmill at the old site. On 25 July 1856, the Chronicle printed the following announcement:

MIRICK & MCLEQD,
MIRICKVILLE NEW MILLS,
MIRICKVTLLE, C. W,
Highest price, in cash, paid for Wheat,

T. H. MIRICK D. McLEOD[413].

Terence Merrick's partner in the above venture was evidently Dougall McLeod, a miller who had been residing in Merrickville at least since 1851[414] and who may perhaps have been running the mill that burned. (Both partners were active in helping establish the village's first common school in 1851,)[415] They continued to advertise their mill in the Chronicle at least until June of 1851[416] and thus Terence Merrick was put in the position of competing against his brothers William and Aaron and also against himself.

The Merrick and McLeod partnership fades from the records after 1859, though McLeod remained active in municipal affairs at least until 1861.[417] Meanwhile, on 27 February 1864 Terence H. Merrick, as stated earlier, decided to sell much of what is now North Merrickville to his brother-in-law, Abel Russell Ward; apparently including the gristmill.[418] It is interesting that Ward, who already had extensive mills of various kinds at Smiths Falls,[419] should have decided that Merrickville also had a lot of potential. Perhaps Ward — who was now on in years - was primarily interested in creating opportunities for his son Abel R. Ward, Jr.: the younger Ward took over the property on 10 December 1866 (after apparently paying $10,000 for it),[420] and as early as 1865 we find him listed as a flour- and gristmill owner in Merrickville, along with John Augustus Merrick,[421] apparently a son of Stephen Hedger Merrick.

The Ward and Merrick partnership was of short duration. John August Merrick soon decided that his true calling in life was to be a doctor, and on 26 November 1866 the milling partnership was dissolved.[422] Merrick went on to study in Montreal and New York City, and then to practise medicine at North Cower, and later Merrickville,[423] while Ward continued — briefly — with the gristmill and sawmill (q.v.)[424]

Before long, however, A. R. Ward became restless, and on 9 November 1868 he sold the mills to Messrs. Magee and Pearson, the iron founders:[425] Ward himself was becoming interested in malleable-iron, and soon took up a new venture in Merrickville.

Magee and Pearson in turn speedily sold the mills to Mrs. Mary Merrick, wife of Aaron, for $5,000, on 20 January 1869: the terms of the sale quite specifically mention "mills, houses, outhouses ... ways, water and water courses. Mill Stones, bolting machines, gearing and other Machinery."[426] Mrs. Merrick, as stated previously, was granted three-quarters of all the north shore water power, with custody of the bulkhead controlling the flow of water.[427] (For details, see North Shore Sawmill No. 3.)

Having secured the gristmill, Mrs Merrick began looking around for a tenant to lease it. The man she found was evidently James Urquhart, a young miller of Scottish ancestry who had previously resided at Alexandria.[428] Urquhart arrived in the fall of 1869, and published the following announcement in the Merrickville Chronicle on 10 November 1869:

NEW GRIST MILL,

MERRICKVILLE.

THE Subscriber having leased, for a term of years, the above Mill, will do his best to deserve a share of the public patronage, and asks a trial from the Farmers and others of the surrounding country.

JAMES URQUHART.

Merrickville, Nov, 2, 1869.[429]

That Urqunart's mill was identical with Mrs. Merrick's mill is suggested by the fact that it was known as the "new" gristmill; the same word used for the Merrick-McLeod mill in 1856 and again in 1881, when it was definitely applied to the present Alloy Foundry office site.[430] (It was certainly not the Easton mill, which is mentioned separately.)[431] On 19 January 1870 and following, Urquhart submitted another advertisement to the Chronicle:

NEW GRIST MILL,
MERRICKVILLE.

THE Subscriber is now prepared to Manufacture 50 or 100 bushel Grists into No, 1 Merchantable Flour for Store-keepers or others.

JAMES URQUHART.

Merrickville, Nov. 22, 1969.[432]

Some detailed information about the Urquhart mill is found in the industrial census of 1871.[433] It says that the mill cost $5,000 (somewhat less than the Easton mill), with a floating capital of $2,000. It employed two men the year round, at $800 a year, ran on water power, and used grains of all sorts (valued at about $8,210), to produce $8,877 worth of flour and provinder per year.[434]

Unfortunately, the record tells us very little more. long James Urquhart stayed in Merrickville is unknown:

he remained long enough to marry the sister of a local harnessmaker,[435] continued to visit Merrickville regularly until his death in 1902.[436] It may be that his gristmill venture was not very successful; rather ominously the Bradstreet Report of 1873 does not mention any mills in the village other than Easton's.[437] That the mill was still in use in the 1870s is implied though not proved by the agreement made between Mrs, Merrick and Magee and Pearson to share the cost of remodelling the water flumes serving both their establishments.[438] (See North Shore Sawmill No. 3.)

In 1881, however, Mrs, Merrick sold the eastern half of her property though the terms of sale make it clear that the "new grist mill" still remained in her possession.[439] By then she had moved to Kingston[440] and presumably her mill was leased to another tenant. A likely candidate for this period was Charles H. Tate of Andrewsville, a miller who was assessed for a house on the mill plot before 1880[441] and who in 1884 was assessed for the "new mill" itself (at $3,000).[442] (An individual by this name is said to have sold the Andrewsville mill in 1903[443] and leased a roller mill at Perth at the same time.)[444] Besides that we can say only that on 25 February 1890 Mrs. Merrick sold the balance of her property including the gristmill and sawmill to Patrick Kyle who thus rounded out his control of most of the north shore industrial area.[445] Less than six years later the gristmill was destroyed by fire (on 13 November 1895) while still in Kyle's possession.[446]

That part of the story along with the new mill built to replace it (North Shore Gristmill No. 7) is described in Chapter 3,

Merrickville: Island Oatmeal

(186 -1899?)

Merrickville also had an oatmeal mill during the above period. It was an Easton enterprise and (naturally) was located on the island, but though the building itself was very prominent and imposing little has been learned about it (as is true of most of the Easton works)

It is not known when Hiram Easton built the oatmeal mill. The lockmaster's letterbook for 1850-65 contains references to a new factory that Easton had under construction around 1860;[447] this appears to have been his woollen mill (q.v.) to which the oatmeal mill was appendaged.[448] It is entirely possible that the two mills were both built at the same time: the Walling map of 1860 which is not very accurate in its outlines shows a big building block on the island with a wing on its north side that might be construed as representing the oatmeal mill.[449] Pictorial evidence though meagre confirms that the two buildings were both five stories in height and similar in appearance.[450] Nonetheless there is simply no mention of the oatmeal mill prior to 1871 though it is probable that the building was completed well before that time.

The oatmeal mill stood on the east side of the highway and the south side of the lane running down to the lower portion of the island.[451] The site of the building, now largely filled in was until recently occupied by George Winner's gasoline pumps; the ruins are said to be still visible and no doubt excavations would reveal the bottom storey walls of the structure. The mill was built of stone, had five stories (four on the side facing the road)[452] and was almost square in shape; being approximately 48 feet by 42.[453] The windows were probably prominent and multi-paned and set out with neat symmetry. The roof was flat, at the same level as the woollen mill with a one-foot-high fire wall forming a rim at the top.[454] The Easton woollen mill (q.v.) adjoined the oatmeal mill on the south side (between the oatmeal mill and the snye) but projected about 13 feet closer to the roadway.[455] Behind the two mills was a much smaller stone building that once housed a foundry (q.v.),[456] and perhaps also the Easton shingle mill (q.v.)

The oatmeal mill is first mentioned in the industrial census of 1871.[457] It is described as using 7,000 (bushels?) of oats every season (worth $3,150) to produce 150,000 (pounds?) of oatmeal, valued at $3,640. It operated five months of the year employing two men who were paid $250 per season(!). The mill cost $5,000 to build, and required $200 more in floating capital. It ran, of course, on water power,[458] which was drawn from the gristmill flume by means of a penstock that seems to have run parallel to the roadway, on the east side (perhaps underground):

a sketch from the Blockhouse Museum at Merrickville also suggests a separate flume, running south from the mill pond behind the dam, parallel to the road, and then crossing it to the building.[459] This flume may have been added at a later date.

Not a great deal else is known about the oatmeal mill. Presumably it ground for outside markets, But this is merely conjecture. On 5 January 1884 it was formally sold (along with the shingle mill) to Roderick Myles Easton,[460] who had taken over the operation of the mill in 1882.[461] The oatmeal mill was not affected by the mortgage of the Easton gristmill (q.v.) to Messrs. Magee and Pearson in 1877, but as the Easton's financial difficulties worsened during the 1880s, a new mortgage was taken from Thomas and George Byron Magee on the oatmeal mill on 24 April 1889 for $977, at six per cent interest over nine years.[462] Though the Eastons lost the gristmill in 1894, they seem to have retained the oatmeal mill until after Roderick Easton's death in 1897, whereupon the property reverted to his father.[463] A short article in the Merrickville star (15 June 1899) speaks of the oatmeal mill as still operating at that date,[464] but the C. E. Goad map of 1900 marks only the outline of the building which had been gutted by fire in the interim along with the woollen mill.[465] The buildings were uninsured[466] and though their walls were partly razed in the spring of 1902[467] (apparently as a safety precaution) the ruins remained visible for many years as a sort of monument to the ambition and perseverance of Hiram Easton.

The Woollen Textile Industry During the Canal Period

Although the woollen textile industry made its beginnings in the pioneer period in the Rideau corridor it progressed no farther towards mechanization than the pioneer loom and spinning wheel supplemented by the occasional carding and fulling mill. Full-scale woollen factories using water power and combining all phases of manufacturing from shearing to the production of cloth in a continuous operation appeared for the first time around 1846 and afterwards spread rapidly.

Woollen mills and factories became very common in eastern Ontario including the Rideau corridor -- for a variety of reasons. For one thing mill sites abounded. Secondly much of the countryside including both the wrinkled granite ridges of the Canadian Shield and the level, poorly drained limestone plains of the St. Lawrence Lowlands possesses thin stoney soils that will not allow for profitable farming: much of the land in fact is suitable only for pasturage. As a result many of the farmers turned more and more to dairying, field crops and stock raising during the 19th century.[468] A third factor was the arrival of experienced Scottish weavers who settled in such counties as Carleton, Renfrew and Lanark.[469] All of these influences strongly favoured an extensive woollen textile industry manufacturing not merely for local demand but for outside markets as well.

The early woollen mills were usually built as extensions to other milling operations[470] partly because the best mill sites were already developed to some extent and partly because many of the entrepreneurs who built textile mills would already have been engaged in sawmilling or gristmilling: however they managed it they would be local men who had money to invest, in some cases they simply expanded or adapted a carding or fulling mill into a full-fledged woollen factory buying raw wool (preferably from Leicester, Cotswold or Lincoln sheep which gave the most suitable long combing fleeces)[471] from local farmers or more often bartering wool for cloth or flannel. The new factories were usually small and highly localized doing custom work for the immediate area.[472] By integrating all steps of manufacturing into one continuous streamlined operation the new mills if successful could produce woollens on a larger scale and at less cost than home manufacturers.[473] Oftentimes these mills created whole new villages or accelerated the growth of older ones. Before long the new factories could expand their operations and start producing for outside markets. Success stimulated competition and the number of new mills grew.[474]

The distribution of the mills changed radically with the advent of the railways. Suddenly mills and communities that gained the added advantage of rail services connecting them with distant market centres and fresh raw materials all year round were at a great advantage compared to places that had to continue to rely on wretched roads and the waterways. The

railways also speeded urbanization as people scenting opportunity migrated to the new rail towns - which meant that many communities bypassed by the railways lost population, concurrently many local mills had to shut down: sometimes their owners transferred to the new towns and cities.[475] As industrialism grew technology was refined and steam power allowed entrepreneurs to build their factories anywhere whether there was water power or not.[476]

By the 1870s other changes were in store. As society became more settled and refined and certain classes grew more wealthy the demand for fancier, more elaborate and more stylish dress became stronger. People were no longer satisfied with coarse woollens and called for fine tweeds, flannels and cashmeres: worse still they sometimes demanded silks and cottons![477] This led to the importation of finer and whiter grades of wool usually from Australia, Hew Zealand, South Africa and South America[478] and forced many mills to begin specializing along particular lines such as the manufacture of worsteds, tweeds, underwear, sweaters, hosiery, blankets and the like.[479] In order to remain competitive most mills had to expand operations and reinvest continually in more and more sophisticated machinery. In the midst of ever-increasing competition it is not surprising that many firms went bankrupt especially during the 1890s.[480]

woollen manufacturers had other headaches too. The industry was plagued by rapid price fluctuations in foreign wool over which Canadian firms had no control.[481] Changes in government tariff policies might have ruinous results.[482] Many Ontario entrepreneurs from the 1860s onwards found it necessary to incorporate their businesses to obtain additional funding.[483] In many cases too the new firms found it expedient to ally themselves with business interests in large metropolitan centres such as Montreal and Toronto: their new city partners helped to sell and distribute products (for a commission, of course!) and sometimes arranged loans and offered advice.[484] In some instances they went further and even claimed the right to regulate production (which meant restricting output) and often the local manufacturers were reduced to the role of factory managers, completely subordinated to the city interests.[485] In many cases the retailers took over the local firms directly or promoted amalgamations;[486] in this way such giants as the Canada Wool Company which controlled mills in over six Ontario towns was organized in 1900.[487] Against such a backdrop as this must we view the fortunes of the textile mills of Merrickville.

Merrickville: Island Carding Mill No. 1 (fl. 1848-1854)

Merrickville seems to have had one carding mill in existence past the pioneer period. We have already noted evidence of the

carding mill erected by William Merrick, Sr. on the north shore during the 1830s. By 1847, however judging from an Ordnance map that appears to show the mill buildings as they were about that date the north shore carding mill had disappeared:[488] the building itself may have been converted into a storage shed and used as an adjunct to the nearby gristmill.

There is evidence to show that the carding mill was moved across to the island and that it survived a number of years past the opening of the Merrick woollen mill (q.v.); from which we must presume that the Merrick brothers continued to find custom carding work profitable. The above-mentioned Ordnance map does not show any carding mills although a few sheds are marked on the island including a large one close to the snye bridge:[489] possibly one of the sheds housed the carding equipment, (See Figure 4.) Almost our only information about this mill comes from a brief commentary in the Carleton Place Herald dated 28 December 1854 which states succinctly, "Mr. Mirick's Carding Mill, Mirickville destroyed by fire but the factory was saved."[490] (This is a fairly clear indication that the island carding mill was housed in a separate building from the woollen mill.) The Prescott Telegraph, 10 January 1855 tells a little more in that it mentions a fire at Messrs. Mirick and Burritt's woollen mill, Mirickville, which destroyed a frame building used for "storing away and assorting wool."[491] It

seems probable that this was the same fire reported by the Herald a few weeks earlier.

There is only one further reference to a carding mill at Merrickville found in Copleston's County Directory of 1859: here we have listed a carding mill, a fulling mill and a woollen factory all owned by Stephen H. Mirick and Son.[492] Evidently custom orders were still profitable to the Merricks. It seems likely that the carding and fulling operations were both housed in the same building which may have been appendaged to the east end of the woollen mill (q.v.) where it could have shared the water flume: the Walling map of about 1860 seems to indicate such a wing.[493] Otherwise there is no further mention of a carding mill at Merrickville. No doubt its operations were gradually taken over by the woollen factory nearby.

Woollen Mills in the Rideau Corridor

Before proceeding with the next development, the Merrick woollen factory, let us pause briefly to observe the general growth of woollen mills in the Merrickville area.

The first water powered looms in Canada appear to have been established at Georgetown, Ontario in 1820[494] but factory mills as such began to develop only around mid-century. In 1846 James Rosamond decided to install spinning and weaving machinery at his carding mill at Carleton Place; operations started the following year.[495] in 1848 Thomas McKay opened a

cloth factory in New Edinburgh.[496] In 1854 a woollen mill was established at Almonte and by 1856 another was in business at Innisville.[497] None of the above buildings still stand. Smiths Falls had a woollen factory by 1850,[498] Burritt's Rapids had a "cloth mill" by 1863[499] and elsewhere woollen mills were built at Port Elmsley (by 1863) and Perth (by 1873).[500] Kingston and Ottawa also had factories by 1860.[501] Altogether there were at least eight woollen or cloth mills in the Rideau corridor by the 1870s. Once again, however, the first such mill seems to have been built at Merrickville.

Merrickville: Island Stone Storehouse
(fl. before 1848)

There is conclusive evidence that the Merrick woollen factory was built in 1848 on the north shore of the island abutting the east wall of the gristmill (No. 1, q.v.). However, the woollen mill was not the first structure to occupy that site. As we have noted earlier Captain Daniel Bolton's map of the Merrickville lock station (dated 18 April 1835) shows a small narrow building at the water's edge immediately to the east of a larger building beside the road about where the island gristmill (q.v.) now stands.[502] (See Figure 2.) The small building apparently stood where the woollen mill is today: probably it was a shed used for storage. The Ordnance map of the 1847 period also shows a storehouse on this site:[503] this building fronted on the north shore of the island right next to the gristmill but not attached to it. (See Figure 1.) This storehouse was built of stone and

its location may be an indication that the Merrick brothers were already loading milled flour onto scows for export from that point. (The north shore gristmill is also shown with an attendant storehouse likewise located at the water's edge.)[504] The island storehouse was much smaller than the gristmill and if the Ordnance map is a reliable indication it may have been about 45 feet by 30 by comparison with the gristmill. Nothing more can be said about the storehouse. It may have been identical to the 1835 building but it is just as likely that the original structure was built of wood. The stone storehouse must have been demolished in 1848 to make way for the new Merrick woollen mill.

Merrickville: Island Woollen Mill No. 1 (1848-)

The old Merrick woollen mill on the island now unfortunately deteriorated past the point of no return is one of the oldest buildings in Merrickville and deserves to be rated an Ontario landmark. Historically it is the oldest surviving woollen factory in apparently the whole of eastern Ontario if not the entire province: it was probably the first to be built on the Rideau and it comes within a few years of being the first such mill to appear anywhere in Ontario.[505] As a business enterprise it lasted longer than any other industry in Merrickville: over a hundred years with just a few brief interruptions. It

is also one of the best documented enterprises to have existed in the village.

The mill itself is not very remarkable except in a few respects. In general its history was essentially typical of moderately successful woollen factories elsewhere in eastern Ontario; at least until the turn of the century. The main interest that the mill poses is that it survived so long amid so many vicissitudes without either going bankrupt before the end of the century or becoming the nucleus of a very large corporation or being taken over by some giant conglomerate. Though the records are by no means complete and leave many questions unanswered we know enough to follow the fortunes of the factory in considerable detail.

The woollen mill was built by Stephen Hedger Merrick (q.v.), fourth son of William Merrick, Sr., who had inherited the island in 1844 along with his brother William.[506] Stephen took the first steps towards his new enterprise on 13 December 1847 by coming to terms with his brother; by which William waived his rights to five acres of land on the island except for a road allowance of 12 feet. William also agreed to allow a new stone building to be appendaged to the east wall of his gristmill (q.v.) and to guarantee Stephen a portion of the water power. It was also agreed that a common water flume would serve both the gristmill and the new woollen mill.[507] On 8 July 1848 the Prescott Telegraph carried a report that Stephen H. Mirick was about to build a new cloth factory to manufacture satinetts, doeskins,

tweeds and other cloth with the exception of broadcloth.[508] (How he managed to finance it is unknown though he seems to have done quite well selling lots for houses in South Merrickville.)

The factory was started in 1848 and one can still find the date stone over a door on the south side reading "S. Mirick 1848." It was built of coarsed limestone with a very regular and symmetrical design and from the start it had four-and-a-half stories[509] - which strongly suggests a gabled roof. Unless it was drastically altered after the fire of 1850 we can give its dimensions at about 109 feet by 46.[510] The earliest photographs (1894?) show a medium-pitched gabled roof with a gabled parapet and dormers as well as a bell tower for summoning employees to work.[511]

The woollen mill began operating in May of 1849. It was equipped with five looms and used 25,000 pounds of wool to produce 2,000 yards of cloth annually; according to a description in the Brockville Recorder dated 28 February 1850. (The same article claims that the building was 409 feet in length by 53 in width but the former dimension is undoubtedly a misprint since the entire island is less than 400 feet in length. Probably the figure was meant to be 109 feet.)[512] The above information could be interpreted to mean that Stephen Merrick's factory was the biggest one in Canada at the time: it had as yet few rivals and it may be noted that the Rosamond mill at Carleton Place started off in 1847 with only three narrow looms, one spindle jack and a bolting roll.[513]

Stephen Merrick's ambitious venture was not fated to enjoy continuous clear sailing. On 7 November 1850 the woollen mill was gutted by fire and all its new machinery destroyed. The loss was reckoned at about £2,000 and Stephen had only £600 insurance.[514] Undaunted he made plans to rebuild the factory at once but this time he took a partner into the business, Henry O. Burritt of Burritt's Rapids[515] who was probably a brother-in-law: no doubt Stephen's move was prompted by a need for additional funds.

The factory was re-opened for business in April of 1851,[516] The census of 1851-52 reports that the capital invested in the plant was £5,000 and that it was manufacturing about 125,000 yards of cloth per year: a vast increase over 1850. We are also told that the factory employed 45 people (quite unprecedented in Merrickville) and that it ran on water power.[517] The above production figure tallies quite well with W. H. Smith's observation (also in 1851) that the woollen factory was turning out from three to four hundred yards of cloth daily.[518] Always active Stephen Merrick also made plans to build a drying house and warehouse on the south side of the island facing the snye in July of 1851: the project, however, aroused the apprehensions of canal staffs who considered it an encroachment that could speed the erosion of Ordnance land.[519] Whether the scheme was actually carried out at the proposed site is not clear. (See *Woollen Storehouses*.)

By 1852 it would appear that Merrick and Burritt were not only exporting their wares by canal (which must have given them an immense if temporary advantage over other manufacturers), but also diversifying their products as well. An advertisement in the Prescott Telegraph dated 28 April 1852 lists a number of new items being turned out by the factory including jersey and flannels in addition to tweeds, satinetts and plain woollen cloth.[520] By the spring of 1854 according to the Brockville Recorder the mill featured improved machinery for carding, spinning, dyeing, weaving, fulling and dressing.[521] It may, however, have reduced production somewhat since 1851: the factory was now employing only 31 persons; 17 men and 14 young women.[522] It was still consuming 100,000 pounds of wool every year, and in 1859 Lockmaster Johnston reported to his superiors that the Merrick woollen mill was producing 93,000 yards of material annually for market: most of this, he added, was being sold to wholesale merchants throughout Canada East and Canada West.[523] The plant was also said to possess two sets of machinery.

Like all the early woollen manufacturers Stephen Merrick obtained most of his raw wool by bartering with the local farmers offering cloth in exchange. Also like the others he assured the farmers that he offered them a better deal than his rivals. Advertisements were carried in the newspapers of Brockville[524] and Prescott[525] and in the Merrickville Chronicle once that sheet appeared in 1856. A sample deserves to be quoted verbatim:

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Good News for the Farmers.

150,000 LBS. OF WOOL WANTED,

BY THE SUBSCRIBER,

For which the highest price will be paid in Cash or in exchange for Cloths.

THE Subscriber, desirous of making his establishment beneficial to the Farming community, as well as the Mercantile, offers to Farmers the following inducements to exchange their Wool for Cloths, that is to say He will give them, at his Factory, one yard of good Cloth, such as is generally made by Farmers themselves, for 1 1/4 lbs. of Wool and one shilling and three-pence in cash, which brings the price of the Cloths to the Farmers full 25 per cent lower than ever before offered in Canada, and from 50 to 75 per cent less than they can manufacture the Wool themselves. The Cloths he will warrant to give perfect satisfaction, and will at all times keep a good stock of all-wool Cloths, Satinetts, Tweeds, Flannels, &c., on hand expressly for exchanging. Persons, however, desirous of exchanging, will find it to their advantage to call early in the Spring, say during the months of May, June, and July. Farmers would do well to give the above a careful consideration before parting with their wool.

> The above inducements are superior to any of the kind ever before offered in Canada. "A word to the Wise is sufficient."
>
> S. H. MIRICK.
>
> Mirickville May, 1856.[526]

Without much doubt, Stephen Merrick engaged travelling salesmen to call on the farmers and dicker with them: perhaps his son George (q.v.), who became a partner in the business about 1859 took up this role for a time. A letter by Johnston, dated 5 March 1863, mentions consignments of wool being teamed to the "factory"; evidently that of "Messrs. Merrick."[527] in January of 1856, too, Stephen Merrick apparently found himself prosperous enough to buy out his partner, Henry Burritt; in any case, the partnership was dissolved at that time.[528]

Aside from the loss of the carding mill (q.v.) in 1854,[529] the business seems to have flourished in the fifties. During the sixties, however, a number of misfortunes occurred. On the morning of 8 May 1860, another fire broke out in the woollen mill, evidently on the top floor.[530] Luckily, the employees were on hand to fight the blaze, and many local citizens hurried to the scene to help. Only the roof of the builing was damaged to any great extent,[531] and the plant was back in operation by June.[532] The editor of the Chronicle was prompted to observe that the village of Merrickville (soon to be incorporated) had already suffered a number of disastrous

fires lately, that the factory fire could easily have been much worse, and that it was time that community had a proper fire engine and staff.[533] (We find the Merrickyille Star strenuously advocating the same thing in 1902.)[534]

A much worse blow seems to have befallen the mill around the early sixties. Stephen Merrick, who may have been in failing health, died sometime around 1861 while still in his fifties: the actual date of his death has eluded detection but the last known reference to "S. H. Mirick & Son" is in February 1862.[535] Stephen's passing seems to have caused some disruption in the business: his son George was assessed for the woollen factory that year,[536] but apparently the mill ended up in the hands of Terence H. Merrick and Dr. Christopher Leggo who had been appointed the executors of Stephen's will;[537] which perhaps explains why "A. & T. H. Merrick" are said to have had a woollen mill at Merrickville in November of 1863.[538] A report to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1864 also mentions a water powered woollen factory, owned(?) by A. & F. H. Merrick [sic], but closed at that time: normally it was said to employ 40 hands.[539] No doubt matters had not been improved any when Hiram Easton (q.v.) opened a woollen mill of his own in the early 1860s. (See Island Woollen Mill No. 2.)

The Merrick factory was much too valuable to remain idle, however, and on 4 March 1864 it was purchased from Stephen's estate by John Hunter Parnell (q.v.), an Irish-Canadian entrepreneur, for the princely sum of $13,780.[540] Parnell organized

his own company to carry on the business and succeeded in enlisting the help of George Merrick, who married Parnell's sister.[541] Mr. Parnell announced his plans in the Chronicle edition of 6 May 1864:

NOTICE.

THE Undersigned beggs to announce that he intends commencing the business of Manufacturing Cloths, ic., in all its branches (in those well known premises, the Mirickville Woollen Mills, now owned by him), and also the manufacturing of Shoddy, &c. , under the name and style of J. H. PARNELL & CO.

Having secured the services of MR. GEO. MIRICK, a gentleman well known to the Trade, I have entrusted the chief management to him. The public will find the same assiduity heretofore given to the business, and therefore invites customers of the late firm of S. H. MIRICK & SON.

Mr. Geo. Mirick is authorized to sign Checques, Notes, Bills, Bonds and all Obligations connected with my business, for me and in my name.

J. H. PARNELL.

Mirickville, April 27, 1864.[542]

Despite this promising start the woollen mill did not prosper in Parnell's possession. Probably Parnell knew little about the textile trade and perhaps George Mirick soon grew tired of running the plant for him. Perhaps the business wasn't properly run. Whatever the reason after just two years Parnell sold the plant on 10 February 1866 to Henry Merrick (q.v.)a younger son of Stephen, for a great deal less than he paid for it: a mere $5,000.[543]

Little is known about the factory's affairs for the next five years except that it was in Henry Merrick's possession.[544] The industrial census of 1871 contains a description of the mill and implies strongly that it was not only still operating but also making a profit. In that year the factory was employing 13 men, 15 women and two girls for 12 months of the year for wages of $6,000 to make 100,000 yards of flannel worth $39,000 from 100,000 (bales?) of wool valued at $30,000. The plant was also said to represent a fixed capital investment of $18,000 with another $8,000 in floating capital.[545]

By that time Henry Merrick who held a number of business enterprises had also become interested in politics and secured election to the provincial house as Member for North Leeds. He therefore sought tenants to lease his woollen mill for the duration of his term in Parliament[546] and in April 1871 he turned it over to the firm of Messrs, Donegan, Dontigney and Company.[547] It is interesting to note that Philip Dontigney,

one of the partners in the above concern, had been an employee with the Rosamond woollen mill in Almonte;[548] he was but one of many experienced "practical men" who later went into business for himself. (His partner, John Donegan, was probably a businessman from Smiths Falls who put up most of the money for the Merrickville venture.) By May of 1871 Donegan and Dontigney were in possession resolved to run the Merrickville mill to its utmost capacity.[549] On 17 May 1871 the following paid announcement appeared in the Merrickyille Chronicle:

100,000 POUNDS
OF
FLEECE WOOL WANTED!
We will keep constantly on hand a large assortment of
TWEEDS AND FLANNELS.
(Made Extra Stout), and will offer
GREAT INDUCEMENTS TO FARMERS
TO
Exchange Wool for Cloths,
And get clothing for their families 50 per cent less
than they themselves can manufacture.
All Cloths Warranted! Bring on your Wool!

We are prepared to do
FULLING, DYEING & CLOTH DRESSING
In a first-class style.
DONEGAN, DONTIGNEY & co.
Merrickville, May 10, 1871.[550]

Though the evidence is scanty, it would seem that this new venture was not very successful either. Within just a few months -- on 7 August 1871 -- Philip Dontigney withdrew from the partnership,[551] and later went on to open a new carding and woollen mill in Almonte.[552] A new syndicate was set up, consisting of John Donegan, Thomas E. Allcock and Robert France:[553] by 1873, only Allcock and France were still involved and the Bradstreet Report of the year gave them a very low credit rating.[554]

A turning point came in 1874. By that time the above lease had expired, and Henry Merrick had to find other tenants. On 3 December 1874, he came to terms with Thomas Watchorn and his son Robert William.[555]

Thomas Watchorn (q.v.), like Philip Dontigney, was a former employee of the Rosamond Woollen Company of Almonte.[556] Again, like Dontigney, he had decided to go into business for himself, and in 1866 he had formed a partnership with Gilbert Cannon (another former textile worker) and leased a mill at Almonte.[557] In 1869 Watchorn became the manager of the Boyd

Caldwell mill at Lanark,[558] and by 1873 he could look back upon 20 years of practical experience in the woollen textile business.[559] In 1874 he left Lanark to try a new venture in Merrickville.

The lease agreement worked out with Henry Merrick was quite specific in its terms. Watchorn was to have the woollen Bill, along with its machinery and the upper part of a frame storehouse (perhaps built by Stephen Merrick in 1851? See *Woollen Storehouses*); as well as the office furniture. The lease was to start on 1 December 1874 and run for five years at an annual rent of $800, to be paid at quarterly intervals.[560] Merrick agreed to pay the taxes and look after fences. Watchorn promised to maintain the plant and furnish continuous water power to a nearby building then apparently in use as a wrench factory (see Island Foundry), which shared a flume with the woollen mill: in short, the Watchorns agreed never to shut down the water flow to the other shop, except for repairs, and these were to be conducted speedily.[561] Watchorn also agreed to maintain the machinery and cloth the first breaker [sic] of the carding machines within six months of the expiry of the lease. He was to guard carefully against the risk of fire, and to permit no fire hazards or public nuisances: failure to do so cancellation of the lease.[562] Robert Watchorn as the actual signatory to the lease, though his father was on hand to witness it,[563] and no doubt was the guiding influence in the whole affair.

The coming of the Watchorns represented the beginnings of a family dynasty that would manage and run the Merrickville woollen mill for nearly 79 years, through three generations. Once established, father and son speedily incorporated themselves as "Watchorn and Company,"[564] and soon became a major influence in the village: in January of 1877 Thomas Watchorn became a council member.[565] Though times in general were depressed in the seventies, the Watchorns seem to have upheld and extended the business done by the factory, so much that they soon found they needed more space around the plant. As a result, a new lease was arranged with Henry Merrick. This time Merrick granted them the use of all the lands on the island east of the grist- and oatmeal mills (q.v.) except some property lying between the factory dye house (at the east end of the mill?) and the land owned by John Mills, which was reserved as a roadway to the flume. (See Island Furniture Factory.) With the lands went all the "houses, out houses, erections, buildings etc." thereon.[566] Watchorn was permitted to add another storey to the dye house, or to lengthen it. The lease was to run for nine years and eight months (i.e., to the end of 1886), starting 1 April 1877 and could be annulled on a month's notice if the government should decide to shut down the Rideau Canal and demolish the dam. Merrick promised not to compete with the Watchorns by doing any carding, spinning or other woollen manufacturing of his own. Watchorn reaffirmed his promise to keep the factory in good condition

(which granted him the right to make repairs) though he was not to be held liable in the event of fire or "destruction by the Queen's enemies"[567] (perhaps a reference to the Fenians?). The financial burdens were made much heavier: Watchorn was now required to pay $1,000 a year in rent for the first two years and eight months and $1,200 a year after that in quarterly instalments. He was also made liable for taxes and could not sublet the premises without written permission.[568] This agreement remained in effect almost until the expiry date.

Very little is known of the woollen mill over the next eight years. Thomas Watchorn died in December of 1879[569] and his son Robert carried on with the factory eventually with the assistance of his brothers. Perhaps all that matters is that they were evidently able to run the plant at a profit and to meet the rental fees required by the lease. Finally on 1 June 1885 a short time before the lease was due to expire Robert W. Watchorn and his brother Thomas Henry formally purchased the mill from Henry Merrick and his wife along with 31,310 square feet of property and the water rights for $8,000.[570] How the Watchorns made use of their property and expanded the business is described in Chapter 3.

Woollen Storehouses

Little can be said of the out buildings connected with the Merrick-Watchorn woollen mill, beyond what has already been mentioned above. References to storehouses and sheds appear intermittently, but not frequently enough to prove continuity from one building to another, and usually too vaguely to establish site locations. The most that can be done is to summarize the evidence at hand.

The first we hear of out buildings associated with the woollen factory is in a letter by John Johnston, dated 25 July 1851, when the lockmaster discovered Stephen Merrick and some of his employees starting to lay crib work in the snye channel below the public bridge.[571] Merrick explained that he was planning to build a drying house and warehouse at the site which Johnston observed to be about three feet in the rear of the irregular stone wing wall connected with the bridge: he also noted that the works were 44 feet across, and in line with the centre of the factory.[572] The crib work was to be extended out into deeper water which would in Johnston's viewpoint partly block the snye channel and speed erosion of Ordnance land on the opposite side during the spring runoffs; unless a stone retaining wall were to be built facing Merrick's works.[573] Johnston did not try to stop Merrick from proceeding, but he communicated his concern to the Ordnance Department;[574] the Commanding Royal Engineer agreed with him

and recommended that a warning be sent to Stephen Merrick that he would be held liable for any damages.[575] The sequel to the incident is not known, but it may be that Merrick decided to place his buildings somewhere else: the site described by Johnston is not known to have had any buildings on it, and in any case, it later formed part of the property sold to Hiram Easton in 1858. A large wool storehouse was built at the water's edge by 1895,[576] but this building was roughly 75 feet farther east and did not project far out into the water. (See Watchorn Storehouse.)

The next glimpses are found in the terms of Henry Harriett's lease of the woollen mill to the Watchorns in 1874. The agreement mentions a frame storehouse on the island, apparently facing north to the river, somewhere inland from the factory; specifically it states that the lease includes "also the north half of the Land now owned by me [= Merrick?] opposite [the factory?] and on the north side of the present frame Store House"[577] Unfortunately, the "present Store House" is now the past storehouse and, while the reference may have been perfectly clear at the time, it hardly remains so today, in the absence of maps and the passing of a century. The storehouse in question may have been one of W. P. Walton's former buildings (see Axe Factories) or perhaps it should be identified with a long narrow outline about 66 feet along by 28 side indicated on the Goad map of 1900: this outline may have been nothing more than a space for piling wood.[578] (See

Figure 5.) It is also possible that the above-mentioned storehouse stood somewhere near the extant island foundry building (q.v.) directly facing the south side of the woollen mill; in which case it would have been pulled down to make way for the foundry. The same lease also mentions a mill shed apparently south of the factory and flanking the roadway but the location of this building is no clearer than that of the storehouse.[579]

Somewhat more definitely known was a frame wool storehouse on the south side of the island facing the snye channel and the upper canal basin and directly opposite the Mills' furniture factory and planing mill (q.v.). This building was about 78 feet by 28[580] and could conceivably have been built by Stephen Merrick or Hiram Easton. There is, however, no proof of its existence before 1895[581] and consequently more detailed discussion is reserved for Chapter 3. (See Watchorn Storehouse.)

Merrickville: Island Woollen Mill No. 2 (1861-1899?)

If a fair amount is known of the Merrick-Watchorn woollen mill the same can hardly be said about the second woollen factory built on the island by Hiram Easton.

We have noted elsewhere that Easton bought a strip of land across the island next to the highway from William Merrick, Jr. on 15 February 1858 including the stone gristmill and certain water privileges.[582] By 27 December 1860 Lockmaster

Johnston was commenting on the "great improvements" engineered by Easton at Merrickville:[583] these evidently included a woollen factory, which was far enough advanced by then for Easton to consider trying to get a lease on some of the adjacent Ordnance property across the snye for storing wood and drying cloth. Having written the department and received no reply, Easton took up the matter with Johnston, explaining that he wished to erect tenter bars for drying cloths and offering to pay £3 rent which was comparable to the amounts paid by other lessees and to provide all the necessary fencings.[584] The lockmaster replied that the property could not be leased until the Merricks' land claims had been settled nor could any wood be embarked or unloaded there, since the lands were so close to the upper canal basin, but he promised to forward Easton's request in a favourable manner to Superintendent Slater.[585] A few days later. Slater replied by stating that the lands could not be leased at that time, but granting Easton permission to pile wood or dry cloths there provided that it did not cause any inconvenience for the lock staffs.[586] (The Ordnance map of about 1860 shows tenter frames on the south bank of the snye, opposite the upper basin and adjacent to the woollen factory; though the buildings shown are those of the 1847 period!)[587]

Easton meanwhile proceeded with his woollen mill; an impressive limestone building located alongside the highway on the east side) at the head of the snye bridge. Johnston

speaks of the "new factory" on 22 March 1861,[588] and on 23 August 1861 the Mirickville Chronicle (quoting the Brockville Monitor for local news!) observed that "On the opposite side of the Rideau [from the Jakes block building], Mr. Hiram Easton has put up a very large building for a woollen factory, and which will soon be in operation."[589] The factory had five stories (four from the direction of the highway) and an almost flat roof, probably covered with galvanized sheet steel. A photograph from around 1895 shows that it was a striking, handsome edifice with decorative quoins and chimneys in the east and west walls.[590] Five large, evenly-spaced windows were set out in symmetrical rows on each floor on the south side, while the west side had rows of three. On the roof was a rather odd little cupola, with what may have been a bell tower.[591] Appendaged to the north wall (though invisible in the picture) was the oatmeal mill (q.v.), which had a roof on the same plane and may have been built at the same time. At the rear of the two buildings was a small three-storey annex with a sloping roof[592] which we have tentatively identified as Easton's shingle mill (q.v,). The old island foundry building (q.v.) was, in turn, appendaged to the annex.[593]

Also visible in the photograph is a sloping retaining wall of loose stones along the bank, built by Easton in 1862 to protect his factory from being undermined by the spring run-offs through the snye.[594] The lockmaster considered these works an encroachment which might protect the factory, but

would surely speed erosion of the canal embankment near the basins and upper locks, but Easton managed to secure permission from Slater to proceed.[595] We do not know whether Johnston's fears were justified by the results or not.

Though Hiram Easton's woollen mill undoubtedly amounted to a large investment, scarcely anything is known about its operations. It is indicated in outline on the Walling map of about 1860, (which also marks Hiram Easton's name on the island)[596] and in November of 1863 it is listed, along with the Merrick mill in a government report on Rideau Canal mill sites,[597] but it is not mentioned in the Ministry of Agriculture's report of 1864,[598] nor in the industrial census of 1871,[599] nor in Bradstreet's report of 1873.[600] Thus, in contrast with the older mill, the Easton woollen factory seems to have remained in business only a very short time. The reasons for the failure can only be guessed at, though it may be recalled that the Merrick mill seems to have been in difficulties at the same time. No doubt the two factories vied with one another to buy wool, and perhaps to attract the necessary skilled workers. Perhaps the local economic base was simply too small to sustain two large textile mills. If so there is no doubt which one succumbed.

By the same token, there is little evidence of what the woollen mill was used for in later years. It may have housed the obscure shingle milling operation, but this is only a guess. The photograph of around 1895 seems to show the

building in good condition and apparently in use: none of the windows are boarded up, though perhaps a few are broken.[601] All that can be said is that the building apparently shared the fate of the appendaged oatmeal mill, which went up in smoke sometime between June 1899 and 1900.[602] It was uninsured and rebuilt,[603] though its ruined walls remained in evidence for many a year.

Tanneries in the Rideau Corridor

The practice of tanning leather arrived in Upper Canada with the Loyalists, but actual tannery establishments seem to have appeared only at the end of the pioneer period: one tannery existed in Ottawa in 1844, and by 1848 Kingston had two.[604] Gradually, additional tanneries appeared within the canal corridor: Westport had one by 1850, Smiths Falls had two, and by 1851 Old Slys had another.[605] During the 1860s and seventies there were at least 27 tanneries scattered throughout the corridor communities.[606]

Along with leather manufacturing went all sorts of trades pertaining to leather, such as boot- and shoe-making, saddle-and harness-making, and trunk manufacturing. At least 47 boot- and shoemakers or shoe shops are known to have existed in 20 small towns and villages along the canal during the 19th century,[607] as well as 69 more in Ottawa, Kingston and New Edinburgh,[608] but only in the cities were these operations

organized along the lines of factory production:[609] those in the corridor communities seem to have been merely small shops. The same applies for the 25 or more saddle- and harness-makers who ran their own small businesses between Kingston and Ottawa during the 1860s and seventies.[610] For the record, it may be observed in passing that Merrickville, around 1865, had four boot- and shoemakers and one saddler and harness-maker,[611] whereas in 1871 it had 13 shoemakers and six harness-makers.[612]

The village also had at least three tanneries. Not a great deal is known about them, but it would appear that two were located in the industrial area of North Merrickville and used water power, while the third was in the south quarter of town, and must have used some other form of power. We begin with the north shore operations.

Merrickville: North Shore Tannery No. 1
(1850?-189?)

Merrickville's first tannery -- as far as we know -- was located in a small stone building on the north shore of the river, on property now owned by the Alloy Foundry Company. (See Figure 5.). The building still stands (in fact, it is the oldest extant industrial building on the north shore), and is currently used by the foundry company for grinding and shipping.[613]

The beginnings of the tannery are obscure. The Ordnance map of about 1847 shows nothing in the area of the tannery building.[614] The census of 1851-52 contains no certain

reference to it either, though it does list a couple of tanners, John Haslip and Mansil Kelly by name, as residents of Wolford (and apparently Merrickville).[615] The first definite record of a tannery is found in the F. P. Smith Papers of 28 February 1850, which mention "a tannery belonging to Mr. Hall." Similarly, the 23 March 1854 edition of the Brockville Recorder notes that Messrs. Campbell and Hall were then operating a tannery at Merrickville that was producing about 10,000 sides of leather a year.[616] Thus the tannery was in business by 1850.

A little is known of Messrs. Campbell and Hall. "Campbell" was apparently John Campbell of North Merrickville, who was part proprietor of a tannery in 1856:[617] during the period of 1857-62 we find him actively involved with the local school board.[618] "Hall" was evidently John D. Hall, also of Merrickville, who around 1856 withdrew from the partnership to take up surgical medicine: in 1862, while the American Civil War was in progress he joined the medical staff of the U.S. Army at Washington, D.C.[619] (David J. Hall, editor of the Merrickville Chronicle, was probably a relative.)

As for the Campbell and Hall tannery, it seems reasonable to suppose that it was the same structure as that marked on the Walling map of about 1860, and run at that time by Messrs. Campbell and Merrick.[620] This tannery stood on property owned by Aaron and Terence Merrick approximately where the extant building owned by the Alloy Foundry Company is today. Photographic

evidence first appears around 1895, and indicates a medium-sized, cedar shingled roof, running parallel to the river.[621] Assuming that the building has not been altered seriously since it was erected, we can adduce from later maps that it was about 50 feet in length by 38 in width, not counting various annexes added and removed since.[622] (A more detailed description applying to the later period is found in Chapter 3, see Malleable Iron Works, *Moulding Shop*.) In 1859 Lockmaster Johnston mentioned a tannery, owned by A. & T. H. Merrick, which processed 10,000 hides a year (the same figure given by the Recorder in 1854): the rent on the premises was reported as £62.10.0 per annum.[623]

From newspaper advertisements and the like, a little more can be gleaned about the tannery during this period. In 1856 following Hall's withdrawal, Campbell formed a new partnership with George Towner, a Merrickville merchant and member of the Masonic Lodge.[624] On 25 July 1856 the pair produced the following advertisement in the Chronicle:

CAMPBELL & TOWNERS,
(SUCCESSORS TO CAMPBELL & HALL,)
MANUFACTURERS OF SOLE LEATHER,
MIRICKVILLE, C. W.
Highest price, in cash, paid for Hides.

JOHN CAMPBELL GEORGE TOWNER.[625]

In November of 1856 we find them advertising that they will pay $8.00/100 pounds of hides left at their tannery.[626] (By this time Henry D. Smith of town was also offering the same price for hides left at his tannery in South Merrickville!)[627]

The following year Campbell and Towner were repeating their ads, this time announcing that they wanted cords of hemlock bark for the "Mirickville Tannery."[628] (The census report of 1851-52 remarks that some of the impoverished settlers on the back concessions of Montague were sometimes known to augment their meagre incomes by selling hemlock bark at "Merricks.")[629] On 23 October 1857, the partners published another interesting advertisement.

SOLE LEATHER.
100 SIDES [sic] NOW READY FOR
Sale, and we are daily finishing
an article, of a superior quality, Manufactured
from the best Buenos Ayres Hides.
-- ALSO --
Slaughter Soleleather, suitable for sewed work,
at the, "Mirickville Tannery."
CAMPBELL & TOWNER.

Mirickville, 3rd Sep. 1857.[630]

(This announcement was still being carried by the Chronicle on 6 August 1858.)

Campbell and Towner are mentioned as being in business together as late as 23 November 1858[631] but after that Towner like Hall withdrew from the partnership apparently in order to concentrate on selling insurance in Merrickville.[632] In 1859 Campbell is said to have formed another alliance, this time with one of the Merricks[633] (perhaps Aaron or Terence from whom he had been renting the building). As mentioned previously "Campbell and Merrick" are marked as tannery proprietors on the Walling map of 1860 or 1861.[634] A business directory of 1861-62 also lists "Campbell & Merrick, Tannery."[635] Unfortunately this is about the last we hear of John Campbell's involvement with the tannery though an individual of that name was still residing in Merrickville in 1865.[636]

Little more is known about the north shore tannery during this period. Significantly by 1865 George Towner had again taken up manufacturing sole leather [637] apparently in partnership with Henry Merrick. It may well be that Henry Merrick was the man who came to terms with Campbell in 1859 and that Towner joined forces with him following Campbell's retirement, but these are merely guesses. In any event on 17 January 1867 Towner and Merrick officially dissolved their partnership and went separate ways.[638] It is not known whether either of them did any more tanning.

From this time until the 1890s the history of the tannery is almost a blank. The site of the building went to Abel R. Ward on 27 February 1864 along with much adjacent land [639] and

on 9 November 1868 it was sold to Messrs. Magee and Pearson, the iron founders (g.v.).[640] They in turn promptly sold the western portion of the property including the tannery to Mrs. Mary P. Merrick, Aaron's wife, and indeed, the terms of the partition (dated 20 January 1869) mention the building as "the present tannery."[641] Mrs. Merrick retained the ownership until 21 July 1881, when she sold the eastern section of her holdings to Patrick Kyle (q.v.): again, the terms of the sale describe the building "as a tannery."[642]

Who was running the tannery during all those years? One possible candidate (in fact about the only one known) was Charles Heanny (also written Heeney or Heney), a tanner and currier of Irish descent who was born about 1836[643] and first appears on the scene in Merrickville in 1865. By that time, he was already established as a leather manufacturer and hide dealer.[644] According to the industrial census of 1871, Heanny was running a regular leather factory on a year round basis, but the record is too sparse to prove that his plant was the same one founded by John Campbell 20 years before: we are told only that Heanny's leather factory represented an investment of $1,000 with $2,000 more in floating capital, that it employed two men (at wages of $700 a year) and that it used 1,000(?) skins and hides valued at $2,000 to produce leather of all sorts worth $4,000.[645] Since Heanny's tannery had water we may rest assured that it was not identical with H. D. Smith's plant in South Merrickville: on the other hand

the operation sounds as if it was being conducted on a rather modest scale; smaller in fact than that of Campbell in the 1850s while both Heanny and Towner are listed as leather manufacturers in 1865.[647] Charles Heeney [sic] is mentioned again in the Woodburn directory of 1876 as a tanner[648] but this is the last reference we find to any tanners in Merrickville. Either Heanny was using the old Campbell tannery or else he had established another on the north shore in town.

The old Campbell tannery meanwhile went to Patrick Kyle in 1881. It was still a tannery at that time[649] and judging from photographic evidence it remained in that role as late as the 1890s; at least tanbark was still being piled in its vicinity then.[650] Eventually it became the moulding shop for Kyle's Malleable Iron Works (q.v.) and a legal agreement dated 3 November 1899 describes it as a "small stone building formerly used as a tannery.[651] The rest belongs to Chapter 3.

Merrickville: North Shore Tannery No. 2

Only the barest hint of this shadowy enterprise in North Merrickville survives. In fact all that is known is that sometime between 1860 and 1894 someone built a stone building appendaged to the north shore gristmill (No. 5, q.v.) and apparently used it as a tannery.

The building in question is still extant, though drastically altered, and is now the carpentry shop for the Alloy Foundry Company.[652] (See Figure 6.) The structure abutts against the east wall of the old gristmill (now the foundry company office), and measures about 42 feet by 30 feet:[653] a later extension has since been removed. It is built of stone, and has a medium-pitched, gabled roof, originally shingled in cedar.[654] All in all, the building looked similar to the old Campbell tannery (q.v.), though it was somewhat smaller.

No one knows when the building was first built. It is not indicated on the Walling map of about 1860.[655] The earliest evidence of its existence is a photograph from around 1895 by which time it already had the extension on the east end.[656] By then the building was being used for an electric power plant (q.v.). Our only clue that it had earlier been used as a tannery comes from the minutes of a Merrickville council meeting, dated 11 April 1894, which noted that Edward J. Kyle (son of Patrick) was housing his new electric light plant (q.v.) in the "old tannery building," which he was then leasing as a tenant.[657] Maps from the 1900-12 period leave no doubt that the "electric light station" was in the present foundry carpentry shop.[658]

Who ran this tannery, and when? Only one tannery is mentioned in 1859, or in 1871 and 1876, although in 1865 both Charles Heanny and George Towner are mentioned (separately) as

leather manufacturers (Towner is specifically stated to have been producing sole leather at that time).[659] Perhaps Heanny's plant described in the census of 1871 was in the same building as that used later for the light plant:[660] this would be in accord with the rather modest scale of Heanny's operations but it would also indicate that the old Campbell tannery had been closed at that time.

Until further evidence is found nothing more can be said about the second tannery in North Merrickville.

Merrickville: Village Tannery

(fl. 1856-1862)

A third tannery flourished briefly in South Merrickville during this period but since it was not contiguous to the canal and did not run on water power it can be regarded as peripheral to the scope of this study.

The south side tannery was located at the intersection of Lewis and St. Lawrence Streets on the south-east corner (according to the Walling map of 1860-61) and was owned by Henry D. Smith[661] (q.v.), a prominent local merchant, industrialist and politician. Little is known of its history. It was established by June of 1856 when Smith began advertising for "green hides"; on the same terms ($8.00/100 pounds) as Messrs. Campbell and Towner were offering.[662] In April of 1861 Smith was advertising himself as a tanner and leather dealer on St. Lawrence Street

now in partnership with Walter Wickwire of Merrickville: the ad promised cash for hides and skins and announced a large assortment of harness and upper leather, kip, calf, etc. on, hand.[663]

Smith. and Wickwire are said to have been in partnership as late as January 1872[664] but nothing more is heard of the tannery. Possibly it was leased to Charles Heanny around 1865 but otherwise the tannery fades from the record after 1862.

Blacksmithing During the Canal Period

As might be expected blacksmithing flourished during the latter portion of the 19th century. Merrickville at times had up to a dozen blacksmiths though apparently few of them had their own shops. According to the census of 1871 there were then 12 smiths in Merrickville; of whom four -- William Edwards, William Lisson, George Crancen and Thomas Edwards -- had shops of their own: two of the above had two employees and the others, one.[665] By 1876, however, the number of smiths had dropped to nine including Lisson and the two Edwardses.[666] (In 1895 by contrast only two blacksmiths are mentioned.)[667] Those smiths who did not have shops of their own usually worked at carriage shops or at agricultural implement works such as the Dangerfield snath factory (q.v.). Others in turn were sometimes employed at the local foundries.[668]

Foundries During the Canal Period

Foundries, like factories, were an unmistakable indication that Canada was leaving the colonial period behind and moving into a more complex commercial and technological age. Sometimes foundries were part of a larger industrial complex; others were independent establishments helping to meet the needs of other industries within a community,[669] Merrickville had both types.

Foundries are mentioned in the census of 1848, but none is recorded from the Rideau corridor.[670] As early as 1839 a machine shop was set up on Gould Island at Smiths Falls by Ebenezer Frost; this operation developed into the Frost and Wood Manufacturing Company in 1846, which remained in business until 1955.[671] By 1850 Westport had a foundry, while Kemptville had one by the 1860s, and Perth, Smiths Falls and Merrickville each had two.[672] (Ottawa then had one, while Kingston had three.)[673] Most of the more successful foundries soon began specializing in various manufactured products, such as stoves and agricultural implements, with the result that it is difficult to dissociate the iron works from the products they produced.

Initially, the early foundries needed relatively few ingredients: fuel, in the form of charcoal or coke, pig-iron and perhaps a little limestone. Limestone, of course, is plentiful in the St. Lawrence Lowlands, and charcoal could

easily be prepared as long as the local timber held out. Coal would be shipped in by way of the canal. Iron ore could be found at various sites around Newboro, North Crosby and Bedford Townships, and Perth; the quality was not especially good, but thanks to the Rideau, it could be shipped out fairly cheaply and some even reached the steel mills of Pittsburgh, Chicago and Cleveland during the 1850 to 1880 period.[674] Whether any of these ores provided pig-iron for any of the local corridor foundries is a question that cannot yet be answered.

As some of the new foundries began concentrating on manufacturing agricultural implements, certain adaptations often became necessary. Implement works in Canada were handicapped during the 19th century by the relatively small domestic market and a chronic scarcity of the necessary capital and facilities needed to make innovations possible.[675] On the other hand they had the advantages of lower wage levels and costs than those faced by their American counterparts throughout most of the century,[676] and these factors, plus the granting of tariff protection in 1847, gave Canadian manufacturers some leverage for bargaining. As a result, some Canadian firms were able to make arrangements to manufacture American products: this was true of H. A. Massey and Company of Newcastle which, by 1852, was permitted to produce mowers and reapers designed by two firms in Buffalo, New York.[677] Similarly, the A. Harris firm of Beamsville (founded in 1857), won the right to build mowers patented in Auburn, New York.[678]

Several notable farm implement firms developed in Canada West during the 1850s and sixties, but almost all the larger ones appeared in the southern Ontario triangle, in the heart of the province's prime agricultural lands:[679] the sole exception was the Frost and Wood Company of Smiths Falls, first founded in 1839, which came to specialize in harvesting equipment.[680] Neither of Merrickville's two consecutive firms ever achieved the prominence of Frost and Wood, though they did occupy a place of honour for about 70 years.

Stove manufacturing was also undertaken by a number of Canadian foundries originally engaged at making cast-iron pots and pans.[681] In 1835 the square or range type of stove with the oven located under the cooking top and suitable for baking was perfected in a forge near London, Ontario[682] while heating stoves began to replace fireplaces in homes.[683] Some of these in turn developed into parlour stoves, which might be enhanced by mica-filled doors on three sides of the firebox.[684] Later warm air furnaces were built, with cast-iron fireboxes, and dampers that directed fumes and hot air through the "heat exchangers": this allowed heat to be utilized before it reached the stove pipe.[685] Other refinements followed.

Numerous stove and furnace foundries appeared in Ontario during the last century, notably in Hamilton, London and the Toronto area, but there were also some large plants at Ottawa and Carleton Place.[686] The principal works at Merrickville

by comparison, were on a small scale, and seem to have been unusual in that they combined stove-making with horse drawn farm machinery.

Merrickville saw its first foundry established around mid-century, making it one of the first canal communities to have an iron works. Unlike many other forms of industrial activity attempted at various times, foundry work remains alive and well in the village to the present day.

Merrickville: The Lilly and Hogg Foundry

(fl. 1851-1852)

Merrickville's first iron foundry was established around 1850 by two Scottish entrepreneurs named William Lilly (or Lillie) and William Hogg.[687] Very little is known about this operation. It is not indicated on the Ordnance map of about 1848[688] (which, admittedly, does not cover the entire village, but only the area of the lock station), nor is there any hint of it on the Walling map of the 1860 period:[689] the only references to it are in 1851-52. The site of the foundry is likewise unknown, though an exhaustive search through the land ownership records of the village might supply a clue. We should, however, expect to find: in South Merrickville, since it is mentioned in the census of 1851-52, under Wolford.[690]

The above census, in fact, tells us practically all that is known of this foundry. It shows that Messrs. Lilly and Hogg,

iron founders, were established in the front of Wolford (along with many Merrickville residents) by 1851-52, with their wives and families.[691] Both men were then in their forties, and both had similar backgrounds, except that Lilly had evidently lived in Canada for at least a dozen years, perhaps longer than his partner.[692] Both were apparently newcomers to Merrickville. One other source, the Canada Directory of 1851, also lists the Lillie and Hogg iron works in Mirickville.[693] Ruth McKenzie, in her history of Leeds and Grenville, credits them with being stove manufacturers.[694]

The Lilly and Hogg Foundry did not last very long. There is no further mention of it after 1852, whereas it would appear that Henry D. Smith (q.v.) had a foundry of his own in South Merrickville by 1852.[695] Perhaps Messrs. Lilly and Hogg allowed themselves to be bought out by Smith, and soon afterwards left Merrickville.

Merrickville: The H. D. Smith Foundries

(fl. 1852-1871)

Henry D. Smith (q.v.), in the midst of his numerous business activities, appears to have run two foundries in South Merrickville over the course of close to two decades. Neither of these, apparently was on the canal, and neither used water power, and hence we shall dispose of them briefly, summarizing the available information at hand.

Smiths appears to have lived in or close to Merrickville at least as early as 1851. For a time (until 1856) he was part owner of a blacksmith shop along with William Whitmore:[696] he also owned the above-mentioned tannery.[697] Concurrently he developed a foundry evidently in South Merrickville but the actual site is unknown: it may have been on one of his properties on Main Street facing the canal.

It would appear that Smith established his shop as early as 1852 since his bookkeeper, William Pearson (q.v.) is said to have been in Smith's employ for seven years by 1859:[698] this increases the likelihood that the original Smith foundry was obtained from Lilly and Hogg. On 28 April 1855 Lockmaster Johnston remarked that "... the Foundry at Merrickville is doing no work at present."[699] and in October of 1856 Smith was advertising for six apprentices to work at his iron works.[700]

An advertisement in the Mirickville Chronicle (25 July 1856) contains some interesting details about the foundry wherein William Henry Magee (q.v.) seems to have emerged as the dominant partner. The announcement states,

William H. McGee & Co.,
IRONFOUNDERS,
Manufacturers of Ploughs, Double Mold Board
Ploughs, Cultivators, Road Scrapers,
Stoves, &c.,
MIRICKVILLE, C. W.

WM. H. McGEE H. D. SMITH [701]

It would be logical to suppose that this operation was an entirely new and separate venture, distinct from Smith's original foundry works and located across the river, where the celebrated Magee and Pearson works (q.v.) were later to be built; except that we are informed that the Magee-Pearson works was not established until 1859,[702] and until then the records mention only one foundry. If all this is true, then the advertisement quoted above must apply to the old Smith works, which thus proved the forerunner of what was later to become one of Merrickville1s most important industries. By 1857, the Magee and Smith works were not only becoming highly diversified, but also highly innovative, as well. On 28 May 1857, the Chronicle came out with a proud new advertisement:

NEW PLOUGH.
PROTECTED BY ROYAL LETTERS
PATENT ! !
Dated, December, 13th, 1856.
W. H. MAGEE & CO.,
MIRICKVILLE FOUNDRY.

HAVING secured ROYAL LETTERS PATENT for a New and Improved Plough, they respectfully beg to introduce the same to public notice. Its merits are, the shortness and height of the beam, giving it a particularly effective draught the peculiar form of the mould board, adapting the implement with ease to all descriptions of work; and as the land-side is connected with the point, they require but to be removed as they wear out, to make the body of the plough available for a much longer period of service than any now in use. Indeed, the renewal of those parts at any time renders the plough a new one. The wearing parts can be replaced at a very slight expense.

The Mirickville Improved Plough, it is anticipated, will supersede all others now in use.

Wm. H. McGee & Co., also manufacture
Cooking Stoves, Box Stoves, Cultivators,
Double Mold Board Ploughs, Road Scrapers,
&c. , &c., &c., &c.
Mirickville, March 27, 1857.[703]

It was not until 12 August 1861 that W. H. Magee and Henry D. Smith formally dissolved their partnership,[704] and by that time Magee definitely had a new iron works established in North Merrickville.[705] In the meantime, the old village foundry had met with disaster. On 23 August 1861 the Mirickville Chronicle (again drawing on an outside paper for news in Merrickville!) remarks that the old Smith foundry had been gutted by fire, and that a new building was then being built to replace it, evidently at a new location off St. Lawrence Street.[706]

The new Smith foundry stood at the south-east corner of Elgin and Wellington Streets.[707] It was a long, narrow, gray rubble stone building, apparently with a flat roof, and was said to be 80 feet by 120.[708] The 1865 business directory lists H. D. Smith as an iron founder[709] and the census report of 1871 says the same, though it does not mention anything about the foundry itself.[710] The Woodburn directory of 1876 also mentions Smith, but only as an insurance agent.[711] By 1900 the building seems to have suffered another fire, since it is shown on a map as "walls only."[712] Fortunately, it was rebuilt, and today it has been tastefully restored and now serves as the L.C.B.O.

store in Merrickville. Happily the old stone building has been permitted to keep most of its outward 19th-century character.

Merrickville: The Magee-Pearson Foundry
(1859?-1887)

The Magee and Pearson iron works which for over a quarter of a century was one of the most successful business enterprises in Merrickville began as W. H. Magee and Company which was founded by William Henry Magee and Henry D. Smith around 1856 or earlier.[713] This firm, of course, developed the village foundry described above and even this foundry had forebears.

The actual beginnings of the business are obscure. William Henry Magee (q.v.) originally of North Augusta seems to have come to Merrickville as a young man.[714] By 1851-52 we find him listed as a carriage-maker.[715] Carriages, of course, required wrought-iron components and the transition from manufacturing wrought-iron to casting-iron is not too vast to contemplate. Sometime during the 1850s Magee made a partnership with Smith and shifted towards making plows, cultivators and other tools, and stoves.[716] By 1856 they appear to have developed a fairly diversified business and could even take the time to experiment with new designs for plows: here no doubt Magee's early experiences on his experiences on his father's farm came in handy.[717] (See H. D. Smith Foundries.)

By 1856, as noted earlier, Magee had incorporated his operations. Business seems to have been good enough to encourage him to build a new plant in 1859,[718] where water power would be available to force air into cupolas, and perhaps drive machinery. It was apparently at this time that Magee made his highly successful alliance with William Pearson (q.v.), who had hitherto been Smith's bookkeeper,[719] but even so, the partnership with Smith was not formally dissolved until 12 August 1861:[720] the part – if any – played by Smith in setting up the new foundry is not clear.

The Magee and Pearson foundry of 1859 was built on north shore property, owned by Aaron Merrick, a short distance northeast of the Campbell and Merrick tannery (q.v.). The Walling map of 1860 or thereabouts suggests a small building on a different alignment from that of the old Merrick mills, now owned by the Alloy Foundry Company, and apparently on the same alignment as the present Ayling boat works (q.v.).[721] It is, in fact, possible that the foundry stood directly where the west end portion of the main Ayling building is today (though it seems a trifle unlikely that the old building assumed the proportions of today's structure). Alternately, the foundry may have been identical with a rather small stone building (since demolished) that lay immediately west of the Ayling works, and east of what became the main building of the Malleable Iron Works (q.v.): this little building was parallel to the Ayling buildings and was used around 1900 for the storage

of castings.[722] (See Figure 6.) In later times, at least, this structure had two-and-a-half stories and a low-pitched roof, and furthermore judging from photographic evidence it may have stood directly over a flume that fed some of the other north shore mills.[723] The Walling map, though none too precise, places the foundry very close to the extant tannery building, just about where the small building stood later.

The census of 1871 gives more detailed information about the "Magee & Pierson Iron Foundry" [sic], though by that time the operation had grown so big that we may suspect it had moved into newer, more spacious quarters. The plant is reported to have cost $15,000, with an additional floating capital of $29,750 (or $21,750?).[724] It ran on water power, operated all year round, and employed 17(?) men and a boy, for wages totalling $8,200 a year. It was using 686 tons of pig-iron and 150 tons of coal in a year, costing $25,464, to make stoves and agricultural implements worth $33,664.[725] It may well be that Magee and Pearson had erected an additional building where the present Ayling complex now stands, but unfortunately no maps or pictures have been discovered to document the period prior to the 1890s: in short, the extent of Magee and Pearson's building programmes remains completely unknown.

On the other hand, there are a number of indications as to the rise and prosperity of the firm. A directory dated about 1865, notes that Messrs. Magee and Pearson, on the Rideau Canal at Merrickville, C. W., were manufacturing all sorts of

agricultural implements, such as iron and steel plows, cultivators and straw cutters, as well as box, cooking and parlour stoves, with "Job work of all kinds done on the shortest notice."[726] Mitchell's Canada Directory of 1866 also mentions "McGee and Pearson" of Merrickville as "Founders and Machinists."[727] A major milestone was reached on 9 November 1868, when the firm at last ceased to be a tenant, and managed to buy the whole of Abel R. Ward's immense north shore property including the foundry site and the present Ayling property 728 for $10,500.[728] About half the purchase price was recovered when Magee and Pearson sold the western half of their new holdings (roughly corresponding to the modern Alloy Foundry property) to Mrs. Mary Perine Merrick in January 1869: included in this deal was a road passage from the highway, across Mrs. Merrick's lands to the foundry, plus another 12-foot right of way along the east side of the Merrick property.[729] Magee and Pearson were also guaranteed one-quarter of the water power from the north side exits in the mill dam, plus full access to the north bulkhead of the dam. It was also agreed that the partners would pay 25 per cent of the costs of repairing or altering the flumes with Mrs. Merrick paying the balance.[730] Later the same year (November 1869), Magee and Pearson began adding fill to the shoreline in front of their foundry to form a wharf[731] and, very likely, they also started expanding the plant itself. In August 1871 we find them buying a type of force pump, enclosed in a tank and mounted on wheels, for use in fighting fires at their

plant:[732] this was probably the first fire engine of any description in Merrickville, and may have helped to reduce the owners' insurance premiums. Two years later, the Bradstreet Report of 1873 gave the firm a superlative rating for character and ability (higher than any other in town), and pronounced it an excellent credit risk.[733]

Indirect evidence of continued expansions by Magee and Pearson can be found in the new agreement over water rights worked out with Mrs. Merrick on 13 December 1877.[734] The terms have been summarized earlier in connection with the fourth north shore sawmill (q.v.), which belonged for a time to Mrs. Merrick: here we may repeat briefly that the two parties both agreed to draw their water henceforth from the south bulkhead, with an underground flume to be built across Mrs. Merrick's property to the iron foundry. Magee and Pearson were also given full rights to any excess waters from the north bulkhead, though they were required to build their own flume to connect the bulkhead with the main flume.[735] Work was undertaken on the proposed flume the following year:[736] if this new watercourse was identical with the one marked on the Goad map of 1900[737] (see Figure 6), traces of which still remain, it would follow (fairly definitely) that the foundry was already occupying part of the site of the present Ayling buildings by the 1870s, if it did not always do so, since the flume of 1900 and earlier fed straight into the Ayling complex.

Though the inside story of the Magee-Pearson works is now forgotten, traditions preserved by old-timers and local historians help to fill in some of the details. We need not doubt, for example, that the foundry imported huge quantities of pig-iron and coal by canal barge:[738] the new wharf built in 1869 is an obvious testimonial to the canal's importance to the firm.[739] Where the raw materials came from is unknown: cordwood for charcoal may have been obtained locally in the early days, though by 1871 the firm was using coal, which must have come from the eastern United States. It also seems probable that some of the finished products stoves, plows and farm implements were also shipped out by boat, though some were also transported by wagons and sleighs: Miss Kathleen Pearson recalls hearing that Samuel Pearson, a brother of William and an agent for the firm was long active in making overland deliveries, especially to the Pembroke area.[740] William Pearson, of course, kept the booksfor the company, while W. H. Magee looked after the shop.[741] Another long time employee, Gordon R. Putnam, also worked on the roads for a time, before joining the office staff, of which he eventually took charge.[742] The office, incidentally, was located in a small brick house (since demolished) on the east side of Mill Street, near the entrance to the foundry site.[743]

No production figures for the firm have been unearthed, but a little is known of its products. During the 1880s the company was still producing steel plows, gang plows, cultivators and the like, as well as cooking, box and parlour stoves.[744] Two stove

models were known respectively as "Forest Beauty" and "Prince of Wales," and both of these featured high ovens and very large fireboxes.[745] It is said that neither W. H. Magee nor Pearson had much formal education,[746] but they seemed to know what the general public needed, and also what they could afford. As a result, the business thrived.

By 1886, the company's real estate was being assessed by the village council at $5,000, with Magee and Pearson's personal property at $4,000:[747] both figures were, assuredly, far below their actual values, and perhaps greater reliance can be placed on the statement that the partners' (gross?) annual income was then about $4,000.[748] By this time, however, the firm had almost run its course. On 14 April 1887, William Henry Magee, who had long been in poor health, died at his home in Merrickville at the age of 60.[749] Whether his sons Thomas and George Byron Magee made any effort to carry on with the business along with William Pearson is uncertain, but there is no doubt that on 30 December 1887 they sold the entire plant, including the buildings, machinery, right of way, and water privileges, to Roger Croft Percival (q.v.) of Pembroke, a former employee with the firm, for $16,000.[750] Under Percival's management the foundry was to ascend to even greater heights, but he was obviously building on the very solid foundations developed by Magee and Pearson over a period of 30 or more years.

Merrickville: Island Foundry

The island foundry at Merrickville which, in part, still survives today, has been used for a number of functions throughout its long history. At times it has been a carpentry shop, a machine shop, and a woollen storehouse. Yet its history is mostly rather obscure, and often there is only indirect evidence to vouch for its activities or existence. In some cases we can only conjecture that certain operations alluded to in the records were, in fact, carried on inside the old stone building facing the ruined woollen mill, on the lower level of the island.

The old foundry building was originally a double structure forming an "L" shape, with the western section, once two-and-a-half stories high, forming an adjunct to the former island oatmeal mill[751] (q.v.), while the eastern section which alone survives was attached to the western at a right angle. Formerly the east wing had two stories;[752] today it has only one. Both sections were once used as a foundry,[753] though we cannot be sure that they were both built at the same time, or to serve identical purposes.

It is not known when the foundry was first built. It does not appear on the Ordnance map of the 1847 period, though a wooden shed is shown close to the site, facing the snye, at that time.[754] (see Figure 4.) In 1856, as noted earlier, William Merrick, Jr. was advertising a machine shop amongst his

enterprises, as well as a flouring mill and shingle factory (q.v.):[755] as only the two mills are mentioned in the census of 1851-52,[756] it would appear that the machine shop was a later addition to Merrick's complex. The evidence suggests overwhelmingly that all of these operations were conducted on the island. It is quite possible that the machine shop was housed within the present foundry building, but it is also possible that the existing building was erected at a later date. In February 1858 William Merrick sold his lands on the island to Hiram Easton,[757] who appears to have disbanded the machine shop: Copleston's County Directory of 1859 contains nomention of it, nor of any foundries in town other than that of W. H. Magee.[758] The Walling map of about 1860 shows a large building with one or more wings on it, apparently a rough approximation of Easton's woollen and oatmeal mills (q.v.):[759] perhaps the foundry building was a part of this complex, even at this early date. If so, we might guess that the foundry building was originally part of Merrick's holdings from the 1850s, and that it escaped demolition when Easton built his factories in the 1860s.

If the foundry was in existence during the 1850s, it disappears from the records again until perhaps 1874. On 3 December of that year, the lease taken by R. W. Watchorn on the Merrick woollen mill (q.v.) mentions a "stone premises" on the island then under lease to Abel R. Ward and two other individuals known as Brenan and Sabrian.[760] The document also mentions that the

"stone premises" was using water power and that its machinery was driven simultaneously with that of the woollen factory. The two buildings obviously shared the same flume since Watchorn in his lease promised not to shut off power to the "stone premises" unless its tenants agreed or unless repairs were necessary in which case they were to be carried out as quickly as possible.[761] The same document also mentions an "old wrench factory" on the island across the roadway opposite the woollen mill; precisely where the foundry building stands today.[762] At least in later times the foundry shared one or two water flumes with the adjacent oatmeal mill.763 All this suggests that today's foundry building was identical with the "old wrench factory" of 1874 and probably with the "stone premises" as well. As for who operated the "old wrench factory" one is reminded at once of William Merrick's machine shop of the 1850s. Admittedly all this is tenuous reasoning, but if it can be accepted at least provisionally it would follow that the island foundry building dates back at least to before 1874 and perhaps as far back as 1856.

The next apparent reference to the building comes in 1881 by which time Henry Merrick (q.v.) seems to have converted the structure into a foundry. On 3 June 1881 Merrick was granted a lease on some of the canal Ordnance land near the swing bridge at Merrickville consisting of 42 acres for a mere $5.00 per year.[764] with the lease went "all the leakage water passing and over the said land, with the right to collect said water

and carry the same by tube or otherwise along the edge of the Canal reserve to a distance of 162 feet ... "[765] The duration of the lease was to be at the pleasure of the government, but it seems to have remained in Merrick's hands until 1915.[766] Twenty-one years later. Canal Superintendent Arthur Phillips quoting the local lockmaster, was to note that, " ... at the time he [Merrick] was granted this lease he owned a foundry at Merrickville and built a small dam to divert this leakage water into his flume leading to the foundry."[767] Phillips went on to observe that this apparently amounted to an infringement on the rights of other mill owners in town, and that Merrick was compelled by the courts to remove his dam.[768]

Very little more can be said about the island foundry during this period. A business directory of 1884-85, in listing founders and machinists, lists two names under Merrickville: Patrick Kyle and H. Merrick.[769] On 11 July 1885, however, Henry Merrick and his wife mortgaged their factory premises on the island to one William Millar for $800, just a month after the woollen mill was sold to the Watchorns:[770] perhaps all this was connected with Merrick's long and costly suit with Hiram Easton over water privileges, in which Millar was apparently involved. (See Island Shingle Mill.) For the rest, the activities of the foundry are very obscure. A photograph dated around 1894 seems to show the eastern section of the building with part of the roof missing (which would indicate that the operation was defunct by that time), while in 1896 we find one Miller perhaps the same

individual mentioned above? applying for permission to use the surplus water resulting from the snye leakage;[771] another indication that Merrick was no longer using it. The Goad map of 1900 marks the foundry building as "old and dilapidated," with the east wing still "open to roof."[772] By 1902 Merrick's rent on his lease was in arrears, which the recalcitrant mill Oowner was unwilling to pay.[773] Obviously the foundry had been abandoned around 1894-1902, but apparently it gained a new lease on life sometime afterwards, when "Miller" obtained the use if not the ownership of the building; both sections of which he used as a foundry.[774] Another map, dated 1915, indicates that Miller was in possession of the foundry, but that it was again, no longer in use.[775] Later the building went to the Watchorn Company, and entered another phase in its long and torturous history.

Malleable-Iron Casting
During the Canal Period

Very closely allied with iron founding, in general, was the specialized trade of producing malleable cast-iron; a business carried on at Merrickville for roughly half a century.

Essentially, the process of rendering ordinary cast-iron (which is normally very brittle) into a malleable product that could be battered, twisted, bent, machined, threaded or polished, was simply a set of refinements to the usual process of

casting iron. Malleable-iron is usually made from pig-irons with a low silicon content. It could be done in a cupola or an open hearth furnace. The procedure was to make castings, then pack them in puddle scale in large iron boxes called saggers.[776] These in turn would be placed in large ovens and fired red hot from four to seven days, which resulted in subtle changes in the carbon content. Hopefully, the once dirty-gray castings would emerge softer than before, with a rich, black, velvety appearance. Once annealed, they were ready for market.[777] Malleable-iron has largely been supplanted by steel which is much stronger but it found widespread application in the making of hinges, door locks, stoves, wrenches, freezers, washing machines, safes and plow blades around the turn of the century.[778]

Smiths Falls and Merrickville were among the Rideau Canal communities that once boasted foundries for malleabilizing cast-iron. The Smiths Falls works was established in 1878.[779] The Merrickville works appeared about a decade earlier.

Merrickville: Malleable Iron Works

(1867-1920?)

The malleable-iron works at Merrickville is another enterprise that once assumed major importance within the village, and even beyond, but about which comparatively little is known. There may, in fact, have been two malleable-iron operations which had no direct connection with one another, or the business may have

lapsed for a time during the 1870s and then been revived. This account will treat the operation as essentially one, though it evidently changed hands at least once, and perhaps went into limbo for a time.

The malleable-iron works first comes into focus in 1871,[780] though it seems probable that it was actually founded two to four years earlier. For example, Messrs. Gwynne and Ward, the two owners of the foundry in 1871, are known to have been in partnership as early as 1869,[781] though the iron works itself is not mentioned at that date. We have noted elsewhere that Abel R. Ward, Jr. bought most of the north shore industrial area from his father on 10 December 1866, and that the younger Ward ran a gristmill on the north shore in partnership with John Augustus Merrick until 26 November of the same year.[782] We have also noted that one of the north shore gristmills disappears from the records after 1867. Repeating an earlier speculation, let us conjecture again that Abel R. Ward, Jr. (who seems always to have been ready to dabble in something new) decided to convert his gristmill into an iron foundry sometime between February of 1867 and November of 1868, at which time (for some reason) he sold all of his lands to Magee and Pearson.[783] The fact that Ward remained a proprietor of the iron works in 1871 and afterwards must mean that he and his partners were leasing the property from Mrs. Mary Merrick after 1869 or that the iron works were then occupying some unknown site offering water power privileges in Merrickville; a most unlikely idea. It seems far

more reasonable to suppose that Ward's Malleable Iron Works (which represented a large capital outlay) was located at the same site as Patrick Kyle's malleable works of the 1880s; that is, on the eastern portion of the present Alloy Foundry Company's oldings. If this writer's conjecture about the gristmill should prove correct, the main casting building of the Alloy Company would have been the oldest part of the malleable works, antedating the arrivals of Patrick Kyle and Abel R. Ward.

As for the syndicate that founded the iron works, it would appear that Robert Gwynne, a Merrickville merchant and store proprietor, went into partnership with George Merrick (q.v.) who had lately (until 1866?) been managing the woollen mill for J. H. Parnell, and that Gwynne and Merrick were also allied with A. R. Ward.[784] The partnership was presumably organized around 1867 or 1868, but on 3 November 1869 George Merrick formally withdrew from it, and the firm of "Gwynne, Merrick and Ward" became "Gwynne, Ward and Company."[785] One-and-a-half years later, the partners ran the following advertisement in the Merrickville Chronicle:

MALLEABLE IRON WORKS,
MERRICKVILLE, ONTARIO.
GWYNNE, WARD & CO.,
Proprietors

> First-Class Annealing Furnaces, under the management of one of the best Annealers in America, are kept constantly going to meet the demands of Customers. The Pattern Department is under the control of a thoroughly competent workman of many years experience. Orders attended to with the least possible delay.[786]

This same announcement kept appearing in the paper until 31 July 1872, or later.

From the industrial census of 1871 comes more detailed information about the Malleable Iron Works. We are told that it cost $6,000 to establish, with another $18,000 in floating capital for day to day operations. The plant ran all year around, using water power, and employed a labour force of 29 men and nine boys whose total wages came to $8,400 a year.[787] It also used 250 tons of pig-iron and 500 tons of coal annually (costing $14,000} to produce about 240 tons of malleable-iron castings, valued at $23,600.[788] In short, the business was comparable in size and scope with the neighbouring Magee and Pearson foundry, though it used much less pig-iron, and much more coal. Abel R. Ward and Company are stated to be the proprietors of the malleable works.[789]

Thus it would appear that the iron works was very firmly established by 1871. Unfortunately, there is no information presently available about the plant itself, or the number of

buildings it occupied during this period; in fact, we can only conjecture from circumstantial evidence that the foundry was located where we find it in the 1890s. By that time it consisted of about half a dozen buildings, used for a variety of purposes, but little is known about the evolution of these structures.

The same applies to the enterprise itself during the 1880s and nineties. The duration of the Gwynne and Ward partnership is unknown though Robert Gwynne was still living in Merrickville as late as August 1877, at which time he sold a house on Brock Street to Robert William Watchorn.[790] Rather ominously, the Bradstreet Report of 1873 apparently does not mention the malleable works.[791] In 1876 the Woodburn directory states that the "Mallable Iron Works" [sic] was then being run by P. Kyle;[792] a statement reaffirmed by the Lanark County Atlas of 1880.[793] Likewise, a directory of 1884 lists Patrick Kyle as a founder and machinist.[794]

How and when did Patrick Kyle manage to take over the malleable-iron works? Only a few signposts in his rise to prominence can be discerned today. Before 1869 he was an established blacksmith in Merrickville, along with William Lisson, and in the above-named year (as noted elsewhere) the two of them teamed up with James Lingenfelter and John Willis to build carriages on S Drummond Street.[795] (See Carriage Works.) In 1871 Kyle is described as an iron worker in a mill,[796] and in 1873 we find him listed as a carriage trimmer, with a fair-to-good rating for small lines.[797] By that time he already owned three town lots

with various assorted buildings in Merrickville.[798] Presumably he bought out A. R. Ward a few years later, and took over the lease of the foundry property from Mrs. Merrick, who owned the site. On 21 July 1881 Kyle formally bought the eastern portion of Mrs. Merrick's holdings (including the foundry) for $3,500 subject to the condition that he would respect Messrs. Magee and Pearson's rights to one-quarter of the water power from the north end water flumes, which crossed Patrick Kyle's new lands. He also obtained the water wheel and main shafting (of the former gristmill?), plus all the water he wanted from the new flume of 1878, into the bargain; as well as two-thirds of Mrs. Merrick's share of the water flowing past the south bulkhead of the mill dam.[799] Nine years later Kyle was to consolidate his position further by buying up most of the remainder of Mrs. Merrick's north shore property, on both sides of the highway:[800] this would give him the north shore sawmill and gristmill (and other buildings), plus complete control of the water flumes and bulkheads as far as the Magee and Pearson property.

Except that Mr. Kyle sold a slice of his land, consisting of 4,000 square feet, to William Pearson in 1884,[801] practically nothing more can be said about the Malleable Iron Works until the 90s, although there is every reason to believe that Patrick Kyle's enterprise prospered and expanded steadily during the interval. One by one he added an annealing shop, a japanning shop and a pattern shop to his complex and, apparently, he also

ran a carriage shop at the site.[802] Later on he would become involved in other enterprises as well. In 1880 he became a patron of the Lanark County Atlas,[803] and for several years he was also a member of the village council, along with several of his fellow industrialists.[804] The remainder of the story of the Malleable Iron Works is summarized in Chapter 3.

Merrickville: Canal Storehouses

Before closing this segment of Merrickville's industrial history, a few words must be said about the various warehouses and storehouses built by the various industrialists on Ordnance (= canal) lands. Though these buildings are connected only indirectly with the mills of Merrickville, the records on them offer some fascinating insights into the industrial scene in the village.

Only one storehouse still survives at the lock station today and that, of course, is the old depot building west of the blockhouse, now known as the "Then and Now Shop." Though its history obviously extends from the 19th century to the present day, we shall ignore the time framework of this chapter in order to summarize what is known of the building and its history in a single, undivided subsection here. Along with the existing storehouse, we shall also comment on others that were located nearby, or may have preceded it, since the available

information makes it difficult to disentangle one building from another.

As for the existing depot building we may describe it briefly as a timber frame structure, 24 feet by 40 feet in size, resting on concrete foundation walls. Its walls and roof are inclined with stamped metal siding.[805] The style of the building with the eaves of its widely overhanging gabled roof supported by pairs of timber brackets strongly suggests a railway shed. The storehouse has one pair of hinged garage doors in the south and north walls and also a single pedestrian door at the east and west ends. There are two high level windows in the east wall. The building now run by the Merrickville Historical Society as a shop and museum is (happily!) in good condition.[806]

The early history of the depot is obscure. Various canal records mention a number of storehouses evidently built close to the waterway in the vicinity of the present buildings, but we cannot be sure which (if any) of the 19th-century warehouses were identical with the building of today. Once again, all we can do here is summarize the evidence that has hitherto come to light and otherwise wait until new information can be found.

The first clear indication of a canal storehouse at Merrickville appears on the Ordnance map of about 1847, which shows a private warehouse located west of the blockhouse.[807] (See Figure 4.) This building stood closer to the blockhouse than the present structure, and hence cannot have been identical

to it. The original warehouse seems to be indicated in an exchange of letters between Sergeant John Johnston, the lockmaster, and the Ordnance officers at Bytown in 1849: on 2 March of that year Johnston wrote to his superiors that Aaron Merrick, J.P. (q.v.) was now in possession of the (one?) warehouse at Merrickville, having secured a transfer from the previous holders, John S. Read and E. H. Whitmarsh.[808] Merrick wanted to build a permanent wharf in front of it, close to the approach of the upper lock; Johnston pointed out that Read and Whitmarsh still owned the Ordnance Department a year's rent, which came to £3.[809] (Elsewhere in 1849 we find reference to rents paid on the building "for years past.")[810] Merrick stated that he was prepared to pay the arrears of rent, but felt that Read should do so.[811] On 9 April 1849 the officers at Bytown, after checking with the Commanding Royal Engineer, decided they had no objection to Merrick's building a wharf and planking the ground on the banks of the canal which, they noted, was 80 feet wide at that point, though they refused to be held liable if the unloading of boats should cause delays or damage to other craft. They also considered raising the rents, since they were granting Mr. Merrick a big favour.[812] (Merrick did build his wharf.)

In the meantime, another Merrickville merchant, Charles Holden by name, irritated by the casual and slipshod manner in which his own orders and exports were being handled by Read and Whitmarsh over the years, decided to follow Merrick's example and apply for permission to build his own storehouse on Ordnance

land. On 22 March 1849 Holden spoke to Johnston on the matter offering to pay the same rent as other tenants did.[813] Two months later headquarters agreed to grant Holden a lease noting that the lands were not immediately needed for canal or military purposes; though Holden was required to pay for moving some of the existing cedar fencing and to add some more.[814] Holden got busy at the project the following April (1850), to the intense irritation of Aaron and Terence Merrick and some of their friends, who gathered at the site to protest. Aaron Merrick objected especially to the close proximity of Holden's new building, which ran tandem to his own, claiming that its shade roof would shed water onto Merrick's building, or that a fire in Holden's warehouse would surely envelop Merrick's as well.[815] Terence Merrick, who was a barrister by training, threatened to have Holden and Johnston (who was assisting with the work) taken before the courts as trespassers, since the Ordnance officers had not informed the Merricks about Holden's new lease:[816] a rather empty threat, since the canal overseer of works was present to vouch that the new building was indeed being built on the spot demarcated by the executive officer of the Royal Engineers.[817] Johnston, who did not consider the new building a danger to the old (except commercially!), later spoke to Holden, who related that Aaron Merrick had already forbidden him to proceed with any storehouse in the vicinity of Merrick's. Holden, who had expected obstructions, resolved to continue

because he was tired of being at his competitors' mercy over deliveries of merchandise.[813]

The above incident had an amusing sequel. In May the lockmaster notified all parties that the District Commanding Royal Engineer would soon be passing through, and that they would all be given a chance to address him on the matter.[819] On the appointed day, only Holden showed up: the others sent excuses. Aaron Merrick afterwards threatened to disobey the instructions he had received and build his new wharf with a slope down from his storehouse.[820] In this way, it seems, Merrickville obtained a new warehouse on the canal. Conceivably, the Holden storehouse was the same one that exists today, but this writer is inclined to think that it stood a short distance to the east.

During the 1860s, more is heard of both storehouses. In July 1861 Johnston alludes to the steamer Britannia embarking 821 flour at the warehouse above the upper lock:[821] this was probably Aaron Merrick's storehouse, which was evidently being used as an adjunct to the gristmills (q.v.). Two years later (8 July 1863), the lockmaster reported finding a breach in the rubble stone wall supporting the wharf, in front of Aaron Merrick's warehouse. Johnston considered the situation dangerous, and Merrick agreed.[822] Merrick, however, blamed it all on frost but Johnston attributed the trouble to excessive piling of cordwood on the banks.[823] The canal superintendent wrote that it was Merrick's responsibility to maintain the rubble wall; Merrick felt it was up to the department.[824] On 7 August 1863 Merrick

told Johnston that he was ready to repair the wharf but not the stonework, and added that he would remove his storehouse except that it would cause inconvenience for the public.[825] It is not known who eventually repaired the stonework.

In 1864 Johnston had more trouble, this time from Charles Holden who refused to pay the annual rent on his storehouse.[826] The following May, Samuel Jakes, another of Merrickville's leading merchants and store proprietors asked the lockmaster if he could obtain a lease on Holden's building for which Jakes was prepared to pay two years rent.[827] Jakes noted that both the storehouse and the wharf were in a state of dilapidation and needed repairs urgently. For his part on 13 May 1865 Holden wrote to Colonel William F. Coffin, the Ordnance land agent in Ottawa, stating his willingness to transfer his lease to Jakes but objecting to paying the arrears of rent, on the grounds that the storehouse had ceased to be of any use to him in 1864.[828] On 5 June 1865, Coffin wrote to Johnston, affirming that he was quite agreeable to allowing Jakes to assume the lease, providing that either he or Holden would pay the arrears. The rent meanwhile was confirmed at $12.00 per season.[829] Though Coffin's letter threatened legal action to recover the unpaid rent, Holden still refused to pay, while Jakes -- apparently -- found another storehouse for the time being.[830] It has not been ascertained whether the department ever got its money.

In the meantime, another of the Merrickville industrialists had become interested in renting Ordnance land for a warehouse.

On 23 March 1863, acting on Johnston's advice, Hiram Easton (q.v.) wrote to Superintendent Slater, asking for permission to rent a small parcel of land along the canal, adjacent to Holden's, with a 50-foot frontage and extending back to the street. Easton offered to pay $12.00 a year for the land, on which he hoped to erect a storehouse for shingles, lumber and flour; he also volunteered to remove it all if the department wished to reclaim the land.[831] The lockmaster seconded the appeal by agreeing that another storehouse was needed: Merrickville, he said, was growing fast, and the existing storehouses weren't big enough.[832] Johnston also reported that the local millers were currently reduced to rushing flour and other commodities over to the wharf on every downward trip, to avoid blocking the movement of other craft; the only alternative, he added, was to leave cargoes on the wharf in advance -- which did not work out so well during inclement weather.[833] Easton received the lease he asked for after the usual delays, but the authorities apparently committed a blunder in that they granted the lease without receiving any firm commitment about payments for it! Thus, when the lockmaster called on Easton in January 1865 to collect the first season's rent, he was amazed to be told that no rents were required![834] Slater afterwards admitted that Easton had never formally agreed to pay any rent for his storehouse, and added that something would have to be worked out soon.[835] It seems probable that Easton's lease covered the site of the existing depot building: if copies of certain sketch maps mentioned in official

correspondences could be found, it might be possible to verify this. Whether the present building was actually built by Easton in 1864 is, of course, another matter: it may have been, or it may be a replacement structure built at some later time. Hiram Easton's business activities were expanding steadily at this time, and soon he decided that his storehouse beside the canal was too small. On 14 January 1867 he sent the following letter to Johnston:

> Dear Sir,
> As the store house and land, that was occupied by Charles Holden Esq. at this station, has been unoccupied this last two years, and is still unoccupied, I wish to apply through you assistant to the Department, to have the same. For which I am willing to pay $12. a year Rent for the same. Should this offer be agreeable to the department, you will please inform me as early as you can, By so doing you will much oblige,
>
> Yours,
>
> Hiram Easton[836]

The lockmaster immediately sent this missive to Coffin, cheerfully recommending its acceptance: Mr. Easton was, in Johnston's opinion, "very obedient and industrious" and "worthy of assistance."[837] Coffin, in acknowledging receipt of the above

commented, " ... I respect your recommendation, and if Mr. Easton will pay $12. in advance, he shall have the portion and use of the store for one year from date.[838] The whole matter was handled with amazing promptitude, since the lockmaster had the reply in his hands within three days.[839] In August 1868 Coffin noted that Easton had paid his rent on the storehouse for 1867,[840] and the following September (1868) Johnston referred to the building as "the store house formerly occupied by Mr. Charles Holden."[841] Thus it would appear that Hiram Easton, for a while at least, held two storehouses on the canal.

In July of 1869 we find another passing reference to rents on Ordnance lands being paid by both Aaron Merrick and Hiram Easton,[842] but beyond that point the records examined by this writer peter out, and nothing more is heard of either the Merrick or Holden storehouses. Concerning the depot building, however, a few more scraps of information are available. Given the apparent extent of the Easton family's forwarding activities during the 1870s and eighties, it seems likely that they kept the storehouse for most of that time. Afterwards it seems to have gone to the Ottawa Transportation Company, a Montreal-based forwarding firm,[843] and one Merrickville old-timer recalls seeing consignments of cheese and other products being stashed in the building before being loaded aboard steamers such as the Olive and her successor, the Ottawan, on their regular runs to Montreal.[844] A photograph taken around the turn of the century

shows the present building with its original board and batten walls and looking rather shabby.[845] Sometime afterwards it must have been repaired and covered with the present pressed metal sheeting.

In 1914 the old storehouse assumed a new role when the Rideau Power Company apparently began to use it to store cement destined for the new mill dam at Merrickville. Afterwards when the dam was finished (1915) the power company used the building for storing cross arms for hydro lines, insulators, fuses, coiled wire and other items. It was still being used in this way during the 1940s and in addition two hydro trucks (a 1935 Chevrolet and a 1938 Ford) were housed in it for a number of years.[846] More recently it went to the Merrickville Lions Club and finally in 1967 it was donated to the Merrickville Historical Society which continues to run the old building as a museum and shop.[847]

One further question might be considered: why was the old depot built in railway style? It seems rather unlikely that Hiram Easton would have chosen such a design, least of all in the pre-railway period of Merrickville's history and it may also be wondered whether Easton would have built the concrete foundations for it as far back as 1864: more likely he would have used rubble stone or nothing at all. Perhaps a glimmer of an answer can be found in the tradition that the CPR shortly after it built its main line through Merrickville around 1886 once ran a spur down to the water's edge on the north shore of

the Rideau River above the dam, so as to be able to exchange cargoes with some of the canal steamers. This being true it would seem logical for the railway to build a freight shed at the end of the spur. Is it possible that once the spur was abandoned and the old Easton storehouse had fallen into decay(?), the railway shed was shifted onto a scow and towed across to the locks where it was relocated at the old site of Easton's storehouse, on a new cement foundation built especially for it? Or is this guess completely erroneous, the truth being that the present building is the same one built by Hiram Easton back in 1864? Perhaps some unexamined records will someday supply the answer.

Summary of the Canal Period

The period from the death of the old patriarch William Merrick in 1844 to the coming of the railway about 1886 saw Merrickville develop into a considerable industrial centre. Despite its continuing dependence on the Rideau Canal (and indeed partly because of it!) the village which had only four water powered mills in 1844 acquired approximately 25 more over the next 40 years, to say nothing of dozens more smaller village shops of various kinds using human or animal power. The most spectacular period of growth seems to have been during the 1840s and 1850s: approximately five new mills can be assigned to the years 1845-59 and about 11 more to the 1850s. Many of these were, of course, rebuildings of earlier mills, but nevertheless the growth was

substantial and Merrickville seems to have come a very close third to its rivals Kemptville and Smiths Falls as a manufacturing centre during this interval.

During the 1860s and seventies there was a perceptible slowdown which can probably be attributed to the gradual decline of lumbering and agriculture in much of the village's hinterland — to say nothing of the immense new attractions for industry enjoyed by Smiths Falls once it had railways running in four directions. Only three new factories can be assigned to the 1860s period in Merrickville and perhaps three more to the seventies: admittedly perhaps the sites with water power were getting largely filled up by that time.

Of course, as we have seen industry also became far more diversified in Merrickville during the above 40 years. Before 1845 the village had only saw- and gristmills plus one small carding mill. After 1845 the community acquired two new sawmills, one shingle mill, one furniture factory, one stave factory, a snath factory, besides carriage works and other wood-related shops plus four(?) new gristmills, an oatmeal mill, two new carding mills and two new woollen factories. Two tanneries also appeared in the 1850s plus two axe factories and five foundries and machine shops, not counting the malleable-iron works. None of this was particularly startling or remarkable given the raw materials locally available (such as timber, grain and wool) or rendered accessible by the canal (coal and pig-iron, for examples): almost all the new industries in Merrickville had

their counterparts in neighbouring towns. Perhaps the most noteworthy factor was the number of apparent "firsts" that can be credited to Merrickville: so far as is known, the village had the first woollen mill, shingle mill, and malleable-iron works anywhere on the Rideau waterway, and perhaps also the first tannery and axe factory. It also had the second oldest carding mill, and for that matter the oldest sawmill and gristmill on the Rideau River. Altogether this is rather an impressive record, which reaffirms the prominence of the community during its initial stages of industrial development, relative to its neighbours. Not too much is known about how these enterprises related to the local scene, but it seems fairly clear that most of the mills and factories exported a great part of their products, usually by way of the canal.

At lease six or seven of Merrickville's new industries proved abortive during this period, in that they seem to have lasted only a dozen years or less. However, some such as the first island woollen mill, the furniture factory, the malleable-iron works, the plow and stove works, and the saw- and gristmills proved sturdy plants that took root and carried on well into the 20th century. That story, however, belongs to Chapter 3.

Biographic Sketches

Aaron Merrick (1801?-1870)

Aaron Merrick (Mirick), one of Merrickville's leading merchants and mill owners was the second son and fourth child of William and Sylvia Merrick and was born either in 1800 or 1801: probably the latter since he is said to have been 69 at the time of his death.[848] He was raised at Merrick's Mills. His first business venture seems to have been undertaken in 1830 when he built a small stone tavern on Mill Street, North Merrickville perhaps in conjunction with his younger brother Terence:[849] the building, now a private home faces the Alloy Foundry Company's office and considering that the Rideau Canal works was still under construction when the tavern was opened it no doubt did a rushing business. By 1832 we find him assessed for horses and land[850] and by 1837 he was the proprietor of a merchant's shop and the north shore gristmill (No. 3, q.v.).[851] He also had a two-storey house of his own by the above date.[852]

In 1844 Aaron Merrick formally inherited the north shore saw- and gristmills along with his brother Terence; he also received the east half of what is now South Merrickville and prospered further by the sale of village lots.[853] The following year or thereabouts he apparently engaged Samuel Langford, a Merrickville mason and joiner to build a handsome new house on a gentle hilltop at the south edge of town in what was then

a secluded pastoral site.[854] The house built in Regency style with large ground floor French windows and corresponding casement windows on the second floor has been extensively remodelled in the 20th century and is now the Hill Top Manor Nursing Home:[855] it still reflects an aura of grandeur and sedateness. (We are assured the remarkable "floating" spiral staircase within dates from Aaron Merrick's ownership of the house.)[856]

To all appearances Aaron Merrick was one of Merrickville's most prominent citizens. He owned (and sometimes leased) the north shore sawmill and flour mill exporting lumber and flour to Ottawa and Montreal and importing dry goods, groceries and hardware from the markets of Montreal and New York City, especially Chinese teas which he sold in his downtown store.[857] In the autumn of 1855 his store and mills were gutted by fire[858] but he persevered and carried on nonetheless and in 1859 completed the large three-storey stone commercial building at the south-west corner of Main and St. Lawrence Streets;[859] the first truly urban edifice in town. (Its even more monumental neighbour across the street, the Jakes Block, followed a few years later.)[860]

Of course, Merrick was also active in civic affairs. In 1828 and 1830 he was pathmaster for Montague Township,[861] in 1849 he was a Justice of the Peace[862] and in 1851 he was reeve of Wolford: as such he was appointed a commissioner for overseeing construction of a new township hall; a position he resigned in 1856.[863] The following year he evidently had a falling out

with E. H. Whitmarsh and John Kirkland, two fellow councilman, over the recent municipal elections.[864] When Merrickville was incorporated in 1860 Aaron Merrick became its first reeve, a position he surrendered to Samuel Jakes the following year.[866]

In 1862 Merrick made a tour of England and parts of Europe and on his return was welcomed home with a hotel banquet and great fanfare organized by most of the leading men in town.[867] By 1865 he had officially retired from business. He died on 1 July 1870 aged 69 and was buried at Merrickville Union Cemetery.[869]

Aaron Merrick married Mary Ferine Burritt (1821-1904) apparently a daughter of Colonel Edmund Burritt of Burritt's Rapids sometime before 1841: they appear to have had at least four sons and three daughters.[870] Neither of the parents subscribed to any religion.[871] Mary Merrick who outlived her husband by 34 years reacquired the north shore sawmill and gristmills after her husband had sold them[872] and leased them to tenants for several years. She moved to Kingston by 1881 and died on 23 February 1904[873] and now lies beside her husband.

William Merrick (Jr.) (1793-1867)

William Merrick, Jr., the eldest son and second child of William Merrick and Sylvia Comstock was born in 1793 probably at Elizabethtown (Brockville) and was christened on 26 May.[874] He came with his parents to Merrick's Mills and served in the militia

during the War of 1812.[875] Apparently he volunteered again during the rebellion scare of 1837 and afterwards was created a militia captain and saw action at Windmill Point in 1839.[876] By 1819 William Merrick, Jr. was a landowner[877] and by 1833 he was given custody of his father's sawmill.[878] In 1844 he and his brother Stephen (q.v.) inherited the island and the south side mill sites.[879]

Merrick developed his share of new mills in Merrickville opening a cooper's shop and machine shop all apparently on the island; he also ran the island gristmill and he or his son established the community's first shingle mill.[880] In 1858, however, he sold all his business enterprises to Hiram Easton (q.v.) and retired to a life of farming[881] probably on the lands he had inherited in Montague. He died of an illness in 1867 surrounded (so we are told) by sympathizing friends[882] and was buried in the Union Cemetery.

William Merrick, Jr. took an active interest in education along with his brother Terence; both were amongst the first school trustees in Merrickville in 1851.[883] His wife was Judith Roche (1805-86) whose family came from County Cork, Ireland;[884] they had only one known son, William Roach (or Roche) Merrick (1828?-1900) who helped run the island mills during the 1850s and who may have built the shingle mill in partnership with Edmund Burritt.[885] W. R. Merrick also seems to have run a gristmill in North Merrickville during the 1860s.[886]

Stephen Hedger Merrick (1807-1861?)

Stephen Hedger Merrick (Mirick) was apparently the fourth son and seventh child of William Merrick and Sylvia Comstock. He was born in 1807 probably at Merrick's Mills and by 1819 he apparently held land of his own.[887] Little is known of him before 1847 though a census listing of 1842 seems to speak of him as a farmer in Wolford: by that time he was married and had four children.[888]

The turning point in his life came apparently in 1844 when he inherited the island and its undeveloped water power along with his brother William (q.v.). Stephen also received most of South Merrickville east of St. Lawrence Street and like Aaron (q.v.) prospered by selling lots to community residents.[889] Around 1845 again like Aaron he engaged Samuel Langford to build a handsome little stone house for him on Brock Street: this house with massive Doric columns supporting a broad entablature and pediment over the front porch is far more Classical in style than any other in town.[890] It is in excellent condition and is now the property of Mr. Arthur Heroux, owner of the Alloy Foundry Company (q.v.).[891]

Stephen Merrick's one major business enterprise was apparently the first island woollen mill (q.v.) which he built in 1848 and operated seemingly with great success until his death; he was in fact one of Canada's first woollen textile manufacturers. On 28 October 1853 he and his wife were amongst the

24 charter members of the I.O.G.T., Harmony Lodge No. 1, Merrickville; one of the oldest lodges in central Canada.[892] He was also a Justice of the Peace in 1854 and 1857[893] and perhaps longer.

It may be that Stephen Merrick's health began to fail in 1858 since on 11 January 1859 he prepared his will appointing his brother Terence (a barrister-at-law) and Dr. Christopher Leggo, a good friend of the family executors of the same.[894] Nonetheless he is still listed as a manufacturer in 1861 and the firm of "S. H. Mirick and Son" is mentioned as late as February 1862.[895] The date of his death and the place of his burial are equally unknown though he is spoken of as deceased in 1863.[896] His name can still be found on the date stone of his ruined woollen mill.

Stephen H. Merrick was married to Margaret Ardell who is said to have been a member of the Easton family[897] though her Irish background makes this unlikely. They had at least seven children including George Merrick (q.v.), Henry Merrick (q.v.), Dr. Edgar H. Merrick and Dr. John Augustus Merrick (1837-1920).[898] Margaret outlived her husband by several years.[899]

Stephen H. Merrick also had a cousin named Stephen Merrick (or Mirick) who has sometimes been confused with him. The cousin born in 1815 was apparently a son of Stephen Merrick of Wolford, an elder brother of William Merrick, Sr. and co-founder of the original Merrick mills.[900] (See Chapter 1.) The cousin also

established the North Merrickville Hotel at the corner of William and Mill Streets sometime before 1856:[901] the hotel burned around 1867.[902] The other Stephen Merrick also founded a stage service between Merrickville and Kemptville during the 1850s connecting with the Ottawa and Prescott Railway.[903] Rather confusingly and perhaps mistakenly Stephen Merrick, as distinct from S. H. Merrick is sometimes listed as a miller but if true there is no indication of which mill he may have held. The last reference to him is in 1867 when he resigned from the local school board:[905] his wife Caroline Gumming outlived him for many years and died in 1907.

George Merrick (1832-1884)

Not very much is known of George Merrick, eldest son of Stephen Hedger Merrick and Margaret Ardell. He was born on 30 September 1832 and by 1856 he was in business as a dry goods merchant at first in partnership with Jeremiah Shailer of Merrickville.[907] (Clothing was sold at that store in 1856 and one wonders if it was made at Stephen Merrick's woollen factory.) In March 1856 George severed his partnership with Shailer and carried on alone;[908] in 1857 he was appointed an auditor[909] and the following year he became an agent for the Liverpool and London Fire and Life Insurance Company.

On 4 March 1859 George Merrick's name first appears along with his father's as a partner in the woollen mill (q.v.).[911]

After his father's death George seems to have taken over the woollen mill briefly; then in 1864 he entered a partnership with J. H. Parnell (q.v.) whose sister he married and undertook to manage the woollen mill for him.[912] This venture did not prosper and by 1866 the partnership was at an end. Shortly afterwards Merrick entered another partnership with Robert Gwynne and Abel R. Ward, Jr. apparently to produce malleable-iron but in November 1869 he retired from this enterprise as well.[913] Of Merrick's later life nothing is known except that he died on 9 April 1884.[914] The house on Lot 83 Lewis Street, Merrickville is still known as the George Merrick home[915] but there appears to be no record that he ever owned it.[916]

Henry Merrick (1837-1927)

A younger son of Stephen Hedger Merrick, Henry Merrick was born in 1837 probably at Merrickville. He first comes into prominence in 1859 when he was first granted a shop licence.[917] Two years later he had erected a very substantial store on the east side of St. Lawrence Street apparently at the corner of Wellington Street which he also used as a residence.[918] Afterwards he took over the woollen mill which he seems to have run personally for a number of years before leasing it to tenants in 1871: in 1885 he sold it outright to Robert William Watchorn (q.V.).[919]

Meanwhile Merrick became active in politics. From 1868 to 1871 he was reeve of Merrickville[920] and in 1871 he suceeded Henry D. Smith (q.v.) as M.P.P. for North Leeds and Grenville as a Liberal-Conservative.[921] He was re-elected in 1874 and drew praise from the Merrickville Chronicle for his independent judgment on political matters.[922] A staunch Orangeman, Merrick was elected Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Black Chapter of Orangemen of British America in 1875 and by 1879 he became Grand Master of the Orange Order in Canada. One of his special concerns was promoting an act to incorporate the Orange Society.[923]

After his retirement from politics Merrick apparently returned to mercantile pursuits[924] though he also opened -- or -- took over a foundry and machine shop (q.v.) on the island.[925] In 1884 he was president of the Mechanics Institute of Merrickville[926] and in 1900 he was serving as post office inspector at Kingston:[927] apparently he had moved to the "Limestone City" by that time. Of his later years nothing has been learned though he lived to the ripe old age of 90. He died in 1927 and was buried with his relatives in Merrickville Union Cemetery.

Henry Merrick was twice married: to Phebe (Phoebe?) Esther Easton (1837-74), a daughter of Samuel Starr Easton of Easton's Corners (a brother of Hiram Easton)[928] and afterwards to Sara J. Byers (1859-1930):[929] at least five children were born of the first marriage and one from the second.

Hiram Easton (1820-1910) and his Family

Hiram Easton, another of Merrickville's leading forwarders and manufacturers came from an old English Loyalist family whose forebear, Joseph Easton came to America as early as 1633.[930] Three generations of Eastons lived at Hartford, Connecticut before one of its members, also called Joseph Easton (1742-1824), came to Canada.[931] Joseph served in the siege of Montreal in 1760 and afterwards supported the British during the Revolutionary War.[932] He arrived in Canada to stay around 1792 and was awarded 1,200 acres in Wolford Township where he settled soon after the 1795 survey.[933] Joseph Easton had four daughters and six sons of whom the fourth, William Henry Easton QTA (1792-1852) became the father of Hiram.[934]

The Easton family on the whole was vigorous and enterprising. Its members, of course, created the village of Easton's Corners and made it a hive of activity: Samuel Starr Easton alone developed a steam powered gristmill, sawmill and blacksmith shop before 1863.[935] It was amid such a setting as this that Hiram Easton was born.

Hiram Easton was the sixth child of William Henry Easton and Mary Kilborne and was born on 3 October 1820 at what was called the old William Roche homestead at Easton's Corners (which burned after the turn of the century).[936] He married an Irish girl named Mary Ann Young in 1841:[937] both were destined to live to a ripe old age. The couple had four sons:

Marinus G. (born 1842), Roderick Myles (1845), William Henry (1847) and Simon Terrance (1850),[938] all of whom came to play a role in the Merrickville enterprises.

Hiram Easton started off as a farmer near Easton's Corners; by 1848 he was the owner of 55 acres and plenty of cattle and was well enough established to employ one farm hand.[939] Three years later he was also running a hotel and secured a tavern licence from the Wolford authorities.[940] Apparently he prospered and with prosperity came new ambitions. By 1857 he was ready to become a manufacturer and deciding that the prospects of Merrickville were better than those of Easton's Corners he purchased a slice of the island industrial area from William Merrick, Jr. including the water power privileges on 5 February 1858[941] though he does not seem to have moved to Merrickville and taken over his new holdings until later that year.

Along with the island site Easton also acquired the still extant stone gristmill (q.v.) and presumably the Merrick cooper's shop, machine shop and shingle mill. Within just a few years Easton built a new oatmeal mill and an impressive five-storey building[942] which we have identified as his woollen mill (q.v.). He also continued to manufacture shingles and built a steam screw tug, the Hiram Easton (apparently the only steamboat ever built at Merrickville) to tow his scows to Ottawa.[943] Not very much is known of Easton's business activities since his record books have apparently disappeared and he never advertised in the local newspapers. His woollen mill was

a failure but the other enterprises evidently prospered and in time he bought land at the canal basin in Ottawa and erected a large warehouse there: this property later went to j. R. Booth, the Ottawa lumber king.[944] His son Marinus ran the shingle mill for a time (1860)[945] and during the 1870s Roderick and William Henry apparently handled the forwarding part of the business.[946] The youngest son, Simon became a steamboat captain and later made a partnership with Henry to forward commodities not only to Ottawa but also to Montreal, Kingston and the United States.[947]

Meanwhile their father had gone into municipal politics. He was one of the first councillors in Merrickville when the village was incorporated in 1860[948] and we find him still on the council in 1871, 1872, 1876, 1878-82[949] and perhaps even longer. In 1860 he was also elected a school trustee,[950] in 1871 he became an active proponent of the abortive Merrickville and Westport Railway[951] and as late as 1887 he ran for village reeve but was defeated by David J. Hall.[952] In 1869 Easton bought some land in North Merrickville on the west side of Mill Street including a two-storey frame house that still stands[953] and is now the home of Mrs. Kathleen Easton. By 1871 Easton was the owner of four town lots, six houses, two sheds, three barns and a farm of 351 acres.[954]

During the 1870s and eighties Easton's enterprises ran into trouble. His sons Roderick and Henry both went bankrupt[955] and Hiram himself became involved in a costly lawsuit with the

Merricks over water rights: both sides were practically ruined by the time a settlement was hammered out in 1884.[956] (See Island Shingle Mill No. 2.) Some of his mills were still busy until the 1890s, but in 1894 the oatmeal mill, which had been mortgaged to George Byron Magee, was confiscated and sold.[957] Then in 1899 most of the mills were destroyed by fire and as there was no insurance, they could not be rebuilt.[958] Hiram Easton, now about 80, retired and spent his last years at home with his son Simon to look after him.[959] In 1909 he suffered a fall which injured his back and side, and was afterwards confined to bed.[960] The end came on the morning of 10 January 1910, and he was buried at Easton's Corners.

Hiram Easton was a Universalist in religion and a Liberal in politics.[962] He was described as "a great reader, a deep thinker and able in debate, [a] man stern in character, very set in his way, but upright, honest and straight forward."[963] It was also said that he was frequently charitable, and never spoke ill of any man behind his back.[964] His obituary closed with the words, "No better epitaph need be engraved on his tomb stone, than that 'he lived and died a man.'"[965]

Mrs. Easton, who was a sister of Mrs. William Henry Magee died in 1914 at the age of 94.[966] Their son Roderick died in 1897 at the age of 52.[967] Captain Simon Easton died in 1923,[968] the last son, William Henry ("Harry") died at Ottawa in 1937.[969]

Ransom Stone (1797?-1864)

Little is known of the individual who operated two of the north shore sawmills (Nos. 3 and 4, q.v.) for approximately 18 years. Ransom Stone was born about 1797 in the United States and evidently came to Canada not later than 1836, by which time he married.[970] He seems to have settled in or near Brockville, where a number of his descendents still live today. A sawyer by profession, Stone is known to have moved to Merrickville by 1847, at which time he was renting Aaron Merrick's sawmill, apparently for £125 per year:[971] he may have arrived with Edward Errett (q.v.) in 1845.[972] The lockmaster's journals for this period record the passages of a number of log drives (with up to 2,129 sawlogs) by Stone during the 1840s and fifties.[973] Errett, whom Stone had evidently met in Augusta Township, was foreman at the sawmill.[974]

Ransom Stone acquired a residence on Main Street East, sometime before 1860,[975] on a property that later went to T. Harvey Percival (q.v.) of the Percival Plow and Stove Company. There is no mention of Stone between June of 1852 and November of 1858, which suggests that Aaron and Terence Merrick repossessed the sawmill for part of that time, but by 1858 he was again in charge of the north shore sawmill:[976] apparently he was also manufacturing lath. In 1863 we find him supplying lumber for canal works,[977] and he is also said to have built some of Merrickville's first wooden sidewalks. However, sometime

before 5 August 1864 he died,[978] and was probably buried with his relatives somewhere in Augusta Township. He left at least six children.[979] Edward Errett (q.v.) assumed the lease of the sawmill.

Edward Errett (1823-1904)

Edward Errett, or Erratt, who became one of Merrickville's most prominent lumbermen, was born in Canada in 1823.[980] The family is said to have come from Wexford, Ireland, and to have settled in the Ottawa Valley,[981] probably along with the Robinson immigrations of 1823. Edward Errett is suspected to have been the son of Isaac Henry Errett, who settled in the Winchester region.[982] By 1851-52 several of the Erretts were residing in Augusta Township, as were the Stones,[983] and it is probable that Ransom Stone (q.v.) induced Edward to come to Merrickville and serve as foreman of the north shore sawmill (Nos. 3 and 4, q.v.), apparently in 1845.

Errett is not mentioned specifically between 1849 and 1864 and it was apparently during this interval that he retired temporarily from sawmilling to take up a mercantile career for 12 years.[984] Afterwards he returned to lumbering, apparently first at Belleville,[985] though by 1864 he had returned to Merrickville to work again with Ransom Stone.[986] When Stone died in 1864, Errett came to terms with the new owner of the sawmill, Abel R. Ward, Sr., and assumed the lease of the mill.[987]

Lockmaster Johnston's letterbook contains a number of polite appeals from Errett for permission to pass sawlogs through the by-wash in 1864 while Johnston for his part felt inclined to recommend Errett to the canal superintendent for favourable consideration.[988]

There is no record that Edward Errett ever purchased a sawmill at Merrickville but we find him listed as a lumber manufacturer and village resident throughout the 1860s, seventies and eighties and even in 1895 he is said to have had a sawmill.[989] By 1865 he had made a partnership with John Hill, a local merchant to sell lumber[990] but by April of 1868 for unknown reasons the firm of Hill and Errett went bankrupt.[991] This setback proved only temporary, however, since by 1871 Errett is again listed as a lumber manufacturer; he also owned 142 acres, a house and three barns.[992] That same year like Hiram Easton he became an active proponent of the stillborn Merrickville and Westport Railway[993] and in 1872 he succeeded Henry Merrick (q.v.) as village reeve.[994]

During the periods 1876-79 and 1886-88 there are more references to Errett as a lumberman usually as a supplier of lumber for sidewalks and bridges and in the 1880s we find him in partnership with a D. Crozier -- a prominent name in town.[995] In 1879 Errett joined the village council along with Hiram Easton and R. W. Watchorn (q.v.)[996] and in 1887 he was appointed an auditor.[997] To all appearances he was one of Merrickville's most esteemed citizens: a contemporary described him as

straightforward and honourable in his dealings as well as gentle and courteous in manner; a man who could always be relied on and whose honour was above reproach.[998]

Little is known of Edward Errett's later years. Family tradition says that he eventually acquired or built a sawmill in Lombardy near Perth[999] and in 1900 the Merrickville Star speaks of him as a resident of Lombardy.[1000] By that time he had apparently retired. He died on 10 January 1904 aged 80 years and five months and was buried in Merrickville Union Cemetery.[1001]

Edward Errett was a Wesleyan Methodist in religion as was his German-born wife Clarissa.[1002] They had at least four daughters and five sons; of whom the eldest, Phineas Edwin (1853-91) became a sawyer[1003] while Alfred Isaac (1860-88) became a doctor,[1004] Robert Putnam (1870-1940) ran a sawmill and later a cartage business in Merrickville (primarily from the CPR station)[1005] and Edward, Jr. became a railway baggage man for a time.[1006] Four of the Errett children are now buried near their parents in Merrickville.

John Hunter Parnell (1838-1905)

John Hunter Parnell who attempted to run the island woollen mill at Merrickville for a few years was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1838[1007] He came to Canada as a child and for a time resided in Kingston.[1008] By 1864 he moved to Merrickville and purchased

the woollen factory from the estate of Stephen Hedger Merrick (q.v.) engaging his brother-in-law George Merrick (q.v.) to manage it.[1009] For some reason the project failed and less than two years later Parnell was obliged to sell the mill to Henry Merrick at a heavy loss.[1010] Sometime later he moved to Ottawa and qualified as a dentist.[1011] He was also prominent in business and civic affairs and was elected to the Ottawa city council in 1894.[1012] He was an early and notable member of the Independent Order of Oddfellows and during his Merrickville days owned and edited the diocesan church paper of the Church of England.[1013] Parnell died in 1905 in Ottawa apparently on 26 July after a lengthy illness and was buried beside his parents at Burritt's Rapids Cemetery.[1014]

Thomas Watchorn (1828-1879)

Thomas Watchorn, Sr., the founder of the Watchorn woollen dynasty in Merrickville was born on 4 December 1828.[1015] Nothing has been gleaned of his parentage and early life although a possible clue is found in the census of 1851-52 which lists a weaver (?) named John Watchorn and his wife Anne, both 56 at the time as residents of North Montague Township: included amongst their numerous children was a Thomas Watchorn.[1016] The family came from Ireland and seems to have settled originally in Beckwith;[1017] other Watchorns are found in such places as Almonte and Pakenham.[1018]

Thomas Watchorn first became a factory weaver in 1853 apparently with the Rosamond Company in Almonte, and in 1861 we find him listed as a cloth finisher and dyer, still employed by the Rosamonds.1019 In 1866, according to an announcement in the North Lanark Advance, he struck out by himself and formed a partnership with Gilbert Cannon, another experienced hand in a woollen mill, "for the Manufacture of Woollen Goods such as Tweeds, Canada Greys, Knitted Shirts and Drawers, etc."[1020] They leased a mill owned by John Baird in Almonte for that purpose, but within a few years Watchorn withdrew from the partnership to manage the Boyd Caldwell woollen mill, which had just been opened at Lanark in 1867; a post he still held in 1874.[1021]

However, Watchorn had never given up the idea of having a mill of his own, and in December 1874 he and his son Robert William took over the lease of Henry Merrick's factory (q.v.) in Merrickville.[1022] The family at once moved to Merrickville and incorporated themselves; securing a fresh lease with additional lands in April 1877.[1023] They also began to take a prominent part in local affairs, and in 1877 Thomas Watchorn was elected to the village council.[1024] But by that time the elder Watchorn's time on earth had almost expired, and on 20 December 1879 he died, at the age of only 51 years.[1025] Three days later the council, on a motion by Edward Errett and Hiram Easton, voted to convey to the family "their deepest

sympathy in their sad bereavement, in the removal by death of a kind and indulgent Father and loving Husband."[1026]

Thomas Watchorn's wife Matilda Morphy outlived him by nearly 34 years.[1027] Three of their sons, Robert William (q.v.), George Edmund (q.v.) and Thomas Henry were all destined to play a role in reaping where their father had sown in the textile trade.

Henry D. Smith (1821?-18)

Henry D. Smith was another of Merrickville's important men during the period of about 1850 to 1872 though the facts of his life (as uncovered by this writer) are rather sketchy. He was probably born in 1821 (or a little earlier) on a farm in Wolford and may have been the son of George Smith, a local farmer.[1028] H. D. Smith first appears as a farmer himself in Wolford in 1851-52 and was chosen as an enumerator during the census survey of those years.[1029] He seems to have moved to Merrickville by 1853 at which time he evidently opened a foundry in the village (or bought out the earlier foundry of Messrs. Lilly and Hogg, q.v.). From 1856 to 1861 he was also a partner in the foundry works of W. H. Magee (g.v.).[1030]

Steadily Smith developed his holdings and enterprises. Until 1856 he and William Whitmore ran a blacksmith shop in town.[1031] His foundry (q.v.) burned out around 1860 but he replaced it with a new one at another location[1032] and

meanwhile established a tannery (q.v.), a general store, and eventually a cheese factory (q.v.. Chapter 3).[1033] The Walling map of about 1861 labels four town lots in South Merrickville as belonging to H. D. Smith,[1034] and this is reflected in the census of 1871.[1035]

Predictably, Smith was active in local affairs. In 1857 he became one of three directors of the newly-formed Mechanics Institute in Merrickville,[1036] and in 1861 he ran for office for the North Riding of Leeds and Grenville, in the provincial government, on a ticket of opposition to the existing ministry and its railway policies, but was defeated.[1037] He later tried again and by 1869 he was successful, becoming a supporter of the Sandfield Macdonald administration: here he rather unwisely accepted two arbitratorships from the government, and was roundly damned by both Edward Blake, the opposition leader, and the Merrickville Chronicle for so doing: they saw it as tantamount to accepting bribes.[1038] By 1871 Smith had been succeeded by Henry Merrick (q.v.).

H. D. Smith was a Methodist in religion. He was married and by 1871 had five children, mostly daughters.[1039] After 1876 he disappears from all the records examined by this writer and since he does not seem to have been buried locally it may be inferred that he and his family perhaps moved away from Merrickville.

William Henry Magee (1827-1887)

William Henry Magee, of the Magee and Pearson foundry works was born in January 1827.[1039] His family came from County Cavan, Ireland; two of his uncles arrived at Quebec city in 1822.[1040] One of these, James Magee (or McGee), a carpenter by trade, went to work for Squire Philemon Wright of Hull, later helped build the Rideau Canal, and finally settled near Stittsville.[1041] The other, Simon McGee, became a master shoemaker and settled at Merrickville.[1042] A third brother, Archibald Magee (1796-1873) , also settled near Merrickville and married Margaret McGuire, by whom he had four sons and three daughters: the eldest son was William Henry Magee.[1043]

W. H. Magee—so we are told—was born on a farm on the old North Augusta Trail, south of Merrickville.[1044] We first hear of him, apparently in July of 1849 when, at the age of 22 he was doing some log driving on the Rideau Canal.[1045] By 1851-52 he had definitely moved to Merrickville, where he opened a carriage shop.[1046] By that time he was already married to Helen Young, a sister of Mrs. Hiram Easton, who was eventually to give him six children (of whom two daughters were to die young).[1047] Magee purchased a home at the north-east corner of St. Lawrence and Drummond Streets, then in 1864 moved to another house at St. Lawrence and Wellington.[1048] Later, as he grew more prosperous, he would shift across to North Merrickville.

Carriage-making apparently nudged Magee into blacksmithing, and smithing led to foundry work. By 1856 Magee, in partnership with Henry D. Smith (q.v.), had incorporated himself as W. H. Magee and Company, iron founders and makers of plows, cultivators, road scrapers and stoves:[1049] no doubt Magee's early life on a bush farm had given him practical insights into what farmers needed, and what they could afford. In 1859 Magee, in partnership with William Pearson (q.v.), with or without the aid of Smith, opened a new foundry in North Merrickville for making plows and stoves,[1050] and two years later he severed his connections with Smith.[1051]

As the business grew (with Magee running the shop and Pearson looking after the account books), the prestige and prominence of the partners grew as well. In 1865 W. H. Magee became president of the Mechanics Institute and Library Association[1052] and in 1869 both he and Pearson were on the village council.[1053] By 1871 Magee was the owner of 100 acres plus three town lots, one house, seven shops and warehouses, two barns or stables, eight wagons and a boat.[1054] In 1869 he and Pearson formally purchased the foundry site along with William Merrick's old house and property from Abel R. Ward, Jr. and his wife[1055] and while Pearson lived in the Merrick house, Magee occupied the large turreted brick house with the verandah and carriage house farther up the street.[1056] The partners were now living in style and comfort.

Little more is heard of W. H. Magee beyond this point though he directed the foundry business to the last and left it in thriving condition. During the 1880s his health began to fail and he was often brought to death's door by a painful illness. The end finally came on 14 April 1887.[1057] The Perth Courier commented that "he filled a large place in the affairs of Merrickville and in the esteem of its people and his death will be regretted by all."[1058] His widow, Helen survived him 27 years, dying at the age of 88.[1059] Both are buried at Merrickville Union Cemetery. Their eldest son, George Byron Magee (1855-1944), who was long prominent in Merrickville married Margaret N. Watchorn, a sister of R. W. Watchorn of the Watchorn woollen mills.[1060]

William Pearson (1832-1929)

William Pearson, the junior partner of the Magee-Pearson foundry works, was born in March 1832 on a farm near Easton's Corners.[1061] The family was of Irish descent.[1062] His grandfather was Samuel Pearson, who left Virginia for Canada during the Revolutionary War and settled at Maitland, while his father, Thomas McKay Pearson, was a farmer.[1063] William Pearson attended school at Merrickville, and at the age of 20 began to work for Henry D. Smith, and apparently kept the books for all of Smith's enterprises - including the store, foundry and tannery.[1064] In this connection he met W. H. Magee, who became a partner with Smith time and in 1859 the two decided to go into business for

themselves, manufacturing plows and stoves. For a time Pearson lived in Magee's former house in South Merrickville,[1065] but in 1869 he moved into William Merrick, Sr.'s old house, which he remodelled and stuccoed and decorated with bargeboards, in Victorian style.[1066] On 22 May 1867 Pearson suffered the loss of his wife, Margaret, a daughter of Lockmaster Johnston, by whom he had one child, and throughout the rest of his long life he never remarried.[1067] His sister Jane kept house for him until his daughter Mary grew up.

Although Pearson was a retiring man who avoided publicity he nonetheless served at least once on the village council,[1069] and for several years on the local school board.[1070] In December of 1887, following the death of his partner, Pearson along with Magee's heirs, sold the foundry works to Roger C. Percival for $16,000,[1071] and retired to take up real estate transactions and mortgages.[1072] Gradually he slackened his pace, and finally, on 24 April 1929, he died peacefully at his home; his death hastened by a cold.[1073] He had attained the age of 97 years and a month, and had become the oldest resident in Merrickville.[1074]

William Pearson was a quiet, soft-spoken man, though very firm in his principles, and in an unassuming, unobtrusive way he was a benefactor to quite a few village residents.[1075] His daughter, Mary Emily Pearson (1860-1959), who donated the present village hall building to the community, likewise became one of Merrickville's most respected citizens.[1076] One of his

brothers, Samuel Pearson (1829-85) who married Eva Dangerfield late in life was a teamster and agent for the Magee and Pearson Company for many years.[1077]

Industries and Industrialists of Merrickville, 1792-1979

by Richard Tatley 1979

Volume II

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The Prime Industrial Period in Merrickville and Its Decline (ca. 1886-1945)

Introduction

Though the practice of periodizing segments of time in the recording of history leads to awkward distortions and attempts to strait-jacket the evidence to suit, still the device is more or less essential to achieve some cohesion of subject matter. In the case of the industrial scene at Merrickville it would appear that the above period encompassed the best years for most of the major industries established in the 19th century including the woollen mill, furniture factory, malleable-iron works and the plow and stove company. (Some of the other enterprises such as the saw- and gristmills do not seem to have done so well, however.) Ironically those years also witnessed the decline and fall of all the old 19th-century industries except the woollen mill which managed to cling to life as late as 1954.[1] Of course many of Merrickville's small-scale manufacturing shops also disappeared during the above period while a number of new industries made brief appearances and then vanished. Fortunately for the village a few others arrived and took root since the Second World War and still remain in business today.

Clearly the industrial scene changed considerably after 1885. For one thing at long last a railway arrived offering manufacturers far greater flexibility in importing raw materials and shipping out their products: though the evidence is anything but conclusive it appears that there was a gradual but distinct shift away from boat transport on the canal by most firms subsequent to the coming of the railway. After the turn of the century the new option of hydro-electricity began to release industry from total dependence on water and steam power. Following the First World War roads and trucks improved sufficiently to offer further transport possibilities though little is known of the extent of trucking by the various firms. Finally the above period saw a concentration of large industries in big cities and hence a rapidly rising rate of urbanization in Ontario which did not work to the advantage of small struggling villages like Merrickville.

It will also be noted that the time framework for this chapter encompasses the Great Depression of the 1930s. Though it may seem inappropriate to include this phenomenon within the "prime period" of industrial growth the extension of the time range over this decade and the war years allows for treating several industries in their entirety instead of subdividing data over two chapters since a good many Merrickville firms disappeared during the Depression.

Merrickville During the Prime Industrial Period and Afterwards

In Chapter 2 we left the village of Merrickville in a state of apparent decline. Its population had evidently dropped between 1871 and 1881[2] and with the general exhaustion of the old timber limits in the canal corridor and a steady diminution of canal traffic[3] the outlook for the future cannot have been encouraging to discerning villagers. On the other hand a railway - that great harbinger of hope and prosperity in the 19th century, so long wooed but never won - had at last condescended to bestow its favours on the village offering it one last chance to recover some of what it had lost to luckier neighbours. How did Merrickville respond?

The evidence examined by this writer is comparatively scanty for the decade following the arrival of the CPR but there are indications that the line which linked the village directly with Montreal and Toronto proved a modest stimulus. On 27 November 1888, for example, we find the village council voting to lengthen nine streets in the community on both sides of the river.[4] Another business directory dated 1895 assigns Merrickville a population of 1,400[5] -which sounds like a remarkable increase given the figure of 819 in 1881[6] though it seems probable that the 1881 figure is not all-inclusive and that the 1895 estimate is much too high. in 1901 according to the Merrickville Star the population of the village was found to be 1,024[7] -which would indicate that the decline of

the 1880s had been arrested, but that any growth was to put it mildly sluggish. Of course it could be argued that the increase had nothing to do with the railway but the fact that so many of Merrickville's businessmen took advantage of the new rail facilities must surely relate to the growth of some of their enterprises which in turn must have employed more people in the village.

During the 1890s there were some obvious new developments in Merrickville. In July of 1894 the council spent some time deliberating over the idea of a high school.[8] That same year the first electric lights appeared on the main street;[9] a notable achievement in itself, since it seems no other town along the corridor had any at so early a date. (See North Shore Electric Power Plant.) That the community was still ambitious is shown by another resolution by the council, passed on 11 April 1894, to offer a bonus of $10,000 to the Kingston, Smiths Falls and Ottawa Railway Company, provided that it would complete its main line through Merrickville not later than 1898;[10] a vain gesture as it happened, since the K.S.F. and 0. was never built. Indeed, it might be added that railway talk was rampant in Merrickville around the turn of the century: in August 1899 the village was stirred to hear that application had been made for a charter to build another railway through their community, direct from Ottawa to Brockville, as a means of giving the Grand Truck Railway direct access to Ottawa.[11] (No matter that a similar charter obtained several years earlier had

lapsed over non-fulfilment)[12] In September of 1900 three of and Merrickville's leading men including R W. Watchorn (q.v.), and George Byron Magee attended a directors' meeting of the Ottawa & Brockville and New York Railway Company which was then surveying a route:[13] in July of 1902 the same three gentlemen attended another such meeting in Ottawa to hear that $125,000 of stock of the Ottawa, Brockville and St. Lawrence Railway had been subscribed and ten per cent of it paid in with construction to begin the following spring.[14] (Alas, it didn't.) Six years later the Merrickville Star was telling its readers that the O.B. and S.L. as a result of a time extension had until 1913 to build a 56-mile line which was to pass through Nepean, North Gower, Burritt's Rapids and Merrickville on its way to the. St. Lawrence.[15] (This line too never went beyond the survey stage.) Hope flickered again in August 1907 when a government engineer visited the village and rumours circulated that either the CPR or the G.T.R. was considering putting a new line through Merrickville:[16] the closest thing to it came in 1908 when the CPR doubled its track and rebuilt the viaduct over the canal.[17] Thus it would appear that Merrickville's failure to secure another railway was not due to lack of encouragement.

The 1895 business directory cited above gives an interesting cross section of the business community in Merrickville at that time. It included one sawmill owner (Edward Errett, q.v.), a furniture manufacturer (A. Mills, q-v.), a wagon-maker, an iron founder (P. Kyle, q.v), one flour mill (run by the

Merrickville Milling Company), one woollen mill (owned by Watchorn and Company), one stove foundry works (R. C. Percival and Son, q.v.) and two brick-makers plus several smaller operators including three harness-makers, three tailors, two bakers, four grocers, two milliners, three boot- and shoemakers, two blacksmiths and one livery.[18] There were also three hotels, one barrister's office and a branch of the Union Bank of Canada.[19] The above list tallies closely with another printed in the first edition of the Merrickville Star (15 June 1899): according to the Star the village was hosting one plow and stove plate foundry, one malleable-iron foundry, a woollen mill, a furniture factory, two sawmills, an oatmeal mill and a wire fence factory along with the smaller manufacturing concerns and first-class shipping facilities by rail and water.[20]

Though all this might seem considerable the Star was not inclined to boast about it. The newspaper felt that Merrickville was woefully lacking in one vital commodity and that was community pride: in short Merrickville had an inferiority complex, an ailment which the Star throughout the dozen or more years of its existence manfully tried to overcome. In one issue after another the plucky little paper prodded the village in various ways to shake off its mantle of stagnation by attracting new industries and if possible another railway. Admittedly all this was asking a lot of a small community but it seemed deplorable to the Star that (as of 16 November 1899) Merrickville had two or three empty mills on the island thus allowing all that splendid water

power to go to waste.[21] (The little paper scored at least one major success in the spring of 1902 when the village council at the behest of many of the leading local industrialists passed a bylaw to spend $4,500.00 on a fire engine, hoses, tanks, a building and a hose tower:[22] a move the star had been pleading for ever since 1899. One effect was apparently to reduce insurance rates very considerably in the village.)

Despite all efforts, however, the mood of stagnation refused to lift except on a few brief occasions when some new enterprise was opened in town. An insurance map of 1912 claims that Merrickville then had a population of 1,300[23] but the figures given by the census reports at decade intervals tell a very different story: they show that the population actually fell by about three per cent from 1901 to 1911; that is from 1024 to 993.[24] Over the next decade the decline intensified until by 1921 the village had only 776 inhabitants,[25] a drop of nearly 12 per cent from 1911. If we compare these figures with performance on the industrial scene we find that six enterprises in the community either shut down or moved away during the early 1900s and that two more followed during the 1910s. A number of firms were also ruined or paralysed by destructive fires. The plow and stove company (g.v.) almost went under in 1916[26] and even the woollen mill faltered occasionally between 1897 and 1908. In 1914 a group of Merrickville industrialists organized the Rideau Power Company (q.v.) in order to generate electricity, modernize their mills and try

to keep up with neighbouring centres like Smiths Falls only to find the project beyond their means: ironically it took capital from Smiths Falls to see the scheme through to fruition.[27]

During the 1920s conditions seem to have improved a little in Merrickville. Between 1921 and 1931 the population rose slightly, from 776 to 812 or about four-and-a-half per cent.[28] There were only a few business failures in the village during this interval. During the depressing thirties, however, there was another drop from 812 people in 1931 to 794 in 1941[29] although in December of 1935 a high of 821 is reported.[30] The Percival Plow and Stove Company which had once been the town's largest employer died a lingering death during those dismal years and so did the furniture factory and all the remaining sawmills save one. Merrickville was now very much a stagnant if not declining village though it must be conceded that it declined gracefully: even during the 1930s an active horticultural society was doing its best to keep the old town looking neat and tidy.[31]

Once again if we pause to compare the fortunes of Merrickville with those of its two nearest neighbours during the 20th century we find a parallel situation in Kemptville but a striking difference from Smiths Falls. In 1895 Kemptville was reckoned to have about 1,400 people not greatly more than Merrickville but there were at least 87 members in its business community at that time as compared

with 61 for Merrickville.[32] Kemptville too had its sawmills, planing mills, flour mills, foundries and blacksmith shops.[33] The census of 1901 assigns a population of 1,523 to Kemptville but this declined drastically to 1,192 in 1911 and 1,184 in 1921.[34] After 1921 Kemptville like Merrickville recovered a little, rising to 1,286 in 1931 but dropping again to 1,232 in 1941.[35] (Perhaps the 1941 figures are more indicative of departures for service overseas during the war rather than actual decline.) By the 1950s both communities were again showing a modest increase.

Both of these two older villages must have been envious of Smiths Falls. Having long since become a railway division point (with yet another line built through it around 1912) Smiths Falls had gone on to become a notable manufacturing centre as well and reaped the benefits. In 1891 the town had 3,864 inhabitants.[36] By 1901 it was nearly five times the size of Merrickville with a population of 5,155[37] and throughout the next several decades its growth was steady: 6,370 people in 1911, 6,790 in 1921, 7,108 in 1931 and 7,418 in 1941.[38] Furthermore every major industry in Merrickville had rival counterparts in Smiths Falls, often on a larger scale: this was especially true of the various foundry works, notably the Frost and Wood Company which by 1906 alone was employing over 400 men.[39] (its Merrickville counterpart, the Percival Plow and Stove Company, q.v. never engaged more than about 75 employees.)[40] Thus in terms of growth, expansion, wealth and

prosperity Smiths Falls must be reckoned to have "succeeded" far beyond any of its neighbours in Grenville, Leeds or Lanark Counties.

To sum up then it looks as if Merrickville was enabled by its new rail connections to revive slightly from the slump of the 1800s and if no important new industries took root there after 1886 and the saw- and flour mills continued to decline at least the old stand-bys from the earlier period the foundries and woollen mill generally expanded to reach their zenith during the early 1900s: in that sense the village industrially was indeed reaching its prime. The tapping of hydro-electricity in a serious way in 1914-16 was another help but during the 1900s the community like several others in eastern Ontario was definitely losing population. During the 1920s it appears that the decline at least was arrested but there were few new developments in the village after about 1921 and during the 1930s most of the old industries now largely obsolescent died out. Only during the 1940s was there anything like a mild industrial revival in Merrickville.

Sawmilling During the
"Prime Industrial Period"

The above subheading is rather a misnomer with respect to the lumber industry since the Rideau timber trade was past its prime by the 1880s and most localities along the waterway were no longer able to furnish anything more than cordwood.[41]

Nevertheless at least four sawmills are known to have existed at Merrickville after 1885. Some were rather small and it would appear that all were engaged primarily in doing custom work for local residents rather than cutting for outside markets. It also seems that much of the timber being cut at these mills was being hauled overland on sleighs rather than floated down the Rideau during this period; at least this was true by the turn of the century.[42] Old-timers have testified that tugs such as the Colonel By and the Cyrus Easton were still busy towing scows and even timber rafts and log booms down to Kingston as late as the 1890s and coming back with coal from Oswego much of which was then dumped at Dow's Lake, Ottawa.[43] Some of these scows were apparently loaded at Merrickville[44] but the recollections are not specific enough to indicate whose lumber or cordwood was being shipped.

As for the mills themselves the older and larger ones were still located at the old sites on the north shore of the island but after 1920 the new plants -- which were no longer dependent on water power -- began to appear outside the original industrial area and even away from the Rideau Canal itself. Let us begin with the old mill on the north shore.

Merrickville: North Shore Sawmill No. 4 (1856-1908) (Concluded)

By above designation is meant a sawmill that stood at the old mill site at the head of the highway bridge on the north shore, where the Alloy Foundry Company now has its front lawn: the said mill may have been the same one built in 1856 by Terence Merrick. In Chapter 2 the suspicion was raised that the old Merrick sawmill was replaced by a new one during the 1870s or 1880s, but there is no evidence to prove this: if the mill of the early 20th century was indeed identical with that of 1856, it enjoyed a remarkably long life. It also must have survived several serious fires in the neighbouring gristmill (q.v.).

Photographs dating from the 1895-1907 period indicate that the sawmill was a board and batten frame building with a medium-pitched cedar-shingled gabled roof.[45] It had at least three nine-paned windows in the south wall, and another window in the end gable of the west wall, along with an entrance to the street. It rested on a rubble stone foundation that is still visible on the south side as an embankment retaining wall along the river. Maps from the 1900 period confirm that the sawmill abutted against the gristmill (No. 6, q.v.) at the east end, and that it was about 62 feet by 35 feet in size.[46]

We left this sawmill (or an earlier one) around 1895 at which time it was owned by Patrick Kyle (q.v.) and apparently

leased to Edward Errett (q.v.).[47] The mill was evidently busy at times: the Merrickville Star remarks in January of 1900 that so many logs were being brought into town that the two sawmills (on the north shore and the island, q.v.) were going to set up double shifts to cope with the rush.[48] That same March the Star again noted that the mills were very busy cutting until midnight every night as farmers kept arriving with more logs on sleighs.[49] It is not certain who was running the sawmill at this time although in December 1902 Robert Putnam Errett of Lombardy, a son of Edward Errett moved to Merrickville and secured a lease on the building from Patrick Kyle.[50] Errett was an experienced lumber dealer but it is not known how long he held the lease. By 1905 Patrick Kyle himself was running the mill and on 21 September of that year he placed the following announcement in the Star:

LOGS WANTED

> I WISH TO BUY MAPLE AND ROCK ELM Logs, delivered to my saw mill this coming winter. Best possible price will be paid for same, and honest measure guaranteed. Will be glad to do custom sawing for those who require it.
>
> P. KYLE.[51]

As we shall see Patrick Kyle experienced a number of disastrous fires in his industrial complex over the years but so far

as is known the sawmill escaped this fate until 1908.* Then during the early morning hours of 3 June 1908 it happened.[53] A couple in a nearby house spotted flames licking out of the front window of the mill and raised the alarm. The fire bell sounded at 3:50 a.m. and within 13 minutes the newly-formed fire brigade was at the scene with the engine and had the hoses turned on. By then, however, the blaze was completely out of control and spreading along the roof from the northwest corner of the building. The men did their best and managed to prevent the fire from spreading to the flour mill (where the eaves and two windows were damaged) but nothing could save the burning sawmill. The inferno was so hot that the wooden sidewalk across the road also took fire though this was put out. By 4:45 the blaze was under control though the bottom timbers were still smouldering three hours later. Arson was suspected at the time. Mr. Kyle had a little insurance but even so the loss came to about $3,000 not counting water damage to the machinery in the flour mill[54] He publicly thanked the fire department (which he himself had helped to establish) and the other citizens for their efforts.[55] So ended the Kyle sawmill though it was soon afterwards rebuilt.

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* There may also have been a major fire in September 1903 judging from a taped-over insurance map of 1912.[52]

Merrickville: North Shore Sawmill No. 5 (1909?-19)

The replacement sawmill is known almost exclusively from maps, photographs and personal recollections and consequently though it can be described in general terms its history can only be surmised. The maps and photographs indicate that this mill occupied exactly the same site as the previous mill, that it was the same size and that it was built in the same board and batten style.[56] The replacement mill had fewer windows than its predecessor and its roof seems to have been coated with painted sheet metal (or tar paper?) rather than shingles.[57]

Presumably the fifth mill was built by Patrick Kyle who still owned the property and probably he lost no time in doing so. The sawmill is marked on the insurance map of 1912 though the building is not labelled[58] - which may be an indication that it was not then in use. Patrick Kyle died in 1911 and apparently disputes broke out amongst his heirs and creditors. On 8 June 1914 Miss Mary Pearson noted in her diary that the Kyle estate had been sold at auction with the foundry, flour mill, powerhouse and sawmill going to Thomas Kyle, a son of Patrick for $16,800.[59] This development was apparently challenged by Edward J. Kyle, another son of Patrick and the matter went before the Supreme Court of Ontario which finally issued a vesting order on 3 April 1917 awarding the entire estate to Thomas Kyle.[60] Soon afterwards on 23 September 1918 Thomas sold the western half of the property including the

sawmill to a firm called the Merrickville Milling and Manufacturing Company for $6,000.[61] It would appear that this company could not meet the terms of payment and in February of 1922 it sold its holdings back to Kyle for the sum of $1.00.[62]

It is not known whether Thomas Kyle or the Merrickville Milling Company ever used the sawmill. Photographs prove that it was still in existence after the new dam and powerhouse were completed in 1915-16[63] and apparently it was still standing in 1922. Old-timers seem to agree that the mill like its predecessor was destroyed by fire: according to one individual the brigades of Kemptville and Smiths Falls were rushed to the scene to fight the blaze when the Merrickville fire department proved unequal to the situation.[64] Miss Kathleen Pearson remembers seeing the burned-out remains of the mill being demolished shortly after the First World War.[65] This time the mill was not rebuilt.

Merrickville: Island Sawmill No. 1

(1898?-1899)

Though the island at Merrickville saw the construction of a number of mills during the 19th century there is no sign of an island sawmill until the 1880s. It first appears in an archival photograph taken during this period which shows a wooden wing appendaged to the south wall of the old Merrick-Easton gristmill (No. 1, q.v.).[66] The walls were apparently board and batten while the shingled roof sloped down from the side

of the gristmill. Later maps confirm that this side wing was indeed a sawmill[67] and presumably it must have shared the water power of the gristmill.

Who added the sawmill to the gristmill building? This question could be answered if we knew when the sawmill was built. It was in 1894 that the property left the possession of the Easton family and went to George Byron Magee, when a mortgage payment went unpaid.[68] There is no record that the Eastons ever had a sawmill and Magee seems to have had little interest in exploiting the property; considering that he promptly sold it to Patrick Kyle on 9 March 1895.[69] Perhaps it was Kyle who built the sawmill. He may also have sublet the mills to a tenant or the mills may have been idle at this time.

Within just a few more years, however, Patrick Kyle decided to sell the property and soon found a buyer in Alex Mills (q.v.),[70] one of the sons of John Mills the furniture manufacturer. On 28 January 1898 they formally agreed that Mills could have the site for $4,100. Kyle could keep the machinery, countershafts and most of the belting for driving the machines as well as the lumber used in boarding up "the mill shed" (= the sawmill?). Most of the gristmill machinery went to Mills who agreed to help Kyle move the other components.[71] The sale was confirmed on 23 February 1898 to both Alex and Abraham Lincoln Mills with the added stipulation that water flowing to the Easton oatmeal and shingle mills (q.v.) from a spout in the gristmill penstock was not to be curtailed

by the new owners.[72] Thus the Mills brothers either purchased the island sawmill in 1898 or built it themselves immediately afterwards: Miss Belle Mills believes that it was her uncle, Alex Mills who built the sawmill[73] and there is no evidence to disprove it.

He had exceptionally ill luck with it. Eighteen months later on 6 September 1899 the old gristmill building was gutted in what was later described as one of Merrickville's most destructive fires.[74] (The village fire brigade had not yet been established at that time!) This blaze must surely have taken the sawmill as well: indeed it was very likely the same conflagration that destroyed Hiram Easton's adjacent oatmeal and shingle mills (q.v.). Unlike the Easton mills, however, the island sawmill was promptly rebuilt.

Merrickville: Island Sawmill No. 2 (19007-192)

Despite the severity of the loss Alex and A. L. Mills soon made plans to replace their mills. As early as 18 January 1900 the Merrickville Star speaks of two sawmills in town, both hard at work cutting up logs brought in by the farmers:[75] one of these mills would have been Patrick Kyle's north shore sawmill No. 4, (q.v.) and presumably the other was the second island mill. On 8 February 1900 the Star also reported that the Mills brothers were starting to fix up the mill that had been destroyed by fire the previous fall:[76] probably this meant the old gristmill

to which the sawmill was attached. Since the sawmill was a simple wooden affair like its predecessor[77] it was probably rebuilt in short order whereas the multi-storied stone gristmill would have taken much longer. On the other hand the Goad map of 1900[78] does not show the sawmill which may mean that it was not rebuilt until after that time and if so we must suppose that the other sawmill of 1900 was actually A. L. Mills'furniture factory (q.v.). A directory of 1902 mentions that79 Alex Mills then had a sawmill.[79]

The replacement sawmill seems to have been much the same as the earlier one, that is a long, narrow, one-storey wooden shed with a roof sloping down from the gristmill wall. Its dimensions (about 52 feet by 17 feet)[80] were probably the same as the earlier mill though the roof level was distinctly lower.[81] It seems to have had side walls though the west side was almost entirely open. Nothing has been learned about its machinery except that it ran on water power.

The second island sawmill is listed in business directories of 1902[82] and 1904[83] respectively and also appears on maps of 1912[84] and 1914.[85] It probably lasted at least until 1921 when Alex Mills for some reason sold the property to the Watchorn Company[86] and built himself another mill on the north shore (No. 6, q.v.). There is no record that the Watchorns ever did any sawing and presumably the wooden sawmill was pulled down soon after 1921.

Miss Belle Mills of Merrickville, a niece of Alex has some interesting recollections about the sawmill. She affirms that it was used mostly for custom work though sometimes both of the Mills brothers would go a field and buy suitable timber on lands owned by the local farmers and send men into the bush with sleighs during the winters to cut the trees and haul them out.[87] Apparently large heaps of logs were once piled close to the road on the island near the mill and allowed to dry out until the spring when they were cut.[88] Miss Mills also recalls that the mill was sublet for a short time to a farmer named William Scott who moved into town and used the plant to saw lumber for his new house and perhaps for other similar jobs.[89] (Scott afterwards became a coal merchant in town.)[90] After the war, however, the sawmill fades from the record.

Before leaving this mill it should be noted in passing that Alex Mills also did some sawing in the adjacent gristmill (q.v.) once he had finished restoring it after the 1899 fire. The fire insurance map of 1912 indicates that the gristmill had sawing and shingle-making machinery on the main floor and planing equipment on the second:[91] apparently Alex Mills was anxious to fill the void left by the destruction of Hiram Easton's shingle mill. In 1977 another Merrickville old-timer confirmed that the gristmill building once housed sawing equipment including "planers, sanders and bandsaws" used to produce "rough stuff[92] though gristing was also carried on during Alex Mills' tenure of ownership. The operations in this building are

discussed more fully under the heading of Island Gristmill No. 1.

Merrickville: North Shore Sawmill No. 6 (1921?-193)

By the above designation is meant the sawmill built by Alex Mills on the north shore of the river around 1921 to replace the above island mill. This writer has not succeeded in finding any photographs of this mill nor any documentation applying to it; however, by combining oral traditions (where they agree!) with land patent records and circumstantial evidence a distinct though shadowy picture of the mill emerges.

The mill was located on the north side of the millpond above the dam, specifically on Lot DD now the property of Mr. Arthur Virtue of Merrickville: indeed Mr. Virtue's house 93 is built on the foundations of the sawmill.[93] A check through the land patent records shows that this land was part of William Merrick, Sr.'s original estate in 1810; subsequent owners included Alexander W. Ward (1826-44), Charles Holden (1844-64) and Hiram Easton (1869-88).[94] On 22 September 1921 Alexander Mills purchased the property from a certain Ambrose McGibbon for $1,000[95] about five months after he sold his island mill to the Watchorns. Presumably the new sawmill was erected shortly afterwards.

The actual site of the mill was vacant before that time and not surprisingly so since it was rather muddy and

frequently water-logged. Consequently Alex Mills made a large excavation and pour a thick cement floor with massive sloping sidewalls for a foundation: the walls are about four feet wide at the base, and generally taper to about two feet at the top and in some places they are buttressed to withstand the pressure of the soil and ground water.[96] The foundations measure about 30 feet by 40,[97] and contain a large wide entrance in the east wall, evidently intended originally for a jack ladder of some sort: a retired lockmaster at Merrickville confirms that the mill had a roller apparatus for bringing in the logs.[98] The mill stood about 12 to 15 feet behind the cement wing dam built in 1915, and it is not entirely clear how the logs from the millpond were passed over the dam: perhaps most of them arrived by land. No one seems to recall what sort of machinery the plant possessed. There is no sign of a flume, and the mill is in the wrong position for water power, which means that some other form of power must have been used. Mr. Virtue kindly pointed out to this writer a large cement block with anchor bolts, located inside the foundations near the old entrance and probably used as a bed for machinery. Considering the time that the mill was built, it seems a reasonable guess that the plant had a reciprocating steam engine, perhaps with a very large flywheel (which would explain why the cement block was needed to upraise it) while the boiler would probably have been fed on sawdust, slabs and wood shavings. The other less likely

possibility is that the mill had an electric engine powered from the hydro station in the village.

Old-timers agree that the sawmill was a substantial building with wooden superstructure and a gabled roof and that lumber and planks were often stashed in the rafters.[99] The mill cut enough wood to make a considerable change in the contours of the site which now consists largely of sawdust and wood shavings[100] but little else is known of its history. The records show that Alex Mills sold the property to Watchorn and Company for a mere $500 on 23 October 1933[101] and since the mill is said to have been left vacant and allowed to deteriorate before it disappears[102] it may well be that it was shut down sometime before 1933: local testimony agrees that the plant did not operate very long.[103] Presumably Judson Watchorn (q.v.) who then controlled the Watchorn Company tore the mill down sometime after 1933 and sold the machinery — though Miss Mills suspects that a lot of it was too old to be worth very much![104] The foundations, however, remained and in 1949 Judson Watchorn decided to erect a bungalow over them as a new home for his wife Myrtle. Mrs. Watchorn, however, did not want to leave her old house and her husband then converted the bungalow into a duplex.[105] The Virtue family rented the east half in October 1949 and in September 1962 they bought the entire house from Jud Watchorn's second wife Mabel.[106] It might also be remarked that the property is still dependent on the hydro dam to contain the river waters and that the basement of the Virtue house was

flooded once during the spring of 1951 when a breach appeared in the wing dam. It took about two months of puddling the hole with clay to repair the damage.[107]

North Merrickville Steam Sawmill

(fl. 1925-1940)

Merrickville had one more sawmill in the course of its history but since it was located well away from the old industrial area and had nothing to do with the Rideau Canal it can be considered of peripheral interest to this study. Nonetheless in the interests of completeness a short summary on this mill is necessary.

This sawmill was located in North Merrickville across the street from the south side of the railway tracks on property now owned by the Grenville Castings Company (q.v.) and quite close to the CPR freight sheds.[108] This rather hasty investigation unearthed no pictures or documentation on the mill and hence relies solely on local recollections.

The above mill was built by a building contractor named Robert J. Dougall of Hallville, Ontario perhaps during the 1920s.[109] Dougall had been operating another sawmill at Hallville[110] but this writer has not had time to ascertain when he acquired the North Merrickville site — though it was sometime before 1925[111] The Dougall sawmill was essentially a wooden building housing a steam engine, boiler and power

saws and apparently it was equipped only to cut planks.[112] Close by was a smaller building with machinery for producing shingles.[113] There were no warehouses and the mills seemingly did little or no exporting by rail: their business was to do custom jobs for local people and sometimes produce lumber and shingles for sale in the immediate area.[114] They also manufactured the ends for cheese boxes which were sold to the neighbouring cheese factories.[115] Most of the logs cut were hauled in by local farmers using sleighs.[116]

Robert Dougall retired and moved to Ottawa in 1929[117] and his elder son, Frederick J. Dougall (q.v.) who held third-class stationary engineering papers returned from the Gatineau Valley where he had been running another mill and took over the North Merrickville sawmill.[118] He apparently employed four or five assistants at first though as business dwindled during the 1930s his staff dwindled as well until he was down to one man.[119] Sometime during the thirties he converted the mill from steam to electric power.[120] Leftover slabs were sold as fuel for wood stoves generally for $3.00 a cord: softwood slabs such as pine or basswood were most in demand during the summertime and hardwoods during the winter.[121] Fred Dougall sometime made deliveries of cordwood using horses, sleighs and a wagon; later he acquired a truck.[122]

Very slowly the business declined. Stands of suitable timber became harder and harder to find: Miss Belle Mills alleges that the Dougall sawmill depleted all the local basswood which

had formerly been used to make broom handles at the island furniture factory (q.v.).[123] Gradually people began burning fuel oil instead of slab wood in their furnaces.[124] The shingle mill seems to have shut down by 1939. Some time afterwards during the Second World War the sawmill some how took fire and was completely destroyed.[125] Fred Dougall subsequently improvised a makeshift shelter and continued to do any cutting he could get until finally worsening asthma forced him to retire.[126] (He died in 1976 at the age of about 79.)[127] His sawmill was the last one of any description in the village of Merrickville.

Merrickville: Island Furniture Factory and Planing Mill (1873-193) (Concluded)

We left this plant around 1890 still in the ownership of its founder John Mills but gravitating more and more into the hands of his sons Alex and Abraham Lincoln Mills. A directory of 1895 lists an "A. Mills" as custodian of a furniture works[128] though the directories of 1902[129] and 1904[130] give the name of John Mills in connection with the plant. In point of fact John Mills did not officially sell the factory to A. L. Mills until 1 December 1913[131] about which time he retired at the age of 81.[132] The property remained in the custody of Lincoln Mills until 1943,[133] long past the demise of the factory.

The furniture factory variously described as a cabinet factory or planing mill is fairly well represented on maps of the 1900-15 period. The Goad map of 1900, for example, shows a wooden building in two sections on the north shore of the island.[134] (See Figure 6.) As explained in Chapter 2 the larger eastern section is probably the older of the two since originally a road allowance was left between the furniture factory and the east end of the woollen mill (q.v.) to provide access to the flume[135] whereas by 1900 the road allowance had been filled up by the western annex to the furniture factory which now abutted against the woollen mill.[136] (Either that or the woollen mill was extended east by the addition of a boiler room at an unknown date before 1895.) The maps indicate (and photographs confirm) that the east section was a two-storey wooden building with a medium-pitched gabled roof.[137] The flume from the mill dam terminated at the east wall of this section near the north-east corner.[138] The main floor was fitted out for "turning"[139] which probably means that most of the powered machinery was located there while the second storey was used for carpentry.[140] Coal oil was used for lighting.[141] The east section had a single-storey annex along the south side by 1900[142] though this feature does not appear in the photographs of the 1890s. In size the east wing was about 53 feet by 28 feet while the annex was 53 by 14. The west wing was much smaller — about 26 feet by 38 with its roof gables at right angles to the rest of the factory.[143] The west

wing too had a tiny one-storey annex along the south side; about 26 feet by 15.[144] The roof of both sections was shingled with a fire ladder running up to the peak of the roof of the main section.[145] The upper storey of the plant if not the lower as well had several evenly-spaced windows in the south and east walls.[146] One photograph from the early 1890s indicates another small wooden building with a low-pitched gabled roof and a tall incinerator stack close to the east end of the factory:[147] this was perhaps the kiln for drying lumber (which was piled in large quantities south and east of the factory) but another photograph taken a few years later (about 1895) shows the dry kiln building set at the extreme east end of the island and the earlier incinerator stack gone.[148] The reason for moving it is obvious: the extreme risk of fire.

At least one fire in the dry kiln got out of control. Around noon of November 1901 during a brief absence from the scene by Lincoln Mills flames were spotted around the kiln.[149] An alarm was raised and men hurried to the scene, some to fight the fire and others to move some of the lumber out of the way. As the blaze spread the Percival Company across the river sent over its hand engine and hose probably the same device purchased by Messrs. Magee and Pearson in 1871 and the stream of water provided saved about half the lumber. (The village did not yet have a fire truck.) The kiln, of course, was consumed: that loss was trifling but the lumber destroyed was valued at between $200 and $250. There was no insurance. The Mills brothers

extended their thanks to the Percivals and all others who helped put out the fire:[150] unchecked the blaze would probably have destroyed the furniture factory itself and perhaps more. Miss Belle Mills recalls that minor fires were commonplace around the kiln which was supposed to be supervised at all times.[151]

One of the Merrickville Council Minutes Books notes that as of 1 June 1888 the assessment on John Mills' furniture factory was raised from $1,600 to $2,000 at a time when Mills himself was on the council.[152] During the early 1900s Mills also advertised some of his products in the Merrickville Star as well as other items he might have imported from the cities for resale at his store. A typical example dated 16 January 1902 is quoted herewith:

> Window Shades
>
> We have just put into stock a large number of new Window Shades in the latest styles and patterns, and fitted with Hartshorn Rollers. Prices from 30 cents up. Good value.
>
> Big stock of Furniture of all kinds on hand.
>
> John Mills[153]

Miss Belle Mills recalls an incident involving her grandfather's business about that time. Apparently a cousin of his wife arrived in Merrickville with a consignment of wholesale

furniture from the cities which he intended to retail at a new store just established in the Jakes Block. Mr. Mills went over to speak to the fellow advising him that he need not bother unpacking his furniture since Mills was more than prepared to undersell him and run him out — even if it meant giving his furniture away. The interloper realized that Mills was in a strong enough position to carry out his threat; consequently he took the hint and moved on.[154]

After the Easton shingle mill and Alex Mills' sawmill on the island burned in 1899 the furniture factory expanded its activities to fill the void. Besides the usual array of beds, dressers, tables, couches and washstands the plant began producing shingles and even basswood broom handles (with "not a blemish on them" according to Miss Mills!)[155] which were often shipped to Scotland. From 1901 to 1905 or later the following paid announcement ran in the Merrickville Star:

NOTICE

All kinds of Turning, Planing, Ripping, Band Sawing, etc., and Job Work of all kinds neatly and promptly done.

A.Lincoln Mills

One door east of Watchorn & Co.'s[156]

Sometimes the scope of sawing and planing seemed to exceed that of furniture-making and indeed one map dated about 1914

marks the building as a planing mill.[157] Miss Mills recalls that the sawmill portion of the factory was housed in the small west wing described earlier: she also recalls that the sawing equipment was removed during the 1920s and replacedwith a gristing machine which was apparently operated for the most part by one Walter Hunt, doing custom jobs.[158] This move may have come about as the existing gristmills in the village closed down and diminishing timber stands reduced the activity of the sawmill.

Though the furniture factory was entitled to the surplus water power from the woollen mill and Alex Mills' saw- and gristmill, problems sometimes developed. The factory was at a distinct disadvantage at its lower end location and sometimes in midsummer, when the water levels ran low, the plant crews were forced to run their machinery and turn the broom handles at night when the sawmill and woollen mill were idle.[159]

Very gradually the furniture business in Merrickville declined. During the 1920s people began acquiring automobiles and with them came increasing mobility allowing them to visit the cities more easily and do their shopping there. Suitable timber from the local scene became harder and harder to find and the machinery in the factory grew old and outmoded and unable to make products matching those from the cities.[160] More and more Lincoln Mills began stocking the store in downtown Merrickville with imported furniture (such as Gibbard's, for example) rather than products from his factory - or he

would order items selected by his customers from catalogues.[161] Besides, as he grew older he found it more and more difficult to manage a store and a factory: in addition, he was also running his late father's funeral parlour.[162] The old furniture factory remained open until sometime in the early 1930s,[163] then its doors were closed forever. The building seems to have stood vacant for some time before it was torn down,[164] perhaps by Frederick Dougall (q.v.), who may also have acquired some of the machinery for his own sawmill. Much later, on 28 October 1943 Lincoln Mills sold the site to a machinist named Harold Miller for a mere $300:[165] evidently the old furniture factory was long gone by that time.

Merrickville: Island Sash and Door Factory (1901-1908?)

A few written records plus a few more personal recollections are all that we have to document this shadowy and short-lived enterprise on the island at Merrickville. Needless to say little is known about it and even the exact site of the factory is uncertain.

As a rule sash and door factories were connected with planing mills and a number of them are known to have existed in such canal communities as Westport, Perth, Kemptville, Smiths Falls, Ottawa, Kingston and New Edinburgh from around 1860 to 1900.[166] The Merrickville factory does not seem to have appeared until 1901.

It was founded by an individual named Albert Brinston of Kemptville,[167] whose family was once sufficiently prominent to have had a settlement called Brinston's Corners, east of Merrickville, named for them.[168] On 7 March 1901 the Merrickville Star informed its readers that A. Brinston and Alex Mills were planning to run a sash and door factory in town as well as a saw- and shingle mill and that the machinery was already in the process of being installed and would soon be in running order. (Previously the machinery had been stored at a Kemptville foundry which might indicate that the factory was being relocated at the time.)[169] The article in the Star contains no mention of the location of the factory, nor is there any record of Brinston's ownership of any part of the industrial area. Miss Belle Mills, who vaguely recalls the plant, affirms that it stood "right across the road from the furniture factory."[170] She also believes that Brinston occupied a previously extant wooden building; which sounds plausible in view of a recollection by Miss Kathleen Pearson that the factory was destroyed by fire.[171]

Three possible sites for the sash factory suggest themselves. One is the old island foundry building (q.v.), part of which still stands facing the woollen mill: this possibility gains in credence when it is remembered that the foundry once had water power (which would have been essential for a sash factory).[172] But the foundry is not directly opposite the site of the furniture factory nor is it built of wood while its

history is too cloudy to ascertain whether or not it was in use at this time and if so, for what purposes. A second possibility is that the "Watchorn storehouse" building (q.v.) on the south side of the island housed the sash factory: this building was built of wood, antedated the arrival of Brinston,[173] faced the furniture factory directly and appears to have had a flume exit from the island foundry running past its east end.[174] The only difficulty is that this building was never burned — unless there never was a fire or the fire went unrecorded and the structure was promptly rebuilt. The third possibility is that the sash factory filled a long narrow space between the furniture factory and the storehouse as outlined on the Goad map of 1900.[175] The main problem here is that the outline (shown in Figure 6) may not indicate a building at all but only an area for storing lumber. Even if a building is indicated it would have been removed before 1900 and there is no photographic evidence of a building at that location before or afterwards. Most probably the sash factory was in the woollen storehouse beside the snye where there would have been water power for its equipment: such a plant must have had swing saws, planers, stickers for cutting mouldings, various trim saws and perhaps belt sanders and straight-line circular saws. (It appears the plant did not use steam power since Miss Mills recalls that it like the furniture factory was sometimes handicapped by low waters and had to cut at night when the mills above it were not busy.)[176]

Unfortunately little else is known of the factory. It seems to have operated in conjunction with Alex Mills' sawmill or Lincoln Mills' furniture factory, or both and to have derived its kiln-dried lumber from them since the sash factory apparently never had a kiln of its own. Albert Brinston is mentioned periodically during the 1900s, as for example in 1902 when he secured the contract to build a new fire hall tower in Merrickville;[177] while other Brinstons dot the records until 1908. Miss Mills recalls that Mr. Brinston was a nice, quiet man quite devoted to his family and his work.[178] On 9 January 1908 the Star recorded a gruesome accident that befell him at his "mill" on the night of the seventh: while working alone with the planing machine a stick he was holding caught in the machinery and pulled the unlucky man's hand into it and he lost two fingers in an instant. Showing great pluck he shut off the power, extinguished the lights and walked across town on a cold winter's night to get the wound dressed.[179]

It appears that the sash and door factory was not very successful and was soon closed. Miss Kathleen Pearson believes that it was gone before her arrival in Merrickville in 1909.[180] Mr. Brinston and his family moved west to Winnipeg where one of his daughters, Madeleine, is said to be residing still.[181] No further information has surfaced about this manufacturer or his factory.

Gristmilling During the "Prime Industrial Period"

As with sawmilling, grist- and flour milling was distinctly past its "prime" in Merrickville by the 20th century for the apparent reason that the rural areas were losing population[182] and farmers were raising less and less in the way of grain crops. This is hardly surprising since the overall area is not well suited for cereal crops and the West was then starting to produce phenomenal quantities of wheat, far more than the nation as a whole needed. Despite the local decline, however, Merrickville still retained three gristmills during the above period (not counting the short-lived operation run during the 1920s in part of the furniture factory, q.v.). There was even some gristing being done as late as the 1950s.[183] On the whole though it seems correct to refer to the mills of this interval as "grist" rather than flouring mills since they appear to have reverted more and more to doing custom jobs than grinding for outside markets.

Merrickville: Island Gristmill No. 1

(1839?-) (Concluded)

We left the island gristmill around 1894 when Hiram Easton and his sons who held it since 1858 were apparently forced to relinquish it to George Byron Magee who had inherited extensive mortgages on it. A photograph taken in June 1894 appears to show the building without the Easton name sign on it and with

the third floor windows boarded up.[184] It seems a reasonable guess that Byron Magee did not make use of the old mill since within ten months he sold it (on 9 March 1895) to Patrick Kyle the north shore industrialist and foundry owner along with 2,968 square feet of land plus the water power privileges.[185] Kyle, however, already owned the north shore gristmill (q.v.) and it may be that he was interested in the island plant only for its machinery. On the other hand the destruction of the north shore mill by fire in November 1895 perhaps caused Kyle to transfer operations to the island mill for a time if he was not previously using both of them.

By 1898, however, Patrick Kyle had definitely decided to part with the island mill. On 28 January of that year he signed an agreement with Alexander Mills (q.v.), by which Kyle was to sell him the mill for $4,100.[186] It was also agreed that Kyle could remove and keep all the machinery, countershafts, and belting used for driving the machinery; the same applied for the lumber used in boarding up the south side of the "mill shed" (= the sawmill, q.v.?). Kyle was not to be charged for any lumber used to board up or temporarily close the head gate at the millpond. Mills was to be left with the mill wheels and wheel pit gearing plus the main shafting (both vertical and horizontal) for carrying power to the machinery plus the belting used for transmitting the power from one main shaft to another above.[187] (Mills also inherited certain claims against the canal authorities over alleged damages to

the water power in proportion of one-quarter of the whole: perhaps the same claims pressed by Henry Merrick in connection with his island foundry operations, q.v.). Mills also promised to help Kyle move the machinery while Kyle promised to prepare a legal deed.[188] The sale to Alex and Lincoln Mills became official on 23 February 1898[189] though the Mills brothers were obliged to mortgage their new property to George Byron Magee for $3,100 that same day.[190] The sale was subject to the condition that Hiram Easton's oatmeal and shingle mills (q.v.) which drew water from a spout from the gristmill flume, as guaranteed in an easement dated 5 January 1884 were to continue to enjoy unrestricted access to their water.[191] Within a very short time, unluckily, this qualification was to become completely irrelevant.

At this point the old gristmill was a solid, substantial, four-storey building with a simple, medium-pitched gabled metal roof on the same alignment as the woollen mill (q.v.) which was appendaged to it on the east side.[192] The roof had no dormers and the main feature demarcating the one building from the other was the massive stone fire wall which formed a parapet projecting about two feet above the actual roof: a similar gabled parapet existed at the west end of the building.[193] The south wall -- at least at the top floor below the attic -- was pierced with four evenly-spaced windows about the same size as those in the woollen mill.[194] The west end which faced the road had only a single window in each storey;[195] the layout for

the north wall at this time is not certain. By 1898 if not earlier the wooden sawmill wing (q.v.) had been built along the south wall.

The Mills brothers had scarcely acquired the old gristmill before disaster struck. On 6 September 1899 the gristmill and sawmill were both engulfed in a mammoth holocaust later described as one of the worst in Merrickville's history[196] and probably the same inferno destroyed Hiram Easton's two mills nearby. (It is most unfortunate that the issues of the Merrickville Star for this period are missing.) The gristmill1 is marked only as a ruin on the Goad map of 1900[197] yet it would appear that the walls of the old building survived the fire since Alex Mills made up his mind to rebuild it the following winter.

On 8 February 1900 the Star noted with satisfaction that the Mills brothers were starting to rebuild the mill and that teams of horses were arriving daily with new timbers.[198] (Work was still going on in May of 1900.)[199] The fact that Alex Mills was back in business not later than 1902 with a sawmill (q.v.)[200] may be taken as a good indication that the old building had been reconstructed by then since Alex Mills fitted it out for sawing and planing as well as gristing.

In a number of ways Alex Mills made extensive changes with the gristmill. Its outer dimensions remained the same about 53 feet by 42 feet[201] -- and the window layout seems to have

been unchanged except that the south side windows were perhaps made a little smaller than before; from which we may probably rest assured that the building of the 20th century was indeed the same basic structure as that of the 19th century. The roof, however, was drastically redesigned. Instead of the former simple gabled roof the building re-emerged with the old stone end gable levelled off and a new barn-like gambrel roof with eleven dormer windows: three on the west (end) wall and four each on the north and south sides.[202] The wooden sawmill wing was likewise rebuilt.

The insurance maps of the early 1900s tell us something about the interior layout at this time. In 1912, for example, the building is labelled a "Grist Mill & Shingle & Saw Mill" with the first floor used for sawing and shingle manufacturing, the second for planing and the third given over to storage.[203] In 1937 an old-timer in Merrickville commented that the building had a lot of machinery upstairs and downstairs including planers, sanders and band saws used for making "rough stuff" during Alex Mills' days of occupation.[204] One wonders where the gristing was done, yet a map of about 1914[205] and a directory of 1915[206] both describe the building as a gristmill with Alex Mills the proprietor. A photograph taken about 1915 when the new hydro dam was in existence but before the new powerhouse was built shows most of the west end windows of the mill boarded up[207] from which we might suppose that dam construction temporarily forced the mill to shut down. Nonetheless the Mills

brothers' mortgage to Byron Magee was officially discharged on 26 December 1918.

Little more can be said about the gristmill during this period. One map dated about 1900 refers to the building as a "chopping mill"[209] -- though no one seems to know what this was supposed to mean. A former lockmaster recalls that Alex Mills' gristmill was still in business when he arrived in Merrickville in 1919; he also avers that the mill was considered suitable only for animal feed and that farmers wanting to get their grain ground into good flour were obliged to go to the mill at Spencerville which was the closest one available.[210] Another old-timer reports that the island gristmill sometimes had trouble with suckers which were a real nuisance especially before the new dam was built: sometimes the creatures used to run up the flume and into the water wheel so thickly that it got all plugged up, rendering the machinery useless![211]

The old island gristmill ceased to be a gristmill in 1921. On 3 May of that year Lincoln Mills and his wife sold out their interest in the property for $1.00 along with "other valuable considerations."[212] That same day Alex Mills sold the property to the Watchorn Company [213] which, of course, owned the adjoining woollen mill (q.v.). The Watchorns appear to have used the gristmill as an adjunct to their factory and as an office.[214] The history of the building from 1921 to 1954 is described under the Island Woollen Mill No. 1 (q.v.) and its more recent history under the Island Electroplating Works (q.v.). Alex Mills went

on to build his north shore sawmill (No. 6, q.v.) while Lincoln Mills for a short time did a little gristing in part of his furniture factory (q.v.). Along with the seventh north shore mill these were the last water powered gristmills in Merrickville.

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill

No. 6 (1856-1895) (Concluded)

Most of the record of this mill (at the site of the modern Alloy Foundry Company's office) has been summarized in Chapter 2 and there remains only the task of describing it from photographs taken in the 1890s before it burned.

From the photo record it appears that the gristmill was a three-and-a-half-storey stone building with a medium-pitched gabled roof. There was a chimney in the centre of the east wall and gabled parapets at either end.[215] The south wall had an even row of five windows on the third floor with only a few each on the floors below. The attic had no dormers but there were two windows under the gable at the east end.[216] The whole building was built in much the same style as the main building of the Kyle malleable-iron works (which itself may have been a former gristmill) and the Watchorn woollen mill and for that matter the main building of the Percival Plow Company, though if anything the gristmill was plainer than the others. Substantially it is the same building as that presently owned by

the Alloy Foundry Company though it has been extensively remodelled more than once.

As noted earlier Patrick Kyle bought the gristmill and other adjacent buildings on 25 February 1890 as additions to his already extensive north shore industrial enterprises. By 1895 if not earlier he seems to have leased the mill to a firm called the Merrickville Milling Company[218] in which one of his sons, William Kyle seems to have had an interest. That same summer and fall considerable improvements in the machinery costing several thousand dollars are said to have been lavished on the plant which was referred to as a roller flour mill at the time.[219] Then disaster struck. Early on the morning of 13 November 1895 fire broke out apparently in the grain elevator of the building and rapidly spread to the upper part of the mill.[220] The village still had no fire engine and except for the walls the whole plant and all its contents were destroyed. The loss was reckoned at $15,000 with only $9,000 insurance. The Brockville Evening Recorder commented that the mill had been one of the most complete establishments of its kind in eastern Ontario and noted that the loss was a very heavy one to the community as well as the proprietor.[221] The mill fortunately was rebuilt.

Merrickville: North Shore Gristmill No. 7 (18997-1927?)

The seventh (?) north shore flour mill was essentially a rebuilt version of the sixth though some of the changes were substantial, especially those made to the roof. It is not certain when the building was reconstructed: at least one springtime photograph shows it as an empty, roofless shell[222] which indicates that the mill was not restored immediately. Judging from an article in the Merrickville Star (3 August 1899) the plant was not rebuilt until that year: the article notes that the Merrickville Milling Company had just concluded a ten-year lease on the recently burned mill premises, that machinery and equipment were soon to be put in place and that the mill was likely to lure back the farmers who since the fire a few years earlier had shifted away to the mills of Kemptville and Smiths Falls.[223] All this sounds as if the mill was not in use after 1895. On 26 October 1899 the paper also announced that "Mr. Kyle is placing the machinery in his flour mill this week and expects to have everything in running order shortly."[224] Elsewhere we read that his plan was to improve the machinery so as to boost production to 75 barrels of flour per day.[225]

Thanks to the Goad map of 1900 we have some definite information on the mill at this time. It was and still is about 66 feet long by 40 feet wide and was said to have had three-and-a-half stories, as before.[226] It also had a tiny wooden veranda-like addition along the north wall near the north-west corner.[227]

(See Figure 6.) The roof was now a mansard type apparently sheeted with metal:[228] the new style required extra masonry to be built around the former end gables and turned the attic into an almost complete new floor. Photographs show that the building now had five dormers in the roof at least on the south side.[229] The north shore sawmill (No. 4, q.v.) also owned by Kyle abutted the mill on the west side while a small former tannery building (No. 2, q.v.) was appendaged to the east wall. A wooden building later used as an office (q.v.) for the malleable-iron works stood against both the east wall and the former tannery.[230] (See Figure 6.)

The Goad map also gives some interesting particulars about the machinery inside the mill. It included six double sets of rollers, two run of stones, two smut machines, one separator, one scourer and one buckwheat huller; all water powered.[231] The mill was heated by a stove and lighted by electricity;[232] probably coming from the electric light plant (q.v.) that had already been set up in the former tannery building. According to an old-timer's recollection the roller mill was a flour mill rather than a gristmill in that it used to grind wheat for the farmers, take part of the product as a toll (as was done since time immemorial!) and sell the surplus. Buckwheat we are told required a somewhat different treatment and most farmers preferred to have that sort of work done at the mill at Andrewsville.[233]

It would appear that Patrick Kyle's ill luck with the old flour mill did not change with the new one. In the first place the scourge of fire struck again, this time around 1:45 a.m. on 23 November 1899, just after the mill was rebuilt: smoke was spotted coming from the upper storey windows by some passers-by who raised the alarm.[234] Citizens gathered and formed a bucket brigade and by tireless efforts managed to put out the blaze before it could do much damage. Arson was suspected[235] and the village still had no fire department at that time.

The fire was only one of Kyle's headaches. Fitting out the mill (and perhaps other commitments) had forced him to mortgage all of his industrial holdings to William Pearson (q.v.), formerly of the Magee and Pearson foundry firm for $13,500 on 3 November 1899, just a few weeks before the above-mentioned fire: one of the terms of the mortgage required Kyle to install "permanent machinery" in the "New Grist Mill" to a value of at least $3,500 and not to remove any of the same until the mortgage was discharged.[237] Mr. Kyle also had trouble with the people who were supposed to lease the mill — presumably the Merrickville Milling Company which seems to have backed out of its agreement to take over the mill: in December 1899 Kyle asked the Merrickville council if it would grant the same inducements already promised to some other tenant if one could be found within six months. The council decided to check and see if it had the power to extend the time[238] and in March 1900 an extension was granted until the first of June.[239] In January

of 1900 Patrick Kyle formally opened his mill for custom grinding.[240]

It appears that Kyle was unable to find a tenant by the deadline and that the mill was consequently closed. However, the plant was too valuable to be left idle and near the end of August Kyle decided to reopen the mill and run it by himself engaging one Peter McCabe, an old town boy to manage it.[241] By September the farmers were arriving with several loads of grain.[242] It may be that construction or installation work was still underway at the mill at that time since scaffolding is mentioned within the "new flour mill" and Kyle is said to have taken a nasty fall from it while supervising the work being done.[243] (He suffered no serious injuries.)

Little more is heard of the roller mills after that time. Peter McCabe was still living in North Merrickville in October 1900[244] but it looks as though he did not manage the mill for long. By December 1900 the Merrickville Milling Company re-enters the picture having just engaged a miller named Johnston from Fort Selkirk, Manitoba presumably to run the mill for them.[245] The Merrickville Milling Company is mentioned again in 1902 at which time T. G. Kyle — probably Thomas Kyle, a son of Patrick — was acting as a business agent for the firm.[246] In October of 1905 we find the company offering a prize of 100 pounds of flour for the best loaves of bread and buns shown at the local fair.[247] It seems reasonable to

conclude, therefore, that the Merrickville Milling Company held the lease on the roller mill during this period.

It also appears that the company was not able to run the mill profitably for long. It was still open in 1906[248] but by 1907 the plant was back in Patrick Kyle's hands and Kyle — who was now 63 — was in no mood to take it on again by himself. In June 1907 he personally asked the council to reduce the assessment on his roller mill (which was set at $1,950) since the mill was then closed and not earning any money.[249] The council stalled for the moment and in November Kyle repeated his plea.[250] The reeve told him that the council had no authority to grant the request; Kyle insisted that such things had been done before and added that he would not pay the taxes levied: the council could, he said, sell the property if it liked. The assessor had never spoken to Kyle when the assessment was being made and the mill was idle at the time.[251] As often happens with historical research the records run out at this point in the story and it is not certain what the council decided to do. There is, however, no indication that the property was sold at this time and by inference some sort of compromise was worked out with Kyle.

After 1907 the picture becomes even more murky. Maps from the 1912-14 period continue to show the gristmill[252] but whether it was operating at the time is uncertain. Photographs indicate no changes in the building. Patrick Kyle died in May 1911 and apparently the settling of his estate presented a lot

of problems. On 8 June 1914 Thomas Kyle purchased all of his father's holdings at an auction for $16,800[253] and this was upheld despite protests from his relatives by a vesting order from the Supreme Court of Ontario dated 3 April 1917.[254]

Apparently the gristmill still aroused interest since on 23 September 1918 a new consortium calling itself the Merrickville Milling and Manufacturing Company arranged to purchase the entire western section of the old Kyle property from Thomas Kyle for $6,000.[255] Included in the deal were the gristmill, sawmill (No. 5, q.v.) and former tannery (No. 2, q.v.) along with "machinery, rollers, plant or other fixtures."[256] The new company evidently had high hopes for its new holdings but the venture failed to prosper. Respecting the flour mill failure a Merrickville old-timer's recollections help supply a clue as to the cause: he remembers that two brothers, Howard and Harry Putnam moved to town from Ottawa and operated the mill around 1916-19. They had trouble due to their lack of experience and also because the mill could not produce really good flour from hard wheats. Despite its eight sets of rollers the flour came out coarse and consequently customers began looking elsewhere, as for example, Spencerville. Hence the Putnams went bankrupt.[257]

So did the Merrickville Milling and Manufacturing Company. In February of 1922 unable to meet its payments on the property the firm sold all of its holdings back to Thomas Kyle for the nominal sum of $1.00.[258] The following October another firm,

the Grenville Milling and Manufacturing Company which had taken over the rest of the Kyle works also purchased the former Merrickville Milling Company's property including the flour mill and in order to pay for it arranged a mortgage $5,500.00 with Kyle.[259]

Grenville Milling was no more successful than its predecessor and by July of 1924 it too was bankrupt. A certain T. Bert Cole was appointed trustee for the firm[260] and on 2 February 1925 he was authorized to hand over the gristmill and adjacent lands to a John Johnston[261] perhaps the same Johnston hired by the old Merrickville Milling Company in 1900. Johnston had been connected with the Grenville Milling Company and was also acting as trustee for Thomas Kyle who had also gone bankrupt by 1924.[262]

It is not known whether Johnston attempted to operate the mill. In any event he died in 1927 and on 1 October 1927 the executors of his estate including his wife Edith sold the gristmill to another firm called Canada Brass Limited.[263] By this time the building definitely ceased to be a flour mill and assumed a new role as a brass manufacturing plant. The rest of its history is told under the headings of the brass works (q.v.) and the Alloy Foundry Company (g.v.) which still owns the building today. Except for three electric powered feedmills opened later in the south quarter of town the north shore gristmill seems to have been the last of its kind to operate in the village of Merrickville.

Cheese-Making in the Canal Corridor

Cheese and butter have been manufactured in Canada since the arrival of the first settlers but a regular dairy industry developed only in the latter part of the 19th century.[264]

Cheese and butter were first made on the farm but cheese tended to find its way to outside markets at an earlier period than milk or butter since during the days before electric refrigeration the latter two items had a tendency to spoil in transit whereas cheese does not.[265] Before the American Civil War when reciprocity reigned between Canada and the United States much cheese was imported from south of the border but during the war American cheese became somewhat scarce and prices went up.[266] The cancellation of the Reciprocity Treaty in 1866 discouraged a resumption of exports to Canada. The way was now clear for Canadians to make their own cheese.

The first Canadian cheese factory was established at Ingersoll, Ontario in 1864.[267] The following year additional factories appeared at Athens and Forfar and by 1870 others were opened in various corridor communities such as Morton, Elgin and Burritt's Rapids.[268] Kemptville, Kars, Perth and Smiths Falls all acquired factories after 1870[269] and altogether at least 130 cheese works are known to have appeared near the Rideau waterway between 1865 and 1929.[270] Many were built outside of existing towns and villages where milk was readily available.

Cheese manufacturing reached its peak in the counties of Leeds and Grenville in 1903 according to historian Ruth McKenzie; afterwards milk began to be converted more into other products.[271] Around 1880 a dairymen's association began controlling the quality and marketing of cheese, sending inspectors to visit the factories, supervise work and offer advice. As a result Canada was soon producing high quality cheddar which gained respect in world markets.[272] The Rideau corridor which is generally unsuitable for agriculture does at least offer some good pasture lands and consequently dairying and cheese-making prospered there.[273] Much cheese was transported out of the district aboard canal steamers even as late as 1930. Of course most of the small rural cheese factories have long since disappeared.

Creameries developed much more slowly than cheese factories in Ontario owing to the problems of preserving the products. By 1882 there were only 16 creameries in the entire province and by 1890 there were still only 32.[275] The first creameries unlike cheese factories usually developed close to the cities where the main markets were but for many years the butter was of poor quality usually coming from small farms and being repackaged by distributors.[276] In 1882 only the Brockville area had any form of inspection services; apparently rather ineffectual.[277]

The first Rideau creamery seems to have been opened at Elgin in 1892.[278] A second followed at Seeley's Bay in 1894 and by 1896 there were a dozen of them scattered throughout various

corridor townships.[279] After 1903 improved transport facilities and refrigeration allowed creameries to step up production enormously and diversify products to include processed cheese, milk powder and ice cream.[280]

With these general observations in mind let us turn to the dairy-related industries in Merrickville.

Merrickville: Cheese Factories and Creameries

In the course of this brief study the writer has uncovered very little information about the cheese factories of Merrickville. About all that can be stated at present is that there have been at least two in the village between 1871 and the 1930s. The first village cheese factory was established by Henry D. Smith (q.v.) probably on one of his numerous properties in South Merrickville. Our only information about it comes from the industrial census of 1871 which reports that the factory represented an investment of $800 (with another $100 in floating capital) and that it employed four men.[281] It appears that this factory was not one of Smith's most successful enterprises since it is not mentioned in Woodburn's directory of 1876 nor in any other contemporary sources. None of the local historians or old-timers seems to have been aware that Smith ever had a cheese works. On this basis we may perhaps conclude that the venture did not last long.

Another cheese factory was opened in North Merrickville apparently in a still extant block building used until 1889 as a Methodist church[282] and now belonging to the Grenville Castings Company (q.v.). On 3 April 1902 the Merrickville Star announced to its readers that the Rideau Valley Cheese Factory was expected to begin production in town on 21 April.[283] Its proprietor was a gentleman from Almonte, W. J. Ragsdale by name[284] who was evidently a very experienced cheese-maker starting on a new venture. On 28 June 1902 the factory was inspected and passed with flying colours: Ragsdale it seems was complimented on the neat and orderly appearance of his plant.[285] The factory is mentioned by the Star again on 9 April 1903 when Ragsdale was said to be about to re-open it, this time with the backing of two assistants, W. J. O'Neil of Eganville and J. C. Churchill of Brockville.[286]

There are further references to the Ragsdale family in Merrickville as late as 1907: in 1903, for example, W. J. Ragsdale was serving as a director of the local fair.[287] By October of 1907, however, Mr. Ragsdale secured an appointment as a travelling government inspector of cheese factories and consequently moved to Smiths Falls which was more centrally located for him.[288] The Rideau Valley Cheese Factory fades out of the record after this although it was not necessarily closed. During the 1920s and thirties the above-named church building was still being used as a combined cheese factory and creamery: we find it listed as such by the Department of the Interior in

1929.[289] Local historians such as the late Dr. Leonard Newman seem to imply that the factory ran more or less continuously from the turn of the century.[290] Local farmers such as the Newmans regularly shipped in their milk[291] while local sawmills such as the one owned by Frederick Dougall (q.v.) manufactured round wooden boxes (made at least partly of elm) for the transport of cheese.[292] Dr. Newman also noted that freight steamers such as the Olive and her successor the Ottawan included consignments of Merrickville cheese amongst their cargoes until about 1930.[293] Another local commentator, Lois Knapp observed about 1946 that the local butter factory in town had been operated by the Corkery brothers;[294] further research would undoubtedly throw more light on these enterprises. In 1945, however, the Grenville Castings Company took over the old creamery and cheese factory building and turned it into a foundry;[295] from which we may conclude that cheese was no longer being made in Merrickville.

Before we leave this industry we might pause to note the existence of the Clear Spring Dairy which was established during the 1940s by a Merrickville man named Jack Jakes.[296] The dairy was located in a house on St. Lawrence Street immediately south of the Presbyterian church: a rear section (since removed) was used for pasteurizing.[297] Deliveries were conducted using a horse and wagon. The house was damaged by fire during the 1940s but afterwards rebuilt.[298] in time Jakes sold the business to a Ross Moffatt who shared the house with him and later it went

to Hiram Holliday of Rosedale, owner of the Clark Dairy in Smiths Falls.[299] Holliday soon merged the two operations and the Clear Spring Dairy closed its doors in Merrickville around 1956.[300]

The Woollen Textile Industry During the Prime Industrial Period

Woollen textile manufacturing in Canada saw the emergence of giant consolidated corporations owning large factories with quite sophisticated machinery during the 1890s and the 20th century. It also witnessed the decline and disappearance of many of the small local mills in eastern Ontario, especially after 1893.[301] The reasons were fairly straightforward. Most of the small mills had slender capital resources to back them. Many were located at sites that offered water power but little else at a time when convenient and speedy access to markets and raw materials (which meant rail connections) was coming to outweigh all other considerations.[302] In some localities where farming was at best a dubious proposition many farms were abandoned after the lumber trade passed and on those that remained farmers began discovering that wool was not as profitable as other crops and accordingly reduced the number of sheep.[303] This forced the local woollen mills to import more and more wool from other countries (which they were often forced to do anyway in order to get the finest and whitest grades such as were now in demand for most products): sometimes the prices

of imported fleeces fluctuated sharply but there was nothing the local mills could do about it.[304] When in 1897 the new Liberal government under Sir Wilfrid Laurier reduced tariffs on imported British woollens many small Canadian firms were forced out of business and over 150 woollen mills had to shut down.[305] Of course, the immense increase in the number of small mills during the 1870s had undoubtedly made a large number of failures inevitable sooner or later; especially as the industry became concentrated in the hands of a small number of giant conglomerated companies which had the best chances of handling the ever more complicated mechanics of marketing, shipping, advertising and obtaining credit.[306]

For the above reasons quite a number of small woollen mills around the Rideau corridor were forced to close during the 1890s; amongst them were the mills of Glen Tay and Port Elmsley[307] and as a rule the former owners ended up managing the factories of more successful firms.[308] The survivors on the local scene usually drifted into partnership with big city interests and tended to specialize along particular lines such as clothing, tweeds, worsteds, felts, rugs and blankets.[309]

The prospects of the industry in Canada brightened somewhat when the tariffs were raised again in 1907[310] and during the two world wars the demand for woollen textiles skyrocketed. Between such peak periods there were, of course, drastic fluctuations. By the 1920s wool was not only taking second place to cotton but also it was facing perceptible competition

from synthetic fibres such as rayon: between 1929 and 1964, an interval of 35 years, wool consumption doubled in Canada while cotton rose two-and-a-half times and synthetics increased 40 times.[311] Since the Second World War the production of woollens in Canada has continued to decline especially in the face of competition from low wage countries such as Japan and India where production is both specialized and conducted on a large scale.[312] Much more research, however, is necessary to round out the setting in which the little woollen mill at Merrickville struggled to survive for 106 years.

The Merrickville mill now owned by the Watchorn family managed to continue independently until 1954 despite its rather small size and increasingly outmoded machinery. Apparently it owed its success to the timely arrival of the CPR, the conversion of its machinery to electricity around 1920, the trend towards specialization in woollen blankets and the mill's location in a low wage area. Perhaps effective management was another major factor. We turn now to the evidence at hand.

Merrickville: Island Woollen Mill
No. 1 (1848-1954) (Concluded)

The beginnings of the woollen mill (the walls of which are still one of the most prominent features on the island at Merrickville) have been summarized in Chapter 2 from its foundation by Stephen Merrick in 1848 to its outright purchase by Robert Watchorn (q.v.) from Henry Merrick in June of 1885.

When Robert Watchorn along with his brother Thomas Henry bought out the old woollen factory — for which they paid $8,000[313] —they were acquiring a solidly established enterprise which they had been operating with success for over a decade. With the actual plant came the water privileges associated with it and various parcels of land on the island totalling 31,310 square feet.[314] The scope of the business should probably be judged as rather small by Ontario standards since the growing tendency was for textile mills to expand, be amalgamated with other mills or go out of business.[315] The Merrickville woollen mill did not go out of business nor was it absorbed by rival firms. It seems to have been expanded somewhat by the Watchorns though the details are obscure. The factory was still handicapped by its almost total dependence on the Rideau Canal even as late as 1885: by then the most prosperous mills in the province all had the great advantage of rail facilities.

To come back to specifics: on the same day as they bought the woollen mill (1 June 1885) Robert and Thomas Watchorn obtained a mortgage on it for $6,000 (three-quarters of the purchase price) from Messrs. Magee and Pearson.[316] The reason for the move is obvious though it is not clear when the mortgage was discharged; however, an indenture dated 17 April 1890 assigning the mortgage solely to Pearson notes that the debt had been reduced to $3,192.[317] The competitive prospects of the mill were greatly enhanced by the arrival of the CPR around 1886 thus

giving the factory direct access to the immense markets of Montreal and Toronto all year round and allowing for convenient delivery of imported wool. It appears that the owners took prompt advantage of it.

Local testimony and circumstantial evidence alike suggest that the business expanded under the Watchorns. One pamphlet by a Merrickville old-timer asserts positively that the plant was enlarged[318] and confirmation of sorts is indicated by the building itself. By the 1890s the factory clearly had two sections with a distinct widening of the space between the rows of windows at the same point on both the north and south side walls:[319] all the windows in the central (and oldest) portion of the mill are evenly spaced until one comes to the sixth window (from the west end) on each floor at which point the slight irregularity appears. This would suggest that the last 28 (approximate) feet at the east end of the building were an afterthought though the style matches the rest of the building exactly, with identical-sized windows and an identical roof line. At a later time still though not after 1895 another small stone extension was added to the east end to house a boiler:[320] this move helped bring the woollen mill flush against the furniture factory (q.v.) at the lower end of the island.

The business expanded in other respects as well. Though the details are vague it appears that the Watchorns opened a store in downtown Merrickville probably not later than 1886: the store was located in the south portion of the building now

housing "Viv's Lunch" and "Ad Infinitum"[321] and no doubt it not only sold products from the factory but also imported goods from cities such as Montreal. In 1887 the firm published a flyer announcing several of its latest developments. The complete text is quoted below:

MERRICKVILLE WOOLLEN MILLS

1887 1887 1887

To the Farmers.

Since we last addressed you we have made extensive improvements that make our premises complete and comfortable, and will enable us to supply your wants more promptly. We take this means of again thanking you for past favors and soliciting a continuance of your patronage, and also of announcing that we will

RE-OPEN OUR BRANCH STORE,
AT MANOTICK,
ROBERT FEE'S NEW STORE,
SIGN OF THE "UNION JACK"

And be ready for business on the FIRST OF JUNE

Our stock consists of

TWEEDS & FLANNELS,
COARSE, MEDIUM AND FINE,
IN SUMMER, MEDIUM AND WINTER WEIGHTS,

IN

NUMEROUS VARIETY OF SHADES AND PATTERNS

(THE LATEST DESIGNS)

OVERCOATINGS, IRISH FRIEZE,

Plain & fancy Pulled-Cloths, Worsted Coatings, Suiting and Trousserings, Navy-Blue Serge. Our Celebrated Halifax Tweeds in plain and fancy Colorings, White and Grey Sheetings.

ALL WOOL, WHITE SHEETING AND BLANKETS

YARNS, double and twist, in plain and fancy colors, also, Grey and White single Yarn, &c. All of which we offer in EXCHANGE FOR WOOL, or will sell for Cash, on most favourable terms. CUSTOM WORK.

Picking, Carding, Spinning and Skeining done for 13 cts per Ib.

Customers residing at a distance can exchange their Wool for Yarn, in Hanks, both Warp and Filling, all ready for the Weaver, thus avoiding the inconvenience of a second trip — and you can rely on getting first-class work done, as our Machinery is always kept in good order.

> We will pay the market price, in cash, for Wool, and do not fail to bring your BLACK WOOL, for which we pay the SAME PRICE as for white, and want all we can get of it.
>
> Whenever you come to town give us a call; you will find your old friend MAC, always glad to see and welcome you, whether you want to buy or not.
>
> WATCHORN & CO.
>
> MAY, 1887.[322]

Obviously the Watchorn Company was trying hard to woo the local sheep farmers but it may be questioned whether the firm was obtaining all of its wool locally at this time. Changing times led to changing tastes and a demand was growing for tweeds, serges, silken mixes and fine worsteds made from increasingly fine wools.[323] The local fleeces usually derived from Leicester, Cotswold or Lincoln sheep tended to have long, coarse fibres which were seldom purely white and consequently many Ontario mills were forced to start importing wool from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America to satisfy popular demand.[324] Since the Watchorn mill was apparently adaptable enough to cater to some of the new demands it may be inferred that the company also imported some of its fleeces from abroad though it is not clear how this was done.

The Watchorns also seem to have established links with clothing and shoe manufacturers in Montreal or elsewhere as many small firms did[325] but little is known of the company's buying or distributing arrangements over the years.

Over the next seven years the operations of the Watchorn Company are obscure except that Thomas Henry Watchorn evidently sold out his share of the business to his younger brother George Edmund Watchorn on 1 December 1891 for $2,000.[326] This apparently did not terminate Thomas Watchorn's involvement with the company since Miss Belle Mills of Merrickville (who was born in 1895) still remembers him as the firm's foremost salesman in the early 1900s: he prospered enough to build a very fine home in Merrickville.[327] Robert Watchorn was the general manager of the company while George Watchorn kept the books at least until 1909 at which time he and his wife decided that there wasn't enough going on to keep them in Merrickville. On 1 May 1909 George sold out his share in the firm to Robert for $2,000[328] and went west to Regina.[329]

In 1894 the Watchorn Company - or rather all the south side mill owners in Merrickville - became involved in another water power feud with north shore industrialists Patrick Kyle and the Percivals. The only information presently available about this distasteful affair comes from an incomplete set of letter transcripts mostly from the Watchorn Company's legal advisors in Toronto[330] from which we can glean some idea of the

cause of the dispute though it is not clear exactly how it was settled.

Apparently the trouble arose when Patrick Kyle (along with the Percivals?) decided to build a large new water flume on the north side of the river. This aroused the apprehensions of the island mill owners who feared that their north side counterparts were preparing to drain off most of the available water power. On 22 August 1894 John Mills (owner of the furniture factory, q.v.), Hiram Easton, George Byron Magee (who held the old island gristmill, q.v.) and the Watchorns all agreed to co-operate in preventing the north shore parties from taking more than 50 per cent of the pond waters apparently proportioned on the amounts of water used respectively by the four parties: Magee and the Watchorns were each to pay two-thirds of the costs while Easton and Mills were to contribute one-eighth apiece .[331] Kyle and the Percivals admitted that their new flume was 12 feet (wide?) whereas the south side flume (which was built at the same level) was only ten feet (wide?) but they insisted that the new flume would still result in an even division of the waters.[332]

On 22 September 1894 the firm of Cassels, Cassels and Brock (barristers and solicitors in Toronto) wrote to appraise their clients, the Watchorns on the results of their investigations into the matter.[333] Briefly speaking the lawyers concluded that though William Merrick in his will of 1844 had apparently intended that the bulk of the water power should go to his sons William and Stephen who inherited the island, the fact that

Aaron and Terence Merrick had been permitted to build a cross dam and division dam in the millpond around 1853-54 with the express purpose of dividing the water equally between the island and the north shore was tantamount to an acknowledgment that the north side millers were entitled to half the water.[334] The fact that the cross and division dams had never been removed (even though they had decayed and were no longer functioning as intended) further strengthened the view that the north side parties were entitled to 50 per cent of the water and the service of a protest in 1875 did not alter the situation.[335] The lawyers also felt that Kyle and the Percivals had the right to make their new water flume as large as they liked so long as they did not end by taking more than half. Only experts and practical men would be able to tell whether the new flume would in fact represent an encroachment and procuring such testimony in court would be a slow, expensive and time-consuming business. The lawyers agreed that the south side mill owners were prudent to reassert their claims to half the waters but they also suggested that it would be wise to settle peacefully out of court rather than start up a long and costly litigation that would poison neighbourly goodwill and perhaps prove ruinous to all concerned: this after all had happened in the case of the protracted and bitter feud between Hiram Easton and the Merricks over the same issue which left both sides nearly bankrupt before a compromise was ironed out in 1884.[336] (See Island Shingle Mill.) More letters were exchanged between the Watchorns and

their legal advisors but after October of 1894 the records peter out. It seems likely that most of the island mill owners eventually acquiesced to the new water flume presumably on condition that its owners did not drain away more than half the water. The question is not known to have arisen again.

Our next real glimpse of the Watchorn Company comes from a news clipping dated about 1896: its contents are interesting though the account is so rosy that one suspects it was written by Robert Watchorn himself! We are told that Watchorn and Company had just wound up 21 years of manufacturing Canadian tweeds, friezes, etoffs, flannels, sheeting and yarns and that their products were being widely sold in Ontario and Quebec.[337] Canadian tweeds were gradually replacing imported English and Scottish tweeds on the Canadian scene (thanks to National Policy protectionist tariffs?) thus allowing local firms like the Watchorns to compete.[338] The Merrickville products were said to have a beautiful texture and finish which was much appreciated by the local farmers with which the company did so much business.[339] The factory itself was said to have two sets of cards and 720 spindles: it was (says the article) the second oldest in Ontario and one of the oldest in Canada.[340] Notwithstanding we are assured that the mill was clean, well-ventilated and healthy. It employed 30 hands all year round and the employees were described as "contented and happy."[341] One wonders about that considering that so many 19th-century woollen mills are described as humid, hot, under-lit, noisy and filled with

fast-moving, dangerous machinery.[342] On the other hand this writer has discovered no evidence of labour disputes in Merrickville at least until the 1930s (though there were certainly cases of it elsewhere).[343] The Watchorn enterprise, owned by R. W. and G. E. Watchorn was even described as one of the leading manufacturing concerns of that part of Ontario[344] though again it would be instructive to know more about how it compared with the other 256-odd woollen mills in Ontario around that time.[345]

Along with the above information we find another advertisement for the Watchorn store; this one specifically about the latest spring derby hats for sale at prices anywhere from 50 cents to $2.50.[346] The same announcement adds that the Watchorn firm was an agent for Beresford Shoes.[347] Quite obviously the company had working arrangements with other firms far from Merrickville.

There are some indications that the Watchorn Company began running into difficulties after 1896. The industry as a whole was starting to decline by that time partly because there were simply too many mills in Canada.[348] Matters were not helped any when the Laurier government in 1897 reduced tariffs on imported British textiles: it is said that 150 woollen mills had to shut down as a result[349] while others were often forced to cut back production or agree to amalgamations. The Watchorn mill was one of those that both survived and maintained its independence but until the tariffs were again raised in 1907 the going was

difficult.[350] In September of 1899 the woollen mill almost shared the fate of most of the other island mills which were destroyed by fire at that time including the gristmill (No. 1, q.v.) appendaged to the west end: the fire wall evidently saved the woollen factory though the roof of the building was damaged somewhat. In October 1899 Alex and Lincoln Mills were engaged to repair the roof.[351]

Further evidence of troubles is found in the Merrickville Star in the edition of 20 March 1902 which says briefly: "The woolen [sic] factory of Watchorn & Co., will commence operations again shortly, after being closed for the past two or three months."[352] The cause of the shutdown is not mentioned but by inference the firm was being forced to limit production. Directories and newspaper advertisements indicate that the factory remained open during the early 1900s and there are frequent references to the store. In 1907, however, the mill was again shut down.[353] On 28 May 1908 the Star printed the following paragraph under the headline "Mill Re-Opens":

The woollen mill owned by Messrs. Watchorn & Co., which has been closed down for a little over a year, has commenced operations again. They have only gone into the manufacture of yarn as yet but everyone hopes to see a full staff employed there in the very near future.[354]

It can only be assured that the mill had to be shut down because of the general depression in the textile industry stemming from outside competition.

From this period comes sufficient documentation to enable us to describe the woollen mill in some detail. By about 1895 judging from photographs the plant had reached its maximum size. The building by then consisted of three sections including two extensions to the original plant presumably added after 1885 when the Watchorns first bought it outright.[355] The western and oldest section was (and is) about 38 feet by 42 feet[356] and may have been the size of the plant in Stephen Merrick's day. The centre section as mentioned earlier is about 28 feet long and matches the western section in width.[357] Both sections are built of irregular limestone masonry. The building including the basement was four-and-a-half stories in height with a medium-pitched gabled roof on the same alignment as that of the appendaged gristmill (q.v.) and likewise apparently sheeted with metal.[358] The east end of the centre section embodied a chimney while each end of the combined sections also featured a striking parapet projecting a few feet above the rest of the roof level forming a fire wall.[359] There were no windows in the east wall but the north and south sides each had a row of eight windows on each floor; symmetrically and evenly-spaced except at the dividing point between the two sections: in addition the second floor substituted two doors for windows.[360] The roof featured three dormers on each side; with two pair in

the older section and one in the new.[361] On top of the roof of the old section was a quaint wooden bell tower apparently identical with that on the roof of the main Percival building across the river[362] but the tower seems to have been a casualty in the fire of 1899 that gutted the gristmill since later photographs show only a simple bell frame.[363] (The new roof added in 1899 was also a darker colour than the old roof.)

The eastern wing of the woollen mill was quite different from the other two in that it was only one-and-a-half stories high though it was also built of limestone and its roof had the same pitch as the main sections of the building.[364] The eastern annex was about 26 feet long and 42 feet across[365] like the rest of the building. It had two small dormers, a few windows and an entrance in the south wall. Its roof featured a small clerestory-like vent for air circulation and its east end wall formed another fire wall.[366] The east wing housed a boiler set in brick along the partition from the centre section[367] and apparently also the dyeing vat[368] which may have been the main reason for adding the boiler to the plant. At least during the 20th century the boiler burned coal[369] which probably came in originally by canal barge though in later times it was all shipped in by rail.[370]

By 1900 judging from the Goad map the plant was being heated by steam and lighted with coal oil.[371] The machinery, of course, was still water powered and the flume ran parallel to the north wall.[372] The map also reveals a certain amount

about the interior layout. The first floor contained the weaving looms, the second housed the spinning frames, the third held the carding machines and the fourth, the pickers: an iron-lined picker section is indicated around the centre of the west wall.[373] According to some old-timers who worked in the mill the above layout remained essentially unchanged throughout the 1920s, thirties, forties and fifties with just a few variations in detail[374] as the firm expanded its holdings, acquired new buildings or added a few new features. In short manufacturing always started on the top floor and worked its way down to the finishing rooms at the bottom. A few refinements are known from early in the present century: sometime after 1900 and before 1912 the fire wall separating the woollen mill from the gristmill seems to have been strengthened[375] and on 26 October 1911 — before the hydro station was built — another improvement was noted by the Merrickville Star:

> Messrs. Watchorn & Co. last week installed at their woollen mill a dynamo capable of generating enough electricity for 150 lights. This will enable them to keep the mills running full time, as before it was often necessary to stop early at nights owing to the lack of light.[376]

(One senses from this commentary that business had improved and that the Watchorns were anxious to step up production.)

We shall be discussing the inside operations of the mill more fully when we reach the 1920s and thirties at which point we can follow testimonies of people who actually worked there. For the early 1900s our main sources are newspaper advertisements which tell us more about the downtown store than about the plant itself. One announcement dated 22 June 1905 tells us that the Watchorn store then had raincoats, wool sweaters, men's suits, shirts, ties, gloves, collars, underwear and hats in stock:[377] these articles undoubtedly were all imported but the other items listed tweeds, flannels, yarns and blankets[378] probably came directly from the factory. According to an old-timer interviewed in 1977 the woollen mill was making mostly blankets early in the century and shipping them out primarily by rail (rather than by canal)[379] The mill was then employing about 25 to 30 people,[380] roughly the same number as in later times. In September of 1907 at a time when the factory was closed we find the Watchorn Company contributing a prize of two woollen blankets for the best exhibit of sheep at the local fall fair.[381] That same year the firm was also selling furs and Ajax Shoes;[382] in 1908 the store was featuring Carhartt's gloves, coveralls and pants.[383] One wonders whether the store (s?) were actually more important to the company than the mill itself: at times they probably were!

We have already noted George Watchorn's withdrawal from the firm in 1909 and it would appear that his pace was gradually taken by Thomas Judson Watchorn (q.v.), the eldest son of Robert

who eventually took over the business. On 16 May 1912 as a legal formality Robert Watchorn transferred the mill from his own name to that of Watchorn and Company.[384]

Little is known of the woollen mill over the next several years though we may reasonably suppose that a blanket factory would have had its work cut out for it during wartime; old-timers seem to agree that the mill was very busy during the war.[385] The new hydro-electric generating station was completed at Merrickville by 1916 allowing the plant to be converted from water power to electricity: a former lockmaster has affirmed that the mill was still using water power when he arrived in 1919[386] but by 1928 it had definitely been converted.[387]

Though the evidence is admittedly scanty it is likely that the Watchorns made few changes in the factory during the war when men and materials were scarce. However, shortly after the war ended the firm carried out some dramatic expansions perhaps using some of the profits amassed from the war and it appears that the plant was improved at the time it was enlarged. For example, on 4 November 1919 the company bought out the holdings of William Millar who seems to have held the old island foundry building (q.v.) facing the woollen mill for $750:[388] the foundry was in dilapidated condition as early as 1912.[389] The Watchorns converted the building into a picking room where wool and shoddy were blended together before carding was started.[390] (Very likely the "Watchorn storehouse" building, q.v., facing the snye was acquired at the same time.) One-and-a-half years later on

3 May 1921 the company also purchased Alex Mills' gristmill along with 2,968 square feet of property beside the road[391] and for the first time the entire building became part of the Watchorn property. In fact the woollen factory was now the only industrial enterprise on the island except for Lincoln Mills' furniture factory. The Watchorns relocated their office from the rear of the woollen mill to the bottom floor of the former gristmill[392] using a flight of steps to provide access down from the road which was at a higher elevation.[393] The second floor of the gristmill was now used for storing wool and shoddy while the floor above that became another picking room (as distinct from the one in the old foundry building).[394] Directly opposite the new picking room in the gristmill section was the carding room in the woollen mill building; naturally doors were opened through the fire wall separating the woollen mill from the former gristmill.[395]

It may be surmised that the plant was converted to electricity around this time. The former lockmaster also remarks that a new wing made of concrete blocks was added to the east end to house a new boiler sometime after 1919:[396] the wing which had one storey and a gabled roof has since been demolished but its outline can still be perceived against the east wall of the mill. The new boiler also a coal burner was used to heat the factory using steam and hot water running through radiators.[397] Coal was brought in by rail and trucked down to the plant.[398] A Merrickville man, Oliver Matilla by name was in

charge of the boiler for many years, right down to the closing in 1954.[399]

Documentary evidence on the woollen mill is rather scanty during the 1920s and thirties. Photographs indicate that the building was not visibly altered during that time except for roof changes following the fire of 1930.[400] A statement from the records of the Department of the Interior in 1929 reads as follows: "Watchorn & Co., Ltd. Blankets, tweeds, sheeting, flannels, knitting & wheeling yarns"[401] -- which at least indicates a fair variety of items being manufactured by the little Merrickville plant which by now had to co-exist with giants in the textile world such as Dominion Textiles Limited. By this time too cotton was in far greater demand than wool for most products while synthetic fibres made from wood, coal, air, natural gas and the like (such as rayon, for example) were making rapid inroads into the Canadian domestic market at the expense of wool and cotton.[402] Despite all these trends plus other unpredictable fluctuations affecting the industry the Merrickville mill carried on.

What were the operations like within the woollen mill? Thanks to the recollections of such people as Mr. Harold Barton and Mrs. Agnes Thibeault who worked for the Watchorns we can reconstruct activities from the late 1920s to the 1950s in some detail. The first stage, of course, was obtaining the raw materials; in this case coal, raw wool and shoddy. Coal as we have noted was shipped in by rail. Wool was still purchased

from the local farmers at that time and it is said that the farmers' trucks sometimes used to block traffic across the island as they turned off onto the factory property.[403] Local supplies of wool, however, were unequal to the demands of the mill and more and more the company was obliged to purchase wool from other firms[404] probably outside Canada. (The problem tended to get more pronounced over the years as farmers began finding other crops more profitable than wool and accordingly cut back on the number of sheep.)[405]

The last item, shoddy, was used in the production of cheaper blankets. Shoddy itself consists of any leftover items of cloth such as old coats, clothing, blankets or even rags made of cotton: these were bought up by agents in cities such as Toronto and Montreal and packaged in bales for shipment to Merrickville.[406] According to Mr. Barton Merrickville once had a separate shoddy mill (q.v.) established in the south quarter of town sometime after 1932: there the shoddy was thoroughly cleaned and trucked over to the Watchorn property.[407] (It is not certain as yet whether the Watchorns had any direct involvement with the shoddy mill but it appears that the mill passed all its output on to the Watchorn works.) The shoddy and the bales of wool were all stored in the wool storehouse (q.v.) beside the snye[408] which the Watchorns seem to have purchased in 1919. Of course many of the Watchorn blankets contained no shoddy at all but were made of pure wool.[409]

Bales of wool usually weighed about three to four hundred pounds.[410] When work was to begin the wool (and shoddy) would be bound up in sheets of burlap and taken over to the picking building (the former island foundry, q.v.) where a single operator (usually Mr. Barton) would feed it through a powered picking machine: if shoddy was to be added the blending was done at this stage.[411] (Later the picking operation was transferred to the top floor of the old gristmill section of the main building while the picking building was converted into a machine shop for the repair of plant machinery.)[412] Picking could be a hazardous process since any metal scrap that happened to be in the shoddy could quite easily produce a spark when it hit the teeth of the picking machine which in turn could set the wool on fire.[413]

Once picked the wool had to be hauled laboriously over to the mill building and up to the top floor. (Of course, once picking was transferred to the main building the wool had only to be carried over to an adjacent room.)[414] Sometime during the 1930s an elevator was installed in the building at the east end thus eliminating the toilsome chore of lugging the wool bags up four flights of stairs.[415]

On the top floor were the carding machines of which the factory had three:[416] here the fleeces were mechanically combed into threads. These were fed onto special spools called copts which were then taken downstairs to the spinning room.[417] Here the wool was mechanically twisted and spun into yarn which was

fed onto spools: a constant concern at this stage was breaks in the strands of yarn which would have to be bound quickly together so that it would continue to fill the bobbin.[418] From here the yarn was installed in a warper in preparation for weaving.[419]

Weaving was done on the second floor which held about eight looms.[420] Mrs. Thibeault recalls that an employee might weave 60 yards of yarn at a time back and forth with the shuttle. A woman warper would tie a little cord around the yarn every so often and when the cord came up it was a signal to the weaver that a particular cut of cloth was completed.[421] (There were five cuts in an entire beam.) The cloth was then measured and thrown down a chute to the finishing room on the bottom floor.[422] Here the cloth was fulled; that is to say washed and wrung out continuously to shrink it and remove any loose threads. (The water came from the river back of the mill.[425] Scouring may have been done there as well.) The factory could produce any colour that was wanted but most of the cloth manufactured was white, green, brown or gray; some red, green or yellow checks were also developed.[426] By the 1930s the Watchorn mill was turning out mostly blankets and heavy cloth for men's work trousers. (The actual clothes were apparently made by Montreal firms that bought the cloth.)[427] The blankets were periodically tested for strength by an inspector from Prescott and we are assured that they seldom failed to draw high marks![428] Cheap blankets might consist of one-quarter

wool and three-quarters shoddy and might sell for $3.00 apiece but the more expensive white or cream-coloured sheets which were done on piecework were made of pure sheep's wool and had to be flawless.[429] Judson Watchorn himself insisted on good quality products that would last and refused to approve poor work or unsatisfactory dyes.[430]

Little is known about the actual machinery within the plant though Mrs. Thibeault recalls that much of it was obtained from the Massey Corporation.[431] Mr. Barton recalls no major modernizing or updating programme on the machinery at any time and as the equipment grew older it became harder and harder to obtain spare parts.[432] Consequently there was much improvising done at the machine shop in the old foundry building which for many years was run by Reeves Watchorn, son of Judson who later qualified as a full-fledged machinist and engineer: it is said that he could duplicate any component in the old woollen mill machinery.[433]

As for the staffs at the mill Mr. Barton recalls that it took one man to operate the picking machine. Three people were employed as carders and three or four men as spinners. Eight women and girls did the weaving while a man and two or three women looked after the fulling and drying. In the rear were a boiler man and a dyer.[434] An individual named Harry Roberts, not a native of Merrickville, was plant foreman[435] and one Ken Whalley for many years was bookkeeper.[436] Altogether the mill usually employed about 25 people. The wages were low and

there was no unemployment insurance or pension plan but the work was steady and prices on essential commodities were low. For both the plant and its employees taxes were moderate and power was cheap.[437] Relations between the staff and the management seem to have been fairly good: Judson Watchorn was known to give baskets of goodies to his employees or their children at Christmas and to loan money or do favours for those in need but he would not tolerate the idea of a union. One time when the employees were apparently discussing it Watchorn threatened to shut down the entire plant.[439] Needless to say no union was ever formed.

We are assured by a biased informant that the woollen mill was once a beautiful property and that Judson Watchorn was very proud of it.[440] On a warm summer's day it was common to see most of the windows open and hear the quiet clattering of the shutters and bobbins.[441] In 1931 the Merrickville Court of Revision fixed the assessment on the mill at $1,000; in 1950 the figure was set five times as high.[442]

On 26 December 1930 the woollen mill suffered a serious setback.[443] Late that afternoon fire broke out in the picking room on the top floor when a piece of metal in some shoddy passed through the picker, igniting a spark and setting the fibres ablaze. The man on the machine could not put it out and the fire rapidly spread to the roof. Between the staffs and the village fire brigade the blaze was confined to the top floor and soon put out but not before doing a lot of damage to the roof;

in addition some of the machinery was soaked with water and began to rust.[444] The plant, valued at something like $30,000 was partly insured[445] and Judson Watchorn at once put all his men to work repairing it. Within three months carding, spinning and spooling were carrying on again as usual.[446] It was probably at this time that the factory was re-roofed without dormers and the double gable on the old gristmill wing rebuilt with a simple gable similar to that of the rest of the building;[447] again, this change may have followed a similar fire in 1941.

The 1930s were, of course, the Depression years and in large measure the market for woollen blankets dried up. It is said that the Watchorn mill was the only enterprise in Merrickville not to lay off any of its employees or institute serious work slowdowns during those desperate years.[448] Sometimes, we are told, blankets and cloth kept piling up higher and higher in the storage room and no buyers could be found; then conditions would improve a little and the piles would get smaller again.[449] Judson Watchorn made a point of making sure his employees were always paid on time though reputedly that sometimes meant that they ended up with more than he did![450] In the winter times he was also known to fill the coal cellars of his employees and to charge them only what it cost him, deducting small amounts from their wages every two weeks.[451] Occasionally he was known to buy meat wholesale from the cities and resell it at cost.[452] At one point he also instituted a "make-work" programme for the unemployed in Merrickville in

that he paid men to pull down the ruins of the old oatmeal mill and pile up the rubble as fill around his factory.[453] Somehow the woollen mill and its employees made it through the Depression.

The outbreak of war in 1939 led to a renewed demand for woollen blankets and soon the factory was running overtime to meet the rush. Most of the work now consisted of making green or brown blankets, sometimes with a black stripe.[454] Wages went up and the weavers were put on piecework which meant that pay increased with production.[455] Starting around 1940 Watchorn also gave his employees a bonus twice a year and apparently repeated the process every succeeding year until the war ceased.[456] Whether the increased pay was more than offset by the increasing pressure to produce thus in fact worsening the employees' working conditions is difficult to say but by inference the twin spurs of patriotism and profit were beneficial to both the firm and its staffs.

Sometime during the summer or early autumn of 1941 the mill encountered one more setback. Another fire broke out in the picking room under the same circumstances as before and once again the roof of the former gristmill wing was destroyed before the blaze was put out. Again the damage was speedily repaired and the plant carried on.[457] The pitch of the roof was, however, reduced after this fire.

The years following the end of the war were not kind to the Watchorn woollen mill. Government orders dropped off and the

factory turned to making coloured check blankets in anticipation of civilian demand; some of these were intended for use in automobiles.[458] By now, however, competition from the large textile corporations was becoming formidable. Even worse was the inflow of cheap woollens from outside Canada and the struggle became more and more desperate.[459] Besides, Judson Watchorn was now in his sixties and wanted to retire partly to relieve the worries of his ailing wife.[460] Apparently he had hopes that his son Reeves would take over the mill but Reeves was not interested.[461] Reluctantly on 1 January 1948 Judson Watchorn sold the mill to his younger brother Arthur who had hitherto shown little interest in it for $15,000 and accepted a mortgage of $12,500 the same day (in the name of Watchorn and Company[462] in which Judson Watchorn had always held 97 out of 100 shares).[463]

Though there may be an element of bias in the recollections of some of the old-timers on this score there is also widespread agreement that the business was generally allowed to go to pieces under Arthur Watchorn's ownership. More than one party has affirmed, for example, that Arthur was known to engage the mill workers to repair a large cottage at Rideau Ferry (which he had obtained from his sister) instead of carrying on at the plant or drumming up business.[464] We are also told that he bought a splendid new two-tone Pontiac just before the business failed. In fairness, however, it must be conceded that times were becoming so difficult for small textile mills that a collapse was perhaps inevitable. For some years the deteriorating situation

seems to have been concealed but in the 1950s another crisis struck the industry apparently forcing 69 primary mills in Canada to close.[466] One of those that succumbed was the Watchorn mill, after almost 80 years of operation under that name and 26 years before then under the Merricks. The Merrickville mill was then the oldest surviving woollen factory in Ontario.[467]

As the grim moment of truth drew near Judson Watchorn unwilling to have the family name associated with an ignominious business collapse reacquired the mill from Arthur who promptly left for Ottawa. Judson considered trying to carry on with the plant but decided not to; instead he sold the accumulated stock, paid off all debts (without loss to himself), settled accounts and shut down operations as smoothly as possible.[468] The actual closing took place on 31 October 1954[469] and the lockmaster of the day recalls that the lockmen were engaged to help the employees remove huge quantities of blankets, work shirts and the like onto trucks for shipment to Cornwall. The furniture was removed to the Watchorn home in North Merrickville.[470]

The fate of the machinery is disputed. Mr. Arthur Virtue of Merrickville recalls that some of it was sold to the Collie woollen mill at Appleton, near Carleton Place[471] though much of it was antiquated. On 12 October 1956 the old mill property was sold to David R. Milne of Toronto for a reputed $10,000[472] and according to the late Mrs. Mabel Watchorn Milne sold off everything of value including all the old weaving looms and a new, barely-used spooling machine from England that had cost $2,000.[473]

The bell from the frame on the roof went for $3,000:[474] the frame itself now lies discarded on a rubbish heap behind the building, Milne then put the empty edifice up for sale and on 14 November 1958 it went to Roland LeMire, a grocery store owner in Kemptville for $5,000.[475] LeMire did not know what to do with the old mill though for a time he considered installing a bowling alley in it.[476] In fact, however, he did nothing at all. Finally on 12 April 1965 he sold the building along with most of the island to George Willner,[477] a German-Canadian immigrant who opened an electroplating business (q.v.) on the site.[478] Under Winner's ownership it appears that the property became an eyesore[479] partly because the owner lacked the funds (and perhaps the will?) to maintain the buildings properly. This final, unhappy segment of the history of the woollen mill in which it deteriorated past the point of no return is summarized briefly in Chapter 4.

Merrickville: Watchorn Storehouse

(fl. 1895-1940)

As for this building very little can be said above and beyond what has been stated already. The storehouse was a long, narrow frame structure with a medium-pitched cedar-shingled roof[480] located at the south side of the island close beside the snye and directly across from Lincoln Mills' furniture factory (q,v,)[481] (See Figure 6.) As noted in Chapter 2 the building was about 78 feet by 38 feet, of board and batten construction

and had at least four windows along the south side facing the water.[482] A water flume from the island foundry building (q.v.)seems to have emptied into the snye at the west end of the storehouse.[483]

Little is known of the building's history. It appears in the oldest known photographs of the site taken around 1895 or earlier[484] and was probably built many years beforehand as a storehouse for one of Henry Merrick's or Hiram Easton's enterprises. Earlier we tentatively identified it with Albert Brinston's sash and door factory (q.v.): if true that would account for its activities from 1901 to about 1908. It may have served afterwards as an adjunct to the foundry. In 1919 as noted above the property apparently went to the Watchorn Company which used the building as a storehouse for shoddy and raw wool for many years.[485]

The old storehouse is marked on the maps of 1900[486] and 1914[487] and apparently it was in use as late as the 1940s. It may have lasted until the woollen mill was closed in 1954. Meanwhile the old storehouse unobtrusively disappears from the local scene.

Merrickville: Shoddy Mill

(fl. 1934-1938)

This enterprise alluded to earlier is known to this writer only from the recollections of Mr. Harold Barton who remarked on its existence during the 1930s.

According to Mr. Barton the shoddy mill was established shortly after 1932 in the old stone foundry building at the corner of Wellington and Elgin Streets in South Merrickville that now serves as a liquor store.[489] The business was run - and perhaps owned - by a Clifford Marshall and his father who were newcomers to Merrickville in the 1930s.[490] They evidently had a close working arrangement with the Watchorn Company since most or all of the shoddy they collected and cleaned went to the woollen mill. Trucks were used to amass the shoddy and deliver it to the factory; in addition the Watchorn firm had a truck of its own.[491] Next to the shoddy mill were stables owned by the its own. Percival family; long since removed.[492]

The shoddy mill was very busy at times but its prosperity was directly dependent on the woollen mill. Probably its duration was fairly brief since the Marshalls are said to have left Merrickville after a comparatively short stay.[493] Further inquiry would undoubtedly throw more light on this little-known enterprise.

Foundries During the
Prime Industrial Period

Merrickville is known to have had three foundries of various descriptions and types between 1886 and 1940. One of these was the small island foundry part of which still stands opposite the ruined woollen mill. The second was the Malleable Iron Works which reached its zenith during this period only to go out of

business around 1920. The last and most successful was the Percival Plow and Stove Company which survived until the 1930s before dying a lingering death. Three other metal-related industries can be assigned to this period though none of them lasted very long. We begin with the island foundry.

Merrickville: Island Foundry
(fl. 1874-1915?) (Continued)

Most of what is known about the island foundry before 1919 has already been summarized in Chapter 2. We have noted that the old stone building seems to have been abandoned during the 1890s while still in the possession of Henry Merrick: the earliest photographs taken around 1895 show the two sections of the structure apparently intact but with most of the roof of the east wing missing.[494] The Goad map of 1900 likewise marks this part of the building as "open to roof" while the whole building is labelled as "old and dilapidated."[495] (The recent fire in the adjacent oatmeal mill probably did not do the old foundry building any good either.)

From the map and photographs we can describe the foundry at this period in some detail. The western and larger section was a three-storey structure, about 32 feet by 62 feet in size and stood 33 feet high at the south side.[496] Its west wall, of course, abutted against the old oatmeal mill while the roof sloped gently away from the larger building.[497] (See Figure 6.) The south wall had a door and two windows at ground level, three

windows on the second floor and two on the third.[498] The lower portions of this wing now (1979) form the foundations of the little house built by George Willner around 1965.

Attached to this section and forming an "L" shape is the east wing which was originally two-and-a-half stories high and surmounted with a cedar-shingled medium-pitched gabled roof.[499] This section is about 55 feet long and 37 feet wide. The south wall stood 23 feet high[500] and seems to have had five windows on each floor.[501] Between the second and third windows was a smoke-stack set outside the building with a tiny one-storey board and batten wing built around it.[502] The stack and the wooden wing were obviously added as an afterthought probably for the cupola: a good indication that the stone building was not originally intended as a foundry. By 1900 the east wing also had a narrow one-storey wooden appendage to the east end wall.[503]

During the early 1900s the defunct foundry seems to have been in the hands of William Millar whose name flits through official documents of the period. A survey map drawn about 1914 marks both wings as "Miller's Foundry"[504] which may be an indication that Millar had reactivated the building by then. However, the insurance map of 1912 continues to mark the building as "old and dilapidated"[505] which suggests that it was still abandoned and indeed another survey map of 1912 explicitly says so.[506] It may be that Millar's foundry was never used at all in the present century.

Better times for the building arrived in 1919. On 4 November of that year William Millar sold the property for $750 to the Watchorn Company[507] which by the early 1930s was using the west wing of the old building as a picking room.[508] (The idea was perhaps to banish the operation with the greatest risk of fire to a site outside the woollen mill.) The east wing as explained earlier became a machine shop for repairing factory equipment.[509] According to Mr. Barton the building had been reduced to one storey by the 1930s.[510] The remainder of its history since the 1940s is summed up in Chapter 4.

Merrickville: Malleable Iron Works
(1867-1920?) (Concluded)

In the last chapter we left Patrick Kyle (one of Merrickville's foremost industrialists) in possession of all of the north shore industrial area excepting only the Percival Plow and Stove Company's holdings to the east (which corresponded to those of the present Ayling boat works, q.v.). We also noted that Kyle acquired the north shore sawmill, gristmill and tannery buildings (q.v.) and that his foundry works had been valued at about $24,000 as early as 1871[511] before he took control of them.

Unfortunately between 1880 and 1895 very few records pertaining to the Malleable Iron Works have been discovered. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the business was steadily advanced and developed by Kyle but the details are unknown: it does not help very much to find, for example, that Kyle's

property was being assessed for $6,000 in 1887.[512] Only around 1895 do the mists begin to clear: then and afterwards we find quite an extensive complex developed. The works now occupied at least five buildings and two sheds; of which only one can be traced back to the 1870s or sixties with anything like a degree of certainty.

What were these buildings and how did they evolve? For convenience we shall summarize each one separately before continuing with the works as a whole. The layout of the buildings is shown in Figures 6 and 7 (g.v.). The largest structure was called the "finishing shop."

"*Finishing Shop*"

This building, the remnants of which are now incorporated into the main foundry building of the Alloy Foundry Company (q.v.) was easily the most imposing of all the north shore industrial edifices. Photographs taken before and after the turn of the century show it as a four-and-a-half-storey limestone building with pronounced quoins, a medium-pitched cedar-shingled gabled roof and fire walls rising to form parapets projecting one foot above the roof line at both gables. Chimneys were embedded in both end walls and seemingly a third one stood at the centre of the building until about 1895.[513] The south wall facing the river — at least in each of its two upper stories — was pierced by seven large evenly-spaced windows with a much wider eighth one near the south-east corner;[514] the lower levels probably showed much

the same layout. The west wall had no windows except a few on the bottom floors and two on the third, fourth and attic levels.[515] No pictures have been found to show the north face but probably it looked much like the south. The overall style of the building was very similar to the nearby north shore gristmill (No. 6, built by the Merricks, q.v.), the main Percival building and the Merrick-Watchorn woollen mill and in Chapter 2 the speculation was raised that the big foundry building itself was originally built by the Merricks. The Goad map of 1900 indicates that it was about 79 feet long and 46 feet wide with a tin-roofed one-storey wing across about two-thirds of the north face.[516] Owing to the sloping land contours of the site the south wall stood 43 feet in height compared to the north's 33 feet.[517]

By 1900 - probably since 1878 - an underground water flume ran past the finishing shop on the north side: no doubt that watercourse or a similar one once served the building itself.[518] As to the pre-1895 history of the structure no direct evidence has been found but if the suspicion raised in Chapter 2 is well-founded the big building was erected around 1856 as a grist- and flouring mill (No. 5, q.v.) by Aaron Merrick. The structure looked like the mills of that period and as there seems to be no practical reason for a foundry to have so many floors we may conclude that it was not built for foundry work. Almost certainly the building was standing before Patrick Kyle bought the property in 1881 and it is perfectly possible that it was used to house

the original Malleable Iron Works as early as 1868. (See North Shore Gristmill No. 5.) That Kyle did not use the whole structure is proved by the fact that from 1899 to 1908 a large portion of it was leased to the National Fence Company (q.v.):[519] there is further evidence that another firm, the Merrickville Hame Company Limited (q.v.) occupied part of the building at an earlier period.[520] Thus we may conclude that Kyle's "finishing shop" was in fact built for other purposes and that its size was perhaps a bit of an embarrassment to Mr. Kyle.

Scarcely anything else is known of the building's operations. Only a rather fanciful sketch drawn around 1900 allows us to assert that the structure was indeed used as a "finishing shop" for iron castings: if the said sketch can be relied on the office was once located in the building as well.[521] The Goad map indicates further that all the Kyle buildings were being heated with coal and wood stoves and that they were lighted with coal oil.[522]

The "finishing shop" met with a pitiful end. On 24 June (or January?) 1920 Miss Mary Pearson noted in her diary that the large building of the Kyle malleable-iron foundry was completely burned out by a very hot fire that day. The alarm was sounded at 7:00 (p.m.?) but the village fire engine arrived too late to be of much assistance.[523] (Apparently it was a steam fire engine which perhaps took too long to heat up.) A photograph dated 1925 shows the building in ruins with the entire centre portion of the east wall missing.[524] In 1927 the bottom storey

of the burned out building gained a new lease on life when the neighbouring Percival Company (q.v.) renovated the ruins for a new foundry (q.v.).[525] Parts of the old structure constitute portions of the casting building for the Alloy Foundry Company today.

"*Carriage Shop*"

By this term is meant a three-and-a-half-storey gabled wooden building that stood immediately west of the "finishing shop" described above though there is little evidence to show that the wooden structure was ever used as a "carriage shop." (See Figure 6.)

Very little is known about this building. Part of its roof seems to be visible in an archival photograph from the 1895 era.[526] Another photograph taken apparently between 1899 and 1907 shows the "carriage shop" as an unpainted structure with a rather low-pitched cedar-shingled roof and three rows of four small windows on the south side with a few more in the west wall.[527] A few of the windowpanes appear to be missing and the Goad map of 1900 marks the building as vacant. Judging from the same map the "carriage shop" was about 40 feet by 38 feet with its east end about 15 feet away from the "finishing shop."[528]

Nothing more can be said about this building. One unpublished study calls the structure a "carriage shop" but on unstated authority.[529] There is only the faintest evidence

(to be considered presently) that Patrick Kyle was still building carriages as late as the 20th century. The wooden building may have been torn down and replaced in 1902 judging from an article in the Merrickville Star [530] while the revised insurance map of 1912 shows a different building partly occupying the same site: the new building, used for storage was evidently about 73 feet by 38 feet and abutted directly against the west end of the "finishing shop."[531] (See Figure 7.) The map indicates further that the storage shed was built of stone, had one-and-a-half stories and was roofed in shingles; the building is also marked "open to roof." Of the replacement shed nothing more is known; perhaps it was demolished during the 1920s or burned with the "finishing shop."

Annealing Shop

The Annealing Shop of the Malleable Iron Works was a two-and-a-half-storey stone and brick building located immediately south-west of the moulding shop (q.v.)[532] (See Figure 6.) It had a medium-pitched gabled roof with shingles set in mortar.[533] There were a few windows in the south and east walls and around 1900 a one-storey wooden side wing (about 18 feet by 28 feet) was added to the west end.[534] The main building was about 46 feet in length by 39 feet in width.[535] It housed two furnaces at the east end (of which the larger may have been used for castings and the smaller for cores) while outside stood a tall smokestack about twice the height of the building.[536] The

operations within this shop - the intensive heating and gradual cooling of castings - were the key to the entire process of malleabilizing iron.

The annealing shop was probably in existence before 1895; at least its stack is visible in photographs from that period.[537] Probably it was built by Patrick Kyle. The building appears unchanged on the insurance map of 1912 though there is record of a new annealing room being built in 1902.[538] The stack (and most likely the building) were still standing in 1925 after the nearby "finishing shop" had been destroyed by fire[539] but it appears that the old annealing building and its stack were both demolished shortly afterwards when the Percival Company (q.v.) built a new foundry from the remains of the "finishing shop" about 1927.

Moulding Shop (ex-Tannery)

The Kyle works also had a moulding shop. Unlike most of the other buildings in the complex this one still survives and furthermore a fair amount is known of its history: it is one-and-the-same structure as the old Campbell tannery built around 1850. (See North Shore Tannery No. 1.)

In Chapter 2 we noted that the tannery = moulding shop was a medium-sized single-storey stone building with a medium-pitched cedar-shingled gabled roof lying close to the river directly south of the "finishing shop" (now the Alloy Foundry Company's foundry building). (See Figure 6.) Judging from the Goad map

of 1900 the moulding shop was about 50 feet in length and 38 feet in width[540] not counting the numerous wings and annexes that have been variously added to or removed from the building over the years. Photographs from around 1895 show an attractively proportioned structure with six evenly-spaced sash-type double-hung windows on the south wall, one window and an arched doorway in the east wall and a chimney at both the east and west ends each with a corbelled cap. Three small cupolas, evenly-spaced, adorn the peak of the roof.[541] To the east is a smaller gabled frame building on rubble stone foundations which may have been appendaged to the main building.[542] A later photograph dating from around 1896-98 suggests that the wooden annex had been replaced by a larger structure with its roof on the same alignment as the main building[543] and this is supported by the Goad map of 1900 which shows a wooden east wing, one-and-a-half stories high and about 53 feet by 43 feet in size. The map also marks a small stone wing on the north side housing a cupola; the roof and stack of which can be seen in the 1895-period picture. The cupola wing also had a gabled roof.

Sometime around 1900 the moulding shop evidently received a new tin roof and the three cupolas were removed.[545] Later, by 1925 the building again had a new roof added; on the same pitch but now featuring a long continuous vent — rather in the style of a Texas barn.[546] By that time the wooden annex seems to have been removed. Further alterations followed in later years but

these are dealt with under the topic of the Alloy Foundry Company (q.v.) which now owns the building.

Little is known of the actual history of the moulding shop under Kyle's ownership. As noted in Chapter 2 it was still being used as a tannery in 1881 and photographic evidence from the 1890s shows neat piles of tanbark piled up near the building.[547] That it had not yet been converted into a moulding shop by 1899 is vaguely suggested (though not proved) by the terms of Kyle's mortgage with William Pearson that year: here we find the structure described simply as the "small stone building formerly used as a tannery."[548] On the Goad map of 1900 and its successor in 1912, however, both the stone building and its wooden annex are marked as a moulding shop[549] and the same applies to the imaginative though undated sketch of the Kyle works drawn sometime around 1900.[550]

In 1927 the old ex-tannery with most of the former iron works property was sold to the Percival Plow and Stove Company (q.v.) which found new uses for the building.

Pattern Shop

This little frame building stood immediately west of the southwest corner of the moulding shop directly beside the river. (See Figure 6.) It appears in photographs from the 1895-98 period and is marked on the maps of 1900 and 1912.[551] These suggest a small gabled shed about 20 feet by 12 feet with a chimney at the west

end.[552] The above-mentioned sketch of the 1900 period shows a small building at the above location marked as a pattern room.[553] Before 1900 there seems to have been an even smaller gabled shed alongside it.[554] Nothing more is known of the Kyle pattern shop.

Japanning Shop

The japanning shop presumably used for lacquering or varnishing products that required it is known from the insurance maps of 1900 and 1912 and perhaps from an archival photograph from the 1898 period. (See Figure 6.) The picture shows a little board and batten building with a gabled roof and chimneys at both ends, looking almost like a tiny house. The west end had one window and the south side had two.[555] The maps show a small shed (marked "japanning") about 22 feet long and 12 feet wide directly west of the pattern shop and south of the south-west corner of the annealing shop very close to the river.[556] It is not certain that the building in the picture is identical with that on the maps though they appear to occupy the same site: the photograph may show a larger and earlier structure. It is not known when this shop was built nor when it was pulled down.

Castings Storage Building

This structure which completes the Malleable Iron Works complex was a two-and-a-half-storey stone building located immediately east of the "finishing shop" or main building of the Kyle works

though on a different alignment from the other foundry buildings. (See Figure 6.) The storage building in fact was directly parallel with the adjacent Ayling boat works buildings (formerly the Magee-Pearson and Percival complex): which raises suspicions that it was originally built as part of the neighbouring enterprise.

The storage building butted against the "finishing shop" at the north-west corner but angled away from it. By 1895 the wedge-shaped space between the two had been filled by a two-storey wooden section.[557] The storage building was about 35 feet by 45 feet in size[558] with a rather low-pitched gabled roof covered with shingles. The south wall facing the river seems to have had two windows on the bottom floor, three on the second and one near the peak of the gable.[559]

The building as it appears in the 1895-period photograph looks old and may have been sitting over a water flume. On this basis - plus its alignment with the Percival-Ayling buildings adjacent - the writer ventured the speculation in Chapter 2 that the structure may have been the original home of the Magee and Pearson foundry (q.v.) which is marked at a similar position and angle on the Walling map of about 1860; though admittedly this is only a guess, Under Patrick Kyle's ownership the building was used only for storing iron castings.[560] It appears on the maps of 1900 and 1912 respectively but by 1925 it seems to have been demolished.[561] It may, of course, have shared the fate of the "finishing shop" during the fire of 1920.

The Kyle Malleable Iron Works, therefore, occupied seven buildings and sheds around the period of 1900 to 1912. Among these were the old Campbell tannery building, a former gristmill built by the Merricks(?) and perhaps an old foundry building once used by Magee and Pearson(?): the others were mostly wooden buildings which one might assume were added by Patrick Kyle after 1881. Kyle, of course, was also the owner of the north shore sawmill (No. 4, q.v.), the north shore gristmill (No. 6, q.v.), a large gabled wooden shed appendaged at right angles to the east wall of the gristmill (and once used for offices) and a second former tannery building used as an electric light plant (q.v.) after 1894. (See Figure 6.)

Though the malleable works were once one of the leading industries in Merrickville it appears to be very poorly-documented. No company records have been found, no advertisements appear in the local newspapers, none of Patrick Kyle's descendants still lives near Merrickville and none of the old-timers interviewed by this writer ever worked at the foundry. Consequently little can be said as yet about this enterprise.

The Malleable Iron Works was engaged primarily in preparing, tempering and casting metals, chiefly iron and in selling malleable-iron components to other firms. Mr. Roger S. Percival of Merivale (Ottawa) remarked that the firm's products were once rated the finest in Canada.[562] The works also made all sorts of repairs and are said to have employed about 15 to 20 hands in the shops.[563] In 1909 Patrick Kyle was describing himself as

"a merchant dealing in carriage and saddlery hardware and tinsmiths goods a specialty"[564] while a much earlier Bradstreet Report is said to have given him a good credit rating for small lines.[565] The claim has been made that Kyle was still building carriages after the turn of the century and that one of his buildings was a carriage shop[566] but it seems far more likely that he was now reduced to making parts for carriages such as harness hooks, seat brackets, slips and clamps and other components that might have to be cast.

Little is known about Kyle's customers. According to Mr. Percival the malleable works sold items to numerous firms including Massey-Harris and even exported to the United States.[567] (Whether the Percival Company bought much from the iron works is unknown.) In February 1902 the Merrickville Star noted the visit of a Mr. W. Bellingham of the Montreal Malleable Iron Works who was making arrangements to buy part of the output of the Kyle works.[568] Whether the products were exported primarily by boat or by rail is not certain.

The Malleable Iron Works naturally imported coal and suitable grades of iron for its operations and as late as the early 20th century coal was still being shipped in by barge.[569] That the canal was still quite important to the firm is suggested by the above-mentioned sketch of the works drawn around 1900 which shows the steamer Olive lying offshore near the moulding shop apparently being loaded or unloaded while another steamer is shown approaching in the background: the same sketch, let it be

added, also shows a train on the railway.[570] Interestingly enough on 8 January 1909 Kyle sent a letter to the Deputy Minister of Railways and Canals containing the following request:

> I wish to purchase or lease for a number of years the small island ... and situated on the north side of Rideau River in said Village [of Merrickville] and containing about 200 square feet of surface. ... I should like to control it for purposes of receiving Coal or zinc by Boat as I have no other wharf close to my property here.[571]

(The said island or sand bar was located about where the Olive is shown in the above-mentioned sketch.)

The department was rather surprised by Kyle's request. On 14 January 1909 the canal superintendent, Arthur Phillips wrote to the secretary of the department explaining that the said island was actually part of the north shore and had apparently been formed by the backing-up of waters on the Rideau River by the works at Clowes lock station.[572] Phillips was unprepared to say whether the department had any jurisdiction over the island or not but he did point out that the department owned no land on the north shore at Merrickville nor anywhere near the island in question: in short the island was not part of the canal reserve.[573] Presumably the department notified Kyle to that effect and as a result Kyle then felt free to build his wharf.

Evidence of the firm's expansion is suggested by Kyle's decision to dig a new water flume for his enterprises (or enlarge an existing one in co-operation with the Percivals) in the summer of 1894: the move as we noted earlier aroused the ire of all the mill owners on the island though the matter was seemingly settled out of court.[574] (See Island Woollen Mill, Chapter 3.) In November of 1899 for unknown reasons Patrick Kyle took out a mortgage on all his industrial holdings from William Pearson (q.v.) to the value of $13,500 — which must have represented a fair portion of the value of the Kyle enterprises at the time.[575] As mentioned previously Kyle had to agree to outfit the north shore gristmill (No. 7, q.v.) with $3,500 worth of new machinery as one of the terms of the mortgage and also to promise not to dismantle or remove any of the equipment in any of his buildings until the mortgage was discharged.[576] Whether Kyle was planning some dramatic new expansions to his enterprises or whether he needed the money for other reasons is not clear.

Some expansion did follow the mortgage, however. On 7 August 1902 the following short item appeared in the Merrickville Star:

> Mr. P. Kyle contemplates erecting a large annealing room 45 x 80 feet in which will be placed four ovens. This will enable Mr. Kyle to handle considerably more work and we understand from 20 to 30 more hands will be employed. He has men at work this week tearing down an old building to make way for the erection of the new one.[577]

On 25 September 1902 the Star remarked further that the new building was being pushed rapidly ahead and would make a large addition to the already extensive Kyle works.[578] It must be noted that the actual annealing building (q.v.) within the complex does not appear to have been altered between 1900 and 1912 nor did its dimensions tally with those given for the new building by the Star. On the other hand a vacant storage building (the so-called "carriage shop," q.v.) west of the "finishing shop" disappeared between the above-mentioned dates to be replaced by a larger, longer building of similar proportions to those given by the Star albeit apparently a little smaller.[579] There is, however, no evidence that this wooden building was ever used for annealing: the 1912 map calls it a storage shed and notes that part of its roof was already missing by that time.[580] There are no signs of chimney stacks around this building either nor is it likely that Kyle would have run two annealing shops at the same time. Perhaps Kyle changed his mind about moving his annealing shop or perhaps he set it up only to dismantle it again after a very short time. Any other assumptions about the developments of 1902 would force us to admit that we are totally unable to deduce where the new building was erected or anything else about it.

Aside from Kyle's effort to add a wharf to his holdings in 1908 nothing more can be said about the malleable works until the 1910s. Patrick Kyle himself died on 4 May 1911 apparently at the age of 73, active almost to the last.[581] It would appear

that the settling of his estate posed very complex problems and that the mortgage of 1899 had not been completely discharged. On 8 June 1914 Miss Mary Pearson noted in her diary that the Kyle estate — which included most of the north shore lots in Merrickville on both sides of the highway (excluding the Percival-Ayling property) — had been put up for auction that day with the foundry, gristmill, sawmill and powerhouse going to Thomas Kyle, a son of Patrick for $16,800.[582] It would appear that Thomas Kyle carried on with the foundry business though not without some protests from his brother Edward. The issue went eventually to the Supreme Court of Ontario which on 3 April 1917 issued a vesting order awarding all of Patrick Kyle's former holdings to Thomas.[583]

In August 1916 the malleable foundry almost met with disaster. At 3:30 p.m. on 10 August the Merrickville fire brigade answered an alarm to put out a fire that had spread from the cupola to the roof of the foundry. The blaze was extinguished before it could do much damage.[584]

On 28 August 1916 Thomas Kyle sold a small portion of his land to Mary Pearson for $400.[585] Two years later he evidently decided to sell off all his industrial holdings and on 23 September 1918 he partitioned his lands along the original line of severance arranged between his father and Mrs. Mary Merrick back in 1881. The western section including the sawmill, gristmill and apparently the old electric power station (q.v.) went to the Merrickville Milling and Manufacturing Company for

$6,000.[586] (This firm as noted elsewhere proved unable to meet its payments and in February 1922 it was obliged to sell the property back to Kyle for the nominal sum of $1.00.)[587] The Malleable Iron Works meanwhile was mortgaged to John Johnston who was acting as a trustee for a firm called the Grenville Milling and Manufacturing Company for $7,901.00.[588]

It would appear that the malleable works continued to function during this period as well: on 4 June 1920 the Merrickville Court of Revision agreed to reduce the assessment on the "Kyle Malleable Castings Co. Ltd." by $300 for the year 1920.[589] Shortly afterwards disaster struck. On 24 June 1920 as noted earlier the main building (or "finishing shop") of the malleable works went up in flames either in the early morning or early evening and though the village fire brigade answered the alarm, it was unable to turn its hoses on until the building was past saving.[590] The blaze largely ruined the main building although the annealing shop and moulding shop escaped destruction.[591] It is said that Judson Watchorn, aware that his friend Kyle would be passing through Merrickville that day via the CPR boarded the train at the station and broke the news.[592]

It is not known whether the foundry works carried on beyond that point. Presumably it did since the Grenville Milling Company moved to purchase the former Merrickville Milling Company holdings in October of 1922, about eight months after they had been returned to Thomas Kyle.[593] To pay for them Grenville Milling arranged a mortgage of $5,500.00 with Kyle.[594]

Thus just briefly Grenville Milling held all of the former Kyle industrial holdings.

However, it did not do so for long. Thomas Kyle who seems to have been deeply in debt over legal fees and perhaps also from his original purchases in 1914 finally went bankrupt in 1922. The courts ordered John Johnston to act has his trustee and assigned the old malleable works to him.[595] Shortly afterwards, in July of 1924 the Grenville Milling Company also went bankrupt and a certain T. Bert Cole was appointed trustee.[596] The following February Cole was authorized to release the remaining Grenville Milling holdings to Johnston.[597]

It is not known whether Johnston tried to make use of the foundry. In any event he died in 1926 and his wife Edith and one Marjorie Cressman were named executors of his estate. On 28 June 1927 they sold the old Malleable Iron Works property to the Percival Plow and Stove Company (q.v.)[598] which proceeded to establish a new foundry for their own purposes.[599] In October of the same year the western half of the old Kyle holdings including the old gristmill (No. 7, q.v.) was sold to the Canada Brass Company (q.v.).[600] By this time - if not earlier - the Malleable Iron Works of Merrickville, after about 50 or more years of operation had definitely passed into history.

Merrickville Hame Company Limited (1888-18)

The only records pertaining to this apparently short-lived enterprise — to the knowledge of this writer — are found in one of the Council Minutes Books of Merrickville dating from the late 19th century. These indicate that a company was organized in 1888 to manufacture hames;[601] by which is meant the curved pieces of a horse's harness, bearing on the collar to which the traces are attached.

The Merrickville Hame Company seems to have been one of Patrick Kyle's enterprises or at least Kyle had close connections with it. On 11 June 1888 the village council voted to reduce the assessment on Kyle's businesses from $6,000 to $5,000 and to divide the latter amount so as to assess $3,000 to Mr. Kyle and $2,000 to the Hame Company.[602] As early as March 1888 the council agreed to engage a lawyer to draw up a bylaw authorizing the granting of $1,000 to help the new enterprise get established.[603] On 25 June 1888 at a special meeting the proposed bylaw went through its second reading and the council voted to publish the text in the Brockville Weekly Times for three successive weeks and to post copies in four or more parts of town. Then a vote on the issue was to be taken by the village freeholders on 27 July 1888.[604]

On 30 July 1888 after four runs in the Times and a majority vote in favour Bylaw No. 172, "To create a debt for the purpose of bonusing 'The Merrickville Hame Co' (Limited)," went through

its third reading and was carried. A supplementary bylaw was passed at the same time.[605] Bylaw No. 172 began with the following words:

> Whereas it is expedient and for the benefit of the Village of Merrickville, that aid by way of bonus should be granted to "The Merrickville Hame Co" (Limited) amounting to the sum of One Thousand Dollars payable in equal quarterly payments of $250 each.[606]

The supplementary bylaw (No. 173) added certain extra benefits but also attached a few strings: the Hame Company (along with its machinery and real estate) was to enjoy ten years' exemption from taxation but only if it gave employment to at least 20 skilled workmen and did not purchase or take over any currently-established viable business in town.[607] On 12 September 1888 the reeve was authorized to dispose of debentures to raise the first $250 for the Hame Company and in October a committee was named to check and see if the company qualified for payment of the first portion of the bonus.[608]

Constraints of time did not permit this writer to examine any further records possibly pertaining to the Merrickville Hame Company but it would appear that the firm did in fact establish itself in the village at least for a short time. It seems to have built or occupied a building on Patrick Kyle's north shore property; either the "finishing shop" (an ex-gristmill?, q.v.)

or the stone "castings storehouse" (q.v.) immediately to the east of the finishing building. In 1948 according to one of the hands working for the modern Alloy Foundry Company (q.v.) the foundry building (once the "finishing shop") was lengthened eastwards and during the course of excavations numerous castings for names and harness parts were found.[609] It appears, however, that the Hame Company was not in business for long. It is not mentioned in the directory of 1895[610] nor in the list of local industries published by the Merrickville Star in 1899[611] and until further information is uncovered nothing more can be said of this 19th-century enterprise.

Merrickville: The National Fence Company (1899-1908)

The National Fence Company is somewhat better known since its years of operation in Merrickville coincided with the publication of the Merrickville Star which mentions the firm often enough to give us a fairly coherent picture of its activities.

The Fence Company was apparently established by a Prescott gentleman known as H. T. ("Harry") French along with a number of backers in 1899.[612] The company manufactured various types of wire fence and related items such as iron gates and the like.[613] Sometime before June 1899 the firm arranged with Patrick Kyle to lease part of his main building (the "finishing shop") where there was both surplus space and (apparently) water power. Within a short time the new firm was in business.

It seems to have done very well. We are told that it made excellent products and was run in a very enterprising way.[614] On 3 May 1900 the Merrickville Star noted with approval that the company was starting up for the season and that it had just shipped out over six miles of wire fence the previous week: the volume of business was expected to double before the summer ended.[615] A week later the newspaper remarked further that W. H. Percival, general agent for the National Fence Company of Merrickville was doing a rushing business in the West where there was an immense demand for fencing.[616] In October of 1900 the paper mentioned a big shipment of fencing being sent off to Alberta, N.W.T.[617] while in September of the same year it was applauding the initiative of H. T. French who had just finished a trip to the Toronto Exhibition where he and another man had set up and staffed an exhibit that netted several orders for the company.[618]

The National Fence Company imported its wire from the United States by boat, interestingly enough:[619] transhipments to canal vessels were presumably made at Kingston,. At Merrickville it had the benefits of cheap labour and water power plus a railway that could move its products direct to Montreal and Toronto. In 05 we find the company providing a prize of one iron gate for the best poultry exhibit at the Merrickville fall fair;[620] a move that was repeated in 1907.[621] In October of 1905 Mr. French received an award for specimens of wire fence he showed at an Ottawa exhibition.[622]

Merrickville seems to have had good reason to be pleased with the performance of its fence factory. Unluckily it was not fated to continue for long. Early in January 1908 the company announced that it was moving to Prescott where after lengthy negotiations it had succeeded in making arrangements to lease a suitable factory. The reasons given for the move were that Prescott was more conveniently located and wire components could be brought in by boat without the expense of transhipping.[623] (Prescott also happened to be Mr. French's home town!) The withdrawal of the fence company after a nine-year stay seems to have been a severe loss to Merrickville and perhaps helps to explain why the village lost three per cent of its population between 1901 and 1911.[624] So far as is known no new firm moved into the big stone building to fill the void left by the departing National Fence Company.

Merrickville: Canada Brass Works (1927-1929)

For geographic reasons it seems appropriate to deal next with this short-lived firm because, like the above concern the brass works took over one of the former Kyle buildings; in this case the old north shore gristmill (q.v.) which now serves as the office for the Alloy Foundry Company.

We left the old gristmill after the failure of the Putnam brothers who were apparently connected with the defunct Merrickville Milling and Manufacturing Company which failed in

1922.[625] After some years of seeming idleness the old mill and its environs were sold in December of 1927 to Canada Brass Products Limited for $2,250.00.[626]

Very little is known of this unlucky enterprise. According to Harold Barton of Merrickville who worked for it briefly, the firm was founded by David Dunn of Montreal in co-operation with his brother.[627] The company established a machine shop (probably powered by electricity rather than water) with a relative of the Dunns, Johnny Clark of Montreal serving as machinist, particularly to do lathe work. The firm made lamps and small decorative items but apparently it never melted brass or did any foundry work.[628]

The brass works was evidently ruined by a fire. Sometime in 1928 the old mill building took fire one night after the watchman had gone home.[629] The roof was destroyed and the works gutted and the building was reduced to a set of stone walls.[630] The owners engaged Robert J. Dougall, owner of the local steam sawmill in North Merrickville (q.v.) and his sons Frederick and Donald to repair the building for them. The Dougalls did a very extensive job, adding a new flat tar paper roof that sloped down towards the centre of the building where the run-off was (and still is) collected by a centre pipe beside a beam; apparently they also added a galvanized iron roof to the old electric power plant wing (q.v.) beside the river.[631] It is also possible that the wooden storage wing appendaged to the east wall was dismantled by the Dougalls unless the wing was already destroyed in the

fire. The contractors may also have added a small concrete block annex to the west wall at this time: this feature was removed in 1958. By 2 October 1928 Robert Dougall presented Canada Brass with a bill for repairs and materials required for the same: it came to $8,090.00[632] which the brass works was quite unable to pay. On 29 December 1928 Dougall secured an order from the Supreme Court of Ontario for Canada Brass to pay its debts which including courts costs now came to $8,536.82.[633] When the firm reneged and apparently declared itself bankrupt the Court, on 28 January 1930 assigned the entire property to the Dougalls.

It must have proved rather an embarrassment for them to be in possession of a rebuilt industrial building for which they themselves had little practical use. Robert Dougall retired about this time and left the problem to his sons who, being recent arrivals in Merrickville moved into the building for one winter (occupying the second floor which was drier than the one below) until they could secure homes of their own.[635] The Dougalls made use of the basement of the old building in that they had it wired, lighted and flooded for use as a local skating rink, at least for a few seasons. Wooden scaffolding and steps were also added so that people could easily put on their skates and reach the ice. The rink always remained frozen until April and, of course, there was never any problem with snow. Apparently no admission fees were charged.[636] Aside from this public-spirited venture, however, it would appear that the old gristmill-brass works remained vacant until the 1940s when a short-lived attempt

was made to use it as a dog food factory (q.v.). Finally on 29 August 1958 the Alloy Foundry Company (q.v.) bought the property from Frederick Dougall for $8,000.00; a portion of which was a mortgage of $5,900.00[637] and the building entered the modern phase of its long and varied history.

The Farm Implement Industry
During the Prime Industrial Period

Of the overall scene in the manufacturing of farming equipment in Canada around 1887 to 1945 we need only remark here that the above period saw several large-scale mergers amongst the old manufacturers and that changes in technology led to some radical new features in machinery design. On the former point the greatest single development was undoubtedly the merger of the rival Massey and Harris Companies in May of 1891 following fierce competition between the two, especially in the manufacture of automatic binders.[638] Several other firms were also absorbed by Massey-Harris until by 1904 it was the largest farm machinery firm in Canada.[639] Meanwhile in response to rising import duties the International Harvester Company opened a plant in Hamilton in 1903.[640] By the 1920s these two firms along with the Cockshutt Plow Company of Brantford were making about 75 per cent of all the farm implements being sold in Canada:[641] the Cockshutt Company had made an alliance with the Frost and Wood foundry works at Smiths

Falls (which specialized in harvesters) in 1909 and in 1935 the Smiths Falls firm was completely absorbed by Cockshutt.[642] Technological advances were numerous during this period but the single biggest change was the invention of the farm tractor, originally using steam power but later shifting to internal combustion engines. Tractors in turn demanded the development of new and stronger accessory machinery. By 1921 there were approximately 50,000 tractors in use on Canadian farms.[643] Until then the new machines had simply been used as substitutes for horses. Afterwards, however, tractors were adapted to convey some of their power directly to the moving parts of the accessory implements through take-off attachments[644] and once again machinery designs were radically altered. By 1951 we find that nearly 400,000 tractors were being used in Canada[645] along with highly sophisticated accessory equipment. Mechanization had truly arrived on the farm scene. Stove manufacturing also changed enormously. Vitreous enamel finishes became general on steel ware by 1914[646] making gas range stoves more attractive than the old cast-iron wood stoves and by 1918 electric ranges were starting to appear.[647] By 1925 gas and electric stoves were outselling the older types[648] and soon stoves and furnaces were being made of steel rather than cast-iron. More and more foundries gave way to steel mills. Against a backdrop of such trends the Percival Plow and Stove Company ran its course in history.

Merrickville: Percival Plow and Stove Company Limited (1887-1935?)

The Percival Plow and Stove Company which succeeded the old Magee and Pearson foundry firm in 1887 remained in business for nearly half a century and for a time it was one of the most eminently successful manufacturing concerns in Merrickville. When at its height the company was the largest single employer of labour in the village;[649] selling plows, harvesting equipment and stoves over much of eastern Canada and even beyond: the late Dr. Leonard Newman even went on record to say that Percival products once made the name of Merrickville a household word to thousands of Canadian families.[650] This perhaps is a slight exaggeration since the Percival Company never approached the size of its neighbour, the Frost and Wood Manufacturing Company of Smiths Falls nor any of the giants in the stove-manufacturing world but nevertheless in both lines the firm won a place of honour for itself on the Canadian scene for decades. It was, incidentally, one of the few foundry companies that combined both plow- and stove-making under one roof in a big way. Though the Percival Company experienced a few ups and downs during the course of its existence its ultimate extinction seems to have come about primarily from changes in technology. Its plows appear to have been of superlative quality but they were entirely wedded to horse teams[651] and apparently the transition from horse to tractor power was too great a hurdle for the company to overcome. The same applied to its stoves which sold

well until gas and electricity began to replace wood and coal as stove fuels. In short the Percival Plow and Stove Company eventually fell a victim to changing times and tastes and perhaps we should be surprised not by the extinction of the firm but rather by the fact that it persisted as long as it did. Indeed some Percival-type plows were still being made as late as 1949, long after the firm itself had gone out of business.[652]

The company was founded in 1887 by Roger Croft Percival (q.v.) on the substrata of business solidly built up by Messrs. Magee and Pearson since 1859. Like Magee and Pearson R. C. Percival was himself a former farm boy from the region of Burritt's Rapids.[653] In his youth he had worked for about eight years for Magee and Pearson apparently as a sales agent[654] and became deeply interested in the plow and stove business. For a time Percival ran a foundry of his own in Kemptville, then moved to Pembroke and opened another that specialized in stumping machines.[655] Then late in 1887 he heard that the Magee and Pearson works in Merrickville was for sale, immediately he hurried to Merrickville, came to terms with William Pearson and Magee's heirs and bought the property. He then sold his business in Pembroke and moved with his family to Merrickville.[656]

By the terms of the agreement dated 30 December 1887 R. C. Percival was awarded the entire Magee and Pearson foundry works including buildings, machinery, water power privileges and right of way plus one acre of land (Lots GG and HH) in North Merrickville for $16,000; in addition he was to pay an

annuity of $39.00 per year for life to Amelia Merrick, the widow of Terence Hamilton Merrick[657] who apparently seems to have had some claim to these north shore lands. Presumably Percival was given some time to pay the full purchase price but there is no record of a mortgage.

As explained in Chapter 2 it is not certain exactly what R. C. Percival inherited in the way of buildings and equipment from Magee and Pearson and similarly there is little record of the operations of the Percival Company until the 1890s. However, there is every reason to believe that Percival literally "forged ahead" and expanded the business steadily; soon with the assistance of his very capable son Harvey (q.v.). It is said that R. C. Percival enlarged the old foundry building and built at least one of the outlying buildings before 1895[658] but we have no real information as to the early evolution of the complex under the Percivals.

The extent of the Percival industrial works around 1895 and afterwards becomes clearer as photographic evidence and insurance maps become available. From the above we are able to assert positively that the main building (q.v.) had at least three additional sections added on by about 1895 and that at least two outlying sheds were in existence by that time.[659] The Goad map of 1900 shows the main building in about five sections with six outlying wooden sheds. (See Figure 6.) The map of 1912 shows a few changes with one more shed.[661] We pause now for a more detailed look.

Percival Main Building

The main Percival Company building (now owned by the Ayling boat works) appears to have started off with the west end section or the central section to which the other portions seem to have been added as the years went by.

The west end section which is by far the largest and most attractive part of the complex was (and is) a three-and-a-half-storey limestone building built on sloping ground so that the bottom storey does not appear from the north side. The building has much the same style as the older Merrickville mills and industrial edifices; including a medium-pitched gabled roof (with shingles set in mortar), a striking stone parapet at each gable and pronounced decorative quoins at the corners. Originally there was a capped chimney at each end (today the east end chimney has been rebuilt and the west end chimney removed) while over the peak of the roof at the centre stood an ornate bell tower;[662] said to have been identical to that on the Watchorn woollen mill (q.v.) but now removed. All four of the walls are pierced with prominent evenly-spaced windows; all of which were apparently double set and many of which still are. The west end wall has three such windows on each floor (all originally protected by iron shutters) with two more smaller ones under the gable. The east end wall seems to have been similar while both the north and south faces had rows of five windows (or a door) on each floor. There are no dormers. The Percival building, judging from the Goad map was originally about 49 feet long by

44 feet wide[663] (somewhat smaller than its neighbours, the main malleable-iron works building and the north shore gristmill until the other sections were added to it). A water flume from the mill dam fed directly into the west end wall: traces of it are still visible. At least since 1900 and within living memory the west end section of the Percival works was used for finishing, painting and carpentry.[664]

It is not known when the west wing of the Percival works was built except that it predates 1895. It may have been built by Magee and Pearson sometime before 1887 — which is suggested by its similarity of style to most of the old stone gristmills in Merrickville — or it may have been erected by R. C. Percival himself. Its design does not suggest it was originally intended to be a foundry and in fact there is no record that it ever was: seemingly it was always used as a finishing shop.

The earliest known photograph of the site taken around 1895 shows four other sections of the main building already in existence.[665] One of these was a small one-and-a-half-storey stone office wing which was appendaged to the north-east corner of the west wing as an obvious afterthought. (See Figure 6.) The office wing (since burned down) had a medium-pitched gabled roof with shingles, a window in the north and west walls and a door on the west side. There was a chimney at the north end once surmounted by a stovepipe at least 12 feet high; probably as a deterrent to sparks and fires. The office wing which was built around the corner of the larger building was about 20 feet by

35 feet.[666] It was destroyed by fire in 1915 and seems to have been replaced by a detached wooden structure which burned around 1931.[667]

Also clearly visible in the 1895 photograph is a stone central section of the main building laid out with its long axis at right angles to the adjacent west wing.[668] The central section looked rather more like a foundry and may originally have been completely separate from the west wing. It had three-and-a-half stories (only two from the north side) and a rather low-pitched shingled roof with a chimney near the centre: the roof was redone with tin-plating by 1900.[669] The central section looks rather similar to the castings storage building (q.v.) on the adjacent Kyle works which we have earlier suspected to have been one of Magee and Pearson's original buildings. It may be that the central section housed the original Magee and Pearson foundry (after 1900 it was being used for mounting plows and stoves and steaming plow handles).[670] Possibly the central section was even older than the much taller west wing: the two were connected by a small adjoining section only about 17 feet by 18 feet (with a gabled shingled roof)[671] which may have been another afterthought. The central section itself is about 62 feet by 42 feet.[672] It had a few windows and an entrance on the north face and perhaps a similar layout to the south. Most of it was demolished and a new roof put on in the 1950s.[673]

Adjoining the central section to the east is another wing apparently two-and-a-half stories high and used by the Percivals

as a moulding shop.[674] This section which was also built by 1895 (and perhaps much earlier) is slightly larger than the central portion and has a low-pitched gabled roof originally shingled but also tin-plated by 1900.[675] The moulding shop section is about 62 feet by 53 feet[676] thus matching the length of the central section but the axis of its roof is at right angles to that of the central section. (The south section of the roof is also much more extensive than the north.) At the east end was a capped chimney and also a massive brick stack that was probably connected with a cupola[677] which may have been housed in another small one-and-a-half-storey stone appendage at the east end: by 1900, however, there was a cupola inside the moulding shop wing itself.[678] The moulding shop has a row of windows at ground level on the north wall. If the central section was indeed built by Magee and Pearson the moulding shop was probably also erected by them as an extension to their foundry.

Even these five sections did not represent the maximum enlargements of the main Percival building. The above layout during the 1890s left the handsome west wing section inset about 17 feet on the south side from the corresponding south wall of the central and moulding shop sections. Sometime after 1895 and probably in 1900 the company evidently decided that it needed even more space and accordingly built an additional stone wing (about 17 feet wide) alongside the south face of the west wing extending it outward so as to be in alignment with the other two sections.[679] The south annex has three stories with similar

windows to the rest of the west wing in an effort to harmonize it with the older section. The roof angles down gently from the roof line of the original building. Except for a few minor wooden appendages added to the north and east ends before 1900[680] the main Percival building -- easily the largest industrial edifice in Merrickville until recently -- had reached its maximum size of expansion.

The Percival works also developed (and perhaps inherited) several small outlying buildings which are described below.

South Storage Shed *(fl. 1895)*

This building was a long narrow unpainted wooden structure lying along the edge of the river directly facing the west wing. It appears in a photograph dating from about 1895 and had a gabled cedar-shingled roof and three windows in the south wall.[681] Nothing else is known about it except that it was evidently pulled down by 1899.[682] By 1900 it had been replaced by a new assembly shop.

Assembly Shop *(1900-1931?)*

The new building partly occupied the site of the above but it was a different size and shape with its long axis at right angles to the river rather than parallel to it. The Goad map of 1900 marks it as a "store house" though in later times it served primarily as a building for assembling stoves.[683] For convenience we shall refer to it as such in the text.

The assembly shop appears to have been an iron-clad wooden barn on stone foundations with a typically barn-like gambrel roof (also metal-covered) and a few windows on each end.[684] Its dimensions were about 60 feet by 42 feet.[685] This writer has not succeeded in finding a clear photograph of it and hence a more detailed description is not yet possible. An overhead walkway connected the upper storey with the adjacent west wing of the main building so that plows and stove parts could be moved across using two-wheeled trolleys.[686]

The assembly shop which served a number of other functions presently to be discussed in more detail was pulled down around 1931 or 1932; not because it was in poor condition but rather because the business was obviously petering out by that time.[687]

Sand Shed *(fl. 1893-1920)*

The Percival Company also built a small gabled wooden building to store sand for the foundry. The sand shed was about 28 feet in length by 22 feet across with the long axis at right angles to the river. (See Figure 6.) It stood directly beside the above-named assembly shop on the west side[688] and as the Percival Company developed a wharf in that area it seems likely that the sand was delivered by boat.

The sand shed does not appear in the archival group photograph of about 1895[689] but a small shed on stone foundations and with a medium-pitched roof appears in a later picture taken

around 1898.[690] It also appears on the insurance maps of 1900 and 1912 though by the latter date it was no longer beside the water since the company was steadily adding fill for a wharf.[691] The sand shed may have lasted until the 1930s when the foundry was shut down but it is not likely to have survived for long after that.

Three South Side Sheds

The Percival works also had at least three wooden or metal sheds along the river at different times in front of the central and eastern sections of the main building. (See Figure 6.)

Little is known of these buildings. One such shed with a gabled cedar-shingled roof and waterside receiving door appears in a group photograph of about 1895;[692] this building also reappears around 1899[693] and on the insurance maps of 1900 and 1912.[694] Its size seems to have been about 42 feet by 31 feet with the long axis parallel to the river and the adjacent stone building complex. A minor pair of wings are shown on the 1900 map[695] whereas by 1912 one of these had been removed and two small new ones added at the south-west and north-west corners respectively.[696] The purpose of the building is unknown.

Immediately to the east on the same alignment was a similar but longer and narrower shed that was definitely standing by 1898.[697] This building was about 50 feet by 24 feet, also with a gabled roof; by 1912 a small extension had been added to the

west end.[698] Its purpose is likewise unknown but Mr. Harold Barton recalls that the Percival Company once stabled a team of horses in a building along the waterfront: the horses were used to take wagonloads of plows and stoves to the railway yards.[699]

By 1925 the above two sheds had been replaced by a new long shed with a gabled roof and perhaps with side walls of corrugated sheet steel. The replacement shed seems to have been over 70 feet long.[700] It has since disappeared.

South-East Building *(fl. 1900-1915)*

Another large, almost square wooden building is marked directly south-east of the stone building complex on the insurance maps of both 1900 and 1912.[701] On both maps the building appears at a skewed angle to the others in the foundry group and with a small wing on the west side. It had one storey and seems to have had a flat roof. (See Figure 6.) The south-east building was apparently about 46 feet in length by 42 feet across while the side wing was about 14 feet by 13 feet.[702] Nothing else is known about this building.

Coal Shed *(fl. 1900-1915)*

This small one-storey building stood directly beside the north wall of the above building. It appears on both the above-named insurance maps and seems to have been about 32 feet long and

25 feet wide.[703] On the 1912 map it is labelled a "coal shed."[704] Today a recently-built boat storage building partly occupies the site.

Castings Storage Building *(fl. 1912)*

This structure stood immediately north-east of the stone building complex. It appears only on the 1912 map[705] and was probably erected between 1900 and 1906. It had a metal roof (most likely gabled) and its side walls seem to have been made of corrugated iron sheeting. Only a portion of it is shown on the map but it looks to have been about 22 feet wide and at least 45 feet long.[706] The Percival Company may have had other makeshift sheds that do not appear on the maps.

* * *

Against this backdrop of buildings we must now try to reconstruct the overall history and operations of the Percival Plow and Stove Company.

Though information is very scanty until the late 1890s it appears that the Percival Company, like Magee and Pearson previously, imported huge quantities of coal and iron for their operations, all of it by canal scow until gradually the railway began to take over that role. The development of a wharf between 1900 and 1912 behind the sand shed and assembly shop (q.v.)[707] bears witness to the importance of the canal for shipping and freighting: the same applies for a glamourized drawing of the

Percival complex prepared before 1921 which shows a tug and a scow worthy of the Welland Canal docked in front of the plant! (Anyone viewing that picture would have assumed that the Percival Company was running an ultra-modern plant occupying several acres and employing nearly a thousand people. Only the setting of the picture bears a slight resemblance to the real thing.)[708] The canal shipping can be believed, however, at least to a large extent: the late Dr. Leonard H. Newman who lived in Merrickville since about 1903 remarked once on the "great loads of plows and stoves they used to draw over to the wharf, shipped by boat, freight boat mostly. ... There was very heavy traffic on the canal at that time. All supplies came into town that way. Those made were shipped out.[709] The steamers handling the freight included the *Welshman*, *Ida*, *Olive* (later the *Ottawan*), *Buena Vista*, *Cyrus Easton* and *Colonel By*:[710] a Merrickville lady recalls that the boats would usually arrive twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays and sometimes docked for the night at the Percival wharf.[711] The coal evidently came from the eastern United States; the origin of the iron and steel is not certain though Dr. Newman recalled that the Percival firm was in close touch with the Carnegie Steel Corporation.[712] Mr. Barton, referring to the late 1920s states that the company both imported pig-iron and bought up scrap-iron for use in the foundry.[713] Nickel was also used as Mr. Roger S. Percival recalls a nickel-plating shop in the corner of the top(?) floor of the finishing building around the turn of the century: such works were then rather unusual.[714]

The Percival Company is mentioned in a business directory of 1895 as "Percival R C & Son, stove founders."[715] Mr. Roger S. Percival, himself a grandson of Roger C. Percival recalls that his father, Thomas Harvey Percival (q.v.) was suddenly instructed to leave school and take over the management of the firm at the age of 18 when his father took ill and believed himself near death:[716] this would have been in 1887. Thereafter it would appear that father and son managed the business together. Some years later in 1895 according to the Merrickville Star the elder Percival who was then about 58 decided to retire and he then sold the business to Harvey[717] for a reputed $40,000[718] (which was two-and-a-half times what Roger Percival had paid for it less than a decade earlier). Harvey was given ten years in which to pay it off; his son stated that the debt was discharged in just three years.[719] Harvey Percival seems to have been a better businessman than his father and under his management the firm expanded until it reached its zenith around 1906.[720]

There are a number of indicators as to the growth and prosperity of the firm during those years. In its opening issue dated 15 June 1899 the Merrickville Star observed that " ... We have a plow & stove plate foundry whose output alone is up in the thousands in each branch."[721] The firm is said to have employed about 65 men at one time as well as about five more people in the office.[722] The Percivals also employed a number of sales agents of whom three R. S. Harder, J. A. Flood and F. R. Oliver are frequently mentioned by the Star and appear to have

been men of drive and ability. Harvey Percival apparently rewarded the zeal of his salesmen by extending credit to them occasionally and granting them stock in the company and we are assured that he never regretted doing so.[723] On the other side of the coin, however, it must be remembered that foundry work is usually dirty and can be dangerous: in 1899 the Star reported two accidents at the works; one man receiving a burned foot while taking off a cast and another losing three fingertips on a planer in the carpentry shop.[724] There was no accident insurance in those days nor unemployment insurance and though the foundry offered steady work the hours were long: from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily with one hour less on Saturdays.[725] Progress definitely exacted a price.

A little information is available on building evolution during this period. R. C. Percival is believed to have added the moulding shop wing (q.v.) to the stone building shortly after 1887.[726] On 26 April 1900 the Star informed its readers that contractors were already at work on two new buildings for the Percivals. One of these, a one-and-a-half-storey wooden structure about 40 feet by 50 feet was obviously the above-mentioned assembly shop (q.v.). The lower flat and the attic were to be used for storage while the upper storey was to be used for painting.[727] The second building, said to be 20 feet by 40 feet was intended as an addition to the plow department.[728] A follow-up article on progress (dated 24 May 1900) speaks of this addition as being built of stone;[729] from which we may confidently identify it with

the stone extension to the west wing of the main building (q.v.) which is known to have been added just about this time. The newspaper also remarks that the business of the Percival Company was both large and steadily increasing.[730]

Late in 1903 the firm suffered a small setback. Early on the morning of 29 December the foundry bell rang vigorously as a fire was discovered in the stone office wing. The office was apparently gutted but at least the blaze was prevented from spreading to the rest of the complex.[731] It would appear that the wing was rebuilt since it is marked again on the 1912 insurance may without any change.[732]

Two business directories dated 1902[733] and 1904[734] respectively list the Percival works under the management of T. H. Percival and here for the first time we find the actual name "Percival Plow and Stove Company." In September 1905 the company displayed 12 models of stoves at the North Leeds and Grenville Agricultural Fair (held at Merrickville); some were sold on the spot.[735] That same season the Percival firm also offered a prize of a cultivator for the best exhibit of hogs at the fair.[736] By 1907 according to a special Christmas supplement to the Star the company was the largest industry in Merrickville and enjoyed an excellent reputation for durable and reliable products, prompt deliveries and straightforward dealings.[737] The newspapers claimed to have seen hundreds of letters from satisfied customers. The various departments -- which had grown quite numerous -- were said to look neat and business-like and besides plows and stoves

the firm was also manufacturing wheelbarrows, steel barrows, road scrapers and the like. Never had the scale of operations been so great. The company even had a second auxiliary foundry at Newburg for handling supplementary work orders.[738] Perhaps it is true that the Percival Company helped make the name of Merrickville famous throughout much of eastern Canada.

As for the actual layout of the works during this period our best indicators are the insurance maps. Most operations were carried on within the stone building complex. The plow department was in the central and west wing sections. The mounting room was on the first floor of the central section while the top floor was used for steaming plow handles. The finishing room was on the first floor of the west wing while carpentry was done on the floor above and painting was carried out on the top floor[739] -- or after 1900 plows were trolleyed across the overhead walkway to the assembly shop opposite where they might be painted and put together.[740] The stove department was in the foundry and moulding shop in the east wing of the stone building complex.[741] The other adjacent buildings were used as stables and storage sheds for sand, coal and presumably lumber and finished products. The layout remained essentially unchanged during the late 1920s and early thirties[742] although one by one the outlying buildings disappeared as the business declined.

What sorts of equipment were turned out by the Percival works? Some details are known today. Though stoves were always important the firm was apparently best known for its plows which

included walking plows and two-furrow or "gang" plows.[743] All were horse-drawn implements which reigned supreme on Canadian farms until tractors began providing a new source of power. According to the late Dr. Leonard H. Newman, drawing from an unknown (and hence undated) source, the company once made seven models of single-furrow walking plows known respectively as the No. 5X, the No. 6, the No. 6 Special, the No. 7, the No. 10, the No. 12 and the No. 13:[744] no doubt other models were tried at various times and abandoned. The Nos. 5 and 6 were especially adapted for heavy sod land where the objective was to turn the furrow slice up on its edge to facilitate the breaking down process with the drag harrower: many farmers then had only a plow and harrow to work their lands and therefore needed to have their furrows well "set up."[745] The No. 6 Special was a refinement of the No. 6 and like the No. 5X was widely used at plowing matches and by farmers who were proud of their plowmanship.[746] Plow No. 7 was a general purpose model widely preferred for stubble land or sandy or loamy soils:[747] Mr. Barton who worked for the Percival Company around 1927-32 affirms that the No. 7 and 10 models were still the most popular at the late period.[748] The No. 10 plow produced the widest furrow and was considered especially suitable for light soils.[749] All plow handles were made of the best local oak.[750]

There were also four types of gang plows each of which cut two furrows. The Sulky or "Riding Plow" was the favourite: it had a seat for riding, was suitable for stoney land and could be

backed up easily. It boasted an all-steel frame drawing from the beam and the disc wheel allowed furrow cuts of uniform width even if the horse's walk was irregular. The depth wheel was guaranteed to follow the contours of the land to produce even-depth furrows and there were said to be no complicated parts that might cause trouble.[751] Another large gang plow, the No. 30 model was said to be very popular at least during the early 1900s: this one was fitted with bottoms for sod, stubble or general purpose plowing and it was claimed that one man with three horses could do the work of two men and four horses using an ordinary plow.[752] There was also a hillside plow with two reversible mould boards making it possible to have all furrows facing "up-hill" on sloping ground so as to impede soil erosion: this plow was seldom used except on hilly terrain.[753] The company's advertisements laid heavy stress on the quality, expertise and craftmanship of their products. A catalogue (No. 8) dated 1921 and now in the files of the Merrickville Museum lists all the above plows except Nos. 6 and 30 and also features several other models such as Nos. 26 and 27 walking plows, a No. 12 sulky, Nos. 41, 44 and 46 Victory sulkies and a No. 50 gang plow.[754] Dr. Newman also remarks that the late James Brennan who originally joined the Magee and Pearson works in 1859 and was known as the "Dean of Plow Makers" in Canada was in charge of the Percival foundry for many years.[755]

Besides plows the Percival Company also built diamond-toothed drag harrows, spring-toothed cultivators (four models),

one-horse cultivators or scufflers and a special harrow for use among stumps. It also made steel rollers, wheelbarrows and umbrella stands.[756]

Of course, there was also the stove department in the Percival works. In 1907 the Merrickville Star commented rather flatteringly on two stoves then in current production. One of these was the "Imperial Oak" heating stove, claimed to be one of the handsomest on the market. It came in three sizes with 14, 16 or 18-inch fire pots, could burn either coal or wood and was offered with plain trim or full nickel trimming with single or double heaters.[757] Another type, the "Colonial Range" which also burned either coal or wood was a cook stove; claimed to be one of the most complete and versatile ranges on the market. It was described as having a large lofty square and full-sized oven, a deep firebox with oval corners and duplex grates that could be removed easily without disturbing the rest of the firebox. Its covers and centres were said to be heavy and strongly-ribbed and fitted with a patented lifter catch. Other refinements included a thermometer on the stove door for assuring the right temperatures. The ornamentation was described as sensible and effective.[758] Other stoves mentioned by Dr. Newman were the "Fairy Queen," the "Imperial Upright" (a heater stove with isinglass windows in the doors and a nickel-plated railing to support the "cold feet"), the "Elmwood Box Stove" (which came in four models) and the "Percival Pipeless Furnace," another popular heating stove developed around 1916.[759] Interestingly

enough the "Forest Beauty" cooking range the same item once manufactured by Magee and Pearson(?) -- was still being advertised in the 1921 catalogue as were various models of "Home Perfection," another cook stove: both had high deep ovens, water tanks and immense fireboxes and apparently went a long way towards replacing the fireplaces and bake ovens of earlier times.[760] James Ogilvie, a long-time employee of the Percival firm once told Dr. Newman that he spent three straight years doing nothing but assembling stoves and furnaces at the Percival works;[761] later he would make an effort to manufacture certain Percival products on his own.

We shall have more to say about Percival manufactures when we reach the 1920s. As for sales distribution only a few hints are available. Mr. Roger S. Percival believes that most of the plows and stoves were sold in Ontario and Quebec[762] though some evidently reached the prairies: on 8 May 1902 the Star observed that F. R. Oliver was off on another business trip to Winnipeg for the company.[763] (In 1903 Oliver decided to go into business for himself out West after 14 years with the Percival Company.)[764] Also in 1903 the company acquired the services of the highly-competent George Seeber of Smiths Falls who had just finished 20 years with the Gould Manufacturing Company: Seeber became the bookkeeper for the Percival firm[765] and by 1907 he rose to be its secretary-treasurer.[766]

The year 1906 proved to be a turning point for the Percival Company -- for the worse as it turned out. On 1 December 1906

Harvey Percival formally bowed out of the firm which then became a joint-stock company bearing the name "Percival Plow and Stove Company Limited."[767] Fortunately we have a little "behind the scenes" information on this development. It appears that Harvey Percival -- perhaps under some pressure from his wife who was tired of living in Merrickville -- was considering giving up the business.[768] One time in 1906 while on a rail trip perhaps by chance he met the Delahay brothers of Pembroke the same people who had bought his father's foundry there in 1887 and during the course of conversation mentioned his desire to retire. The Delahays immediately offered to buy the Merrickville works and a verbal agreement was reached right on the train.[769] Back at home, however, the decision caused an uproar: Harvey's sister Jean and her husband Jack Waddell, the local manager of the Union Bank branch in Merrickville strongly objected to the idea and Harvey reluctantly telephoned the Delahays and called the deal off.[770] Waddell who was a shrewd financier then put together a syndicate including George Seeber and G. F. McKimm of Smiths Falls (who was apparently connected with the powerful Frost and Wood Foundry Company)[771] and a few others who organized the joint-stock company and bought out Harvey Percival's share: the land patent books say that the property was sold for $45,000[772] though Mr. R. S. Percival affirms that his father left Merrickville with a tidy $200,000![773] (The transfer was apparently subsidized by the Union Bank.)[774] Harvey's father, Roger C. Percival who was now 69 was induced to come out of retirement and join the new

company; a move strongly opposed by his son who confidently predicted that the new group would ruin the business.[775] Jack B. Waddell became the new president, R. C. Percival became vice-president, George S. Seeber became secretary-treasurer, E. W. Stickney (Harvey's father-in-law) assumed the role of managing director while G. F. McKimm and one W. R. Morris became directors of the new company.[776] Harvey Percival soon moved to Ottawa, leaving the firm to its fate.[777]

It rapidly went downhill. The reasons for this are not clear although Mr. R. S. Percival recalls that the new syndicate in contrast to his father rigidly demanded that their sales agents always pay "spot cash" for every sale instead of allowing some flexibility.[778] It is a matter of record that R. S. Harder evidently one of the company's brightest long-time agents left the Percival firm by June of 1908 to work for F. R. Oliver who already owned the Rideau Stove Company and had just purchased the Perrin Plow Works in Smiths Falls.[779] There may have been other desertions around this time as well. According to Mr. R. S. Percival his grandfather lost the money he had reinvested in the firm before his death.[780]

On 26 April 1908 disaster in the form of fire was narrowly averted at the plant. About 10:45 that morning a few hands noticed that the roof and belfry of the main building had been ignited by chimney sparks. The alarm bell was rung and employees quickly gathered and put the blaze out before much damage was

done but all agreed that the fire would have destroyed the plant had it gained another ten minutes' build-up time.[781]

A more serious blow to the company was probably the death of R. C. Percival, the original founder of the firm in February of 1912 at the age of 75.[782] He was thus spared the distress of witnessing the demise of the business he had founded with such success nearly a quarter of a century earlier. By 1915 the company, now headed by G. F. McKimm, had become a partner in the proposed Rideau Power Company (q.v.) through which it was to develop hydro-electricity at Merrickville in co-operation with the Malleable Iron Works, the Watchorn Company and the Mills brothers but this group ran into financial difficulties and was unable to carry out its plans.[783]

The Percival Company too was tottering towards collapse. On 29 December 1915 the office was again gutted by fire:[784] one wonders whether this blaze was altogether accidental since it seems to have occurred at night or during the early morning hours when the staff was not normally on duty.[785] In May of 1916 the plant was officially closed and in June Miss Mary Pearson noted in her diary that the Percival Plow and Stove Company was bankrupt, offering 30 cents on the dollar.[786] The board of directors looked around for buyers and found some in the P. T. Légaré Company Limited of Quebec City which was engaged in much the same lines of business: Harvey Percival had known them well.[786] Early in June 1916 a Mr. Fortue or Fortier arrived from Quebec to work out the details and on the twelfth

the plant was reopened under the management of a Mr. J. A. Talbot apparently of Montreal.[787]

The remainder of the Percival story is rather poorly-documented but it can be said that the P. T. Légaré Company continued to run the Merrickville plant until 1935. The new company also continued to use the old Percival name and officially the Percival Plow and Stove Company still remained in business. J. H. Portier (or Fortier?) of Montreal was now the president though he seldom appeared in Merrickville and J. A. Talbot was secretary-treasurer and general manager.[788] Talbot, of course, moved to Merrickville with his family and eventually bought a home on Main Street East. The name Légaré seems to have been heard very seldom by the villagers who were often wont to call the plant "Talbot's foundry."[789]

It would appear that the new Percival-Légaré venture was moderately prosperous and that the firm was able to capitalize heavily on the old name and reputation of the Percivals. The Légaré corporation evidently had close affiliations with numerous other firms such as the Dominion Carriage Company Limited which made sleighs, buggies, wagons, democrats, concords, surreys and the like and with various American companies that made harrows, seeders, cultivators and engines burning gas and kerosene.[790] It also had rights to the sale if not the manufacture of Simonds power saws, Hayes spraying equipment, Walter A. Wood mowers, steel rakes, hay loaders and tedders and the like, Burlington wire fence products and even Son-o-Phone

windup phonographs.[791] The Légaré Company itself produced "Majestic" stoves, milk separators, butter churns and sewing machines and probably also threshing machines, root pulpers and slicers, cutters and blowers, fanning mills, pumps and safes.[792] All of these items and more were sold in Ontario during the 1910s and twenties, many of them under the Percival name.[793] It might startle a few Merrickville residents today to hear that the "Percival Plow and Stove Company of Merrickville" in addition to plows and stoves was officially making Percival-American disc harrows, Percival threshing machines, Percival animal harnesses, Percival wall safes, Percival-Milwaukee gas engines and even Percival player pianos.[794] The elaborate and well-illustrated company catalogue of 1921 No. 8 contains 168 pages and countless pictures, some in colour. Of all the items shown about eight walking plows plus five gang plows and sulkies as well as three or more wood stoves (out of over 50 in total) look as if they were actually made in Merrickville, being continuations of earlier times.

Retailing all these items called for stores and during the 1920s the Percival-Légaré Company reputedly opened eight retail outlets including one in Brockville and another in Smiths Falls. All of these were known as "Percival Stores."[795]

Little more is known of this phase of the firm's history. A few dry assessment figures for the company appear in the Merrickville Court of Revisions' records: for example, the plant and property were assessed for $11,500.00 in 1920 (much below

their actual value!) and in 1921 we hear of a company building on the CPR grounds which was being assessed for $400.00.[796] As the years went by the assessment kept dropping: to $7,000.00 in 1929 and 1933 and $6,700.00 in 1934.[797] No doubt this genuinely reflected the declining profitability of the business during those years: Mr. Harold Barton believes that the Percival works were employing only about 30 hands at the time he joined the firm around 1927.[798] By that time J. A. Talbot had long since left, to be followed by a W. J. Bathgate and he in turn by Arthur Hunt who had previously been running Harry F. McLean's railway quarry outside Merrickville.[799] Hunt evidently presided over the final years of the dying enterprise.

On 28 June 1927 the Percival Company purchased the eastern half of the former Kyle property including the old tannery building and the ruins of the old finishing shop of the defunct Malleable Iron Works along with all rights, privileges and rights of way for $600.[800] The charred remains of the three upper stories of the big Malleable building were then pulled down and the remnants made into a new one-and-a-half-storey foundry building with a lofty metal gambrel roof. The old tannery building meanwhile seems to have been used for casting brass.[801]

Despite this piece of expansionism, the Percival Company seems to have been getting deeper and deeper into difficulty and on 4 October 1927 it was obliged to sell all of its old holdings to the General Investment and Finance Corporation for $36,094.57. Eight days later the finance company in turn sold the property

to the P. T. Legarg Company Limited for $1.00 although the transfer tax statement says $36,094.57.[802]

Thanks to Mr. Barton we are permitted a glimpse of operations within the Percival plant from about 1927 to 1932. By that time naturally the firm was using electricity rather than water power to drive its machinery.[803] It was still manufacturing stoves and plows (especially the No. 7 and 10 models) plus other products such as cultivators, wheelbarrows, furnaces and barn equipment; according to a statement by the Department of the Interior in 1929.[804] The stone building complex was still being used for moulding and foundry work at the east end though we are told that there was little moulding being done any longer by the 1930s as the orders for the old cast-iron wood stoves declined. The central section was still used for cleaning the castings after they came out of the moulds while grinding and polishing was, as always, carried on in the west wing on the ground floor. Carpentry was still done on the second floor and some of the painting on the top floor: a hoist was used to move heavy items up from one floor to the next.[805] Stoves and furnaces were still trolleyed across the overhead walkway to the barn-like assembly building where they were put together and stored: any tinsmithing work was done at this stage and also some of the painting.[806]

By this point most shipping was being done by rail: Mr. Barton recalls no exporting whatsoever by boat.[807] The company still maintained a pair of wagons and a fine team of

horses to move products to the CPR yards. All items were crated, of course, and the bottom slats of the crates which were the last to be attached were nailed to the floors of the boxcars to make certain that they did not shift in transit. As a rule about two boxcar loads left Merrickville every week; some west towards Toronto and some east to Montreal.[808] (Mr. Roger S. Percival recalls some teaming being done as well to such regions as the Gatineau Valley during the 1900s.)[809] Mr. Barton believes that the plant was still employing about 30 men around 1927 with about ten in the moulding shop but the number tended to decrease all the time.[810]

The company still maintained its stores during this period but more and more the factory was being used to stock-pile imported products such as enamelled stoves from Montreal than to produce their own. The imported stoves were usually stored in the ex-tannery building now used by the Alloy Foundry Company as a grinding shop.[811] Gradually business diminished and one by one the employees were laid off. Around the spring of 1931 the company office building now a detached wooden structure north of the main plant was destroyed by fire early one morning and no effort was made to replace it.[812] Either in 1931 or 1932 the assembly building was pulled down not because it was not in excellent condition but only because the firm no longer had much use for it.[813] The end came finally in June 1935 when the P. T. Légaré Company which had mortgaged the Percival works for $165,000 in 1930 was unable to repay the loan.[814] Though efforts

were made by other parties to revive the business in a small way none was to prove very successful.

Why did the Percival Plow and Stove Company fail? The reasons are fairly self-evident. Respecting the plow department the company was pressed with mounting competition from giants emerging in the farm machinery world such as Massey-Harris of Toronto, International Harvester of Hamilton and Cockshutt Plow of Brantford: the last-named firm absorbed the old Frost and Wood works at Smiths Falls in 1935.[815] Even more fundamental, however, was the growing substitution of tractors with steam (later internal combustion) engines for horses on Canadian farms.[816] Tractors required newer and stronger accessory equipment for plowing and harvesting. Then too during the 1920s tractors became more than just substitutes for horses: they now became a direct source of power for most of the moving parts of the accessory implements through power take-off attachments; in short there was a much closer integration between the tractor and the machinery it towed. All this led to the development of such highly-sophisticated machines as the combined thresher-harvester (which both cut and threshed in one operation) and the self-propelled combine; both of which demanded a strength and precision of parts unknown in earlier times.[817] The Percival Company, irrevocably wedded to the production of horse-drawn implements for which the power for moving parts came solely from ground traction simply could not make the necessary adaptations required by the new technology.

Other factors made the cast-iron Percival stoves seem quaint and obsolete. Just before 1914 vitreous enamel as a finish on steel parts became general on stoves making them more attractive and by 1918 electric ranges were starting to develop: Canadian manufacturers in co-operation with the hydro-electric authorities began making electric ranges with safety and service features for use in private homes.[818] By 1925 most families were using gas and electric stoves for cooking while oil furnaces were replacing wood and coal furnaces for heating.[819] Cast-iron was generally giving way to steel especially for stoves and furnaces: gas and electric ranges require few castings and for that matter steel, unlike iron is difficult to cast. As a result foundries in general began to disappear though a small number still survive. (Merrickville still has one today.) The Percival foundries were not adapted for putting enamel on their products[820] and needless to say they were totally unsuited for making gas or electric stoves. Hence the stove department declined even more extensively than the plow works. Only in quite recent years has there been a perceptible revival of interest in cast-iron stoves reflecting nervousness over the rising costs of apparently diminishing fossil fuel supplies and perhaps a certain flair for nostalgia.

Such, however, was the prestige of the Percival name that seemingly a number of efforts were made to continue the manufacture of its plows. On 28 January 1937 a new consortium calling itself the Percival Plow and Metal Works bought part

of the old Percival property for $1,500 from George S. Currie who had been appointed a trustee for the Légaré Company.[821] The prime mover in this development seems to have been Herschel Edward Reilly, a professor with the physics department at McGill University, Montreal. A former farm boy raised near Spencerville, Ontario, Professor Reilly was a fervent admirer of the old Percival plows[822] and apparently it was his intention to continue manufacturing some of them. According to Dr. Newman he carried on with the foundry works for a short time[823] and in 1938 we find the Percival Plow and Metal Works' lands and buildings being assessed for $2,000.[824] However, on 29 December 1938 the new company sold its property to the Eureka Alloys and Stainless Steels Company apparently another of Reilly's ventures for the sum of $1.00.[825] Details of this development form a prologue to the histories of the Alloy Foundry Company and Grenville Castings Limited and hence are reserved for discussion in Chapter 4. At this point we need only say that the Eureka venture soon failed and that the property was nominally sold back to the Percival Plow and Metals works on 28 September 1942 for $1.00.[826] Professor Reilly was now dead and on 6 October 1943 the site with the remaining Percival buildings was sold to Henry Tainsh, a Scottish inventor and entrepreneur for $7,000.[827] That part of the story is continued in Chapter 4 under the heading of Merrickville Engineering works (q.v.).

Before we leave the Percival works it seems appropriate at this point to comment briefly on the Merrickville Plow Company

which was actually organized in 1947 to continue making Percival plows! This venture was suggested by James Ogilvie, a long-time employee with the Percival firm who had lately joined the Grenville Castings Company (q.v.).[828] The old Percival patterns had become the property of Henry Tainsh and when his short-lived firm was being liquidated at an auction sale in 1947 Ogilvie, unwilling to see the designs leave Merrickville made a successful bid for them.[829] Next with three local backers Ogilvie formed his little company and obtained the use of the old Dougall gristmill building (now the office of the Alloy Foundry Company) to manufacture some of these plows, particularly the ever-popular No. 7 and No. 10 models.[830] The products were sold to various former Percival dealers including Glen Ogilvie, son of James who was hired as sales representative. Most sales went to customers in Ontario, Quebec and New York State.[831] The firm even secured a contract from the Frost and Wood (Cockshutt) works in Smiths Falls which was then overloaded with work orders to make a horse plow for sale in South Africa.[832] The plow company also made repairs to old plows and stoves and for a time tried the new item of coal-fired brooder stoves for raising chickens. It also accepted some subcontract work for the Cockshutt Company.[833]

Predictably this venture did not last very long. Mechanization had largely eliminated the demand for hand plows and James Ogilvie and his friends found the enterprise unrewarding. The Merrickville Plow Company officially closed down on 30 December 1949 and the building reverted back to Frederick

Dougall.[834] The pattern designs were sold and according to Dr. Newman they eventually went to the James brothers of Perth, Ontario.[835] No one seems to know what finally became of the old plow patterns of the once-famed Percival Plow and Stove Company.

Merrickville: Electric Light and Power Company (1894-1915?)

Merrickville it seems was the first or one of the first communities in the Rideau corridor to generate electricity. The first electric light plant in the village was established as early as 1894 though apparently not for industrial purposes. Only Smiths Falls seems to have had a lead over Merrickville in this respect: it appears that the Smith's Falls Electric Company was founded in 1893 though it does not seem to have started generating power until about 1895.[836]

The Merrickville Electric Light and Power Company was founded by Edward J. Kyle, an elder son of industrialist Patrick Kyle and seemingly it never had more than a few employees. The plant was located in an "old tannery building" in North Merrickville[837] which could mean the old structure now used as a grinding shop by the Alloy Foundry Company or the old stone carpentry shop that still stands beside the river as an appendage to the Alloy Company's office. (See Figure 6.) The latter building is labelled as "Electric Light Station" on the Goad map of 1900:[838] its previous history (about which little is known) is summarized under the heading North Shore Tannery No. 2. There it was noted

that the building is a one-and-a-half-storey stone structure about 42 feet by 30 feet in size and that it had a medium-pitched cedar-shingled roof (now replaced with sheet metal). The structure abutts against the east wall of the north shore gristmill (No. 7, g.v.) and by 1900 it had a one-storey wooden appendage measuring about 30 feet by 22 feet attached to its own east end.[839] (The same appendage appears in 1912.)[840] A branch of the north side water flume emptied into the river beside the east end of the building.

No details are as yet available about the type of generator installed by E. J. Kyle (except that it supplied D.C. power) but there is no doubt that the plant was operational early in 1894: on 14 March 1894 the Merrickville council, obviously impressed with Kyle's achievement voted money to the Electric Light Company to light up the main street for the balance of the year.[841] On 11 April 1894 we find Edward J. Kyle being assessed as the tenant of the "old tannery building" and also as the owner of personal property represented by the electric light plant in the old tannery.[842] A sour note is found in the minutes of 26 July 1894, however: the council, dissatisfied with the service it was getting notified Mr. Kyle that if he could not provide better street lighting the council would prefer to manage with no lighting at all.[843] This complaint has been corroborated by an old Merrickville resident who recalled that Kyle's street lights were so faint "you'd think it was a bunch of candles he had around town":[844] there was no question of there being enough power to

run any industries as yet. Miss Belle Mills recalls further that power was sometimes curtailed or shut down on account of shortages of water which was needed for navigation.[845] Yet the Merrickville Star in its maiden issue on 15 June 1899 announced proudly that " ... our electric light service is beyond reproach. Commercial travellers say we have the best lighted town in Ontario."[846] Perhaps there had been a few improvements since 1894!

From the columns of the Star we glean a few more particulars of the activities of the Electric Light Company between 1899 and 1907. In November Mr. Kyle was obliged to turn off the power for a few weeks until he could complete a transfer of his plant to a new building which could mean the frame extension to the above-named building or that the power plant had previously been housed in the former Campbell tannery building (q.v.): by 25 November the lights went back on.[847] In April 1900 we find the village council paying the power company an instalment of $109.64 while a petition was being circulated to arrange for all night electric lighting; 162 ratepayers approved the idea and the council named a committee to investigate.[848]

In September 1900 E. J. Kyle set forth his terms for all night lighting to the council. In brief he proposed to run his lights from a half-hour after sunset to a half-hour before sunrise with inspections to be made every night and deductions made for defective lamps. Payments were to be reduced if services were to be curtailed for any reason except during severe thunderstorms.

Some time was to be granted for repairs in the event of an accident at the plant but the contract was to lapse at once if there was any default in service. The cost of the service was to be $617.00 per year, payable quarterly and the contract was to run continuously by year unless three months' notice of termination was given. The village could terminate the contract anytime if the lighting was not up to capacity.[849]

Reasonable though these terms might seem the council was apparently not completely satisfied with them. It agreed to pay Kyle $109.00 to cover the period up to 30 September[850] and for service up to 29 March 1901 but for some reason it delayed signing the new contract. On 9 May 1901 the Star observed that Merrickville was still getting light but that the council still had not signed a contract: furthermore it was refusing to pay for the power supplied since the end of March when the old one expired.[851] In July the electric company submitted a bill of $113.13 for three months of street lighting: no action was taken by the council.[852] A few weeks later the Star was mystified to find both the town and the company hiring lawyers over the above issue and frankly asked what was going on.[853] Meanwhile it seems that E. J. Kyle had lost patience and shut off the power.

In late September the matter came to a head in court. The council won. The court ruled that the village did not have to pay for the power it had received since the end of March.[854] It was, however, a Pyrrhic victory since the lights were still off and citizens were obviously discontented about it. The council

immediately started talking about having the service restored, preferably all night too with the reeve going on record as favouring a five-year contract: there was, he insisted, no desire to take advantage of Mr. Kyle. An all night service was deemed necessary for the protection of travellers and besides many citizens disliked having the lights shut off at midnight.[855] On 16 October 1901 the council held a special meeting with Kyle who offered to light the streets all night for $660.00 a year: he pressed for a five-year contract. On the question of defective lamps Kyle pointed out that they could be repaired the same night if the street inspector who currently reported problems to the town clerk was also to report promptly to the company. The council unanimously approved the terms offered and Kyle set to work repairing his wiring.[856] On 14 November 1901 the new contract was signed and that night the lights came back on. Already there was talk of increasing the lighting on Church and Lewis Streets.[857]

Very little more is heard of E. J. Kyle's electric light operation; apparently it ceased causing controversy in later years. E. J. Kyle is mentioned again in this regard during December 1907 when we find him distributing 32-candlepower lamps to various customers in town[858] and we still find the electric power station marked on maps of 1912 and afterwards.[859] Almost the only other known detail which may have some bearing on the power plant during this period was the construction of a wooden "drive shed" building over the north shore water flume directly north of the present Alloy Foundry Company office. (See Figure 7.) This building was

about 46 feet by 20 feet and stood directly over the flumes:[860] presumably it housed some sort of water wheel (perhaps horizontal) but its precise purpose is unknown. It was not built until sometime after 1900 though it was standing around 1912-15.[861] Near it stood a tiny wooden shed, about 13 feet square, with a few windows and a gabled roof: this building was standing around the 1908-15 period[862] and was apparently used as an office -- but for what enterprise? Perhaps the "office" and drive shed were owned by Kyle's electric company.

As of 1916 it would appear that E. J. Kyle's little dynamo became completely superfluous. By that time the Rideau Power Company was ready to generate electricity on a much larger scale at Merrickville.

Merrickville: The Rideau Power Company Limited (1914-1949?)

The Rideau Power Company was brought into being by a group of Merrickville industrialists who had become convinced they needed electric power not just to illuminate their plants but to drive their machinery as well: otherwise there seemed no way to remain competitive in the modern age. Smiths Falls industrialists already had electric power and it was also appearing in the cities. Around 1899 Arthur and Alonzo Bowen converted an old factory at Andrewsville into an electric plant to provide power for the Kemptville Milling Company as well as the communities of Kemptville and Burritt's Rapids: this operation was apparently

running by 1900.[863] It seemed increasingly essential for Merrickville to follow suit.

Though there had been occasional feuds amongst the Merrickville industrialists over water rights in the past (as for example, Merrick vs. Easton before 1884 and Watchorn vs. Kyle in 1894) on a number of instances they had also co-operated to their mutual benefit. Before 1911 all the millers had combined their efforts to build a crib and rock (riprap) dam just below the present concrete dam:[864] traces of two old flumes are said to be visible under the road between the existing powerhouse and the canal locks. These flumes, of course, supplied water to the oatmeal mill, Alex Mills' grist- and sawmill, A. L. Mills' furniture factory and the Watchorn woollen mill. Traces of the north side flume can also be discerned on its course to the buildings once owned by Patrick Kyle and the Percival Plow and Stove Company.

In 1911 talks were initiated between the Mills brothers, the Watchorn Company, the Percival Company, the heirs of Patrick Kyle and the Dominion Government on the question of a new dam at Merrickville.[865] The government proposed that all surplus waters not needed for navigation be sold to an electric power generating company which should be composed of the existing water-users who would own stock in proportion to their respective existing shares of the water rights. The said company would, of course, build and equip a powerhouse.[866] In 1914 the above four parties formed the Rideau Power Company whose debentures were backed by the

village of Merrickville.[867] That same year the Department of Railways and Canals with the approval of the Minister, the Honourable Dr. J. D. Reid, authorized work to proceed on the dam.[868]

Plans for the dam were drawn up in 1912.[869] The actual contract covering construction of a new 30-foot bridge across the main channel of the river as well as the concrete dam came to almost $50,000 and was let to John O'Toole of Ottawa who had already done some of the work on the Tay Canal in 1891-92.[870] (The swing bridge over the locks and the snye bridge were not altered.) The dam itself, built of solid concrete is about 360 feet across and six feet thick.[871] Penstocks run under the highway to the powerhouse. The two racks (= grates at the intakes) are about 12 feet wide, of 3 x 1/4-inch steel spaced 1 1/2 inches apart.[872] The head gate on No. 1 unit is about 12 feet wide and is lifted by a hand-operated double rack winch while the head gate on No. 2 unit (at least in 1955) was found to be missing; being operated by a single rack hand winch.[873] A waste weir is situated near the centre of the main river channel with another at the snye: the north end has one log sluice near the headworks while the south has two log sluices near the locks.[874] Each log sluice has a double set of log gains or end slots spaced about six feet apart. Approximately 15 logs each 16 inches square and about 25 feet long fill each of the sluices.[875] The head of water comes to about 26 feet offering 406 horsepower at ordinary minimum flow and 636 horsepower at ordinary maximum flow.[876]

Old-timers still recall the construction work as O'Toole's men used horse teams to cart in huge heaps of gravel for the new dam. Mr. Carman Knapp of Merrickville once remarked that the contractor had four Austrians working for him and that when war broke out during construction a local regimental colonel was sent to intern them: the four men hastily sought refuge in the millpond but the colonel's orders were carried out nonetheless. O'Toole is said to have received the contract to build the powerhouse as well but this was not carried out until the dam was completed.[878]

As work proceeded a problem became apparent: that the backup waters behind the dam would flood parts of North Merrickville. To counter this the canal superintendent, Arthur Phillips wrote to the minister suggesting an extension of 200 feet along the north bank of the river past lands forming part of the Kyle estate: the cost, he estimated, would come to about $18,500.[879] Reid agreed that this feature should be added to O'Toole's existing contract.[880] Phillips then requested an Order-in-Council to authorize the change which he now figured could be carried out for just $16,500 by building a less substantial extension that could be practically buried in the mud.[881] The minister in turn suggested that the extension could be narrowed to act as a wing dam running north from the end of the main dam: the smaller size reduced the cost to less than $7,400 along with another $3,250 to cover the cost of land flooded by the dam.[882] The end result was a 300-foot concrete wall extending from the north end of the

dam west along the river bank on land purchased by the government with a tile pipe drain at the base of the rear wall to carry off the leakage.[883] Completion of the dam was delayed by the installation of machinery at the new weir by the power company but on 1 April 1915 Phillips reported that he expected the department's work to be finished by the end of the month.[884] In 1916 the annual report of the department noted with pleasure that O'Toole had done an eminently satisfactory job and that the minister had ordered the pond waters backed up to navigating levels on 1 January 1916 to supply water to the Rideau Power Company.[885] Within 30 years, the report added, the new dam would have paid for itself through the rental fees while incurring little or no additional expense to the department. Nor would there be any further vexatious questions about water leakages at Merrickville.[886]

The power company meanwhile had not been idle. According to the above report it had already paid the first year's rental fee, built a brick and concrete powerhouse below the new dam and also installed two eight-foot steel draught tubes through the same.[887] The report went on to say that the company as yet had only one electrical unit of 650 horsepower in place but that the device had been running very satisfactorily since 1 January. The firm was planning to install a second unit shortly which made very good sense since the full water power had to be paid for in any case whether electricity was being generated or not.[888] Surplus waters meant sheer waste.

The original directors of the Rideau Power Company were Robert W. Watchorn (q.v.), G. F. McKimm of the Percival Plow and Stove Company, A. Lincoln Mills and his brother Alex Mills.[889] The first plant operator was Percy Kerr of Merrickville who had previously been running E. J. Kyle's powerhouse: he had the assistance of one Joe Williams.[890] Within a matter of months tragedy struck at the plant. Around 2:00 p.m. one day in May or June 1916 the power failed when something went wrong with one of the Lombard-type governors on the generator. The main shift driving the generator was a groove pulley which ran back to the governors while a special pin kept the pulley belt on solidly: unfortunately the said pin which should have been flush with the pulley was of the wrong type and protruded out. Something had to be used to throw the belt but Kerr decided not to try the usual stand-by of a broom handle which might easily be flipped out of the works. Instead he tried reaching in with his arm to make the adjustment but as he did so the protruding spinning pulley pin caught his rolled-up sleeve. Instantly the unfortunate man was hurled over the shaft and flung onto the concrete floor and killed. Bloodstains were still visible on the floor a year later![891] In response to an advertisement for a new foreman George McMullen, a factory employee in Carleton Place immediately caught a train to Merrickville where he was promptly hired by Messrs. Henniger and Gould of Smiths Falls.[892] McMullen spent his next 57 years in Merrickville running the power plant.[893]

What had happened respecting the management of the Rideau Power Company? Though the details are vague it appears that the original Merrickville directors had quickly run into financial difficulties trying to pay for the power plant, penstocks and generators; not forgetting the rental fees.[894] It will also be noted that the Malleable Iron Works and the Percival Plow and Stove Company were both teetering on the verge of collapse at this time. As a result new parties had to step in and take over the embarrassed power company. The new president proved to be Graham Henniger, a paving contractor who controlled M. G. Henniger Construction Limited of Smiths Falls while J. S. Gould who was very prominent in milling and manufacturing in Smiths Falls became secretary-treasurer.[895] Both of these men shared ownership of a small power station in Smiths Falls which was inadequate for their needs and in part they used the Merrickville plant to supply extra power to Smiths Falls.[896] How ironic that the Rideau Power Company which was created to help the Merrickville industrialists compete with their opposite numbers in Smiths Falls was to prove beyond the means of the Merrickville manufacturers who were forced to turn to parties in Smiths Falls to bail them out!

The new owners were more successful than the old but for a time they were obliged to make do with just the one generator. We might remark in passing that the original generator was a 60-cycle A.C. model built by the Swedish General Electric Company of Toronto and Sweden: it ran at 240 r.p.m. and produced 550 K.V.A. with a 530 amperage and 600 voltage.[897] (The governor was made

by the Lombard Governor Company of Ashland, Massachusetts.)[898] In 1918 the company decided to buy a second, used generator from the Rochester Light and Power Company of New York State: this unit was built by the General Electric Company of Schenectady, New York. It too was a 60-cycle A.C. model with 500 K.V.A., a 70 amperage and a 4,150 voltage. It ran at 200 r.p.m. without a governor[899] and in the opinion of Mr. Carman Knapp was an unfortunate choice since it had to be completely rewired and reconstructed and was not ready for service until 1919.[900] Even then it required three times as much water to run the second unit as the first. According to Mr. Knapp the power company was supposed to be guaranteed 1,500 horsepower from the new dam but this could not be delivered without imperilling navigation[901] and usually the plant had to function with barely half that amount. Sometimes that meant that only the smaller generator could be used. The lockmaster would come over and notify the operators when they could run their machines and when not.[902] Both generators would be used in the spring when the waters were high but only one would be operating in late summer.[903]

Of course, the local mills at Merrickville were among the first beneficiaries of the new power service and Mr. Knapp recalls helping to hook them up around 1917.[904] Around that time the Rideau Power Company formally signed a contract with Ontario Hydro to supply surplus power to places outside Merrickville on transmission lines put up by Ontario Hydro.[905] Within Merrickville the transition from coal oil to electric

light bulbs was gradual: another former employee with the power company, Willis Driscoll of Merrickville helped wire up a good many homes in the village after he joined the company in 1929.[906]

Thanks to various old-timers such as Mr. Driscoll and Carman Knapp we are afforded several glimpses of operations within the plant. Mr. Knapp served the Rideau Power Company from 1916 to 1919: working ten hours a day and 13 when on night duty as an assistant to George McMullen for which he was paid $50.00 per month. He quit in July 1919 because the pay was too little and the incessant noise was affecting his hearing:[907] both Percy Kerr and George McMullen became hard of hearing for the same reason.[908] Mr. Driscoll who worked at the powerhouse for seven or eight years starting in 1929 recalls having to work 11 hours at a time during the day shift and 13 hours when on night shifts; however, by the late 1930s a third operator was also hired. Driscoll was paid $45.00 a month in 1929[909] though this figure was raised to $60.00 over the years. George McMullen was the superintendent with (eventually) six men under him, one of whom worked out of town; a role Driscoll was to assume later.[910] McMullen also kept the books for the company although he had no office.[911]

Every so often dramatic incidents occurred. Storms helped to make life interesting for the staff especially in the days before the power was grounded: it was quite common to see "balls of fire" around the plant during thunderstorms in McMullen's time.[912] On one particular evening in 1928 a lightning storm blew over the village: it dropped almost no rain but one flash

struck the lightning rods next to the plant and started a fire. A passing traveller from the railway station noticed smoke and raised the alarm; George McMullen dashed to the scene in his nightshirt but the fire was entirely out of control and there was little anyone could do:[913] the village fire brigade had only a steam engine and steam pumper which could not be brought into play fast enough to do much good. The plant was largely burned out[914] but work was undertaken at once to rebuild it. One generator unit was rewired and back in service by May 1929 while the other was going again in July.[915]

On another occasion during the 1930s Mr. Driscoll was nearly killed in front of the plant while putting up lightning arrestors on the nearby poles: he climbed one particular pole where there was a nine-inch clearance between the top and the hydro wires running into the plant but apparently the wind blew his hair upwards a little bit too much. A moment later he was rolling in 550 volts on the ground. Driscoll spent the next 16 weeks in the intensive care section of the hospital at Smiths Falls; he was unconscious for three weeks and was unable to remember his own name when he finally came to. He also suffered burns to his hips and toe but rather remarkably there were no lasting effects and in time he was able to return to work.[916]

In 1931 the Rideau Power Company was given an added responsibility. The neighbouring Kemptville Milling Company which ran the Andrewsville generating plant had been running into difficulty. In 1924 the Bowens who owned it sold the plant to Judson Watchorn

(q.v.), proprietor of the Watchorn woollen mill but Watchorn also had problems with it and in 1931 sold it back to the Bowens.[917] Meanwhile the almost defunct Kemptville Milling Company had been revived by J. Harold Kidd of Burritt's Rapids who became president with M. G. Henniger as vice-president and George P. McMullen as secretary-treasurer. These three men purchased the Bowens' charter (with the consent of Ontario Hydro)[918] and apparently tried to carry on with the Andrewsville plant. Six months later the Andrewsville generating station dismantled itself by falling into the river and we are told that the parts netted $125.00 from a junk dealer.[919] Thereafter the Kemptville Milling Company purchased power from the Rideau Power Company over a new line built at the time.[920] (A few years later a sleet storm pulled the wires down and McMullen's son spent many a bitter hour out in the cold climbing poles to restore the line.)[921]

According to the old-timers the Rideau Power Company was little affected by the Depression except by freezing itinerant job seekers who often sought shelter inside the plant during the winters.[922] Mr. Jack Smith of Merrickville who was lockmaster for 25 years was also engaged to check up and clean the powerhouse for 30 years: the two jobs closely overlapped since both were largely concerned with the water levels.[923] Smith recalls that the company employed six men during the 1930s and forties all to maintain the plant and power lines; today, he observed, Ontario Hydro employs five men all in offices and none of them at the

plant. Smith informed us that the generators are in the basement of the plant. The head gates on the penstocks so we are told have ten different positions of which the tenth means wide open: the turbine wheels are undershot. The generators ran automatically and power was turned on by opening the head gates and closing a switch and the oil breaker. Water is maintained at about six feet two inches for navigation but is, of course, lowered in the winter. During that season only the smaller generator keeps operating: the peak period runs from March to mid-June.[924] Mr. Smith also remarked that it was once proposed to close the bridge near the plant and to fill up the channel with a road embankment but after some discussion it was decided that the spring run-offs made the idea too risky.[925]

In 1949-50 the Rideau Power Company ceased to exist as a separate entity. It was bought out by Ontario Hydro as was the Kemptville Milling Company.[926] Ontario Hydro in turn has done some rehabilitation work including adding some 550-volt A.C. circuit breakers, extra relays and the like which allowed a semi-attended operation by one man with automatic shutdown.[927] Today the Merrickville generating station has been completely integrated with the overall power line network.

It is now automatically controlled by the Q-2 station near Smiths Falls, has no operator of its own and serves only as a "back-up" or reinforcing station for the general hydro grid.[928] The local office was closed when the plant was automated causing a perceptible slump in the village.[929] The two original

generators remain but have been rebuilt. We are also informed that the interior of the Merrickville plant has recently been upgraded and that new doors and new painting have lately been ordered for the exterior.[930] This is would appear that the Merrickville hydro station is not in imminent danger of being closed down and may continue to generate electric power for some time to come.

Merrickville; Island Laundry (fl. 1905}

This short-lived venture deserves a few words of acknowledgment in a study such as this solely for the reason that it happened to be located in the old 19th-century industrial area upon which this report is focused.

Very little is known of the early laundry services in Merrickville. On 21 December 1899 the editor of the Star was complaining about the lack of any such facility in town along with 25 other items that also crossed his mind. Someone must have read that article since by 1901 a laundry had been established in the village.

The first known laundry service was opened by a Jim Lee of Montreal in September of 1901 evidently in the downtown part of Merrickville "in the stone house opposite Wm. Scott's office."[932] Lee was still advertising in June of 1907.[933] A business directory of 1902 lists two laundries in Merrickville; one run by a Thomas Hamilton and the other by the Pembroke Steam Laundry.[934]

(In the edition of 1904 only Hamilton is mentioned.)[934] On 20 March 1902 Hamilton ran an advertisement in the star explaining that his "Canadian Laundry" did all its work by machinery[936] -- unlike Lee who emphasized that his work was all done by hand.[937]

Were either of these laundries located on the island? Seemingly not unless Hamilton's was sold after 1904 to a Chinese gentleman known as John Hunter. In June of 1905 Hunter was doing his own advertising in the Merrickville Star, promising his customers "good clean linen" and assuring them that there was no charge for satisfaction.[938] On 24 August 1905 the Star reported with indignation that four young men had recently harassed Mr. Hunter and vandalized his property one previous evening because they thought it fun to torment "a quiet law-abiding Celestial."[939] Local tradition tells us that the island laundry was run by a group of Chinese; therefore, it must have been Hunter who operated the island laundry.

Tradition agrees that the laundry occupied a wooden house on a shelf of rock opposite the gristmill-woollen mill building;[940] an area now flooded by the hydro dam. This is confirmed by an archival photograph taken before 1900 (and perhaps before 1895) showing an unpainted wooden house with a chimney, a shingled roof and an annex on the south side: the annex is sagging at the east end. The picture was evidently taken in the springtime and shows the river in flood.[941] Corroborating the photograph is the Goad map of 1900 which indicates a small wooden house of one-and-a-half

stories (with a single-storey south side wing) in the above location: the house appears to have been about 30 feet by 25 feet 942 while the annex was 25 feet by 12.[942]

The house was probably not new in 1900 and presumably it was not yet being used as a laundry. Tradition agrees as to what became of it. Sometime shortly after 1900 the dam upstream at Poonamalie gave way and unleashed a flood that did extensive damage and during its course the laundry building was washed off its foundations and swept downstream through the bywash leaving it totally smashed up.[943] Not surprisingly it was never replaced. It does not appear on the insurance map of 1912[944] and shortly afterwards its very site was blasted out when the new hydro dam was built. Further research might establish the exact date of the flood. Nothing more is known as yet about the island laundry at Merrickville.

Conclusion

By way of summary we can only reiterate here what was noted at the beginning of the chapter: that the period of 1886 to 1945 saw the main manufacturing industries of Merrickville rise to their zeniths of prosperity. This evidently holds true for the village malleable-iron works, the plow and stove works, the island furniture factory and the island woollen mill. The sawmills, flouring mills and gristmills, however, did not fare so well and one by one they faltered into extinction as both lumbering and agriculture declined in the area. On the other

hand the belated arrival of the railway and the advent of hydro-electricity both helped to delay the decline of Merrickville as a manufacturing centre; the former because it put distant markets within convenient reach and released industry from its almost total dependence on the Rideau Canal and the latter because it made amends for the occasionally uncertain water power available in the village and allowed some of the old mills and factories to modernize a bit, increasing their competitive prospects. Notwithstanding these new advantages, however, all of the old industries that flourished during the 19th century declined sooner or later during the 20th until by 1945 only the old Watchorn woollen mill was still in business and even this shut down in 1954. The reasons for these failures are not always clear but in most cases growing obsolescence, small size and formidable outside competition from giant firms in the cities seem to have been common contributors. Worse still few new firms appeared in Merrickville during this period and none of those that did lasted very long. As the old enterprises slowly died out in the 1930s nothing new seemed to be arriving to take their place. Fortunately the picture brightened a little after the Second World War when a little post-war prosperity began to filter into Merrickville.

Biographic Sketches

John Mills (1832-1924)

The founder and owner of Merrickville's most successful furniture factory, John Mills was born in 1832 apparently in England: the family was definitely of English origin and Wesleyan Methodist in religion.[945] Of John Mills' youth nothing has been discerned except that he dwelt at North Gower for a time.[946] Early in the 1850s he moved to Merrickville where he was apprenticed to Robert Riddell who taught him the cabinet-maker's trade at his shop on west Brock Street. Around 1860 Mills managed to buy out Riddell and take over the shop.[947] He apparently built a large new house on Brock Street and used it partly for building and finishing furniture. Three or four employees were engaged (usually his own sons) and soon the business was worth about $2,500 per year.[948]

Mills, however, desired to expand his operations and to obtain water power to drive his machinery. In 1873 he succeeded in purchasing the east end of the island at Merrickville from Henry Merrick and proceeded to erect a new frame furniture factory immediately below the woollen mill with which he shared a water flume. He also opened a store in downtown Merrickville to display and sell his products and later opened a funeral parlour as well.[949]

Mills was one of 24 charter members of Harmony Lodge No. 1, I.O.G.T., Merrickville (organized in 1853).[950] By the time of his retirement in 1913 he had the only furniture and cabinet works in

the village. He lived to the ripe old age of 93 dying only in 1924 and was buried at Merrickville Union Cemetery. By his wife Susan (born 1834) he had four sons and one daughter.[951] Two of those sons, Alex and A. L. Mills (q.v.) themselves became millers and manufacturers in Merrickville.

Alexander Mills (1855-1942)

Alexander Mills who owned a number of saw- and gristmills in Merrickville was the eldest son of John Mills and was probably born at North Gower. He spent most of his life at Merrickville where in 1898 he purchased the old island gristmill from Patrick Kyle and did custom grinding jobs. According to his niece Miss Belle Mills it was he who added the wooden sawmill wing to the gristmill.[952] Despite the great fire of 1899 Mills carried on with this enterprise until 1921 when he sold the building to the Watchorn Company. Shortly afterwards he built a steam(?) sawmill on the north shore of the Rideau where Mr. Arthur Virtue's house now stands. This operation seems to have shut down around 1930.[953] Alex Mills and his brother Lincoln were also amongst the original founders of the Rideau Power Company in 1914.

Mills played a part in community affairs, serving on the Court of Revision during the 1920s.[954] He was also a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Personally he seems to have been a pleasant genial man and very hard-working but in the opinion of his niece was not an especially astute businessman.[955] He retired around 1930 and died in 1942 at the advanced age of 82. His wife

Alice Cranstoun of Merrickville (1856-1927) predeceased him. Their son John Mills died in 1962.[956]

Abraham Lincoln Mills (1864-1950)

A younger son of John Mills (Sr.), Lincoln Mills was born at Merrickville in 1864. He evidently followed his father into the furniture and undertaking businesses and by 1901 was placing his own advertisements in the Merrickville Star for turning, planning and bandsawing work that could be done on demand at the furniture factory[957] although he did not formally purchase the factory from his father until 1913. Lincoln Mills continued to run the furniture factory until about 1932 when he was forced to close it down; afterwards he continued to run his father's funeral parlour until 1944 when he sold it to Raymond Lannin (now of Smiths Falls) and retired.[958] He died accidently but painlessly on 1 May 1950 from the effects of gas fumes from the coal heater at his home (now the residence of his daughter Miss Belle Mills).[959] He was then 86 years of age. His wife and daughter survived him.

The Dougall Family

This clan which was associated with lumbering and other enterprises in Merrickville for about 40 years stemmed from Robert J. Dougall of Hallville, Ontario who built the steam sawmill near the railway tracks in North Merrickville sometime before 1925. The family was of Scottish ancestry.[960] Robert Dougall's father

was said to have worked on the Gatineau River cutting lumber and driving it down the river to Ottawa. Later he moved to Hallville and build his own sawmill.[961] Robert Dougall who was apparently born in Hallville either inherited this mill or built himself another and soon became a prominent local contractor and lumber dealer. His sons Frederick and Donald were both born in Hallville in 1897 and 1906 respectively.[962]

Sometime before 1925 Robert Dougall apparently decided that the prospects of Merrickville were brighter than those of Hallville and accordingly moved his business. He set up a steam sawmill mostly to do custom jobs and also engaged in building contract work. In 1928 he undertook to rebuild the burned out ex-gristmill building (now the office of the Alloy Foundry Company Limited) for the Canada Brass Works Company (q.v.) only to find that the brass works could not pay the bill. In January 1930 the property was awarded to the Dougalls by the courts. In 1929, however, Robert Dougall retired and moved to Ottawa leaving the problem to his sons.[963]

The sawmill meanwhile was taken over by his son Frederick H. Dougall (1897-1976) who had previously been working in a mine and then running a sawmill at Kazabazua on the Gatineau.[964] Both he and his brother Donald (1906-1973) held third-class stationary engineering papers for running steam plants and boilers which they had acquired in Detroit.[965] The brothers also inherited the former brass works building for which they had little use: it was rented briefly to the Daly Dog Food Company (q.v.) in the 1950s

before Fred Dougall finally sold it to the Alloy Foundry Company in 1958 for $8,000.[966] While Donald worked on various jobs, usually outside Merrickville Fred operated the sawmill apparently into the 1950s until worsening asthma which ran in the family finally forced him to retire. He and his wife Myrtle whom he married at Hallville in 1919 began spending the winters in Florida and California. Dougall died in 1976 and was buried in South Gower Cemetery.[967] His brother Donald who ran a machine shop in North Merrickville from about 1942 to 1972 died in the spring of 1973.[968]

Of the two Frederick Dougall was much the better businessman. We are told that he was a quiet reserved man but with a real sense of humour and a strong sense of community spirit. Fred Dougall and his wife both once performed in the local orchestra he on the violin and both once sang in the choir of the Merrickville United Church.[969] He was also known to take the local children's ball team to Morrisburg in his truck for competitions[970] and for a time fitted out the basement of the former brass works as a community skating rink. One of his special interests was a patch of bushland he owned outside of Merrickville which he kept lovingly groomed and maintained; never cutting a healthy tree but only dead-falls or dying timber. He is still survived by his widow and one daughter, Jean now of Kemptville.[971]

Robert William Watchorn (1852-1950)

Robert William Watchorn, the Merrickville manufacturer who presided over the affairs of the Watchorn Company and its woollen mill and stores for about 45 years was the eldest son of Thomas Watchorn (Sr., g.v.) and his wife Matilda. The son was born in 1852 probably in Almonte. Nothing has been discerned about his youth although by inference he followed his father into the woollen manufacturing trade at Lanark. In 1874 he came with his father to Merrickville and signed the actual lease of the island woollen mill from Henry Merrick (q.v.) in his own name. With the death of his father in December 1879 the entire responsibility for running the affairs of Watchorn and Company devolved onto the shoulders of Robert Watchorn although by 1885 his younger brother Thomas Henry Watchorn (born 1861) was in partnership with him. In that year they formally purchased the woollen mill from Henry Merrick.[972]

Robert Watchorn also emerged as one of Merrickville's leading men. In 1879 he followed his father on the village council (along with Edward Errett and Hiram Easton, q.v.) and remained a councilman until 1883; in 1885 he was again returned and may have served beyond that date.[973] In 1901-02 we also find him representing Merrickville on the Council for the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville; he was not re-elected in 1903 but was nonetheless appointed county warden that same year.[974] Keenly interested in transport improvements Watchorn was elected a vice-president of

the Eastern Ontario Good Roads Association in 1903[975] championed a number of attempts to build a railway directly from Ottawa to Brockville through Merrickville.[976] In his later years, especially following his retirement from business Watchorn often served on the Merrickville Court of Revisions, as for example, in 1915, 1924-27, 1931-34 and 1937-39.[977]

Robert Watchorn was apparently a very astute businessman and directed the affairs of his company with energy and success. In 1908 he became the sole owner of Watchorn and Company after his brother George E. Watchorn (q.v.) withdrew from it. By 1920 he retired and left the business to his eldest son Judson (q.v.). He spent his last years at his large brick house in South Merrickville but ultimately died of an illness at Judson's home on the north side of the river in 1950 at the great age of 98 years. He was buried in Merrickville Union Cemetery.

Watchorn was a Conservative in politics, an Anglican in religion and a member of the Masonic Order of which he was elected District Deputy Grand Master in 1899.[978] An amusing sidelight to his career is furnished by an extant formal contract he signed and sealed with a Kingston steamboat captain on 10 April 1877 by which both parties were to swear off the use of tobacco for 12 months or pay a violation penalty of $25.00.[979] Watchorn married one Eleanor A. Jackson who predeceased him in 1930 at the age of 77: they had nine children of whom two Clyde and Susie-both died young of tuberculosis while two other sons, Bill and Ned perished from the malady in early adulthood. The

other children Judson, Anna, Harry, Arthur and George all outlived their parents.[980]

George Edmund Watchorn (1865-1947)

Little is known of George E. Watchorn who was a younger brother of Robert. He was born perhaps at Almonte in 1865 and came with the family to Merrickville in 1874. In December 1891 he bought out the interest of his older brother Thomas Henry in the Watchorn Company and for nearly 18 years served as bookkeeper for the firm.[981] Unlike his brother Robert, George Watchorn played little part in community politics although in 1887 and 1888 and perhaps afterwards we find him serving as clerk of the municipality.[982] In 1909 he retired from the woollen business and sold his share in the enterprise to Robert. He is said to have gone out West to Calgary immediately afterwards yet in 1909 he bought a property on Brock Street from his mother for $1,300.[983] Twelve years later he and his wife sold this property at a very substantial profit.[984] Of his later years nothing is known. He died in 1947 and was buried at Merrickville Union Cemetery.

George W. Watchorn was married to Juliana Jakes of Merrickville who died in 1954 at the age of 81.[985] His brother Thomas Henry Watchorn (born 1860?) was a travelling salesman with the company at least until the early 1900s.[986] He was also a good friend of George Byron Magee, his brother-in-law (himself the son of a very successful Merrickville manufacturer) with whom he built

a steam launch called the Gwen on the Rideau around 1905. It is said to have been the first such craft to appear on that portion of the canal.[987]

Thomas Judson Watchorn (1881-1962)

Judson Watchorn was the eldest son of Robert Watchorn and like his father he devoted most of his life to the Watchorn Company which he controlled and ran for about 30 years. Judson Watchorn was born and educated at Merrickville. He first appears in the records in 1901 when he began a course of training in shorthand, typing and other studies at the Brockville Business College.[988] During his student days (which may have started in 1897) he used to board in Brockville but frequently commuted to Merrickville by bicycle over bumpy corduroyed roads to see his family on weekends.[989] By December of 1901 he had earned his diploma[990] and by January 1903 he was working as a commercial traveller for the Watchorn Company.[991] He had no car at that time and used to lug a heavy case full of samples to and from the railway station.[992] In October 1907 he married Annie Myrtle Mills, a cousin of Miss Belle Mills of Merrickville and honeymooned at Niagara Falls.[993] One son was born of the marriage.

Little more is heard of Judson Watchorn until 1920 at which time he is described as a manufacturer rather than a traveller:[994] perhaps he had inherited the business by then. As a businessman he was shrewd and clever and seemed born for the role: he is said

to have held 97 shares out of 100 in Watchorn and Company and to have been literally his own board of directors.[995] It is remarked that he had only $900 in the bank when he built his house in North Merrickville but such was his credit rating that he had no trouble borrowing the money for it.[996] As a rule he always paid cash on the spot for everything he received. The woollen mill was his pride and joy. He paid his employees low wages but by all accounts treated them well; always making sure they were paid promptly and refraining from laying them off whenever times were lean. On occasion he was also known to fill their coal cellars from company stores during the winters[997] and to charge them only what the coal cost him.

Watchorn had other business interests as well. In 1924 he bought the hydro-electric generating station at Andrewsville from Arthur and Alonzo Bowen of the Kemptville Milling Company but found it an unprofitable purchase and in 1931 he sold it back to the Bowens.[998] He also became involved in money lending and real estate transactions. Early in 1948 he retired from the woollen business and sold the factory to his brother Arthur Morphy Watchorn (1893-1966) under whom the enterprise declined. Judson then devoted all his energies to building homes in Merrickville and accepting mortgages on numerous others although in 1954 he felt compelled to reacquire the woollen mill solely for the purpose of giving the family firm (then on the verge of collapse) a decent burial. Some years later he was invited to supervise the establishment of the woollen mill at Upper Canada Village but for

reasons of failing health was forced to refuse.[999] In 1961 he suffered a stroke and was taken to the hospital at Smiths Falls; later he went to a nursing home. Finally he died on 1 February 1962 at the age of 81 apparently at his home and was buried in Merrickville Union Cemetery.[1000]

Most Merrickville residents interviewed by this writer hold favourable impressions of Judson Watchorn. He is said to have lent money to many people on generous terms and to have been very fond of children[1001] perhaps because he himself had so few. He left an annuity to the local Anglican church (of which he was a member), provided it with an electric organ and gave to every charity.[1002] He was also a member of the local band at one time.[1003] Personally Watchorn was a very reserved and serious man and to some he seemed parsimonious, aloof and arrogant. His relations with his first wife Myrtle (1882-1950) were somewhat strained because he did not share her desire to give parties and play the role of a generous host:[1004] after her death he married Mabel MacGregor (née Evans) who had been his housekeeper for some time and who had nursed his father during his final illness. The second marriage seems to have been a happy one. [1005] (Mabel died in 1978.) Relations between Judson Watchorn and his brother Arthur and his sister Anna (1879-1958) were distinctly cool but on the other hand he was quite friendly with Thomas Kyle and his uncle George Byron Magee.[1006] He kept a fine home in North Merrickville and was quite well off when he died.[1007]

Judson Watchorn had one son, Reeves Watchorn who once ran the machine shop associated with the woollen mill. Reeves later qualified as a marine engineer and went to sea: today he is said to be living in Smiths Falls.[1008]

Patrick Kyle (1838-1911)

One of Merrickville's leading industrialists Patrick Kyle was born in Northern Ireland on 1 January 1838 and came to Merrickville with his parents at the age of two.[1009] He was probably the son of Edward Kyle, a blacksmith by trade who died at Merrickville on the night of 11 September 1852: a few days later Lockmaster Johnston wrote to ask for the influence of the commanding royal engineer on behalf of the widow who was left with seven children to support. The eldest of those children was said to be 15 years of age[1010] which was the approximate age of Patrick Kyle at that time.

Nothing is known of Kyle's youth although it may be surmised that he was educated at Merrickville and learned the blacksmith's trade from his father. He is said to have lived in the United States for a few years but otherwise his life was spent in Merrickville.[1011] He is first mentioned in 1869 by which time he was operating a blacksmith shop along with William Lisson: in February of that year the two of them joined forces with James Lingenfelter and John Willis to build carriages on Drummond Street, Merrickville under the name of "Lingenfelter and Kyle."[1012] Two years later Patrick Kyle is described as an iron worker in a mill

and the owner of three town lots, a house, shop, warehouse and stable. By that time he had married an Irish girl named Margaret O'Hara who was ten years his junior; no children are listed at this time.[1013] In 1873 Kyle is described as a carriage trimmer -- evidently self-employed -- and was given a good credit rating for small lines.[1014] His residence was then at the north-east corner of St. Lawrence and Drummond Streets in a stuccoed one-and-a-half-storey stone house.[1015] Quite obviously Kyle was on the way up.

It is not known when Patrick Kyle made the transition from light to heavy industry although the Woodburn business directory of 1876 connects him with the Malleable Iron Works[1016] -- presumably the same enterprise founded by Robert Gwynne and Abel R. Ward, Jr. around 1868. In July of 1881 Kyle was in a position to buy the iron works property (now the eastern portion of the Alloy Foundry Company's property) from Mrs. Mary Merrick along with the water power privileges connected with it. In 1890 he also purchased the western portion of Mrs. Merrick's lands which gave him custody of the north shore sawmill and flour mill and other buildings along with complete control of the water flumes from the dam to his enterprises. Kyle also bought up portions of the north shore shorelines west of the highway to form another large block of land in 1893 and 1903[1017] but seemingly he did little or nothing with those lands except perhaps sell or lease lots for housing. (Parts of them had to be purchased by the Department of Railways and Canals for an extension wing to the Merrickville hydro dam in 1914.) Also for just a few years (1895-98) he was

the owner of the island gristmill but soon sold it to Alexander Mills.

Like most of his fellow industrialists Kyle took part in municipal politics serving on the village council in 1876, 1878 and 1881-84.[1018] He also played an active part in negotiations to bring the main line of the CPR through Merrickville in 1886.[1019] Most of his activities, however, were related directly to business. By 1880 he was a patron of the Lanark County Atlas and by about 1895 his iron works had been expanded to fill seven buildings. During the 1900s he advertised himself as a merchant dealing in carriage and saddlery hardware, making a specialty of tinsmiths' goods.[1020] Miss Belle Mills remembers him as a rather sullen-looking old man who seemed to be invariably at his home or at his plant.[1021]

Kyle remained active almost to the last. On 29 April 1911, however, he was suddenly seized by an "acute attack of indigestion" from which he never really rallied and a few days later he died on the morning of 4 May 1911 at the age of 73.[1022] He was buried in the Roman Catholic cemetery. Perhaps more than any other businessman in Merrickville he deserves to be considered a "self-made man."

Patrick Kyle was twice married. His first wife Margaret died in 1893 at the age of 45 and a daughter, Mary Regina in 1892 at the age of 19.[1023] His second wife Mary McMahon outlived him as did three sons, Edward J., William P. and Thomas G. and three daughters.[1024] His son Edward founded the first electric light

plant (q.v.) in Merrickville while William joined the electrical works in Almonte in 1899 before moving west to Edmonton. Thomas Kyle who eventually obtained possession of the Malleable Works only to go bankrupt in 1924 was a close friend of Judson Watchorn.[1026] All of the Kyle brothers appear to have left Merrickville by the early 1920s.

Roger Croft Percival *(1837-1912)*

Roger C. Percival, founder of the Percival Plow and Stove Company has been described as "one of the successful well known business men of Eastern Ontario."[1027] Like his predecessors Messrs. Magee and Pearson he was born on a farm; in Percival's case about three miles east of Burritt's Rapids. At one point in time so many members of his family lived in that area that it was known as the Percival Settlement.[1028] Roger C. Percival was born on 22 July 1837 and is said to have engaged in farming until he was 21.[1029] It seems he periodically visited Merrickville, met Messrs. Magee and Pearson and became interested in manufacturing farm machinery. Pearson apparently suggested that Percival become a sales agent for the Magee and Pearson firm and it is said that Percival agreed and worked for the plow and stove works for a number of years.[1030] Later on he opened a small foundry of his own in Kemptville and after three years sold it and moved to Pembroke where he opened another foundry that specialized in making stumping machines.[1031] Both operations were evidently quite successful.

A turning point came in late 1887 when Roger Percival learned that the Magee and Pearson works in Merrickville were for sale. Immediately he hurried south, came to terms with William Pearson and the heirs of W. H. Magee and bought the enterprise. He then sold his plant in Pembroke to the Delahay brothers who expanded the works and became prominent manufacturers in Pembroke.

Percival did the same in Merrickville. As the Brockville Evening Recorder put it in 1912,

> By his energy and enterprise he [Percival] extended and enlarged what already was an old established business, and by his sterling honesty and upright dealing he won the entire confidence of the buying public. The name of R. C. Percival soon became most favourably known throughout Eastern Canada, and the Percival plows and stoves attained a popularity that still makes them household words.[1033]

In 1889 Percival also bought two house lots from William Pearson on Main Street East, Merrickville, just east of Elgin Street and proceeded to erect a large red brick Victorian house with elaborate panelled rooms and fireplaces: it now belongs to Inara Jackson.[1034]

Roger C. Percival apparently had barely started with his new venture when he suffered what was believed to be a heart attack. Consequently he was forced to hand over the business to his 18-year-old son Harvey (q.v.). However, the father soon recovered

and afterwards both Percivals ran the firm jointly.[1035] Around 1895 it seems the elder Percival retired and sold the enterprise to Harvey and thereafter lived a quiet leisurely life, sometimes spending his summers at Brockville, Caledonia Springs or the Maritimes with his wife.[1036] In 1906 at the age of 69 Roger Percival was induced to come out of retirement and join the newly-formed Percival Plow and Stove Company Limited as vice-president and worse, to invest money in it. As is explained elsewhere the firm went bankrupt under its new management although mercifully Mr. Percival himself did not live to witness the final collapse. In January 1912 he suffered a paralytic stroke which affected his right side and vocal cords and about three weeks later he died at his home on the evening of 6 February 1912 at the age of 75.[1037] He was buried at Merrickville Union Cemetery.

Roger C. Percival was a prominent Methodist and an ardent Conservative.[1038] It was he who applied successfully to the Carnegie Foundation to obtain money for a pipe organ for the Merrickville Methodist Church (now the United): the Carnegies paid half the cost.[1039] Percival was married to Eliza Ann Holden probably of Merrickville who outlived him and died in 1924 at the age of 85. Besides his son Harvey (q.v.) he left a daughter, Jean who married J. B. Waddell of Toronto. A second daughter, Margaret Adelaide died in 1896 at the age of 16.[1040] By all accounts the Percivals were highly-esteemed and respected by their neighbours in Merrickville.

Thomas Harvey Percival (1869-1941)

Thomas Harvey Percival, the only son of Roger C. Percival was born on 11 February 1869 near Kemptville.[1041] He spent his youth mostly in Pembroke before moving to Merrickville with his parents. Apparently he was still in school when his father's illness around 1887 forced Harvey to withdraw from his studies and take over the foundry business. The two managed it together until about 1895 when the father retired and sold it to his son. According to Mr. Roger S. Percival Harvey proved a better businessman than his father and paid off the entire cost of the business in just three years.[1042] He established his residence in the white house on East Main Street next to his father's.[1043]

In 1906 having raised the fortunes of his firm to their zenith Harvey Percival opted to retire and sold the Percival Plow and Stove Company to a joint-stock syndicate for a reputed $200,000.[1044] He then bought land out near Adanac, Saskatchewan and opened a ranch: as a rule he lived out West only during the summertimes and leased the property to a local couple. Sometimes he would purchase enough Ontario horses to fill a cattle car, then ship them out West, fatten them up and sell them off at auction in the fall for about three times what they cost him. He also shipped a carload of Percival machinery west every year which he would use for a season and then sell at a great profit.[1045] Frosts and wheat rust frequently ruined his crops yet one good wheat crop was sufficient to pay for six years of failure.[1046]

In 1912 Percival moved to Ottawa where he spent most of his remaining years on a family farm near Manotick. He died there on 12 February 1941 just a day after his seventy-second birthday and was buried at Merrickville. His wife Jane E. Stickney (1887-1931), originally from Prince Edward County predeceased him.[1048]

Harvey Percival was a member of the Independent Order of Oddfellows[1049] and of the Methodist church. Personally he was a quiet retiring unostentatious man, highly-regarded by his neighbours. We are told that he took devoted care of his mother in her old age.[1050] He was survived by two sons, Roger S. Percival who still lives in Merivale (Ottawa) and Edwin O. Percival who lived in Montreal.[1051]

The Modern Industrial Period in Merrickville (ca. 1945-1979)

Introduction

The modern period of Merrickville's industrial history covering approximately the past 34 years has little historical or antiquarian interest but is obviously essential to round off our investigations of the old industrial sites and to obtain a proper understanding of the scene in the village today.

Generally speaking the post-war period has produced two main industrial trends. One has been a modest revival of manufacturing in Merrickville which by 1945 had only one of its old 19th-century factories still in existence and very few new business enterprises to replace the older ones. Today there are three noteworthy industries within the village — not many certainly but enough to arrest the decline of the village. The other trend has been a continuing shift away from the old industrial core area beside the Rideau; a shift made possible by the extensive development of hydro-electricity in 1916 (q.v.): nonetheless two firms are still located in the old north shore industrial area. A third trend has been the declining importance of the railway which saw fit to demolish its station at Merrickville within recent memory: many firms now depend largely on trucks although both of the existing foundry companies still rely on the railway to bring in

bulk commodities such as sand or to ship products off to the cities.[1] Canal commercial traffic has, of course, completely disappeared as of the 1930s but the village is starting to benefit from the modern traffic in passing pleasure boats to which the present boat works (q.v.) on the north shore is an obvious witness.

With the sole exceptions of the Watchorn woollen mill which survived until 1954 and a short-lived felt works Merrickville has had no share in the Canadian clothing or textile trades during recent times. The food processing industries have been represented only by a few electric powered feedmills in South Merrickville plus a dog food factory in the old north shore gristmill building which lasted just a little while: none of these enterprises remain. During the Second World War three firms (all relating to machining and foundry work) are known to have been established in the old north shore industrial area (i.e., the former Kyle and Percival properties) of which only one survived the war but disappeared in 1948. The village has also had a number of small machine shops since the war, however, none of these outlasted their owners. Later during the 1960s two electroplating firms were established in Merrickville: both of these proved viable but — for different reasons — have had to move to other centres. A post-war foundry works established in the former Percival complex in 1948 lasted only about four years. On the other hand two new foundry companies — Grenville Castings Limited and the Alloy Foundry Company Limited (q.v.) have taken root since the war and appear to be prospering, especially the former.

It is difficult to correlate the modern industrial scene with population figures for the village. In 1944 Merrickville was listing amongst its commercial assets cheap electric power, a motorized fire brigade, a main line location on the CPR, high-class schools, a low rate of taxation and a beautiful setting on the Rideau River and Canal:[2] however, the census of 1941 assigned the village a population of just 794,[3] a drop of 22.46 per cent since 1901. Whether very much of this dwindling was a result of wartime exodus we cannot say. But it may be noted that the population of Merrickville increased a little — to 851 — by 1951[4] by which time the community had about five manufacturing firms in business (of which four were newcomers). By 1949 Merrickville had its first permanent water works established (for the southern half of the village at least!) and could also boast a branch of the Royal Bank of Canada, one hotel, several garages and service stations, Masonic and Orange Lodges, a branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, three tourist homes,[5] a school and four churches. In 1950 the assessable property was reckoned at $852,075.00.[6] Today the present population is said to be about 900 and slowly increasing.

With this inadequate backdrop in mind let us turn to a more detailed examination of Merrickville's recent industries starting with the food processing firms.

Merrickville: Electric Feedmills

Merrickville has had three electric powered feedmills over the years including two within recent times. None of these was located in the old industrial area and none is of great relevance to a study such as this. However, in the interests of completeness a few brief commentaries about them seem appropriate.

The oldest feedmill apparently occupied the site of the present Weedmark gas station on the east side of St. Lawrence Street in South Merrickville.[7] It was in a brick building which was converted into a mill by Al Connerty of Easton's Corners.[8] The feedmill was in business during the 1930s and it was eventually sold to Arthur Telford, a Montague farmer who ran it for a number of years.[9] Eventually though Telford demolished the building (apparently before 1938) and replaced it with the present service station which he operated during the Second World War. Telford afterwards became reeve of Merrickville while the gas station has had a succession of owners and is still in business today.[10]

The other more recent feedmill stood across the street at the site of the modern Howard's Hardware Store.[11] We are told that the mill was once operated by William Dixon, a farmer from the Perth area; later it went to Stanley (or Clifford) Knapp of Merrickville.[12] Later still -- for a short time -- it was operated by Bill Wylie with the aid of his son Newman. Trucks from Prescott Wholesale Limited would drive into town with grain which was weighed, dumped and ground into animal feed.[13]

Meanwhile around 1950 a farmers' co-operative proceeded to erect a cement block building across the street at the site of the modern post office; apparently for use as a storehouse. The co-operative also took over the feedmill from Wylie and soon moved 14 the operation over to the new building.[14] Eventually the venture failed and many farmers lost a lot of money including a reputed $150,000 spent on the new building.[15] The co-operative building was demolished and was replaced by the present post office building around 1973.[16]

A third feedmill also electric powered once stood near the modern medical centre on Wellington Street in South Merrickville. This one was operated by Arthur Lisson of town and survived until the 1950s.[17]

The above accounts obviously lacking in precision were derived entirely from local tradition since this writer felt too constrained by deadlines to investigate further. Additional data on the feedmills could easily be obtained.

Merrickville: Daly Dog Food Company (fl. 1950-1952)

This venture like the above-mentioned three was a food processing industry, also for the benefit of animals. Like the others it is known to this writer only through oral traditions which though imprecise are sufficient to give us the following picture.

The dog food plant was established by an American named Stan Daly who apparently resided near Smiths Falls. He rented the

former north shore gristmill (No. 7, q.v.), now the Alloy Foundry Company office from Frederick Dougall (who had been holding the building since 1930).[18] The exact date of the opening of the dogfood plant is uncertain although one Merrickville resident recalls that Daly first drove into town one day in a new gold-coloured 1950 Packard and caused quite a stir by so doing![19] Daly took up residence in the former Percival house on Main Street.

Meanwhile the dog food works was opened. It imported huge quantities of slaughterhouse waste and spread the putrid stench of boiling meat over a wide swath in North Merrickville especially in areas unlucky enough to be down wind of it[20] -- which usually included the Alloy Foundry works, the Belaire works and the Watchorn woollen mill. For some reason the plant was not very popular though seemingly its products passed inspection.

After just a few years Daly decided to move his operations out of Merrickville to an old cheese factory at Rosedale (east of town). Sometime later the Rosedale plant burned down.[21] Daly who is said to have been in debt at the time he left Merrickville but later (it seems) settled down in Smiths Falls.[22] All parties agree that the old gristmill building was sold to the Alloy Foundry Company not long afterwards (1958) though evidently it stood vacant for an interval: Mr. Harold Barton who joined the foundry firm in 1955 asserts quite positively that the Daly Dog Food Company had left the scene by that time.[23]

Until further information is found then we can only say that the dog food plant operated briefly around the period of 1950-52 in Merrickville.

Merrickville: Felt Works (fl. 1945)

Aside from the Watchorn woollen mill (already discussed in Chapter 3) the only industry even remotely connected with clothing or textiles in Merrickville during the modern period was a short-lived felt works. Again the only sources for this enterprise known to this writer are local traditions but the picture presented by them is fairly consistent.

The idea of a felt works was apparently conceived by the Reverend Reynaldo Armstrong who was minister at Merrickville United Church during the period of the Second World War.[24] Armstrong's idea was to make felt linings for boots and to provide employment for people in the village.[25] He attracted a number of supporters it seems and perhaps even incorporated a company so as to be able to issue shares.[26] He also succeeded in finding a building which proved to be the old Campbell tannery in North Merrickville (now the grinding shop for the Alloy Foundry Company).[27] At the time the venture was launched (which was apparently around the end of the war) the original Alloy Foundry Incorporated (q.v.) was scaling down its operations at the site and preparing to close shop and in any case it is not certain that the original foundry firm was making use of the former tannery. Thus the building was available for rent.

The felt works employed about six people including some women.[28] It was opened in the autumn probably of 1945.[29] The operations were apparently rather crude: the plant featured a couple of shapers for shaping felt into linings and insoles and mallets were used to pound them into shape. Volunteers such as Harold Barton sometimes came around in the evenings to stretch liners or make repairs.[30] The organization was evidently weak: employees came and went and frequently the shop would run out of felt and be left idle for a few days.[31] We are also told that the products were of poor quality and that the materials would not stand up to the wear and tear of regular use;[32] as a result sales were few. It is said too that store space was once rented in the Jakes Block to show and sell the products[33] but if so, only briefly.

It seems likely that the felt works failed to function for more than a number of months. On 1 November 1946 the building along with the nearby foundry was purchased by J. Arthur Heroux and his son[34] who immediately founded the present Alloy Foundry Company (q.v.). The old felt shop became the office and grinding shop for the new firm. As for Mr. Armstrong, he later left Merrickville for Ottawa where he is said to have opened the city's first "drive-in" church in the Britannia district. This scheme seems to have been far more successful than his ill-fated Merrickville felt works.[35]

Merrickville; Island Brass Works (fl. 1943)

This is another of those nebulous and short-lived operations in the village the existence of which is vouched for almost exclusively by long-time residents. About all that is known is that one Harold Miller ran a shop on the island during the 1940s to make or repair items of copper and brass.

A number of local residents still remember Harold Miller. Apparently he was a machinist by trade. He may have been the son of William Miller or Millar whose name appears intermittently in the records for the island foundry (q.v.).[36] Harold is said to have come to Merrickville from Ottawa in 1943 in company with Henry Tainsh, founder of the Merrickville Engineering Company Limited (q.v.) to work as a machinist though it is also alleged that he had been living in Merrickville at an earlier time.[37] The land patent books at Prescott furnish one more clue: they affirm that Harold Miller bought a piece of land on the island from A. Lincoln Mills for $300 on 28 October 1943[38] which might indicate the site of the old furniture factory (q.v.) which, however, seems to have been torn down by this time. Unfortunately there is no record of Miller's having sold his property to anyone else. One Merrickville resident alleges that Miller's brass shop was in a shed behind the gas station on the island[39] (see Island Electroplating Works); which sounds like the east wing of the old island foundry building. One difficulty, however, interferes with this theory: the old foundry building belonged to the

Watchorn Company during this period (and was being used as their machine shop at the time) and consequently it was never available for the Mills family to sell. There is no record that the Watchorns ever sublet their shop to Harold Miller. More likely Miller purchased or erected a small shed of his own a little farther east.

It is not known how long Miller ran his brass works though it cannot have been long: some older residents have no recollection of a brass shop on the island at any time. Within a few years he seems definitely to have left the island and set up a new shop on the north shore in the former Kyle electric power station.[40] (See North Shore Machine Shop.) Also unclear is how Miller managed to combine his brass shop with working for Henry Tainsh. On the other hand we are informed that Miller's brass works could fashion or repair all sorts of copper and brass items: after the fire in the United Church building he repaired or replaced the lights and is also said to have donated two lamps to the village community centre.[41]

However, by 1946 — if not earlier — Harold Miller seems to have transferred his operations to the north shore where he opened a machine shop next to the modern Alloy Foundry Company office.

Merrickville; North Shore Machine Shop

Harold Miller's new machine shop according to local residents was in the old stone building beside the river appendaged to the east

end of the former north shore gristmill.[42] As noted previously this is a one-and-a-half-storey limestone building about 42 feet by 30 feet with a medium-pitched gabled roof.[43] It seems to have been a tannery (q.v.) at one time and later housed E. J. Kyle's electric power dynamo (q.v.). Various successive owners held it along with the gristmill until it became the property of Frederick Dougall (q.v.) in 1930.[44] Harold Miller must have rented the premises from Dougall: Mr. Heroux believes he was occupying it as early as 1943.[45]

Of the actual machine shop little is known except that Miller used it to repair all sorts of appliances and public utilities including pumps.[46] Probably it was only a part-time operation for the proprietor who seems to have worked for Tainsh until 1948: in later years Miller sometimes did various jobs at Grenville Castings Limited (q.v.).[47]

Miller's stay in the former electric plant was also brief. Perhaps during the 1940s he transferred to new quarters further up the street in an old stone building that had once served as an icehouse.[48] According to Mr. Heroux Miller raised the roof level on this house and carried on with the machine shop until fairly recently.[49] The old building, of course, is now the Alloy Foundry Company's carpentry shop.

Harold Miller died at his home on Brock Street, Merrickville around 1974 and was buried at the Union Cemetery.[50] He seems to have been a rather retiring man, somewhat abrupt in manner though well-thought-of in the community. He had at least three sons and

two daughters[51] some of whom could doubtless provide more detailed information about their father and his shops in Merrickville.

It might be remarked in passing that still another machine shop was operated in North Merrickville by Donald Dougall, a brother of Frederick, from about 1942 to 1972 in a large shed now on the property of his widow Mrs. Violet Dougall.[52] The building plus the lathes and other equipment along with a truck came from the railway quarry near Merrickville run by Harry Falconer McLean, the dynamic millionaire-contractor and philanthropist and were given away free to Dougall, an employee at the quarry thanks to the generosity of McLean once the operations ceased.[53] Dougall then set up his own shop adjacent to Grenville Castings Limited and did repairs and improvisations for local people until the autumn of 1972, several months before his death in 1973.[54]

Foundries During the Modern Industrial Period

In addition to machine shops several new foundry operations were established in Merrickville during the Second World War and afterwards. Of these one was a product of wartime needs and disappeared with the end of the war. Two others survived only about four years each. Another two have been quite successful (one eminently so) and continue to uphold a tradition in the community that is now nearly 130 years old. We begin chronologically.

Merrickville: Eureka Alloys and Stainless Steels Limited (1938-1942)

This short-lived enterprise may be considered the first "modern" business to appear in Merrickville and in a real sense it was apparently the lineal antecedent of the two foundry works still in business in the village today; namely Grenville Castings Limited and the Alloy Foundry Company Limited. Indeed it is possible that neither of the two above-named firms would ever have come into existence at Merrickville had it not been for the Eureka company: though Eureka itself proved a mere "flash in the pan" it may have helped launch the careers of Mr. C. S. Dinsmore and Mr. J. A. Héroux and bring them to Merrickville. Both these men went on to establish successful businesses of their own.

Eureka Alloys and Stainless Steels first appears in the records on 29 December 1938; on which date it purchased the major portion of the old Percival works from the Percival Plow and Metal Works Limited.[55] Circumstantial evidence plus the fact that the property was "sold" for $1.00[56] suggest that the Eureka company like the metals company was the brainchild of Professor Herschel E. Reilly and a Swiss metallurgist named Maurice Strittmatter.

What seems to have happened was this: Professor Reilly, a member of the physics department at McGill University and also the owner of the old Percival properties of North Merrickville (including the former Kyle foundry buildings, q.v.) apparently met Strittmatter shortly before the outbreak of war or shortly

afterwards.[57] Strittmatter claimed to have developed a new technique in his native Switzerland for making high alloy stainless steels directly from iron ore without any need for smelting.[58] His ideas seemed to be worth a gamble and it would appear that he and Reilly incorporated the Eureka company to try them out. Hence the "sale" by the Percival Metals Company which does not appear to have been very active at the time. The above reconstruction of events — which is derived entirely from oral traditions — may be partly erroneous, however: Strittmatter may not have become involved until the mid-1940s in which case he would have played no part in the founding of Eureka — although the company's official name suggests otherwise.

Nothing else is formally known about the Eureka enterprise except that it apparently worked out a partnership with the Pan American Steels and Alloys Company Limited before 1942;[59] which may mean that it received some financial backing from Pan American Steels. On 28 September 1942, however, the Eureka company nominally "sold" its holdings back to the Percival Plow and Metals Company — for $1.00[60] — and disappears from the records. The following year Strittmatter and Reilly apparently established connections with Héroux Industries Limited of Longueil, Quebec which founded the original Alloy Foundry Company at Merrickville in 1943.

Merrickville: Alloy Foundry Incorporated (1943-1945)

The firm of Alloy Foundry Incorporated was set up as a wartime subsidiary of Héroux Industries Limited of Longueil, Quebec and Héroux Machine Parts of Montreal.[61] Officially the firm lasted until 1952[62] although in fact the operation was closed down at the end of the war. According to Mr. Arthur Heroux of Merrickville the two parent companies had contracts with the Department of National Defence to manufacture equipment for the Royal Canadian Navy including asdics or submarine detection gear. These called for brass castings and apparently neither of the parent companies had a foundry.[63] In wartime all existing foundries were working to capacity and the Montreal firms were continually falling behind because they could never be sure of getting the castings they ordered from local foundries.[64] As a result the HSroux brothers, Eugene and Arthur began looking for a foundry of their own. After some scouting around and apparently some discussions with Professor Reilly who knew them they settled on Merrickville where they evidently rented the old (unused?) gristmill building (No. 7, q.v.) which was still owned by Frederick Dougall who also possessed the last remaining local sawmill (q.v.).[65] Reilly and Strittmatter seem to have been involved in the project until Reilly's sudden death in Montreal around May of 1943:[66] it is said that Eugene Héroux afterwards bought out the professor's share of the enterprise.[67] A machine shop was set up in the old gristmill building with at least four or five lathes

for turning out asdics and other equipment.[68] There was also a stainless steel department under Strittmatter's direction:[69] evidently the Héroux firms had agreed to provide him with facilities and money for his experiments.

According to one Merrickville resident who worked under him Strittmatter was a good boss.[70] About five or six men were employed at the works (which was fenced off during the war) while experimenting went on for most of a year.[71] Mr. Clarence S. Dinsmore was hired in October 1943 to run the office, watch operations and (if possible) find out Strittmatter's secret.[72] Essentially Strittmatter's idea was to produce stainless steel by a form of "thermit" welding process using lathed aluminum grindings, glycerine and burned iron ore combined with melted salt. A "Y"-shaped valve was improvised from an old automobile engine.[73] One day during 1944 a demonstration was arranged and it is said that half the village turned out to watch. According to one eyewitness the process went off with a bang and seconds later molten steel ran down through the valve and collected in a ladle below; to be poured immediately into waiting sand moulds.[74] Despite the fanfare, however, the technique apparently never produced any satisfactory castings and Strittmatter was either dismissed or perhaps discretely left to do more research. He is said to have returned to Switzerland after the war but to have reappeared again in Merrickville for a short time afterwards.[75]

After this failure the company turned to making gray iron castings as well as brass and aluminum products. The employees

were given about three to four weeks to build a cupola for melting the iron: they managed it by digging up a bricked-in underground gasoline tank owned by Tom Scott, a Merrickville well driller and moving it from his home to the foundry where it was used as the case for a cupola.[76] It was mounted in the present foundry building about seven or eight feet away from the existing one today. In later years two or three new cupolas were built in succession to replace the original.[77]

The alloy works remained busy doing job work such as brass and aluminum aerial equipment and the like: these and the iron castings were usually shipped off to Montreal by rail.[78] However, by 1945 with the war obviously coming to an end the parent companies in Montreal, unwilling to carry on with an operation so far away sent orders to dismantle everything and close up shop.[79] In April 1945 Mr. Dinsmore withdrew from the venture and went on to found the Grenville Castings Company (q.v.).[80] It would appear that an interval passed in which nothing was happening at the property. Finally in 1946 Héroux Industries Limited put the foundry on the block in order to get rid of it and it was promptly acquired by J. Arthur Héroux in partnership with his son Arthur, Jr.[81] With this purchase begins the history of the modern Alloy Foundry Company Limited at Merrickville.

Merrickville: The Alloy Foundry Company Limited (1946-)

It would appear that the inception of the present Alloy Foundry Company occurred in the autumn of 1946 although the original name of "Alloy Foundry Incorporated" remained in use until the end of 1952.[82] The venture had to be "started from scratch." Arthur W. Heroux, Jr. had just left the Navy and one evening his father J. Arthur Héroux suggested going into the foundry business. The son was a trifle dubious at first since neither of them knew much about it but Mr. HSroux, Sr. (who was an accountant by training) felt he could manage anything involving figures and the son agreed to "take a whack at it."[83] On 1 November 1946 they purchased part of the Kyle property (including the old foundry building and the former tannery).[84] The firm is still there today though it has since expanded its holdings considerably. Some difficulties apparently arose respecting the rights of the Reilly estate to the property but on 20 January 1948 the professor's widow Margaret Frances Reilly, having gained clear title to the assets of the former Percival Plow and Metals Company sold her claim to part of the site of the foundry firm for $6,000.[85] In November of 1949 the property and buildings were being assessed at $5,000.[86]

To set the scene as it was in 1947 it appears that the foundry company had acquired essentially the same lands as had comprised Patrick Kyle's Malleable Iron Works (q.v.) from the 1880-1914 era. Most of the smaller wooden buildings from Kyle's day were now gone including the former japanning shop (q.v.), annealing shop (q.v.)

and the storage building as well as the old stone castings storage building (q.v.). (See Figure 6.) (It may be that a few of these structures survived until 1946 but were then dismantled.)[87] The sole remaining buildings in 1947 were the old tannery building (q.v.) and the former Kyle "finishing shop" (as rebuilt by the Percival company as a foundry in 1927).

The old tannery building (judging from photographs) had been altered very little since Kyle's day except that the wooden annex on the east end had been removed while two flimsy lean-tos had been added in its place; in addition a small wooden wing with a sloping roof had been added to the north face.[88] The foundry building meanwhile was still an impressive structure though it retained very little of its 19th-century character. The old stone walls had been levelled to a height a little higher than one storey (excepting the west wall which still rose to the second-storey level) and the gable sections of the end walls were now made of wood or sheet metal. The roof, however, rose to a height of perhaps 24 feet or more at the peak and was built of sheet metal in a lofty barn-like gambrel style.[89] In addition an "L"-shaped single-storey tar papered wing was now attached to the east end towards the present Ayling boat works (q.v.) while a rather small brick side wing with a sloping roof had been added along the south side perhaps to house a furnace. Another small wooden annex with a roof not much higher than ground level abutted the west end of the north wall.[90] The new owners moved into the foundry building

and presently into the old tannery building as well where the original office was located.[91]

The fledgling firm had more than the usual number of trials and tribulations. The spring run-off in 1947 proved alarmingly high and though the rampaging waters did not actually reach the buildings they swept away much of the filled-in shoreline apparently including the sites of some of the former Kyle buildings. Even the foundry building seemed endangered at one point.[92] After the flood waters receded the foundry company began bringing in tons of fill to replace the washed-out frontage of the property.[93]

This was not the worst. One Sunday night on 4 April 1948 another fire broke out in the foundry building starting from the cupola head and by the next day the big structure was in ruins with most of the roof destroyed and the equipment ruined including a brand-new sand cutting machine that had never been removed from its travelling crate. Only the old stone walls remained standing.[94] For the foundry company it was a paralysing blow: the building had been only partially insured and new building supplies were very hard to obtain so soon after the war.[95] The Hérouxs kept their staffs employed at rebuilding the foundry and hired a builder to mastermind the job. The old stone walls were lowered and phone calls were made to all sorts of building contractors and steel companies primarily to get new sheet steel for a roof. Nobody had enough but generally the various parties were sympathetic and helpful when apprised of the mishap and little by little small quantities of steel arrived.[96] Meanwhile a new cement

block south wing was added along the full length of the building (incorporating the site of the old brick wing which was removed) while to the east the old wall was demolished and the building extended considerably in that direction.[97] The job which had threatened to take several months was finished in five weeks.[98]

Today the foundry building is a great deal lower than it was with a gently-pitched sheet steel roof and a much larger surface area. Only the west wall still shows some of the stone masonry of the original building.[99] The company has since built a number of sheds adjacent to the north wall and largely buried them with fill along with much of the foundry walls themselves; in order to allow trucks to back up, dump their loads through hatches into the bins below and drive away again.[100] A small truck-loading dock about the width of two trucks has also been excavated at the east side of the building and set in cement.[101] Perhaps at the same time a new core room was added to the east end and the present sandblasting machine installed.

The Alloy Foundry works started off with a staff of about 25 men making iron castings.[102] According to a number of old-timers some early orders included gears and connecting rods for washing machines (made by J. H. Connor & Son of Ottawa), pallets for Henry Tainsh's cement block machines being manufactured next door and components for Cockshutt farm equipment, besides coat hooks, bottle openers to go on soft drink vending machines and even a few three-ton castings of which more later.[103]

Within a year the firm also developed a side line in casting aluminum; primarily because many customers seemed to want identical castings in both materials.[104] Combining the two operations under one roof posed problems, however; as for example, pit holes were sometimes unintentionally blown in castings as a result of running the two molten metals together. Partly for that reason and partly for lack of space the company bought the former gristmill building near the highway from Frederick H. Dougall on 29 August 1958 for $8,000; taking a mortgage of $5,900 from Dougall the same day.[105] Along with the ex-gristmill (which had previously been housing the Daly Dog Food plant, q.v.) came the former Kyle electric plant building (q.v.) and a block of land extending west to the highway. The Alloy Company transferred its aluminum works to the bottom floor of the former gristmill and turned the former power plant into a carpentry shop.[106] The main floor of the ex-gristmill became the new office for the company though part of it is used for storage including a number of antique stoves and the like, some of them Percivals![107] A small cinder block addition at the front of the gristmill evidently built by the Dougalls was removed by the foundry company in 1958.[108] Apparently the Hérouxs had trouble with the roof of their building which tended to collect (rather than shed) water but in recent years, after a number of ineffectual repairs the roof was rebuilt and an exit pipe installed to carry the run-off waters from the centre pipe to the outside river wall: today we are assured the roof no longer leaks![109]

In summary then we may state that the Alloy Foundry Company today has seven buildings; of which the old Kyle gristmill is now the administration building and aluminum foundry works, the former electric powerhouse is now the carpentry shop and centre for the restoration of period castings, the (rebuilt) Kyle-Percival foundry building is now the moulding shop and the former tannery now serves as a grinding, inspection and shipping shop.[110] In addition a low-roofed wooden sand storage shed has been constructed at the east end of the ex-gristmill partly on the site of the former "wooden storehouse" of the 1900-12 period (see Figure 6): we are told that the stone foundations of the defunct storehouse were still visible in 1948.[111] Finally two wooden storage sheds of little aesthetic or historic interest have been erected close to the water's edge west of the ex-tannery and facing the moulding shop. Tons of rubble, cinders and slag remnants have been added as fill to replace the eroded shoreline and to level off the upper terrace north of the foundry shop to create a parking lot; nowadays such waste products have to be hauled away to the dump.[112] The foundry building has received a number of additions over the years including a new cement block washroom wing on the south side added since 1955.[113] Mr. Arthur W. Heroux who is now president of the firm has plans to rearrange the works soon by enlarging the foundry building still further and transferring the aluminum foundry to a new section of the same while the carpentry shop is likewise scheduled to be moved into part of the grinding shop (the ex-tannery); in order to combine and centralize operations rather

than have them scattered amongst so many buildings.[114] Mr. Heroux is also contemplating using part of the main office building (the ex-gristmill) as a gallery for displaying some of his numerous old antique cast-iron stoves and plows many of which were made in the old Merrickville foundries of the past.[115]

As for the Alloy Foundry Company's present operations we may say that it currently employs about 30 men plus a small office staff. Two men are usually engaged at simple mechanical work such as machinery repairs while a handful more work in the grinding shop and the pattern department.[116] For specialized jobs requiring tinsmithing, electrical work or the like licensed tinsmiths, electricians or other professionals are brought in for the durations.[117] The foundry's raw materials include pig-iron, coke and moulding sands. The company uses about five tons of pig-iron per day or about 200 tons annually: most of this is trucked in from the Algoma Steel Company smelting works at Hamilton and Port Colborne though some comes from the United States by way of a local distributor, Canadian Foundry Supplies of Montreal. Large quantities of scrap metal are also purchased locally.[118] Coke was formerly obtained from the LaSalle Coke Company in Quebec which has since gone out of business: today it is usually trucked in from the United States about 30 tons at a time and over 100 tons per year.[119] The moulding sands, all pre-washed, dried and screened and with the requisite clays added are imported by rail from various American companies in New Jersey or adjacent regions with Canadian Foundry Supplies again acting as intermediary.[120]

Simplistically speaking the operations run as follows: a customer will send in patterns for castings to the foundry where moulds are made from the patterns; checking to be sure that there are no defects such as cracks or teeth missing from the gear.[121] Sand moulds are then made (one for each individual casting) with cores to fill any hollow chambers within the castings.[122] The moulds are packed tightly to withstand high temperatures. A lubricant such as graphite is used to coat moulds for iron castings to discourage sand from sticking to the castings.[123] Molten metal (iron heated to about 2600-2700°F or aluminum heated to about 1200°F) is then poured into the moulds. After they cool the castings are put in an automatic shot-blasting machine where they are rolled and pelted with shot pellets to rid them of sand impurities: formerly the castings were merely rolled which left some of the impurities still adhering.[124] The castings are then inspected for defects and the good ones packed away (usually in steel barrels) and shipped to the customer.[125] The Alloy Foundry works does no polishing or machining of castings except for a few very special orders. Each mould can be used only once but the sands can be reworked and used a number of times; in addition the same sands are usually applicable for both iron and aluminum though they may need different temperings with moisture (too much moisture could produce bubbles of steam as a casting is poured).[126] Iron remains the mainstay of the Alloy Foundry works with aluminum only as a side line: generally the iron castings contain about one-third pig-iron, one-third scrap metal and one-third excess from other castings.[127]

As a rule the Alloy Foundry Company makes small castings (usually less than 25 pounds) either in machineable gray iron, alloy gray iron, chilled iron or aluminum alloys in numbers ranging from one to 10,000. The foundry can also do match plate work for jolt squeeze machines but it is not really equipped to produce very large castings.[128] As Mr. Heroux put it his company is a "scavenger" in the trade making castings almost exclusively for other firms and accepting more or less whatever orders it can get.[129] At times it has taken on very large orders weighing up to 200-300 pounds: once in sheer desperation the foundry agreed to make some giant castings weighing three to four tons for the Department of Transport but it is not really mechanized sufficiently for such assignments. Besides such castings are a source of dread to the staffs in that they require careful engineering, much hard work and huge quantities of molten metal. (Normal "heat time" within the foundry is only about two hours in the middle of the day.) In short the Alloy Foundry Company does not try to compete with the giant automated foundries of Taiwan.[130]

At present the Heroux firm makes mostly valves and plugs for furnaces and fireplaces besides parts for washing machines and the like. Most customer companies are in the Montreal and Toronto areas though some castings find their way to the United States.[131] Mr. Heroux admitted that Merrickville is not a very suitable place for a foundry since there is no longer much demand for castings anywhere in the area and consequently other foundries located closer to the cities enjoy a competitive advantage: nonetheless

the Herouxs are too attached to Merrickville to consider moving elsewhere.[132]

Within the past few years the Alloy Foundry works has started to do a few "fun" jobs for reasons of aesthetics and nostalgia. The foreman suggested making a few artistic pieces in addition to regular work. Mr. Heroux discussed the idea with his son Ken and it was decided to make a few box stoves in a limited edition. The result was the "beaver" stove which went into production in 1977: it appears to be the only six-plate wood stove currently being made.[133] By "six-plate" it is meant that the stove follows an antique design by which the entire box falls apart if the top is removed. Such stoves are very easy to package and ship but for added practicality they are equipped with hidden tie rods on the inside which the originals never had. In keeping with authenticity there is no lid for the top. The "beavers" have boxes about 20 inches long and an ashtray in front. They take their name from a plaque embossed with a Canadian beaver forming the front and side panels of the box while the legs and feet are shaped like those of the national rodent. Some of these "modern antiques" have been displayed in museums.[134] Mr. Heroux plans to make about 100 of these stoves and then perhaps replace the beaver with a voyageur décor and sell a few more as "voyageurs."[135] The stoves are not advertised and are not really commercially viable (partly because they are handmade and therefore a little expensive) but they form an enjoyable side line and there is no lack of customers.[136]

The foundry has also produced a number of other rather exotic items for various museums and historic sites such as cannon balls, gun carriages and sometimes even small cannon barrels: some of which were cast for the reconstruction of Old Fort Wellington at Prescott.[137] Thus twice in its history Merrickville has come to the aid of Fort Wellington: it will be recalled that William Merrick, Sr. (q.v.) and numerous other Merrickville residents were instrumental in building and garrisoning the original defences at Fort Wellington in 1812.

At the present time the Alloy Foundry Company employs about the same number of hands as it always has but thanks to increasing automation it now produces roughly three times as many castings as it did in the 1940s.[138] (To all appearances relations between the staff and management seem to be very friendly.) The late J. Arthur Héroux (1893-1962) was the first president of the firm until his death in the spring of 1962; his son Arthur W. Heroux (born in 1924), hitherto plant manager succeeded him. Mr. Ken Heroux is now plant manager and seems likely to follow his father in about four or five years' time.[139] The firm has become one of the mainstays of Merrickville's economy and it is to be hoped that it will continue in that role for many years to come.

Merrickville: Grenville Castings Limited *(1945-)*

This firm, also founded right at the end of the Second World War has proved about the most adaptable and successful of all the

recent enterprises in Merrickville. From its rather modest beginnings in 1945 it has expanded steadily and rapidly until today it is the largest employer in the community (except perhaps for the Hill Top Nursing Home). Its entire history reads as almost an unswerving success story.

Grenville Castings Limited is located in North Merrickville at the north end of Mill Street near the railway tracks, well away from the old industrial area near the canal. Formerly it occupied an old creamery building (once a Methodist church) and a school-house: today it still owns these and other buildings but no longer uses them having moved into spacious new quarters. The old buildings have all been sublet to other parties in recent times.[140]

The company was founded in the spring of 1945 by Clarence S. ("Dinny") Dinsmore and two colleagues, Roy Pevere and Mike Courrier all of whom had been employed previously at the original Alloy Foundry Incorporated works (q.v.).[141] C. S. Dinsmore was born in 1919. He left the University of Toronto in 1941 and worked for the Federal Aircraft Company at Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal for two years during the war. Then in October of 1943 he came to manage the office of the Alloy Foundry works at Merrickville where he remained until April 1945.[142] Roy Pevere was a moulder born and raised at Merrickville; he received his training with the Percival Plow and Stove Company (q.v.) but also worked in Smiths Falls and Carleton Place before returning to join the Alloy works in 1944. Mike Courrier was a core-maker from Smiths Falls who likewise joined the Alloy company in 1944.[143] As the original Alloy works

wound down its operations in 1945 the above trio left and decided to open their own foundry works; noting what effects the closing of the old foundry would have on the depressed economy of Merrickville.[144]

Grenville Castings started out making gray iron castings in the old creamery building (see Cheese Factory) mostly for the Frost and Wood Company of Smiths Falls which was then overloaded with work orders. When the Frost and Wood works were closed in 1955 Grenville Castings sold some castings to the parent company Cockshutt Plow Limited of Brantford.[145] At an early date the Grenville firm bought two sheds; one from the United Church at Burritt's Rapids and the second from a Mr. Thomas of Merrickville and moved them to the foundry site as annexes: the former of these was demolished some years ago and the latter was pulled down in the summer of 1978.[146]

In 1946 the company was ready for some more substantial expansion. During the spring a concrete block addition about 35 feet by 85 feet was appendaged to the main building.[147] The firm was then making mostly farm implement castings plus motor frames for the Commonwealth Electric Company Limited. Gradually additional customers were found.[148] In 1947 James Ogilvie formerly with the Percival Plow and Stove Company joined Grenville Castings as a partner:[149] it was he (with a few backers) who set up the short-lived Merrickville Plow Company (1947-49) in the present Alloy Foundry Company office to manufacture some old

Percival walking plows. (That brief episode is described under the Percival Plow and Stove Company Limited, q.v.)

Mr. Ogilvie's plow company shut down in 1949. By that time Grenville Castings was also in difficulty. The iron casting business was collapsing on account of economic conditions and the company was obliged to investigate other possibilities such as making magnesium castings.[150] Roy Pevere had contacts with such firms as Dominion Magnesium Limited and Light Alloys Limited of Renfrew: the former company had been set up by a consortium of mining companies to exploit a new process of refining magnesium from dolomite ores early in the war while the latter was then making magnesium castings for Orenda aircraft engines at Renfew. Taking a few cues Grenville Castings soon came up with a new product: magnesium textile beams or spools for coiling up rayon tire cord then being manufactured by Cortaulds Company Limited of Cornwall, Ontario. The new light magnesium beams could each take between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds of the tire cord and soon proved superior to the old wooden spools which often splintered under the strain.[151] Soon Grenville was casting and machining the new beams, sometimes 500 at a time and shipping them off to Cornwall. Before long other companies were placing orders for them as well.[152] During the 1950s Grenville started taking on other magnesium jobbing orders such as making anodes at its sand foundry (which were used for protecting steel pipe lines, hot water tanks, naval vessels and tankers from corrosion).[153] Business was booming.

Everything ran smoothly until the late 1950s. Then the Dupont Corporation developed a type of tire cord made of a new synthetic product called nylon. Before long nylon tire cord supplanted rayon just as later nylon would be supplanted by polyester.[154] Only aluminum spools were suitable for nylon and producing them required new and heavier machinery but the trends of the times demanded it and by the late 1950s Grenville Castings had added an aluminum division to its works. Soon aluminum casting completely supplanted magnesium:[155] in 1964 experiments were conducted with a low-pressure process using magnesium but there was little demand for the products and the magnesium division was dropped.[156]

In 1960 the company added a large wing to the east side of the old plant. Two years later as profits grew the new wing was expanded.[157] Finally in 1965 the present sheet steel plant was built more or less adjacently across the road close to the railway tracks partly on the former site of Frederick Dougall's sawmill (q.v.). The new plant, intended for making aluminum permanent mouldings was originally 80 feet by 120 feet resting on concrete flooring.[158] The sand foundry across the street continued to function until November of 1973 but by then business was dropping and running two operations was troublesome: the expense of maintaining all the extra equipment and overhead seemed to outweigh the benefits derived and consequently the old moulding shop was closed. Besides permanent moulding was easier.[159]

In 1978 the new Grenville plant was nearly doubled in size when another extension of 75 feet by 90 feet was added including

space for a new office 40 feet by 20 feet in size:[160] the main building is now (1979) 315 feet by 80 feet and vast new enlargements are planned in the immediate future.[161] On 1 June 1978 meanwhile the old cheese factory building was rented out to the Alcoholics' Rehabilitation group for a workshop while at the same time the second section was leased as a storehouse and shop for selling garage doors.[162]

At the present time Grenville Castings Limited makes such items as aluminum cookware, lighting accessories (for example, housings for traffic lights), some industrial castings and stove parts (for Selkirk Company Franklin stoves) as well as posts for aluminum bridge railings.[163] The metallic aluminum 100 per cent pure comes from the Alcan Corporation.[164] Most of the products made (except the bridge posts) have to be further refined and embellished by the customers although Grenville trims rough edges and files or grinds castings where necessary: the firm also heat-treats products for ductility and the like.[165] According to Mr. Dinsmore Grenville Castings is now the largest installation for producing low-pressure aluminum ware of its kind in Canada.[166] The company, of course, also makes permanent mould aluminum castings. Products are shipped out by CP Rail Express.[167]

A few dry statistics will help illustrate the fortunes of the firm over the years. In 1945 (the first season) Grenville's sales came to about $75,000.[168] In 1950 when the iron business was declining sales fell to a mere $65,000 but by 1955 they were up to $142,000 and in 1960 they rose to $233,000. In 1965 sales

were up to $257,000 but by 1970 they had jumped to $515,000 and in 1973 to $575,000. Since then the climb has continued: to $623,000 in 1974, $714,000 in 1975, $715,000 in 1976, $874,000 in 1977 and $1,461,000 by the end of the fiscal year of 1978 ending in June. The Messrs. Dinsmore confidently predict sales of $2,200,000 by June of 1979.[169]

As of 1979 Mr. Clarence S. Dinsmore is still president of Grenville Castings Limited in which he held a controlling interest until 1975 when he sold a majority of shares to his son Jim.[170] Jim Dinsmore is vice-president and general manager: born in 1946 he officially joined the company in 1965 and now holds a controlling interest.[171] Mr. Ralph Ogilvie, son of James who joined the firm in 1961 is now secretary-treasurer. The company now employs about 40 to 45 men, more than any other in Merrickville.[172]

In 1965 at the recommendation of Jim Dinsmore the company inaugurated a profit-sharing scheme with its employees. The result has been a stable reliable work force with a strong loyalty to the firm. General meetings with all the staff are held once a month wherein problems are aired and resolutions made. As a consequence staff morale is said to be high and long-time employees seldom have to be laid off during slack intervals.[173]

Thanks to able management, a steady labour force and the necessary adaptability to keep abreast of the times with products that remain in regular demand Grenville Castings Limited has emerged as the leading manufacturing concern in Merrickville and seems likely to remain so for a long time to come.

Merrickville Engineering Company Limited (1943-1946)

This rather short-lived but once promising enterprise was established in the old Percival Plow and Stove Company buildings where it operated for nearly five years.

Its founder was a Scottish inventor and engineer named Henry Tainsh who is said to have visited Merrickville for the first time around 1938.[174] During the war Mr. Tainsh obtained a sizeable contract to build davits and winches for naval vessels[175] and on 6 October 1943 he purchased most of the holdings of the defunct Percival Plow and Metal Works Limited (presumably from the heirs of Professor Herschel Reilly) for $7,000:[176] this included the large stone building complex of the former Percival works plus one or two remaining wooden sheds that had escaped demolition. (Tainsh also acquired most of the north shore lands east as far as the railway tracks.)[177] It is not known why he chose to locate his enterprise in Merrickville but a reasonable guess would be simply availability of premises: factories cannot afford to be left vacant and unproductive during wartime. Next Mr. Tainsh incorporated the Merrickville Engineering Company Limited to which he sold his above purchase for $1.00 just 11 days later.[178] He then outfitted the old Percival buildings as a machine shop with lathes, shapers, planers and drills and according to the late Dr. Newman he had to make substantial changes in the buildings to install all this equipment.[179] A former employee recalls that the shop was quite up to date and that it also featured a large new washroom on the second

floor but there was no foundry. Little remained of the old Percival equipment by this time.[180]

The Engineering Company employed about 12 to 15 men including draftsman Walter Lawless and machinist Harold Miller (who eventually opened his own shop): both came to Merrickville with Tainsh apparently from Ottawa.[181] Tainsh was it seems quite security-conscious and kept the works restricted during the war;[182] partly because he was working on some new inventions. In addition to producing items for warships Tainsh launched another project intended to revolutionize the steering of ships in which he invested a lot of money.[183] The Navy, however, was dissatisfied with his model and wanted a number of changes made; Tainsh refused to comply and the scheme was scrapped to his own considerable loss.[184]

As the wartime contracts expired Tainsh turned to some new ideas and developed a machine to simplify and cheapen the costs of making waterproof cement blocks. According to Mr. Harold Barton who helped build them the machines stood about six to seven feet high and were about four feet wide.[185] The procedure was to pour a suitable mixture of wet cement into the device and pull a lever which allowed the load to slide down into a mould. There was a gauge on the outside of the machine and by pulling another lever pressure was brought to bear, squeezing out most of the water. The device used immense oil pressure like a jack. In just a moment or so the lever would be relaxed and instantly one had two cement building blocks.[186] They always emerged "wet" but hard and after being set out for several hours were ready for use. The

operator could make blocks as fast as he could pour in the cement and activate the levers. Tainsh allowed Mr. Barton and two other employees to use the machines in their off hours to make as many blocks as they wanted and thus Barton obtained materials for his new house at the cost of only the cement.[187]

Despite the promise shown by the cement block machines they did not sell very well. Apparently they were simply too costly compared to other methods available[188] and furthermore though they could produce decorative blocks with various design patterns on the front sides they could not make glazed brick which was gaining in favour.[189] As a result the Tainsh works lost money and by September 1948 the Merrickville Engineering Company Limited was bankrupt. The Supreme Court assigned its assets to the Canadian Credit Men's Trust Association Limited on 4 September 1948[190] and the following November the property was sold to S. Leonard Belaire of Montreal for $7,000.[191] Henry Tainsh retired to his home in Merrickville (the former Watchorn residence, now an alcoholics' halfway house) where he spent his last years. Around 1952 he took ill and died.[192] By all accounts he was an accomplished inventor and a good employer and one feels that his enterprise deserved more fortunate results.

Merrickville: Belaire Works (1948-1952?)

The Belaire works perhaps known as "Merrickville Engineers" or "Merrickville Engineering" was the short-lived enterprise that

replaced the Tainsh works in the former Percival complex. Little has hitherto come to light on this firm. The land patent books confirm that S. Leonard Belaire of Montreal bought all the Tainsh property on 4 September 1948.[193] Long-time residents agree that the Belaire works imported pig-iron and coal to manufacture steel balls of various sizes for the mining industry. The white steel balls were used specifically to crush, break-up and concentrate ore in silos: to make them Mr. Belaire had to re-establish the foundry in the old Percival works.[194] The products were apparently trucked away and it is said that many were sold to the Noranda Mining Corporation of Quebec.[195] Dalton Crowe of Ottawa was hired to act as foreman at the works.[196]

Little more is known about the affairs of this firm except that on 7 November 1949 the assessment on its buildings was reduced to $7,500.[197] Leonard Belaire himself has been described as an effusive talker and somewhat eccentric in a few ways: once it seems he confided to his neighbour Mr. Héroux of the Alloy Foundry works (q.v.) that he was convinced that people were stealing his (Belaire's) iron supplies and that he was planning to erect an expensive fence all around his property to keep them out![198]

The Belaire works did not last long. It may have been during this period that the roof on the central section of the old Percival complex collapsed as we find a mechanics lien being taken against Mr. Belaire by one William A. Bond on 19 May 1952 for $3,607.78[199] -- which would suggest that a major piece of reconstruction or other work had just been performed by Bond for

which Belaire was unable to pay. Action was taken by Bond on 16 July 1952, this time to recover the amount of $3,621.78.[200] It is not known at present how the matter was resolved except that the lien was apparently discharged by 30 April 1959.[201] Leonard Belaire died before the spring of 1954 as there is a reference to his estate on 31 April of that year.[202] As of 27 February 1959 the property went to W. Irving Belaire and his wife for $5,000.[203] They in turn sold it to William and Nora Watson of Manotick for $4,500 on 15 June 1960[204] and the site entered upon its modern function as a marina and boat works (g.v.). From the foregoing transactions we may conclude tentatively that the Belaire works went out of business either in 1952 or 1953 and that they were never revived. By the time the Watsons acquired the property there was little of any value left inside it. Even the old Percival bell tower -- which was still in situ as late as 1947[205] -- was gone now, presumably sold for whatever it would bring. So ended the last foundry works on the old Percival property at Merrickville.

Merrickville: Boat Works (1960-)

This present enterprise which succeeded the Belaire works at the site (and the main building) of the former Percival Plow and Stove Company (q.v.) was founded in 1965 by Mr. Peter Ayling of Arnprior and his partner Dick Whiting.[206] In one sense, however, its beginnings go back to 1960 with the arrival of William D. Watson.

William D. Watson was (and is) a designer and developer orignally from Manotick, Ontario. He first visited Merrickville on a boat trip in the summer of 1960 and was struck by the quaint old-fashioned charm of the village with its numerous old buildings and mills and especially the blockhouse which was then badly in need of restoration. Like many others before and afterwards Watson became fascinated with Merrickville[207] and the following autumn on 26 October 1960 he bought the old Percival Company property (in the name of his wife Nora) from the heirs of Leonard Belaire for $4,500.[208] He also bought the vacant land east of the Percival site over towards the railway tracks and began developing a marina for selling gasoline and servicing and storing boats.[209] This move perhaps marked the beginnings of a substantial tourist industry in Merrickville as people who were attracted to the marina were also sometimes disposed to pause and do some shopping in town. Watson opened a gas pump and adapted parts of the property for storing boats.[210] He also went to the United States to copy the design of a travel lift for hoisting boats in and out of the water; returning he then built his own lifting device which was apparently the first of its kind on the Rideau: it can handle boats weighing up to 20 tons and once lifted a 48-foot steel private cruiser.[211]

Meanwhile the ambitious developer was looking further afield. He formulated plans for a boatel above the locks and bought a number of riverside cabins with that end in mind but the costs of putting in a water and sewage system proved prohibitively expensive and consequently the plan had to be abandoned. The cabins

were sold back to their former owner.[212] Watson also purchased a number of old buildings in downtown Merrickville, notably the present "Merrick Hotel" and the Jakes Block: he still owns the Jakes Block which he has been restoring and subletting for stores and offices.[213] He also has plans for a subdivision with 119 single-family housing units and additional sites for town-housing in North Merrickville.[214]

All these extra "irons in the fire" tended to distract Watson's attention from the marina and on 20 May 1964 he opted to sell it to Peter Ayling and Associates for $19,000.[215] Mr. Ayling had hitherto been building boats in Arnprior since 1947 as a partner in the firm of Ayling and Ramage: after the death of Ramage in 1958 the business was continued under Ayling's name.[216] Then in 1964 a retired Air Force officer from Ottawa, Dick Whiting by name suggested forming a partnership to build boats elsewhere and the result was the formation of "Peter Ayling and Associates" who purchased the old Percival property in 1964.[217]

They found themselves in possession of the old stone Percival complex which was structurally sound but with many broken windows and no heat. Mr. Ayling and his partner spent about three weeks repairing the building; they also lived in it for about six months and installed an oil furnace.[218] Little remained of the old foundry equipment except an old hoist in the former moulding shop at the east end; most of which has since been taken down.[219] The old chimney at the east end was also dismantled but very few changes have been made to the old Percival building.[220] Today, however,

it is said that the roof on the west wing or main portion of the building is getting shaky and needs to be replaced.[221] Also during Mr. Ayling's occupation a section of one of the old underground water flumes running past the west end of the building collapsed when the roof logs rotted away and caved in: the present proprietors examined it before filling it up and noted that its side walls were lined with stone. The flume which ran towards the river was at least 150 feet in length.[222] A filled-in arch can still be discerned marking the original point of inflow for the water.[223]

Today the former Percival complex is used for building, maintaining and storing boats. The west wing (formerly the plow department) contains a woodworking shop on the first floor, an engine repair and upholstery shop on the second floor and a storage area on the third. The attic is not in use. The central section which is heated is used for building and repairing boats.[224] The boat shop has extensive woodworking machinery and welding equipment and has produced boats made of both wood and fibreglass; currently a steel vessel is underway.[225] The east end of the building (the former moulding shop) is now used to store boats.[226]

The Ayling works inherited one old wooden shed at the northeast corner of the property which was used for storing implements; this building collapsed about 1968 or 1969 and was not rebuilt.[227] Aside from this the firm removed no outbuildings. Two wooden sheds, however, have been added for storing boats: one which stands south of the stone complex takes nine boats while the other, a tri-deck

structure to the south-east can accommodate about 12 to 14 boats. (It was started around 1967 but has not yet been completed.)[228]

The Ayling works is not a marina but rather a true boat works which designs and builds pleasure boats for rent to vacationers.[229] As of 1979 it has a fleet of five vessels with a sixth under construction. All of these are about 25 to 30 feet long and quite spacious and are usually rented out at rates of about $400 to $500 per week: they might average $20,000 apiece if bought outright.[230] (So far Mr. Ayling and his staff have never conducted cruises or tours on the Rideau but hope eventually to take a day off for an outing!) Of course, the firm also services and stores private boats though it does not sell gasoline. The business started off with only Messrs. Ayling and Whiting; today it employs one part-time and three full-time boat builders two of whom were originally local residents.[231] As is usually the case with such ventures progress has been slow but steady and the firm remains solvent and owes no debts. A letterhead on company stationery sums up operations nicely:

Peter Ayling & Associates Ltd.

Builders of Yachts and Boats

Cruisers for Rent

Repairs, storage, moorings, wharfage, outboard motors, reinforced plastics, refinishing, marine engines, supplied, installed and serviced, designers.

Merrickville, Ontario

Merrickville: Island Electroplating Works (1965-1977)

The island electroplating works, the first such enterprise of its kind in Merrickville was established in 1965 in the former Watchorn woollen mill complex. Its owner was George Willner, a German-born electric technician who came to Canada about 1956 after having been in business in both Germany and Argentina.[232] He settled originally in Montreal where he went into business making furniture items such as high chairs, children's chairs, rocking chairs, kitchen tables and the like using welded and plated steel tubing and various plastics.[233]

Apparently Mr. Willner decided to do his own electroplating which required some expansion of his plant. Failing to secure a loan to finance this he had a number of conversations with Roland LeMire of Kemptville who pointed out that he (LeMire) had a large industrial building for sale at Merrickville. The sale was effected on 9 August 1965 for $7,000[234] and thus George Willner and his wife acquired the old wool and gristmill complex, the former island foundry (q.v.) and most of the island industrial area in Merrickville. (They were forced to mortgage it just a few months later.)[235]

Willner promptly began adapting the site for his own purposes. A reputed 5,000 or more truckloads of fill and gravel were dumped at the west end of the old woollen mill and the ruins of the old oatmeal mill (q.v.) in an effort to create a parking area level with the highway:[236] as a result the old oatmeal mill foundations

were all but completely buried. The same applied to the bottom storey of the old island gristmill (q.v.) appendaged to the west end of the woollen mill building. Over the west wing of the former island foundry and mill machine shop Willner erected a little green bungalow (now slated for removal) and installed gasoline pumps over the site of the old oatmeal mill and for several years he combined the selling of "Shell"-brand gasoline with his electroplating business.[237] The tanks, anodes and conveying equipment were apparently bought from various sources or made by Willner himself (rather than imported from Montreal) and installed in the bottom two stories of the former woollen mill and gristmill with the aid of one of Winner's sons. (The equipment now transferred to Smiths Falls is valued at $80,000 by its owner.)[238] Approximately four men or as many as seven during peak production periods were employed at the electroplating works which were adapted only for comparatively small items. Of course, hydro-electric power was utilized. In general the electroplating works catered to all sorts of manufacturing companies in the area of Smiths Falls, Ottawa and Brockville which would truck quantities of steel or other metallic components to the shop for plating.[239]

Mr. Willner presently expanded his enterprises to include a furniture and upholstery shop where again he used to bend and weld steel tubing to make the frames for kitchen chairs and other furniture adding plastic or upholstered parts where necessary.[240] He also had a wood carpentry shop which was housed in the former island foundry (q.v.) opposite the woollen mill. Approximately a dozen

hands including Winner's wife Maria were employed in the furniture shop.[241] The steel tubing was usually purchased from Barton Tubing or Tubular Steel in Toronto or Montreal and it too was mostly electroplated. Nearly all of the products were sold in Ottawa and Montreal.

The enterprise did not enjoy completely smooth sailing in Merrickville. Willner had troubles with the village council and perhaps other authorities as well over such matters as water rates, sewage disposal and water pollution.[243] His firm seems to have been operated on a "shoestring" basis and apparently he could spare little money to repair his buildings which had received practically no maintenance since the Watchorn Company locked its doors in 1954. We are told that the old woollen mill degenerated into an eyesore and that its sheet metal roof began rattling ominously in the wind.[244] Finally during the winter of 1968-69 or thereabouts, burdened by a heavy load of wet snow the old roof collapsed section by section.[245] Mr. Willner alleges that he tried to obtain a small business development loan from the banks and the government to repair the roof but (apparently) to no avail. The best he could do it seems was to pull down the top storey of the old gristmill wing of the building and put a flat roof on that portion of it.[246] Possibly it was at this time that the carpentry shop was established in the former foundry building since that at least still had a roof. The deterioration of the ancient woollen mill accelerated rapidly perhaps speeded by the chemicals used in the electroplating process.

As the condition of the property worsened it became inevitable that the electroplating works would have to find new quarters. As early as 1974 the Federal Government's Department of Indian and Northern Affairs became interested in acquiring the site for tourist, historical and aesthetic reasons[247] but negotiations with the owner proved tedious and unproductive for several years. Only on 19 October 1977 was an agreement finally hammered out by which the Winners consented to sell all of their island holdings to the government for $100,000.[248] Mr. Willner managed to buy an unused industrial building near the CPR station in Smiths Falls for about $36,000 and claims it cost him about $18,000 to transfer all his equipment to the new location plus more to adapt the new building for his automatic conveying equipment.[249] His other ambition at present is to re-establish his gas station near his new residence between Smiths Falls and Merrickville but here again he complains of "red tape" that is paralysing his plans.[250]

At the present time Parks Canada holds the entire island industrial area (except for the property owned by Ontario Hydro) and the plan is to landscape the site and develop an interpretative centre for illustrating the general industrial history of the Rideau corridor and of Merrickville in particular. Unfortunately the purchase came too late to allow for using the historic old woollen mill in this role since that building is now beyond restoration except at an astronomical cost. It is to be hoped, however, that portions of the 130-year-old structure and even the older gristmill can be "stabilized" into a picturesque and attractive

ruin that will continue to remind Canadians of the lengthy and varied roles of industries at Merrickville over close to two centuries past.

Merrickville; Roger's Plating Limited (1967-1973)

Merrickville was also host to another electroplating firm for a brief period and though not located in the old industrial area it seems appropriate to call attention to its existence.

This enterprise was established in the old Aaron Merrick block in South Merrickville at the south-west corner of Main and St. Lawrence Streets. It was founded in September 1967 by two French-Canadian gentlemen, Roger Lacroix of Montreal and his partner Joe Carrierre who bought the above building and moved in with their equipment. Mr. Lacroix was the plating expert while Carrierre made customer contacts.[251] Both men invested equally in the enterprise which was adapted for plating with either nickel or chrome: unlike the Willner works Roger's Plating could electroplate large items such as automobile bumpers.[252] About 12 people were employed at the shop. Mr. Lacroix at first spoke little English but like many others he developed a real fondness for Merrickville and continues to live there even though his business has had to migrate to Perth.[253]

The plating works did not remain in Merrickville for long. Mr. Lacroix predicted that the firm would soon grow and expand and indeed it has -- in Perth -- but apparently the enterprise

received scant encouragement from the Merrickville council which is said to have been dominated at that time by conservatives who disliked change of any kind. The partners needed water supplies and sewage arrangements and seemingly the council hedged repeatedly about providing them;[254] also the building is said to have proved too small.[255] After much wrangling and mounting complaints from customers Carrierre became impatient and finally in 1973 the company moved to Perth[256] where it evidently employs about 32 hands and has diversified its activities to include manufacturing, especially various types of wire stands for displaying record albums and wire dividers for filing cabinets. It sells today from coast to coast and also in the United States and sales in a single year have topped $500,000.[257] Mr. Carrierre sold out his share of the business in 1975.[258]

As for the old Aaron Merrick block this imposing building has been sold to Mr. James Milne of Merrickville. Today it remains vacant and in need of substantial repairs due to the effects of acids from electroplating operations on the mortar.[259] It is to be hoped that the repairs will be forthcoming and that the old building which was the first truly "urban" edifice to be erected in town can be put back into active and regular use.

Conclusion

By way of summary we can only repeat that Merrickville during the war and the post-war period has seen the appearance of about 15 new manufacturing enterprises of which at least nine related closely

to the machining or founding of metals such as brass, iron and aluminum. Only three of these concerns -- Grenville Castings, the Alloy Foundry works and the Ayling boat works -- have both survived and remained in Merrickville and collectively employ about 80 people; the other enterprises either proved abortive or moved away to other centres.

Today Merrickville -- which lies at the outermost rim of reasonable commuting distance from Ottawa -- seems to be turning into a dormitory community for city-weary workers in the national capital. Whether this is to be its fate or whether the village is to discover a new role for itself by taking advantage of its quaint picturesque atmosphere and old-fashioned charm (part of which is endangered by decay and the threat of demolition) -- or best of all, whether all three elements (industrial, residential and historical) can be fused together to form a harmonious whole -- all these are questions that only the future can answer. Of late there have been several hopeful signs that such a fusion is possible. The future, however, is rushing towards Merrickville at a rapid pace and the past is in danger of crumbling away or vanishing into oblivion. The decision belongs to the present.

Epilogue: The Surviving Industrial Buildings of Merrickville Today

Now that we have reviewed the evidence on hand for industries past and present in Merrickville perhaps it would be best to conclude with a few general commentaries on the visible industrial legacy that survives in the village today.

The foregoing study has unearthed approximately 58 industrial enterprises in Merrickville between 1793 and 1979. Of these about 17 are known to have existed on the island and are presumed to have occupied 18 buildings of which only four still survive; two more or less in a state of ruin. About 33 enterprises are known from North Merrickville and apparently used 46 buildings mostly near the river. Eleven old north shore building still exist including eight beside the Rideau although only four are of much architectural or antiquarian interest. (Traces of other missing structures still remain.) The balance of the enterprises were located in South Merrickville for the most part though the sites of a few have not been determined as yet.

Island Industrial Buildings

Island Gristmill (1839-)

The oldest surviving industrial edifice in the village is the old island gristmill (No. 1, q.v.) which as we have seen appears to date from 1839. Summarizing briefly we may repeat here that the gristmill was apparently built by William Merrick, Jr. who sold it to Hiram Easton in 1858. Easton made few or no changes to the building. In 1884 it was sold to Roderick Easton but ten years later the property was forfeited to George Byron Magee who had inherited a mortgage on it. In 1895 Magee sold it to Patrick Kyle who largely removed the machinery in 1898 and then sold the balance to Alex and A. L. Mills. Fire gutted the building in 1899 but by 1900-02 it had been rebuilt now with a gambrel-type roof. Alex Mills used it for planing and sawing as well as gristing. In 1921 he sold it to the Watchorn Company which converted the building into an office and annex to the company woollen mill. In 1930 and 1941 the top storey was damaged by fire and apparently the roof had to be rebuilt twice. From 1954 to 1965 the building was vacant and then became part of George Winner's electroplating shop. Shortly afterwards the roof collapsed and Willner demolished the top storey and capped it with a new flat roof. Today the bottom storey has been filled entirely with rubble making the building appear only one storey in height. Though it no longer looks very impressive it deserves a place of honour as one of the oldest surviving mill buildings in eastern Ontario.

Island Woollen Mill No. 1 *(1848-)*

Appendaged to the east end of the gristmill is the old Merrick-Watchorn woollen mill which has had a similar history. As stated elsewhere Stephen H. Merrick began construction of this mill one of the oldest in Ontario in 1848 and had it in operation by 1849. Probably at that time the mill was only 109 feet long; later two additions were built onto the eastern end. In 1850 the building was badly damaged by fire and again in 1860 the top storey was burned out: each time the mill was rebuilt. After Stephen Merrick's death around 1861 the mill went to his relatives; then from 1864 to 1866 it was owned by John H. Parnell who failed to make it pay. Henry Merrick, a son of Stephen then took it over and after 1871 leased it to various tenants who apparently had little luck with it. Then in 1874 it was sublet to Robert W. Watchorn who bought it outright in 1885. In 1912 it was technically "sold" to Watchorn and Company which retained it until 1945. Two more fires in 1930 and 1941 respectively again damaged its roof which was rebuilt without dormers. In 1954 the woollen mill ceased to operate and nothing was done with the building until 1965 when George Willner acquired it for an electroplating business. Shortly afterwards the roof collapsed in sections and though the government acquired the property in 1977 the old woollen mill had deteriorated beyond all reasonable hope of storation. It is still, however, the oldest surviving woollen mill in eastern Ontario if not the entire province and for that reason alone deserves a partial preservation as a national landmark.

Island Foundry *(ca. 1870?-)*

Close to the woollen mill stands the unobtrusive little island foundry (q.v.). As explained elsewhere the history of this building is mostly vague and confused. It is not certain when the structure was built: it seems to have been standing by 1874 and to have been used around that time as a wrench factory. By 1881 Henry Merrick converted it into a foundry and later it seems to have gone to a William Miller who used it for the same purpose. By the 1890s the building had partly lost its roof and by the 1910s it seems to have become distinctly decrepit. In 1919, however the Watchorn Company bought the structure and turned it into a picking room as part of the woollen mill complex. Later it became the machine shop for the Watchorn Company and may once have housed a brass works owned by Harold Miller. In 1965 George Willner acquired it and turned it into a carpentry shop. Today it belongs to the government and is likely to be used to house a historical interpretative display on industries in the canal corridor.

The old foundry building once had two stories but by the 1930s these had been reduced to one. Formerly it also had a west wing but this has since been levelled and filled with rubble. What remains is, however, a pleasing little building with a gabled roof and happily it is in tolerably fair condition.

Hydro-Electric Generating Station *(1915-)*

The last industrial building on the island is the brick hydro generating station completed in 1915 by the Rideau Power Company and now owned by Ontario Hydro. It too seems to be in reasonably good condition.

North Shore Industrial Buildings

In the old north shore industrial area along the river only four buildings still retaining any 19th-century character survive. These are the old north shore gristmill (now the Alloy Foundry Company office), the old electric plant building appendaged to it, the old tannery building near the shore and the old Percival main building (now owned by Peter Ayling and Associates as a boat works). Fragments of the former "finishing shop" of the old Malleable Iron Works are incorporated into the main foundry building of the Alloy Foundry Company but it is hard to distinguish them and if the company's anticipated expansions go into effect there will soon be even less of the old Malleable Works structure left intact.

North Shore Gristmill-Foundry *(1856?-)*

As for the ex-gristmill we can sum up its history as follows: it appears to occupy the approximate site of William Merrick's old

sawmill of 1803-44 (?) (No. 2) and perhaps the site of the original sawmill erected in 1793 as well. By 1847, however, Merrick's sons Aaron and Terence had replaced their father's sawmill with a gristmill (No. 4) which burned in 1855. Gristmill No. 6 replaced it in 1856 and remained in Merrick hands until 1890 although usually leased to tenants. It then went to Patrick Kyle who fitted it out lavishly as a roller mill. Then in 1895 it was destroyed by fire. By 1899 it had been rebuilt (as Gristmill No. 7 which was substantially the same building as No. 6). A succession of tenants or Patrick Kyle himself tried to run the mill, none with much success. In 1927 the Canada Brass Works firm turned the building into a brass shop only to have it burn in 1928. The building was rebuilt more or less in its present form by Robert Dougall and his sons who took over the property in 1930 when Canada Brass proved unable to pay the repair bill. The Dougalls made little use of the building (except briefly as a skating rink on the basement level) until 1943 when Frederick Dougall leased it to the original Alloy Foundry Incorporated works which used it for war work until 1945. Afterwards around 1950 it was briefly sublet for use as a dog food plant and finally in 1958 it was sold to the modern Alloy Foundry Company which removed a cinder block annex from the front of the building and adapted it into an office. The bottom storey has been used for casting aluminum products and part of the old building may be turned into a small private museum for displaying vintage plows and stoves. This building too is in generally fine condition.

Electric Light Plant *(since 1895-)*

The old electric plant building appendaged to the above building also has a lengthy history. It was built sometime before 1894 and seems to have been a tannery (No. 2) at one time. In 1894 or shortly afterwards it was leased by Edward J. Kyle from his father to house Merrickville's first electric light plant which was superseded by the Rideau Power Company station in 1916. The building afterwards had the same succession of owners as the ex-gristmill but its later history is obscure. By the 1940s Harold Miller -- briefly -- set up a machine shop in it. In 1958 the old building went to the Alloy Foundry Company which now (1979) uses it as a carpentry shop and a centre for the restoration of period castings. A wooden addition at the east end has long since been removed.

North Shore Tannery-Grinding Shop *(1850?-)*

The small tannery building at the east end of the Alloy Foundry property is an attractive little structure and undoubtedly the oldest industrial building still standing in Merrickville: excepting only the island gristmill and woollen mill. It seems to date from 1850 or earlier and was built as a tannery by J. D. Hall. In 1854-56 it was being operated by Hall and John Campbell; in 1856-58 by Messrs. Campbell and Merrick. Henry Merricks appears to have run it during part of the 1860s and a number of tenants

seems to have followed him. In 1881, however, the building was sold by Mrs. Aaron Merrick to Patrick Kyle. It was still a tannery at that time and may have remained so into the 1890s. It may also have housed E. J. Kyle's electric light plant for a few years. By 1900, however, Patrick Kyle of the Malleable Iron Works was using the old building as a moulding shop. It continued in this role apparently until the 1920s; then in 1827 it was sold to the Percival Plow and Stove Company which is said to have used it as a brass shop until the early 1930s. Presumably other uses were found for it by the original Alloy Foundry Incorporated (1943-45). Briefly in 1945 it housed a felt works shop; then (in 1946) it went to the present Alloy Foundry Company which has used it as a grinding, inspection and shipping shop: the office of the company was originally housed in a wing of the building on the north side. Various wooden annexes have been added to or removed from the old tannery over the years. Today the little building is in reasonably good condition though it needs point work and other repairs in several places.

Percival-Ayling Main Building *(since 1895-)*

The last significant surviving industrial building is, of course, the former Percival main edifice now owned by the Ayling boat works. The study produced no dates of construction for this complex except a stone extension to the south side of the west end built in 1899: the other sections were all standing by 1895 and parts may go back

as early as the Magee-Pearson works (or before 1887). The Percival Plow and Stove Company used the complex from 1887 to 1935 and a few short-lived successor firms occupied it afterwards until 1943 at which point Henry Tainsh's Merrickville Engineering works moved in until 1948. The Belaire works foundry operations then acquired the building but appear to have shut down by 1952. In 1960 William Watson bought it and began developing a marina which he sold in 1964 to Peter Ayling and Associates who established the present boat works. Except for a new roof on the central section (built about 1952?) the old Percival building has not been seriously altered in external appearance and still retains its essential character. The roof, however, is becoming shaky and it is guestior able whether the boat works will have the means of repairing it properly.

* * *

Except for an old Methodist church in North Merrickville now owned by Grenville Castings Limited and once used as a cheese factory (and the former foundry and shoddy mill now used as a liquor store) Merrickville has no other extant industrial buildings of aesthetic or historic interest. As it happens the buildings that survive give a fair indication of the nature and scope of Merrickville' s former industrial enterprises and fortunately they are quite centrally-located near the highway, canal and the Blockhouse Museum. In addition traces of some of the missing structures remain, notably on the island and excavations would probably disclose the outlines of such buildings as Hiram Easton's

old oatmeal and woollen mills which dated from the 1860s. All this plus the antiquity and diversity of Merrickville's industrial past should doubtless make the site an excellent choice as a setting for reminding Canadians of the industrial and manufacturing heritage of the Rideau corridor.

Industries and Industrialists of Merrickville, 1792-1979

by Richard Tatley 1979

Volume III

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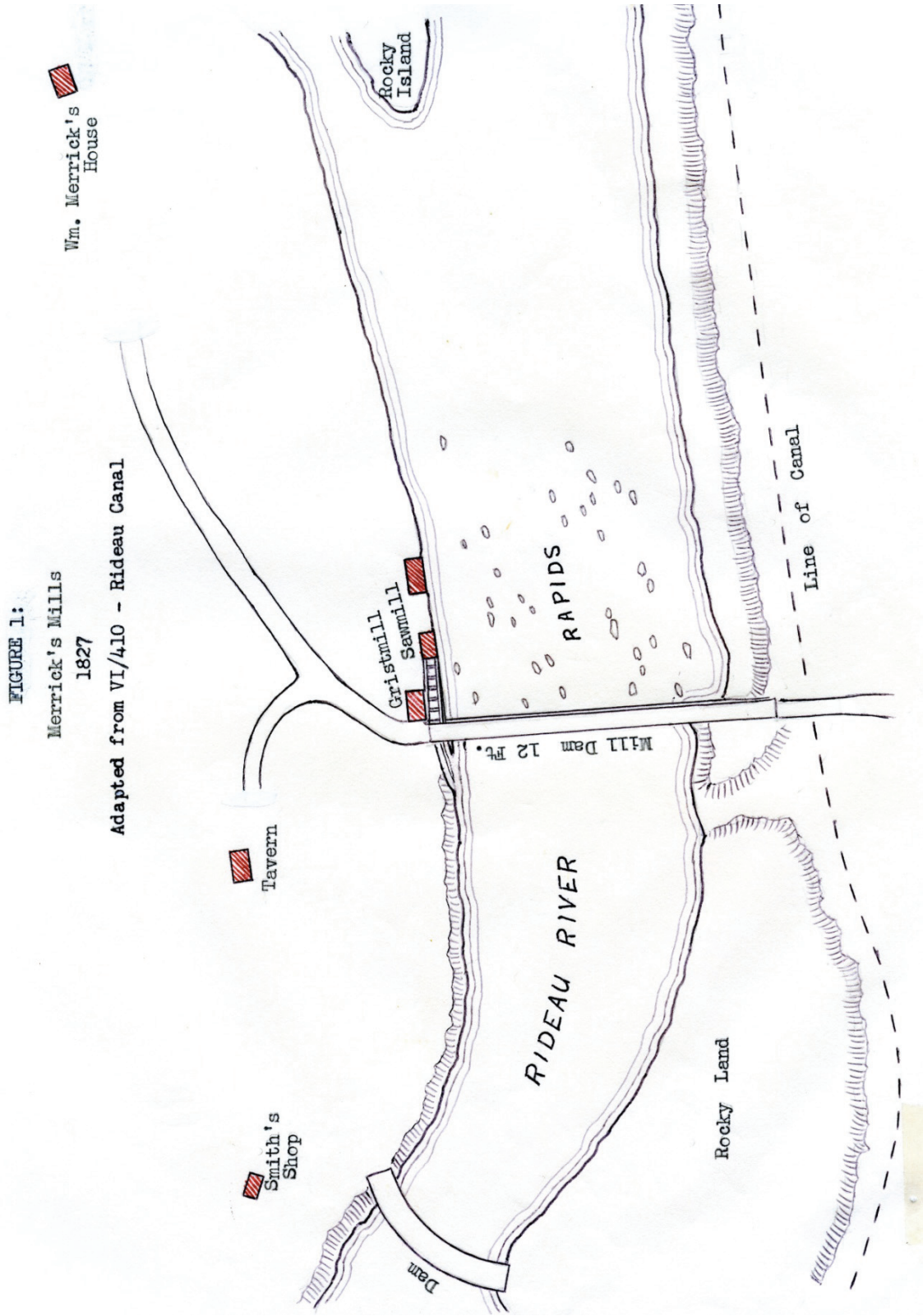


FIGURE 1:
Merrick's Mills
1827
Adapted from VI/410 - Rideau Canal

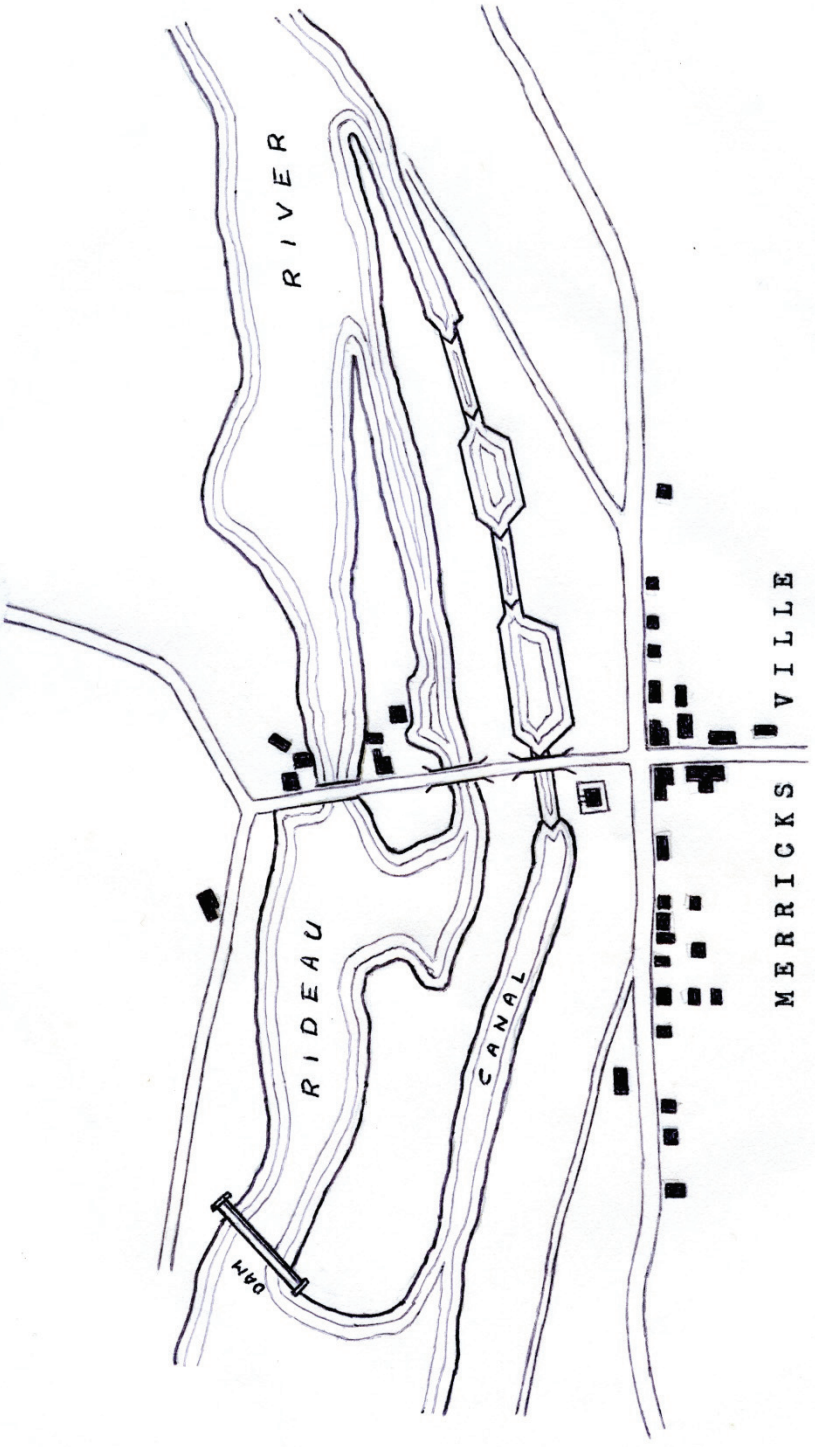


FIGURE 2:
Merrickville Locks
1835

Adapted from a Sketch
by Captain Daniel Bolton, R. E.,
18 April 1835

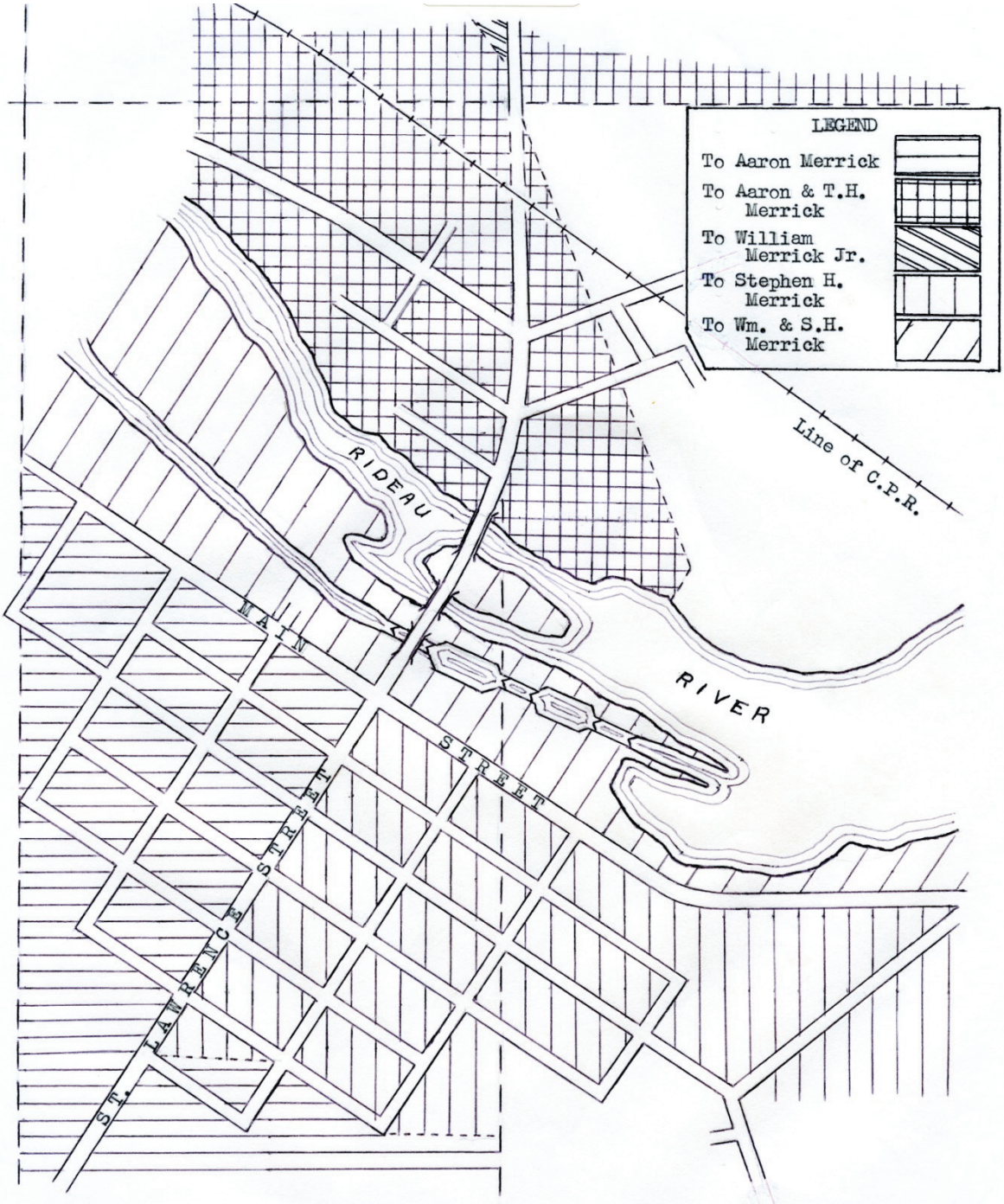


FIGURE 3:

Merrickville, 1844

Division of William Merrick's Lands

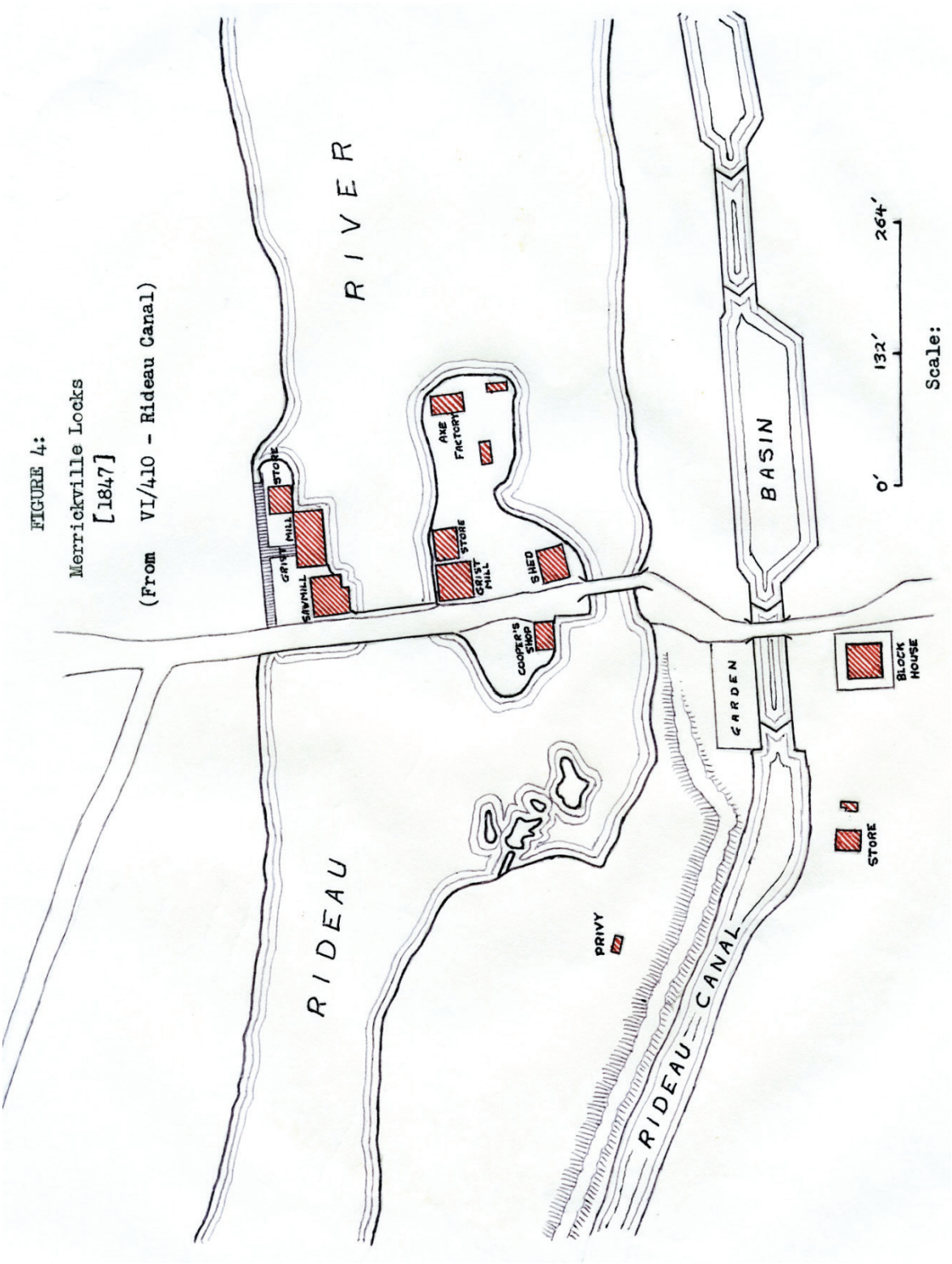


FIGURE 4:
Merrickville Locks
[1847]
(From VI/410 - Rideau Canal)

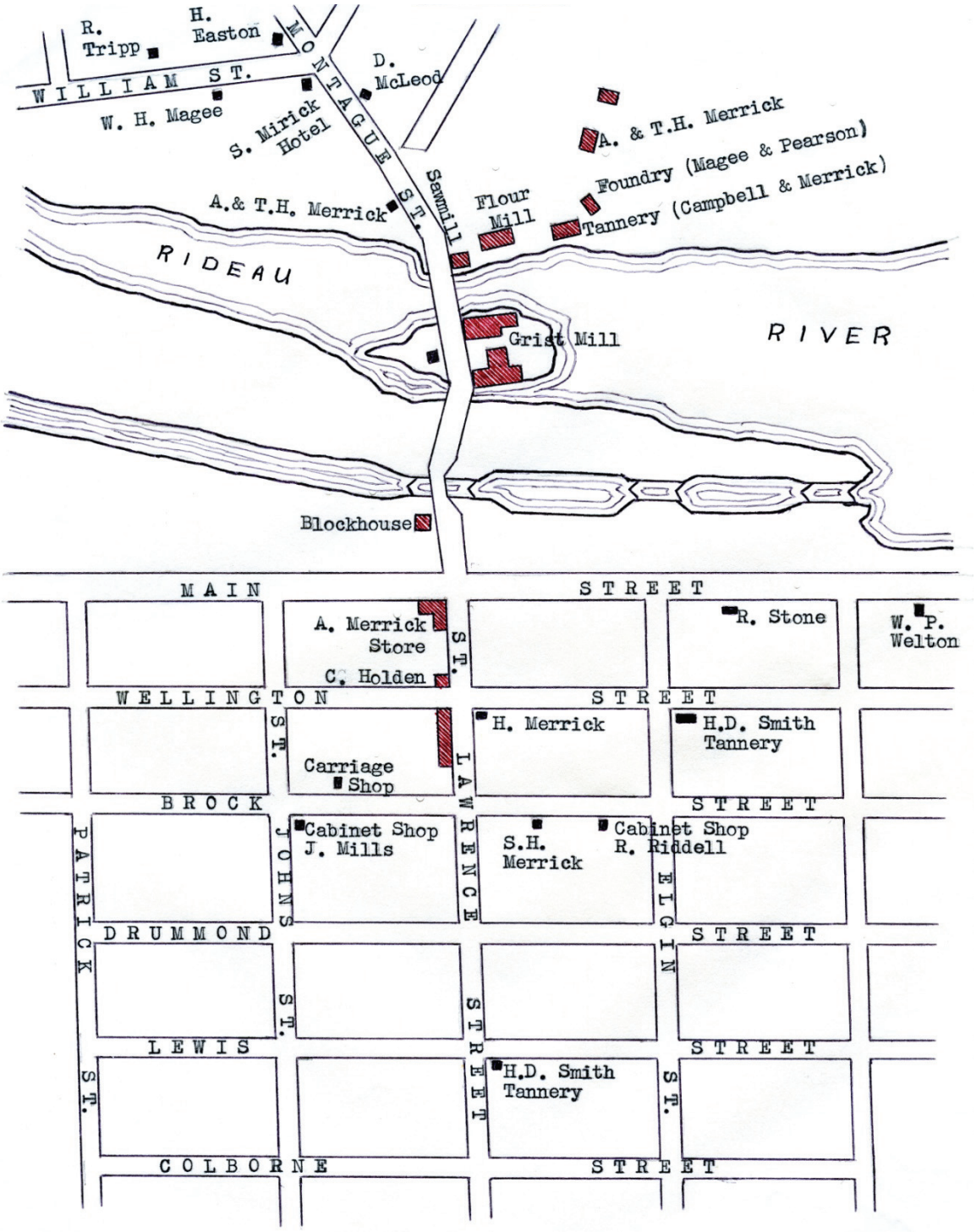


FIGURE 5:

Central Merrickville
Adapted from VI/410 -- Rideau Canal [1860]

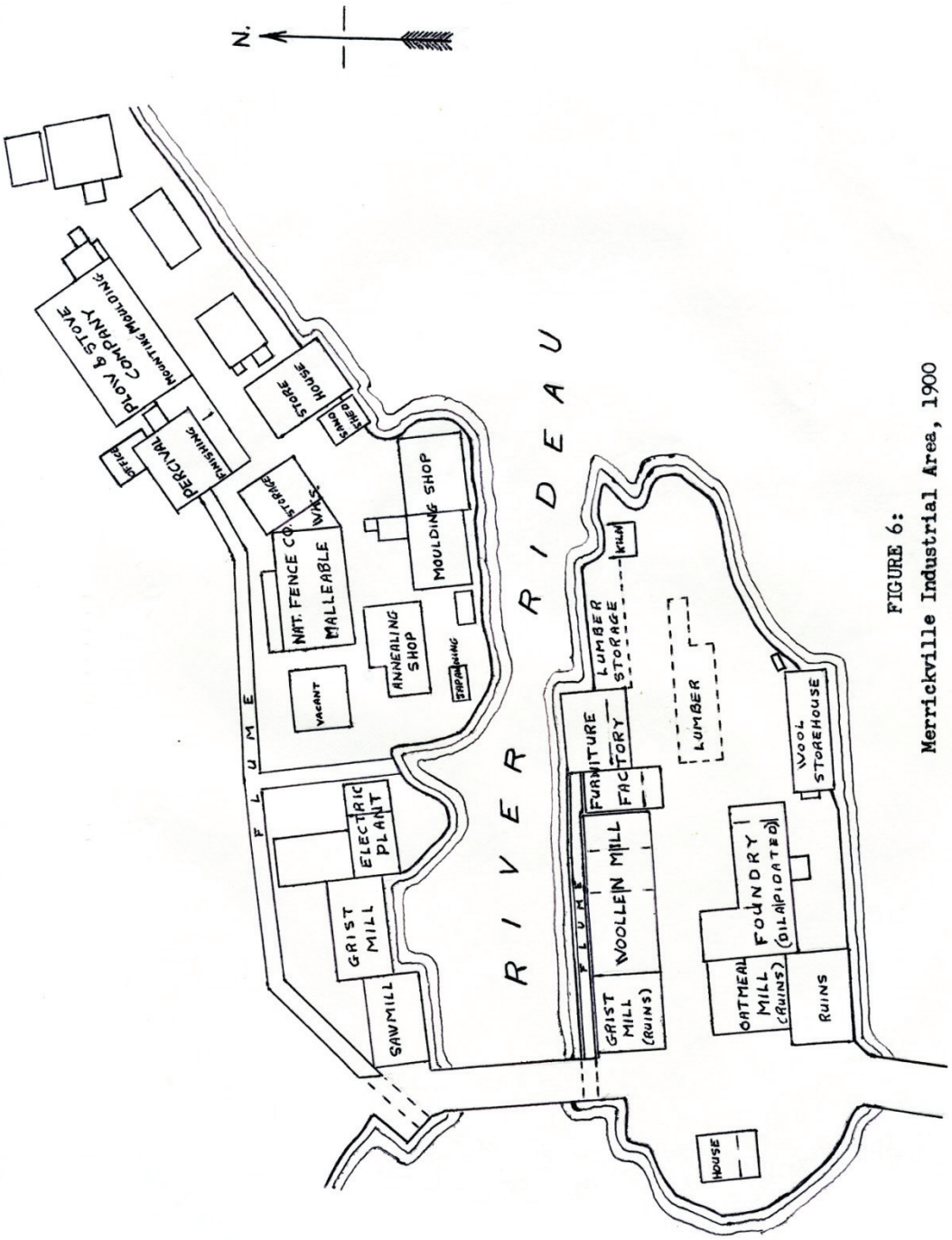


FIGURE 6:
Merrickville Industrial Area, 1900

Scale: 0' 50' 100' 150'

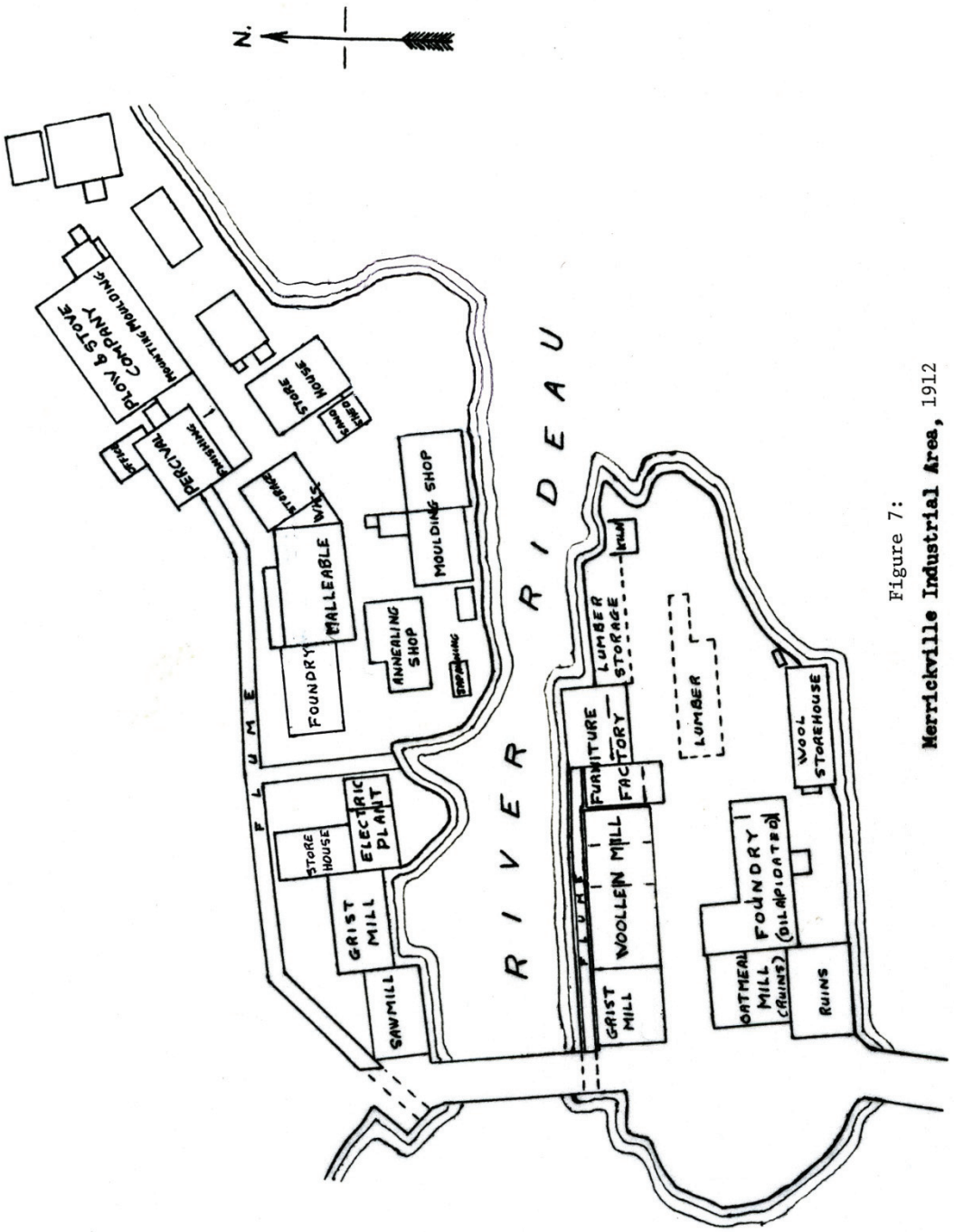
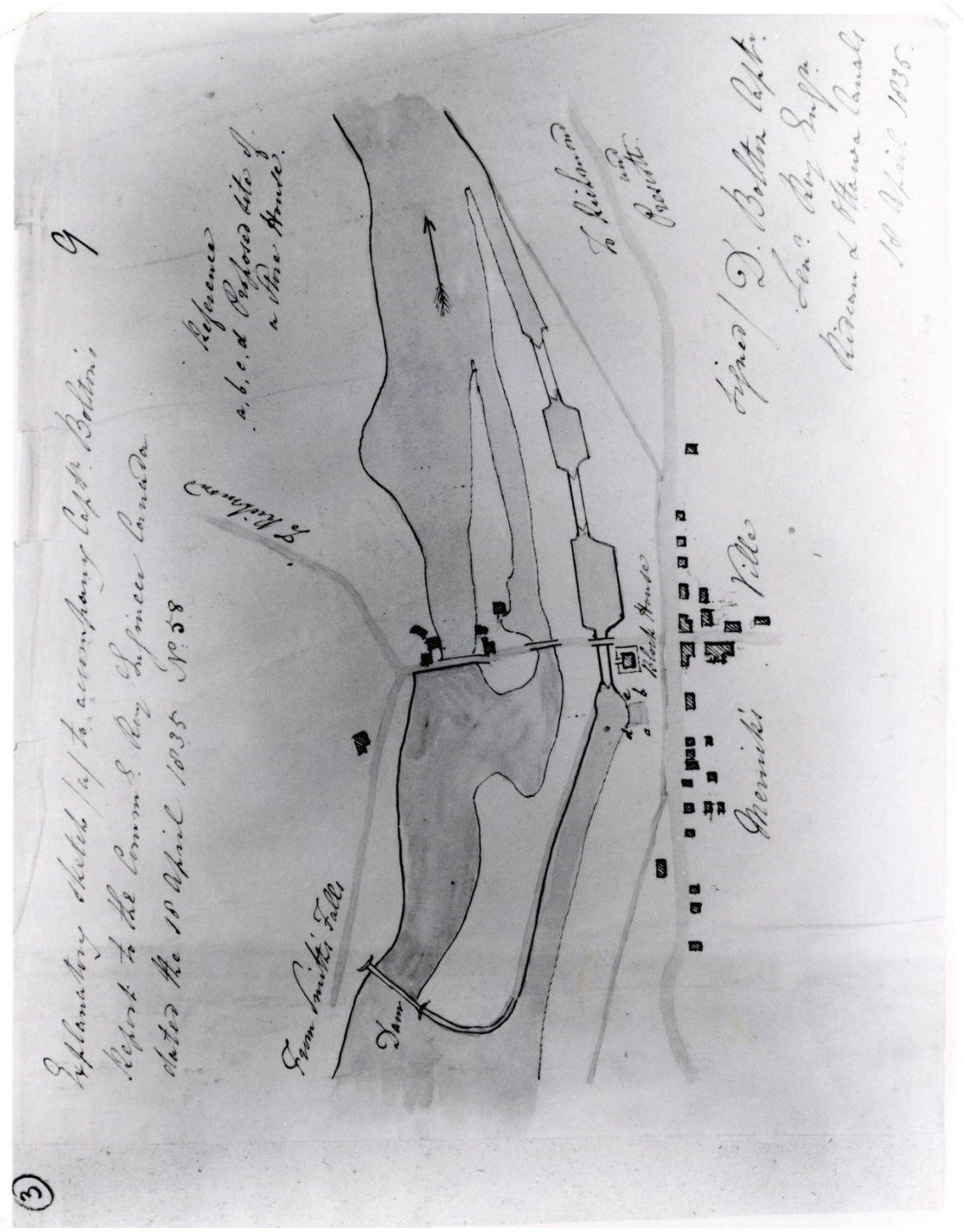


Figure 7:
Merrickville Industrial Area, 1912

Scale: 0' 50' 100' 150'

1 Merrickville Lock Station, 1835

Explanatory sketch map by Captain Daniel Bolton, R.E., 18 April 1835. (Rideau Canal Interpretative Office/ Smiths Falls.)

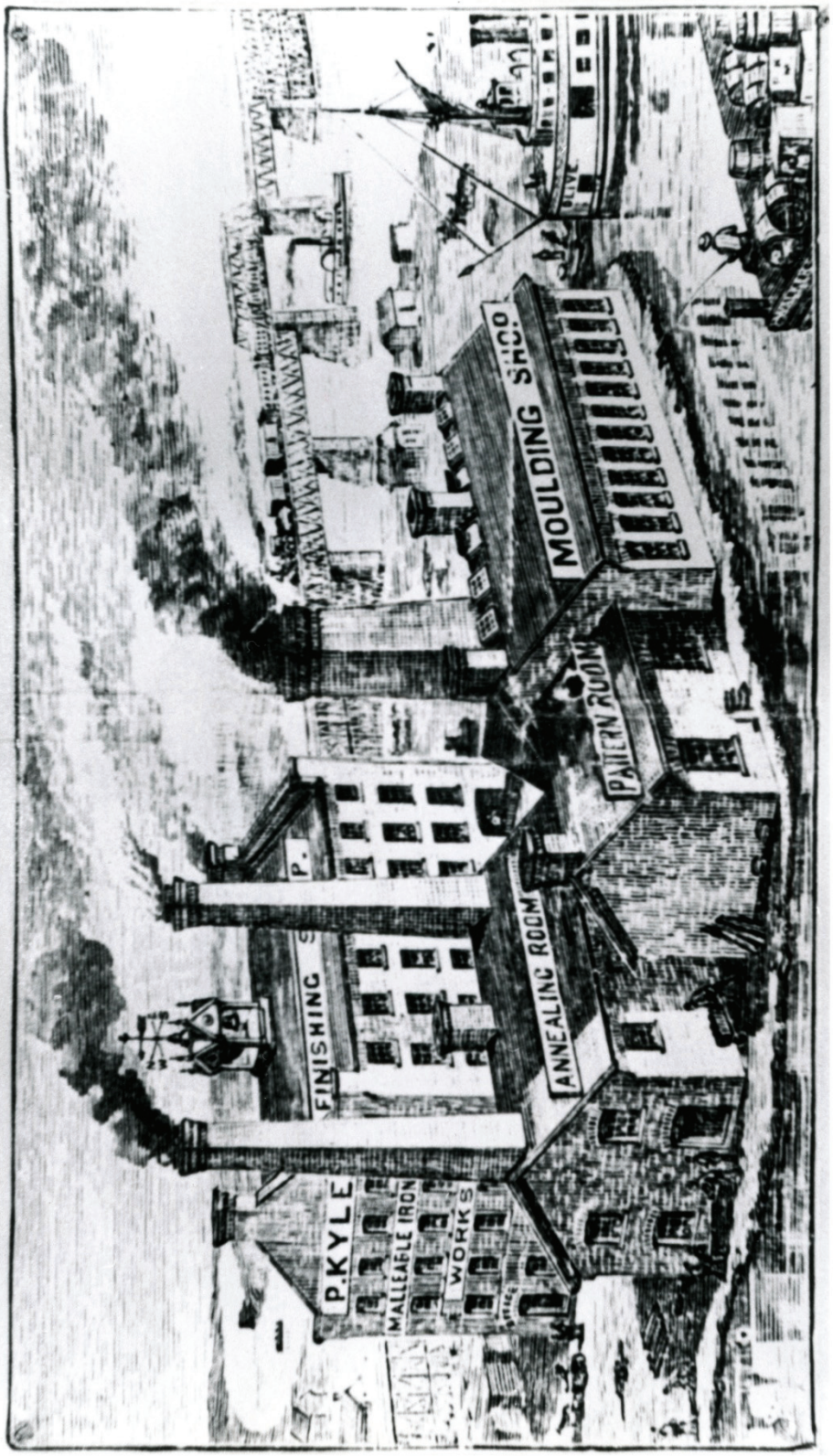

Explanatory sketch to accompany Capt. Baltin's
Report to the Commrs. of Rideau Canada
dated the 10 March 1835 No 58
References
a, b, c, d Proposed sites of
new Locks
Dam
Stone Mill
Stone Mill
Merrickville
Villa
Lines of D. Baltin Capt.
Com. Rid. Surv.
Rideau & Ottawa Canals
10 March 1835

2 Merricks Station, 1827-1832

Rideau Canal Station No. 9 by William Clegg, wash drawing. (Public Archives of Canada.)

3 Kyle Works, Merrickville, ca. 1900

Sketch of Patrick Kyle's Malleable Iron Works, North Shore. Artist unknown. (Blockhouse Museum, Merrickville.)


MOULDING SHOP
PATTERN ROOM
ANNEALING ROOM
FINISHING
P.
P. KYLE
MALLEABLE IRON
WORKS

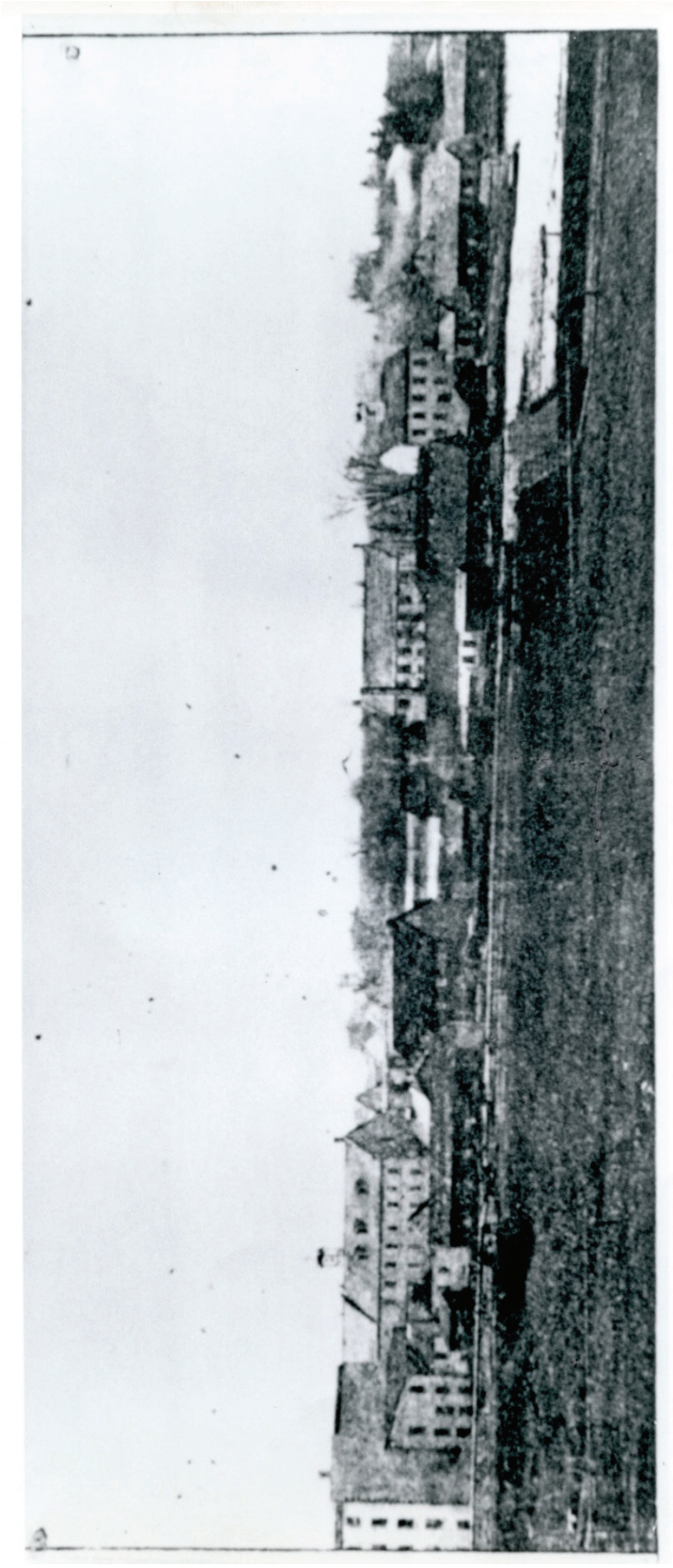
4 View of Merrickville Industrial Buildings, ca. 1894 (?)

.

(Public Archives of Canada

5 View of Merrickville Industrial Buildings, ca. 1895 (?)

LEFT TO RIGHT: Island Oatmeal Mill, Island Foundry, Island Gristmill-Woollen Mill (background), Woollen Storehouse, Island Furniture Factory, North Shore Gristmill No. 6 (burned out), Annealing Shop, North Shore Tannery =Moulding Shop, Malleable Iron Works Finishing Shop (background), Moulding Shop Annex, Percival Company Finishing Shop (background), Storage Sheds (foreground), Percival Company Moulding Shop (background). (Blockhouse Museum, Merrickville.)



6 View of Merrickville Industrial Buildings, ca. 1896 (?)

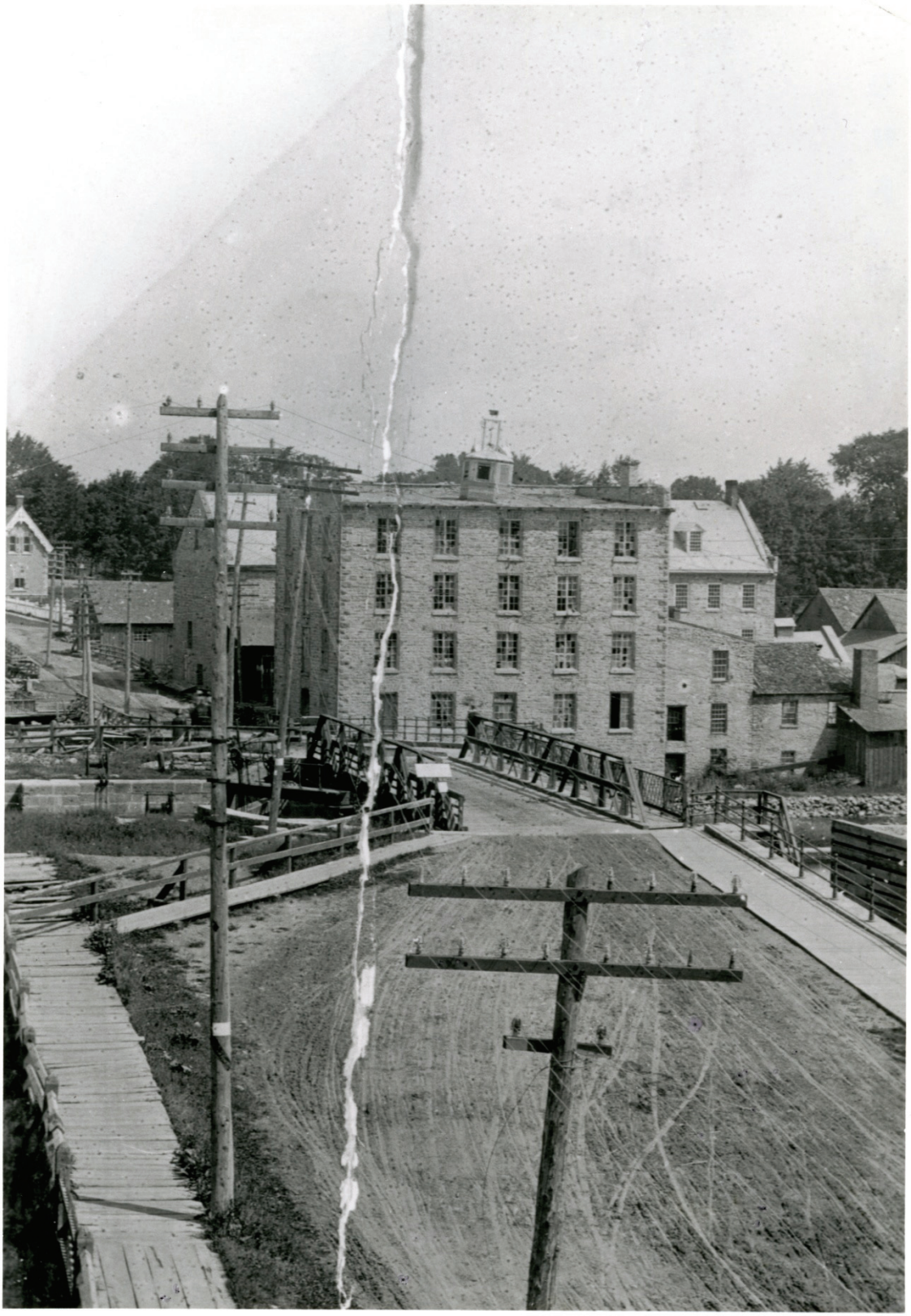
LEFT TO RIGHT: Island Oatmeal Mills, Island Foundry, Woollen Storehouse, Island Gristmill-Woollen Mill, Island Furniture Factory, North Shore Gristmill No. 6 (burned out), Storage Shed (background), Island Drying Kiln, Brick House (background), North Shore Tannery = Moulding Shop. (Public Archives of Canada.)

Industrial View, Merrickville, Ont.

7 View of Merrickville Industrial Buildings, ca. 1896-1898

LEFT TO RIGHT: Brick House, North Shore Sawmill No. 4, Island Gristmill, Island Sawmill No. 1, Island Oatmeal Mill (foreground), Island Foundry, Island Woollen Mill (background), Island Furniture Factory (background).

(Parks Canada, Ottawa)



8 Flood Scene at Merrickville, ca. 1890 (?)

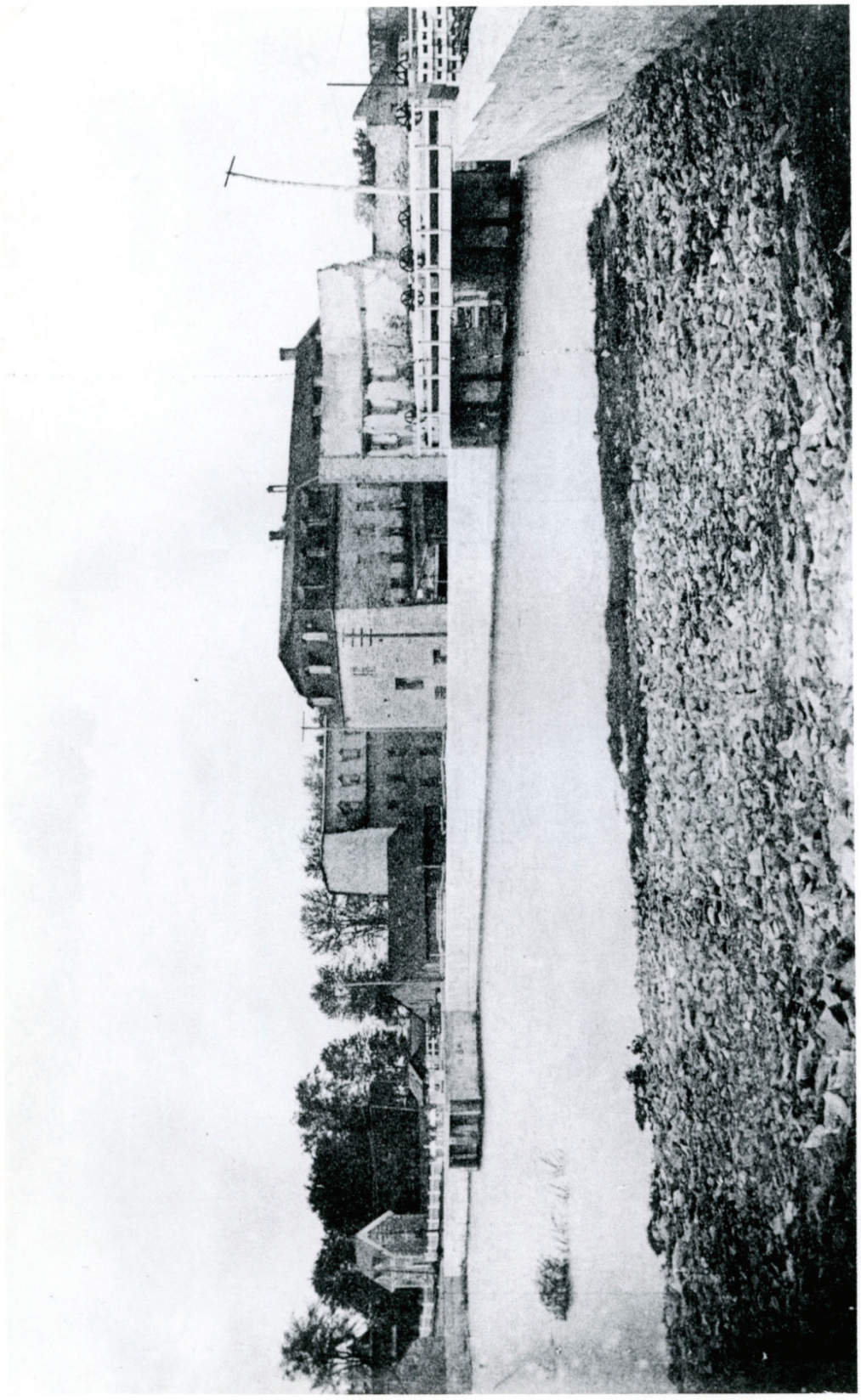
Island House (later a Laundry) with North Shore Sawmill No. 4 (centre) and Island Gristmill (right) still in the Easton name. (Public Archives of Canada.)

9 View of Merrickville Industrial Buildings, ca. 1908-1914

LEFT TO RIGHT: Various Dwellings, Office Shed(?), North Shore Sawmill No. 5, North Shore Gristmill No. 7, Island Gristmill, Island Sawmill No. 2 (foreground), Ruins of Oatmeal Mill. (Rideau Canal Interpretive Office, Smiths Falls)

10 View of Merrickville Industrial Buildings, ca. 1916 (?)

LEFT TO RIGHT: Brick House, Drive Shed, North Shore Sawmill No. 5, North Shore Gristmill No. 7, Island Gristmill, Island Woollen Mill (background), Ruins of Oatmeal Mill with new concrete dam in the foreground. (Public Archives of Canada.)



11 North Shore Industrial Buildings at Merrickville, ca. 1900(?)

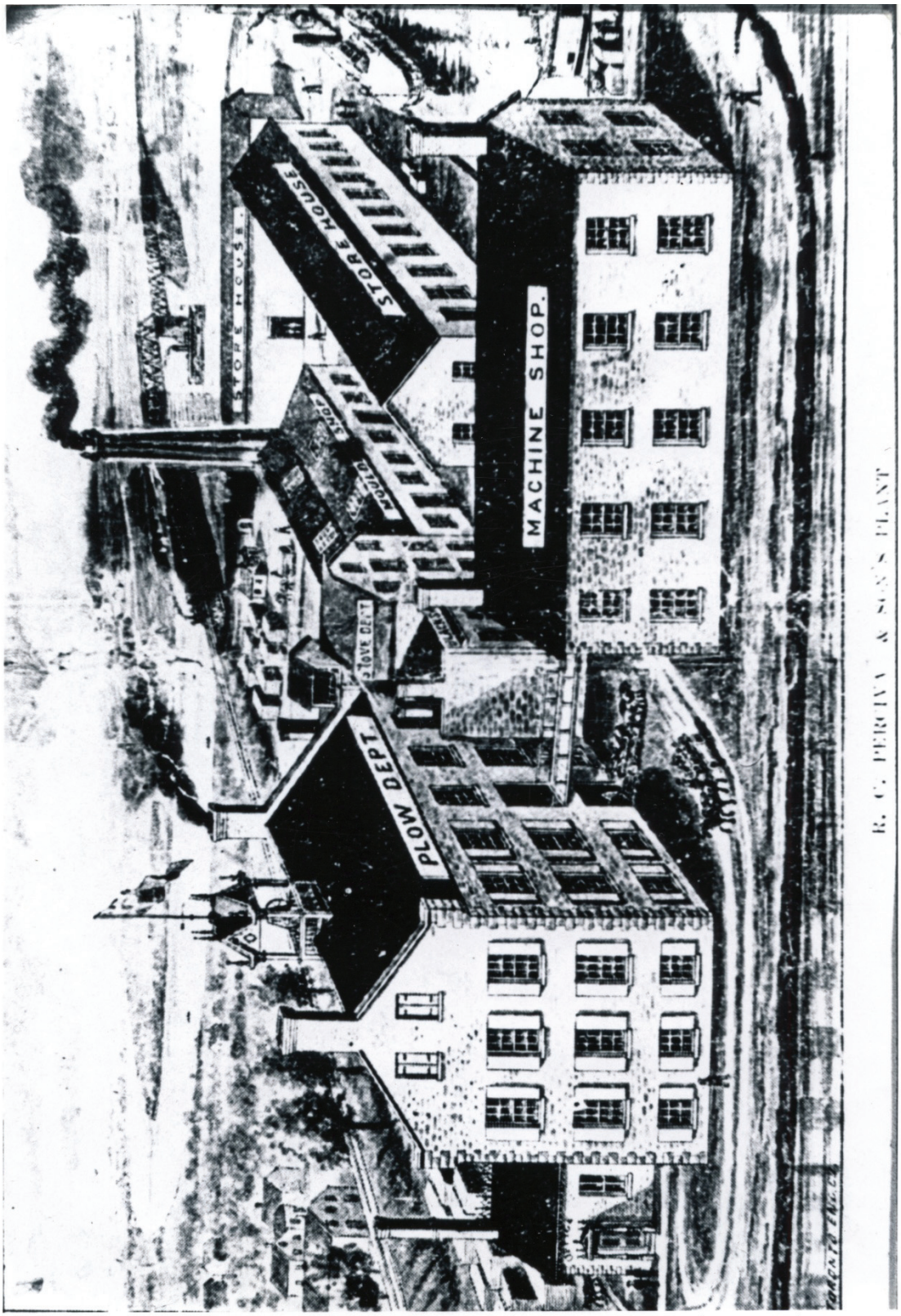
LEFT TO RIGHT: North Shore Sawmill No. 4, North Shore Gristmill No. 7, Electric Light Plant. (Public Archives of Canada.)

12 North Shore Industrial Buildings at Merrickville, ca. 1900(?)

LEFT TO RIGHT: North Shore Gristmill No. 7, Electric Light Plant, Malleable Iron Works Foundry Building, Finishing Shop, Anealing Shop, Pattern Shop(?), North Shore Tannery = Moulding Shop, Small Shed. (Public Archives of Canada.)

13 Percival Plow and Stove Company Works, ca. 1900

Sketch of R. C. Percival and Son Works, North Shore. Artist unknown. (Rideau Canal Interpretative Office, Smiths Falls.)


STORE HOUSE
STORE HOUSE
MACHINE SHOP.
PLOW DEPT.
STOVE DEPT.

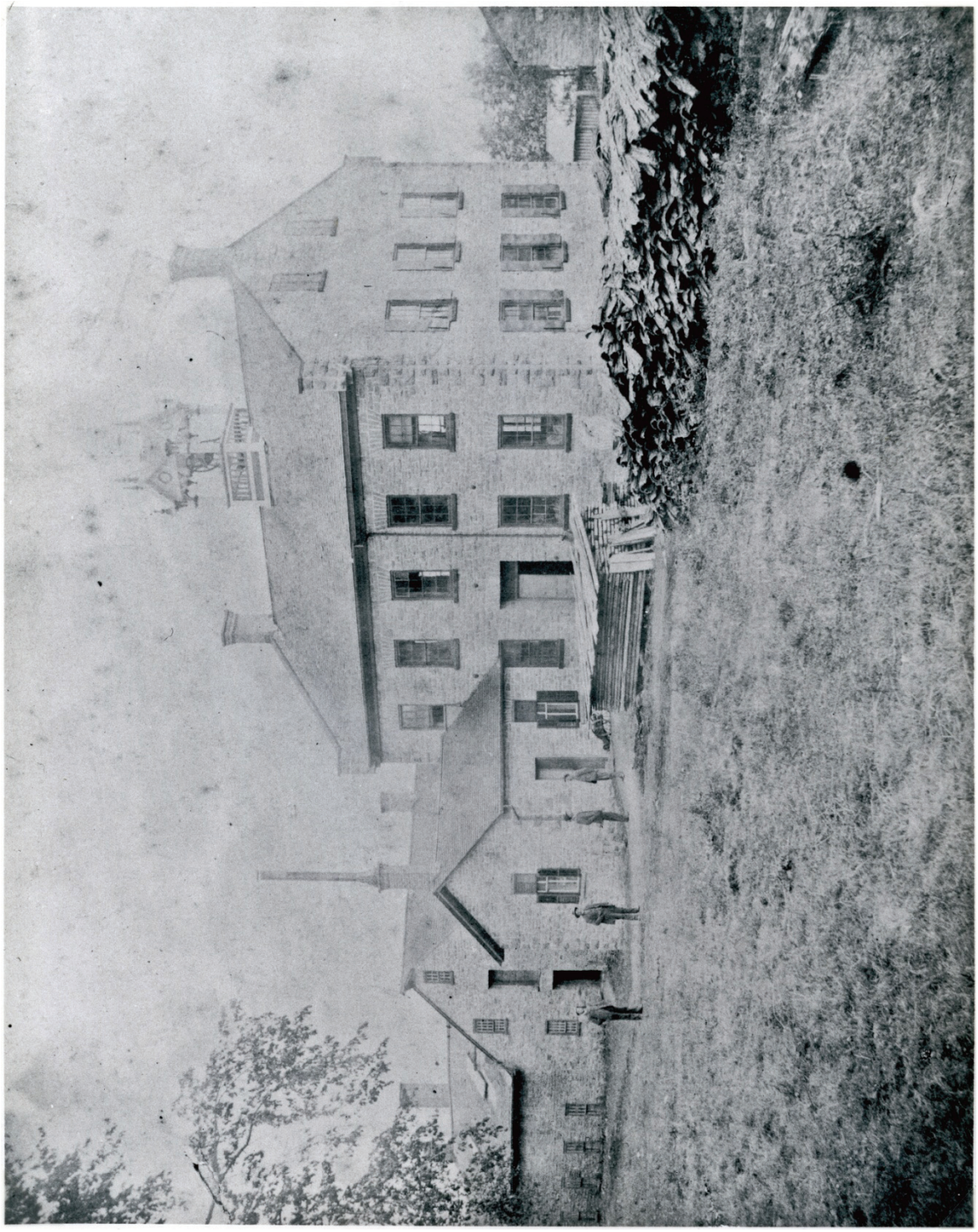
14 Percival Plow and Stove Company Works, Merrickville, before 1921

Publicity picture from the Percival Company Catalogue of 1921. Artist unknown. Any resemblance to the real thing is purely coincidental. (Blockhouse Museum, Merrickville.)

The Factory of Better Plows
Agricultural Implements and Stoves
Merrickville,
Ontario
Merrickville,
Ontario
THE PERCIVAL PLOW AND STOVE CO. LIMITED
WAREHOUSE NO. 3
WAREHOUSE NO. 1
OFFICE

15 Percival Plow and Stove Company Buildings, ca. 1895

LEFT TO RIGHT: Moulding Shop Wing, Mounting and Steaming Wing, Finishing Shop, Shed, Storehouse. Tanbark in the foreground may be destined for the nearby Tannery. (Public Archives of Canada.)



16 Percival Plow and Stove Company Buildings, ca. 1965 (now the Ayling Boat Works)

LEFT TO RIGHT: Former Moulding Shop, Mounting Shop, Finishing Shop. (Parks Canada, Ottawa.)

17 Henry Merrick (1837-1927)

Photograph taken in 1873. (Ontario Archives.)

H Merrick

18 William Roche Merrick (18287-1900) and his Wife(?)

(Blockhouse Museum/ Merrickville.)

19 Henry D. Smith (1821?-)

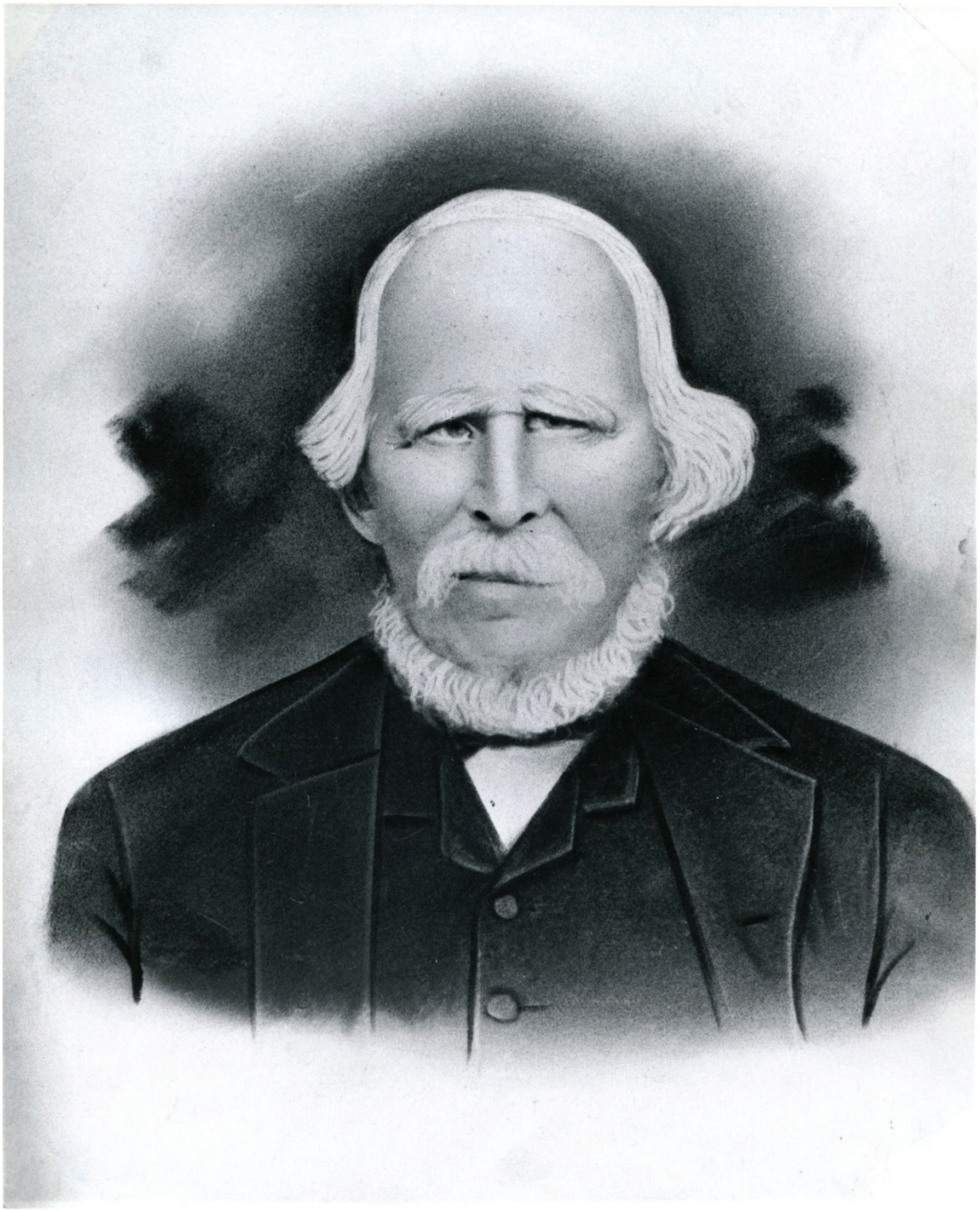
(Mrs. Kathleen Easton, Merrickville.)

20 Hiram Easton (1820-1910)

(Mrs. Kathleen Easton, Merrickville.)

21 Hiram Easton (1820-1910)

(Mrs. Kathleen Easton, Merrickville.)



22 Edward Errett (1823-1904)

Blockhouse Museum, Merrickville

23 Robert William Watchorn (1852-1950)

Rideau Canal Office, Smiths Falls