

THE MYSTERIES AT JONES FALLS

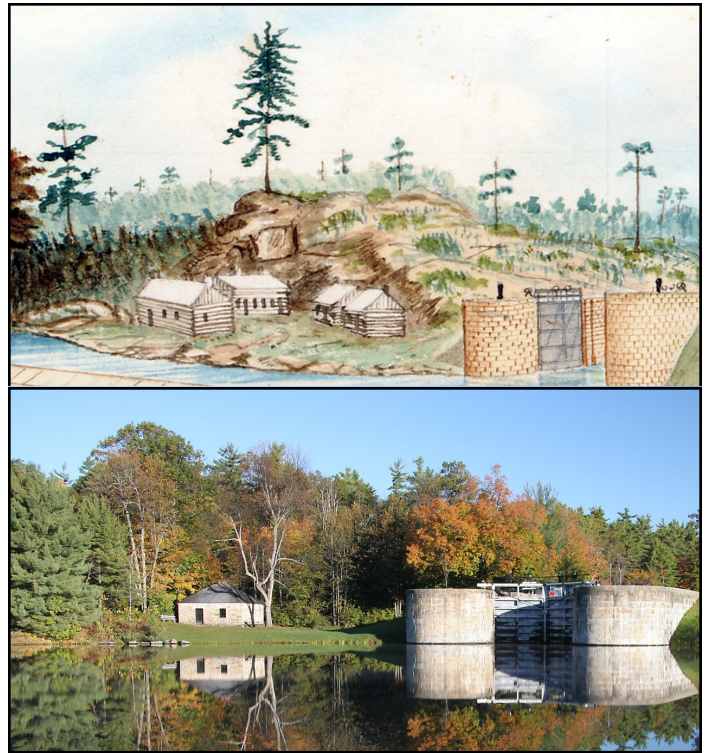
Jones Falls is full of mysteries and it is hoped that an upcoming landscape study by Parks Canada will shed some light on these. The management plan has committed to doing several such studies. The first one, the Ottawa Reach (Ottawa Locks to Hogs Back), is just being completed. Smiths Falls will be next (the Smiths Falls Reach - Detached to Old Slys) and then it will be Jones Falls, which promises to be the most interesting study.

The management plan states that: "By 2025, the cultural landscapes and heritage values of five lockstations are described and documented to support conservation initiatives, interpretation and authentic visitor experience opportunities." The Ottawa study didn't accomplish those aims (i.e. there is nothing in it to support interpretation) and it is suspected that the Smiths Falls study may not either, but Jones Falls is a different case and Friends will be pushing hard to make it a proper landscape study.

Jones Falls is one of the most pristine Rideau lockstations, with features dating back to indigenous use (original portage) and the building of the canal (i.e. haul roads for the stones) still existing today. It is also one of the least studied lockstations. There was a lot of heritage research done by Parks Canada after they took over the Rideau Canal in 1972, but for some reason Jones Falls was never done. Smiths Falls and Kingston Mills, by contrast, ended up with Parks Canada research reports that are hundreds of pages long. But this wasn't done for Jones Falls. In addition, there has also been essentially no terrestrial archaeology carried out on the site. So, in terms of Parks Canada heritage documentation of Jones Falls, it's mostly non-existent.

Jones Falls in the pre-canal era was the location where a set of rapids descended about 62 ft (18.9 m) over a distance of a mile (1.6 km). It wasn't a waterfall, the term fall in that period was used for any topographic drop of water (i.e. rapids). It was on the main indigenous travel route between the Ottawa River at Rideau Falls to the St. Lawrence River at Gananoque. In the pre-mill dam era (pre-c.1805), there was no water connection to the Cataraqui River which led to Kingston. The White Fish River flowed from Jones Falls to Lower Beverley Lake and then down the Gananoque River. A portage, almost 1,400 m long, bypassed the Jones Falls rapids. That portage was in use by indigenous peoples for thousands of years. It has never been documented by Parks Canada.

It was a major challenge for the Royal Engineers to make Jones Falls navigable for steamboats and other large



Jones Falls Locks Construction Camp

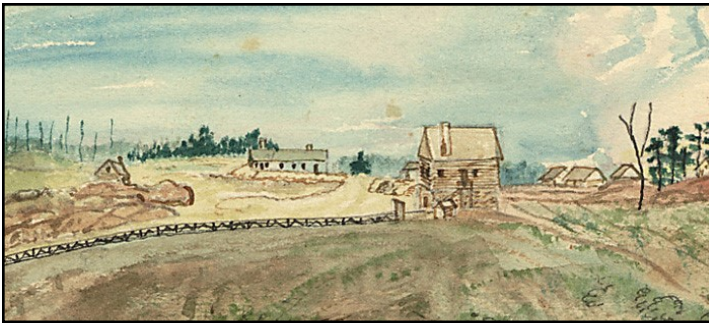
The top image is an 1831 painting showing the construction camp for the locks. The lower photo shows the same location, with a blacksmith shop, built in 1843, on the site. Parks Canada has not done any investigations of this site. It is hoped the landscape study, if done properly, might provide more details of how this area was used during construction. Top: Bason & Upper Lock at Jones' Falls; from the East Upper end of 3rd Lock. Works nearly completed, by Thomas Burrowes, 1831. Archives of Ontario, C 1-0-0-55. Bottom: photo by Ken Watson.

watercraft. Several proposals were put forward and in the end they placed the locks in a dry flood channel (McDonald's Gully) and built a large dam (the Great Stone Arch Dam) at a bedrock constriction in the lower portion of the rapids. The dam raised the water by 13.7 m / 45 ft in that location, putting a navigation depth of water into the upper lock and raising the overall level of Sand Lake by 2.4 m / 8 ft, which put 2.1 m / 7 ft of water over the lower sill at Davis Lock.

The construction of the Jones Falls locks and dam was done by contractor John Redpath using primarily French-Canadian workers as well as workers and tradesmen from Canada and the British Isles. The Royal Engineers

set up their officers' quarters at the head of the portage. A haul road was built in 1827 from the stone quarry near Elgin to the site. The last kilometre or so of that road followed the route of the lower portion of the portage. In 1827 a bridge was built over the rapids (near where the power plant is today), connecting the quarry road to a haul road on the lockstation side that led to the locks. A portion of that original 1827 haul road still exists. It remains undocumented and uninterpreted by Parks Canada.

Redpath created two construction camps, one for the crews working on the locks, the location today of the Blacksmith Shop, and a second camp for the crews working on the dam, which he named "Esthertown" in honour of Colonel By's wife, Esther. Redpath built a large house at that site for his sister Elspeth, brother-in-law Thomas Fairbairn and their eight children. Thomas was Redpath's overseer of the site. While we have period paintings showing both those camps, Parks Canada has never done archaeology on either site, so, other than the period paintings, the exact layout and use of those sites remains unknown. Parks Canada had an uninterpreted walking trail through the Esthertown site but this now appears to have been abandoned by Parks.



Esthertown in 1841

This is a close-up crop from a larger 1841 painting that shows the Great Arch Dam. It shows a portion of what remained of Esthertown in 1841. This was the construction camp for the dam and the main receiving/storage point for supplies. The original portage ran through this site and a road to this spot, originating in the quarry near present day Elgin, was built in 1827. "The Great dam at Jones' Falls; from the West end, 1841" by Thomas Burrowes, Archives of Ontario, 10002172.

Jones Falls is full of mysteries, some big, such as the exact layouts of the construction camps and some small, such as the two iron pins embedded in stone that appear to have been used to help haul up the carts carrying the sandstone blocks quarried at Halladay's Quarry. Indigenous use of the site, particularly at the head and foot of the portage (which would have been a major stopping points), is virtually unknown other than the location of the portage itself, which has been investigated and mapped by people such as your author, but never by Parks Canada.

We hope that Parks Canada will do a serious landscape study at Jones Falls. To properly interpret the site, you need to know the site's use and the landscape changes over time – from indigenous use up to present day use.



Wrought Iron Pins and Portages

The left photo shows one of the two iron pins that were embedded in bedrock, likely during the lock construction period. They are located directly above where the carts/wagons carrying stones from Halladay's Quarry near Elgin, destined for the locks, arrived at Jones Falls. Their location and appearance suggest that they were used to help move the stones uphill. But how exactly that was done, or if in fact that was their use, remains a mystery since they've never been professionally studied.

The photo on the right, taken in 2004, shows the head of the portage in the location of the Officers' Quarters. The location is marked incorrectly on some current maps, sometimes shown as the height of land near the present day Jones Fall Road fixed bridge. But they were in fact located at the head of the portage. My dog Katie is standing on the portage path. We only have a couple of period maps showing the buildings and layout of the Officers' Quarters (no period paintings). This area has never been archaeologically studied and remains a mystery other than the general location. It's another area that would hugely benefit from a lidar survey with subsequent archaeological ground-truthing. Photos by Ken Watson.

This is directly in Parks Canada's mandate to do, as well as the stated aim of the landscape studies in the current management plan. We hope that they will do a proper study, including incorporating outside knowledge (since external heritage researchers know a lot more about the site than Parks Canada). It is hoped that a scientific approach will be taken, including a lidar survey of the entire site, to be able to properly map out past landscape use. That work should be followed up by targeted terrestrial archaeology to ground-truth results.

We know that the Underwater Archaeology Branch of Parks Canada will be involved and they always do an excellent job. Will Parks Canada bring similar high quality scientific resources to the study of the terrestrial portions of the site? We don't want this to be a simple planning study—it needs to have depth and it needs to meet the stated aims of the landscapes studies, including providing a foundation for proper interpretation of the site. It's the type of study that is needed, time will tell if this is the study we'll get.

- Ken Watson

Message from the Chair

As we head into the 193rd season of operations of the Rideau Canal, I am pleased to report that we are building on the strengths of a successful year in 2023.

In 2023 we welcomed over 14,300 visitors to the Depot, our visitor and interpretation centre in Merrickville. We also took part in several events along the Rideau Canal, notably Rideau Paddlefest in Smiths Falls, the Manotick Classic Boat Show in Westport, and Stewart Park Festival in Perth. As a volunteer, I take part in the events and serve as many days as I can at The Depot over the season. I find it stimulating to meet first time visitors to the Rideau Canal and give them advice on exploring the Waterway and discovering the many fascinating dimensions of its history. Of course it is equally enjoyable to meet existing supporters of Friends and get caught up. We hope to do the usual "road show" of events this summer and to see you there.

At the end of February this year Friends returned to the Ottawa Boat Show as an exhibitor, for the first time in four years. We were pleased to share our booth with the Rideau Roundtable and together we delivered messages about the heritage and environmental dimensions of the Rideau Waterway. The Roundtable has been kind enough to invite us to participate in the Rideau Paddlefest, in Smiths Falls, on Saturday June 15. If you have attended Paddlefest in years past you know what a family-friendly and fun event it is. See you there.

The Friends board is currently in the process of preparing for the 2024 season at The Depot. Our planning has been made more challenging as the support we had requested from the Canada Summer Jobs program (CSJ), to help employ students, is less than half of our request, due to cuts in the national CSJ budget for the second year in a row. This program is a very important source of support for community-based, volunteer-run organizations like Friends, enabling us to hire students for quality jobs in areas where opportunities are not numerous. We've written to the Minister responsible for CSJ, the Hon. Randy Boissonneault, noting that reducing funding when the target group - secondary and post-secondary students - is increasing in size, does not seem logical. We'll cope, but will have to manage our budget carefully, and hope that visitors to The Depot will be generous with their donations.

Given the irregular weather the Rideau has experienced over the winter, with lower than normal precipitation (but we didn't have to shovel it, I hear you say) it will be interesting to see how this will affect water levels on the Waterway. As well, Parks Canada will have to cope with the problems created by the damage to the lift bridge on the Lasalle Causeway in Kingston. Never a dull moment.

We hope that visitor levels to the Rideau Canal will be high, whether by water or by road, and we look forward to seeing repeat visitors and first-timers enjoying the Waterway.

- Hunter McGill



Caught with a hand in the Cookie Jar

In this photo taken at a FoR board meeting in December, we see director Sue Warren offering cookies to Chair Hunter McGill. Photo by Ken



Under New Management

The Blockhouse museum in Merrickville has recently had a change in management. The museum was previously operated by the Merrickville and District Historical Society but it has now been transferred to a new museum services board at the Village of Merrickville-Wolford. The historical society has decided that they are no longer in a position to properly manage the museum and the village has stepped in to take over. The service board is currently made up of six members. A manager has also been hired through Carleton University's internship program. The artifacts within the museum remain the property of the historical society as well as some from Parks Canada, who own and maintain the building. The museum is planning on being open Thursdays to Mondays this summer.

- Joshua Terpstra

Rideau Canal Cultural Landscape Study—Ottawa Reach

A key commitment of the new (2022) Rideau Canal Management Plan is for Parks Canada to undertake cultural landscape studies of several important lockstations along the Rideau Canal. The purpose of the studies is to describe and understand the cultural landscapes and character-defining elements of the Rideau Canal to guide management and interpretation of the sites. The first of the studies, led by a partnership of Parks Canada, the National Capital Commission, and the City of Ottawa, covers a section of the Rideau Canal from the Ottawa Locks/Chateau Laurier to the Hogs Back locks, an 8.2 km stretch of the waterway known as the Ottawa Reach.

Cultural landscapes are those where human interaction with natural systems has, over a long period, formed a distinctive landscape. They are defined as a place with many layers of history that has evolved through design and use over time. A cultural landscape embodies the associations and uses that evoke a sense of history for a specific place. These landscapes include both tangible and intangible elements which coexist.

Ken Watson and Hunter McGill of the Friends of the Rideau were among those consulted by Matrix Heritage, the study consultant, during the data collection and analysis phase of the study, which began in October 2023. The consultant's report to the partner agencies is expected in June. We welcome the collaboration of the three partners, which is essential given the complexity of the governance of the Ottawa Reach. What will be particularly important, following completion of the study, will be commitment by the partners, especially the City of Ottawa, to a time-bound action plan to implement the study recommendations.

It is understood that the other sites along the Rideau Canal to be the subject of cultural landscapes studies are Smiths Falls, Jones Falls, Newboro and Merrickville. It is not clear when these studies will be done, Parks Canada has not released any timelines. The Management Plan shows a completion date of 2025 for these, but that's unlikely to be met. Friends is more concerned with the quality of the work than the speed and we encourage Parks to put in the time and resources to do these right. Friends will seek to contribute our views and heritage knowledge of the Rideau Canal to these studies and will communicate the outcomes to our members.

- Hunter McGill



Dominating the Rideau Canal

The modern 22-storey high Dunton Tower of Carleton University is the dominant feature on the landscape in the area of the Hartwells Lockstation. If allowed to continue, inappropriate development adjacent to the Rideau Canal in Ottawa will eventually ruin it for everyone. Photo by Ken Watson.

Travelling the Rideau Canal in its Early Years

by Sue Warren



Steamboat Hunter in 1840

The steamboat Hunter passing in front of Barrel Point in Opinicon Lake. "Opinicon Lake looking to NW" by Thomas Burrowes, 1840, Archives of Ontario, I0002166.

Today the Rideau Canal is a vacation spot, a scenic route for tourists in cruisers, houseboats, canoes, and powerboats. However, in its early years the canal was both an inexpensive passageway for immigrants entering Upper Canada and a commercial waterway. The heyday of this use of the Rideau was from its opening in 1832 until the early 1850s, when the St. Lawrence River route was improved with the additions of canals and locks to bypass rapids.

In the early years, it was less expensive and safer to travel from Montreal to Bytown and then take the Rideau Canal to Kingston which was the gateway to Toronto and beyond. Thousands of passengers were towed behind steamers on barges (some covered, some not). Wealthier individuals enjoyed travelling on an actual steamboat – although enjoyed might be too strong a word.

For example, in the diary of John Treffry, who took a trip on the steamer Enterprise on his way to western Ontario, he narrates a difficult journey. The steamer sprang a leak and after pumping it did not work, the engine broke down. The captain took one of the

Durham boats it was towing to seek help in Kingston (Durham boats were moved by sail, poles or oars when not being towed). The passengers ran out of provisions and were forced to try and catch fish. A few even went on shore to hunt deer but to no avail. Then the cook mutinied. When the captain finally returned with help and food, it was seven days since the steamer had left Bytown.

In the 1830s and 1840s, the steamers were small, dirty and could only achieve about 3 to 5 miles an hour. These little sidewheelers had boilers that required a constant supply of firewood, usually sourced by local farmers, and piled at the lockstations. From Bytown to Kingston it took anywhere from three to seven days depending on the weather and the number of barges the steamers were towing. Barges both decked and undecked were loaded with immigrants as well as a variety of goods – wheat, potash, corn, stoves, geese, iron parts, fish, pigs and so on. Often, the steamboats dragged rafts of timber. Most of these early travelers were disappointed either by the conditions of the steamers or the appearance of the landscape.

James Alexander in his book “L’Acadie or Seven years of exploration in British North America” describes the Rideau as a “hot ditch” with acres of drowned trees standing like ghosts in the water. His only comment was that he was happy in the evenings to fish for bass or paddle a canoe (often hauled by the steamer). Alexander’s steamer was romantically named the Otter.

Amelia Murray, a British botanist and journalist, was disgusted with the Prince Albert, one of the better-known steamers. In 1854, she described the boat as “small and dirty”. Rather than warm her hands on the stove inside, she preferred to sit on the deck under an umbrella in the pouring rain. She was not impressed except by the occasional fall colours of scarlet and gold. The endless swamps, sickly looking trees and log cabins appalled her.

One of the better descriptions of the Prince Albert came from William Kingston in his “Western Wanderings”. Kingston, a British MP, travel writer and novelist, took a journey from the city of Kingston to Bytown in the early 1850s. Kingston later became famous as the translator of Jules Verne. He describes boarding the steamer along with a massive load of stoves which covered most of the deck. The steamer, below the deck, had a ladies’ sleeping quarters and a men’s sleeping quarters with a dining table placed between them. Kingston considered the area below very confining. The steamer zigged and zagged its way to Jones Falls which he found quite magnificent but continued to complain about the stumps which popped up “like crocodiles along the Nile.” Like Amelia Murray, he considered the Rideau Canal to be a sickly place. Among his fellow passengers was a woman with a pair of twins: “sturdy voracious little animals.”

Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Gray, the brother-in-law of the more famous Lord Durham, also passed through the Rideau in 1839 after the Rebellion of Upper Canada. His steamer the Cataragui was acceptable and the food excellent, but he stated that other Rideau steamers on the line “were as bad as possible.” His adventures included a thunderstorm on the Big Rideau which “sounded like the salvo of 32 pounders” and a foray at Oliver’s Ferry to gather waterlilies. Unfortunately, his left eye was then completely shut from mosquito bites. A fellow passenger, James Mathewson, a Member of Parliament for Frontenac County, was described as “a fat, vulgar fellow violent in his abuse of the Family Compact.”

In its first two decades, the Rideau Canal was a very important route in Upper Canada, moving thousands of people and large tonnages of goods. It has been estimated that in 1843 alone, approximately 30,000 individuals travelled the Rideau Canal. But with the improved St. Lawrence River route, the Rideau became strictly a regional waterway. And clearly, while it did move a lot of people in its heyday, it did not receive a lot of praise from voyagers.

- Sue Warren



Durham boats filled with people and goods at Davis Lock, 1840

These five Durham boats (barges) are being towed south to Kingston by the steamboat Bytown. In the painting we see that they’ve been locked through Davis Lock and will hook up to the tow line from the Bytown to continue through Sand Lake to the next locks (Jones Falls). “Lock, Dam, &c at Davis’ Mill; Barges passing from the lock to the Steamboat ‘Bytown’” by Thomas Burrowes, October 1840, Archives of Ontario I0002169.

The Lasalle Causeway



The Lasalle Causeway Bascule Lift Bridge in Kingston (photo by Ken Watson)

Note to boaters: the east channel of the Lasalle Causeway has a fixed bridge clearance of 4.3 m / 14 ft. The lift bridge closure noted in this article only affects boats over that height. For updates on this issue see: parks.canada.ca/rideau

The Lasalle Causeway marks the southern end of the Rideau Canal. It has three bridges, including the iconic Strauss trunnion bascule lift bridge, built in 1915-16. On March 30 of this year, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) had an accident while doing maintenance work on the bridge that resulted in severe damage to a diagonal steel truss element supporting the counterweight. PSPC closed the causeway until further notice and as of this writing (April 27) has not released any information about when the bridge might be repaired.

The closure is having a huge negative impact on Kingston, in terms of business losses, on the tourism season, on vehicles and pedestrians, and of course, on boats. Normally the bridge would begin marine operations (lifting) on May 1. It provides access to the Kingston Inner Harbour for larger boats—including those that use MetalCraft Marine. In addition, several cruise boats, including two of Gananoque Boat Tours boats and St. Lawrence Cruise Lines' flagship boat, the Canadian Empress, are trapped on the wrong side of the bridge. Other tour operators, such as Ontario Waterway Cruises, who operate the Kawartha Voyageur, face a huge impact if a solution cannot be found in time.

There is a solution, which has been put forward by Parks Canada and several others (including the cruise lines), which is to remove the fixed bridge span at the east end (lift it off), to allow access for large boats until the lift bridge is restored to service. Removing the span would allow boats over the present 4.3 m / 14 ft clearance of that bridge to pass through, including the trapped cruise ships, vessels that use MetalCraft Marine and of course vessels such as the Kawartha Voyageur and larger visitor boats that wish to travel the Rideau Canal. If a solution is not implemented prior to the May 17 opening of the Rideau Canal, it will negatively impact businesses along the entire length of the Rideau.

PSPC caused this problem (they still have not fessed up to what exactly happened) and it is really incumbent upon them to put in the resources to quickly fix it. Hopefully a fix is in place to either restore the bridge to service in a timely manner (unlikely), or an alternate solution (i.e. remove the east end bridge) used to allow for large vessels to use the Kingston Inner Harbour and/or use the Rideau Canal.

The earliest bridge in this location may date to as early as 1819 but the first documented bridge dates to 1829, a wooden bridge on masonry piers with a draw bridge at the west end (later replaced by a swing bridge). The LaSalle Causeway is named after René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, a French explorer who oversaw the construction of Fort Frontenac in 1673. Remains of that site, now a National Historic Site, can still be seen today.

Rideau Canal 2024 Hours of Operation

| Dates | Days | Hours |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| May 17—June 20 | Mon to Thurs | 10 am to 4 pm |
| | Fri to Sun, holidays | 9 am to 7 pm |
| June 21—Sept. 2 | Mon to Thurs | 9 am to 6 pm |
| | Fri to Sun, holidays | 9 am to 7 pm |
| Sept. 3—Oct. 14 | Mon to Friday | 10 am to 4 pm |
| | Sat to Sun, holidays | 9 am to 5 pm |

Rideau Canal 2024 Fees

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|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Single Lockage & Return | = \$ 1.25 per foot |
| One Day | = \$ 2.00/ft |
| Transit (one way) | = \$ 5.25/ft |
| Six Days (any six days) | = \$ 5.75/ft |
| Seasonal (power boats) | = \$ 10.00/ft |
| Seasonal (paddle craft) | = \$ 5.00/ft |
| Mooring (overnight) | = \$ 1.25/ft |