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A Rideau Jaunt

or

A Sketch of the Rideau Navigation from Ottawa to Kingston, Ont.

by William Mills - 1883.

CA0186



To view the contents of this CD we recommend the use of Adobe® Acrobat Reader™. Use the “forward” and “back” buttons to browse through the pages. To find individual topics use the CD Contents page and bookmarks in each section, or use the “forward” and “back” buttons, or the scroll bar, to go to a selected page number. You may also select a page number within a section by typing it into the page number box, if the box is displayed on your screen.

The printed portions of this CD have been formatted for text searches using Acrobat Reader™ While the OCR program we use to generate the searchable index for this book achieves accuracies in the high 90% area errors remain. It is not possible to search the portion of the CD showing the page images of William’s original handwriting. Enjoying reading William’s impeccable handwriting is a part of the experience this CD offers.

Remember, there is no substitute for human reading, do not rely on search results.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

William Mills wrote this book in about 1880 at the age of 59.

We do not know much about his early history except that that he was born on 17 July, 1824, and he first became a Civil Servant on 10th August 1858 (at the age of 34). We have an Ottawa address for him in 1862 on Kent Street, "near Rear." We wonder if this might be a misprint, or misinterpretation, for "Maria" - the cross street of Kent who's name is closest to "Rear" - or if there was some other landmark on Kent known as "Rear" at the time, although there is no sign of it in the directory.

In 1872, at the age of 48, William Mills is shown in the Civil Service Lists as working as a Senior 2nd class clerk in the office of the Ordinance Land Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State, earning a salary of \$1,100.00 a year. From an 1871 directory we see he now lived on George Street in what was then called Lower Ottawa but is now known as the Byward Market area.

By 1875 he had moved to a house on the north side of Rideau Street, 3 houses from Gloucester towards Chapel. A move of only a few blocks from his George Street address.

He took his trip down the Rideau Canal aboard the "Louise" on a Thursday in July, 1872 but it took him another couple of years to actually get around to writing about his experiences in the exercise book which we eventually found, and which has been copied to make this reproduction on CD.

Following his jaunt, we know that he remained with the same branch of the Civil Service - although its name was changed to the Ordinance and Admiralty Lands Branch of the Department of the Interior, employed as a 1st class clerk at an annual salary of \$1,800 a year because he appears again in 1894 Civil Service List, when his age would have been 70. He had been promoted to this position on 1 July, 1875.

As William worked in a government department which was dealing in the procurement and, presumably, sale of lands his wonderful clear handwriting must have been a great asset to him and may well account for his career advancement and relatively good salary.

The government department that William worked for would have been responsible for the many land purchases needed to build the canal but since most of these transactions would have been completed before about 1840, well before Williams employment, the only contact he could have had with the canal through his work would have been the occasional transaction needed in the course of maintenance and improvement of the waterway.

The majority of these facts were simply found from our publication CA0030, The Civil Service Lists of Quebec 1853 and Canada 1872 & 1894, the Ottawa directories for 1861-62 (CA0191) and for Ottawa & Kingston of 1875 (CA0190) and from the Canadian Dominion Directory of 1871 (CA0192). The main hint which allowed us to gather all this information can be seen on William's title page where there was a pencil annotation "of Ordinance Land Office" attached to his name and from a fragment of the adhesive flap of an envelope stuck to the inside cover of the book carrying the legend, "Department of the Interior, Ottawa."

ABOUT THIS CD:

While we could have transcribed William's account of his jaunt down the Rideau canal into regular type-script we felt that leaving his account in his own beautifully clear handwriting would bring you a little closer to him and his experiences. For those not familiar with older handwriting styles we should point out that William wrote a "ss" as a "fs" (the first character was also known as a long "s.") some even older texts contain many of the "s's" written as "f's."

The one disadvantage of bringing you the handwritten text is that it cannot be computer searched. This is amply offset, however, by our frequent bookmarking which allows you to jump straight to all the "location" descriptions through the text. The included newspaper cutting is searchable as is all the text in the "Pictures" section.

We did not set out to produce just another "history" of the Rideau canal, but to bring you a personal account of the experience of one of its passengers as he made the journey from Ottawa to Kingston just for the fun of it.

We thought it would be a good idea to see if we could also bring you some pictures so you could also gain some images of what he describes so we sought the help of the archives of the Rideau canal's Museum and Archives, in Smiths Falls. Their archivist, Kim Shepherd, was most helpful, and allowed us to rummage through their enormous collection of old and new photographs of the canal and its surroundings. From this search we selected 70 photographs and added 12 of our own to bring you 82 views of the various points along the canal which William identified in his account. The originals of many of these older pictures, as well as the artwork from which some of them were made, are held in both public and private archives. We have added a picture credit to each picture indicating its origin and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all these fine establishments, not only for allowing us to use these pictures here, but also for their work to preserve these important glimpses into our past.

All these pictures are contained in the file named "CA0186_RideauCanal_Pictures.pdf" on this CD and may be accessed directly. The intention, however was that you read William's account of his jaunt and when you come to a yellow button named "Go to pictures" you use it to access the images which will show you the lock station or location which is being described.

All the pictures have been rendered with the best resolution we could achieve so you can use your "zoom" tool to move in and examine the individual pictures in detail. You will find some amazing details in some of the pictures.

One of the most prized finds in the archive was a picture of the side-wheel paddle steamer "Louise" in the Old Slys locks, this being the very vessel which carried William on his summer jaunt.

Sketch of the
Rideau Navigation,
from Ottawa to Kingston, Ont.

by William Mills. of Ordnance and
Office.

The following sketch of the Rideau Navigation was written by me a few years ago, since then the "Louise" has been removed, and her place taken by the "Gipsy" a more commodious, and elegantly fitted-up vessel, commanded by Captain Fleming, a most genial and obliging gentleman.

Beyond mentioning the erection of a few bridges, connecting the opposite shores of the Navigation, (the principal one being that of the Canada Pacific Railway, situated about a mile from the city) and an occasional landing place, of little interest to the tourist, nothing remains to be added to the sketch as originally written, except a few cursory remarks.

Most of the Lock stations were named, at the time of the construction of the Canal, after certain prominent and esteemed families or individuals living in the vicinity of the respective works, others owe their titles to the peculiar features of the surrounding scenery.

The Lockmasters and their assistants, throughout the entire route, are a most obliging class of men, ready to lend a hand at a portage, to offer you the hospitalities of their homes, and to furnish you with the most reliable information in connection with the particular subject of your enquiry.

As the hour of the "Gipsy's" departure from Ottawa is occasionally changed, I would recommend the intending tourist to consult the advertisement which is regularly inserted during the season in the columns of the local newspapers.

I have appended to this itinerary a copy of an article on "The Rideau Canal" which appeared in the "Canadian Monthly and National Review" of April 1878, its perusal will I have no doubt prove interesting.

Ottawa, May 1st 1883.

M. M.

Sketch of a tour from Ottawa to Kingston Via, the Rideau Navigation

Introduction.

There are perhaps but few persons, in this section of Canada at least, who are thoroughly acquainted with the varied beauties which are presented to the eye of the traveller, throughout the Line of the Rideau Navigation.

We purpose giving a brief sketch of this very interesting route, with a view to attracting the attention of many who being for a time relieved of the irksomeness and pressure of their ordinary business or professional avocations, may contemplate a change of scene for one affording healthy recreation and abundant opportunities of enjoyment.

Ottawa.

We will presume that the fine series of locks, eight in number, which receive, and deserve to receive, so much of the attention and admiration of visitors to the Capital, have been passed through, and that we have experienced an hydraulic "lift" of 82 feet introducing us to the first level of the canal.

The river Ottawa at the entrance to the locks is 110 feet above the level of the sea.

On Thursday the — day of July 1842 at 7 a.m. precisely, the Montreal and Ottawa Forwarding Company's steamer "Louise" well freighted with a cargo of general merchandize and having on board a goodly number of passengers,

was

Pictures of the Rideau Canal Locks and their surroundings.

The pictures in this appendix have been collected to help the reader to share William Mills' experiences as he enjoyed his jaunt down the Rideau canal.

While some of the pictures are contemporary with our story there are also some which originate from much earlier, being reproductions of sketches and watercolors made when the canal was still under construction. To the best of our understanding these pictures were mainly to show the progress being made and were to be included in official progress reports. This would explain their rather "sketchy": nature. Others picture we have included are from photographs and depict scenes of the canal over subsequent years right up to today. Amongst the pictures contemporary with William's jaunt we found a picture of the Louise, William's side-wheel paddle steamer, as she locks through "Old Slys" (page A-13.)

In selecting pictures we have deliberately chosen views which show what William would have seen from his deck-chair vantage point on the Louise's deck. On the other hand we have also included some photographs taken from an aerial viewpoint - which clearly would have astonished William - but which serve well to show the layout of some of the various locks.

William was always very complimentary about the lock staff he encountered so whenever we could find them we also included pictures of the buildings which serviced the locks as residences, offices or store houses. Some pictures even show people who we think may be the canal staff of the period but unfortunately it is impossible to be sure in the majority of cases.

We have shrunk many of the pictures to fit them onto one page per lock station. These pages should be considered as a gallery as most of the pictures can be zoomed by several times to view the subject in detail. For instance the aerial view of the Black Rapids on page A-4 can be zoomed to reveal a boat just leaving the lock. A happy accident we believe, and not the particular intent of the Royal Canadian Air Force when they took the picture.

William's jaunt starts upstream of the first set of eight locks in Ottawa but we thought our first page of pictures should show this important landmark both during its construction and during its latter years of use. Today the locks serve the dual purpose of connecting the Rideau Canal and the Ottawa (or Grand) river and also providing a really interesting tourist venue.

Don't forget to stop in at the Bytown Museum on the west bank of the Ottawa flight of locks to learn more about Colonel By (the canal's builder) and the quite amazing engineering project which he carried out in the face of such great difficulties. Also visit the Rideau Canal Museum on Beckwith Street in Smiths Falls, in the old mill building just before the bridge crosses the canal.

Ottawa

Station #1, locks 1 through 8

First Eight Locks of the Rideau Canal, the North entrance from the Ottawa River. - 1834



First Eight Locks of the Rideau Canal, the North entrance from the Ottawa River

A watercolor by Thomas Burrows, Shows the commissariat building, now the home of the Bytown museum. Painted before the Houses of Parliament were built in the 1860's.

Picture credit:

Archives of Ontario,

- C 1-0-0-13, Thomas Burrows fonds

The Locks in winter



Canal closed and locks drained.

Picture credit: Parks Canada - Rideau Canal Office

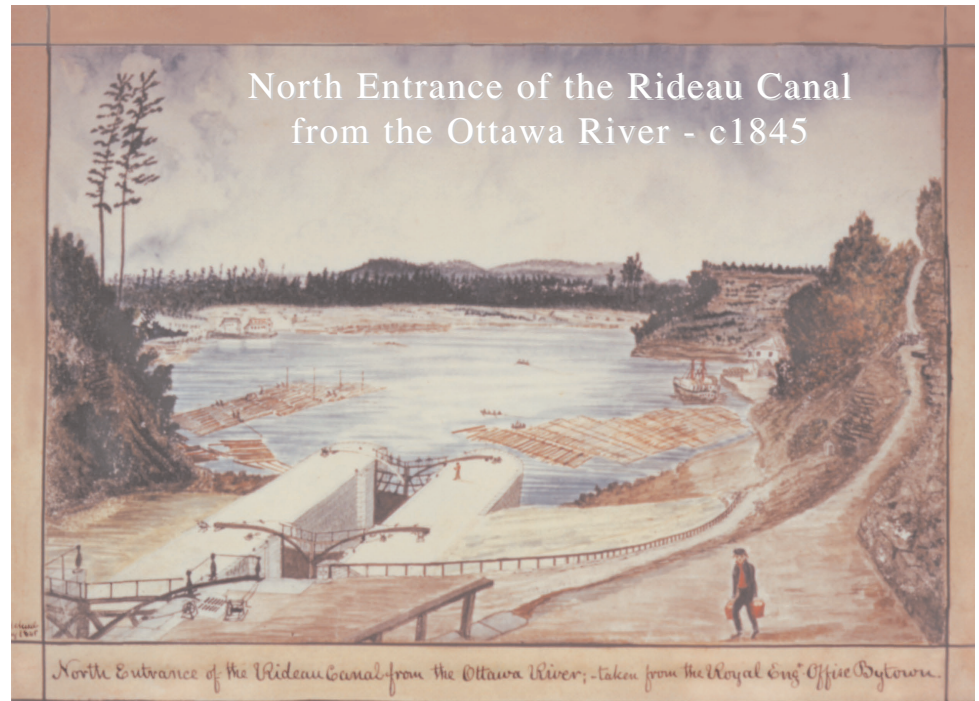
Looking south at the lock entrance, from the Ottawa River. - 1880



Note the commissariat building to the right of the locks, now the home of the Bytown museum.

Picture credit: Library and Archives Canada

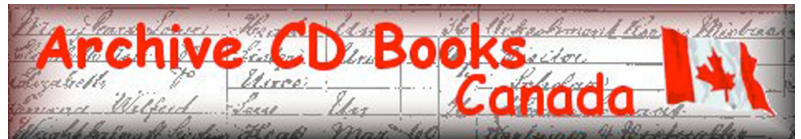
North Entrance of the Rideau Canal from the Ottawa River - c1845



North Entrance of the Rideau Canal from the Ottawa River; - taken from the Royal Eng's Office Bytown.

A watercolor by Thomas Burrows, View from the (then) Royal Engineers office Bytown.

Picture credit: Archives of Ontario
- C 1-0-0-14, Thomas Burrows fonds



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Archive CD Books Canada Inc.
P O Box 11
Manotick
Ontario, K4M 1A2
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