COMMONWEALTH
HISTORIC
RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
LIMITED

RIDEAU CANAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
1989 - 1990

A REPORT

MARCH 1990
The Microfiche Report Series is intended for internal use by the Canadian Parks Service. These Microfiches are distributed to various public depositories in Canada for use by interested individuals.

Documents are reproduced exactly as received and have not been edited.
RIDEAU CANAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
1989 - 1990

A Report
March 1990

Submitted to
Environment Canada, Canadian Parks Service,
Ontario Region

by
Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
1

### A. INTRODUCTION  
9

### B. INTERVIEW AND INTERVIEWEES  
10

### C. A SUMMARY OF ORAL INTERVIEWS  
19

- Part 1: Rideau Canal Employees  
- Part 2: Rideau Canal Users  
- Part 3: General Observations  
36  
39

## BIBLIOGRAPHY  
41

### D. TRANSCRIPTS  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tape</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tape 1</td>
<td>Carl Peel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 2</td>
<td>Don Warren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 3</td>
<td>Bob Moir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 4</td>
<td>Larry Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 5</td>
<td>Bob Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 6</td>
<td>Grenville Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 7</td>
<td>Joe Jacques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 8</td>
<td>George Foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 9</td>
<td>Eddie Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 10</td>
<td>Charlie Menagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 11</td>
<td>Dan Danielson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 12</td>
<td>Ron Pyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 13</td>
<td>Doreen Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 14</td>
<td>Fred Killingbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 15</td>
<td>Billy Bowles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 16</td>
<td>Allan Buell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 17</td>
<td>Richard Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 18</td>
<td>Gilbert McBroome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 19</td>
<td>Gord Mains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 20</td>
<td>Bill Jardine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 21</td>
<td>William Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 22</td>
<td>Harold Nichol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 23</td>
<td>Stuart Douglas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 24</td>
<td>Charles Milne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 25</td>
<td>Marcel Belanger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 26</td>
<td>Al Rochefort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 27</td>
<td>Richard Evoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 28</td>
<td>Richard Egan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 29</td>
<td>Jack Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 30</td>
<td>Syd and Mary Herwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape 31</td>
<td>Rheal Regimbald</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRANSCRIPTS bound separately
RIDEAU CANAL ORAL HISTORY

Tape 32  Edward Winton
Tape 33  John Bonser
Tape 34  Ashton Dale
Tape 35  Ruth Anna Glover
Tape 36  Joe Ducharme
Tape 37  Jim Watters
Tape 38  Harry and Helen Showler
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary is an analysis of interviews relating to their importance to certain themes. It is a concise summary for the use of Canadian Parks Service employees and other researchers. It is included in the bound report providing a commentary on different interviews where an informal evaluation has been made for each interview. The prime purpose of the summary is to enable researchers to cut to the interviews most likely to provide detail for certain themes and to weed out the interviews that were less informative.

Tape 1. Carl Peel.
An excellent interview involving several key management positions including assistant superintendent and superintendent in the southern area, area manager and assistant superintendent of the Rideau Canal. He has a total grasp on changing management structures.

Tape 2. Don Warren.
An important interview with a key public activist for the preservation of heritage sites on the Rideau. Good material on his opposition to the electrification of Chaffey's Locks. Also important information on growing up at a lock station and local activities like guiding. Mr. Warren is a superb communicator and should be considered for future interviews on several subjects as well as a video interview on his public interest activity. He was also interviewed by Susan Warren in 1984. He has a personal collection of documents relating to his activities.

An honest, up front interview about the frustrations and achievements of public service. The most important interview on the subject of water control in his role as operations supervisor in the central area. Good information on growing up near the canal and activities like trapping, hunting and fishing. A video interview with Mr. Moir outlining the process for water control would be valuable.
Tape 4. Larry Clark.
A key interview with a former superintendent active during Transport years. Not as useful on Rideau details as his role in lobbying for the canal in other levels of the department. Good data on lock electrification issue—see Warren. Excellent contrast in work overload in a limited office with John Bonser’s analysis of later administrative structures.

Tape 5. Bob Day.
A concise and important interview with the first full-time interpreter on the canal. Good discussion on the introduction of the program to canal employees and the balance between heritage and natural resources in planning.

This interview involved a wide array of activities from the floating plant to the lock station. He worked as a deckhand and a lockmaster.

A useful interview on some of the technical details relating to the floating plant and maintenance.

Tape 8. George Foster.
A mechanical scow operator, he has some important details on maintenance activities, especially concerning stone work at lock stations.

Mr. Moore was at forefront of new management positions when areas were first created in 1967 and when they expanded to three in 1974. As an assistant superintendent and area manager, as well as a lockmaster, he is able to provide an overview of the era. See also the 1984 interview of Mr. Moore by Susan Warren.
This interview has little to do with operations and maintenance but it provides some good detail on recreational activities on the Rideau Lakes. Menagh operated a supply boat from Smiths Falls during the 1930s.

Tape 11. Dan Danielson.
An animated interview with a lockmaster who knows a great deal about the Long Island and Hartwells Lock Stations. He is adept at identifying the visual changes around the Ottawa area locks since 1960. Very opinionated on many issues. A good storyteller.

Tape 12. Ron Pyne.
An good interview about growing up at the Davis Lock Station. Also details on guiding and trapping on the system. A very sensitive overview of living and working on the Rideau at a specific station.

Tape 13. Doreen Campbell.
Some minor information on the role of the clerk but the interview wasn’t successful.

Tape 14. Fred Killingbeck.
The only interview with a maintenance supervisor.

Tape 15. Billy Bowles.
A good interview on the role of a deckhand in the floating plant. Also some details on the work boats, staff and depots. Especially useful on the kind of lifestyle on the floating plant.
Tape 16. Allan Buell.  
A highly recommended source for an interview, he actually had limited personal experience on the canal except for some early canoe tripping and later residence in Manotick. More important as a source of information on the Foster family of Smiths Falls, who were forwarders. He has some interesting scrapbooks on this family.

A brief interview with the operator of the Gananoque Light and Power Co. generating station at Kingston Mills. Some information gleaned on the power station and an overview of life and changes around Kingston Mills.

Tape 18. Gilbert McBroom.  
Very little on operations and maintenance but a sensitive overview of growing up at the Lower Brewers Lock Station and changes that have taken place. Note details on early mills in the area.

A good interview with an individual described as an electrician but really Mr. Fixit with a wide range of experience in several fields of maintenance.

A fair interview with a long term carpenter who has experienced several changes in the maintenance field.

Tape 21. William Bell.  
A good interview with a former operations supervisor with a lot of comparative information between operations on the Trent and Rideau Canals. Note the discussion about safety measures and their adaptation on the Rideau.
Tape 22. Harold Nichol.
Very little information on operations or maintenance but important details on his families' role in early boatbuilding and bird carving.

A good interview with a man of many trades who depended on the Rideau for some of his operations like lumbering. Information about the Meighen families' long time recreational use of the canal. Also information on early boatbuilders and activities at the Rideau Ferry Regatta.

Tape 24. Charles Milne.
With his father, brother and son as lockmasters at Upper Brewers Lock Station, Chuck had a lot to talk about in this fascinating interview. For over 50 years he has operated the generating station owned by the Gananoque Light and Power Co. at Brewers Mills. Some good observations on local changes in the landscape.

Tape 25. Marcel Belanger.
A former lockmaster and present operations supervisor in the northern area, he recounts the kinds of problems in water control and visitors services that are unique in the Ottawa region.

Tape 26. Al Rochefort.
In this interview there is some information on the role of the labourer in a temporary situation. There is also insight into activities around Kingston Mills.

Tape 27. Richard Evoy.
There is discussion on the operation of the mechanical scows presently in use.
Captain Egan had a career in the Rideau Canal floating plant as deckhand, fireman, engineer and master. He had not been well recently and the interview did not reach its potential. Some insight into the characters which made up the floating plant.

Tape 29. Jack Campbell.
Retired owner of the Gananoque Light and Power Co., Mr. Campbell provided important information on water level management, relations with canal managers and the network of dams and watersheds which support the Rideau system in the southern area. Further interviews may tap into his wide knowledge of the Rideau waterway.

Tape 30. Syd and Mary Herwig.
They provide a lively discussion on the roots of recreational boating on the Rideau and life on the canal. There is some important information on the relationship between boaters and canal operations. A video interview would go far in capturing their enthusiasm for classic boating on the Rideau.

Tape 31. Rheal Regimbald.
A good interview with a long time member of the carpenter gang. He is interested in interpretation and he would be an excellent choice to do a French language video of a Rideau Canal lock gate carpenter.

Tape 32. Edward Winton.
The interview had little to do with operations and maintenance except his role as a founder of a local fish and game association. The Wintons provide information on local activities, operating tourist cabins, and changes on the system.
Tape 33. John Bonser.
An important interview reflecting the kinds of changes in attitude and operations that have taken place on the Rideau Canal. The present superintendent identifies the kinds of challenges that had to be overcome and reflects on the importance of 150th anniversary celebrations as a catalyst for widespread recognition of the canal.

Tape 34. Ashton Dale.
He should be declared a heritage site. This interview was important and forms a companion interview with one done by Susan Warren in 1984. He is the last surviving member of carpenter gangs who roamed the Rideau Canal in a schedule of on-site lock gate and bridge framing. He has wonderful comments on lifestyle while growing up at a lock station, and bunking at stations when he was part of the gang. Note also his comments on other Rideau Canal staff and also specific maintenance problems, like working with wood. He should be interviewed in a video format on the nature of lock gate framing in old and modern methods.

Tape 35. Ruth Anna Glover.
A short but very interesting interview with the retired owner of Bunnys Tourist Home. Having little to do with operations and maintenance, it is an interesting account of a dedicated host and a loyal clientele. Some of her long term clients should be interviewed. A video walk-about in her tourist home would capture the atmosphere of her place.

Tape 36. Joe Ducharme.
This interview with a retired Ottawa area lockman was of little importance owing to Mr. Ducharme’s declining health.

Tape 37. Jim Watters.
This interview with an active lockman offered little substance except for some information on the early employment of summer students on the canal. More information on his youth growing up in proximity to the canal did not pan out.
Tape 38. Harry and Helen Showler. The major contribution is Harry's as he discussed the environmental changes and conditions on the Rideau Lakes over the last four decades.
A. INTRODUCTION

The Rideau Canal is over 158 years old and is approximately 150 miles long. As a heritage waterway, the Rideau presents an image of an earlier era when water transportation played a more significant part of everyday life. Old technologies and structures persist at lock stations, the canal still meanders through lake land, rural countryside, and small towns and cities. In spite of the timeless setting, the Rideau Canal has experienced major transformations over its history. It has passed through eras dominated by military, commercial and recreational uses. Many Rideau shorelines have seen vast changes in land use and occupation. One of the more significant transformations on the canal has been recent. As a result of the growing dominance of the recreational use of the canal throughout this century, the canal passed from the hands of the Department of Transport in 1972 to Parks authorities first in the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and later Environment Canada.

The transformation has had a major impact on canal management. The canal has modernized its procedures in operations and maintenance, it has broadened its objective beyond passing boats to include servicing the needs of the tourist industry, it has taken a more significant role in environmental management, and it has acquired the necessary funding to maintain heritage structures and support interpretive programs.

The purpose of this oral history is to capture some of the flavour of operations and maintenance on the Rideau Canal before the transition, and to detect the impact of changes during and after the transformation. This project has been significant because procedures on the canal survived well into the mid-century.

The result of this oral history is an easily accessible collection of tapes, transcripts, and a summary that will be a significant contribution to our knowledge of the lives and routines of people who worked and lived on the Rideau Waterway.
B. INTERVIEWER AND INTERVIEWEE

The project manager and interviewer for the project is Larry Turner, principal historian with Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited. He is thoroughly versed in the historical and contemporary development of operations, maintenance, and management of the Rideau Canal. He has worked on several Rideau Canal projects including histories of the two Tay Canals and recreational boating, as well as studies of canal work vessels and their staff, the development of lock gate framer’s carpenter gangs and maintenance and operations at Hartwells Lock Station (see bibliography). He is a past-president of the Rideau and Adams Lake Fish and Game Association, a member of the heritage committee of the Manotick Classic Boat Club, and a board member of the Friends of the Rideau. Turner’s familiarity with subject background, knowledge of sources, and experience in interviewing are key factors which ensure the success of this project. A comprehensive plan for seeking the appropriate questions in interviews and understanding the significance and impact of answers has resulted in a document with wide-ranging sources of information.

Most of the interviewees came from a list of sixty names prepared by the Rideau Canal Office. The list represented individuals likely to have knowledge of operations and maintenance on the Rideau Canal. The list was well balanced by region and job background, and most were retired. More than half of the list declined to be interviewed, or could not be found, with many of the individuals declining because of personal health or health problems in the family.

Several of the names in the Rideau Canal list had not been employees, and to round out a full slate, the interviewer added several individuals who he thought would contribute to the oral history. The individuals not employed on the canal offered insight into their view of canal operations and maintenance as well as other observations. Owing to the dominance of males in past Rideau Canal staffing, only one female Rideau Canal employee was interviewed out of a total of thirty-eight
interviews. One female was interviewed as a tourist home operator, and four others contributed to interviews as a husband and wife team. Unfortunately no woman who had lived on a lock station was interviewed.

Most of the interviews took place in the homes of the respondents, and several were located at work stations. One interview was undertaken by phone. All of the interviews were less than an hour in duration, and some were for half an hour. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere, with discussion taking place before and after the interviews to collect biographical data and set the line of questioning. Unfortunately some of characters told stories when the taping was over to be ‘off the record’. The interviewer would like to acknowledge the hospitality and patience extended by all the interviewees.

All of the thirty-eight interviews involving forty-two persons were taped on a standard cassette recorder, and transcribed. A counter index appears at the end of each transcribed interview. None of the tapes or transcripts were edited for content, and square brackets were used [ ] for clarification of statements or added information. Release forms were signed where possible, photographs were taken of most of the individuals and short biographies were collected on all of them.

The list of interviewees and their biographies are as follows. Transcripts of the interviews are bound separately, and the tapes are on file at the Canadian Parks Service’s Ontario Region office at Cornwall, Ontario.

Tape 1. Carl Peel
Carl Peel was born in Peterborough, Ontario. He started work on the Trent Canal in 1959 as an accounts payable clerk, and he had served as payroll clerk, store clerk and storeman by 1969. Carl came to the Rideau Canal as assistant superintendent in the southern area in 1969, and became superintendent of the southern area in the early 1970s. In 1974 he was transferred to Smiths Falls to be area manager in the central area and he has served as assistant superintendent of the Rideau Canal since 1980. He presently resides in Perth, Ontario.
Tape 2. Don Warren
Don Warren was born on 25 October 1921. He was the son of Herman Warren who was a canalman at Newboro Locks 1919-1928 and Lockmaster at Chaffeys Lock 1928-1956. Don grew up around the lock station and was a guide around Chaffeys Locks for many years. After military service he entered the teaching profession from which he is retired. Don was instrumental in forming a public interest group to save the Chaffeys Lock from electrification. He has served on the local township council, and he is presently a member of the board of the Friends of the Rideau. He resides at Chaffeys Locks.

Tape 3. Bob Moir
Bob Moir was born near Kilmarnock on 10 April 1937. He worked some years at CP Express before being hired by the Rideau Canal in May of 1972. Bob worked as a lockman at Smiths Falls Combined Locks until 1974 when he was appointed operations manager for the central area, a position he still holds.

Tape 4. Larry Clark
Larry Clark was born in Morrisburg, Ontario in 1922. After serving with a bomber command overseas, he studied forestry and engineering, graduating from the University of New Brunswick with a degree in civil engineering. In 1950, L.W. Clark joined the Rideau Canal as an engineer, and he replaced A.R. Whittier as superintending engineer in 1954, a post he held until 1972 when he was transferred to Canals Branch in Ottawa. He is now retired and living in Ottawa.

Tape 5. Bob Day
Bob Day was born in North Bay, Ontario in 1942, and graduated from the University of New Brunswick as a forester. Mr. Day was the first permanent interpretive officer on the Rideau Canal in 1976 where he worked until 1981. He is presently the superintendent of the Georgian Bay District of the Canadian Parks Service.

Tape 6. Grenville Murray
Grenville Murray was born in Burritts Rapids, Ontario, on 4 April 1919. After serving overseas in World War II, he was employed at the woollen mill in Burritts Rapids and later at the Merrickville foundry before starting work with the Rideau Canal in 1948. Mr. Murray worked in construction away from the canal between 1952 and 1956. He returned to the Rideau Canal in 1956 where he worked on the floating plant as a deckhand, became a bridgemaster, and from 1972 until his retirement in 1984, was the lockmaster at Merrickville. He now lives in Kemptville, Ontario.

Tape 7. Joe Jacques
Joe Jacques was born 18 June 1925 and raised in Lancaster, Ontario. After serving in the Armed Forces he moved to Merrickville, where he worked in the foundry. He started with the Rideau Canal on 29 June 1962 as a deckhand on the floating plant. He has worked on the old tugs and new scows, as a carpenter building lock gates and as a sign painter at the shops in Smiths Falls. Mr. Jacques retired in 1986.
RIDEAU CANAL ORAL HISTORY

Tape 8. George Foster
George Foster was born 3 October 1935 in Frankville, near Jarvis in Kitley Township, Ontario. He has worked in the construction industry and with Ontario Hydro, and he started working for the Rideau Canal on 27 September 1967. He has operated mechanical scow #2 in the central area since 1976 and was formerly on maintenance gangs, the work scow towed by the Long Sault, and with the main shop in Smiths Falls.

Tape 9. Ed Moore
Ed Moore was born and raised in Burritts Rapids, Ontario. He was first employed by Rideau Canal in 1956, starting as a deckhand on the old dipper-dredge Rideau. After a year he moved on to be lockman at Merrickville and lockmaster at Edmonds and Burritts Rapids Lockstations. In 1967 Ed was transfered to the northern area depot as assistant superintendent of that section of the canal. He was appointed Area Manager in the Southern Division when the canal was divided into three maintenance districts in 1974. He retired in 1984, and his late wife was a daughter of a lockmaster. He lives in Merrickville, Ontario.

Tape 10. Charles Menagh
Charles Menagh was born in 1901 in the house he still lives in at 11 Jasper Avenue, Smiths Falls, Ontario. He has been around the Rideau Canal all of his life and worked for Frost and Woods Agricultural Implements between 1928 and 1954, and in research for the Department of National Defence. In the early 1930s he operated a small supply boat visiting cottages and hotels on the Rideau Lakes for his uncle. He is a long-time cottager on Big Rideau Lake.

Tape 11. Dan Danielson
Dan Danielson was born in Bangor, Saskatchewan, on 30 January 1911. He came to Ottawa during World War II when he was involved with the wireless radio school at Uplands. He started working on the Rideau Canal in 1960 as a lockman, and he served in that position at Long Island and Black Rapids before becoming lockmaster at Hartwells Lock Station in 1968. He retired in 1975 and lives in Ottawa, Ontario.

Tape 12. Ron Pyne
Ron Pyne was born in June of 1944, and he was raised at Davis Locks where his father, Jim Pyne, was a lockmaster between 1947 and 1959. Ron started working for the Rideau Canal in 1974 and he has been a lockman at Narrows and Davis Lock Stations.

Tape 13. Doreen Campbell
Doreen Campbell is a clerk with the Central Area Office of the Rideau Canal. She was born near Portland, Ontario on 4 October 1918. She worked previously with a furniture company in Toledo, Ontario, and began working on the canal in 1974.
Tape 14. **Fred Killingbeck**
Fred Killingbeck was born in 1928. He served with the Armed Forces in the Korean War, and he was a carpenter when he was hired by the Rideau Canal in 1968. Mr. Killingbeck worked as a lock gate framer and on maintenance gangs. He became acting maintenance supervisor in the central area in 1975, and he transferred to the southern area as maintenance supervisor in 1978. He retired just a few days from this interview on 30 October 1989.

Tape 15. **Billy Bowles**
Billy Bowles was born in Ottawa, Ontario, and after serving in the armed forces during World War II, he moved to Smiths Falls. He started working with the Rideau Canal in 1955, first in general maintenance, and then from 1960, on the dredge as a scowman and deckhand and later as a deckhand on the tugs. He retired in 1977.

Tape 16. **Allan Buell**
Allan Buell was born in 1907 and raised in Brockville, Ontario. He graduated with a degree in Forestry from the University of Toronto in 1931, and was located at Longlac between 1938 and 1955. He moved to Ottawa in 1955 where he was vice-president in charge of wood supplies with the E.B. Eddy Co. He retired in 1972 and took up residence on the Rideau Canal at Manotick.

Tape 17. **Richard Allen**
Richard Allen was born in Montreal, Quebec in October of 1930. He spent some of his youth near Kingston Mills, Ontario, and in 1965 was hired by the Gananoque Light and Power Company to operate their hydro-electric station at Kingston Mills.

Tape 18. **Dr. Gilbert McBroom**
Gilbert McBroom was born at Washburns or Lower Brewers Locks in 1912 where his father was a lockmaster. After spending his youth at the locks Dr. McBroom attended medical school and practiced in the region. He later had a cottage on the Rideau Lakes, and now resides near Kingston in Pittsburgh Township in the historic Baxter House built in 1820.

Tape 19. **Gord Mains**
Gordon Mains was born in North Gower, Ontario, on 18 September 1926. After working with the Department of Agriculture at the Experimental Farm in Ottawa, he started working for the Rideau Canal as an electrician in 1951. Mr. Mains retired in 1985, and he lives in Smiths Falls.

Tape 20. **Bill Jardine**
Bill Jardine was born at Battersea, Ontario, on 12 July 1923. He started working on the Rideau Canal in 1958 as a timberman, and he worked as a lock gate carpenter and later with the maintenance gang in the southern division until his retirement in 1987.
Tape 21. William Bell
William C. Bell was born at Waubauschene, Georgian Bay, in 1925. After serving in the Second World War, he took a job with the Trent Canal in 1946, where he eventually became a lockmaster. In 1973 he transferred to the Rideau Canal where he became operations supervisor for the southern area. Mr. Bell retired in 1985 and lives in Westport.

Tape 22. Harold Nichol
Harold Nichol was born in Smiths Falls, Ontario in 1927. He has resided in Smiths Falls all of his life and has been a cottager on the Rideau for most of his life. Harold is a renowned wood carver, and he learned his craft from his father, David W. Nichol and his great uncle Davy Nichol. Davy Nichol was one of the Rideau’s most significant boat builders.

Tape 23. Stuart Meighen Douglas
Stuart Meighen Douglas was born in Smiths Falls, Ontario, in 1916. He was a draftsman apprentice at Frost & Woods, 1934-41, and he operated a lumbering firm on the site of the present Murphy’s Point Provincial Park. He has also been involved in construction and the sand and gravel business. He now runs a machine shop in Smiths Falls, formerly known as Stuart M. Douglas Ltd., and now SMD Enterprises. Mr. Douglas shares a cottage site near McVeety’s Bay on Big Rideau Lake with other descendants of the Meighen family of Perth, and he presently resides in Smiths Falls. Mrs. Karen Douglas also commented in the interview.

Tape 24. Charles Milne
Charles (Chuck) Milne was born at Brewers Mills on 29 July 1921. His grandfather, Charles, was a lockman; father, Peter, twin brother, Edward, and son, Ken, were all lockmasters at Upper Brewers Locks on the Rideau Canal. Mr. Milne is now semi-retired, having worked for more than fifty years with the Gananoque Light and Power Co., operating its power station at Upper Brewers since its construction in 1939. The Milies also operated some tourist cabins.

Tape 25. Marcel Belanger
Marcel Belanger was born in Hull, Quebec, on 15 March 1945. He started working on the Rideau Canal in 1972 as a bridgemaster, becoming a lockman at Ottawa Locks in 1973. In 1977 he was appointed lockmaster at Hogsback and Hartwells Lock Stations which were operated as combined stations from 1978. He was acting operations supervisor in the northern area in 1982-83, lockmaster at Ottawa Locks from 1984-86, and acting operations supervisor again in 1987. Mr. Belanger was appointed operations supervisor in the northern area in 1988, and he presently resides in the lockmaster’s house at Hartwells Lock Station.
Tape 26. Al Rochefort
Al Rochefort was born in Kingston, Ontario, on 7 July 1921. He was the son of Florence Graham who grew up at the Kingston Mills Lock Station, where her father, Donald, was a canal man and a resident of the blockhouse. Mr. Rochefort spent one summer working as a labourer on the canal, served in the Second World War, and resided in Smiths Falls where he worked on the railway. He presently lives on a farm near Smiths Falls and raises beef cattle.

Tape 27. Richard Evoy
Richard Evoy was born in Smiths Falls, Ontario, on 11 December 1934. He worked in trucking and with the Town of Smiths Falls before starting work with the Rideau Canal on 27 June 1967. Mr. Evoy started working as a deckhand on the floating plant, and has operated work scow no. 3 for most of its existence in the southern area of the Rideau Canal.

Tape 28. Richard Egan
Richard (Dick) Egan was born in Hammond, Ontario, on 21 September 1910. His father, Captain Michael Egan, was a career steamboat master who was captain of the Rideau Canal work vessel, Loretta, from 1939 to the late 1950s. Richard worked at E.B. Eddy and had his own dance band before following his father to the Rideau Canal. He joined the floating plant in 1940 and worked on the dredge Rideau as a deckhand, on the tug Agnes P. as a fireman and engineer, and on the Loretta as an engineer. He also took out his master’s papers and became the captain of the Long Sault. He has always lived in the Ottawa area, and he retired in 1975.

Tape 29. Jack Campbell
Jack Campbell was born in Rochester, New York, 15 October 1908, and he grew up in Kingston. His grandfather had been a Kingston miller and his father, John M. Campbell, was at the forefront of electrical development in eastern Ontario. Jack attended the University of New Brunswick and worked for Canadian General Electric in Toronto and Peterborough before taking over his father’s Gananoque Light and Power Company in 1936. The company now operates five power stations on the Rideau system at Kingston Mills, Washburns, Upper Brewers, Jones Falls, and Rideau Falls. Jack is semi-retired, and the firm remains in the family. He presently lives on the St. Lawrence River just east of Gananoque.

Tape 30. Syd Herwig
Syd Herwig was born in Ottawa, Ontario, on 28 April 1924. He served with the Navy during the World War II, worked at E.B. Eddy in Ottawa, Heroux Foundry in Merrickville, at a Merrickville engineering firm, and for the Mines Branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. With his wife, Mary, he operated Commodore Marina near Manotick between 1966 and 1975. Syd and Mary were founding members and both past-presidents of the Manotick Classic Boat Club.

Mary Herwig was born 24 May 1924 and she is the editor of the Brass Binnacle, and presently sits on the Board of the Antique and Classic Boat Society. The Herwigs reside in Manotick, Ontario.
Tape 31. Rheal Regimbald
Rheal Regimbald was born in Hammond, Ontario, 23 May 1926. He started working on the Rideau Canal in 1947, and joined the carpenters gang in 1955. For several years Mr. Regimbald was a seasonal employee in the winter while maintaining a market garden at Navan. He worked in the northern area framing lock gates at Hartwells and later in general maintenance at Long Island. He was involved in the interpretive program for several years. He retired in 1988 and lives in Cumberland, Ontario.

Tape 32. Edward (Ned) Winton
Edward (Ned) Winton was born in Ottawa, Ontario, on 24 November 1920, and has lived all of his life on a farm located on Lot 2, Concession 5, of North Burgess Township, fronting on Adams and Big Rideau Lakes. Aside from mixed farming, Ned has been involved in local mica mining, lumbering, saw milling, trapping, ice cutting and storage, and the making of maple sugar. Along with his wife Wilma, the Wintons have maintained and operated tourist cabins since 1949. The Wintons were founding members of the Rideau and Adams Lake Fish and Game Association.

Tape 33. John Bonser
John Bonser was born in England in 1940. He joined the civil service in Ottawa in the 1960s and started with Parks as a program officer in Halifax in 1968. In 1969 he became an area engineer for Parks in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and was appointed superintendent of Terra Nova National Park in Nova Scotia in 1970. He became superintendent of Fundy National Park in 1972; St. Lawrence Islands National Park in 1976; and the Rideau Canal in 1980. John became Director of Regional Planning and Development at the Ontario Regional Office of Parks Canada in 1983, returning to head up the Rideau Canal in 1987. In 1988-89, John was President of the Ontario Historical Society. He has a cottage on the Rideau Lakes and resides in Brockville.

Tape 34. Ashton Dale
Ashton Dale was a master carpenter who specialized in the framing of lock gates. Born in Shawville, Quebec, in 1912, just when his father had been signed on as lockman at Hartwells Locks, Ashton moved to Hogsback Locks in 1924 when his father was promoted to lockmaster at that site. He was hired on the canal in 1934, became a timberman, and was promoted to carpenter in 1939. He was a foreman of his own carpenter gang in 1949, and when lock gate framing was given a permanent home in Smiths Falls in the early 1970s, he headed up the crew until his retirement in 1977. Ashton's experience made him a valuable asset long after he retired, in giving advice and volunteering to help interpret the role of the distinct Rideau Canal lock gate framer.
Tape 35. Ruth Anna Glover
Ruth Anna Glover was born in the village of California near Jones Falls on 23 March 1907. She married John Francis "Bunny" Glover, whose father had erected a house overlooking Jones Falls Lock Station in 1900. In 1949 they opened Bunny’s Tourist Home and after her husband’s death around 1970, she continued to operate the tourist facility and bed and breakfast house until 1986 when she retired. Except for one small cabin, all guests ate and slept in the main house, and the interior furnishings are typical of a tourist home in that period. The interview took place in the spacious kitchen where many a story had been told about Rideau bass.

Tape 36. Joe Ducharme
Joe Ducharme was born in 1917 and was raised at Verner near Lake Nippissing, Ontario. He worked as a labourer in maintenance on the Rideau Canal until 1962 when he was appointed a lockman. He worked at Hogs Back, Hartwells and Ottawa Locks before his retirement in 1982. Mrs. Ducharme made several comments during the interview. They live in Ottawa.

Tape 37. Jim Watters
Jim Watters was born near Davis Lock in South Crosby Township in 1947. His father John had been a lockman and lockmaster at Davis, retiring around 1974. Jim started work on the Rideau Canal as a student in 1969 and became full time in 1972. He has worked as a lockman at Edmonds and Jones Falls Lock Stations.

Tape 38. Harry and Helen Showier
Harry Showier was born in Ottawa on 30 October 1925. He had worked as a linotype operator with the Ottawa Journal and Ottawa Citizen, and he built a cottage on Big Rideau Lake near the entrance to Adams Lake in 1952-53. He was a founding member of the Rideau and Adams Lake Fish and Game Association, and he has lived the past few years at his Rideau home.

Helen Showier was born in Ottawa, Ontario, 16 May 1934, and shares with her husband an interest in local wildlife. Her family had long been associated with the area where they live on lot 2, concession 5, North Burgess Township.
C. A SUMMARY OF ORAL INTERVIEWS

Part 1: Rideau Canal Employees
Since the oral interviews are about people and their perceptions, the best way of organizing a summary is through job categories rather than operations or maintenance function.

Superintending Engineer and Superintendent
Colonel John By was the first superintending engineer on the Rideau Canal, and it was an apt job description for almost 150 years. The most senior position on the canal involved decision making on canal operations and maintenance involving a wide range of uses over a long stretch of waterway through several kinds of landscape. In the process of locking boats and controlling water, the superintending engineer had to assess maintenance on lock stations, lock gates, sluices, dams, weirs, bridges, wharves and other structures. Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century when water supply became an increasing concern, decisions on the canal made a greater impact on the Cataraqui and Rideau watersheds. A strong knowledge of engineering was considered essential to head up the system which cast a wide net of control on either side of the canal channel.

After the Second World War, the administration of the Rideau Canal was subject to several new pressures including increased urban development, recreational use, environmental concerns, heritage awareness and the growing complexity of different levels of government about the role of the Rideau in their jurisdiction. The role of superintending engineer began to change with the system. The costly maintenance of an aging system took on new meaning with the recognition of the canal as an historic waterway. Funding was made available to undertake expensive repairs and to develop an engineering team to handle the growing problems, especially of heritage restoration. The rise of tourism as a major industry in Ontario broadened the scope of the Rideau Canal as a system to lock boats to include visitors services and sensitive restoration of structures. Recognition of recreation as
the dominant pursuit on the canal saw the transfer of the Rideau Canal from the Department of Transport to Parks Services in the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in 1972, and later in 1979 to Environment Canada. Concerns over the environment and water control has forced a more sensitive response in decision making along the waterway involving areas once taken for granted. Finally, widespread development in the region has made more complex, the jurisdictional boundaries of federal, provincial, and regional or municipal governments and their departments. The superintendent of the Rideau Canal must now be a negotiator, a conciliator, a politician, an organizer, a manager. The element of engineering, while still useful in the position, has largely been delegated to people on staff.

The transition in this role has been rapid. The interviews of Larry Clark who left the canal in 1972 and John Bonser who took over in 1980 reveal the nature of this change. When Clark worked on the canal he had two assistant engineers helping in a small office that controlled the whole canal in the 1960s until two divisions were created in 1967. Meanwhile Bonser entered a growing main office, with three divisional offices in place. Between 1972 and 1980 the Rideau Canal acquired a new purpose and personality, fed by a ministerial transfer, and a new parks-orientated establishment.

L.W. Clark had been involved in an old management scheme dominated by the narrow purposes of operating and maintaining a secondary canal. During his tenure, pressures concerning heritage preservation, with the planned electrification of some locks, and the lobbying for money within the Department of Transport predicted the kinds of changes that would be experienced in the top job on the canal. The word engineer was dropped from the position of superintendent, and it reflected the new role as overseer of a wide range of issues and activities on the canal. John Bonser commented on these changes:
...I guess it's fair to say that the job today, requires an awful lot of negotiation and a lot of meeting, a lot of getting together with people to explore areas of mutual interest, areas of mutual concern. I don't think that the engineering aspects of the job has disappeared completely. The fact that the title changed is one thing, but it's certainly still useful today to have some knowledge of engineering in terms of doing the job (33-14).

Much of the increased administrative load in operating the canal has come from what Bonser identifies as 'fairly sensible and sound administrative structure' (33-15). Instead of being cloistered in a small office at one end of the canal, the creation of area offices made a lot of sense to Bonser 'because it makes the canal administration more accessible to local people' (33-15).

Many of the changes that have taken place in canal operations are reflected in the evolution of the position of Rideau Canal superintendent. The widening sphere of canal activities has raised the profile of the superintendent on the waterway. Many of the interviewees remembered the legendary and imperious inspection trips undertaken by Superintending Engineer Arthur Phillips with pomp and ceremony between 1894 and 1934. In age old Imperial style, Phillips represented the almost military role, function and purpose of a leader in the service of his government. The public profile has been elevated again with the importance of the position in recreational, environmental and planning responsibilities.

Assistant Superintendent
The role of assistant superintendent reveals the growing complexity of managing the Rideau Canal. Many of the duties were once performed by the superintending engineer. Formerly the superintending engineer had an assistant, like the foreman of works in the last century and well into this one, or an assistant engineer. By 1967 the position of superintendent of operations was created in the head office. Carl Peel's description of his role reflects that of his superior, with much of the engineering concern delegated to engineers on staff.
The role of assistant superintendent could be described as operations manager for the canal and administrative assistant. The position is responsible to the superintendent for day to day operations with the chief interpretive officer, the water management and safety officer, resource conservation specialist, and realty manager reporting to the assistant superintendent.

Area Manager
From 1832 to 1967 the Rideau Canal was operated and maintained from an office in Ottawa. For several years after the canal was built a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers and an overseer of works was stationed at Kingston Mills to check on the canal north to the Narrows Locks. The canal was sufficiently long that a divisional point was considered useful in operation and maintenance. As the canal became a financial burden, management was centralized under the superintending engineer in Ottawa. This centralization continued even with carpenter gangs, masons gangs, and the floating plant. By 1930 there was sufficient work to divide the carpenters into two gangs and by 1949, these gangs had been divided into three with geographical responsibilities. Stationed at Hartwells, Smiths Falls, and Jones Falls, the carpenters set a trend that would be recognized in 1967 when the canal was split into two areas. The new administrative structure released a burden from the Ottawa office, and brought managers into closer contact with the various areas of the canal. Maintenance depots in the northern area were at Hartwells and Merrickville and at Smiths Falls and Jones Falls for the southern area. Both areas had a superintendent reporting to the Rideau Canal superintending engineer and an assistant superintendent and two carpenter foremen. The floating plant remained centralized and separate from area control.

The last major administrative change was the creation of the central area in 1973-74 to make three divisions. This was also associated with the main central office moving to Smiths Falls and the break up of a canal wide floating plant. Each area had an area manager reporting to the Rideau Canal superintendent, an operations supervisor and a maintenance supervisor. The carpenter gangs and floating plant
lost their identity, being absorbed into maintenance crews with a wide range of activities on shore or on water. Lock gate framing for the whole canal was centralized at Smiths Falls. Area depots were located at Long Island, Smiths Falls and Elgin.

The superintendents of the two areas and area managers of the later three areas created a new intermediary role between the superintendent of the canal and the workers and the public. Not unlike the divisional offices of a railway line, the Rideau had implemented a decentralized structure to deal with specific areas. While greatly increasing the management structure of the canal, it has brought decision making and profile closer to the public.

The area managers have had to deal with the broadening role of the Rideau Canal as an historic waterway. The interpretation program is implemented from the areas and water control has a much higher profile in community relations. There are heightened concerns about heritage preservation and environmental awareness. The demands of increased development along the Rideau involve area managers in other government jurisdictions.

*Operations Supervisor*

Part of the role of operations supervisor existed before 1974 within the positions of superintendent and assistant superintendent in northern and southern areas. When Carl Peel arrived in the southern area as assistant superintendent in 1969 his activities spanned both operations and maintenance responsibilities:
'...the duties involved everything from water control to staffing of positions, making sure that the stations had adequate staff on duty, that supplies were there, that the lockmasters received their supplies. You investigated any complaints from the public. You were involved with collecting water levels, doing snow surveys, giving direction to the lock staff, involved with the public and making sure that the maintenance were scheduled that the, there was a decision going to be made that we would, you know build so many gates, so we’d have to be sure that the timbers were ordered and make arrangements with the canal shops for the hardware to be ready and the help the foreman schedule the winter work and this type of thing.’ (I-16)

When the canal was divided into three divisions the former role of assistant superintendent in the areas was divided into the positions of operations supervisor and maintenance supervisor. An important element in the operations supervisor position continues to be the operation and staffing of lock stations. The other key function is that of water control. In the interview with Bob Moir one can detect the growing sensitivity in water control and the need to balance several interests involving property and wildlife. Like many other Rideau Canal employees who grew up in proximity with the waterway and who were active as fishermen, guides, or trappers in their youth, they became readily aware of the subtle changes caused by water control. Moir commented in his interview:

‘...I’m a conservationist, I’m the president of the Smiths Falls Fish and Game Club and have been for a number of years and I’ve trapped on the Rideau Canal since I was sixteen years old and I’ve seen what mismanagement of water can do to everything and I think that, I don’t like to take all the credit for it, but I’ve thought long and hard and I think...our area was the first one to ever try doing anything with the water since the Ministry of Natural Resources and I think it was because of me fighting and arguing and we’ve certainly come a long way and the wildlife is notably coming back (3-19).’

In the latter half of the nineteenth century water control involved industrial interests. With the declining use of water power as an energy source for industry, water control developed as a routine function to maintain a regular supply of water for the navigation season and to avoid problems during the freshet. The
importance of water control has resurfaced involving property owners and individuals concerned about environmental conditions and wildlife habitat. One can detect that the experience gained in this position would be difficult to hand down.

Another result of administration having closer contact with operations in the areas has been the widespread adaptation of safety measures. William Bell had noted a significant gap in safety awareness when he was transferred from the Trent Canal to the Rideau in 1973. In his interview Bell talked about the role of safety committees in bringing the Rideau up to standard:

'We got our safety committees working, and one of us out of each area worked with them, in fact I chaired for quite awhile here [southern area]. They'd go over this area and they'd come back with all their notes and we'd have a meeting and sit down and decide what we could do right then without them going on into Smiths Falls [headquarters]...I think the safety committee had a bigger impact than anything on the safety of the operation (21-10).'

The creation of management areas has allowed a closer, hands on relationship between management and operations. The impact of this position has been felt in water management, safety on the job and bringing formerly distant lock staff within a geographical framework under local supervision.

*Maintenance Supervisor*

The legendary carpenter gangs on the Rideau Canal were the first maintenance organizations to recognize the importance of geographical distribution in work scheduling. After 1949 they predicted future area management with a northern and southern area each having two gangs of carpenters each with its own depot. The distribution of work by area allowed maintenance workers to locate in a given place and expect to be able to return to home at the end of the day. While the change led to closer affiliation with the maintenance problems of a particular area, it also brought to the end, an interesting system of nomadic carpenter gangs living and working together along the whole of the Rideau Canal.
The most significant alteration to work patterns in existence prior to the creation of area management has been in maintenance. The maintenance supervisor largely replaces roles formerly known as foreman of works previous to 1967, maintenance supervisor in the Ottawa office between 1967 and 1974 and foreman carpenter. Instead of this position being attached to a particular gang of maintenance employees, it is associated by area to cover a wide range of responsibilities involving workers in several activities. As a result of a reduced reliance of wood in structures, and the centralization of lock gate framing, carpenters are no longer at the core of maintenance strategies. Machine operators and controllers, shops staff and labourers now dominate maintenance positions. There is no maintenance supervisor in the main office except for role played by the engineering staff in advising the area supervisors.

With the acquisition of the mechanical scows in 1976, and the retirement of the steam powered dredges and tugs in the late 50s and early 60s, the floating plant lost its former role as a separate maintenance force covering the whole canal. The areas picked up the pieces of the floating plant with a mechanical scow at the disposal of each area. The maintenance supervisor had to assume the responsibility of managing floating plant work in each area. With the major role of dredging abandoned by the early 1970s, the impact of the floating plant had been greatly reduced. Scows located in each area permitted a consistent work schedule in the three regions and greater flexibility for responding to immediate needs.

The former floating plant and its crew had a large and legendary profile on the Rideau Canal with its distinctive vessels and activities which were widely admired. The tug Tay is the last vestige of a once proud fleet. Even the tug has lost its permanent crew as the vessel is used by a number of workers for specific work when needed. The present mechanical scow operators like Richard Evoy and George Foster require none of the papers or knowledge of navigation systems or engines that used to be part of the role of a 'Master' on a work boat like that experienced by Richard Egan. Formerly the tug masters and dredgemaster had a
considerable amount of authority as captains of their own vessels doing work scheduled by the superintending engineer or his forman of works. The maintenance supervisor has none of the responsibilities of handling ‘captains’ in the ‘Rideau Navy’.

The role of maintenance supervisor has also been affected by the increasing use of contracting out for major repair work. A lock wall reconstruction project in 1915 would have involved a canal mason’s gang, a carpenter gang, some labourers added to the work force, canal machinery and supervision by gang foremen, the canal foreman of works and a lockmaster keeping time. A present project of this nature would be tendered to a company which would take care of the whole package with minimal participation by canal staff or managers.

Lockmaster
On the surface, activities at a lock station appear to be unchanged since 1832. The locking of boats, the physical measuring of water and dam control, and keeping up the appearance of the station have always been part of a lockmaster’s duties. However, there have been significant changes in lock station operation.

Lock stations are no longer home to lockmasters. Many lock stations used to reflect the personalities of the lockmaster and his family. There were vegetable gardens, children, flowers, dogs, horses, and clothes lines. Many families had lived at stations for many years, even generations. Canal users got to know lockmasters and vice versa. There was time to chat, boats were slower, and pace was not a particular concern. Each lock station had character beyond the physical location of the site. The interviews involving the children of lockmasters, like Gilbert McBroom, Don Warren, Chuck Milne and Ron Pyne reflect the fabric of family life and activities at a station. Canal users like Syd Herwig, Stuart Douglas and Al Rochefort also remember the relationships that developed between lockmasters and their clientele. Former lockmasters who used to live at the station like Eddie Moore and Grenville Murray also gave some indication of their lifestyle all year round.
Lockmasters now live away from their stations. They drive to work and manage their sites during navigation season on a specific schedule. Many could remember the days of locking 24 hours a day which required the presence of a lockmaster at the station. Since most lock stations are part of a community, the need for year round surveillance is no longer necessary. Regular policing is sufficient except at stations like Hartwells where a canal employee is allowed to live there for security reasons. It is ironic that lock stations were homes under the narrower administration of the Department of Transport, and they have become mere work stations under the auspices of the Canadian Parks Service. While the lock stations have been celebrated for their heritage value, they have lost some of that character that was central to the Rideau Canal as an operating system.

The loss of the living lock station was not so much a change in policy as it was a change in attitude of those working there. Employees like Dan Danielson or lockman Jim Watters would find it too close to be working and living at a station. Wider community interests drew men and their families to local towns where in some cases, work could be found to fill in for the layover time during winter. It is harder now to recruit staff for the canal, and all of the men who acquired jobs on the canal as veterans of the war have retired.

The high turnover of positions has affected the stability at stations. There is not the same level of recognition by boaters of lock staff. Syd Herwig, a long time recreational boater, commented on this aspect of the lock staff:

'Well the biggest changes are the lock people themselves. You don’t know them. They seem to shift around quite a bit and you don’t seem to get to know them as well. And they’re bound by a lot of rules and regulations that weren’t in existence in former years...It was much friendlier and gentler life style in those days going through the locks using the canal (30-8).'

During the summer, recreational traffic by boat and car has made the lock station very busy. At the busiest locations some landscaping duties are handled by students sent out from area offices. The collection of tolls was revived in the 1980s
after having been abandoned in 1903. These duties have added to the responsibilities of the lockmaster. They have also become interpreters and specialists in public relations. The growing popularity of the Rideau as a destination point by car and boat has made lock staff the key linkage between the public and the canal. This latter point was particularly stressed by Marcel Belanger, a former lockmaster at Hogsback, Hartwells and Ottawa Locks.

**Lockman**

Several of the men interviewed had once been a lockman, and for three, Joe Ducharme, Ron Pyne and Jim Watters, it has been their main occupation. Of all the positions on the Rideau Canal, the role of lockman, formerly canalman, has changed the least. Their duties still involve locking boats, pre and post navigation preparations and on site landscaping. Although many used to live at the lock station in storehouses or smaller buildings, all now drive to work. The position is still considered a training ground for future lockmasters. One of the problems keeping lockmen employed is the very nature of their job as serving the tourist industry. While everyone they are servicing is enjoying summer recreation, they are tied to their work at the most demanding time.

The lockman’s work can vary depending upon the frequency of lockages at their sites or the number of locks involved. For a good many years their summer work schedules have been lightened by the presence of summer students helping to lock boats at the peak of the navigation season. Lockmen also serve an increasing role in public relations and visitors services. For many individuals, their only human contact on the Rideau Canal has been with lockmasters and lockmen.

**Bridgemaster**

There are no longer any bridgemasters under the employ of the Rideau Canal. At one time swing bridges were a key link at several locations between lock stations along the waterway. All of these former bridges, mostly wooden, which needed a swing mechanism were replaced with fixed span bridges. The swing bridges that
remain are operated by lock staff at their stations. Former employees who spent at least some time as a bridgemaster were Grenville Murray, Marcel Belanger, and Gord Mains. The bridgemaster was always located at some site distant from the nearest lock station, where a person was needed to man the site throughout the navigation season. Some key bridge sites used to include Beckett's Landing, Rideau Ferry, and Brass's Point but the LaSalle causeway near Kingston and the Pretoria Street bridge in Ottawa continue to be operated by staff in different government jurisdictions. The extinction of the bridgemaster also meant the loss of several classic bridges which were prey to the dominant impulse of the automobile. The role of bridgemaster at Perth, involving four bridges, had the ceremonial tradition of canal gardener handed down from one master to another. The organization known as Friends of the Rideau continues to hire an individual in Perth to open the Beckett Street bridge at scheduled times in the summer.

Maintenance Personnel
Before the 1970s, the maintenance personnel could have been classified under the following distinct categories: floating plant staff; carpenter gangs; shops staff; and several individuals involved in a wide range of work including a resident engineer, electrician and some labourers. The transition of canal maintenance having less to do with wood, and more to do with cement and other kinds of structures has greatly affected the former dominance of carpenters on the system. The cessation of dredging and a more complex and reliable road system undermined the need for operating a floating plant. The areas offices have decentralized a system of supply distribution that used to be run out of Ottawa. All of these changes have occurred since the late 1950s and even later. The process of transition can be seen in several interviews of individuals like Ashton Dale, Richard Egan, Grenville Murray, Billy Bowles, Bill Jardine, Fred Killingbeck, and Joe Jacques. A more recent interpretation of maintenance can be gleaned from interviews of George Foster, Richard Evoy and Rheal Regimbald.

The floating plant was created in 1890 to maintain an active dredging program on an aging canal. A combination inspection boat and tug was acquired to help
monitor canal problems and bring supply needs under canal distribution. Although the original dredge *Rideau* [1890-1917] and tug *Shanly* [1890-1907] are beyond living memory, the second dredge originally called the *Tay*, and changed to *Rideau* [1913-1965] in 1922, and the tugs *Loretta* [1908-1958] and *Agnes P.* [1913-1961] are legendary craft fondly remembered by canal user and worker. Even the later generation *Long Sault* [1959-1978] and active *Tay* [1961 to date] have a special role in Rideau Canal identity. Only a pale shadow remains of a once proud floating plant, almost a Rideau 'navy'. Also gone are most of the characters who manned these boats like dredgemaster James Yelland who spent 48 years in his position, peg-legged Captain Michael Egan and the legendary Captain Ned Fleming who once sailed the *Rideau Queen* and who was known for his his violin and dexterity at horseshoes.

One can get a feel for the former activities on the floating plant listening to Grenville Murray, Joe Jacques, Billy Bowles and Captain Richard Egan. Both George Foster and Richard Evoy bring the story up to date as active mechanical scow operators. The two major reasons for maintaining a floating plant was dredging, and supplying lock stations with materials by water. When both those functions ceased to exist, the floating plant came to an end. The firemen were the first to go when the steam powered boats were de-commissioned, followed by cranesmen and marine engineers, dredgemasters and deckhands. Diesel and gas powered engines eliminated staff off of boats like they did to trains. When the mechanical scows were acquired, primarily to continue the important function of checking and renewing navigation aids, they were run out of the areas and were no longer part of a distinct canal-wide structure. The present scows do not require the special training once expected of many positions on the plant. The floating plant was victim to modern technology, a more efficient road network, and a policy to abandon canal operated dredging systems.
Before 1866 much of the maintenance work that was required on the young Rideau Canal was handled by contract. A carpenters gang was created in 1866 to handle the increased maintenance load on wooden structures, especially with the framing of lock gates which required a consistent schedule for renewal. A masons gang had also existed until the 1920s when cement began to overtake stone work in repairs. The carpenters gang was split into two distinct gangs around 1930 and into three by 1949, reflecting the need for gangs at different points of the canal at the same time. With the creation of two areas in 1967 there were four carpenters gangs although their activities began to take on wider maintenance functions having nothing to do with carpentry.

The centralization of lock gate framing at Smiths Falls in the early 1970s spelled the end of the traditional maintenance gang made up of a foreman carpenter and carpenters. For more than a century wooden structures like lock gates, swing bridges, work scows, dredge booms, lock houses, sluices, wharves, waste weirs and dams were made of wood. Indeed, in spite of the original stone work in lock stations and some dams and houses, the world of wood dominated maintenance activities. The dismantling of the floating plant with its wooden dredge and scows reduced the need for carpenters in repairs and renewals. Metal buoys replaced wooden spars, wooden swing bridges were eliminated or made with different materials, and wharves, waste weirs and dams were reconstructed with cement. In the 1960s and 1970s the world of wood on the Rideau Canal collapsed. The distinctive lock gates were now built using a minimum number of skilled framers working with treated wood that would last longer.

There is a colourful history of the carpenters gangs roaming along the canal from work place to work place, living together on site and renewing structures in the open. One of the gangs once had their own boarding scow and they all had their own cook. They would take measurements off of existing lock gates and swing bridges and renew them on the spot. They would be aware of their schedule every year, getting from place to place using teams of horses rented from local farmers or
lockmasters. They were like shantymen, railway navvies, and boarding house crews who would spend weeks away from home and family working on the canal. Ashton Dale is one of the last of the carpenters who used to travel from station to station with his gang. Other interviews involving the youthful memories of Gilbert McBroom and Chuck Milne help recreate a notion of what it was like to be near these carpenters at work. By the time that carpenters like Jacques, Killingbeck, Jardine and Regimbald were on the scene in the 1960s the old atmosphere of the gang had changed. It was not only the reduced amount of wood work required that affected the gang, it was the organization of gangs by territory, the creation of depots and more efficient road access throughout the waterway that changed the way things were done. Carpenters could now live all year round at home. They could work at specific jobs like lock gate framing at their local depot.

The present maintenance gangs are made up of machine operators, labourers and some carpenters. None of these gangs based in the three areas work on the distinctive lock gates and they have a much wider range of activities involving work not requiring carpenter’s skills. The three present lock gate framers in Smiths Falls use electric machinery on dry, treated wood in a heated building. For half of Ashton Dale’s career he used his own hand tools on natural wood that had been soaked in a timber pond and he had worked under the open sky in winter and summer. Ashton Dale experienced the whole transition, having started with travelling gangs in 1934 and ending up in the new lock gate framers shop at retirement in 1977.

There are several other maintenance employees who could be classified as neither floating plant or carpenters. Gord Mains played the role of electrician, as more of the lock stations, bridges and maintenance yards required electrification. He was also a resident handyman in several activities including operating bridges and in the shops. He was able to give an excellent description of storekeeper J.H. Ford who used to run the Ottawa supply depot like it was his own.
There were also labourers hired by the canal for specific work. Al Rochefort spent one summer as a labourer with a drilling crew near Kingston Mills. Several of the men interviewed started as labourers like Rhea Regimbald who worked on canal wall construction near Ottawa for several seasons. Mr. Regimbald, who became a carpenter, was also a truck driver who could deliver supplies or bring the crane to sites where it was required.

Interpreter
A significant change in Rideau Canal operations has been the creation of an interpretive program. When the canal was transferred from Transport to a Parks administration in 1972, an immediate impact was the recognition given to heritage potential. The Rideau Canal developed an interpretive program that tried to balance human history and natural history on the waterway. The employment of a full time interpretation staff in 1976 was a brand new appendage to an operations system steeped in history. As the interpretation program became a part of area management, it was accepted with some initial trepidation as the new kid on the block of canal operations.

The interview with Bob Day who was the first full time interpreter on the canal was important for revealing the kinds of decisions that had to be made to set out a plan. Day described the transition process for educating some employees who were new to interpretation. He also talked about the balance between natural history and human history in setting up an interpretation program. The field of interpretation was relatively new in Canada and its introduction to the canal took some time. It would appear that the 150th anniversary celebrations in 1982 had some effect in cementing the relationship of interpretation to operations.

The history of the Rideau Canal had long been recognized and there was some sensitivity to the issue of restoration when Fred Killingbeck first worked at rebuilding the Newboro blockhouse and during the debate over the electrification of lock stations. Bob Day recognized the role of the lockmaster in being a key link
in visitors services and he campaigned for a greater awareness of the canal by lock staff. Several individuals recognized their role at the locks in informing the public when asked (see the interviews of Marcel Belanger, Joe Ducharme, Dan Danielson). Some Rideau staff had to be convinced of the need for interpretation (See interviews of Eddie Moore and Fred Killingbeck). As an area manager when interpretation was introduced, Eddie Moore had to be sold on the project:

'I still, when I was introduced I was awful leery of it. I was of the class of the old lockmasters and I guess pretty nearly everything that happened, they had to convince me that it was right before I would accept it. Once I accepted it, then there was no stopping it. But it had to be proven to me that it was necessary or that it was going to be a good thing (9-36).'

Several people who were interviewed praised the kind of influence interpretation has had (see Richard Allen, Gilbert McBroom, Don Warren, Al Rochefort and others) and some were not so sure (see interviews of Chuck Milne and Stuart Douglas). While living at Kingston Mills most of his life and working at the Gananoque Light and Power Co. generating station, Richard Allen has noticed the biggest change on the Rideau Canal being the care of lock stations and interpretation:

'I think the biggest [change] that comes to mind right off the bat, is the transition from the utilitarian purpose of the locks, I guess, just to put boats up through, to making it a nice people place, a nice park. A place for people to come. There's events take place here now periodically through the summer, and interpretation people in the blockhouse over in the museum. It's a really nice, interesting place. I suppose that's about the biggest change and certainly the most impressive that comes to mind. A lot more boat traffic too, I'll tell you. A lot more boat traffic (17-17).'

Finally, a couple of the maintenance staff like Ashton Dale and Rheel Regimbald even became active in the interpretive program, before and after retirement. Indeed everyone who has been interviewed has participated in the interpretation program.
Clerk
Beyond key management posts like superintendent, or managers, only one person was interviewed involving day to day administration. Doreen Campbell described the growing complexity of paper work and record keeping on the canal as administration has increased. Several people in positions of management or mere observers of the canal complained about the mounting demands for paper work or the problem of too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Opinions were also raised on efficiency and priorities. One thing can be certain, that when the first areas were created in 1967 and when the main office moved to Smiths Falls in 1974, the administrative sector of canal management has seen widespread growth.

Miscellaneous
Three individuals were interviewed who were not employees of the Rideau Canal but were dependent upon their livelihood by canal operation. All three were employees of Gananoque Light and Power Co. including retired owner Jack Campbell, and power station operators Dick Allen and Chuck Milne. They provided important information on canal operations and the role of water control as well as observations on other canal activities and sites. The power stations at Kingston Mills, Washburn (Lower Brewers), Upper Brewers, Jones Falls and more recently, Rideau Falls owned by the Gananoque company are little known ramifications of Rideau Canal operations. Liaison between power and canal officials is an element of canal operations involving the private sector in ways not unlike nineteenth century concerns dealing with industrial interests over water power at mill sites. Mr. Campbell outlined the pattern of water control dams in the interior which have contributed to consistency in water flow and more cordial relations with the canal.

Part 2: Rideau Canal Users
Opinions on Rideau Canal operations and maintenance are not confined to former or present employees. There are several kinds of canal users who were interested in the kinds of things that happened to the waterway. Although it was sometimes
difficult keeping to the focus of operations and maintenance with the following interviewees, they made a significant contribution to the oral history by talking about their experiences on the canal. These individuals were:

Don Warren of Chaffeys Locks, local guide, teacher, office holder and Rideau activist, son of a lockmaster.

Harold Nichol of Smiths Falls, hunter and fisherman, cottage owner, decoy carver and descendent of famous carving and boat building family.

Allan Buell of Manotick, forester, and long time resident and user of the Rideau Canal.

Gilbert McBroom of Pittsburgh Township, Physician, son of a lockmaster and resident.

Stuart Douglas of Smiths Falls, company owner, machinist, lumberman with business and recreational interests on the canal.

Charles Menagh of Smiths falls, long time resident and cottager, operator of an old supply boat on the Rideau.

Harry and Helen Showler of North Burgess Township, cottagers and wild fowl specialists.

Syd and Mary Herwig of Manotick, former marina owners, boating activists.

Ruth Ann Glover of Jones Falls, resident and tourist home operator.

Ned and Wilma Winton of North Burgess Township, farmers and tourist cabin operators.
All of the above had recreational interests on the Rideau Canal in either the use of cottages, the ownership of tourist resorts, or pleasure boating. Ruth Ann Glover and the Wintons gave interesting accounts of their tourist businesses and their American clientele. Harry and Helen Showler outlined the changing environmental conditions on the Rideau Lakes that are affecting wildlife. Allan Buell and Gilbert McBroom reminisced about their younger experiences on the canal with Dr. McBroom discussing family life at the Lower Brewers Lock Station. Harold Nichol was asked about the Nichol tradition in boat building, decoy carving and recreational boating on the canal. Stuart Douglas talked about the long tradition of cottaging on the Rideau by his family and some of his activities and people he knew during that era. Charlie Menagh talked about his long experience on the Rideau and his activities in the 1930s as a supply boat operator on the lakes. Syd and Mary Herwig gave a humorous account of their early experiences in using the canal and their later dedication to raising the profile of antique and classic boats in Ontario. Syd also tells about the close relations which developed between early boaters and lockmasters.

Don Warren gave an excellent presentation on his early life growing up around a lock station, a family tradition for the Warrens. Most importantly he gave an insight into the public interest group he helped create to save Rideau stations from being electrified in the 1960s. Electrified lock operations at Newboro, Black Rapids and Smiths Falls brought to a head, the issue of modernizing the canal for more efficient recreational use, or preserving past structures and operating methods as symbolic of a heritage canal. Warren reveals the depth to which local residents and users were willing to push to prevent the electrification of Chaffey's Locks and the respect they held for the heritage value of the site. He believes that their contribution as a public interest group helped deliver the canal from the administration of the Department of Transport to Parks Canada.
Part 3: General Observations
Meeting, talking with, and interviewing forty-two people once or still active on the Rideau Canal can reveal several trends in changes to the system. The most significant changes in operations and maintenance on the Rideau Canal over the last quarter century have included the transfer of control between different government ministries, the creation of management areas, the dispersal of the floating plant, the introduction of an interpretation program, the changing use of materials in repairs, the shift away from carpenter dominated maintenance gangs, and the absence of lockmasters and their families in year long residence at lock stations. Other influences have been the increased sophistication in administrative framework, the recognition of the need for restoration of historic structures, a more sensitive awareness of wildlife management and water control, increased residential and recreational growth along the Rideau corridor, and a rise in recreational boating and canal visitation. The Rideau Canal exits primarily as a function to lock boats but it has become a national historic site and its operation has come to affect a broad range of activities and interests. It has a new face on an old body.

I have made the following observations. Many of the persons who had grown up at lock stations were trappers and guides in their youth. Few who have worked on the canal, or reside on it, have ever been all the way through it on a boat, indeed some have kept confined to a specific area. While a few pointed out the decline in fishing and duck hunting, a common environmental problem mentioned was the affect of boat wake on shorelines (see Milne, Showler especially). Many who described lock stations as friendly in the past, are concerned about the more business-like or unrecognizable staff. Most mentioned the increased use of recreational boats and many were concerned about boat power, noise and speeding. Most noted physical changes to lock stations over the years.
Basic Management Structure
Rideau Canal 1967 to present

1967 - 1979
Ottawa Office

- superintending engineer
- superintendent of operations
- maintenance supervisor

Northern Area

- superintendent
- assistant superintendent

Southern Area

- superintendent
- assistant superintendent

1974 to present
Smiths Falls Office

- superintendent
- assistant superintendent

Northern Area

- area manager
- operations supervisor
- maintenance super.

Central Area

- area manager
- operations supervisor
- maintenance super.

Southern Area

- area manager
- operations supervisor
- maintenance super.
RIDEAU CANAL ORAL HISTORY

BIBLIOGRAPHY


