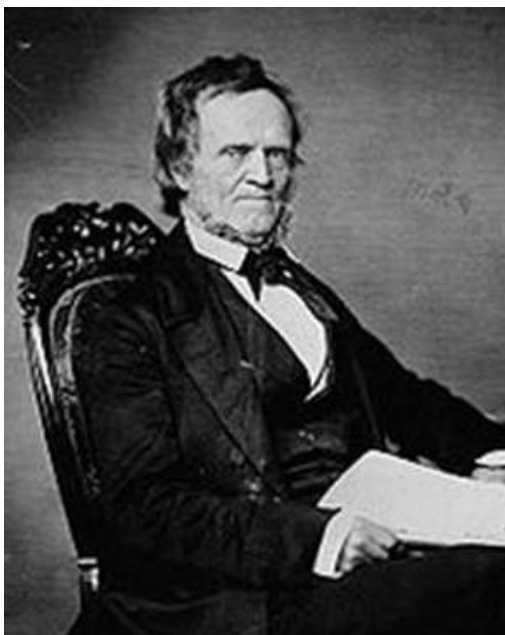


## MCKENZIE'S RIDE: FACT OR FICTION

By Robert Williamson

In one of my favourite movies, "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance", starring John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart, the premise of the story is whether to **print the Truth or print the Legend**. But history is not fiction and those who write about it must make sure that their facts are correct. If assumptions are made to fill a vacuum, they must be clearly identified as such.

In December's Mountain Memories I wrote about **Mckenzie's Midnight Mountain Ride**, and made a brief reference to a legend reported in this newspaper in 2012 by the colourful historian, Colwyn Beynon now deceased. He told how the political fugitive of the 1837 Rebellion, William Lyon Mckenzie, took refuge in an Eramosa limestone cave on the east mountain near Mount Albion. Now, access to a research paper, "**The Perilous Escape of William Lyon Mckenzie December 7-11, 1837**", by Chris Raible, soon to be published in the **Ontario History** journal, allows us to dispel the legend based on our interpretation of original documents.



William Lyon Mackenzie c. 1834

Library & Archives Canada

In William Lyon Mckenzie's own words, he wrote that as he rode east on Rymal Road after midnight on Sunday December 10th, he quit the main road to avoid being spotted by what appeared to him to be an inspection post. It was most likely a major intersection and perhaps a toll booth or gate such as at Ryckman Corners on Upper James (Caledonia Road) or possibly at Hannon

on Nebo Road. He consequently got lost in what he described as the pitch black primeval forest of Glanford and Binbrook Townships (now Glanbrook Township) located on the **south** side of Rymal Road.

The fact that he was a fugitive, lost in the dark in the area of the Eramosa Karst has given rise to the "Cave Legend". However, the Nexus cave that Colwyn Beynon refers to in his 2012 story is on the **north** side of Rymal Road in Saltfleet Township. The negro who supposedly gave Mckenzie directions to the cave, actually gave directions to a shallow crossing in the Twenty Mile Creek where Mckenzie could ford. The creek is located four kilometers **south** of Rymal Road. Mckenzie reports that after travelling about one mile beyond the creek, he entered a hamlet (Binbrook is the logical option) looking for food and shelter in a house, not a cave.

He did in fact have breakfast at a farm owned by Wm. McWatters on Binbrook Road, 3.5 miles (6 km) east of the hamlet (source Glanbrook Heritage Society). Later that day after evasive exploits he arrived in Smithville.

If anyone wishes to find out more about Mckenzie's ride or the life and times of this important period during the struggle for Responsible Government in Canada, read **The Life and Times of William Lyon Mckenzie** by Charles Lindsey. It is a free file on the internet.-  
<<https://archive.org/details/lifetimesofwmlyo02linduoft>>

***Mountain Memories***, by **Robert Williamson** for the *Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society*, appears monthly. For more information, see the *Society's website* ([Hamiltonheritage.ca](http://Hamiltonheritage.ca)).



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Robert Williamson 2016