

# LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society  
Kingston Ontario Canada

Vol 18 no 3

ISSN 1488-5565

April 2016

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lou Grimshaw

The past month has been a busy one for the Society. Council had a very full first post-AGM meeting on 10 March, ratifying appointments, considering and passing budgets for both the Society and Museum, and receiving and discussing all the usual committee reports. There is much continuing work behind the scenes for membership recruiting, publications, Murney Tower Museum, program, and website operation.



An important point that has arisen is for members to be aware of is that when their own or another member's status has changed they are asked to inform the Membership Chair, Paul Van Nest. Paul needs to be informed immediately when a member moves, becomes ill or dies so that the Society can react as appropriate.

The most important resource for a volunteer organization such as the KHS is volunteers. What a surprise! The new Council was elected by the AGM without a Program Chair. That is an important but not a difficult job. Having done that job for several years in the 1990s, I have taken it on again, more or less *pro tem* until a permanent Chair can be found. ***Thus I am appealing to the membership for someone to come forward to volunteer to take on that function.*** I will provide all necessary instruction and assistance.

Lou Grimshaw  
President

### APRIL MEETING

Lucinda Bray: Social aspects of daily life in Kingston Heights  
during the war years.

Wednesday, April 20, 2016 at 7:30 pm

Seniors Centre 56 Francis Street

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

*of historical interest*

The Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society will meet at the Kingston Seniors Centre, 56 Francis St., on Saturday, April 16th at 10 a.m. Elaine Farley from Athens will speak on "From Founder to Trustee: My Pilgrimage to the Old Hay Bay Church". Visitors welcome. Further details at [www.ogs.on.ca/kingston](http://www.ogs.on.ca/kingston). Join us for a sandwich and squares lunch beforehand – \$3.50 if you're not one of those who brings food. Arrive from 11:30 a.m. before we sit down together at 12:00 noon. Visitors are always welcome. Further info from Carol at 613-546-2256.

THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Established 1893*

***LIMELIGHT is published nine times a year, September to May.***

***Please forward submissions to the Editor Betty Andrews. [betty.andrews@gmail.com](mailto:betty.andrews@gmail.com)***

***Reprinting of articles from the Limelight must be accompanied by an acknowledgement of the Society, the issue and date. All photo credits and by-lines must be retained.***

***The KHS gratefully acknowledges the support of our sponsors in producing Limelight.***



The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.



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[www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.com)

(website migration from .ca to .com is ongoing)

Feedback welcome.

**KHS MEETINGS** take place at 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of the month, September to May, except in December, when the meeting takes the form of an awards ceremony and gala, and is held at a different time and location. Until further notice, meetings will be at the Seniors Centre, 56 Francis Street. At regular meetings refreshments are available; a small donation is appreciated.

Two annual events are held celebrating Canada's First Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald (1815—1891): a formal dinner on the Saturday closest to January 11th honouring his birth, and a service on June 6th at the Cataraqui Cemetery National Historic Site commemorating his death.

***2016-17 KHS Executive Council***

*President:* Lou Grimshaw

*Vice-President:* Marcus Letourneau

*Secretary:* Don Richardson

*Treasurer:* Peter Ginn

*Past President:* Peter Gower

*Historic Kingston Editor:* Virginia Letourneau

*Limelight Newsletter Editor:* Betty Andrews

*Murney Tower Director:* Graeme Watson

*Webmaster:* Corinne Harrison and Mark Nardi

*Councillors:*

Betty Andrews

Joe Brites

Nancy Day

Ben Holthof

Anne Richardson

John Whiteley

Paul Van Nest (Membership)

[pvannest@cogeco.ca](mailto:pvannest@cogeco.ca)

**NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**

Membership includes an invitation to attend monthly meetings; nine issues of *Limelight*, delivered electronically or in hardcopy; and a copy of *Historic Kingston*, the KHS annual journal containing the substance of the papers delivered at the monthly meetings.

Membership also includes free admission to the Murney Tower, Kingston's oldest museum; and a discount at some of our sponsors' places of business.

Sponsors receive monthly advertising in *Limelight* and, it is hoped, the patronage of KHS members.

If you are interested in the advantages of being a sponsor, please speak to the president or to the membership chair.

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Here is a photo from my great grandmother's album. The album and numerous other local photos by Henrietta Anne Constantine now are held by the Queens Archives. We have always been puzzled by the caption she added to the picture. My sister Libby Fyon stumbled on a piece in the Windsor Star which gave us a date to research, and I was able to retrieve the relevant article from "The Daily British Whig". Dean Bidwell was the Dean of St. George's and went on to be Bishop of Ontario.



The Daily British Whig, Wednesday, April 24, 1912

Capt. Constantine saved Dean Bidwell's Daughter.

The stone at the city entrance to the Cataraqui bridge gave way Tuesday afternoon, about five o'clock, and fell into the water below, carrying with it the young daughter of Dean E. J. Bidwell, who was sitting on it at the time. The little girl would in all probability have been drowned had it not been for the prompt action of Capt. C.F. Constantine passing, and who jumped into the water and rescued the little girl. A companion of Miss. Bidwell was with her at the time, but was not sitting on the wall, and so escaped the wet and cold experience of the dean's daughter.

It appears that Capt. Constantine was the only person passing at the time, but the falling of the wall attracted the attention of a number of the soldiers of the barracks, and other people crossing the bridge. The water is quite deep at the spot, and after the artillery officer had swam to the foot of the wall, he handed the little girl up to some men above. She was taken to Mrs. Richardson's quarters, at the barracks, and warm applications administered. Later she was removed to her home on King street. The entire wall at this spot has been in a bad condition for some time, and it is thought that the frost coming out of it caused it to give way. The foundations were badly undermined and it would take very little to topple over the remainder. The broken piece was barricaded off Tuesday evening, and the whole thing should be seen to at once.

If you have an interesting anecdote such as this about Kingston's past that you would like to share with KHS members, please forward it to the Limelight Editor. [betty.andrews@gmail.com](mailto:betty.andrews@gmail.com)

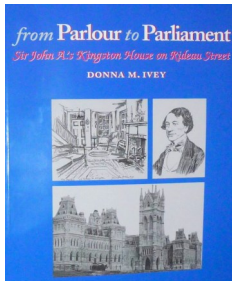


## Books

### ***from Parlour to Parliament – Sir John A.'s Kingston House on Rideau Street***

by Donna M. Ivey,

published by the Frontenac Heritage Foundation, printed by Allan Graphics, Kingston, 2015.



Following a year of intense literature research, a chronicle entitled *from Parlour to Parliament–Sir John A.'s Kingston House on Rideau Street*, was written by Donna M. Ivey for publication by the Frontenac Heritage Foundation (FHF), to which she has belonged since coming to Kingston in 2002. It was that organization that purchased and restored the house at 110-112 Rideau Street between 1974 and 1976. As a member of the Kingston Historical Society, Donna has published in four issues of *Historic Kingston*, the first being the Vol. 52 paper on John A. Macdonald's home on Rideau Street, commissioned by Brian Osborne. She also compiled the Index to *Historic Kingston*, for the period 1997-2006.

With a grant from the City of Kingston Heritage Fund, the FHF received the go-ahead for Donna to write this unique document for scholars and interested Canadians. Donna spent

2015 developing the scenario around the 200 year lifespan of the house which turned up various mysterious people, activities and environments – far more than ever suggested by previous writers, who had limited data to the dates surrounding 1835-1839 when John A. and his family lived in the house.

The challenge to Donna was to determine exactly who had owned the house over the two centuries, who paid the taxes and who fixed the roof? The City of Kingston Registry documents helped only a little, as it was not until the 1860s that properties were identified by more than the street on which they sat.

The involvement of John A.'s Scottish uncle, Donald Macpherson, who had built "Cluney", now in today's Barriefield environment, provided a broad spectrum of extended family situations. One of John A.'s cousins, Evan Macpherson, lived in England, and he would become an absentee landlord, possibly not having seen the house on Rideau Street since he was a young man. John A.'s many lawyer cousins helped straighten out the complicated legal property registrations.

John A.'s extended family definitely lived in 110-112 Rideau Street, and so did other contacts of John A.

The house's near-destruction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a sad story with a happy ending. Norma Kelly and Donna Ivey bought the Rideau Street property in 2002, and Claude Tardif bought in the next year. The Rideau Street environment is not as peaceful as the region Molly Brant enjoyed around the corner near North Street, but it is home to many people who enjoy living in the big city environment.

### ***Meetings and Events***

#### **Kingston Historical Society Meetings**

#### **Seniors Centre 56 Francis Street**

**April 20:** Lucinda Bray: Social aspects of daily life in Kingston Heights during the war years.

**May 18:** John Cartwright: Success for political refugees – the Cartwright family in Kingston, 1792 to the present.

May Opening: Murney Tower



#### **June 6::**

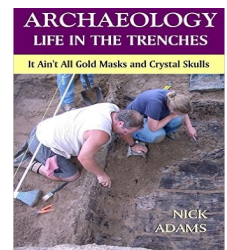
Sir John A. Macdonald Commemorative Service

See Limelight page 8

[www.amazon.ca/ARCHAEOLOGY--Life-Trenches-Golden-Crystal-ebook/dp/B01CRH9EDC](http://www.amazon.ca/ARCHAEOLOGY--Life-Trenches-Golden-Crystal-ebook/dp/B01CRH9EDC)

A new book you might enjoy: includes digs in the Kingston area.

Written by local archeologist  
Nick Adams



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## STILL STANDING:

Looking at Regional Architecture with Jennifer McKendry,  
Architectural Historian

*“Fear not, I mean not vengeance, but your reformation.  
Severe is my hand, but benevolent my intention.”*

British penal reformer John Howard’s writing in 1789 resonated in the thinking of the designers of the Provincial Penitentiary (now known as Kingston Penitentiary or KP) in the early 1830s. The idea was to get away from the established practice of congregating persons of all ages and both sexes in communal wards regardless of the type of crime or debt involved. He wanted to move away from dungeon-like conditions. Thus in Kingston, cells were built to incarcerate only one convict, who had to live out his or her sentence in silence. With isolation came time for penance (as in “penitentiary”) leading to reform with the goal of creating a

productive member of society when released. Skills were acquired through working at various trades in the workshops, yards, quarries and farms but in silence, which included meal times. This was the situation faced by the architects and builders of KP, the first stone of which was laid on 20 August 1833. Over time buildings have been altered and increased in number until its closing in 2013.

Particularly with silence as the rule, a building with wings (four in the case of KP) attached to a central hub was thought to be ideal for supervision by listening as well as observing. This was particularly true when Avenues of Inspection were inserted down the ranges of cells in a manner that the guards could see and hear without being seen or heard. These social and architectural solutions make this site of national significance and its preservation essential. This “school of reform, where the idle will be usefully employed and the vicious reclaimed to the good of themselves and of society at large (as expressed in 1834)” was a failure by 1848, when the depravity of the administration was publicly revealed in a government investigation. Furthermore, by the late 1850s plans were underway to build a Criminal Lunatic Asylum (the predecessor to today’s psychiatric hospital) for - among other patients - convicts driven insane by the Rule of Silence. These facts do not negate the need for the site to be preserved. Rather it reinforces the need to remember how cruelly we, as a society, treated devalued persons. History is more than commemorating the good stuff.



Views of the North Gate, KP, 1845, architect William Coverdale;  
the vaulted ceilings are a rarity; photo J. McKendry©

The General Meeting of the KHS on 16 March was well attended. The speaker was M. Maxine Chouinard, Curator of the Museum of Health Care at Queen's University, who spoke on *The Cholera Epidemic of 1832 at Kingston*.

Of necessity, M. Chouinard discussed the disease broadly, including its nature, cause and treatment, beyond just its effect on Kingston. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and before that, cholera was a frightening, misunderstood and deadly disease. Because the cause was not understood at the time, its treatment was ineffective and sometimes bizarre, and often worse than the disease. M. Chouinard provided a fascinating tour through early 19<sup>th</sup> Century medicine as it was practiced. He described how cholera came to Canada in unsanitary, overcrowded immigrant ships and affected ports of disembarkation, such as Kingston. The effect of so many deaths on relatively small populations could be devastating. He described the location of an early and long disused burial ground for cholera victims within the military reserve at Kingston. It was not until the mid and later 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when germs and public sanitation became to be understood, that cholera and other historically epidemic diseases could be treated effectively.

Maxine Chouinard's paper provided an enlightening view on the social history of early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Kingston

### **Visit Our Web-site**

Paul Van Nest made a brief demonstration of the website of the KHS, which has been recently redesigned by Corinne Harrison and Mark Nardi. It provides a great deal of information which is easily accessible and attractively displayed. The web-site was begun in 2000 as a joint effort with the various heritage groups of Kingston, but gradually became more representative of the KHS, and in 2003 the name of the web-site was changed in order not to be confused with the newly formed web-site of the Frontenac Heritage Foundation. A web-site committee was formed and many Society members have been involved in the web-site evolution over the last decade. For more information on its history, see the President's messages in the May issues of 2003 and 2004.

Now renamed [www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.com) [emphasis .com].

If you see any errors or have improvements to suggest, please contact [corinneharrison111@gmail.com](mailto:corinneharrison111@gmail.com)

At our meeting on April 20, 2016, Lucinda Bray will present another aspect of the very interesting study of wartime housing begun by John Grenville in January. Her topic is *Social aspects of daily life in Kingston Heights during the war years.*





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## THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY presents

### The Graveside Commemoration Service for Sir John A. Macdonald

**Monday, June 6th, 2016 at 1:30 pm  
Cataragui Cemetery National Historic Site  
927 Purdy's Mill Road, Kingston ON**

*The public is invited to join the Kingston Historical Society,  
members of the Fort Henry Guard,  
Bellevue House historical ambassadors,  
representatives of Cataragui Cemetery National Historic Site,  
and many special guests and dignitaries  
from local, provincial and national organizations.  
Wreaths will be laid, surrounded by solemn formal pageantry  
to mark the 125th anniversary of the passing  
of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister.*

**Guest Speaker:**  
**Donna M. Ivey, Author of *from Parlour to Parliament***

Information: Alan MacLachlan, Commemoration Service Chair  
(613) 549-8841 or (613) 453-7078 (cell) [alaguide20@gmail.com](mailto:alaguide20@gmail.com)

Alternate location in unfavourable weather:  
Christ Church Parish Centre, 990 Sydenham Road, Kingston

photos by Peter Glenn, design by Eiva Barnes

