

# Limelight

## Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

Volume 19 no 9

ISSN 1488-5565

December 2017

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Marcus R. (Marc) Létourneau

I recently came across an interesting term in my work: "knowledge keeper." Although most often used in the context of traditional knowledge and indigenous elders, it got me thinking about how fragile this information can be. In a past address, I referred to the ongoing Swamp Ward Oral History project, and how it has brought to light many important and underrepresented stories in Kingston's past. In reflecting upon this project, and in looking around the room at attendees at one of our recent KHS lectures, I was struck at the tremendous amount of knowledge about national, provincial, and local history embodied by our membership. In speaking with a colleague of mine who has worked in the heritage field for nearly 50 years, I asked him if anyone had ever talked to him about his experiences. Surprisingly, he said no. Kingston is a place of heritage firsts including: the first municipal heritage committee (1958), the location of the first Council Approved Heritage Conservation District - Barriefield (1979), the 1970 *City of Kingston Act* (precursor to the *Ontario Heritage Act*), and the location where the *Ontario Heritage Act* was signed into law in 1975 (the only time this has occurred outside of the provincial legislature). Many of our members took part in these activities, but their stories have not yet been told or recorded. Perhaps in light of KHS's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2018, it is time that we consider how we can ensure that this tremendous wealth of knowledge is not lost.



Another gentle reminder that memberships are now being accepted for 2018. Again, we ask you to please renew as KHS depends on our membership to make it a dynamic and meaningful organization.

Lastly, December 6 is our awards evening. I hope to see everyone there!

As always, if there are any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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### Awards Night

### Christmas Party

*December 6th KHS Christmas Event*

*Renaissance Event Venue. 285 Queen St Cash Bar and  
Hors D'oeuvres 6pm Awards presentation 7 p.m.*

# THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Established 1893*

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

*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 .*



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## 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.*

MEMBERSHIP RATES	\$300 Sponsor
\$50 Individual	\$60 Family
\$60 Institutional	\$25 Student


## What does your Annual Membership Buy?

### Costs

Limelight (mailed)	\$37
Historic Kingston	\$25
Meeting facilities	\$ 8
John A dinner	\$ 0 (covered by attendees)
June 6 <sup>th</sup> graveside	\$ 0 (covered by grant)
Admin/ Misc.	\$14
Awards	\$ 4
Accounting/ Insurance	<u>\$13</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$101</b>


A very good deal for the \$50 or \$60 annual membership.

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Many of us read Robert Louis Stevenson's great adventure novel when we were young. It was an exciting story then, and it still is. What I would not have noticed then, but did notice while reading it in this summer of 2017, was the subtext. Stevenson, who lived from 1850 to 1894, was not writing just to entertain the reader. In this novel he showed in heartbreaking detail how the social structure and culture of the Highlands of Scotland had been systematically destroyed following the suppression of the Jacobite Rebellion, which ended, as we know, with the defeat of the Jacobite forces at the Battle of Culloden in 1745 and Bonnie Prince Charlie's subsequent flight into exile in France.

The two main characters in *Kidnapped* are Alan Breck Stewart and David Balfour. The former is an historical figure; the latter is fictional. Alan Breck was a fugitive accused of the murder of Colin Campbell, a Lowland Scot who had made himself hated as a tax collector for the English. These are facts upon which the plot depends.

But for us reading the book in 2017, it is not the plot that matters. It's the subtext, the description of the suffering of the “Hielands,” that brings to mind troubling aspects of our own history. What the English did to the Highland Scots in the second half of the 18th Century bears uncomfortable similarities to what we have done to our own First Nations, including the Metis.

It is a striking coincidence that Louis Riel was hanged in the very same year that Stevenson was writing *Kidnapped*. That year was 1885.

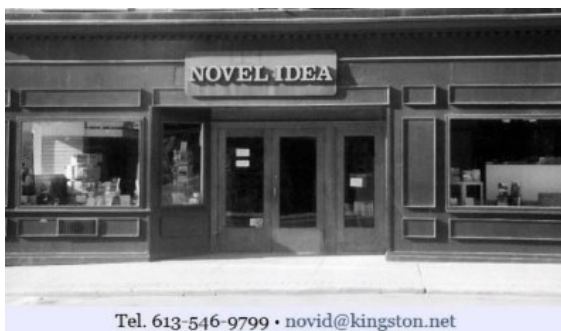
Balfour, the narrator in *Kidnapped*, tells us:

*I met plenty of people, grubbing in little miserable fields that would not keep a cat, or herding little kine about the bigness of asses. The Highland dress being forbidden by law since the rebellion, and the people confined to the Lowland habit, which they much disliked, it was strange to see the variety of their array. Some went bare, only for a hanging cloak or a great coat, and carried their trousers on their backs like a useless burden; some had made an imitation of the tartan with little parti-coloured stripes patched together like an old wife's quilt; others, again, still wore the philabeg [kilt], but by putting a few stitches between the legs, transformed it into a pair of trousers like a Dutchman's. All those makeshifts were condemned and punished, for the law was harshly applied, in hopes to break up the clan spirit.*

No Highland Scot was allowed to carry arms, not even a knife. To carry a pistol was punishable by a fine of fifteen pounds for a first offence, and by transportation to the colonies for a second.

The story in *Kidnapped* is set in 1751. That is to say, Stevenson was writing about something that happened 134 years in the past but still had consequences for his own time. As the movement for Scotland's independence shows, those consequences linger still.

The Highland Scots had Bonnie Prince Charlie. Canada has Louis Riel. How long will it take for us to undo the harm that our predecessors did?



# HOMESTEAD





## *Ad\*dress\*ing History With Dignity ...*

by Eva Eichenbaum Barnes

"Our group has a special heritage anniversary coming up very soon. Where can I rent a costume?" As a researcher and designer of home-made historical clothing reproductions for civic events here in Kingston for the past ten years, I am asked this question often. Usually, both organizers and enthusiastic participants are surprised to learn that the process of becoming historically attired for a specific occasion is not always as easy, inexpensive, or straight-forward as hoped. And there is no commercial facility in this immediate area that offers ready-to-wear off-the-rack historically authentic outfits for customers to rent for a few hours, which can be rather discouraging.

There are many variables and choices to consider when dressing in clothing to represent the past as a heritage ambassador. And, unfortunately, if details are not taken into account with careful thought, the result might be an uncomfortable mockery of history, rather than a dignified opportunity to invite others to engage in the visual pleasure of honouring days gone by. I have seen quite often how imaginative professional organizers of serious events, large and small, can become disappointed by the overwhelming attendance of many well-meaning casual celebrants who quickly "dressed up in some funny old-fashioned costumes" to support formal heritage occasions. Their clothing choices unintentionally changed the tone and nature of the planned event.

One of the greatest challenges for me as a designer has been explaining to clients that the outfits they will be wearing at civic history celebrations are not really 'costumes' at all, not in the way that we might think of dressing up for "look at me" party fun or perhaps even for entertainment shock value during Hallowe'en. The purpose of wearing heritage attire as a representative of the past is to enhance thematic event ambience in harmonious support of the organizers' planned vision, as a respectful personal contribution. The aim is also to help create an enjoyably unique, appropriate and aesthetically appealing visual conversation with other event-goers that conveys living history as a "finishing touch" to an occasion for them.

**Historical clothing can be grouped into many types according to purpose, construction and quality:**

- original museum collection pieces
- high quality, researched, authentically-styled museum recreations using period correct fabrics and sewing techniques
- clothing made for historical re-enactment events, such as War of 1812 battles, camps, fancy dress balls
- professional theatrical/movie designs (for Shakespeare, Shaw, historical films, etc.)
- interpreters' clothing for presenting historic sites (such as Upper Canada Village, Bellevue House)
- historical tour guiding outfits (Murney Tower Museum)
- formal ceremonial civic attire (a Town Crier's ensemble)
- heritage inspired clothing, custom-created for participation in celebratory civic historical anniversaries
- low cost and colourful community theatre and recital costumes
- themed one-time party costumes for casual recreational/social groups (St. Patrick's Day parties, etc.)
- inexpensive and disposable Hallowe'en/masquerade costumes.



## Ad\*dress\*ing History With Dignity/page 2

Here in Kingston, because of the city's colourful and vibrant past, and the great respect shown for history within its urban cultural milieu, there has been a quietly steady and unique demand for the creation of authentically inspired period clothing for civic events, especially to represent the decades between 1784 to 1914.

What recommendations can be given to heritage ambassadors-to-be about period clothing choices? Past Kingston special event experiences suggest that, if an outfit does not look reasonably authentic, does not fit well, is not complete, is not comfortable and clean, and is not put together in a style or colour suitable to the portrayed character, it really is best to participate in the heritage celebrations wearing regular modern attire. Other consideration factors in wardrobe selection would be the time of day of the event, the season, the time period being depicted, the nature of the occasion, ease of transit to the site, and the age of the wearer.

Also, if media photographers are present, it is always a good idea to remove modern eyeglasses (or acquire period correct frames or contacts), to hide wristwatches and modern purses, and to put away electronic devices. Complementary footwear choices are also important. The 'wow factor' and credibility of many outfits have been greatly diminished by the unexpected appearance of well-worn running shoes under a long skirt. Victorian ensembles accented by brightly coloured fingernails, or the visibility of "ink art" and ultra trendy hairstyles from the 21st century, quickly lose their charm. Chewing gum can also cause historical "magic" to dissipate instantly.



Carolyn Dowdell models one of her own researched summer recreations from the 1880s.



Early 1900s costumes on King Street for an American film in 2014

Department is important as well. Victorians stood and spoke differently. Doing a little research about heritage clothing before an event, or even watching a few excellent PBS historical dramas from Britain, helps in this regard. Once the dressing in a period ensemble is complete, a special performance begins for the wearer, in service of history enhancement. Most heritage ambassadors report that, for them, the first wearing of historical fashions can feel a little awkward, even embarrassing. However, as time goes on, the heritage attire does become much more comfortable and natural, which is the desired, purpose-inspired, dignified, and most enjoyable outcome for all.

Left to right: Summer student tour guide Kerith Tung tries on a new outfit at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Kingston, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year. Carolyn Dowdell models a late Victorian recreation complete with bustle and accurate underpinnings. Portrait artist Joanne Gervais frequently uses historically attired models for her workshops. Rev. Andrew Johnston of St. Andrew's is dressed as a travelling clergyman of the early 1800s in his portrayal of Rev. Barclay, the first minister, for the homecoming anniversary banquet at the church in September. Ada Mallory and Larry Moore pose in the sanctuary of St. Andrew's wearing outfits incorporating Presbyterian blue and hints of Scottish plaid in the recreated anniversary designs.



Ada Mallory photo



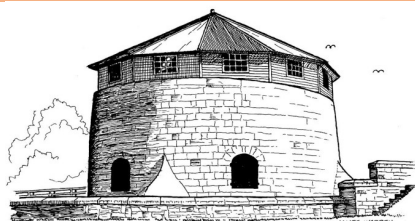
On November 15, a full house listened attentively to Dr. Duncan McDowall's fascinating account of the early history of Elrond College. Through words and images, Dr. McDowall evoked the 1960s as it was felt on Queen's campus – an era in which university enrollment grew threefold as conventional housing alternatives like boarding houses disappeared and the university was unable to keep pace with normal residence building. There was already a tradition at Queen's with co-operative housing models, and Toronto's Rochdale College was much in the news. Queen's principals were allowing students an increasingly large role in determining student affairs. Idealism, experiment and change were in the air. This was the context in which the AMS, along with Queen's administration and the federal government, engaged a well-known Toronto architect, Irving Grossman, who designed a landmark building that was markedly different, inside and out, than anything else built in Kingston. Most notably, apartment units were clustered into multi-floor units of different shapes and sizes – the elevator only stopped at certain floors. Communal dining was carried out on the main floor, and residents were expected to pitch in with administrative and cleaning duties. In a nod to the counterculture headiness of the era, the building was christened 'Elrond' after a character in Lord of the Rings. Unfortunately, things unravelled fairly quickly. There were problems between the architect and builder, followed by legal, financial and housekeeping issues beginning almost as soon as residents moved in. It proved difficult keeping the rooms full year-round. The initial enthusiasm for cooperative cleaning waned, and the building became shabby. Costs spiralled, and the university kept throwing in money as the project became a financial sinkhole. Finally, within a decade, the CMHC took control – by which point the university had lost several million dollars. The building has been run as a conventional apartment building (now known as Princess Towers) ever since. Numerous questions from the audience following the presentation attesting to the high degree of interest in this very visible reminder of the 1960s.



Dr. Duncan McDowall

## Murney Tower

## Operated by the Kingston Historical Society



This summer, Murney Tower Museum commissioned Eva Barnes, local Kingston seamstress and member of the Kingston Historical Society, to create a new outfit for Tower interpreters. After hours of dedicated measuring and sewing, Eva brought her creation to the Tower for its final fitting before the Sir John A. Macdonald Graveside Commemorative Service on June 6. Milong Wang, one of the Tower's two new summer staff members, wore the dress for the occasion.

Interpreter Milong Wang's final fitting with Eva Barnes



## **The Summer of '78** **by Pat Carson**

How many people are in a position to say that a summer job in a cemetery was the BEST EVER and that their professional activities for the next 40 years were influenced by it? I can - it happened to me!

In response to stories in the national press about the state of the Queen's University Anatomy Department burial ground and then photos of Sir John A Macdonald's grave covered with broken glass, Mr. John Howard, the newly appointed Superintendent of the Cataraqui Cemetery, and the Kingston Historical Society were able to leverage the attention into a Young Canada Works Project. In the summer of 1978, Paul King, an upper year Law student at Queen's University, was hired as the project manager. He, in turn, hired four other university students: Bob Blair, Debora Grass, Bob Mullen and me - and then later we were able to bring on board a newly graduated Grade 13 student, Brenda Bruce.

With the lovely grounds of the cemetery as the focus of our work, and what I remember to be a summer of exceptionally beautiful weather, as well as a trailer arranged to serve as our office on the grounds, we were all set! Days were spent working on our particular projects, researching families with roots in the area such as the Mowats, and Macdonalds - and because Debbie worked with us, UEL families such as the Grasses - and scouting locations on the grounds. These excursions were not without adventure; on learning that one of the original statues had stood upon a small island, one of The Bobs waded out through what was, by then, a swamp, to the remnants of the island to see if a plinth, or maybe even a fallen statue, remained. On his way back to the bank, he stepped on a snake - I have never seen, before or since, anyone levitate onto dry land quite so effectively!

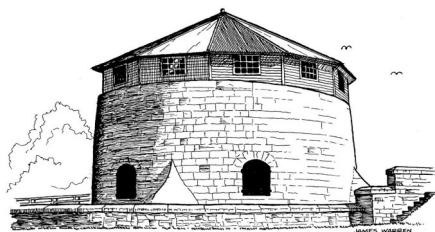
Mr. Howard was knowledgeable about the Garden Cemetery movement which had been influential at about the time the Cataraqui grounds opened, and which promoted the inclusion of statuary and the importation of specimen trees from England and the U.S. for landscaping. Both he and the Cemetery Administrator, Carmen, were generous with documents, ideas and books, and provided every assistance possible. I had the opportunity to re-draw and update the cemetery map and to name some of the roads, so I used the many tree varieties as my inspiration. By the way, the original Board of Governors for the cemetery were said to have imported several pairs of English red squirrels in hope they would populate the grounds but which immediately jumped the fence. We were always on the watch for descendants with tufty ears or suspiciously rusty coats!

Queen's University was a wonderful resource for our work as well. Provided with the original burial register, I found my way to the Queen's University Epidemiology Department, then housed in what looked like a glorified Nissan hut which stood where the Business School is now situated. There, Dr. Art Krause very kindly advised me about how to approach this treasure trove of information and what to look for in terms of disease trends and diagnostic categories, thereby sparking my ongoing interest in epidemiology, population health and in the history of medicine. Later, a Queen's archivist showed me how to protect the original documents and so, armed with my squeegee, double-sided tape and a roll of Mylar purchased for the project, I was able to ensure integrity of the original articles of incorporation for the cemetery and other key documents.

It was an idyllic summer, made even more remarkable because we all got along so well. One of The Bobs played rugby so we'd turn up at his matches at weekends. We went to films, had parties, and congregated at the Grad House. At least two of our group had cars so occasionally we would venture downtown on a weekday to have lunch at Confederation Basin and sing-along to the carillon at City Hall. Our harmonies on "The Blue Canadian Rockies" were particularly effective. That glorious summer had to end. A tent from Tompkin's Funeral Home appeared. The Kingston Historical Society arranged a reception attended by local dignitaries. Flora MacDonald, then MP for Kingston and the Islands, was in attendance.

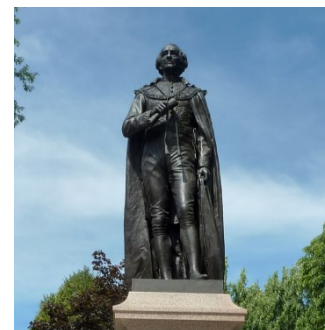
I don't know if the others were as influenced as I by that golden summer, but here I am, nearly 40 years later, still working on topics related to population health and in love with the history of Canada.

Thank you, Kingston Historical Society, for my wonderful summer of 1978!



**COME CELEBRATE!!**

**It is Sir John A. Macdonald's birthday  
and the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KHS**



To kick off the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Society, the guest speaker for the upcoming Sir John A. Macdonald anniversary dinner will be Mayor, Mr. Bryan Paterson! He will be addressing the early years of Sir John...."Sir John A. as an alderman and local politician before he became Prime Minister".

The dinner is planned for Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and will be held at the Senior Staff Mess at the Royal Military College. We will gather in the mess at 6:00 pm to meet our guest and mingle with your friends. The dinner will commence at 7:00 pm and the cost will be \$ 70. per person. Seating is limited to 100 members and guests.

We invite you to wear your best period costume for this event!

Please fill out the tear off portion noted below and send it along with your cheque made out to:

Kingston Historical Society C/O Anne Richardson

750 Amaryllis Street

Kingston, Ontario K7P 0A9

All reservations must be received no later than Monday, December 20, 2017.

Feel free to pass along the information for this evening. It is always fun to share a memorable event with friends! If you have any questions, please contact Anne Richardson at [richanne@hotmail.ca](mailto:richanne@hotmail.ca)

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NAME(S):

\_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE #:

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EMAIL ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ATTENDING: \_\_\_\_\_ NUMBER OF VEGETARIAN MEALS:

\_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

LIST ANY FOOD ALLERGIES:

\_\_\_\_\_

*\*\*Please ensure that you include the names of all of those attending the dinner. Many thanks.*