

# Limelight

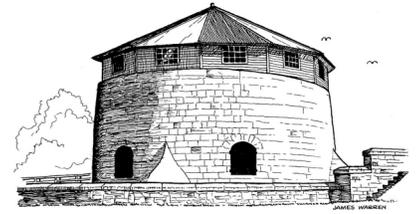
Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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January 2020



**KHS MEETING Please Note Date and Location and Time**

**Wednesday, 15 January 2020**

**KINGSTON FRONTENAC PUBLIC LIBRARY, CENTRAL BRANCH,  
130 JOHNSON STREET ROOM #1**

**GATHERING AT 6:30, MEETING AT 7 PM**

**Dr. Terri-Lynn Brennan: Fitting Kingston into an Indigenous story.**

Dr. Brennan is the founder and CEO of Inclusive Voices Inc. based on Wolfe Island. She is Haudenosaunee and British with her family coming from Six Nations of the Grand River, Brantford. She will use a map of Turtle Island to share regional Indigenous history and the ongoing responsibility of all Ka'tarohkwi residents to build healthy reciprocal relationships.



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# THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

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

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

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

## 2019-2020 KHS Executive Council

President: Warren Everett      Vice President: Joe Brites      Past President: Peter Gower  
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Editor, Limelight: Betty Andrews      Director, Murney Tower: Tabitha Renaud      Webmaster: Peter Gower  
Membership Chair: Paul Van Nest      [pvannest@cogeco.ca](mailto:pvannest@cogeco.ca)

Councillors:      Vincent Durant      Duncan McDowall      Alan MacLachlan  
Tabitha Renaud      Anne Richardson      Paul Van Nest      John Whiteley

## President's Message

Warren Everett



I was cleaning out some files the other day, and came across my January 2001 Limelight newsletter. It made for interesting reading. We were just entering the new millennium and all our technology was still working!! The Society was embarking on a millennium project: *An Illustrated Guide to Monuments, Memorials and Markers in the Kingston Area*. But most importantly, we were about to have the first Sir John A. Macdonald dinner. The guest speaker was Professor Donald Smith and the topic: *Sir John A. Macdonald and Aboriginal Canada*. Little did we know then how involved the Society would become in this issue.

Looking forward to the new decade, we are returning to the Central Library on January 15<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30pm, for our regular meeting, our second Heritage Dinner is on February 29<sup>th</sup> and we can look forward to a number of excellent speakers during the coming year. If you know of someone who may be an interesting speaker please contact Duncan McDowall, programme Chair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Society and the members of council who pitched in and worked hard to make the past year a success. With your ideas and participation our Society meetings are interesting and enjoyable. In fact, our Society depends on the engagement of its members in meetings and on council and on committees. Thank you and best wishes for the New Year. See you in January!

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## Kingston Branch of Ontario Ancestors

Join us 18 January 2020. Seniors Centre 56 Francis St., Kingston Free parking. Visitors always welcome.

Coffee at 9 a.m.

Our early speaker Geoffrey Allen is at 9:30;

Business meeting at 10

**Presenter Gord Sly, Curator of the Schools Museum in Barriefield**

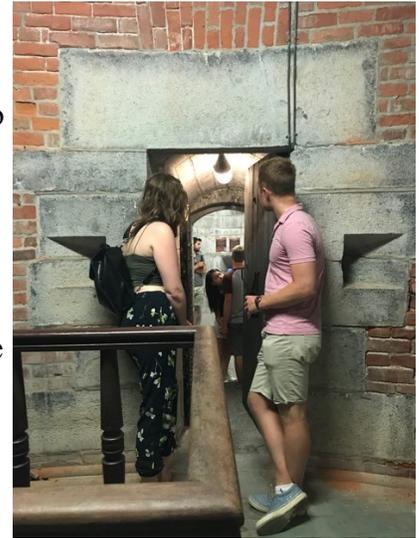
**"Aye Your Roots; What is "Behind" Your Name**



**By Bria Crosby**

“A Night in the Barracks” was a special event that took place at the Murney Tower Museum 13 August 2019 targeted at increasing community involvement and outreach. The event featured partnerships with Daft Brewing, the new brewery that opened on Princess Street in September; Minotaur, the game and gift store downtown, and other local businesses. In organizing the event, it was hoped to create an experience that would simulate the life of a 19th soldier in the Murney Tower and would appeal to various demographics. The Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment was known for drinking often and playing games to pass the time while looking out for deserters, and it was thought that would appeal to individuals interested in beer, games, and history.

Queen’s University music students performed at the event on the gun platform and sound traveled throughout the tower as people were laughing, playing games, and drinking bottles of Daft Brewing’s beer. The environment was lively and fun; if you traveled down to the basement there were multiple tables set up with games you could play in a quieter milieu. There were two sets of quoits commissioned by Walt with the Kingston Woodturners. Throughout the evening there were guided tours of the museum offered by staff wearing period costumes, as well as photos offered with the staff. Attendance for the event was about fifty, and the revenue was over \$200. The event was enjoyed by the patrons and engaged the community in a new way for the Murney Tower Museum. It is hoped that the event will be repeated and improved upon in the coming years, and that it will be a welcome addition to the Historical Society’s presence in the city of Kingston.



*Participants listening to guided tour during “A Night in the Barracks”.*

**KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL** Membership dues are as follows (please check one) - \$50 for an individual membership - \$60 for a family membership - \$25 for a student membership - \$60 for an institutional membership - \$300 for a sponsor. Please speak to Membership Chair Paul Van Nest, 613-544-6802 or email [membership@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca](mailto:membership@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca)

Additional donation: The Society would sincerely appreciate any additional donation you may wish to contribute to the Society.  
Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send this completed application form, along with a cheque made out to the ‘Kingston Historical Society’:  
Kingston Historical Society, Box 54, Kingston ON K7L 4V6

You can also register on-line from our webpage: [www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.com) > Membership

Membership includes the annual journal ‘Historic Kingston’ and 9 issues of the newsletter ‘Limelight’ as well as a dis-counted fee to selected special events. Some sponsors also offer discounts.

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**Please renew  
membership  
now!**

## The Kingston Historical Society Award

The Kingston Historical Society held its Annual Awards night 4 December 2019 at the Renaissance Event Venue. Since 1993 the award has been presented to individuals and groups in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the preservation and interpretation of local history. This year, awards were presented to Bill Stevenson, and to the Tour Guide Program at Kingston City Hall.

The Kingston Historical Society recognizes Bill Stevenson in appreciation for his contributions to the preservation of local Kingston history. In 2012 he created the Vintage Kingston Facebook Page which offers a public platform for sharing historic ephemera related to Kingston and its environs. These include photographs, maps, advertisements, and illustrations. Many of the images are from private collections and would otherwise go unseen if not for Vintage Kingston. The page has been a great success with over 28,000 registered followers. There are now approximately 7500 images posted to Vintage Kingston, many of which include dozens of visitor comments that often fill in details about the subject depicted. In addition to Vintage Kingston, Bill Stevenson created and manages pages for Vintage Toronto, Vintage Gananoque, Vintage Brockville and Vintage Belleville.



**Awards Chairman Joe Brites with Bill Stevenson**

The Kingston Historical Society recognizes the City of Kingston Volunteer Tour Guide Program for its contributions to the understanding and interpretation of local history. For over 20 years the program has provided free guided tours of City Hall that explore a multitude of topics related to Kingston history. Tour participants are taken on a journey through time that features the World War I stained glass in Memorial Hall, a visit to the building's 1840 jail and a chance to see historical artifacts sprinkled throughout the building and in the Heritage Resource Centre.



In addition to Canada's two official languages, tours were available this year in Mandarin, Farsi and German. The twenty-eight volunteers conduct a 30 to 45 minute tour. This past year over sixty-three hundred visitors were offered tours. An additional seventy-seven hundred visitors took advantage of the self guided tour option. The Kingston Volunteer Tour Guide Program operates between May and October with additional special tours offered throughout the year.

**A few of the many City Hall guides**



Photos Clockwise:

Warren Everett, KHS President; Paul Van Nest, Membership; Carol and Peter Davy, John Grenville, Sue Bazeley, Maurice Smith, Duncan McDowall, Sandy Campbell, Leigh Smith; CKWS cameraman; Anne Richardson, Heritage Dinner Convenor.



Sue Bazeley, Bill Stevenson, Marc Shaw, Shirley Gibson -Langille and Robert St. Pierre.

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# Eliza and Sir John A.

by Vincent Durant



Eliza Grimason c. 1888

Eliza Grimason was ideally suited for the rapid growth experienced in 19th century Upper Canada. Smart, reliable and full of Irish charm, she helped her husband Henry operate a very popular tavern/hotel in downtown Kingston.

But it isn't Eliza's business savvy that intrigues me; rather it's her life-long devotion to one man –and no, it wasn't Henry! Instead it was to John A. Macdonald, whom she first met while seeking business advice from the up-and-coming lawyer, seven years her elder.

Born Elizabeth Jane Deacon in Northern Ireland, she and her husband Henry, also Irish born, first rented and then bought Grimason House from Macdonald in the mid-1850s. He had originally purchased the property as an investment a few years earlier.

Eleven years after starting the business, Henry Grimason passed away at age 56 in November

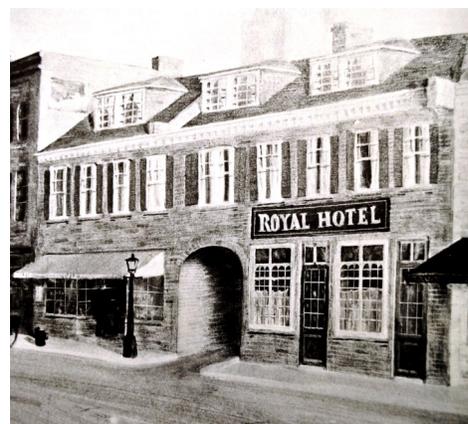
1867, leaving Eliza, then aged 46, a widow with several children at home and a business to operate. Rooms above the tavern were rented out, and she ran Grimason House with great efficiency. In time she would become quite wealthy, with net worth estimated at \$50,000.

A popular venue with local farmers, and the unofficial Conservative Party headquarters for the Kingston riding, the pub drew a constant crowd. As one writer put it, "Grimason House became in time the shrine of John A.'s worshipers with Mrs. Grimason as high priestess," and on special political occasions, she "lit up Grimason House and stood free drinks to her clients."

Regarding her feelings for the politician, Eliza left no doubt: "There's not a man like him in the livin' earth ... if he said it was so-and-so, I'd take my oath that it was so, whether I knew anything about it or not."

Active on the political scene, she often attended meetings at which she was the only woman. And although women didn't yet have the vote, Eliza was said to be able to sway about 100 votes; a considerable number since several key elections were won by fewer than that. For example, Sir John A. won the Kingston riding in 1874 and 1887 by 17 votes each time; and he lost the 1878 election here by 44 votes!

Whatever political power-base resided at Grimason House was seriously eroded when Macdonald lost the Kingston riding in 1878; he wouldn't regain the local seat until the 1887 election. Perhaps it was the thought of not seeing her beloved



The 1901 Kingston City Directory still listed Grimason House, but with William Marshall (Eliza's son-in-law) as proprietor. Today it operates as The Royal Tavern. Framed documents on its walls show the transfer of the building from John A. Macdonald to the Grimasons, and a "Superb Favourite" cook stove - highly decorated and from Eliza's time - greets the modern-day visitor. (Oil painting: F.A. Pratt)

politician so often, or maybe the possible loss of business at Grimason House, that caused Eliza such woe when he was defeated: "I went around the next day cryin' til I didn't have an eye in me head".

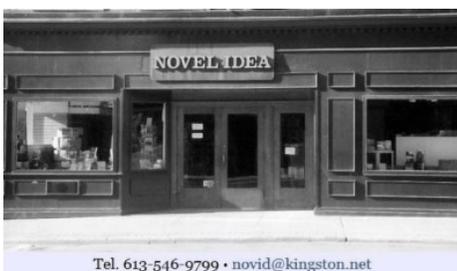
What she considered the highlight of her life was the chance to visit Sir John A. and his wife Agnes in Ottawa. In the House of Commons she saw him take his seat on the Conservative bench, and then was invited to the official residence at Earncliffe. Although she found Lady Macdonald "plain" looking, she was quite taken with her education and manners, and the fact that "she took good care" of Sir John!

In 1890, seventy-five-year-old Sir John A. Macdonald laid the cornerstone for a dry dock on the Kingston waterfront. The event marked his last public appearance in Kingston. According to biographer E. B. Beggar, when the Prime Minister finished his speech, "a woman in a plain dress but with a kind face gently worked her way upon the platform and moved towards Sir John. As the Premier saw her he sprang to his feet, and with a 'Hello, old woman!' grasped her in his arms and gave her a hearty kiss. It was Mrs. Grimason."

Macdonald died in June 1891 and was buried in Cataract Cemetery. Sometime later, Eliza Grimason was able to purchase the burial plot adjacent to his and had the remains of her late husband Henry moved there. Upon her own death in 1916 at the ripe old age of ninety-five, Eliza was buried next to her husband Henry ... and for all eternity she also rests near her beloved Sir John A.

**Note: Lena Newman's excellent book, *The John A. Macdonald Album (1974: Tundra Books)*, contains details on Eliza's family (pp 52-56), and is the source for photos of Eliza and the Royal Tavern used in this article.**

The centre obelisk marks the Macdonald family; the one on the right (partly hidden by the tree), marks the Grimason's. Sir John A.'s grave marker is the simple stone cross to the far left of the picture.



A well-attended book launch was held Sunday afternoon, 8 December 2019, upstairs at the Brew Pub, for **Paper and Rags**, the second historical novel about Kingston life written by **Morgan Wade**. Morgan introduced the historical background for his novel, which is on sale now at Novel Idea, and then friends performed a playlet about some of the characters in the book. The newspaper and publishing scene in Kingston circa 1818 is the backdrop for the novel. Morgan recreated an edited version of the first issue of the *Kingston Gazette's* front page on specially made rag paper for the launch event.

**Photo: Eva Barnes**





# Canadian Heritage Dinner

Sponsored by the Kingston Historical Society



**ANOTHER WONDERFUL EVENING...SAME GREAT PRICE!**

This coming year we will be holding the second annual Canadian Heritage Dinner sponsored by the Kingston Historical Society. The guest speaker for this very special event is **Dr. Laura Brandon**. Her presentation is **“Paint and Paper: The Group of Seven and the First World War”**.

Dr. Brandon is a freelance writer, curator, and lecturer specializing in international and Canadian war art. She was the historian of Art & War at the Canadian War Museum. She has written and lectured internationally for nearly 40 years, curated more than 45 exhibitions, and is currently an Adjunct Research Professor in the School for Studies in Art and Culture in the History Department at Carleton University.

Dr. Brandon will speak about the artists who first exhibited as the Group of Seven in 1920. She will highlight the critical and popular success of the 1919 war art in London, England, and explain how burgeoning notions of Canadian identity, along with the artists’ own experiences in World War I as soldiers, painters and commercial artists, placed the conflict at the centre of their post-war success.

**Date:** *Saturday, February 29, 2020*  
**Time:** *6:00 pm with dinner commencing at 7:00 pm*  
**Cost:** *\$70 per person*  
**Location:** *Senior Staff Mess at the Royal Military College*

Our meal will consist of the following: pretzel buns (gluten free buns available), butternut squash soup, your choice of entrée, lemon broccoli vegetable, tea or coffee, and raspberry cheesecake for dessert. Please choose from the entrée options below on the registration form.

**Entrée Options:** Braised beef short rib/red wine jus/garlic parmesan mashed potatoes  
 Fresh salmon filet/lemon beurre blanc/wild rice pilaf  
 Four cheese ravioli/herbed tomato sauce/reggiano parmesan

Please fill out the tear-off portion of the registration form and send it along with your cheque to the address below. **ALL** registration forms must be received **no later than Friday, February 13, 2020.**

Anne Richardson Kingston Historical Society  
c/o 750 Amaryllis Street, Kingston, Ontario K7P 0A9

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Anne Richardson at: [richanne@hotmail.ca](mailto:richanne@hotmail.ca)

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