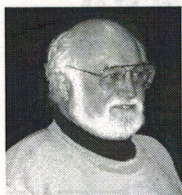
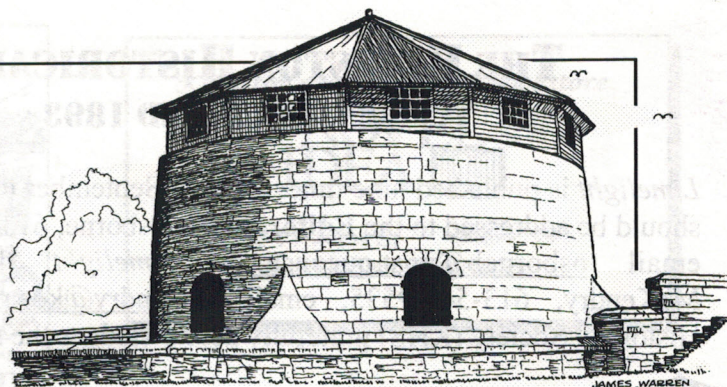


LIMELIGHT

NEWSLETTER of the
KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

vol 7 no 2 February 2005 ISSN 1488-5565



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

For those of you who missed it, our John A. Macdonald banquet was, yet again, a successful event. Indeed, the whole day evolved into a full calendar of tributes at Macdonald's monument, Bellevue House, and RMC. Some of us even added a new element: an enthusiastic toast to the Old Chief at opening time at the Royal Tavern!

All of this and more will be referred to in these pages, but I do want to make particular reference to a point made by our speaker, Rudyard Griffiths. So often, we bemoan the fact that Sir John doesn't receive the recognition he deserves as one of the principal architects of this great country. And, yet, are we somewhat to blame? Are we guilty of trivializing the man and turning him into a caricature? Do we place too much emphasis on perceived frailties rather than well-established achievements?

And what a coincidence! In my introductory remarks, I alluded to genealogical research that reports that there were 1400 "John Macdonalds" in pre-Confederation Canada. I went on to quote J.K. Galbraith that, for many Scots, "To call a son something other than John was to combine mild

eccentricity with unusual imagination." Imagine my shock when, as if to underscore this point, the very next day, *Kingston Whig Standard's* "In Memoriam" reported the death of one, John Alexander McDonald (a "Mc" not a "Mac", I know!), on 10 January 2005 in his 84th year, a native of Ardoch in North Frontenac. "Sir John, you'll never die!"

The February KHS meeting will be the occasion of our **Annual General Meeting**. We will report on our past activities and elect a new Executive and Council (see page 8). Participatory democracy and institutional loyalty should be sufficient motivation to attend. However, as an added inducement, following the business part of the meeting, we will repeat last year's very popular **auction**. Those wishing to donate items to be auctioned (income tax receipts will be provided that night) should advise Alan MacLachlan at 549-8841. As he did last year, our "auctioneer in residence," Douglas Petty, will introduce us to the arcane mysteries and frivolous legerdemain that separates us from our money -- albeit for a good cause!

Brian S. Osborne



THIS MONTH'S MEETING:

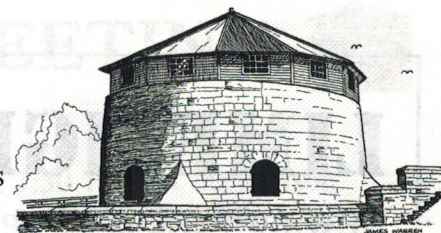
WEDNESDAY, 16 FEBRUARY at 7:30PM
AGM & AUCTION

Wilson Room, **Kingston Public Library**,
Johnson at Bagot
ALL WELCOME ~ REFRESHMENTS

- ◆ President's Message, 1
- ◆ Speakers' Corner, 2
- ◆ The Scribbler, 3
- ◆ The Book Shelf, 3
- ◆ John A.'s birthday, 4—5
- ◆ The Secret Garden, 6
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THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ESTABLISHED 1893



Murney Tower by James Warren

Limelight is published nine times a year - September to May. Submissions should be addressed to the **Editor**, Brian Osborne, 613-533-6042, email osborneb@post.queensu.ca. *Limelight* designer, Jennifer McKendry, 613-544-9535, email mckendry@kos.net. The Kingston Historical Society (KHS) gratefully acknowledges the support of *Limelight's* sponsors.



KHS holds monthly talks or events, usually at 7:30 PM on the third Wednesday of the month, September to May, usually in the Wilson Room of the Kingston Public Library on Johnson St at Bagot St. Special annual events include a dinner and talk honouring the birthday of Sir John A. Macdonald in January and a ceremony marking his death in June. **New members are welcome!** - individual \$35, family \$40, institutional \$40, student \$25; memberships include *Historic Kingston*, published annually by KHS.

Kingston Historical Society
Box 54, Kingston ON K7L 4V6

website www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

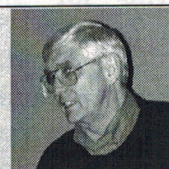
Brian Osborne, *President*
Warren Everett, *Past President*
Maurice Smith, *Vice President*
Douglas Petty, *Secretary*
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Councillors: John Abbott
Robert Andrews
Jane Errington
John Fielding
Ed Grenda

Alan MacLachlan
Desmond O'Meara
Jack Pike
Gordon Sinclair
Edward Snider

SPEAKERS' CORNER

with Alan MacLachlan



On 19 January, over 60 friends and members weathered the snowy, blustery, winter conditions to listen to tales of the Wolfe Island Ferry, presented by Captain **Brian Johnson** who has worked with the Wolfe Island Ferry Service since 1981 and has been a captain since 1989. He traced the history of the ferry service from 1802 to the present. He brought a display of clippings and objects including a hat passed from one captain to the next (*far right*). The evening was even more interesting because a number of Wolf Islanders were present with observations and personal recollections. Following a colourful question period, the Society enjoyed refreshments and conversation before returning to the

chilling winds of January.



Please remember our auction on 16 February following the AGM.

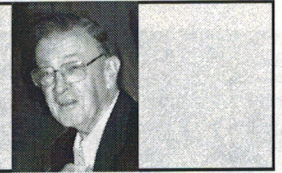


photo: J. McKendry



THE SCRIBBLER

J.W. (Bill) Fittsell



POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Is this scribe's memory misty or has our Society in recent years shifted its focus to buildings and events rather than to the people who made Kingston's history?

Having made a nickel writing about Kingstonians over a couple of decades, I may be coming from a biased position, but it seems to me—without a cursory glance at the record—that recent papers have not adequately reflected the personalities of Kingston. Is it just a case of exhausting the supply interesting characters?

Certainly, our most famous son, Sir John A. Macdonald, is accorded scholarly scrutiny once or twice a year and the annual KHS Awards honour modern day preservers and promoters of history but what about other major subjects and the lesser lights of yesteryear?

What does *Historic Kingston* reveal? Let's assess a sample of titles of papers presented over the last 20 years:

★ from 1985 to 1994 (vols 33-42), of 102 articles, 13 covered the Macdonalds and 19 were spread over various characters, ranging from Molly Brant and Dollar Bill to the Hanleys and Michael Grass.

★ from 1995 to 2004 (vols 43-52), of 109 articles, 14 covered the Macdonalds and 19 articles featured noteworthy citizens, ranging from Amherst and Etherington to Davies and Nickle.

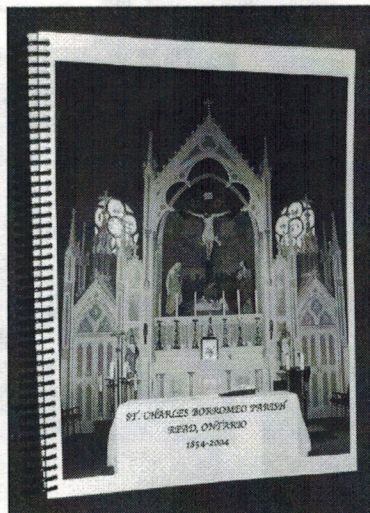
Surprisingly, a check of the last three editions, shatters my theory. Of 33 articles from 2002 to 2004, 13 were "people prominent" and one article covered three native sons—Mackenzie, Rogers, and Benson. Cheers! Considering that the person who fills the demanding and vital position of program chair, with executive and membership support, accepts the volunteer offerings of speakers, the vocal and printed results are a fine balance of emphasis on people, places, and happenings.

Kudos to **Allan MacLachlan** for consistently producing a strong line-up of varied speakers and subjects as well as directing enlightening and entertaining special events.

P.S. For students of local history looking to mine unheralded people subjects from the past, check out Fred Meyer's series, "Men of Affairs in Kingston" in *The Daily British Whig*, December, 1924 - January, 1925.

THE BOOK SHELF

Since her retirement from Queen's University library system two-and-a-half years ago, KHS's **Helen Coffey** has been working with six others to compile *St Charles Borromeo Parish, Read, Ontario, 1854-2004*, which was published for the parish's 150th celebration on 21-22 August 2004. This parish covers the northern half of Tyendinaga Township, Hastings County. The book tells the stories of the Irish who pioneered there in the 1830s and '40s on what had



originally been Mohawk territory. Much of this 325 pp. book consists of detailed histories of about 110 families and includes family photos, legends, and even some family songs and poetry. Available at \$20 in Kingston and area from Helen 542-4586 or coffeyh@post.queensu.ca. Or by mail at \$30, payable to St Charles Borromeo History Book, and sent to: Verna Stephenson, 1387 Cross Road, RR#1, Roslin, K0K 2Y0.

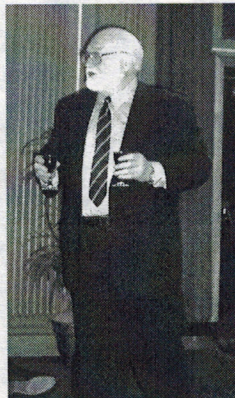


birthday greetings to John A. Macdonald

photography by Marc Letourneau (p. 4) and Randy Genoie (p. 5)



KHS annual banquet at the Royal Military College





above: City Park

★

left: Bellevue House

For colour photos, please see
www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

LANDSCAPES/INSCAPES

The Secret Garden

by Shirley Gibson-Langille



In my garden of memories, there is one particular place I would like to share with you. When Mom, Dad, and I first came to Kingston we lived in an apartment at 221 King St East, on the corner of Earl St. It was then known as the "Elizabethan Inn," a club for Army, Navy, and Air Force servicemen. It was run by two kind ladies, Mrs Richey and her sister. I enjoyed hearing the music that came from an old floor-model wind-up Victrola gramophone.

At that time, there was a beautiful veranda on two sides of the house where I loved to play on rainy days. Across the street was Berman's store. Mom would often take me there and buy me a treat. Every day, I waited excitedly for the horse-drawn milk and bread wagons to come to the store. I remember one of the horses was called "Queeny." Next door was a beautiful stone house, where Mrs. Mollet lived with her fluffy grey cat. A tall limestone wall joined the back of both of our yards. On her side, was a latticework door going into what I called, "The Secret Garden." How I used

*I could visualize
beautiful, ever-blooming
flowers, colourful
butterflies, birds singing,
and a wonderful big
swing, just waiting for me
to spend hours swinging
and dreaming.*

to fantasize it as a magical, story-book place. I could visualize beautiful, ever-blooming flowers, colourful butterflies, birds singing, and a wonderful big swing, just waiting for me to spend hours swinging and dreaming.

Although time passed and we moved away, I never forgot "The Secret Garden." In fact, in the 1960s, I did a large oil painting of the imaginary garden full of magnificent translucently coloured flowers, hidden behind the stone wall. It still remained a mystery for me.

Ironically, in 1987, I got an amazing phone call from Janet Grey who lived at 224 King St East. Her friends, the Carmichaels, lived across the road, where Mrs. Mollet had lived. I couldn't believe it! Having commissioned me to do a painting of their garden for a surprise gift, she arranged for me to do it the very next day. All night, I dreamed about my fairy-tale image. I was finally going to see "The Secret Garden."

It was very foggy when I arrived the next morning. Quickly, I ran to the back of the yard and opened the squeaky door into a gloomy, ugly, tangled mess of thorny weeds and deadly nightshade vines. Tears filled my eyes, as I closed the door on my childhood dreams. I returned to the real world and the job at hand. The front garden of the house was beautiful and it was a joy to paint it. A unique white squirrel came to visit. I quickly put him in the painting and left with a feeling of well-being.

This experience with "The Secret Garden" and life in general reminds me of two songs! As a child, I recall singing, "Everything is Beautiful." Then, one grows up and looks behind the door to the tune, "I Beg Your Pardon, I Never Promised You a Rose Garden"!



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



At the KHS AGM on Wednesday, **16 FEBRUARY** 2005 at 7:30 PM, in the Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library, the Society's Nominating Committee will present the following slate of candidates to the membership:

EXECUTIVE

<i>President</i>	Maurice Smith
<i>Vice-President</i>	Ed Grenda
<i>General Secretary</i>	Alan MacLachlan
<i>Treasurer</i>	Gordon Sinclair
<i>Past President</i>	Brian Osborne

COUNCIL

John Abbott
Robert Andrews
John Fielding
Heather Home
Ted Huber
Marc Letourneau
Doug Petty
Jack Pike

As specified in the Constitution, the newly elected Council will appoint persons to several responsibilities. The Nominations Committee will recommend the following who have agreed to serve in the following capacities:

Editor of *Historic Kingston*, **Jane Errington**
Editor of *Limelight*, **Brian Osborne**
Murney Tower Committee, **Warren Everett**.

The Nominating Committee will also recommend the following slate of committee chairs:

Awards, **Jack Pike**
Finance, **Gordon Sinclair**
Grants and Reports, **Ed Grenda**
11 January event, **Jack Pike**
6 June event, **Peter Radley**
Membership, **Ted Huber**
Programme, **John Abbott**
Publications, **Robert Andrews**
Publicity, **Marc Letourneau**
School Liaison, **John Fielding**
Web-Site, **Mark Andrews**
Welcome, **Shirley Gibson-Langille**.

Members wishing to serve on any of the above

committees are most welcome and encouraged to apply by contacting any member of the Executive

Any member of the Society in good standing may nominate any other member of the Society in good standing for any office. Incumbents may be nominated for an additional term, and nominations may be submitted for any or all of the positions to be filled. Members wishing to nominate a candidate for any position as a member of the Executive or Council may do so from the floor at the AGM, by submitting written nominations to Warren Everett, 253 Willingdon Avenue, Kingston, K7L 4J2, or by handing them to any member of the present Executive and Council before 9 February 2005. Submission of a nomination carries the assumption that the nominee is willing to stand for election and serve, and that this has been verified by the nominator.

Please participate in this extremely important activity to ensure the continuing health and efficiency of the Society.

Warren Everett

Past President & Chair, Nominating Committee