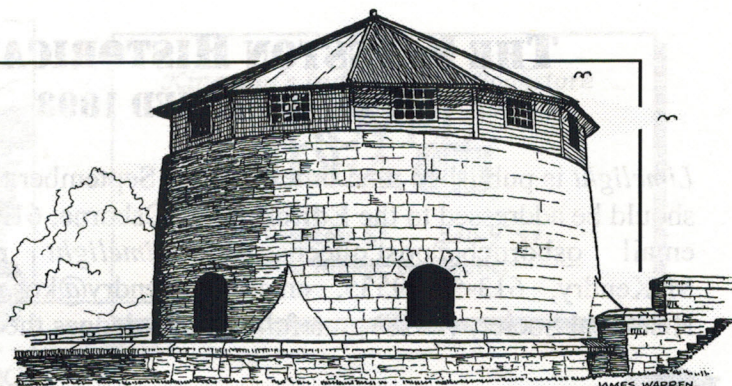


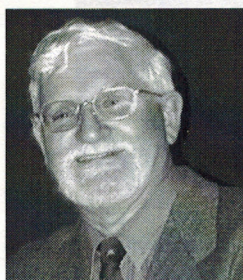
LIMELIGHT

NEWSLETTER of the
KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

vol 7 no 4 April 2005 ISSN 1488-5565



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



I have finally found some time to think about **Rudyard Griffiths's** presentation at the Sir John A. Macdonald Birthday Dinner on 11 January. Each time and place brings with it a different way of

looking at old ideas and maybe to revise the usual bromides about our first Prime Minister. It is very easy to fall back on the stories about drinking gin, disguised as water, while addressing the House and yet such stories have a purpose: they are usually told to help make history more accessible to those normally turned off by the subject or to avoid a lengthy exegesis on Sir John A and Confederation. As I see it, the problem is that we need something more than gin (did I say that?) and a little less than the creation of Canada to bring this remarkable man forward.

I found a connection between Rudyard Griffiths and **Steve Lukits** who spoke to us about his time at

The Whig Standard, where there is the constant tussle between advertising and journalistic content. And, within the journalistic content, there seems a constant battle for space between meeting the expectations of the popular culture and the 'important' stories, the light and entertaining versus the serious stuff. It's a little like gin and Confederation! Of course, sorting this out is a part of the never-ending debate and questions that the Kingston Historical Society deals with regularly and with considerable success. But now is a good time to renew the dialogue about Sir John A Macdonald.

On another front, the War of 1812 Celebrations will soon be upon us. With the coming of spring it is time to tramp the grounds of the Royal Military College, a former Royal Navy Dockyard for inspiring thoughts about another dimension of Kingston's historic past.

Maurice Smith

THIS MONTH'S MEETING:

WEDNESDAY, **20 APRIL** at 7:30PM

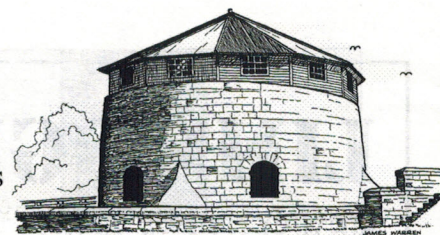
Blake Seward on the "*Lest We Forget Project*"

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

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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

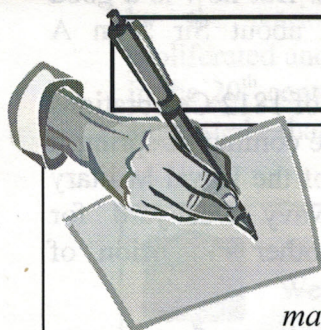
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The Letter Box



Nancy Mounsteven writes:

My father has recently sent me a silk square, which resembles a flag (but I don't believe it is), approximately 2 x 2 feet, with "Kingston" embroidered in the centre.

At the bottom are two (I believe) provincial flags crossed, and at the top there is a design of maple leaves, a rose, a thistle and a pair of shamrocks. I believe this item must be about 100 years old, as it belonged to my grandfather who was born and raised on Wolfe Island. My father is now 78.

Possibly this was made as a souvenir of some sort? If you could help, I would greatly appreciate it.



NB: Please see the enclosed flier for details about the **ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY's** AGM at Fort Frontenac on **SATURDAY, 7 MAY**. KHS members and guests are welcome to the lunch (\$30) and accompanying talk by **Ian Wilson**, National Archivist and Librarian of Canada, as well as a talk later by **Susan Bazely** about Fort Frontenac and a closing reception.

IN MEMORIAM

Frederick Arthur McConnell

1914-2005

Born in Kingston, educated in Kingston and Ottawa, Fred McConnell was a strong family man, friend to many, and active member of his community. Yet to all who knew him, his very bearing underscored another dimension: his long association with things military.

Fred enlisted in the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals around 1937 and was commissioned during WWII. At war's end, he reverted to the NCO rank in order to continue on as a member of the permanent force. In 1949, he was posted to the RMC at Kingston as drill sergeant, and also undertook the role of "coach" of the rifle and football teams. In all of these capacities, he was much respected by the cadets.

From 1954 to 1960, Fred served as Company Sergeant Major with the Black Watch (The Royal Highland Regiment of Canada). Upon retirement from the army, he returned to Kingston and became responsible for the training of the Fort Henry Guard. Here, his considerable skill in dealing with young people and his own personal example of conduct and deportment contributed to the recognition of the Guard as a world-leader in historical animation. During these years, Fred also continued his sport

interests through officiating and organizing basketball activity for Kingston's youth.

KHS also benefited much from these skills. Fred advised in the planning and execution of the ceremonial aspects of the annual 6 June Sir John A. Macdonald Memorial Service. He also served as Curator of the Murney Tower Museum during the 1960s and as Vice-President. In 1994, he received a KHS award in recognition of his outstanding service to the understanding of local history.

Fred's sincerity, energy, loyalty, and never-failing *bonhomie* will be missed by all who counted him as a colleague and friend.

with thanks to Jack Pike



Fred was presented with a special KHS award in 2003 in recognition of his long standing contribution to the Macdonald graveside ceremony. *left to right: Brian Osborne, Isabel Trumpour, Fred McConnell.*
Photo: Randy Genois

Rose Richardson

1938-2005

It is with profound regret that KHS notes the death on 18 March 2005 of one of its most loyal sponsors and supporters, Rose Richardson. Two years ago, *Limelight* noted the passing of her partner, Zal Yanovsky. Together, Rose and Zal did much for their adopted community, Kingston. For many of us, their conceptualisation of Chez Piggy and Pan Chanco added a new dimension to downtown life, but there was more. Apart from sponsoring KHS and, in particular, *Limelight*, together they reached out into the community



photo: J. McKendry

in so many ways. Rose and Zal employed newcomers to Canada and Kingston to help them get started; they donated food and services to several charities; they supported various organizations such as Kingston Literacy, the Horizons of Friendship, the Kingston Humane Society, and the Rose and Zal Yanovsky Breakfast Fund for needy children. Our condolences and best wishes go out to Rose's daughter, Zoe, and all of Rose's staff, colleagues, and friends at "Piggy's" and "The Pan."

THE SCRIBBLER

J.W. (Bill) Fittsall



WHEN DOES HISTORY BECOME HISTORY?


When does an object become an antique? Viewers of the popular television program *Antiques Roadshow*, cognizant of the “100 year rule,” may well ask this question when they see collectibles featured from their youth or middle age. This leads to the question: “When does history become history?” When does an event or a happening become worthy of study, criticism and publication? From the viewpoint of one amateur history buff, history begins in the era before the individual’s year of birth. However, as the years tick by, and anniversaries of momentous events are marked, one soon realizes that they have lived through historic times.

This was brought forth most vividly at the society’s March meeting when former *Whig-Standard* editor **Steve Lukits** illuminated listeners on the hectic happenings at the Kingston daily newspaper from 1988 to 2002. It was the first draft of modern history that, when printed in *Historic Kingston*, will make a valuable addendum to Doug (George) Fetherling’s 1993 book—*A Little Bit of Thunder, The Strange Inner Life of The Kingston Whig-Standard*, to which I had the privilege of contributing historical notes.

The microfilm files of *The British Whig*, *The Daily Standard* and *The Kingston Whig-Standard* that I combed from 1961 to 1994—and from which I still glean items—have produced notations that prove historic happenings of great and little importance occurred in my lifespan. Index cards in my “Offbeat” file, indicate that the City of Kingston, while not rivalling that other conservative “Hub,” the City of Boston as a leader in prohibiting certain things, certainly had its idiosyncratic whims.

For instance, bobbed hair, not a book, was banned at Kingston General Hospital in 1937. The same year, bingo was banned. The “gambling” game, which according to the *Whig* “had been popular in the city for some time,” was declared illegal by Police Chief R.J. Robinson, on advice of Attorney General Arthur Roebuck. Apparently the ban never stuck. The city, however, did permit the Rotary Club to hold a marble tournament, complete with official rules.

Thirty years later in 1967, it was female dress decorum that came under scrutiny. Kaye Fulton, a Loyalist Collegiate student, noting Cleveland’s ban on mini-skirts, eye shadow and fancy stockings, conducted a *Whig* Youth Page poll on the former. Miss Fulton, who went on to a distinguished career in journalism, found students adamantly opposed—six to one—to a ban with one lone dissenting male declaring, “Legs are legs, looks are looks and never the twain should meet.” Three years later, a ban on wearing of jeans in one city school was lifted after a student vote.

So what era qualifies as “history?” According to *Encyclopedia Americana*, “history is the memory of past experience as it has been preserved largely in written records.” So everything, from the trivial to the tragic and triumphant, may qualify for study and dissemination. And Kingston is fortunate to have the near 200-year record of its newspapers as a rich resource and the experience and energy of both amateur and professional historians to search, study, analyse and interpret history for those with inquiring minds and sharp eyesight. 



Pediment of the original *British Whig* building 1895. Photo J. McKendry

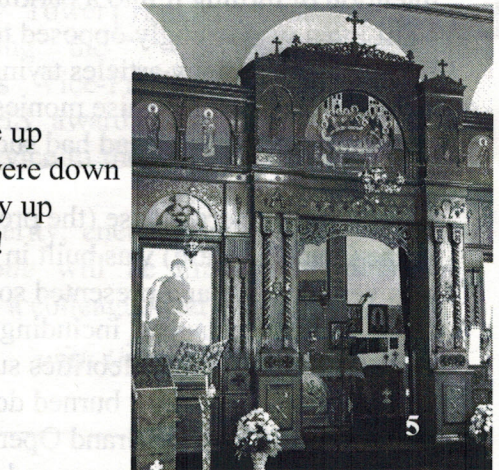
"UP & DOWN KINGSTON HILL"

photography by Jennifer McKendry



1 & 2. St George's Cathedral

In celebration of Heritage Week, **Brian Osborne** (left)—on behalf of KHS—organized two walking tours of downtown churches.



3-5. Father T. Drakos of the Greek Orthodox Church, Dormition of the Theotokos (originally Baptist Church of 1882)



6. nave of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church



(To the tune of the "Grand Old Duke of York")

A group of good old folk,
Knew what they had ahead:
March up to the top of town
And follow they who led.

Chorus

And when they were up they were up
And when they were down they were down
And when they were only half way up
They thought they'd left the town!

Chorus

They started at St. George
Then to G.O. did go.
Then on to Mary's nave
Before the kirk in the snow.

Chorus

And then they were at the top,
So they drifted down below,
To the quiet of St. Paul's
And graves lying in a row.

Chorus

They did this twice that day,
Fine leaders of the troop,
Sturdy to the end,
Though one came down with croup!

Chorus



St Mary's Cathedral:
7. nave; 8 & 9. crypt with tombs

LANDSCAPES/INSCAPES

IT'S A "GRAND" STORY

by Shirley Gibson-Langille



I did this pastel of the Grand Theatre in 1963 when it had just ended its life as a movie theatre. I painted it late at night when I didn't have to worry about parking or traffic. I sold the painting to Elizabeth VanLuven who bought it for husband, Deane, who, at that time, wrote a daily column in the *Whig-Standard* called "All things Considered." The painting now belongs to Sally VanLuven.

The Grand Theatre had then been in the news since its closure in 1961. A wrecking crew had already stripped the interior with the intention of turning it into a parking lot. Deane VanLuven was strongly opposed to this. He had written many articles trying to save the Grand and to raise monies for its restoration. After all it had had such a long history.

Martin's Opera House (the precursor to the Grand Theatre) was built in 1879. It was very popular and presented some 1200 live performances, including operas, minstrels, bands, and celebrities such as Oscar Wilde. In 1898, it burned down. Rebuilt in 1902 as the Grand Opera House, it hosted many operas and dramas with great success. Famous persons such as Sarah Bernhard, Harry Houdini, and Al Johnson were among those who graced its stage. In 1919, the owner, Mr. Small sold the Grand and all his other theatres for some \$1,700,000. He disappeared the day of the sale and is thought to have been murdered. Though this mystery has never been solved, it is rumoured that his ghost continues to haunt the Grand Theatre to this day.

In 1938, changing times led to the purchase of the Grand by the Famous Players motion picture chain. It opened with the feature, "College Swing," starring Burns and Allen,

Jackie Coogan, Betty Grable, Martha Raye, and Bob Hope. I can remember going to the theatre every Tuesday night in 1954-55 to collect a set of "Tudor Rose" china-dishes. It served as a movie theatre until 1961 when its doors closed for four years. It was during this time that Dean VanLuven worked so hard to save the Grand. Kingstonians rallied together to revive the tradition of the former Opera House. The city bought the building in 1962 and the public raised the money for the restoration. In 1966, the Grand Theatre opened as a Civic Auditorium.

Now, it's 2005 and, once again, the theatre



needs restoration. Another big campaign is on to raise \$6.5 million to restore the Grand. The City of Kingston is contributing \$3.9 million and the balance of \$2.6 million is being raised through local fund-raising. **FINAL CURTAIN? NO WAY! LET'S KEEP THE GRAND ALIVE!**

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SPEAKERS' CORNER

with John Abbott



On 16 March, Dr **Steve Lukits** of RMC addressed a capacity audience of KHS members and guests on the publishing revolution that transpired at the *Kingston Whig-Standard* during his term of editorial responsibility, 1989 to 2002. He began by placing Canada's oldest, continuously

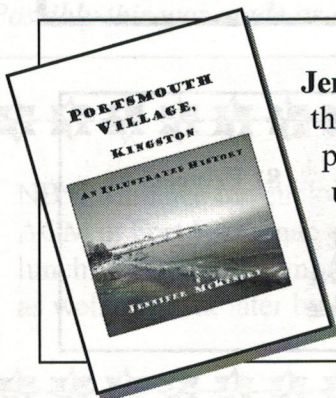
published, daily newspaper into historical and theoretical contexts. The newspaper drew prestige from the authority accruing to the press in the great age of journalism, when the print medium had a monopoly on "the news"; then suffered as that authority was shattered by the various broadcast media, which proliferated and went from strength to strength in the 20th century. On the theoretical side, he suggested that success or failure in the

newspaper business has been determined by the skill with which publishers manage the forces generated by the dynamic relationship between metaphor (how effectively the paper presents the story) and the measure (defined in such terms as space and financial resources). Those contexts established, he took us on the roller-coaster ride that he and his colleagues experienced as the *Whig* was sold into corporate ownership by its Kingston-based owner, publisher, and patron, Michael Davies. It was then centrifuged and divested in turn by Southam, Hollinger, and CanWest, until it was finally embraced by Michael Sifton's Osprey Group. Simultaneously, the *Whig* moved local news to the front section, went from afternoon to morning publication, shifted from computers designed for newspapers to Personal Computers linked in a network, and acquired a new press and a new home at the woolen mill. By the end of his presentation, Professor Lukits's audience understood what he meant by metaphor and measure. ☞

J. McKendry



At our 20 April meeting, 7:30PM in the library, **Blake Seward** will present, "Lest We Forget." This secondary-school project is an examination of military service files and other primary and secondary source documents to create a dossier on soldiers whose names are found on cenotaphs across Canada. We look forward to seeing you there.



Jennifer McKendry will be bring copies of her new illustrated book on the history of Portsmouth Village to the 20 April meeting. Regularly priced at \$22, it is \$20 (no tax) to KHS members and guests. If you are unable to attend, please contact Jennifer about arrangements for mailing (order form www.mckendry.net) or delivery at 544-9535 or email mckendry@kos.net. It is also available for \$22 at Peters Drugs (King St W. at Yonge) and Novel Idea (Princess St at Bagot).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & 38th ANNUAL HONOURS &
AWARDS PRESENTATION of
THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

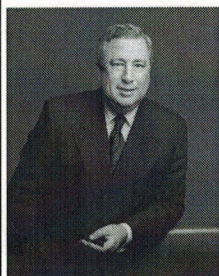
SATURDAY, 7 MAY 2005, 11:00 AM
FORT FRONTENAC, KINGSTON



Archives of Ontario F 1075

The Ontario Historical Society at the Royal Military College, July 1923

This year's AGM of The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) will take place at Fort Frontenac on Saturday, May 7th, at 11:00AM. The AGM is open to OHS members. The AGM will be followed by lunch, served at 12:30PM in the Officer's Mess. A cash bar will be available. **Dr. Ian E. Wilson**, Librarian & Archivist of Canada, will be the



guest speaker addressing the theme of "The gift of one generation to another: Reflections on Heritage and Identity." The 38th Annual Honours & Awards Presentation will begin at 2:30PM. Individuals,

organizations and businesses that have worked to preserve, interpret, or raise awareness of Ontario's history will be honoured during this event. Following the awards' ceremony, **Susan M. Bazely**, Executive Director &

Senior Archaeologist with Cataraqui Archaeological Foundation, will present "Fort Frontenac, 1673-2005: Five centuries of Canadian History." A reception follows immediately.



photo J. McKendry

Lunch Registration

Kingston Historical Society members and guests are invited to join OHS members for lunch. *Note:* the \$30 lunch ticket also includes the talk by Susan Bazely and the reception. Pre-registration is required; please contact Brian Osborne before Monday, **May 2nd** to reserve your ticket at 613-533-6042 or email osborneb@post.queensu.ca.

Further information:

www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca