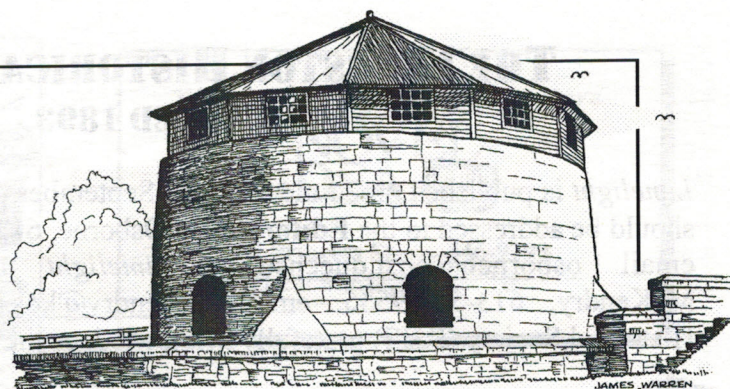


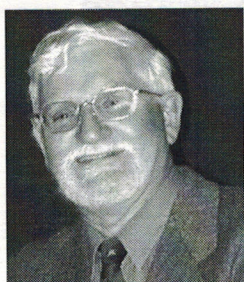
LIMELIGHT

NEWSLETTER of the
KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

vol 7 no 5 May 2005 ISSN 1488-5565



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Kingston Historical Society members are making the news! Our Vice President was described in the *Whig Standard*, on 23 April, as “**Ed Grenda**, the pup.” Did we know that Ed has a remarkable sports record and is regarded as “the best all-

round athlete of the bunch,” in a comparison with two other coaches featured in the article? I would like to attribute his sense of sportsmanship to being a Commonwealth Scholar at the London School of Economics: but, no doubt, that a stretch — wishful thinking.

Sue Bazely, as the Executive Director of the Cataraqui Archaeological and Research Centre, must be a very happy person these days. CARF’s open house, on 23 April, in their new headquarters (in a former public school on Gilmore Avenue) was a great success. Adding to that is CARF’s remarkable “dig” at the

Market Square behind City Hall. There it is — our past laid out like a map with walls, basement areas, cobblestone path, and steps leading into the subterranean areas. I recommend that you visit the site soon, and then again and again, as more of Kingston’s history is peeled back before our eyes. The archaeologists, on their knees with trowels in hand, seem to revel in answering questions. John Counter, our first mayor, must be very pleased.

And there is also this subject of some concern. Should we be renaming traditional areas of the city to honour benefactors? Can a way be found to honour our worthy and generous citizens while retaining a sense of the past? Please give this some thought.

Maurice Smith

THIS MONTH’S MEETING:

WEDNESDAY, **18 MAY** at 7:30PM

Heather Home & Gillian Barlow will speak on

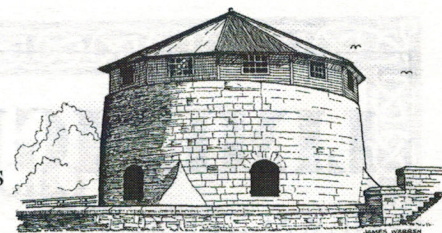
*“The Old ‘New’ Medical Building: Past and Present
Use of Kathleen Ryan Hall”*

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.

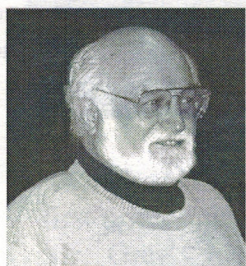
Kingston Historical Society
Box 54, Kingston ON K7L 4V6

website www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

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BOWING OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT

I have edited *Limelight* since September 1999 and it's time for a change. I am most pleased to report that my colleague, **John Fielding** has agreed to take over next September. A fine scholar with a well-honed historical instinct and sensitivity, John will, I am sure, move our newsletter into bigger and better things. I have enjoyed the challenge of communicating with you through these pages and, as I leave, I wish to thank some people in particular.

When the baton was passed to me six years ago by KHS President **Desmond O'Meara**, I had three weeks to get into the swing of things. A doctoral student in my department came to my rescue: **Brandon Beierle** had never done any design work before, yet he pulled together the bits and pieces I gave him, and we turned out Volume 1 No. 2 in October 1999. Since then, literally scores of people have submitted material to fill in the white space but one special person merits recognition: **Shirley Gibson-Langille**. An accomplished artist, she is also a consummate historian: through her eyes and imagination, people and places in the past come alive ...and she always makes me laugh!

Finally, over the last few years, I am most appreciative of the support I have received from **Jennifer McKendry**. Brandon and I were amateurs, while Jennifer brings the professional expertise of a designer to our pages, and I am most grateful for her contribution to the quality of *Limelight* and her constant support.

Brian Osborne

THE 1952 KINGSTON ELECTION

Robert McGeachy

"It had been my intention not to seek re-election this year," declared Mayor Clifford Curtis in one of 1952 campaign speeches. But, he continued, one issue "compels me to be a candidate": that issue was sewage, or more particularly, the need for a sewage disposal plant.

A longtime and distinguished Professor of Economics at Queen's, Curtis had become an alderman because he wanted to serve his community. In 1948, Alderman Curtis was chosen by Council to replace the dying Mayor Stuart Crawford and went on to win the 1948 and 1950 mayoral races. Curtis's four-year tenure as mayor was eventful. With the valuable Alcan and Dupont properties as his primary targets, in 1950, he led the move to annex parts of Kingston Township. The following year, the Ontario Municipal Board approved Kingston's annexation west to the Little Cataraqui and to the north. While the new boundaries incorporated the Alcan plant, Portsmouth Village, and Ontario Park, Kingston Township retained the Dupont and Collins Bay Penitentiary properties.

Kingston's expansion was costly and there were new expenses. In 1952, Curtis argued that Kingston had outgrown the capacity of its existing sewer system and he recommended the construction of a new sewage disposal plant in

Pittsburgh Township. Given some federal assistance, Curtis reasoned that, with its high credit rating, the city could afford, arguing further that its costs "would be spread over the necessary years of construction." His opponent in the 1952 election was George Wright, a retired civil engineer, lifelong Kingston resident, and mayor in 1930. He disagreed with Curtis. Wright promised to reduce taxes without reducing services; he opposed the proposed sewage plant and argued, instead, that Kingston should look for less expensive options.

Wright's message of fiscal restraint was attractive; he won the election with 6,015 votes to Curtis's 5,577. The defeated Curtis must have found City Council's subsequent actions almost ironic. Not only were taxes raised, but his recommended Pittsburgh Township sewage disposal plant was eventually constructed in 1958. ❧

Curtis's four-year tenure as mayor was eventful. With the valuable Alcan and Dupont properties as his primary targets, in 1950, he led the move to annex parts of Kingston Township.



John A. Slept Here, with apologies to Margaret Angus

We think it would be fun to meet the folks who own or live in the other existing Kingston houses, which Sir John A owned or rented, and we are attempting to identify them. Please give us a call at 547-5263 and help us with the search. Donna Ivey and Norma Kelly, 110 Rideau Street. ❧

THE SCRIBBLER

J.W. (Bill) Fittsell



A NEW GRAIN of THOUGHT

Program chair, John Abbott, before introducing the speaker at a recent meeting, inadvertently revived a custom that used to brighten KHS meetings a few years ago. That is brief comment on an anniversary of a significant event or even a trivial piece of memorabilia with or without a Kingston connection.

John's "factoid" was about David Fife (1804-77), the originator of Red Fife wheat, a variety that was the first Canadian wheat resistant to rust. According to the *Encyclopedia Canadiana* (1962), Fife was a farmer at Otonabee, Upper Canada, and imported a quantity of fall wheat from Danzig in 1842. The shipment contained a few grains of spring wheat that proved to be of the rust-resistant type. From these grains he developed the variety known as Fife, later Red Fife, which is widely grown in the harsh climate of the prairies and is still a favourite among some Saskatchewan wheat farmers.

At Lang Pioneer Village, ten miles southeast of Peterborough, stand Fife's log cabin and a

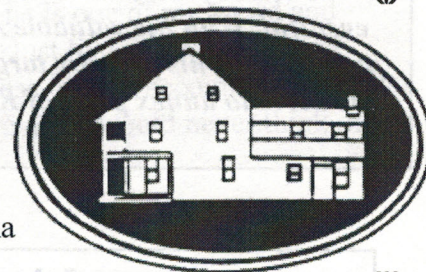
plaque commemorating his contribution to Canadian agriculture. What the sign and the encyclopedia have omitted, however, was the fact that Fife had a Kingston connection. According to *The Daily British Whig* of 22 May 1883, David Fyfe, as the editor spelled it then, worked at Fort Henry as a stone cutter. That would have been between 1832 and 1836, when Fife was an energetic man of 28 to 32.

Such oral gems or mini-papers, "This Day (Week/Month) in History," with the impromptu input of members, could become a regular part of the society's already varied programs. ☞



FAIRFIELD HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION'S SUMMER SEASON

- Saturday, **18 June**: FHHA Annual Dinner and Silent Auction. Under tent at Fairfield House on the beautiful shores of Lake Ontario, Bath Road, on the west edge of Amherstview! House Tours - Exhibits - Entertainment - Reception 4 to 6 PM; Dinner 6 to 9 PM. Contact Johanna MacKinnon 352-7453 millerseedfarm@sympatico.ca
- Saturday and Sunday, **30-31 July**: Upper Canada Trade Faire at Fairfield Park. A wonderful re-enactment of activities of the late 1700s and early 1800s, including blacksmithing, woodcarving, and open fire cooking. Presented by the Upper Canada Historical Association. Information, Barb Monk 386-7571



SPEAKERS' CORNER

with John Abbott
photographs by Jennifer McKendry



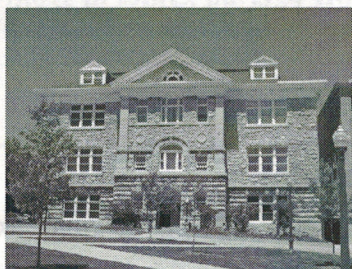
A generation ago, some of us feared that indifference and hostility toward all things military would emasculate our collective memory of national service and individual sacrifice. Even those who attempted to keep the faith often failed to make it operational. We observed the rituals of 11 November, discharged with solemnity around thousands of cenotaphs across Canada. Sometimes we perused the columns of names incised in the granite. Perhaps we wondered about the persons they were, why they had enlisted, and how they had met their fates, before walking off to resume our work.

At our April meeting, **Blake Seward**, a teacher at Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute, told some thirty-five members of KHS how he and a group of high school students decided to recover the *personae* of those veterans whose names were engraved in the Smiths Falls cenotaph. As part of the "Lest We Forget" project, each participating student selected a name, then proceeded to bring it to life through a process of research in archival, memorial and newspaper records, and family recollections. As their knowledge of their



subjects (their "guys") deepened, students developed a bond with their soldiers, often gaining sufficient confidence and interest to make "cold calls" to telephone subscribers having the same names in distant centres across the country. We listened with respect and empathy as Blake described the emotional responses of these young people when, their research complete, they stood before their subjects' grave markers in Europe.

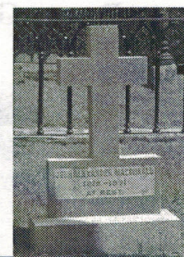
These pioneers have created a template for cenotaph research that is being employed by an increasing number of high school teachers and students in Ontario and beyond. It is available through the "Lest We Forget" website. Blake Seward illustrated his address with photographs and the profiles of several Smiths Falls' veterans connected with Queen's University. The questions and comments following his presentation revealed the extent to which our members were moved by the nobility of the project and the generosity of its participants and promoters.



Our last regular meeting, on **18 May** at 7:30 PM in the library, features **Heather Home & Gillian Barlow** speaking on "The Old 'New' Medical Building: Past and Present Use of Kathleen Ryan Hall."

Please mark Monday, **6 June** at 1:30 PM, in your calendar as a reminder to attend the annual ceremony at the Macdonald family gravesite in

Cataraqui Cemetery. Further details are on the back cover.



LANDSCAPES/INSCAPES

THE TRADING POST

by Shirley Gibson-Langille



I produced this pastel of *The Trading Post* in 1964. It was situated at 49 Princess Street below King Street, next door to Albert Syme's "Upholstery Shop," between Milan's Grocery (now Coffee & Company), and the S&R Department Store. I found The Trading Post to be a very special place which I looked forward to visiting every week to find weird and wonderful treasures: a shrunken head; an ornate brass clock; purple hexagon glass plates that had come from some church.

Yes, many people enjoyed wheeling and dealing in this unique little shop. Two of these were Elizabeth VanLuven and her daughter, Sally. In fact, they were such good customers that they were sometimes invited for coffee with the proprietors, Bill McViety and Brian Smith. When Elizabeth saw this pastel in my 1964 show at Domus Gallery, she asked her husband,

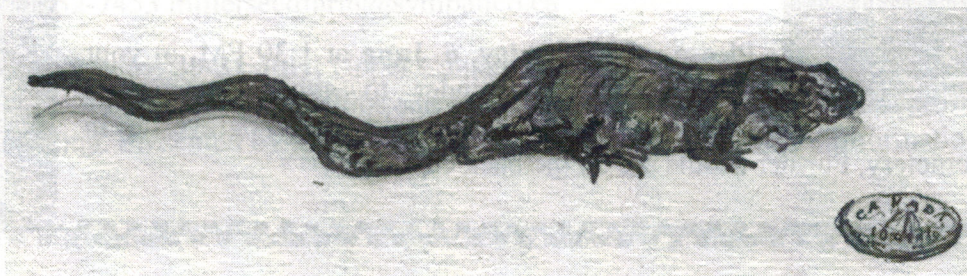
Deane, to buy it for her as a gift for an upcoming occasion. He did and Sally has now inherited it. When I went to her house to pick up the image to go with this story, she showed me some very valuable antiques that had come from The Trading Post, and a wooden chair they had given her as a gift.



I don't remember when The Trading Post closed but I do have a remarkable story to tell of how I remember this store and what it was like in November, 1975. It was a Pet Shop then. On my daughter Tiffany's fourth birthday, I took her there and bought her a Scarlet Newt (like a salamander). Even though we didn't know if it was male or female, we called it Sammy. It was about three inches long and I asked the salesman how long they lived. He told me, two years.

Believe it or not, it is now 2005 and, this year, Sammy will be thirty years old! Even though he sheds his skin four times a year, he is still only about six inches long. Some time along the way, he became my pet. After all, I am the one who looks after him and digs for worms to feed him.

But really, I feel he is one of my weird and wonderful treasures. Just like other purchases I made from that address, he has become even more valued with age and I would never think of trading him!

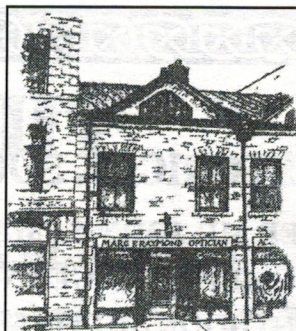


Sammy and a dime

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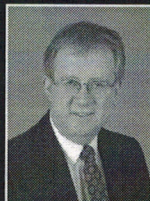
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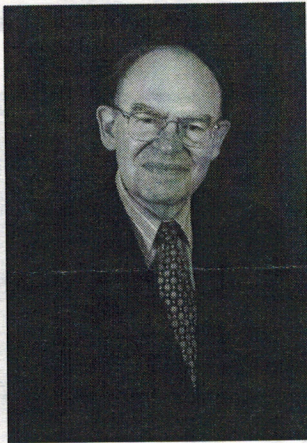
81 Princess St

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THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INVITES YOU TO REMEMBER SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD
IN AN EVENT ON 6 JUNE THAT COMBINES PAGEANTRY & HISTORY
IN A SPECIAL OUTDOOR SETTING

Please join us on **MONDAY, 6 JUNE at 1:30PM** at Cataraqui Cemetery to remember Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, who died on 6 June 1891. As in previous years, the annual commemorative ceremony features the Fort Henry Guard, a school choir, Bellevue House staff in period dress, city officials, as well as many dignitaries and representatives of various organizations laying wreaths. The guest speaker for the 113th grave-side ceremony commemorating the death of Sir John A. Macdonald will be the Rt. Hon. **Herb Gray**, P.C., C.C., Q.C. Mr. Gray, a native of Windsor, Ontario, was



educated at McGill University (Montreal) and Osgoode Hall (Toronto), and is a member of the Ontario Bar. Elected thirteen consecutive times, The Rt. Hon. Herb Gray served in the House of Commons from June 1962 to January 2002: a period of 39 years, six months, and 26 days! His various portfolios over the years covered the parliamentary landscape: Finance; Trade and Economic Affairs; National Revenue; Consumer and Corporate Affairs; Industry, Trade, and Commerce; Regional Economic Expansion; Treasury Board; and Solicitor General. Further, he has served as Opposition House Leader and Deputy Prime Minister. Since January 2002, Mr. Gray has sat as the full-time Chair of the Canadian Section of the International Joint Commission dealing with transboundary issues between the

United States and Canada concerning water and air. After so many years of commemorating our first prime-minister, one wonders what is left to be said. Given Mr. Gray's considerable experience in so many realms of political life, we look forward to his reflections on the life and contribution of Sir John A. Macdonald.

You are welcome to tour historic picturesque Cataraqui Cemetery (927 Purdy Mills Road off Counter Street) before and after the ceremony and enjoy refreshments in the outdoors chapel. Two Fathers of Confederation, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Alexander Campbell, and many other noteworthy Kingstonians and Canadians are buried here. We look forward to seeing you, your family, and your organization or group.

For further information, please see www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

