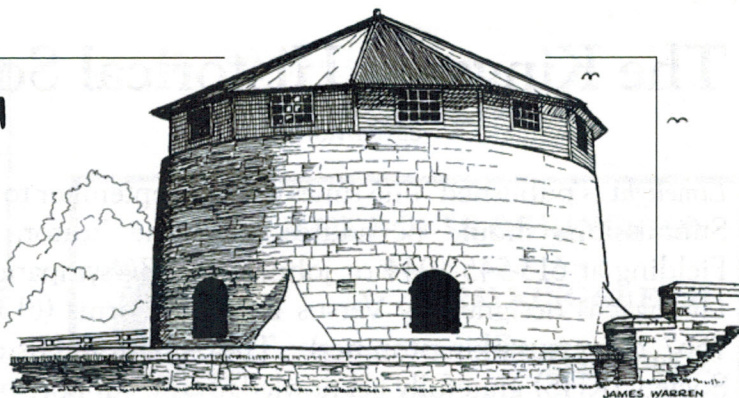


# LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the  
Kingston Historical Society

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**A**t the risk of rehearsing the obvious or uttering something that many of you may have already encountered, I would like to make a few observations about the study of history, whether it would be of the local, or global, or specialized variety. These musings were prompted by several discussions I recently had with university students and middle-aged adults who argued that an emphasis on history is essentially antiquarianism and that our focus should be directed toward the future. For them, the sense of individual and social contexts and also the sense of place which the study of history provides are of little consequence. It appears that the exigencies of daily life constitute a distraction that does not permit serious reflection.

Perhaps the most frequently quoted maxim that the advocates of historical study adduce in support of their positions is that by the philosopher, George Santayana "Those who will not learn from history are forced to relive it." I am sure most of us would nod in agreement. However, it is not clear what Santayana meant.

The first interpretation (an optimistic one) is that Santayana is advancing an admonition that we are slow learners avoiding the lessons of the past. This

suggests that we can and ought to learn from history. For this to be done, an assumption is being made that there are general ethical principles and empirical generalizations that are applicable to a wide range of behaviours and social phenomena irrespective of time and place.



The second interpretation, though somewhat dispiriting, is that Santayana is putting forth a pithy, all-embracing epitaph to be inscribed on the eventual tomb of humankind. This entails the assumption that very little has been learned from history and such will be the case in the future.

Whatever interpretation one adopts, it can be confidently said that historians and those interested in history are "reluctant forgetters", constantly reminding us of our links (tenuous or otherwise) with the past and causing us to pause and think about the human condition.

*Edward R. Grenda*

### THIS MONTH'S MEETING Wednesday, 19 NOVEMBER, 7:30PM "Princess Street and the Automobile: A Visual History of Then and Now"

Presented by John Olsen  
Professor Emeritus,  
Queen's University, Faculty of Education  
Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library, Johnson St. at Bagot  
Refreshments    All Welcome

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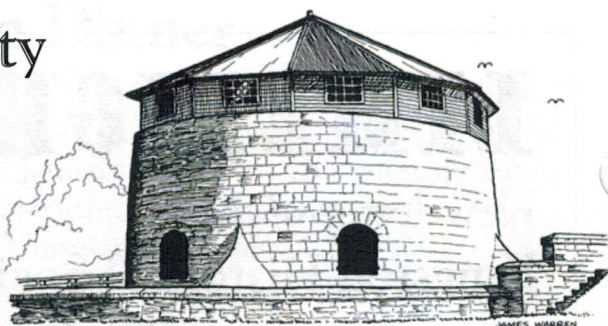
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# The Kingston Historical Society

established 1893

*Limelight* is published nine times a year - September to May. Submissions should be addressed to the Editor, John Fielding at 613-545-5944 or john.fielding3@sympatico.ca. *Limelight* is designed by Versus Business Forms (613-353-7667 or versus@kingston.net) The Kingston Historical Society (KHS) gratefully acknowledges the support of our sponsors in the production of *Limelight*.



Murney Tower by James Warren

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 Street at Bagot Street. 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!** Membership rates are \$40 individual, \$50 family, \$50 institutional or \$25 student. Memberships include *Historic Kingston*, published annually by The Kingston Historical Society.

## Kingston Historical Society

Box 54, Kingston, ON K7L 4V6  
www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

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Robert Andrews	Heather Home
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Mark **9 December** on your calendar for our **annual KHS Christmas Party** at Fort Frontenac Officer's Mess.

On **5 November** the **Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation** will host the final lecture in its 25th Anniversary Public Lecture Series. Peter Carruthers, will deliver his talk entitled "Living on the edge from Kingston to Kouchiching: Who are these people anyway?". The event will be held in Memorial Hall at Kingston City Hall beginning at 7 pm. Admission is free. Everyone is welcome. For more information, please contact the Kingston Archaeological Centre at 613-542-3483 or carf@carf.info.

The Kingston Branch of the **Ontario Genealogical Society** will meet in the Wilson Room of Kingston Frontenac Public Library, 130 Johnson St., on Saturday, **15 November, 2008** at 10 a.m. Janice Nickerson, M.A., will speak on "Old Religious Newspapers: Their Value to Genealogists". Ms. Nickerson is the founder of the research firm Upper Canada Genealogy, a past chair of the Ontario chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists, and author of over 60 articles in a variety of genealogical magazines as well as several how-to guides. She provided "behind-the-scenes" genealogical research for the CBC TV program "Who Do You Think You Are?" which aired October 2007 to February 2008. Visitors welcome. For further information, visit our website [www.ogs.on.ca/kingston](http://www.ogs.on.ca/kingston)

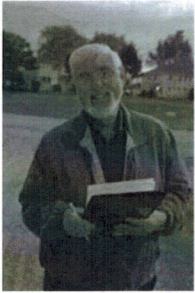
You are cordially invited to a **wine and cheese reception** in celebration of McGill/Queen's Press publication of *D'Arcy McGee, Volume 1: Passion, Reason, and Politics, 1825-1857*, by David Wilson. The author will be speaking and available to sign copies of his book in the Fireside Lounge, at The University Club, 168 Stuart Street, Friday, **14 November 2008**, at 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. R.S.V.P. to Sandy Fox at 613-533-6647; or [sandy.fox@queensu.ca](mailto:sandy.fox@queensu.ca)



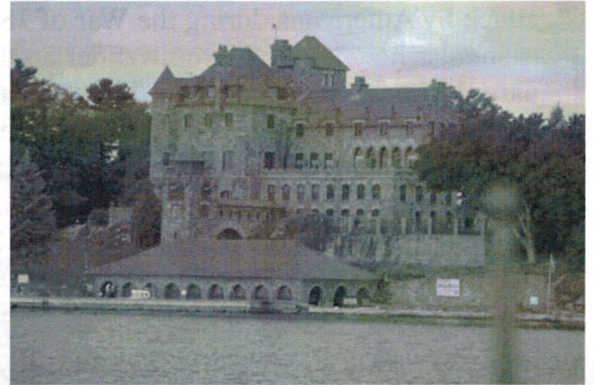
# Fall Excursion 2008

Written by Alan MacLachlan, photos by Peter Ginn

On a sunny and colourful Saturday, October 4, 45 members and friends of the Society experienced the Annual Fall Excursion along the American and Canadian sides of the St. Lawrence River. This included a ride on the 1923 touring boat, The Morrisania, superbly guided tours of the 1903 Singer Castle on Dark Island, and a delightful lunch at the Gran View Resort in Ogdensburg. This was followed by a presentation and tour of the Frederic Remington Museum and his sculptures and paintings. Bob Andrews gave us historical glimpses of various sights that we passed from Prescott to Brockville. The last highlight was the presentation by John Fielding in the Brockville Square of the historical significance of it and the tale of the imposing 'Sally Grant' statue atop the courthouse. The success of this excursion is due in large part to the advice and involvement of Bob and Betty Andrews, Patricia McGinniss, and John and Diane Fielding. ed Thank you, John.



Our fearless leader Alan MacLachlan herded us into the bus and shepherded us through a wonderful autumn day.



The first stop was at Chippewa Bay where we boarded the Morrisania and travelled to Singer Castle on Dark Island.



We learned from the guides and each other. Discussions continued over a fabulous lunch in Ogdensburg.



The Remington Art Museum was fascinating.



see more pictures on page 6



## AN EXAMPLE OF SURVIVING TOPOGRAPHY IN KINGSTON

By Jennifer McKendry

So much of Kingston's current topography is such a shallow, altered reflection of its natural features that it is interesting to look at one area, which – to some degree – allows our imagination to visualize what it looked like in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and why it drew military attention. A good place to start is at the Montreal Street entrance to Hill Park between Raglan Road and Bay Street. With one's back to the Great Cataraqui River, one looks up a cliff to the height of land on which Sydenham Street is located. The exposed rock face still shows behind houses facing Montreal Street, whereas other parts of this plateau, as it drops, have been graded and filled. On the west side of Sydenham – before it declines towards Raglan Road – was the site of Block House No. 5, built as part of a line of defences to protect the small town of Kingston from inland attack by Americans during the War of 1812. Raglan and Montreal are at the base of this almost triangular height and, as you wander around, you can spot exposed rocky terrain below the high parts of Redan and Sydenham Streets. This natural feature is noted on maps throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even after the 1860s when streets and building lots were surveyed for sale by the Anglican Church (leased to the military, the land was part of the Clergy Reserves). Weathered and neglected, the early blockhouse was one of the favourite subjects of Kingston postcards and amateur painters in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It disappears by the time of the 1908 fire insurance map.

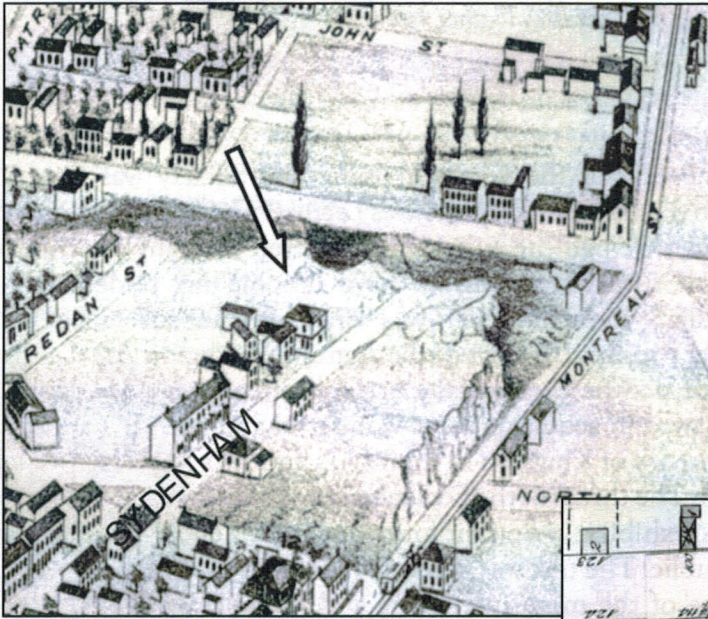


*Left* 1816, showing the line of pickets and blockhouses guarding Kingston, with Block House No. 5 at the top, detail NMC11380

*Right* 1828, an arrow point to Block House No. 5 with the white line outlining the height of land, and to its right Montreal Street in black; McBurney Park is the "Burial Yard"

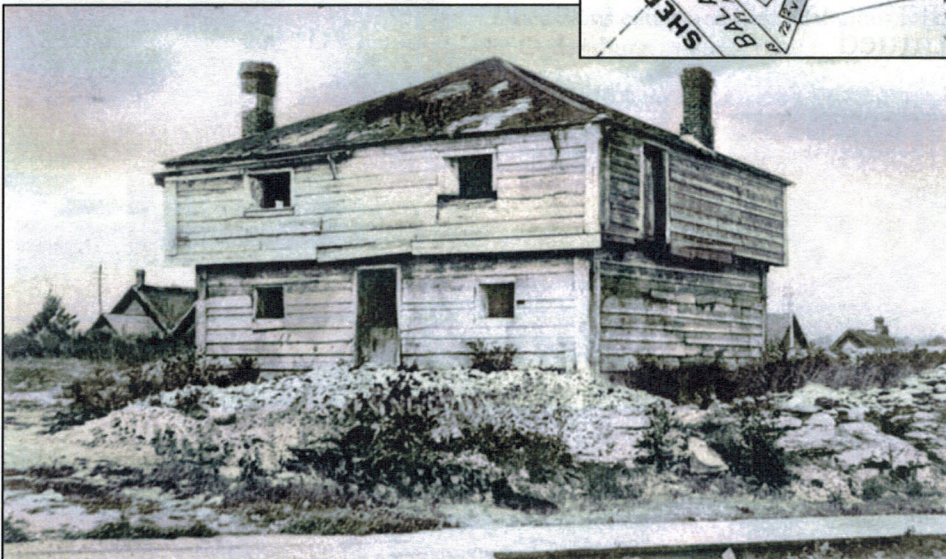
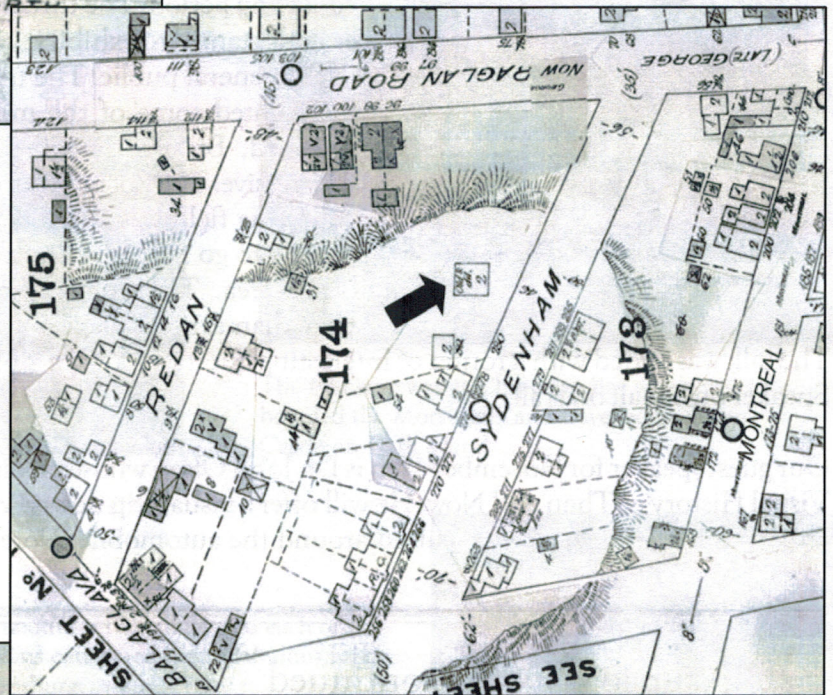






Left 1875, the cliff face is easy to distinguish in this bird's-eye view by Brosius, the arrow points to the old block house; Raglan Street is shown intersecting with Montreal Street

Right 1892, Redan and Sydenham Streets are now extended to Raglan, the block house (see arrow) is labelled "Old & Dilapidated"



Left c1900, undated postcard, McKendry Collection



## SPEAKERS' CORNER

with Heather Home



Photo courtesy of Peter Ginn

This month's meeting of the Kingston Historical Society was held in conjunction with the 26th Annual Archives Lecture. The talk was attended by 85 people and although the evening was marred by many a technical glitch (which unfortunately, seems to have become my trademark as Programme Chair), the talk itself was one of true substance and scholarship. Janet Brooke, Director of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, relayed to the audience the history of the Art Collecting Society of Kingston and the role it played in acquiring some wonderful and fairly dynamic art works for the citizenry of Kingston in the 1950's and '60's the height of its collecting period. The thrust of the Society was not only to buy art, but just as importantly, to exhibit it in a public forum for enjoyment and edification of the general public. The talk was accompanied by attractive slides which highlighted some of the more interesting and valuable works that were acquired. Brooke discussed the collecting taste of the Society as very progressive. The Society started acquiring Canadian art at a time when that collecting field was still relatively new, allowing the modest budget of the Society to go much further than it would have been able to achieve in any other area. The Society's choice to collect both English and French Canadian artists was also noted as a fairly advanced choice for that time.

The talk was ended with a round of interesting questions and comments, at which point Stewart Fyfe thanked the Speaker on behalf of us all.

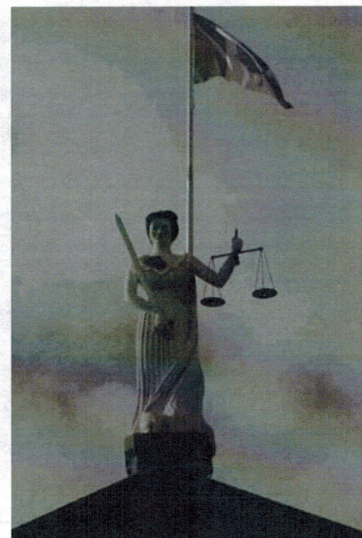
Our guest speaker for November 19th is Dr. John Olsen whose talk is titled: Princess Street and the Automobile: A Visual History of Then and Now. He will offer a visual trip down Princess Street when the key components of the architectural landscape were centred around the automobile. Note we are back at our regular site in the Wilson Room this month

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### Fall Excursion 2008....continued



We concluded our tour with a visit to Brockville's County Court House and the story of "Sally Grant".





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# Annual Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner



This year's annual Sir John A. Macdonald Anniversary Dinner will be held on Sunday January 11, 2008. Our guest speaker will be Professor Tom Axworthy, Chair of Centre For the Study of Democracy, Queen's University His topic:

"Revitalizing a Brand, John A's Lessons  
For the Liberal Party".

The dinner will take place at the Senior Staff Mess, Royal Military College. Cost for this year's dinner will be \$45 for members and \$50 for non-members

Reservations for the dinner must be received no later than December 23, 2008.

Please contact Heather Home, 613-544-5596 or Warren Everett, 613-545-9316 for more information.

## Menu

Chef's Salad  
Cream of Garden Vegetable Soup  
Chicken Stuffed with  
Chanterelles and a Cardamom Sauce  
Parisiennes Potatoes  
Mixed Vegetables  
Maple Blondie Bombshell Cake  
Tea and Coffee



## Sir John A. Macdonald Anniversary Dinner, Sunday January 11, 2009

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Member(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Member(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Food Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Reservations & Cheque to:

Sir John A Dinner, 253 Willingdon Ave, Kingston, ON, K7L 4J2