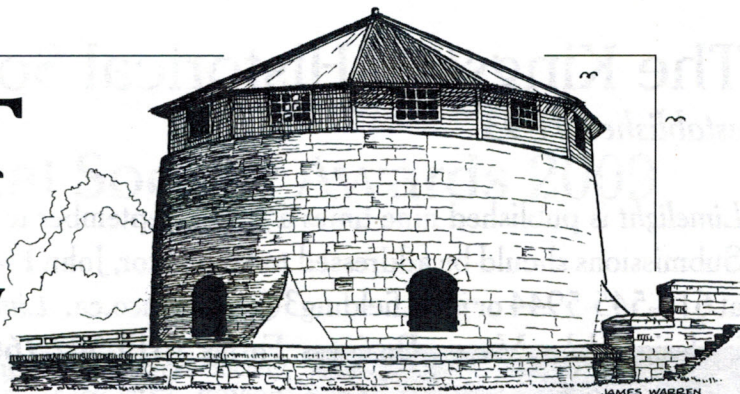


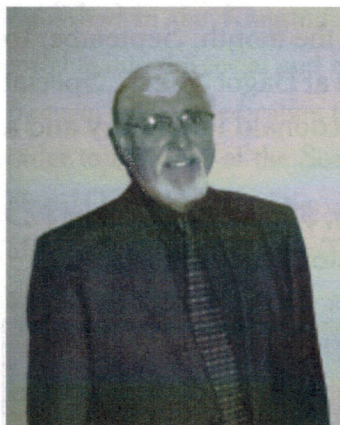
LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the
Kingston Historical Society

vol 12 no 1 January 2010 ISSN 1488-5565



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



As we enter 2010 many of us sated with Christmas culinary delights and a sundry other holiday treats, the traditions of passing from the old year to the new one come to mind. In Japan, New Years is considered the most important holiday and it is a symbol of renewal in which misunderstandings and grudges are forgiven and houses are scrubbed. The Spanish tradition on New Year's eve has been to eat twelve grapes at midnight which is meant to secure twelve happy months in the coming year. Hogmany, a Scottish tradition, of having a lively, need I say a rousing, New Year's celebration with a fire which would symbolize many things such as bringing the light of knowledge from one year to the next, lighting the way into the new uncharted year or century and leaving the darkness of the past. First footing, another Scottish tradition, holds that if the first one to cross the threshold on New Year's Day at the stroke of midnight is a "tall, dark stranger" with a lump of coal for the fire, or a cake or a coin, that household will have a prosperous year. One should offer the stranger food, wine or a wee dram of whisky, or the

traditional Het Pint, which is a combination of ale, nutmeg and whisky. In North America, a new tradition began with a group of musicians from London, Ontario. Guy Lombardo first heard the strains of Auld Lang Syne in his hometown being sung by Scottish immigrants and adopted it as one of their standards when he formed his band, Guy Lombardo and the Royal Canadians. In 1929, Lombardo played it at midnight while performing at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City and a tradition was born. He continued to perform every New Year's Eve from 1929 - 1959 and then at the Waldorf Astoria from 1960-1976. The singing of Auld Lang Syne at midnight on New Years Eve has become a tradition for many of us regardless of our background. The song asks whether old friends and times will be forgotten and promises to remember people of the past with fondness and as the fifth and final stanza says:

And there's a hand my trusty fiere, (*And there is a hand, my trusty friend*)

And gie's a hand o thine, (*And give me a hand of yours!*)

And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught, (*And we will take a right good-will drink*)

For auld lang syne (*For old long past*)

As we recall 2009 a year of vibrancy for the KHS and a year in which we recall good friends amongst us and those who are no longer with us, we also look forward to 2010 with our annual Sir John dinner, the planning of the War of 1812 Symposium, and an informative slate of monthly guest speakers. Regardless of whether your New Year's traditions are small and private, ethnic or internationally renowned, on behalf of the KHS Council I extend to all best wishes for a very safe, joyous and prosperous New Year.

Alan MacLachlan

THIS MONTH'S MEETING

Wednesday, 20 January, 7:30 PM

Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library, Johnson St. at Bagot

Refreshments All Welcome

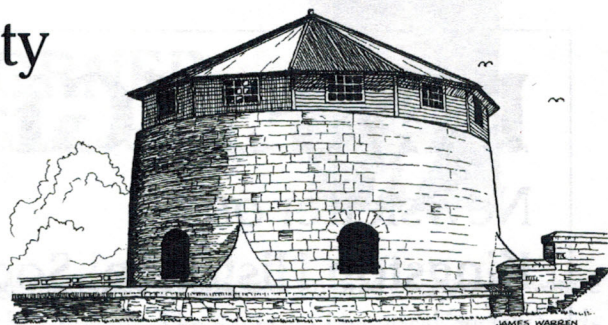
***"Reflections on the Role of
Rene-Hipplyte Laforce in the
Campaign of 1759"***

David More (Novelist)

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 (613-507-7667 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

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www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

Executive

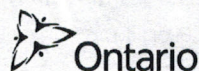
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The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Government of Ontario

The Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society will meet in the Wilson Room of Kingston Frontenac Public Library, 130 Johnson St., Saturday, January 16, 2010 at 10 a.m. "Dating Pictures by Clothing Style" - a presentation by our member Barbara Monk and members of the Kingston Historical Costume Club. Visitors welcome. For further information, visit our website www.ogs.on.ca/kingston

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KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

A TROUBLESOME BERTH The Journal of First Lieutenant Charles Allan Parker,
Royal Marines: The Canada Years 1838-1840,
Robert J. Andrews & Rosalyn Parker Art, editors, \$40

Illustrated Guide to Monuments, Memorials & Markers in the Kingston Area, \$24.95

The City of Kingston Portrait Collection: Historical Sketches & Portrait Views
Marjorie Simmons, \$29.95

Williamsville Revisited: an Illustrated History of "Williamsville" at Kingston, \$35

Selected volumes and indexes of **Historic Kingston**
(listed on KHS website publications order page), \$12 to \$18

For information on ordering and postage costs:

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Does Kingston need a History Handbook?

Does the Kingston Historical Society covet one?

These thoughts recoiled recently, after this Scribbler wondered in print about the whereabouts of forgotten Grove Inn Point (off King Street West) and scarcely known and rarely written about Snake Island, on Kingston's waterfront.

I would have loved to have referred to a book entitled *Kingstonia—All You Ever Wanted to Read About the Limestone City* and found the particular entry:

Snake Island: "A small island, with a few trees and the remains of an old pier and a light, located a mile northwestward of Four Mile Point on Simcoe Island. It once contained a blockhouse, as part of the harbour defences of Kingston."

Back in the reign of President Anne MacDermaid, yours truly proposed such a publication to K.H.S. and set out five aims for such a book:

1. To serve as an accurate and handy reference for students, teachers, history buffs and visitors;
2. To increase interest in the Society by involving members as researchers and writers;
3. To provide mini-papers for presentation at each meeting of the Society and at special events;
4. To prove a card index reference file of historical dates and happenings for Kingston Public Library (before the Internet, Yahoo and Google).
5. To establish a reference book to mark a milestone in the history of K.H.S.

That was in 1985, and the 90th, 95th and 100th anniversaries of the Society and the occasions passed and were marked or celebrated in other ways.

The K.H.S. Executive, in their wisdom, had deemed that there were not sufficient funds or a prominent leader to initiate or complete such a project.

Now in this age when four-fifths of Canadians have computers and e-mail connections, it may be appropriate to broach the idea again.

While the Society has primed the pump with hundreds of loan dollars for other history books, this uniquely Kingston almanac could be "published" without exorbitant printing costs. It could be built progressively like Wikipedia.

The answer is in the example of Queen's Encyclopedia, an on-line compendium of entries answering every imaginable question about the university. It's alphabetical and under "C" for instance, there are 76 entries, everything outlined succinctly from "Cha Gheil" and "CFRC-FM Radio" to "J.A. Corry" and "Captain Curtis."

Each is free for the asking--available at the click of a computer key.

Our Society could create such an electronic resource under the guidance of a person with the computer and heritage skills of a Jennifer McKendry or the energy and writing skills of a Michael Dawber, who produced the still-in-print cultural and historical companion, *Old Ontario Strand* for Quarry Press in 1994.

An editorial committee would guide the work and select the entries, much in the way the Frontenac history, *County of a Thousand Lakes*, was published in 1982. It belied the claim that a volunteer group couldn't



by The Scribbler
Bill Fitsell

successfully publish a major work.

The leg (brain) work would be done by members of the Society. Can you imagine the fun and challenge of drawing a subject like "City Hall" or "The Traffic Circle" and have to condense the pertinent, historic facts into 25, 50, 100, or words? Or being allowed 150 words to capture the uniqueness of Bellevue House or Sir John A. Macdonald in print?

Such a compendium could have a broad, popular and/or scholarly mandate. It could reflect the character and characters of Kingston, including those unforgettable citizens like "The Angi" (Margaret and William) and the late harbourmaster Edward Phipps-Walker. It could record the names and dates of mayors from Counter to Rosen and list the notable K.H.S. presidents, including Courtland Strange and Louis Flynn.

My brain storm of 25 years ago, rattled off 65 possible entries, including the names of poets, artists, authors, actors, sportsmen and references to Lost Kingston — Stuartville, Williamsville, "The Fruit Belt" and identify Selma Park, Kick and Push, Elevator Bay and The Wolfe Island Canal.

Other citations could record traditions like Copper Sunday, Freedom of the City, The Town Crier and The Lion in the Park. And brief explanations on The Cotton Mill, Davis Tannery and S & R would link past and present. And could the editors overlook Abbey Dawn, Machar House or Elizabeth Cottage, all part of the fabric of this distinctive community?

Of course, there would have to be space devoted to native sons and daughters, some of whom just passed through and made fame elsewhere, like Robertson Davies and Judith Thompson and honour those show-biz stalwarts who remained, like Ken Weston, Nancy Helwig and the intrepid Valerie Robertson who have made local theatre history more than "grand."

And can I finish with a sporting note and plunk for the addition of two names, past and present--the late Max Jackson and larger than life Don Cherry, who broadcasts "Kingston" beyond Canada.

Who and what have I omitted? Zillions!

The 57 editions of Historic Kingston offer a choice of thousands of short subjects that could make "The ABCs of Kingston" a best seller!

What can stop it? Only inertia, lack of loonies and leadership. The defence rests!

(Bill Fitsell was president of K.H.S. in 1994-95, after a few years as program chair).

The ABCs of Kingston



*A compendium of the character
and characters of the Limestone City
from "The Angi" to Zimmerman*

**Compiled by
members
of the
Kingston
Historical Society
1893 - 2013**



FUTURE EVENTS

- January 20, 2010: "Reflections on the Role of Rene-Hippolyte Laforce in the Campaign of 1759". By David More (Novelist)
7:30 p.m. Kingston Frontenac Public Library
(Wilson Room) 130 Johnson Street
- February 17, 2010: KHS Annual General Meeting
7:30 p.m. Kingston Frontenac Public Library
(Wilson Room) 130 Johnson Street
- March 17, 2010: "Work Hard. Play Hard: The Making of a Nurse in Kingston-1890 to 1970). By Paul Robertson (Museum of Health Care)
7:30 p.m. Kingston Frontenac Public Library
(Wilson Room) 130 Johnson Street



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The Kingston Historical Society Awards 2009

BEATRICE MARGARET CORBETT

A native of Kingston, and long-standing member of the Kingston Historical Society, Bea Corbett has contributed significantly to the recognition and understanding of our local heritage. Her presentations at Society meetings and her written articles, published in the Kingston Whig Standard and Historic Kingston, provide rich insights into the social and cultural nature, as well as the history, of Kingston. Her pungent wit and dedication to the correct usage of language have brought vitality and order to the work of the Society Awards Committee. As a veteran of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service, she has been indefatigable in ensuring the celebration of Kingston's naval history. The development and ongoing care of Navy Park provides a lasting example of Bea's gracious and thoughtful service to our community. Her persistence in identifying the Second World War fatal casualties from Queens' University made possible the recognition of their sacrifice by the placing of their photographic portraits in the Students' Memorial Union. The Kingston Historical Society is pleased to honour these varied and worthy achievements of Beatrice Margaret Corbett.



ARTHUR BRITTON SMITH

A benefactor to a wide variety of community endeavours, Arthur Britton Smith has also made lasting and significant contributions to Kingston historiography. His anthology of local history, *Kingston, Oh Kingston!*, is an entertaining and informative collection of 18th and 19th century observations on Kingston. His meticulous research into the short life of the Carleton Island-built vessel *Ontario*, coupled with the writing and publication of *Legend of the Lake*, has captured a poignant tale of the age of sail on Lake Ontario. He also played a major role in the successful search for, and 2008 discovery of, the remains of this 22 gun ship; a story which is recounted in the second edition of *Legend of the Lake*. Colonel Smith has been a long-standing member of the Society and has always endorsed its ventures with rapid and significant support. The Kingston Historical Society is proud to honour this exemplary citizen whose gifts have furthered the awareness and understanding of local history

photos by Peter Ginn

SPEAKERS' CORNER

with Edward Grenda



Very few local historical societies in the world have the opportunity to stage meetings and events in an area or structure where the very foundations of the city which the society represents are unmistakably situated. The Kingston Historical Society holds that distinction with its close relationship with Fort Frontenac, the very area where Kingston's origins as a city took place in the late seventeenth century under the French colonists and entrepreneurs. During the 1990s, the Society's Council held its

monthly meetings in one of the buildings in the Fort Frontenac complex. And for the past five years the Society has held its annual Christmas Party and Awards Presentations in the Officers' Mess at Fort Frontenac. A palpable heritage resonance and significance is already established and maintained when a heritage society can hold its meetings and events near an area in which the city (Kingston) initially took shape.

The Fort Frontenac Officers' Mess was the setting for the 2009 Society's Christmas Party and Awards Presentation on December 9th. Even though the day started off with a classic winter snowstorm which transformed itself to a period of heavy rain during the evening, these unpleasant weather elements failed to deter over seventy Society members from attending the event and, it should be pointed out, dampen the festive spirits which graced the event.

President Alan MacLachlan, and Ted Huber, Secretary, formed a short reception line as Society members arrived at the Mess. They were occasionally joined by other Council members to assist in greeting members as they came in from the cold and damp.



Robert Andrews and President Alan MacLachlan present the award to Brit Smith

Awards Committee Chair, Robert Andrews, conducted the Awards Ceremony with the assistance of the President. The 2009 awards recipients were two well-known city heritage enthusiasts – Beatrice (Bea) Corbett and Brit Smith. Mr. Andrews read the citations for each of the two recipients and presented them with the Society's certificates for recognition. Each of the recipients took advantage of the opportunity to thank the Society and comment about this involvement and interest in heritage endeavours in Kingston.

It became quite evident that Ms. Corbett and Mr. Smith have known each other since the early thirties. Many of the incidents and reminiscences they told were personally delightful and humorous given the accomplishments and contributions to the life of the city.

It is interesting to note that Bea Corbett's family history also involves another major Canadian city. Her grandfather, Malcolm MacLean, was the first mayor of Vancouver in 1886. Her mother, daughter of Mayor MacLean, had developed an early but proper relationship in Vancouver with the poet, and then bank clerk, Robert Service before he went to the Klondike and then to literary eminence. Several recent books on Vancouver's history make mention of these fascinating elements in Bea Corbett's family history.

Doubtless, the evening was a judicious mixture of season conviviality, heritage awareness and recognition of achievements in contributing to Kingston's heritage and its dissemination to its citizens and those interested in Canada's early development.



Robert Andrews and President Alan MacLachlan present the award to Beatrice Corbett

photos by Peter Ginn