

# LIMELIGHT

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2000

NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**A**ugust 1 2000 will mark the 75th anniversary of the partnership between the Kingston Historical Society and the Federal Government for the management of the Murney Tower. This is a particularly important event because it marks the longest and continuous public aspect of our society.

Negotiations to lease the Murney Tower began in earnest in 1921 but, at the annual meeting of 11 February 1924, the Chairman noted that he was of the opinion that as neither the Militia Department nor the Historical Sites Commission were at all likely to devote any funds to rehabilitating the Tower. He therefore suggested that KHS consider taking it over. Following an inspection by Major General Sir Archibald Macdonnell (who, conveniently, was also President of KHS!) and Major Sherwood (Chief Engineer of Military District No. 3), the Tower was thoroughly cleaned. After six years of negotiations, President Macdonnell was able to announce that, at long last, a lease for the Tower had been obtained.

During the spring of 1925, the Murney Tower Committee worked at preparing the building and collecting objects of historical interest to be put on display. On 1 August 1925, the Hon. W.F. Nickle officially opened the Tower to the public. It was to be an eventful day.

KHS had planned to make a profit from ice-cream sales on that hot day but were foiled by "the ubiquitous small boys of the City" who forced their way into the Tower and "got away with many gallons of [ice-cream] and when satisfied, proceeded to splash the remainder on the manuscripts and books." Not to be outdone, "The general public, to the number of several hundred, profited by forcing the door and enjoyed a free inspection of the building and its contents." This report closes with the comment, "The locks have now been repaired and are impervious to the assaults of the enemy, viz the Kingston gamins."

Thus it was that 1 August 1929 marked not only the first

day of operation of the Murney Tower, but also the first time it had succumbed to invasion. But it has come a long way since that inauspicious beginning, and its successes are entirely due to the excellent stewardship of the many Tower Committees and certainly our current group led by the Director, Ed Grenda, and the Curator, Doug Petty. Bravo Zulu! (Warren Everett).



## NOTE: APRIL MEETING

**The next meeting of KHS will be at 7.30, Wednesday, 19 April, in the Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library.**

**Speaker: Mr. Joe Last, Parks Canada**

**Project Archaeologist**

**Topic: "Five Easy Pieces: Views of The Murney Tower at Kingston."**

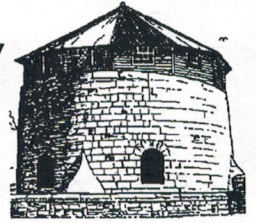
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# Kingston Historical Society

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Memberships: Individual, \$35; Family, \$40; Institutional, \$40; Student, \$25.

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## AND ONE FROM THE EDITORS...



It's Spring  
at last!  
According  
to our  
calenders,  
the new  
year started  
on 1  
January.  
But, for  
many of us,  
the year  
really  
begins on  
21 March -  
- with the

official coming of Spring. For the last month, the city has been shaking off the snow and the lethargy of winter. We've been revelling in longer, warmer days, and anticipating flowers in the garden. And like 19th century Kingstonians before us, we now feel we are beginning a new year.

Throughout much of the 19th century, Kingstonians looked to the end of winter to pick up their means of livelihood again. As the ice left the harbour and then the St. Lawrence, local merchants and dockworkers, shopkeepers and consumers, anticipated the arrival of ships carrying goods and -- after 1815 -- emigrants. Nineteenth century diaries tell us that farmers ploughed and planted, and their

families put in gardens so that they could begin to replenish pantries stripped bare after months of winter. And in town, the likes of Harriet Cartwright (wife of the Anglican minister at St. George's in the 1830s) and other Kingston matrons and housekeepers took advantage of the good weather to clean their homes and looked forward to seeing fresh produce in Kingston's market.

Certainly, much has changed over the last two hundred years. We no longer have to wait for muddy roads to become passable, or for gardens to produce fresh fruits and vegetables. The first sitting of city council after a municipal election is no longer in April (as it was throughout much of the last century) and British soldiers will never again parade in the square at Fort Henry (as the Royal Canadian Rifles did for the last time on 1 April 1870). But, farmers in the former townships still plough and plant in April and look to the skies for rain and sun. We continue to look forward to going to the market and participating in the local promenade downtown. The opening of the harbour now signals the beginning of the tourist season. Local museums and heritage sites -- including our own Murney Tower -- start to prepare in earnest for the arrival of student groups, local residents and tens of thousands of guests from other parts of the province, the country, and around the world.

We may be living at the beginning of the 21st century, but in many ways the rhythm of our lives and the life of the city continues to revolve around the arrival of spring and the coming of a new year. Happy New Year!



## IN SEARCH OF THE CATARAQUI TRAIL: THE ROUTE

In December of 1999, I had the opportunity to travel the whole length of the Bay of Quinte Railroad -- from Smiths Falls to Strathcona -- as a guest of Kelly West, a contract employee of the CRCA. At Smiths Falls, the local Railroad Historical Society has rebuilt the station to its original grandeur and a somewhat rare bascule bridge is still in place over the Rideau Canal. From there to where the track crossed Highway 15 just north of Elgin, the route is very flat and somewhat uninteresting except for the occasional beaver ponds, dams, and swamps.

From Elgin to Perth Road village, the route cuts across the Frontenac Axis of the Canadian Shield and constitutes one of the most naturally scenic sections of the trail. Huge amounts of fill and much blasting of granite ridges was necessary to construct a grade 1% or less to accommodate trains travelling at 60 mph. At one location, the engineers blasted a tunnel through a ridge to drain a swamp to allow the construction of the roadbed. This tunnel poses no problem for a hiker but, if you're afraid of heights, don't look down as you walk across the high level bridge over the Rideau canal at Chaffey's Locks!

From Perth Road through to Sydenham, much of the route skirts the north shore of Sydenham Lake and provides a series of good views. A point of interest at Sydenham is the turbine at the entrance to Millhaven Creek which at one time provided power for the village's electrical generator. From Sydenham to Harrowsmith, the trail climbs the escarpment separating the watersheds of the Millhaven Creek draining Sydenham Lake and the Napanee River. Near the top of the ridge, about three miles west of Sydenham, the railroad is carried over the road by the third bridge built there -- the piers of the first two bridges are still visible.

Harrowsmith was the junction point of the Kingston & Pembroke Railroad, progressing north to Sharbot Lake and Renfrew, and the Canadian Northern on its way to Napanee. The original station is still in the village, but has been moved south and west of its original site. The route descends to Yarker where it crosses the Napanee River by a high-level bridge built in 1912 by the Canadian Northern. The original 1889 bridge curved northward towards Enterprise and was removed in 1941 when the Tweed-Tamworth-Yarker line was abandoned, though the bridge-piers still stand on either side of the Napanee. Until 1941, Yarker was an important junction point on this route and had watering, coaling facilities, a wye turning track for steam engines, and the largest rail-yard between Napanee and Smiths Falls.

The line from Harrowsmith through to Strathcona -- the present terminus of the Cataraqui Trail -- is mainly flat. However, it passes through interesting 19th century villages, each displaying the remains of local industries, the stonewalls of factories, and mill races and dams. One particularly noteworthy feature is the original Bay of Quinte Railroad station which still stands beside the Napanee River at Newburgh. Unfortunately, no other stations along the Cataraqui Trail remain as they were all demolished when passenger and freight service over the line was abandoned. But at least we should thank the Canadian Northern for leaving all the bridges intact.

Walking along the old line of the Bay of Quinte Railroad is a journey into the past. Away from the bustle of roads and traffic, it's not difficult to imagine the curses of the construction gangs, the staccato chuff of the engine, and its mournful whistle as it climbs the Sydenham hill grade. If you want to check it out yourself, contact the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority at 546-4228. (Prepared by George Dillon with the assistance of Neil Payne, Tom Wash, Kelly West, and Doug Knapp.)





## CAN YOU DIG IT?

Each year since 1996, the Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation has run a summer camp for budding archaeologists. People of all ages have spent a week exploring the fascinating world of Kingston's past through one of its historic and now often unseen sites. Whether it was small naval ratings' cottages on the grounds of RMC, overlooking Kingston harbour or the Warden's residence at Kingston Penitentiary, campers have dug and uncovered a part of our too frequently forgotten history. Pots, door handles, window latches, stove doors and a variety of other artifacts are gathered, sorted, cleaned, recorded and then researched -- along with building foundations and layers of soil and debris, to piece together something of the lives of those who lived sometimes more than 100 years ago.

Starting in July 2000, a new "dig" will be explored at Fort Henry -- the military hospital (burned down in 1924) that was built around 1828 to serve the various British regiments garrisoned at the Fort. Those who have always wanted to "dig" but won't have the time this summer can still learn about the site and archaeology by signing up for two evening workshops in May and June which will be held at the Foundation's headquarters and museum, at



the Kingston Archaeological Centre, at 370 King St West -- just south of the Domino Theatre, right on the lake. All interested, please contact S. Bazely, 542-3483. (Submitted by S. Bazely)

## NEW MEMBERS

A hearty welcome is extended to the following new members of KHS: Anthony and Gillian Barlow; Kathryn A. Davis; John Morse; Tilly and David Nelson.

As for old-timers, double check that you have renewed your 1999 membership. It has to be received by 31 May for inclusion on active membership list for 2000, and receipt of regular KHS mailings, the monthly newsletter, **Limelight**, and **Historic Kingston**. (Barbara Snyder, Membership Secretary)



## ST. GEORGE'S WINDOW PROJECT

The windows of St. George's Cathedral present a long and varied spectrum of coloured-glass window-making in Canada. Little is known of the windows in the building as it was enlarged early in the last decade of the 19th century, and those windows of course perished in the great fire of New Year's Day, 1899, which totally destroyed the building. Only a very small shard of a coloured glass memorial window remains from before the fire. The parish seems not to have designated money specifically for replacement windows after the fire, so that the first windows in the present church building must have been of plain glass, like some small ones remaining in the galleries and in the narthex.

Very soon after the completion of the building in 1901, however, coloured glass windows began to be installed as memorials. All save one of the present 20 coloured glass windows are memorials, the oldest ones dedicated in 1902 and the most recent in the 1980s. Some of the windows are catalogue-book designs; others are unique works of art. Some may be assigned to known artists, like the set made by Peter Haworth in the middle decades of the 20th century. The makers of others remain anonymous, though the works often form part of a clear conceptual design, like the set in the apse which picture the Nativity, the Crucifixion and the Empty Tomb of Easter. One of the windows may be attributable to the studio of Louis Tiffany and another to a design by an English glassworker who re-located in Ontario in the early part of the 20th century. The newest windows, in the transept galleries, represent modern stained-glass art of a very high quality. Time and pollution have taken their toll on the windows, however, and while those in the apse are now protected by clear vinyl panels installed in the early 1980s, several of the windows in the nave are in desperate need of repair and protection.

In order to raise money for this work, the Projects Committee of St. George's Cathedral has organized a Spring Flower Festival which will take place on the second weekend in May. The event, entitled "Art for Windows," will include displays of work by local artists, music, and floral art displays. Some of the items will be for sale or will be sold by auction. The central attraction of the festival will be "Floral Kneelers": arrangements of fresh, dried or silk flowers in the shape and size of a prayer cushion. The kneelers will be on display at a Gala on Friday evening and all day Saturday. A nominal admission fee will be charged for this event, and all proceeds from the event will go to restoration and protection of the Cathedral windows. (Prepared by Phil Rogers)





## SPEAKERS' CORNER

At its March meeting, KHS was entertained by a talk entitled, "History Beneath Our Feet: Exploring Kingston's Archaeological Past" by Sue Bazely, the resident archaeologist at the Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation. Her illustrated talk presented an overview of the archaeological activities in Kingston for the past 150 years as well as several digs that had been conducted in the Kingston area by the CARF. With the use of excellent slides, Ms Bazely introduced her audience of 70 people to the accomplishments and difficulties experienced by the CARF since its creation in 1983. This was followed by a stimulating question period from the membership.

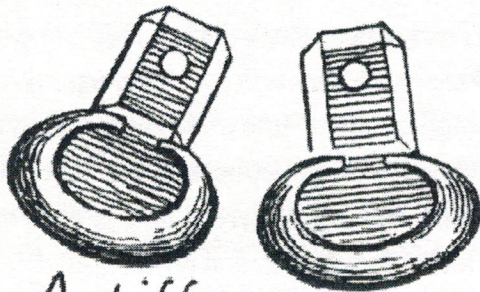
On Wednesday, 19 April, **Mr. Joe Last**, Project Archaeologist of Parks Canada, Ontario will present a paper entitled, "**Five Easy Pieces: Views of The Murney Tower at Kingston.**"

## ORDERING YOUR PLAQUE BOOK

The KHS new book on **Monuments, Memorials, and Markers** will be launched on Saturday, 13 May, at Bellevue House (see page 7). If you are unable to attend, copies will be available for sale at the KHS meeting on Wednesday, 17 May. It will also be available by mail-order (look for the flier in May's **Limelight**), and in book stores after 13 May.

Jack Granatstein of the Canadian War Museum characterizes this book as "a superb guide to the monuments that distinguish Kingston's history," and Dorothy Duncan of the Ontario Historical Society states that "the wealth of illustrations, maps and texts has been coordinated to perfection." High praise indeed for a worthy project.

## KINGSTON REGIONAL MILITARIA FAIR



*Artillery  
Epaulettes*

Members of KHS may be interested in the Kingston Regional Militaria Fair which will be held in the Sail Room, Portsmouth Olympic Harbour, Sunday 28 May 2000, 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. It is open to the public, admission \$5.

The KRMF is an antique show of a special kind, featuring all sorts of historical and collectable military artifacts including

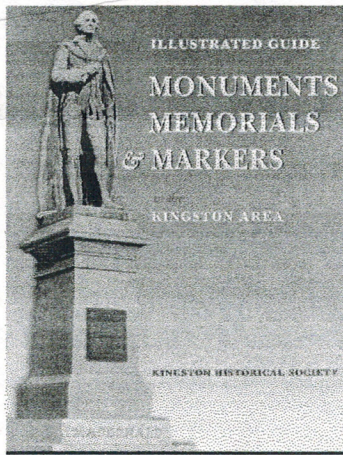
medals, insignia, uniforms, swords, history and reference books, etc. Vendors will include many leading military antiquarians and medallists from across the region as well as local collectors. Also, there will be several people on hand who will be available to identify, discuss, and purchase material brought in by the public.

Organized by Mr Derek Complin, it is intended that the KRMF be held twice a year, the next being on 15 October. (Submitted by Lou Grimshaw)





*You are invited to a book  
launching party for ...*



AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO  
**MONUMENTS,  
MEMORIALS &  
MARKERS**  
IN THE KINGSTON AREA

The KHS Plaque Committee — John Grenville (chair), David Kasserra, Jennifer McKendry, Bill Patterson, and Ted Storey — invite you to **Bellevue House**, 35 Centre Street, on **Saturday, May 13th, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.** Ceremonies at 4 p.m. Refreshments. Free parking. Everyone welcome.

This lavishly illustrated book recording more than 190 plaques, monuments, and memorials, will be available on May 13th for \$24.95 — a great bargain for a book (8.5 x 11 inches) of more than 250 pages with a colour cover. This subsidized price is possible because of grants, donations and volunteers' time. *We hope to see you there!*

*Saturday May 13th*

KHS MILLENNIUM PROJECT



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