

LIMELIGHT

Vol. 2: No 7
October
2000

NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A small, but enthusiastic audience at the September meeting had the opportunity to listen to a particularly interesting talk by Carol White. Carol, a Kingston history teacher, presented the theme of "History Boring? No Way!" Carol spoke about the methods she uses to create interest in history for young pupils. She teaches predominately Canadian history, with an emphasis on Kingston, which she admits gives her an advantage as this area is not only so rich in history, but it still exists all around us.

Her success in the classroom has resulted in a number of important awards for her students, the most recent the award from the Arts and Entertainment Cable network. During the question period she stressed that one important tool used to peak the interest of children was the use of personal anecdotes to put an interesting face on the historical facts presented in texts. As she looked out over our audience she noted that in that room there would be some very interesting stories to be told. Most of us only need to go back a generation or two to be right in the thick of history.

My grandmother, as a child, knew a man whose father was in the Crimea campaigns. Thus, it occurred to me that this was an excellent opportunity for the Society if our members, particularly those with roots in Kingston, wrote items for publication in this newsletter. Or, perhaps, one of our general meetings could be devoted to family history, anecdotes etc. I am positive that there is a wealth of interesting and insightful articles about our area's history -- and it's just waiting to be told. Moreover, from a personal point of view it might take the pressure off me to come with a message each month! In this vein, I offer a thought by an anonymous member of the society:

"As leaves begin to turn and
Morning frost sparkles in the warm October sun,
We begin to button down for winter,
And light the fires,
Knowing that as geese fly,
Soon will be the snow.
Anticipation is the password.
Knowing full well that yet again,
We wait for spring.
But remember history is about us, and

Though captured ever so slow.
Look to Sunnyside, look to Block D,
And remember me!
The membership needs to tell us more,
Forgotten Leaves of History are before.
Share your knowledge,
Tell us what you know.
The member's list is apropos."

(Warren Everett)



OUR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of KHS will be at 7.30, Wednesday, 18 October, the Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library.

Speaker: Ms. Carmen J. Nielson Varty

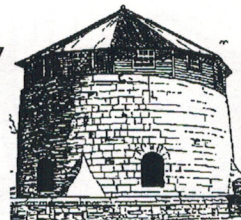
Topic: "Reassessing our image of St. George's: A second look at Kingston's first church, 1792-1826"

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Kingston Historical Society

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AND ONE FROM THE EDITORS...

October: the month of harvest and shorter days and cooler nights. For many, the arrival of "fall" marks the end of a season. As tourists go home, students go back to school, and we all move into our winter routines, many museums, including our own Murney Tower, carefully pack away displays. Often, the hours of opening are shortened and with the arrival of Thanksgiving, many historic sites and museums seem to go into semi-hibernation.

And yet this is a time when many Kingstonians' fascination with the past and the city's heritage is rekindled. For the changing colours of the leaves also marks the time when many organizations -- including various historical and heritage associations -- begin their new season. For the next 9 or 10 months, those of us who are fascinated by our community's past can indulge our passion -- and take part in a wide variety of activities that provide us with insights into that complex and colourful puzzle of our history. And there are several exciting new initiatives that have recently become available.

First, for genealogists, there is a new and exciting research tool: **Ontario and Nova Scotia Settlers, 1796-1860**. This CD includes information about more than 130,000 immigrants who settled in Ontario and Nova Scotia. It's available for \$29.99US from Genealogical Publishing, 1001 North Calvert St., Baltimore, Maryland 21202. Or, check out <http://GenealogyBookShop.com>

Another initiative is calling for participants in a new Canadian history project. **The Canadian Letters and Images Project** is asking for assistance in preserving Canada's wartime experience. The **Project** intends to create a permanent electronic archive of Canadian war-related correspondence which will be accessible to everyone. The objective is "to let Canadians tell their own story in their own words by creating a permanent online archive which preserves Canada's wartime correspondence from the battlefield and from the homefront." Intended to be at once an archive and tribute, the underlying rationale is that "every piece of correspondence is a valuable artifact linking us to our past, and while one letter may seem insignificant, in combination with many others that single letter can help to tell a remarkable story of the unyielding spirit of a country at war. Anyone who has any correspondence -- letters, postcards -- and is willing to donate or lend them to the project is asked to contact Dr Stephen Davies, Project Director, Department of History, Malaspina University College, 900 Fifth St., Nanaimo, BC, V9R 5S5 (letters@mala.bc.ca) (<http://www.mala.bc.ca/history/letters>).

But, closer to home, we have our own KHS with its exciting programme of activities. We encourage all to continue to enjoy these many opportunities to explore our heritage during this new season. And introduce a friend or a colleague or a neighbour to KHS -- and this world of history. 

OTTO JACOBI'S FRONTENAC INTERLUDE



One of Kingston's jewels is the Agnes Etherington Art Collection. No mere university facility, it also serves the local community, region, and indeed the nation as a superb exhibition gallery. In order to maintain this excellence, its director and curatorial staff have to be constantly on the *qui vive* for locating possible new acquisitions -- and then being successful in getting them.

Recently, they bagged two canvasses by one, Otto Reinhold Jacoby (1812-1901): *Sunrise* and *Sunset*. A contemporary of Lucius O'Brien and John A. Fraser, Jacoby was born in East Prussia, studied in Germany, and later moved to New York. He arrived in Canada in 1860, living in Montreal and Toronto, and then to the Dakotas where he died in 1901.

Of some interest to members of KHA is the fact that he appears to have been familiar with the Kingston area. At least one of his landscapes is entitled *Thousand Islands*. More specifically, a letter dated 30 July 1876 is addressed from "our little wood cottage" at Ardoch on Malcolm Lake, to the north-west of Kingston.

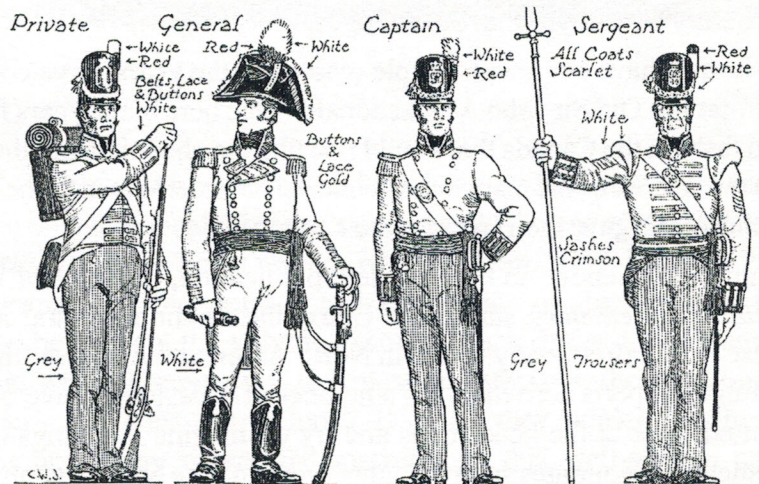
Sunrise and *Sunset* were exhibited at the seventh Ontario Society of Art exhibition in Toronto in May 1878 and it is probable that they were painted during his Ardoch interlude. More romantic depictions of generic woodland scenes than site-specific subjects, they nevertheless tie Kingston's back-country to this famous Canadian painter.

It's intriguing to compare Jacoby's local itinerary with that of another contemporary Prussian artist -- Augustus Kruger -- who David St. Onge and Amanda Gray wrote about in the last *Historic Kingston*. Kruger arrived in Canada in 1866, was admitted to Kingston Penitentiary in 1871, and discharged in 1874. Both were Prussians; both were artists; both painted renderings of the Canadian wilderness. Did they know each other as fellow artists? Did their paths cross in their homeland or the streets of Kingston? One can only wonder. In the meanwhile, Jacoby's AEAC canvasses join Kruger's *Penitentiary Guard* -- that other piece of Prussian-Canadian art already located in Kingston.

MILITARIA FAIR

The Kingston Regional Militaria Fair fall show will be held at the Portsmouth Olympic Harbour Centre on Sunday 15 October 2000 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. A variety of vendors and collectors will have for sale and display all types of historical military artifacts, including medals, badges, antique weapons and uniforms, as well as reference books, model figures and other "militaria."

KHS members are particularly welcome to yet another event in our local historical calendar.



FLORA AND GRAVES

[The following are the Hon. Flora MacDonald's remarks on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Incorporation of Cataraqui Cemetery, Kingston, Ontario, 12 August 2000.]

There can be few other square miles of Canada that more completely embody the history of the nation than Cataraqui Cemetery of Kingston. The name itself speaks to an historic past: Cataraqui, the Indian name given to the area by our aboriginal people, long before the coming of European settlers.

I am very pleased to be here for this Charter Day Celebration marking the 150th Anniversary of the incorporation of Cataraqui Cemetery. This is a time for honouring the wisdom of those who, besieged by the calamities of the day -- disease, sickness, malnutrition and death -- had the foresight to establish one of the first rural garden cemeteries in the country. It is also a time to salute the ongoing efforts of those who today and into the future make this a place of peace and reflection, of welcome and farewell.

Cemeteries offer a very unique and special environment. Yes, people come to cemeteries to mourn; but they also come to ponder the demands of the present and meditate on the challenges of the future. Some of our most cherished poetic selections emerge from contemplations in cemeteries. Think of Hamlet's musings over the skull of Yorick in the grave-diggers scene, or Thomas Gray's moving "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" at Stoke Poges.

So it must have been with people who, over the years, have come to this cemetery to spend time in thought and meditation. Did Sir John A. Macdonald come here in the years following his mother's death in 1862 to brood over and fashion the Canada that would rise like the phoenix from the ashes of the Union of Upper and Lower Canada? Do the kinfolk of the many who lie buried or remembered in the Military Plot come to reflect on the final moments of those who gave their lives for their country?

Jennifer McKendry, in her excellent publication, *"Weep Not For Me": A Photographic Essay and History of Cataraqui Cemetery*, states that "One of the functions of rural cemeteries was to act as public parks in an era when these were infrequently found in North America." And over the years people have visited this site to picnic and indulge in sports activities. On a number of occasions I have bicycled to these beautiful grounds simply to walk around, look at the headstones and try to imagine the Kingston of an earlier time. The ambience of Cataraqui Cemetery encourages such thoughts. McKendry's booklet captures the feelings of some of those who buried loved ones here with her inclusion of a number of epitaphs engraved on headstones. One that is particularly appealing is the brief admonition: "Tell those that you love, That you do."



FLORA AND GRAVES - CONTINUED

I have collected epitaphs such as these from a number of grave sites in different locales, and they do tell a story. One of my favourites was found -- in two versions -- on headstones in different parts of England and leaves a message for us all:

"Stranger, Pause as you pass by,
As you are now so once was I,
As I am now, so you will be,
So be prepared to follow me."

And the second version repeated the first, but with a meaningful addition:

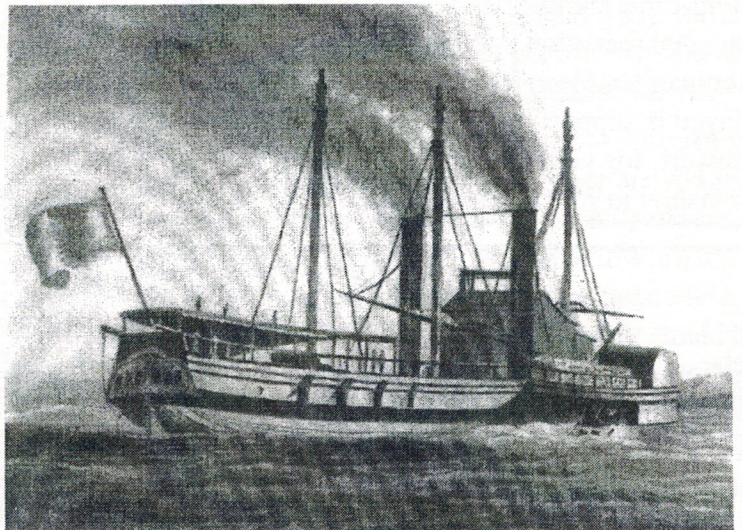
"To follow you I'm not content,
Until I know which way you went."

I congratulate those who have organized this special ceremony and the completion of the New Open Air Chapel. Such occasions help us to remember -- and learn from -- our past; they offer peace and understanding, but they also provide the impetus to carry forward the vision that inspired the creation of this rural garden cemetery 150 years ago.

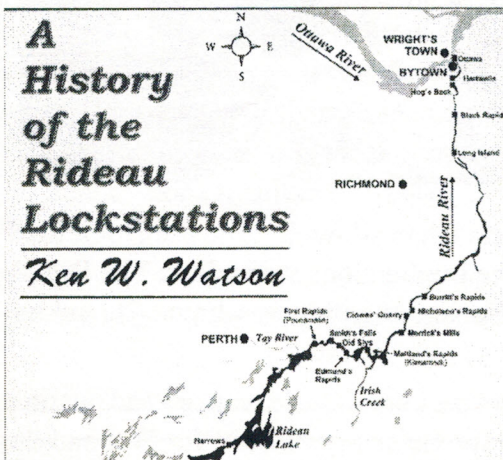


BOOK SHELF

For the boaters among us, two recent books may be of interest. First, there's Frank Mackey's *Steamboat Connections: Montreal to Upper Canada, 1816-1843*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2000. It's an impressive history of the first 25 years of steam navigation of the Ottawa-Rideau-Great Lakes-St. Lawrence navigational system. This was the age of the introduction of steam-power as it encountered the rapids of the St. Lawrence and commenced the displacement of sail from the Great lakes. Of course, Kingston bulks large in this story with the launching of the *Frontenac* in 1816 and its pivotal role in the Montreal-Ottawa-Kingston-Montreal circuit. It's a story of entrepreneurs, engineers, and navigators, all central to the chronicle of Canadian history.



A History of the Rideau Lockstations *Ken W. Watson*



Ken Watson has written a wonderful guide to the Rideau system that should be on every local historian's shelves: *A History of the Rideau Lockstations*. Smiths Falls: Friends of the Rideau, 2000. Following a brief summary of the politics and economics of the decision to construct the Rideau, the volume examines each of the 23 lock-sites sequentially from Ottawa "up" to Kingston. Why were the locks built there? How did they use to look? How do they work? All these questions and many others are answered in this well-written and beautifully illustrated volume.



SPEAKERS' CORNER

At our October meeting, *Carmen J. Nielson Varty* will speak on "*Reassessing our image of St. George's: A second look at Kingston's first church, 1792-1826.*" This paper will examine and discuss observer impressions and contemporary assumptions about the appearance of the first St. George's Church, built in 1792. The paper will also introduce a new image of St. George's, which suggests the influence of vernacular colonial American church styles. This architectural analysis will lead into a discussion of the character of the church generally, as revealed by the preaching style of John Stuart and the regional origins and socio-economic status of the congregation.

At the last gathering of the Society on the 20th of September, we were informed of the engaging strategies being employed by local teachers to stimulate our young students' interest in history. The sixty guests and members of the Society discovered first hand the characteristics that Carol White, our speaker, has which makes her such a wonderful, creative and challenging teacher in the elementary schools of Frontenac County. The discussion which followed the talk and demonstrations by Mrs. White revealed the situations, challenges, and accomplishments that presently exist for history in our educational system. This was truly a very enlightening talk.

CONGRATULATIONS

Long-time member of KHS, Stewart Renfrew, has retired from the Queen's University Archives. A well-attended reception was held in his honour on Thursday, 7 September 2000, in the Frederick W. Gibson Reading Room of Kathleen Ryan Hall. Several speakers contributed to the general theme of the important role Stewart has played in supporting the work of a wide range of researchers, professional and amateur alike -- Congratulations, Stewart, for your years as a willing servant of historical research -- and thanks for agreeing to serve KHS as Treasurer in your -- um, what's the word? -- oh yes, ~~retirement!~~

FOCUS ON THE RIDEAU: PICKING A ROUTE

It's hard to imagine that the Rideau Canal was the outcome of a conflict between the two contending British and American ideologies. Now, Kingston's waterfront facilities play willing host to American visitors. Each summer, the Rideau's locks are chock-full with boats flying "Old Glory." But two hundred years ago, they would've not have been welcome. The prevailing geopolitical strategy at that time was preoccupied with the defence of an imperial British North America against an expansionist republican United States. The problem was a simple matter of geography complicated by politics.



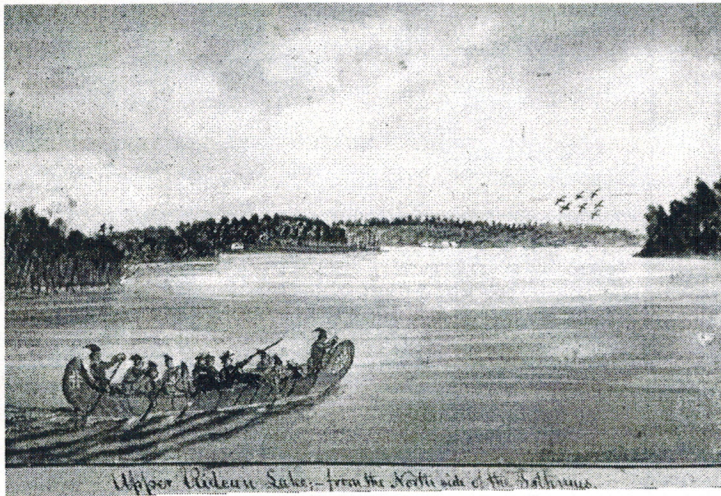
In times of peace, the river is wide enough to accommodate both nation's traffic. In times of war, however, it's narrow enough to allow shot and shell to be fired from both directions. And that's what happened in the War of 1812. The implications were clear: The British needed an alternative water-route from tidewater into the continental interior and attention was directed to linking the Ottawa River and Lake Ontario watersheds.

This proposition must have appeared eminently sensible when worked out on a small scale map, spread out on a table in a distant Whitehall. One can imagine the conversation between the Secretary of State for War and the

FOCUS ON THE RIDEAU: PICKING A ROUTE - CONTINUED

Colonies, Earl Bathurst, and the Master General of Ordnance, the Duke of Wellington, as the pointer moved across the blank space on the map: "The shortest distance and most direct route, old chap, is from heah to heah!" But negotiating this "paper space" was not a simple proposition. For several reasons, the actual "geographic space" was to prove to be problematic for those junior officers working at ground-level.

First, much of the proposed route had to traverse the Frontenac Axis extension of the Canadian Shield with its construction-resisting igneous and metamorphic rocks, forests and swamps, lakes and rapids -- let alone black-flies and mosquitoes! Secondly, apart from a sparse population of Mississauga and Algonkian people and a few scattered pioneer outposts clustered around mill-sites, it was an unsettled region. Little was known of the lay of the land or the run of the water. And thirdly, this was not to be a natural route negotiated by canoes and portages but an engineered navigation system of "canal," locks, and barges. Its construction required a detailed knowledge of the hydrology in terms of watershed limits, volumes of water, potential routes, and obstacles to be overcome. The empty space on the map had to be transformed into a comprehensive archive of data.



So how did the British do it? Certainly, the experience and fortitude of the military and naval officers charged with the exploration must not be underestimated. Well trained in the arts and crafts of their profession, they were also products of an imperial system that was not unfamiliar with hostile places and demanding tasks. Also, they were well versed in the special needs and requirements of the "navigators," the canal-builders that had been so active in transforming the transport systems of eighteenth century Europe.

Fortitude and experience aside, it is clear that the on-the-ground surveyors also availed themselves of "local knowledge," and in particular, that of the

native population. They relied upon "Indians & Canadian guides." Indeed, Wellington complained that his officers were negligent in not getting guides "capable of conducting each Officer on the road he is to go." It pained him that his men went "wandering over the Country they don't know where." Clearly, he fully appreciated the importance of indigenous knowledge in the task at hand.

In the final analysis, several routes from the Ottawa to Lake Ontario were considered over the years. In 1783, Lt. French had left the Ottawa via the South Nation, and followed the course of the Petit Nation, before portaging to the St. Lawrence at Johnstown. In 1816, Lt. Jebb proposed the route from the Ottawa, along the Rideau River to Irish Creek, and from there along the Gananoque River to the St. Lawrence. In 1819, Lt. Catty explored the tributaries of the Ottawa along the Madawaska to Lake Simcoe with an eye to connections to Lakes Huron and Ontario. In 1823, Samuel Clowes recommended the Ottawa, Rideau River, Rideau Lakes, Cataraqui River route to Kingston. And it was this route that was recommended to government in 1826 by General Sir James Carmichael Smyth, head of the commission charged with recommending improvements in the defences of the colony.

In this way, the Rideau "Canal" became reality. It was first conceived of as schematic line, drawn across a vaguely known geographic space. Next, this strategic concept was transformed into a specific project by the imagination and fortitude of field surveyors. And, ultimately, the proposed project became a material reality through the herculean efforts of military engineers and civilian contractors and labourers. But that's another chapter in the story of the Rideau.



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Celebrating One Thousand Years Of Ontario's History

Wednesday, November 15, 2000

4:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library

130 Johnson Street

Kingston, Ontario

Ontario



Celebrating One Thousand Years of Ontario's History will trace the occupation of the land that today we call the Province of Ontario, from the life and times of the First Nations to the arrival of the newcomers from all over the world. We will explore their challenges and accomplishments through video and slide show presentations, lectures and discussion groups. Resource material will also be available.

Programme

4:30-6:00 **Celebrating One Thousand Years of Ontario's History**

Dorothy Duncan, Executive Director, and
Robert Leverty, Programme Co-ordinator,
The Ontario Historical Society

6:00-7:00 **Dinner**

7:00-7:45 **New Roots in Cataraqui Township # 2**

Barbara Snyder, Amhersburg, President,
Fairfield Homestead Heritage Association

8:00-8:45 **Kingston's Monuments, Memorials and Markers: A Look at the Book**

Kingston Historical Society Plaque
Committee.

Registration

Registration fee is \$10.00 and includes a light dinner. Space is limited. First come, first served. You must pre-register by Friday, November 10, 2000. Complete the registration form below and mail it along with your cheque (payable to the Kingston Historical Society) to:

Stewart Renfrew, Treasurer
Kingston Historical Society
P.O. Box 54
Kingston, Ontario K7L 4V6
tel: Alan MacLachlan
(613) 549-8841

The Ontario Historical
Society
34 Parkview Avenue,
Willowdale, Ontario
M2N 3Y2
tel: (416) 226-9011

This event is co-sponsored by The Ontario Historical Society and the Kingston Historical Society with thanks to the Government of Ontario, through Ontario 2000 and the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation for their support.

Registration Form

Celebrating One Thousand Years of Ontario's History

Wednesday, November 15, 2000 Kingston

Name(s) _____

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