

# LIMELIGHT

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2001

NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we enter the second year of the millennium (or the first for some folks) a look at some of the high points in the past year is worthwhile.

The year began with a new and revised constitution and by-laws, ones that reflected more closely the manner in which the society had been operating for the past number of years. This was followed by a very successful launch of our millennium project **An Illustrated Guide to Monuments Memorials and Markers in the Kingston Area**. The book has been a great success, and to date has sold 500 copies. The annual memorial service for Sir John A. Macdonald was well attended and coincided with the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the Cataraqui Cemetery. The year finished off with a great Christmas party.

All of these events were only successful because of the volunteers who gave their time, effort and enthusiasm. To all of them, "Well done and thank you."

On the subject of Sir John A, we are going to celebrate his birthday this year with a dinner on 11 January 2001. It will take the place of our regular January meeting and will be held at the Senior Staff Mess, the Royal Military College of Canada. We are fortunate to have as our inaugural speaker Professor Donald Smith, a noted historian from the University of Calgary. We intend that this will become an annual tradition, much like the June gravesite ceremony. I encourage everyone to come out and enjoy this special evening.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the society's members who encouraged and helped me in my first year. In particular, my thanks to the members of council who pitched in and worked hard to make the past year a success.

As well, I would like to thank those members of the society who donated money. A reminder: all donations, gifts and bequests are tax deductible. And for the future continued vitality of KHS, I urge everyone to continue our campaign to increase the society's membership (Warren Everett).

## OUR NEXT MEETING

The January meeting of KHS will be a dinner to honour Sir John A. Macdonald on the occasion of his birthday.

**Date:** Thursday, 11 January 2001

**Place:** Senior Staff Mess, Royal Military College

**Time:** Cocktails at 6.30 p.m.  
Dinner at 7.30 p.m.

**Toasts:** "Sir J.A. the Scot"  
"Sir J.A. the Kingstonian"  
"Sir J.A. the Canadian"

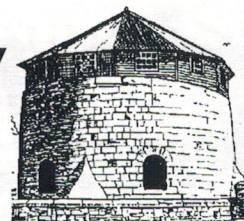
**Speaker:** Professor Don Smith, University of Calgary: "John A. Macdonald and Aboriginal Canada."

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# Kingston Historical Society

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## AND ONE FROM THE EDITORS...

Well, here we go again! Another New Year on its way and, as some would have it the REAL dawning of the new millennium -- 2001. A century ago, the debate whether 1900 or 1901 was the portal date raged from North Cape to Cape Town, from New York to Vladivostock. From 1-6 January 1900, the **London Times** published no less than sixty contentious letters on the subject of the century's end!

In little Kingston, Ontario, however, the **Kingston News** had no doubts about: the new century started on 1 January 1901 and it published Joe Lincoln's "**Uncle Ezra's New Year Reverie**" to reflect on past achievements and future prospects. Looking back on the nineteenth century, Uncle Ezra commented on the wonders of railroads and ocean steamers, the telephone and telegraph, X-rays and phonographs, and electric ranges, lights, and trains. But then he turned to the coming C20:

*What does he bring, I wonder ter tickle and surprise us?  
What magic tricks is up his sleeve ter please and paralyze us?  
Will our grandchildren go abroad upon an airship liner,  
Or whiz through the earth upon the hourly train ter China?  
Will we "expand" until the moon's divided 'mongst the nations?  
Will war news telegraphed from Mars affect the stock quotations?  
Will water burn, I wonder? And will fire be cold and freezy?  
Will nothing be impossible and miracles jest easy?  
I wonder if-- But there! I'll stop: my "wonderer's gittin tired.  
And, see! 'tis the stroke of twelve! The Old Year has expired.  
"The Nineteenth Century's dead!" Says the clock with its tickin,  
He's dead and gone for good and all, but I'm alive and kickin'.  
Ring up the curtain! Clear the stage! I'm ready fer the drama.  
You're welcome, Mister Twentieth! Now start you panorama!*



Well, we know how many of Uncle Ezra's fears and predictions were actually realized. But as we enter the twenty first century, may we share in his optimism and enthusiasm, and welcome the future with, "Ring up the curtain! Clear the stage! We're ready fer the drama!"

## GEORGE VOSPER RECALLS

...how a chance conversation to influential people led to significant actions. The following is an excerpt of a letter from George Vosper to the well-known planner, Gordon Stephenson. Fresh from his services to the City of Halifax, Stephenson had participated in the development of the 1960 Planning Study for Kingston:

*"I look back on the two years I was on that study [1960] as one of my great learning opportunities. As you may know, after the study was presented to City Council, I convinced them to form an Urban Renewal Committee to implement the many recommendations in the report. Reg Bruce was a staunch supporter of the idea. I became its first chairman. The first action was to arrange a meeting with the Vice President and Eastern Manager of the CPR, Mr. S.M. Gossage. Mayor Mills, and a large group from council and the business sector, accompanied us to Gossage's office in Union Station Toronto. He agreed to meet with us in Kingston to discuss it on site.*

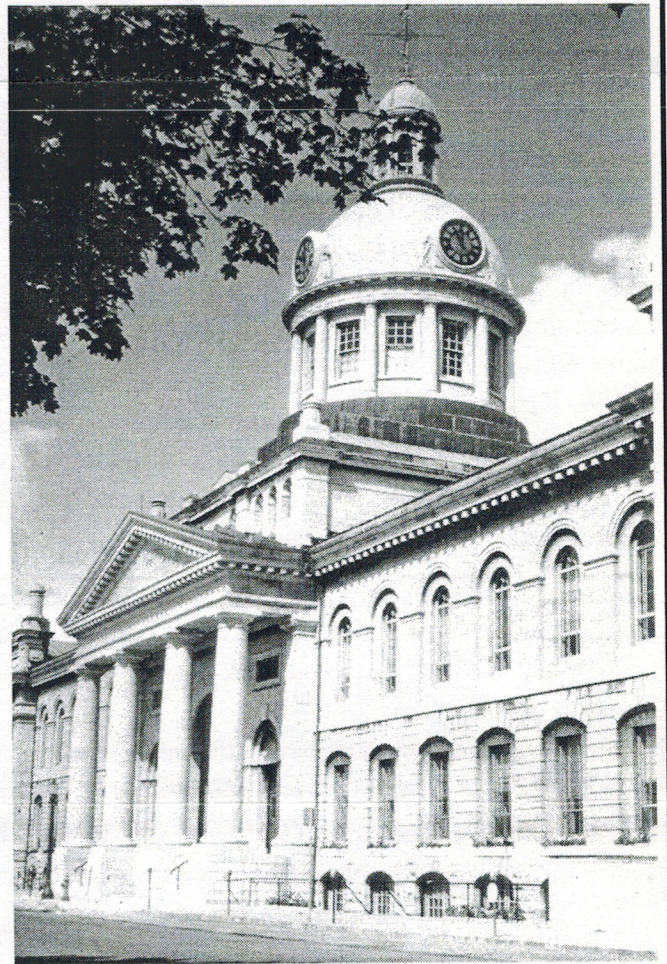
*On the day of the second meeting I was waiting in City Hall when someone told me Gossage had arrived in his private rail car across the road at the CPR station. A large group of his staff arrived separately. After the meeting Terry McKibbin arranged for me to drive him around in a police cruiser with the Chief of Police at the wheel. It now makes me laugh when I think of it.*

*At the end of our tour we were talking at the bottom of Brock St. before Gossage went back to his private car. Looking up at City Hall he said, "It's too bad they ever took the portico off." I replied, "Consider this, Mr. Gossage, you may be the very person who puts it back up!" He smiled and said, "OK, you get your people together, and I'll get mine, and we'll put them in a room, and make them work out a deal."*

*The result was a swap of the CPR land in front of City Hall for land in the Industrial Park. Gossage is the one who made it possible, but the park is a tribute to the vision of yourself and those on your study group.*

*Following your report, I became concerned about that section of the Ontario Planning Act dealing with severances and subdivisions. The law as it then stood called for a fine when severances or subdivisions were made without Planning Board approval. The fines imposed by some judges -- who felt restrictions on land development were foolish -- were so small that they were no deterrent. Reg Bruce and I convinced Council to submit a motion to the annual meeting of the Ontario Municipal Association that would prevent any severing of land without Planning Board approval. The motion passed and was one of two that was chosen for presentation to the Ontario Cabinet. I spoke to it before the assembled Cabinet. Two months later it was included in a revised Planning Act. You taught me well!*

*Reg Bruce and I got an old buildings committee formed and, by means of a private members bill, got some legal teeth for the idea of heritage preservation. The Province finally saw the light and copied our act as the basis their own. We've come a long way since you were here." (George Vosper to Gordon Stephenson CBE, 16 November 1994)*



## SPEAKERS CORNER

A good time was had by all at the December meeting of KHS -- the Christmas Party held on 13 December in the Memorial Hall, City Hall. It was a festive occasion -- and a satisfying one on several counts. First we honoured those who had served KHS and the Kingston community well in terms of protecting and enhancing our heritage and sense of the past: Mrs. Marjorie Simmons and The Cataraqui Cemetery Company. Secondly, Jason-Emery Groen of Mill and Ross, Architects, spoke on the topic, "**Canada's Oldest Architectural Practice....We Think!**" In a well illustrated "power-point" presentation (a first for KHS!), Mr. Groen outlined the genealogy of the firm of Mill and Ross, with particular attention paid to the contribution of the Power family to nineteenth century Kingston. Nor were more recent structures neglected in this sensitive treatment of over a century and half of architectural activities in this community. A lively discussion followed this presentation and we thank Mr. Groen for the part he played in making the evening such a success. And lastly -- but by no means least! -- we were truly entertained by the "Barber and the Seviles Sextet." Singing a-cappella in close harmony, they presented a rich programme ranging from "Buddy, Can You Spare a Dime" through to "White Christmas"! A wonderful evening.

On 11 January 2001, the January meeting of KHS will be the occasion a banquet to commemorate the birth of Kingston's most illustrious citizen, Sir John Alexander Macdonald. Following dinner and appropriate toasts, our guest speaker will be **Professor Donald Smith**, Department of History, University of Calgary, who will address the society on "**John A. Macdonald and Aboriginal Canada.**" Professor Smith is a much published author on the Ojibwa, Mississauga, "Grey Owl," and Native missionaries. The venue for this evening of pleasure and erudition will be the Senior Staff Mess, Royal Military College. If you are interested in attending please send your cheque for \$26 per person to Alan McLachlan (549-8841), KHS, Box 54, Kingston, K7L 4V6.

Professor Smith will also be speaking at Queen's, Policy Studies Room 202, 7.30 Wednesday 10 January 2001: "**Shah - wun - dais ("Sultry Heat"): Mississauga Chief, Methodist Minister, Orator Extraordinaire**". All are welcome.



## HISTORICAL CHUCKLES: GOLF AND WAR

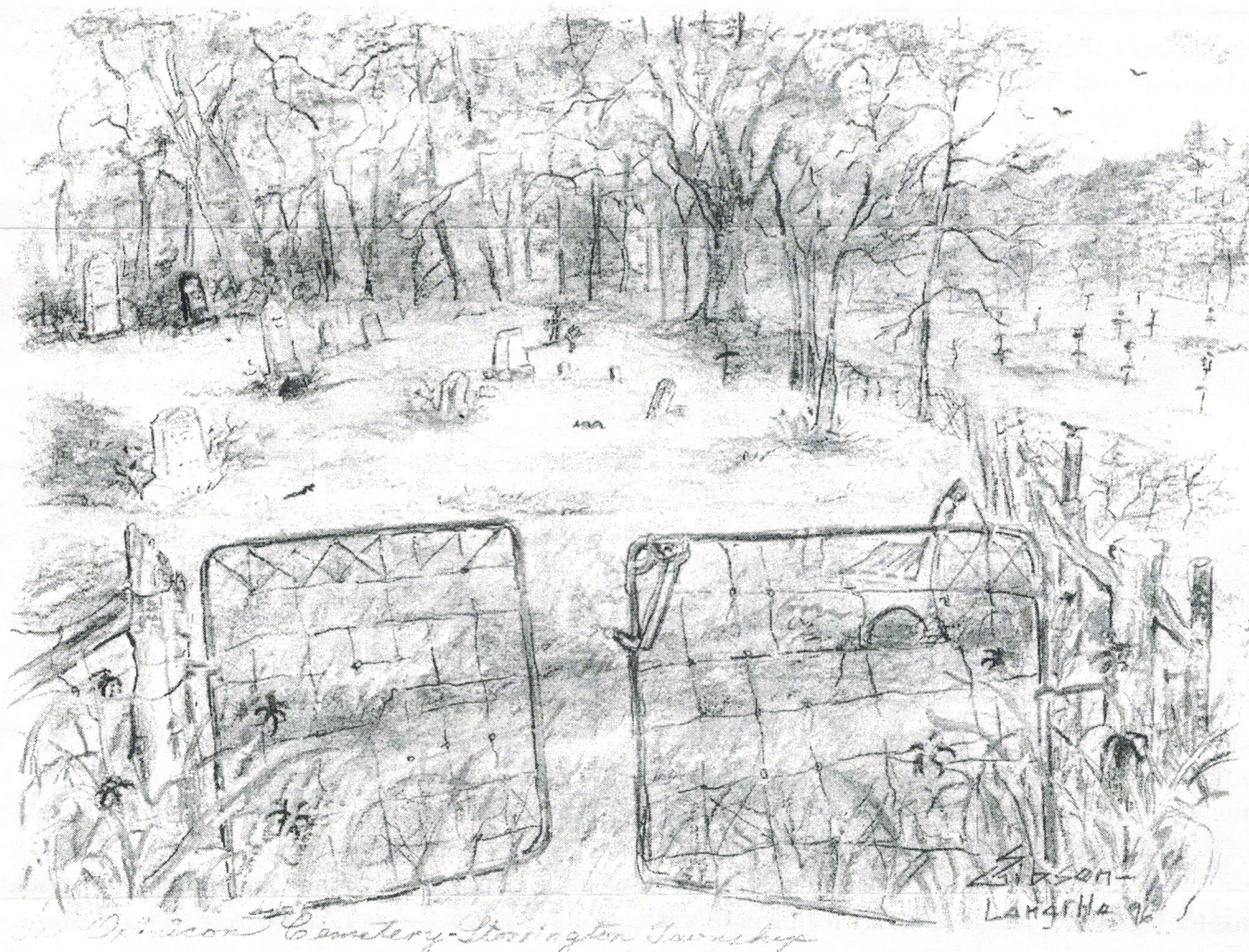
November was a month of respectful remembrance but we should also not forget how dry humour and downright fun were also part of the culture of war -- and perhaps an important agency of maintaining "grace under pressure"! Richmond Golf Club was located in the suburbs of London during the blitz in World War II and, in 1940, it felt obliged to introduce the following "Temporary Rules":

- Players are asked to collect Bomb and Shrapnel splinters to save these causing damage to Mowing Machines.
- In Competitions during gunfire or while bombs are falling, players may take cover without penalty for ceasing play.
- A ball moved by enemy action may be replaced, or if lost or destroyed, a ball may be dropped not nearer the hole without penalty.
- A player whose stroke is affected by the simultaneous explosion of a bomb may play another ball from the same place. Penalty one stroke.



## LANDSCAPES/INSCAPES: OPINICON CEMETARY

Opinicon Road is out along Division Street, just past Perth Road Village, in Storrington Township. It's quite a distance before you come to the "ghost town" of the former Lake Opinicon village. On the way there, just past the old Opinicon School, is the Opinicon Cemetery. To the right of the cemetery is a field with hundreds of bluebird houses.



Never having seen a bluebird, I was anxious to paint the cemetery in the spring time. Because it's such a desolate spot, I asked my friend, Eleanor, to come along with me. I painted while she studied her course on Therapeutic Touch Healing Treatment -- and practised her skills on the trees in the cemetery!

In order to get the view I wanted, I had to sit right in the stony ditch without my stool. A car pulled up and a young girl got out. She put flowers in front of a small wooded cross. She cried and cried. It was so sad! I had thought it was a pioneer cemetery and disused. But I later learned that they are still performing burials there.

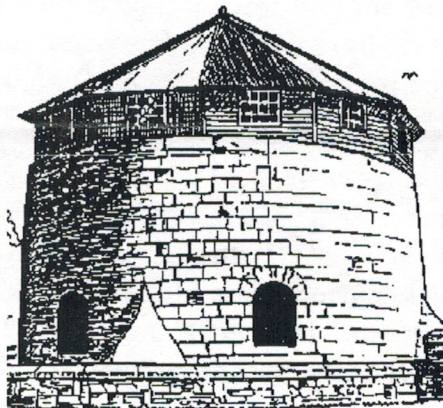
Well, the outcome was that I have still not seen a bluebird and Eleanor had a real live patient to practise on when I tried to get up from the ditch. Ha! (Shirley Gibson-Langille).

## OUR SYMPATHY

One of KHS's Life Members, Mr. Leonard James Norman, passed away on 1 December 2000. Mr. Leonard's association with Kingston extends back to the years he worked in the family's tinsmithing enterprise located to the rear of the Brock Street Fire Hall. After active service in World War II, Mr. Norman returned to Kingston where he worked at Queen's University for fourteen years until his retirement. On behalf of KHS, We extend our sympathies to the family and friends of this long-standing and loyal member of our society.



## KHS AWARDS: 2000



The Kingston Historical Society Award, inaugurated in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Society in 1893, is presented from time to time to worthy individuals, groups and institutions in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history. Two awards were made this year.

### **Cataraqi Cemetary Company**

Founded by royal charter in 1850, the Cataraqi Company has created an innovative garden cemetery in a magnificent park-like setting, which provides not only a dignified resting place for departed members of our community, but also a powerful visual record of Kingston's unique heritage. A walk in the cemetery, aided by the guide books and well place markers provided by the company, becomes a pilgrimage through 150 years of local and Canadian history. The Cataraqi Cemetery Company has indeed been successful in "preserving the past for the future" and is a worthy recipient of a Kingston Historical Society Award in this its sesquicentennial year.

### **Marjorie Simmons**

Marjorie Simmons has played a leading role in three organizations which contribute to the understanding and awareness of Kingston's historical richness. A contagiously enthusiastic member of the Kingston Historical Society for almost forty years, she has served that body as council member, secretary, and vice-president. Marjorie was a founding member of the Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society serving as its second president and, in 1984, as the first female president of the provincial body. She has provided leadership within the Cataraqi Cemetery Company for twenty-five years and was its president for no less than fourteen years. Her efforts have been fundamental to the continuing recognition of the cemetery not simply as a memorial to former citizens but as a living record of our community's heritage. Marjorie Simmons' long-standing and consuming devotion to the preservation of Kingston's history fully justifies her receipt of this Kingston Historical Society Award for 2000. (Jack Pike, Chair, KHS Awards Committee)



## FOCUS ON THE RIDEAU: "POOR MAN'S WAY TO A WAGE"

[At the 2000 Christmas Party, the "Barber and the Sevilles Octet" performed this piece composed by Valerie Hamilton with Brant Peppley. It was written for the commemoration of the drinking fountain erected in Kingston, June 2000, in memory of the Irish who died building the Rideau Canal. Of course, the full effect is best appreciated as the group renders it in their distinctive close harmony.]



*Oh the rhythmic swing of a wood handled axe  
Sings of Irish come to this land  
To eek out a livin' building the Rideau Canal  
Through the rock of this rugged land mass.*

*The Rideau plan was a tough one you know  
From Ottawa ribboning South.  
To stave off the threat of a Yankee attack  
It all started a long time ago.  
A fine man was silver cupp'd Drummond said By  
So too thought the Royal Engineers.  
Brewers and Davis and Kingston Mills  
Six locks two dams three waste weirs.  
His navvies forged through the granite and swamp  
Two shillings six pence for a wage.  
With pick and shovel and barrow and axe  
They grubbed and they cleared and they pumped.*

*Oh, the tired swing of a wood handled axe  
Is a poor man's way to a wage  
Buys flour and pork and tallow and draught  
Keeps the wolf in our bellies at bay.*

*In the summer of eighteen twenty eight  
The dog of August drew nigh.  
From the woods from the brush from the fetid  
swamps  
Came the poisn'd mosquitoes loud whine.  
The heat like a thunder cloud hung in the air  
Fever infested the crews.*

*For ev'ry stone turned another hot night  
For ev'ry tree felled more in sight.  
Malaria raged through the camps like a plague  
Barely a body was spared.  
The doctors were sick alongside the sick  
Quick for a dose of quinine.*

*Oh the silence when there's no wood handled axe  
Is the sorrow of death lurking near  
No voice of the raven rings in the air  
His hovering presence we fear.*

*More than a thousand men dead in the end  
The length of the Rideau canal.  
A Prayer must be said for the five hundred laid  
Near Kingston in unholy graves.  
Accidents sent fifty more to their deaths  
Blasting through granite and stone,  
Tree roots and earth and shrapnel and bits  
With the powder's quick clap hit their mark.  
Six days of the week sixteen hours a day  
The Rideau was built by and by.  
By May thirty-two the **Pumper** sail'd through  
First Drummond and then Colonel By.*

*Oh the tired swing of a wood handled axe  
Is a poor man's way to a wage  
Buys flour and pork and a tallow and draught  
Keeps the wolf in our bellies at bay.*



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# KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## A COMMEMORATION OF THE BIRTH OF SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

11 January 1815



Date: Thursday, 11 January 2001

Place: Senior Staff Mess, Royal Military College

Time: Cocktails at 6.30 p.m.  
Dinner at 7.30 p.m.

Toasts: "Sir J.A. the Scot" : Major Kemp Stewart  
"Sir J.A. the Kingstonian" : Mayor Isabel Turner  
"Sir J.A. the Canadian" : Mr. Peter Milliken, M.P.

Speaker: Professor Don Smith, University of Calgary  
"John A. Macdonald and Aboriginal Canada."

Tickets: \$26.00 per person. Please purchase your tickets as soon as possible and prior to 2 January 2001. For further enquiries, contact Alan McLachlan (549-8841).