



LIMELIGHT

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NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



On behalf of the KHS, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Peter Milliken on his election as Speaker of the House. Peter has been a long time and enthusiastic supporter of the Society. He has agreed to be "our" speaker at next year's Sir John A dinner, his schedule permitting.

You will recall that the KHS was instrumental in the formation of an umbrella heritage group whose role would be the co-ordination of information sharing and educational efforts amongst Kingston's many heritage organizations. Initially, the group was to be called Kingston

Heritage Alliance. However, now that the City's heritage advisory committee has reverted to its original title of LACAC, the umbrella group has assumed the title Heritage Kingston. The group has met with the member organizations and the Mayor and received positive encouragement.

One of the initial tasks of Heritage Kingston is to consolidate a central data base of all existing information on the city's historical buildings, landscapes, and artifacts. Eventually this data will be posted on our website. The group has approached KHS to see if we are interested in undertaking this role. I consider this to be an excellent opportunity and recommend we do so. Accordingly, we need a volunteer(s) with computer and web experience. Ideally, the same person would assume the position of web coordinator for the Society. The position of web coordinator has gone unfilled for some time and is necessary if our web site is to remain current and useful. Anyone interested should contact the secretary Paul Ross at 544-6739 or myself.

I had the opportunity to help Doug Petty, the tower curator, move the scarlet tunics used by the tower for its summer programme. Sadly, about two dozen of them have deteriorated and need the attention of a needle and thread to reattach buttons, sew up tears, and replace loose linings etc. It would be much appreciated if volunteers willing to repair one or two of these tunics would contact Doug at 546-0422 or myself.

OUR NEXT MEETING

The April speaker will be Henk Weaver, who will address the Society on "The Restoration of the Phoebe."

Date: Wednesday, 18 April 2001

Place: The Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library

Time: 7:30 pm

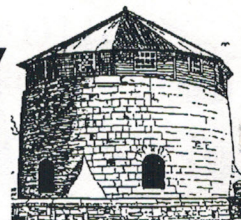
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AND ONE FROM THE EDITORS...

Committed as we are to the written word, nevertheless we feel we should draw your attention to two new web-sites of interest to KHS members.

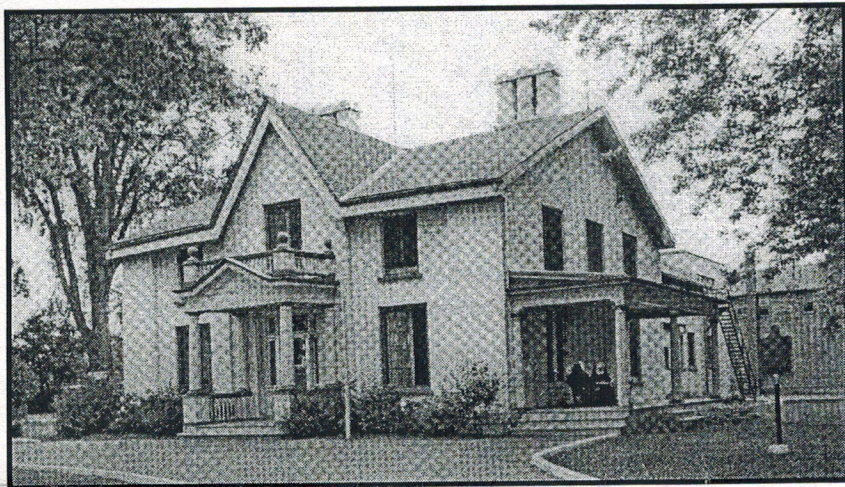
On 23 January 2001, Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, announced the establishment of the *Portrait Gallery of Canada*. Associated with the *National Archives of Canada* (NAC), this new national cultural institution will be housed in the former Embassy of the United States at 100 Wellington Street in Ottawa. Scheduled to open in 2004-2005, the Gallery will have 2,645 square metres in 19 galleries, a multimedia lecture room with seating capacity for 80-100 people, as well as a coffee bar and a small boutique. The Portrait Gallery will display NAC collections, as well as works from other collections -- public and private -- from across Canada. For Minister Copps, "The Portrait Gallery will reflect the values which link Canadians across the country. Through the Gallery, we will have an opportunity to make connections across time and history, and to experience the rich and varied heritage that all Canadians share." There will also be a Virtual Gallery. Access to the art, photographs, multi-media, and archival records exhibited will also be provided via the Internet. Click on the following hyperlink to appreciate a few photographs of the interior of a heritage building enhanced by a fine collection of National Archive Portraits.

[Http://intranetarchives.ca/Branches/cscb/portrait/index.html](http://intranetarchives.ca/Branches/cscb/portrait/index.html).



Another web-site of interest to historians, military-buffs, and Canadians in general was launched on 2 April 2001: the *National Inventory of Canadian Military Memorials*. This is a joint undertaking of the National Defence's Directorate of History and Heritage and the Organization of Military Museums of Canada (OMMC). The OMMC is an association of people and organizations who have a common interest in the operation of military museums and the preservation of Canadian military heritage. One of the main principles of the *Military Memorial* initiative is to encourage Canadians to ensure that no memorial lies forgotten and neglected. For further information, call Mr. Dan Potvin, Directorate of History and Heritage, (613 998 7053). The web-site may be visited at www.dnd.ca/memorial and www.ommc.ca

SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE AND HEATHFIELD



Once the home of Canada's first prime minister and now the nerve centre of the only religious congregation founded in Kingston, the property known as "Heathfield" has a long and proud history.

Built in the 1830s, the square, stuccoed, two-storey Ontario cottage-style villa, passed through several hands until it was sold to Charles Heath in 1852. In 1865, Heath sold the property to Professor James Williamson, a brother-in-law of Sir John A. Macdonald. Macdonald rented the home for his unmarried sister Louisa and, while he was prime minister, made it his home on

his frequent visits from Ottawa. It was a complicated family arrangement. Louisa insisted she would live only in her brother's "home," so Williamson rented the whole house to John A., but continued to live there also until the family moved into the city on 18 April 1876. Around 1879, George Sears purchased the property and is listed as its owner as late as 1895. Congregation records do not show who owned the property from this time until 1930, when the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul purchased the land for a novitiate.

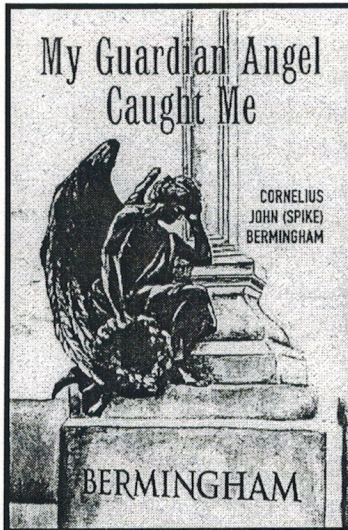
Founded in Kingston in 1861 to look after the city's poor, orphaned and elderly, the congregation of the Sisters of Providence had grown rapidly from its humble beginnings. By 1910, their original home in the House of Providence, now known as Providence Manor, was crowded with Sisters and their charges and consequently St. Mary's of the Lake was purchased to house an orphanage and novitiate. By 1930, the congregation had outgrown both sites and needed new quarters. The Sisters purchased Heathfield, then a 30 acre property just outside the western limits of the city. The original villa served as a novitiate until 1932, when it became a residence for the Sisters teaching in the city. In 1941, the villa became a home for needy children when the Department of National Defence took over St. Mary's of the Lake Orphanage as a military hospital. In 1964, it was demolished to construct a new wing on the Motherhouse complex. An original marble fireplace from the villa still stands in the leadership team's meeting room.

Construction of the building known as "Providence Motherhouse", the official home base of a religious congregation continued throughout the early years of the Great Depression and provided employment for many workers. Built of limestone quarried in the Kingston area, it was officially opened on 6 July 1932 and housed the novitiate and general administration of the congregation. There have been several changes since: in 1954, the 50-bed "Marian Wing" was added to serve as an infirmary for aged and sick Sisters; in 1964, administration offices, an enlarged novitiate, 60 extra rooms for the Marian wing, new dining, kitchen and laundry facilities and a modern heating system were added; in 1969, the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception was built on the east end of the building; in 1989, renovations were made to accommodate the congregational archives; in 1991, the dining room area was renovated; in 1993, the chapel was refurbished and named the Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion; in 2000, extensive renovations to the Motherhouse were completed to accommodate the special needs of senior citizens.

A Heritage Room, located behind the auditorium, was opened on 13 December 1999. Open to visitors, it contains more information on the history of the congregation and Heathfield, Providence Motherhouse. (For more information about the history of the Sisters of Providence, consult our web site at www.providence.ca or call 544-4525, ext 147).



BOOK SHELF: A FORMER KINGSTONIAN'S MEMOIRS



The historian's search for information on Kingston of yesteryear and its related families was augmented recently with the publication of **My Guardian Angel Caught Me** (Spiritwood Press: Burlington, Ontario).

Transcribed from Dictaphone recordings made by Cornelius John (Spike) Bermingham (1900-1972) and edited by family members, this neat soft-cover book has connections to the Hartys, Macklems, and Panets. The wonderfully animated stories reveal his insatiable curiosity and creativity interests in tree houses, cars, boats and horses. They also provide insights into old Limestone City homes and traces Bermingham's remarkable career as a soldier and businessman.

"A wonderful story teller," according to his namesake son, C. John Bermingham, the author obviously wanted to leave behind more than a few oral records for his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. His memoirs read like a novel and they are well illustrated with snapshots that any family can appreciate.

The 269 pages are spiced with poems, songs, and poignant and pointed letters of advice to his grandchildren. Military veterans will enjoy insights into "Spike's" barracks at Camp Borden and bridge-building accomplishments over the Rhine. Col. Bermingham didn't like bureaucracy and he used his sense of humour, guile, and style to cut through red tape as a private contractor and as an enterprising officer with the engineers in the Canadian army.

A Royal Military College grad, as was his father, William, and one son, Bill, "Spike" Bermingham, moved the family-owned marine contracting business westward after the 1939-45 war. His wife, Dorothy "Dumpie" Coates and children, gained a good taste of Ontario as they followed the dock-building trade around the Great Lakes to Chatham, Port Stanley, Leamington, and Collingwood.

In the early days, the Limestone City was the family hub and the Berminghams returned here for visits and during periods when the firm won the contracts to build the Olympic Harbour breakwater and the Holiday Inn wharf.

Maybe you can't go home, but the Berminghams have proven that a family can save and savour stories that help bring a city alive. Thanks to the judicious editing of son William, and input of the whole family, many of the screwball and ingenious things "Spike" Bermingham did during his life are preserved for all to savour. This fine book is available from Novel Idea and other booksellers at \$22 (Prepared by Bill Fitsell).

SPEAKERS' CORNER

On Wednesday evening, 21 March, approximately 75 members and friends of The Society were taken on a "slide cruise" through the 1000 Islands by Susan Smith, author of, **The First Summer People: Thousand Islands 1850-1910**. Susan illustrated her talk with a series of superb historic photographs of life in the islands in the 1800s. Her talk took us back and forth from the American side to the Canadian side as she regaled us with many stories and incidents of the people who came to develop the islands. Her presentation was followed by a lively exchange of personal stories about the Thousand Islands from the audience and, as well, many insightful and probing questions. It was truly a most enjoyable evening as the Society gained a deeper appreciation and knowledge of the history of the Thousand Islands.

Next month, at the April 18 monthly meeting, we will have with us Mr. Henk Weaver who will be speaking on The Restoration of the PHOEBE, the following meeting on May 16, two of our members, Bill Fitsell and Brian Osborne will be honouring the late Wally Breck. They will be highlighting his contributions and presenting Dr. Breck's last paper which he had hoped to present to the Society prior to his illness.

ST. GEORGE'S ART FOR WINDOWS



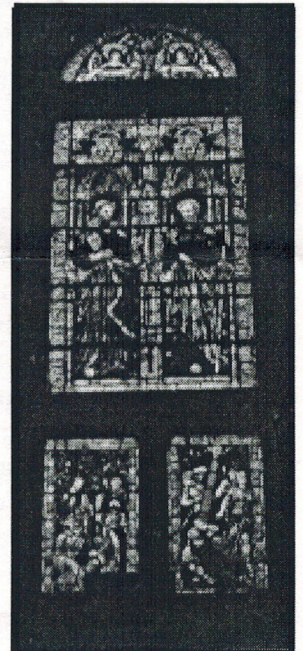
In May of last year, the Anglican Cathedral Church of St. George, one of Kingston's most significant historical sites, sponsored its first "Art for Windows" celebration, an event organized to raise funds for the repair and restoration of the building's stained glass windows. Last year, this event attracted more than 400 people and raised almost \$16,000 for the restoration of one of the windows most in need of work. The first window to be repaired is one in which a bow had developed in the leading, causing separation of the leading and the glass. Not only the window itself, but also its frame, suffered damage. The window has been at the Edwards Glass Company in London, Ontario, for some months and should be reinstalled in the church before summer.

The window is from the second bay of the nave, on the liturgical north (geographical west). Like all of the

nave windows, it has four parts: a large rectangular main panel with a lunette (a semi-circular panel) above and two smaller rectangular panels below. It is the large central panel which required work. That panel is divided in two vertically and presents images of Saints Peter and Paul, the Church's two main early preachers. St. Peter carries the keys which are his symbol and St. Paul the book of the Word of God. The four parts of the window, like most of the other windows in the nave, are linked by thematic and design features. In the lunette are quotations about the Word associated with the two saints ("the word of the Lord endureth forever," quoted at I Peter 1:25 from Isaiah 40:8 and "Let the word of Christ dwell in you" from Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:16). In the smaller lower panels, St. Peter receives the keys of the kingdom and Paul, as Saul, is blinded on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9). The window was placed in the church shortly after 1902, the year of the death of James Scott, to whose memory it is dedicated. It is thus one of the oldest coloured windows in the building.

This year, the St. George's Project Committee will hold the second annual "Art for Windows" festival in aid of the continuing restoration work. Like last year's event, the festival will feature paintings, sculpture, pottery, flower arrangements, and other arts and crafts items for sale. Artists, artisans, and designers from throughout the region will be showing their work. There will also be music in the Cathedral throughout the event.

The festival will open on Friday, 11 May at 6:30 p.m. with a gala reception for which refreshments have been generously donated by Kingston area businesses. After that, the festival will continue from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, 12 May. Admission to the Friday night reception is \$11.00, and admission on Saturday is \$2.00. Tickets for both times will be available at the door, but admission is limited on Friday and it is advisable to obtain tickets in advance from the Cathedral office (Wellington Street: telephone 548-4617).

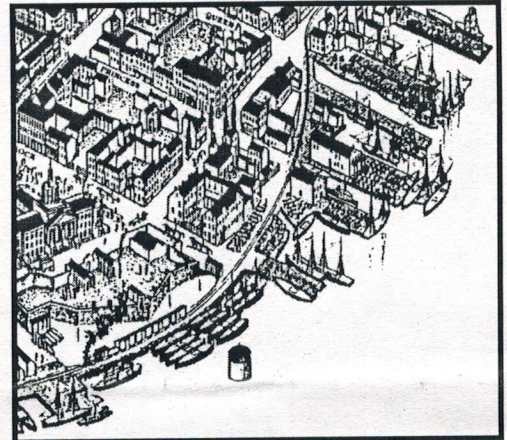


A WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



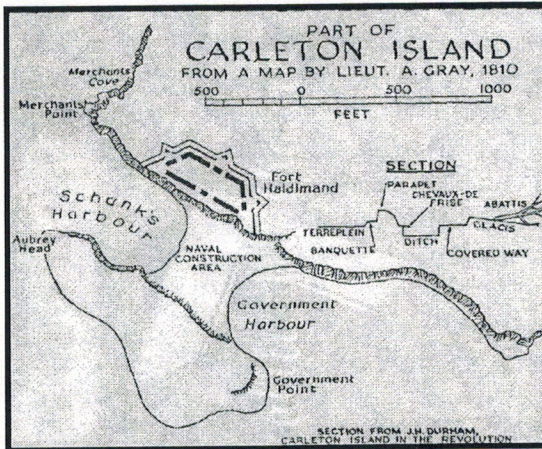
Since my last report, KHS has acquired nine new members: Lynda Cyr; John and Dianne Fielding; Joan Gibson and John Prytulka; Susan Smith; Eily StrotmannMartin; and Robert and Wendy Mayoff. Welcome all!

Eily StrotmannMartin has raised the question of a membership card. After all, how else could she identify herself for admission to Murney Tower? She's so right! So, as membership secretary, I am moving ahead with a card. Another benefit will be that it can reassure members that they have renewed.



In response to a member's question, KHS membership for the year 2000 included 41 life members, 92 individual, 2 students, and 42 families (or 84 members).

CARLETON ISLAND ARCHAEOLOGY, 2001

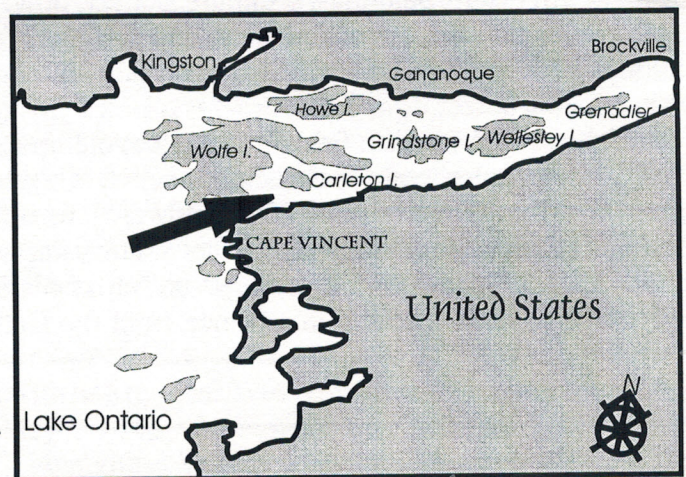


In his 1960 article in **Ontario History**, Major C.C.J. Bond reported on the "British Base at Carleton Island." Having summarized its original military role and subsequent acquisition by the Americans in 1817, he described its condition at that time:

"Today, a few old mansions stand near the ruins of the fort on the island's western promontory, and the twin coves shelter a few big launches; the rest is farm and woodlot. Nearby, two derelict stone chimneys poke their heads over the lilac bushes, provoking the curiosity of passersby on the St. Lawrence Seaway. The ditch, the chimneys and some rubble heaps are the sole remaining traces of Fort Haldimand, for a few short years a vitally important British link in the defence of Canada."

The fourth season of investigation will commence in June of this year and volunteer archaeology opportunities are available at this fascinating site. No prior archaeological experience is necessary to help uncover information about the British military in the 18th century. Assistance is needed to clear and stabilize the existing features of the fort and to aid archaeologists in the excavation. The work at Fort Haldimand is being conducted by Doug Pippin of Syracuse University in cooperation with the 1000 Islands Land Trust.

Individuals or small groups (3-4 persons) can be accommodated by contacting Doug Pippin after the 1st of June at (716) 924-9948 or by email at djpippin@syr.edu.



LANDSCAPES/INSCAPES: YE OLDE BARBER SHOPPE HARDWARE



In 1969, I was all set to do a pictorial history of North and South Fredericksburg, but fate intervened and I did Storrington instead!

It all came about one day when Eleanor asked me to go for a drive. We stopped for tea at the "Big Deli" in Battersea and I asked the waitress how old the building was. She told me to go and ask the local historian, Norman Freeman, in the store across the street. I looked over at a dilapidated building with a sign across the front:

Ye Olde Barber Shoppe Hardware." On the wall was written, BEWARE! Falling Paint - Enter At Your Own Risk - There's No Place Like This Place - So This Must Be The Place!

We decided to check it out. Wow! I knew that I had to paint it, but would it still be here two years after my present project was finished?

We met Norm Freeman. He told us that it had been a barber shop at one time. I asked him if he had any pictures of it. Just then, a bearded character, Bob Wright, came out of the office claiming that he

had lots of pictures. Oh, oh! I realized what was happening! Bob looked at me knowingly, saying "SERENDIPITY"! I knew then that I was hooked.

I was back that week to do this drawing. Many interesting characters came into the store. There was "Pablo," "Filthy," "Beaver," and "Wobbly," the last of whom kept stealing penny-candy from a drawer. Norm would catch him, but as soon he turned his back, Wobbly would be back at it again. Ha!

Would you believe, Norm eventually named me "Shirley Doublebarrel"! I told "Beaver" I didn't like the name. He said I should be honoured as he only names his favourite people. Oh well! I noticed that when Norm served liquid refreshments in his office, \$2 were left on the table. He also had a "CUSS BOX." Anyone who swore had to toss in a quarter. Yes, loved people, but he demanded a lot of respect. He was a retired school teacher and his father and grandfather had both been doctors for the community.

Norm was kind. Every Christmas, he made up boxes of food and books to leave on door-steps for the needy. He was also very good to me as he agreed to present a history of the Township at the opening of my art show. Also, "Mr. Serendipity," Bob Wright, played the part of the "Ghost of J.B. Willy." It was such a unique experience, one I would have missed if I had waited. Dear Norm passed away less than two years later. (Shirley Gibson-Langille)

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