

LIMELIGHT

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NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I trust that all of you had a pleasant summer, albeit a very hot one if you stayed in Kingston.

I am sure that the issue of the sorry state of Fort Henry has not escaped your attention. Indeed, one of this summer's real accomplishments was that, through the efforts of various heritage organizations and determined lobbying, finally, the provincial (and it is hoped) the federal government have acknowledged that this historic site needs serious attention.

Originally built to repel republican invaders from "across the line," Fort Henry now attracts thousands of our American neighbours and other visitors from around the world. This year, however, they had to negotiate scaffolding and were denied entry into many portions of the Fort. Clearly, there is a pressing need for funds to restore the citadel.

While not mentioned in local newspaper coverage, I would like to assure you that the KHS has been involved in this issue. As President of KHS, I have written to our elected representatives and to Minister Copps. Moreover, I have represented KHS on the Fort Henry Community Action Group and given it our full support. Initial responses from both levels of government have shown some light at the end of the tunnel, but considerable work is yet to be done to address this national issue and the Society will continue to play a very active role. I am sure there will be much more to come on this topic.

As I write, the 2001 issue of *Historic Kingston* is sitting before me. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jane Errington and Brian Osborne for another excellent journal. Volume 49 marks a significant achievement for an organization like ours. Next year will be the 50th anniversary of *Historic Kingston*, a milestone worthy of something special. I would welcome any ideas on how we can mark this occasion.

We have a very good programme for the coming year, and it promises some special venues. I look forward to seeing you at the first meeting this September. Don't forget to bring along new members and guests. (Warren Everett).

OUR NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 19 September 2001

Place: The Wilson Room, Kingston
Public Library

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Speaker: Patsy Flemming

Title: Kingston and the Northwest
Rebellion.

N.B.

15 Sept.: Visit to Kingston's

Masonic Temple

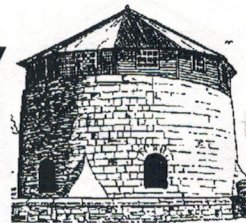
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Kingston Historical Society

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AND ONE FROM THE EDITORS...

It's hard to imagine that summer is almost over. After stirring restlessly at the end of May and throughout June, the city came alive in July. The summer celebrations began with the arrival of the Tall Ships. For almost a week in July, we were reminded how important the harbour was to the lives of city residents in the 19th century. We also marvelled at conditions aboard ship. What would it have been like to live in those cramped quarters below deck and work amid the creaking riggings -- and always at the whim of the weather? As the ships proudly made their way out of the harbour, activities in the city continued.



Summer students guided visitors around the city and introduced many to those haunted corners of Kingston. Thousands were entertained by music in the park and strolled along the same streets that Sir John A. walked to work. In celebration of our rich heritage, museums, like our own Martello Tower, and Bellevue House, the Old Pump House, and the Marine Museum welcomed visitors from across the continent. As it has done for 200 years, the city market was busy as farmers offered fresh produce and artisans displayed their handcrafted creations to residents and visitors.

The hottest and driest summer in almost two generations is drawing to a close. Already, the days are getting noticeably shorter, the nights cooler; farmers are well into the harvest; many gardeners are preserving their produce; children are getting ready to go back to school; and those at the Martello Tower and other local museums are beginning to pack up their exhibits. It has been a good summer for the city; and it has been a good summer for our history.

KHS AWARDS

During the next several weeks, the Awards Committee will be preparing its recommendations to Council concerning KHS Awards for 2001. In keeping with normal practice, members are again asked to participate in these deliberations by nominating individuals or organizations who are worthy candidates. Nominations should be put forward using the form enclosed with this newsletter. Completed forms may be mailed to the Chairman of the Committee, Dr. J.G. Pike, 150 Macdonnell Street, K7L 4B8, so as to arrive not later than 31 October. It is requested that as much information as possible be presented in support of each nomination as detail which may obvious to the nominator may not be so to members of the Awards Committee.

THE FRIENDLY GIANT: A KINGSTON CONNECTION

Sitting in the train room at the back of the Pumphouse Steam Museum at the corner of Ontario and West Streets is part of the set of the *The Friendly Giant*, the former CBC children's television program that ran for almost 30 years, ending in 1988. Indeed, CBC had decided to terminate the show in 1984. However, such was the outcry from irate fans and questions asked in Parliament, that they compromised and ran repeats of the program for the next four years.

When the show was eventually cancelled, the set was on the verge of being demolished. Bob Homme, the "Friendly Giant," took the castle and some of his little characters ("Rusty" and "Jerome") to his retirement farm near Grafton, Ontario. The 6 feet by 12 feet train-set was acquired by one of the show's technicians who soon realized it was impossible to get the half-ton lay-out in his house. So, it was moved to the loft of a friend's barn near Picton until, in the early 1990's, one of the members of the Kingston Division of the Canadian Railroad Historical Society, the late Walter Bedbrook, was asked if the club would be interested in acquiring it.

Arrangements were made to move the "Friendly Giant's" lay-out into the same room in the Pumphouse that accommodated the bigger "O" scale lay-out. A timer-button was installed to enable visitors to operate the trains and the club double-tracked the lay-out to allow the two trains - a passenger train and a freight train - to run in opposite directions. A suburban streetcar line was added to run back and forth up the hill, alongside the road.

About two years before he died, Bob Homme visited the Museum, as did one of his daughters who donated a signed photograph. Train operators at the Pumphouse have observed how the model appears to bring back fond memories for parents in their thirties, while children seem to prefer it to the larger "O" scale model as it is closer to their size and they enjoy being able to operate the trains. It is a sight that would most assuredly bring much joy to Bob Homme's "Friendly Giant"! (Submitted by George Dillon).



Tom Wash and George Dillon



BOOK SHELF

One of the attractions of the Kingston area is that wonderful ferry-ride to Wolfe Island. Another, is hearing all those colourful stories about the place and the people. Renie Marshall has pulled some of her recollections and reflections on this distinctive place together in an attractive little booklet,

"Ganounkouesnot" (The Long Island Standing Up!), Wolfe Island: Graphics Plus. Well illustrated, the topics discussed include the ferry, Marysville village, churches, schools, black slaves, the Wolfe Island canal, public services, colourful characters, Garden and Simcoe islands, and Horne's Ferry and Cape Vincent.

And then there are the poems:

Wolfe Island we would have you know,
Has over the years, since long ago,
Received several names, it would appear
According to who was living here!

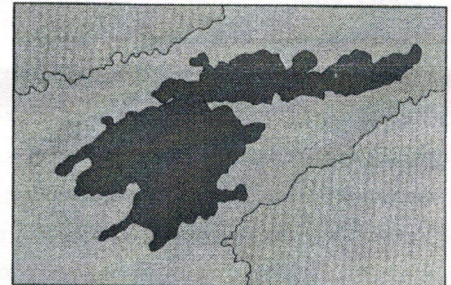
But there's one thing we must point out
So's not to leave you in any doubt,
Our friend, the wolf, has nothing to do
With the name of the Island that's pure bally-hoo!

General James Wolfe, spelt with an "e",
Was a famous general in history.
He defeated the French in a battle grim,
So the Brits called Wolfe Island after him!

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"GANOUNKOUESNOT"

"THE LONG ISLAND STANDING UP!"



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WEB SITINGS

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the first Canadian postage stamp, issued 23 April 1851, the National Archives of Canada has introduced the **Virtual Canadian Postal Archives**. Working closely with Canada Post, NAC has designed a website which will include an integrated search engine and provide virtual access to Canada's postal and philatelic heritage.

Among the thousands of documentary and archival records it will offer, the **Virtual Canadian Postal Archives** will present 16,000 digital images of all the stamps in the national collection, along with various other original philatelic documents. The site will also provide links to other postal and philatelic sites.

The first phase of project development was completed on 6 April. To mark the 150th anniversary of the transfer of postal services from British to Canadian administration, NAC created an online catalogue of the 6500 titles in the philatelic library.

The Virtual Canadian Postal Archives was officially launched in August 2001. Regular substantial additions are then planned over the course of the following two years. In the meantime, go to <http://www.archives.ca> and click on Postal Archives, and enjoy the completely redesigned philatelic site.

SPEAKERS' CORNER

The Spring program came to a close on 16 May when two of our members, Bill Fittell and Brian Osborne, exercised their roles as close friends of Wally Breck to present on his behalf, his last paper: "Major General Charles Francis Constantine CB, DSO: The General and the Athlete." Under the critical scrutiny of friends and family, members of the RCHA Brigade Association -- and Jack Pike! -- the speakers rendered a biography that spanned the Canadian Northwest, Kingston, the Great War, and the home-front in WW II. It was a story of barracks, battle-fields, and playing fields and served to remind us of two highly regarded Kingstonians: Major General C.F. Constantine and Professor Wally Breck.

The tentative programme of speakers for the Fall and Spring 2001-2002 is as follows:

- 19 September: Kingston and the Northwest Rebellion: Patsy Flemming
17 October: The History of KP4W: Kingston's Prison for Women: Bill Patterson
21 November: George Johnson's War and After: Maureen Garvie
12 December: Our Christmas Party: Curry Hall, Royal Military College, hosted by Ross McKenzie and Jack Pike
11 January: Celebration of Sir John A. Macdonald's Birthday: Guest-speaker, Peter Milliken M.P.
20 February: The Society's AGM and Annual "Show and Tell": KHS members describe their historical treasures
20 March: The Fate of Kingston's Warships: Fifty Years Later: Jonathan Moore
17 April: Three Vignettes:
Robertson Davies in Kingston: Beatrice Corbett
Lamplighter: Bill Fittell
Carved in Stone: Canada and the Great War: Isobel Duguid Trumpour
15 May: Fort Henry in Wartime: Lubomyr Luciuk

Also, in an attempt at providing some diversity in our activities, the following events have been planned.

- 15 September: A visit to the **MASONIC TEMPLE** located across from the Kingston Public Library. Recently sold, the new owner will be taking possession of this historic property some time in October. KHS is fortunate to have received an invitation for a tour of the Masonic Temple and former Congregational Church on Saturday, 15 September, at 2:00 p.m. All interested, should assemble at the door on Johnson Street by 1:50 p.m. The tour will be conducted by Mr. Donald Patterson of the Masonic Temple. For more information, contact Alan Maclachlan at 549-8841.
- April 2002: A visit to the **MACLACHLAN WOODWORKING MUSEUM** FOR a guided tour and exposition on the use of wood in the 19th century.
- May 2002: A visit to **OTTAWA** for a tour of **RIDEAU HALL**, the residence of Canada's Governor General, and possibly **EARNSCLIFFE**, the residence of the British High Commissioner, followed by lunch at the National Gallery and a tour of the collections there. Provisional cost: \$60 p.p.

PRESBYTERIAN, PRINCIPAL - AND "PLANTER" TOO: DANIEL MINER GORDON

Principals of Queen's have made individual contributions to the university, but the tenure of Daniel Miner Gordon (1903-1917) is marked by what has been called the greatest single event in the history of Queen's: the separation of Queen's from the Presbyterian Church. Gordon's predecessor, George Munro Grant, had initiated this controversial move but it did not take place until 1912, nine years after Gordon succeeded Grant.

Like Grant, Gordon was a Presbyterian minister from Nova Scotia, and was born in Pictou, in 1845. His father's people had come from Kildonan, Sutherlandshire, to Nova Scotia, where many Scots had settled. His mother's people, the Miners, were "Planters," originally from New England. He was educated at Pictou Academy and the University of Glasgow. Before coming to Queen's, Gordon served the church in Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Halifax, and as Chaplain to the Forces in the Northwest Rebellion in 1885.



Both these principals were eager for Queen's to take its place on the national stage. In 1869, Gordon was one of the Presbyterian clergymen who rescued Queen's from collapse, when funding was cut to \$5000, and he became a Trustee. When he arrived here as principal in 1903, Queen's was a group of separate faculties. When he retired in 1917, it was a well-integrated university. Grant's vision had moved Queen's ahead, and it was Gordon's experience in the west, with its flow of immigrants from many nations, that showed him that a university must serve people from many backgrounds if it was to justify its existence, and survive.

But Daniel Miner Gordon was distinguished in another way. Through his mother, Amy Miner, he was descended from the Planters, people who came to Nova Scotia from New England between 1760 and 1768, **before** the American Revolution and the Loyalists. They were offered land and freedom of worship to be a British presence in Nova Scotia after the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755, and thus offset a possible French resurgence.

Called Planters because they planted communities such as Barrington, Yarmouth, and Horton (now Wolfville), they were yeomen and town men, and from families who had run out of land for younger sons. They arrived by ship, and 8,000 came between 1760 and 1768. They were the first Anglophone presence in what is now Canada, and they are the best-kept secret in Canadian history! Among Planter descendants there have been academics, clergymen, two Fathers of Confederation (Sir Charles Tupper, and Sir Leonard Tilley), and two Prime Ministers (Sir Charles Tupper and Sir Robert Borden). The Law Courts of Upper Canada are riddled with Planter descendants. Daniel Gordon and his wife Eliza had five children. She was noted for her hospitality, and highly regarded in Queen's circles. Two daughters remained here: Kate, who married lawyer W.F. Nickle, and Wilhelmina, Associate Professor of English at Queen's, and author of the fine biography, *Daniel M. Gordon: His Life*. Gordon Hall stands as a tribute to Principal Gordon. A Celtic cross marks his grave in the Queen's plot at Catarauqui Cemetery and is in need of restoration. He died in 1925, and left Queen's a stronger university than he found it. (Submitted by Beatrice Corbett)

LANDSCAPES/INSCAPES: THE MYSTERY BUILDING

In 1987, I was researching that interesting Kingston character, Dollar Bill, as I planned to bring back his ghost at the opening of my Kingston Waterfront II show. Wally Breck told me that Ernie Warmington had known him so I dropped in at his barber-shop at 373 King Street East. I spent a fascinating day chatting with Ernie and his customers -- doctors, students, professionals, and seniors -- some of whom had been frequenting his barber shop since it opened forty years earlier.

Ernie was born in Barriefield in 1915, the son of George and Ellen Warmington, George was a plumber at RMC. Ernie married Evelyn McDermott in 1940 and raised two sets of twins, Peter and Paul, and seven years later, Fran and Jo-Ann. Ernie told me that he had learned his trade from Fred Todd who had had a shop next door. He was only paid a dollar a week -- and for that he had to scrub the floors and even clean out the spittoon. It paid off once though, when he found a \$2 bill in it! When he first started barbering in 1931, a hair-cut cost 25 cents and you could get a shave for 15 cents.

Yes, Dollar Bill had been Ernie's customer there and at his previous shop at 35 Brock Street. He always asked Ernie to trim his eyelashes, saying that it strengthened his eyes. He liked to play checkers with Ernie and he usually won. Of course, Ernie knew all about Dollar Bill's bootlegging establishment in Barriefield, but he also knew what a kind man Dollar Bill was: how he would leave groceries on the doorsteps of the poor and give movie tickets to the children; how he fed the birds and loved animals.

A member of St. Mark's Church, Ernie still sings in the choir. He started playing the saxophone 60 years ago and agreed to play for my art show. He also greeted Dollar Bill (played by Professor Russ Waller) on his bicycle. On 13 April 1989, I sketched his barber-shop and it was none too soon as Ernie retired in August of that year, long after his legs had started bothering him. Accompanied by Don Smith, Ernie continues to play his saxophone at my art shows, the Forget-me-not Club, Extendicare, and other senior homes. A kinder, more talented gentleman I have yet to meet!

It is now 2001. Ernie's wife, Evelyn, died two years ago and he is still at 14 Drummond Street where he was born. It's a real joy visiting him and his glorious garden. You'd recognize most of his beautiful flowers, but with one difference: they are larger, more colourful, and taller than any I have ever seen! Not surprising really, if he gives them the same loving care and kindness that he has always given his customers, friends, and family. A sure sign that he reaps what he sows. We all love you Ernie! (By Shirley Gibson-Langille)



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