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Editor
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OUR ANNUAL MEETING

We greet the new year with good cheer, the prospect of elections of officers and council, and the hope that winter will not be too unkind to us. Our Annual Meeting will be held at 7.30 Wednesday 25 January (the 4th Wednesday) 1995 in the Wilson Room, upstairs in the Central Public Library, 130 Johnson Street. There will be the opportunity for nominations from the floor. If none, the usual suspects will continue in office with the exception of our secretary, Barbara Bonner, who wishes to be relieved of her considerable duties. We deeply appreciate what she has contributed over the past years. There will be our usual Show & Tell, a word from Sue Bazely on archaeology at Fort Henry and poetry from James Chapeskie. Please try to join us.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Many of us enjoyed our Christmas party at the Royal Military College, bravely enduring the frosty evening and listening to Jack Pike and Ross Mackenzie as they related the history of the Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment, Royal Canadians and their phenomenal collection of silver steins, dinner service, trophies, miniature cannons and other gleaming impedimenta. It is always pleasant to meet with our fellows in the Pittsburgh Historical Society.

SOCIETY AWARDS

Also at the Christmas party, we were delighted to present our annual awards to three distinguished members who have made outstanding contributions to the revelation and promotion of our history over many years. They include Life Member Dr. William Angus, whom we were happy to see in person. His editorship of *Historic Kingston* and the *Newsletter* were noted, as were his

historic plays and lively recitations. Another Life Member recipient was Dr. Richard A. Preston, author of two volumes of the history of the Royal Military College and other now standard works. He was especially vigorous in helping to restore our Society to good health after the war years. Last but not least, we honour Frederick A. McConnell who, for nineteen years, developed and directed the Fort Henry Guard, served as Curator of the Murney Tower Museum and led the pageantry for the annual graveside ceremony for Sir John A. Macdonald, not to mention service on our executive. God bless them, every one.

CONGRATULATIONS GEORGE

We extend warm congratulations to our helpful but modest George Henderson on his Staff Recognition Award from Queen's University. Himself a graduate of Queen's and a diligent husbandman in the documentary vineyard, George has never failed to help all of us who seek the best vintage in Queen's Archives. Some may not be aware that he has made an extensive study of Mackenzie King and Royal Commissions, the Kingston Rowing Club, genealogy and the organization of the annual graveside ceremony honouring our first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. As vice-president of publications in our Society, he worked tirelessly to distribute *Historic Kingston* and our other books. Perhaps his greatest contribution has been to build a close liaison between Queen's, the Kingston Historical Society and the town as a whole. George Henderson, we salute you.

LEST THEY FORGET

Our ever vigilant president Bill Fittsell has written to our representative in parliament Peter Milliken, MP, commending him for bringing to the attention of the House the failure of a recent government publication to note the close connection between Sir John A. Macdonald and his Kingston

riding. Bill pointed out to Mr. Milliken the considerable commemorations of Sir John on a major boulevard, on school and college buildings, his home Bellevue House and in Cataraqui Cemetery, not to mention some forty entries in *Historic Kingston*. Those people in Ottawa just never learn.

BOOK REVIEWS

A cultural and historical tour guide, *Fittsell's Guide to the Old Ontario Strand* has arrived in local bookstores to round out your library of local history. Researched and written by our own Bill Fittsell and Michael Dawber, it is published by Quarry Press 1994 in paperback for \$14.95. Its format is interesting, providing maps, pictures and descriptive information about places of historical interest along seven driving tours. These include Kingston and the Islands, Leeds & the St. Lawrence, the Rideau Valley, the old Kick and Push, the Addington Road, the old Nip and Tuck and the Loyalist Parkway. Also included is an index of place names and an address and telephone list of towns and institutions where more information can be found. If it did not appear under your Christmas tree, run out and get a copy, sit back for a good read and, when spring comes, have it handy in your glove compartment. Better yet, keep a copy in your home library and another in the car. Or get three and give one to a friend.

For historical railroad buffs, the 1995 edition of *The Canadian Rail Passenger Yearbook* is hot off the press. Published by Trackside Canada, Box 1369, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5R4, it is offered to our members for \$24.02 including discount, shipping and GST. It features in-depth articles on vanished trains, paint schemes, stations, high speed rail, maps, plans, rosters and more than 100 colour and black and white photographs. Of special interest to Kingstonians is a fifteen page article about the stormy 43 year history of our street railway, extensively footnoted. PUC please note.

OUR MEMBERS

We welcome, along with the new year, a promising group of new members. Shirley Harmer is chief map librarian of Queen's, newly ensconced in the basement of the new Stauffer Library. Her map collection and her knowledge of cartography have been very helpful to this writer in researching the history of Portsmouth, and we thank her.

Mary Lazier Corbett conducts a consulting practice in human resources management around the province, but takes time out to work with others in Vision Kingston to protect Kingston at Ontario Municipal Board hearings. She is a spirited leader and public speaker and will be a welcome addition to our Society.

Another is Michel G. Fontaine, a highway engineer from Paris, France, who has practiced his craft there and in Africa, South America and the Caribbean. We welcome this enterprising francophile whose past activities have included secretary of the Association Historique Francophone de Victoria, where he published books and brochures on the French presence in Victoria and Vancouver Island and became vice president of Alliance Francaise in Victoria. He notes our strong interest in the early French history of the Kingston area and offers to provide French translation so that our publications can be enjoyed by our own francophone community. Bienvenu, Michel.

Brian and Elizabeth Toney also join our ranks, and we look forward to learning more about them in the near future.

In appreciation of her continued service to the Murney Tower Committee, we have renewed an Honorary Membership to Rona Rustige, now curator and manager of the Hastings County Museum in Belleville.

For his yeoman service to Murney Tower and its programs, we also extend a Complimentary Membership to Peter H. Gray.

We extend a particular welcome to our new Mayor of Kingston, Gary Bennett,

who becomes an Honorary Member of our Society and, we hope, can take an active part in our efforts to promote the historic significance of our city.

Sadly, we must also report the passing of several beloved members of our Society. Life Member Dr. Garfield Kelly died in June 1994 at 76. Born in north Kingston, he became a marathon swimmer before taking his medical degree at Queen's in 1940. After internship, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force as a medical officer in 1941. He began a distinguished career on the staff of Queen's and Kingston General Hospital in 1949, retiring in 1983 as vice-principal of health sciences and professor of medicine. His colleagues described him as the most open, generous and warmest of people.

Life Member Philip "Pip" Nation died December 11 at 77. Once a cadet, later staff adjutant and administrative officer at Royal Military College, he joined the Canadian army in 1939 and served with the Royal Canadian Engineers. He became curator of both Fort Frederick and our Murney Tower Museums. His warm diplomacy, historic knowledge and service to our Society are deeply missed.

We also mourn the passing of family member A. Rosemary Bishop who died 13 October.

To the families and friends of these distinguished Canadians we extend our deepest sympathy and admiration.

OUR MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

On the first of August, 1925, the Daily British Whig noted the opening of Murney Tower as the museum of our Society. "No other Canadian city is fortunate enough to have been given a real fortification in which to keep its treasures." Seventy years later, our treasures are not in such good shape. In 1987, Prof. H.W.M. Hodges commented: "The housing conditions (of our collections) are precisely the antithesis of what they should be: they are dusty, at times subject to flooding and

impossible to control from an environmental point of view." In September 1994, Ken Rutherford and Doug Petty undertook to do something about it, sorting the important artifacts from the irrelevant, and packing them away into boxes and a dry location. Since reporting their efforts in our November newsletter, former curator Rona Rustige came to the rescue of our intrepid pair, located the records of the collection and clarified collections policy. We now know that all donors of artifacts signed a gift form which states: "I do hereby give and bequeath to the Murney Tower Museum the objects listed herein, and in so doing I understand that as their legal owner I hereby relinquish all rights in, and ownership of, such objects and convey all such rights and ownership to the Museum. Further, I understand and agree that the objects may be displayed, loaned, retained or disposed of in such manner as the museum may deem to be in its best interests." The Museum Committee

has recommended the deaccessioning of a number of unwanted artifacts and this was approved by the Executive and Council, subject to approval at a general meeting. Your approval will therefore be requested at our Annual Meeting.

Still unresolved, however, is what is to be done with those artifacts we wish to keep. Parks Canada no longer heats the Murney Tower in winter, which threatens the survival of many vulnerable objects; budget cuts are the excuse. Carting artifacts back and forth each season is also impractical and likely to cause damage to them and any members with bad backs. Where to store them in the winter months is another concern. How many of us have the space?

If one may be permitted an editorial comment: Given the fact that Kingston has a surfeit of military history, artifacts and interpretive facilities in Fort Henry, the Royal Military College, the upcoming Communications Museum, and the



Armory's PWOR Museum, is there an urgent need for more military interpretation in Murney Tower? Secondly, how can the old stones, cold, damp and circular shape of the Murney Tower be considered a serious location for the interpretation of the history of Kingston town? Is it, perhaps, time that we relinquished Murney Tower to Parks Canada, cannons, rifles, cartridges, bats and all, and sought a more suitable place in which, to paraphrase our museum's Statement of Purpose, "to collect, preserve, research, exhibit and interpret those artifacts which best serve to illustrate the social and cultural life of the town and harbour of Kingston and of the County of Frontenac."

We need a new and better museum now. Or must we dither away for another seventy years?

On a more personal note, my dear wife Florrie and I would like to extend our warmest new year wishes to all members of the Kingston Historical Society. In the brief five years we have lived in Kingston, everyone we have met has made us feel at home and part of the historical family.

Your kind words about **THEN**, our newsletter, are appreciated and, with your forbearance, I look forward to continuing as editor through another year.

Jim Warren