

Limelight

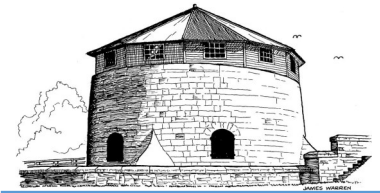
Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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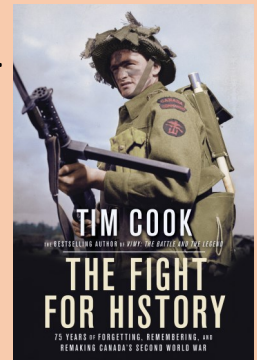
KHS Meeting Wednesday 20 January 2021 @ 7:00pm by Zoom

Dr. Tim Cook : “Forgetting, Remembering and Remaking Canada’s Second World War.”

In this lecture, best-selling author Tim Cook will talk about his book, *The Fight for History*, and will discuss the strange way that Canada chose to ignore for decades its epic contributions during the Second World War. Despite 1.1 million Canadians who served in uniform, and millions more who supported the total war effort from the home front, Canada rapidly left the war behind, publishing few histories, building fewer monuments, and advancing into the prosperous second half of the twentieth century, Dr. Cook will talk about the neglect of our Second World War history until quite recently, and highlight the key role of veterans in reclaiming this important legacy of service and sacrifice.



Dr. Cook is the acting director of historical research at the Canadian War Museum. He was the curator of the museum’s First World War permanent gallery and he has curated numerous temporary, travelling and digital exhibitions. He is the author or editor of 13 books and they have won the C.P. Stacey Prize for Military History (twice), the Ottawa Book Prize (three times), the RBC Taylor Prize for Literary Non-Fiction, and the L.W. Dafoe Book Prize (twice). In 2012, Dr. Cook was awarded the Queen’s Diamond



Jubilee Medal for his contributions to Canadian history and in 2013 the Governor-General’s History Prize. He is a frequent commentator in the media, a member of the Royal Society of Canada, and a Member of the Order of Canada.

Our first meeting of 2021, in fact our first since February 2020, will be online: ZOOM. You will be emailed “the link” a day or two before 20 January; you only need to click on that link (underlined address in the email) and a couple of friendly buttons on the screen. Before the meeting, two things will happen: 1) you will receive written instructions based on whether you are using a desktop, laptop, tablet or iPad, or SmartPhone or iPhone, and 2) a practice session (just us) about a week before the program. So wait for those two things, but please reserve Wednesday 20 January, 7 p.m. to see and hear Dr. Tim Cook. For those who do not have access to the internet, you can hear the program on any telephone but, at this point, it will be a long distance call for about an hour.

THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

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Please forward submissions to the Editor betty.andrews@gmail.com

Reprinting of articles from the Limelight must be accompanied by an acknowledgment of the Society, the issue and date. Photo credits and by-lines must be retained.

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The KHS gratefully acknowledges the support of its sponsors in producing Limelight.



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President's Message

by Vincent Durant

Last month I mentioned writing to Mayor Patterson to express our desire to be part of the ongoing City of Kingston deliberation on Macdonald's role in the cultural heritage strategy of the city. As you may recall, this was a follow-up to our October Council discussion regarding the statue of Sir John A Macdonald in City Park. I am happy to report that in a response from City Hall, Cultural Director Colin Wiginton mentioned a Working Group that will advise the City on the matter. More information on this, as well as how to apply for membership on the Working Group, may be found on the City's website.



As we move towards the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be of historical interest to look back to the so-called Spanish Flu of just over a century ago. A fine article by Ian McAlpine in the Whig Standard last March did just that. To briefly quote from the article, which also contained some stunning pictures of the day:

"According to research done in 2017 by Andrew Belyea, then a first-year Queen's University medical student, Kingston was the Ontario epicentre for the 1918 influenza epidemic with about 5,000 cases of the flu and 150 deaths in hospital from either the flu or pneumonia."

Elsewhere in this issue of Limelight you will see details about our upcoming venture into the digital world; plans are afoot to bring back our monthly speaker lectures. Many thanks to the cooperative work being carried out on this by members of your KHS Council.

In closing, I want to thank members of Council for their dedication, cooperation, and sense of *bonhomie* during this oft-times trying year. They have made my first year as President a most rewarding experience, and I look forward to challenges we'll face together during 2021.

Vincent

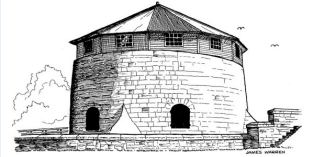
It is noted with regret, the death of Douglas R.G Smith, on December 1, 2020, a longtime member of the Kingston Historical Society.

It is noted with regret, the death of Richard Leslie White (Dick), on December 6, 2020, spouse of longtime member Carol White.

It is noted with regret, the death of Bill Fittell, on December 3, 2020, a longtime member of the Kingston Historical Society and president from 1994 to 1996.

Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society



Report by MTM Manager and Curator Symge Erdogan

As 2020 comes to a close, there are some very important developments happening at the Murney Tower Museum. We are very proud to announce that we have received the City of Kingston Heritage Fund Full Operating Grant for 2021. We were selected as recipients by a community jury which has granted us \$57,916.45 for our 2021 museum operations. Local museums and tourism are very important in keeping the spirit, the history and the heritage of Kingston alive. This funding plays a pivotal role in the Tower's continuity and success by allowing us to hire professional museum staff, expand our activities to 12 months a year, create new exhibits and programming, and rent climate control storage for our artifacts. A key goal this year is to care for Kingston's treasures, improving our conservation standards and engaging with our many artifacts to generate new content on a wide variety of topics that will appeal to a broader audience than ever before, making the Tower more relevant and involved in its community than ever before.



Over the fall, the Murney Tower staff were hard at work cleaning and packing the artifacts in the Tower, getting them ready to move to their new home. In mid-December, the move was made to a climate-controlled storage unit in the All About Storage facility where major collection and storage management work will proceed in the coming months.

We look forward to new ways we can serve and engage the community in 2021!

Photo featuring Mayor Paterson of Kingston from a past Heritage Fund Ceremony

We welcome, new members

Ken Watson

Elaine Davies

Ian Durant

Steve Durant



JAMES F. REID
CREMATION & RECEPTION CENTRE
1854

1900 John Counter Blvd. K7M 7H3
Tel: 613-544-3411 Fax: 613-544-3414
jamesreidfuneralhome.com
info@jamesreidfuneralhome.com

James Reid Furniture
250-256 Princess Street
Tel: 613-548-3022
princess@jamesreidfurniture.net

James Reid Furniture
1880 John Counter Blvd.
Tel: 613-544-4415
counter@jamesreidfurniture.net

PAN CHANCHO
the pig with a peel

44 Princess St 613-544-7790

68-R Princess St 613-549-7673



From the recent past of the Kingston Historical Society's Proceedings Taken from THEN newsletter – January 1993

January 1993 (4 pages) In 1970, our Society assumed responsibility for the annual memorial service for Sir |John A. Macdonald...and carried out the restoration of his gravesite in 1980.

Frontenac Heritage Foundation Completion of Digitization Project – Daily British Whig 1902-26

By Shirley Bailey

Each year the Frontenac Heritage Foundation undertakes a special project to highlight the heritage and history of the Kingston region. This year, the Foundation negotiated a contract to digitize 24 years of the *Daily British Whig*, from 1902 to 1926. This involved digitizing 89 reels of microfilm: this included 7,532 issues of the newspaper for a total of 89,413 pages of newsprint.

This project moved the historical microfilm records into the digital age, and will benefit students, researchers, and genealogists. Two sources of funding assisted with the project, as well as a donation from the Frontenac Heritage Foundation.

- The Davies Foundation donated to the project, and this is fitting as the Michael Davies family took over the publication of the *Kingston Whig Standard*, as it became in 1926.
- The Foundation also received a City of Kingston Heritage Fund Project Grant with the assistance of the Kingston Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites and the City of Kingston.

Local libraries hold microfilm of the newspapers, but anyone who has attempted to research on microfilm knows that it is tedious flipping the pages on microfilm, and it is a challenge to look for material without a good search function. Digitizing this daily newspaper now makes it easy to research on your own computer screen. The materials will be of particular interest to those who wish to research people and events relating to World War I, a time when there was a special insert in the *Daily British Whig* describing life in the Barriefield Camp. Anyone looking for material about relatives who were involved with the Great War will be interested in this information.

One of the Foundation's longstanding members and supporters, John Grenville, examined some of the early digitized material, and he reported success with researching Ernest Beckwith, an architect who was City Engineer/Architect from 1906-08, followed by nearly a decade in Kingston as an architect from 1908 to 1917.

Beckwith designed many brick houses and other structures such as the Orpheum Theatre (now James Reid's at Sydenham Street on Princess), and the Orange Hall (south side of Princess, between Barrie and Division which is no longer standing). As a result of the searchable newspapers, Grenville found a description of the Orpheum Theatre's opening in October 1909. The article offers many insights into the interior of the new vaudeville theatre, and described its dimensions, the fact that it was constructed as a fireproof building having a seating capacity of 700 people and a large reception hall on the second floor, and so on. While many of the 'Beckwith' hits in the digital information are advertisements, there are other references to houses that Beckwith designed on Victoria, Albert, Aberdeen, Stuart, Couper Streets etc., and on Kensington Avenue.

The Daily British Whig materials can be accessed online at this time at the following link:

<http://vitacollections.ca/digital-kingston/search>

In the future, the materials will also reside on the Our Digital Kingston area of the website for the Kingston Frontenac Public Library.

While the Foundation had hoped to hold a public information session so people could learn more about using the *Daily British Whig* materials, researchers are instead directed to look at an informative guide produced by the Waterloo Public Library which explains how to access a digital newspaper collection:

For more information, please contact Shirley Bailey, President, at 343-363-1901, Penny Sharman, Executive Director at 613-766-2599 or at contact@frontenacheritage.ca

Lieutenant Colonel Sydenham Clitherow McGill

by Warren Everett

One of the rewards of collecting is finding that unique and interesting item when you least expect it. This was just the case when I came across the item pictured. What initially caught my eye was the signature in the lower left corner, J. P. Gildersleeve, Notary Public, Kingston, a name with which we are all familiar. This Letter of Attorney describes how officers of the Army and Navy conveyed their salaries to an agent. As an aside, 1871 was when all Imperial Forces, except those at Halifax and Esquimalt, left Canada. In 1871, McGill was recently of the Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment (RCR), the unit having been disbanded on the departure of the Imperial Forces.

The pay assignment reads much like a last will and testament: granting Vesey Weston Holt Esquire full power and authority to manage all sums of money and allowances owing to McGill. Holt & Co was established in 1809 offering banking services to officers and their families. The firm continued through WWI and dealt with pay for more than 50,000 officers and their families in that war. In 1939 the firm was acquired by the Royal Bank of Scotland; although, it continued to operate under its own name until 1992.

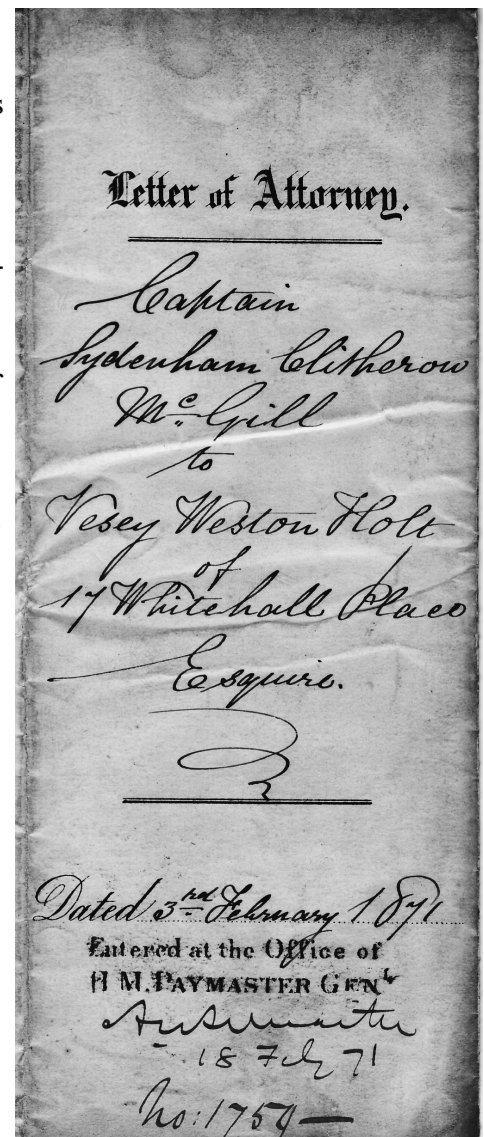
McGill was born on April 27th, 1841 to a prominent Montreal family. His father Peter McGill was a wealthy Montreal businessman who numbered amongst his circle John Molson and John Redpath. Peter McGill was born Peter McCutcheon. In 1821, he changed his name when he became the heir of his uncle John McGill. Peter McGill held a seat in the Legislative Council of Lower Canada from 1832 to 1837, the Special Council of Lower Canada from 1838 to 1841, and the Legislative Council of the United Provinces from 1841 to 1860. Peter McGill served as president of the Bank of Montreal from 1834 to 1860.

Sydenham Clitherow McGill was baptized at the Cathedral in Montreal on May 25th, 1841. His godparents were Lord Sydenham, Governor General of British North America, and Major General John Clitherow, commander of British Forces in Canada. He did not lack pedigree!

McGill, late of the 73rd Regiment of Foot, purchased his commission as Lieutenant in the RCR in 1864. During his service in the RCR he served in the Fenian Raid of 1866 and the Red River expedition in 1870. After the disbandment of the RCR he purchased commissions in the Imperial Army in the 20th and 22nd Regiments of Foot. Purchase of commissions ended with Cardwell Reforms in 1881. In 1876 McGill returned to Canada and served with the 4th Provisional Cavalry in Kingston. In 1883 he joined the Staff of the Royal Military College, Kingston, serving until his retirement in 1900 as Lieutenant Colonel.

Ensign Dowdall, featured in the December 2020 Limelight, and McGill served together in Kingston as young officers in RCRR.

The chance discovery of this document brought to light an alternate banking system for the military and through this a story of eminent Canadians and Kingstonians.



Know all Men by these Presents that I
Sydenham (Litherow) McGill a Captain of the
late Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment
have made, ordained, constituted, and appointed, and do hereby make, ordain, constitute and appoint
Very Weston Holt of No. 17 Whitehall Place in

The City of Westminster Esquire my true and
lawful Agent or Attorney for me, and in my name, and for my use, to ask and demand, and
receive of and from the Right Honourable the Paymaster General of Her Majesty's Land Forces
for the time being or of and from whomsoever else the payment thereof doth or may concern
All such sum or sums of Money as now are, or may hereafter become due and payable
unto me for any Appointment or Service, including all Prize Money of whatever
description.

Also, any allowance I may be entitled to receive from Her Majesty's Treasury
Exchequer, Ordnance, or other Public Department and all Claims and Demands whatsoever
and upon receipt thereof or any part thereof, to make and give such acquittances and
discharges as may be necessary.

full power and authority, in and about the premises as fully and effectually, to all
intents and purposes to do and act as I might or could do if these Presents had not been
made.

HEREBY ratifying, confirming, and allowing all and whatsoever
my said Agent or Attorney shall lawfully do, or cause to be done therein, firmly by
these Presents.

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal, the
day of February in the year of our Lord,
One thousand eight hundred, and Seventy one

Signed, sealed, and delivered
of the City of Kingston in the County of Frontenac and
Province of Ontario in the Dominion of Canada
in the presence of

Witness

J. R. Hildeesleeve
Notary Public
Kingston,
Ontario
Canada

Sydenham (Litherow) McGill
Capt Royal Canadian Rifles



(The date to be inserted in words at length)

Kingston & District Branch, United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada

The next Zoom meeting of Kingston and District Branch, United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada will be **Saturday, January 23, 2021** at 2:00 pm. (Register at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAftuugrjMqG9y0g5u0mwDUXJBY9Mr725G1> – you will receive a Confirmation email.) Topic: **St. Alban the Martyr UEL Memorial Church in Adolphustown: its history and its future.** The church was built in 1884, near the site where United Empire Loyalists landed in 1784. **Diane Berlet**, church historian, and **Axel Thesberg**, Chair of the Friends of St. Alban's, will discuss the group's plans for its preservation and re-imagined role in the community, now that it has been deconsecrated (2018).

“IT’S COMPLICATED...” A Reflection by Eva Barnes

Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada’s first Prime Minister and a Father of Confederation, was born in the slums of Glasgow on January 11th, 1815. He emigrated to Upper Canada with his parents as a five-year-old lad, embraced within the family’s hope for a better life.

The local winter custom of celebrating the birthday of one of Kingston’s most famous historical citizens took a sharp pivotal turn in January of 2016. Unexpected civic vandalism, together with an assertive public protest demonstration, led to the dismantling of a small ceremonial gathering presented annually around John A.’s statue in City Park. The issue was Indigenous rights, with this specific occasion being chosen by demonstrators to serve as a visible platform to gain media attention, and to raise collective national awareness for the cause. Public enlightenment and reforms were the goals.

Much has changed in Kingston since then. Historical summer tours with theatrical Sir John A. themes are no longer offered to visitors in the downtown heritage precinct. A long-established and formally-celebrated annual January banquet in Macdonald’s memory has evolved into a generic Canadian heritage dinner in February. The traditional birthday ceremony with its toast by the statue is gone. And there is discussion now around the complete removal of John A.’s monument from its familiar park location since 1895. Many conscientious initiatives and “course adjustments” have been taken by various organizations and individuals to integrate First Peoples’ heritage elements into the fabric of the contemporary civic life.

I was present at that fateful ‘statue ceremony’ back in 2016, listening to the drums that over-shadowed the singing of *O Canada*, while standing just metres from Sir John A.’s hanging effigy as flames crackled beyond my left shoulder. My first instinct was to get away immediately, to seek safety. I was unable to escape, trapped within the crowd, and impaired by a cumbersome Victorian-era Scottish costume, created to provide ‘historical local colour’ for the occasion. My volunteer participation was as a representative from a recreational historical enhancement group, the Heritage Ambassadors of Kingston, no longer in existence.

That momentous day five years ago will NOT be forgotten any time soon. Upon returning home, I felt compelled to engage in some serious introspection about the events that had transpired. What would be the implications of this most unsettling happenstance, personally and civically?

The underlying irony in this confrontation was that I am an Indigenous person myself, but from a place far away. My ancestors have lived on the shores of the Baltic Sea in northern Europe for 7,000 years. Horrific human events are part of this history too, including the systematic genocide of the Estonian people in modern times. My grandfather lies in an unmarked grave in Novosibirsk, Siberia, deprived of his ancestral farming estate and deported into a forced labour camp by Stalin’s Communist regime of terror. My parents were lost and abandoned teenaged refugees in Sweden during World War II. They came to a country like Canada in the 1950s to try to leave the trauma behind and to begin life anew, very far from home, and without any resources, recognition or support.

I grew up immersed in the two distinct cultures around me, as I knew them: Estonian and Canadian. There was, and is, a respectful reverence and gratitude for both.

And so I was confused by the sudden shift in thinking that was demanded of me by the adversarial protestors around the statue that day. Later I felt the need to pen a spontaneous poem about the events that had just unfolded, written in the style of a 19thC Upper Canadian narrative. I was surprised that the authentically private tone of the words was far from “politically correct” or empathetic. Defensive anger made its presence known through the rhythms and descriptive phrases. The prevailing theme that surfaced was: *I am also Indigenous. Every life has a story. Would any of the protestors today be aware of the suffering and injustice in my personal past? Would they care about the things that had brought me to stand in the cold in front of this statue with a completely different mind-set?* I had felt invisible, wrongly judged, harshly confronted, and personally threatened that afternoon.

Many questions arose upon further reflection. Why and how should I best become engaged in the political and social agendas of Canada’s Indigenous population? What would encourage me to do so, going forward with understanding, compassion and action?

I read recently in the *Kingston Whig Standard* that Armand Garnet Ruffo, a talented writer of Ojibway descent, and a respected teacher at Queen’s University, has been recognized through a prestigious national prize for his prolific Indigenous poetry. He is planning to develop academic courses around ancestral cultures at Queen’s. There is much interest. This is good news.

I also read that Sir John A. Macdonald's name has been removed from the law school at Queen's because of continuing political and social pressure. Rightly or not, John A. alone seems to be an arbitrary historical fall-guy for all that was misguided, unsophisticated and wrong during the 1800s, in what was then a struggling, backward and impoverished third world settlement known as Canada. This fledgling nation was a fragile entity barely protecting itself from absorption into the aggressive expansion plans of the United States. Lately, even the Macdonald name has become a controversial target, something to be shunned 'radioactively' by all, two centuries later. Somehow, this *doesn't* feel like good news.

Recently I have learned that Sir John A. Macdonald was the ardent 24-year-old young man who took a bold personal step in seconding the idealistically ambitious motion at a congregational meeting at St. Andrew's Church Kingston to create a university in 1839. "I was extremely anxious that my native city should have the honour of being a University City," he said in 1889.

No Macdonald, no university? An interesting conjecture. What would be the implications then for the teaching of contemporary Indigenous People's courses, and for the very existence of the law school at Queen's University, which has just expunged his name?

In the meantime, my historical Victorian plaid ensemble, once researched and sewn with great care, and worn with pleasure at Kingston's colourful heritage celebrations in the past, remains in storage collecting dust indefinitely. Suddenly it is perceived as a disrespectful embarrassing symbol of past colonial wrongs, neither welcomed nor wanted.

All of these small "snapshots in time" are connected to the extraordinary individual who, for good or ill, was our first Prime Minister long ago. An over-arching, multi-layered narrative continues to develop... including the ongoing discussions about the current historical significance of Macdonald's statue in Kingston's City Park. This is a very human story.

The final stanza of the 'statue poem' written five years ago poses a question:

***"Above it all Macdonald loomed, his likeness in the park,
Not moved by birthday greetings, nor damage in the dark.
This custom has been stricken since, no people gather there.
Where are their stories spoken now? Does any person care?"***

It's complicated...



ARTICLE RESOURCES:

Newman, Lena, [The John A. Macdonald Album](#), Tundra Books, 1974, Montreal p. 29.

Hendra, Peter, "Kingston Writer to Receive National Poetry Prize", *The Kingston Whig-Standard*, December 2, 2020 p. A2

Eva Barnes wears the historical ceremonial attire of her Indigenous Estonian ancestors during a pause at the grave-side of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, at the Cataraqui Cemetery National Historic Site December 2020.

