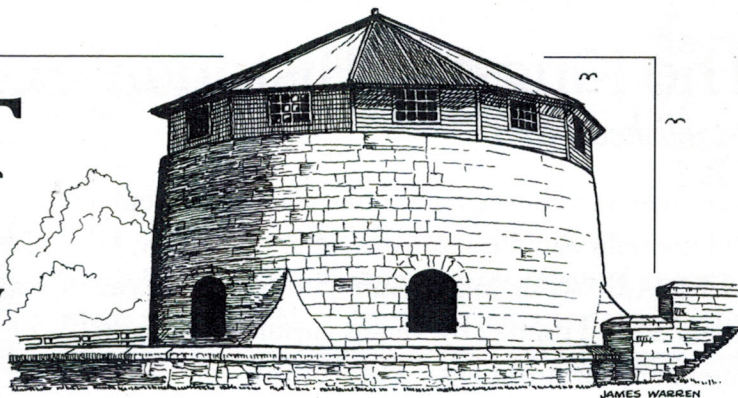


LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the
Kingston Historical Society

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It often happens that our Society is approached by some individual or agency looking for the support of the Society in some project that has to do with history, heritage, local or more wide-spread, and there are times when we lend our support to the cause - other times we choose not to.

The causes may well have considerable merit on their own, and the individual presenting the case may be highly qualified, and may also be very persuasive, but the Society must always decide whether the particular cause is a good fit with our mandate. If it is, it may be worthy of support; if not, KHS support would likely not be forthcoming.

The mandate of the Society has a great deal to do with individuals and organizations that have made a contribution to the rich history of this city and area. Individuals from the earliest aboriginals to Kingstonians of more recent activity and organizations from such diverse sources as the military, politics, the arts, academia, business and industry satisfy the programming requirements of KHS gatherings.

This mandate plays itself out in lectures, publications, and our upcoming 2012 conference. There are countless individuals and organizations worthy of study and exposition, and there is a consistently robust interest among members in such subjects. As a rule, we don't usually involve ourselves in heritage architecture preservation or archaeological projects, to name two such causes, since there are very capable

local organizations dedicated to these interests. We also play no role in zoning bylaws or other municipal issues, since it is felt that these matters are best left to the appropriate authorities.

I hope this helps to clarify the position of the Society.

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The Kingston Historical Society

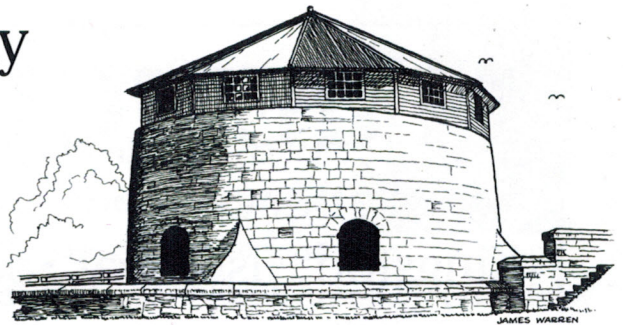
established 1893

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KHS holds monthly talks or events, usually at 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of the month, September to May, usually in the Wilson Room of the Kingston Public Library on Johnson Street at Bagot Street. Special annual events include a dinner and talk honouring the birthday of Sir John A. Macdonald in January and a ceremony marking his death in June.

New members are welcome! Membership rates are \$40 individual, \$50 family, \$50 institutional or \$25 student. Memberships include *Historic Kingston*, published annually by The Kingston Historical Society.



Murney Tower by James Warren

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The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Government of Ontario

Announcements of Historical Interest

17th Annual Kingston Regional Heritage Fair Thursday May 12, starting at 6:00 pm, will usher in the 17th Kingston Regional Heritage Fair held at the Faculty of Education, MacArthur Hall of Queen's University. The Heritage Fair features over 300 student Canadian history projects on display. The Fair also continues on Friday, May 13 until noon.

Support the learning of Canadian History by coming to the Fair and listening to the students tell their stories about what they have learned. Better still help us continue this important venture in promoting Canadian history by acting as a volunteer or as a judge or make a donation. Contact us by going to our website <http://krhf.limestone.on.ca/keindex.php> or phone John Fielding at 613-544-0086.

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The KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY invites you on Monday, 6 June 2011, to remember Sir John A. Macdonald with an event that combines commemoration, pageantry, history and conviviality in a special outdoor setting.

Join us on Monday, 6 June at 1:30 p.m. at Kingston's Cataraqui Cemetery to remember Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John Alexander Macdonald who died on this day in 1891.

This annual commemorative ceremony features members of the Fort Henry Guard, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Bellevue House Staff in period dress, as well as many dignitaries and representatives of local organizations who will lay wreathes at the grave.

The guest speaker for this, the 120th graveside ceremony commemorating the death of Sir John A. Macdonald will be Dr. Yves Pelletier, Assistant Deputy Minister Post-Secondary Education of New Brunswick. Dr. Pelletier's topic is *"Bellevue House not Earnscliffe: How this Decision Symbolizes the End of Sir John A. Macdonald as a Symbol of Canada"*.

Before and after the ceremony, all visitors are welcome to tour the historic and picturesque Cataraqui Cemetery (972 Purdy Mills Road off Counter Street). Refreshments will be served in the outdoor chapel following the ceremony. We look forward to seeing you, your family, and your organization or group.

In case of severe weather conditions, the event will take place in Christ Church Parish Centre, 990 Sydenham Road.

THE HERB ARMSTRONG FARM, WOLFE ISLAND, ONTARIO



cloud of dust past, sometimes stopping at the halfway house just beyond the farm on the left. It was run by Ed Smith and his wife Eliza Horn who was John O'Shea's mother's grandmother. The stage-coach changed horses there and passengers could buy whisky at the house. John O'Shea remembered when the first car, a model T Ford, came to the island and noted that electricity didn't arrive

In 2002, when I was working towards my Frontenac Islands Exhibition, I came across this farm just up a hill from a wooden bridge at the narrow western end of Button Bay. It intrigued me with the house on the left and the barns on the right. No one ever seemed to be at home when I came by so I decided to go ahead and do a drawing of it without permission. All I knew about it was that it was the Herb Armstrong Farm.

The drawing was sold to a Maureen Day, but I never got to talk to her.

Later, I learned some facts from John O'Shea and from a Whig article on Herb Armstrong by Brian Johnson.

The family saga story starts in 1893 when the farm was bought from H. Muckian, after Herb Armstrong's parents, John and Julia, were married. Herb was born on the farm in 1903, he married Mary Downing in 1943, and they had two daughters, Anna and Shirley.

He could remember the first road on the island that had been cut through the bush. It ran right through the farm and the Cape Vincent stage-coach would roar over the bridge in a

until 1944.

Herb was known to be a hard worker and he was still climbing up his apple trees picking apples when he was over 90. For years, he grew strawberries which he sold at the Kingston Market, ran a dairy farm, and later raised beef cattle. He was also an avid hunter trapper and fisherman.

Herb's wife, Mary, died in 1999 and, two years later, he left his farm to spend his last years at Kingston's Trillium Ridge Retirement Centre.

Herb turned 100 on 6 April 2003 and there were birthday wishes from nearly everyone on Wolfe Island, as well as greetings from the Queen, Prime Minister Chretien and Ontario Premier Ernie Eves. It was his most special birthday but also his last as he passed away on 15 January 2004.

When I crossed the wooden bridge at the end of Button Bay in 2005 I was sad to see that while the barns had disappeared, the old farm lot had been severed and the house still stood there.

Text & Painting by Shirley Gibson-Langille

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THE OLD ROAD by Stewart Renfrew

In my last effort I spoke about the 'Old Road' in Collins Bay and then went on to locate things along Hillview Road. A bit confusing but then 'The Old Road', 'Hillview Road', and 'Bath Road' were all at one time or another all one and the same thing. In fact the story of the 'Old Road' is one that illustrates something of how road building in this area progressed over the years.

If one approaches Collins Bay from Kingston along the, now, Bath Road you will find two Marinas just after Riley's Garden Center. Then there is a stretch of the road that runs across the bottom of the bay itself. When passing the first marina, if you look to the right over the train tracks you can see a high rock cut. When this road was first built this cut did not exist, and the rail lines did not arrive until 1856, so there was no easy way for the road builders to get by the rock except by skirting the rock right at the edge of the water. Then just before the second marina the road turned abruptly inland because it would be too difficult at that time to build a causeway across the end of the bay there.

The road would then have been known as the Bath Road. Turning inland, it travelled along the northeastern side of Collins Bay following the route of what is now called Hillview Road. This would take it along lot three of the second concession of Kingston Township. About where lots three and two meet, though, the road would have diverted from its present path and turned even further inland. This would have been at about what is now called Mona Drive.

The bay ended not too far from this turnoff where it was fed by Grass's Creek. This is not, of course, the Grass Creek near the McLaughlan Museum on the road to Gananoque but Grass's Creek because it flowed through the land owned by Mr. John Grass, Michael Grass's son. The road, then, would have crossed the end of the bay with a ford over some flat smooth bed rock at that point. It then turned back to the present Hillview road along what is now called Center Street. When I was a kid there were large boulders along the downstream side of the crossing. We kids called them stepping-stones but I suspect they were placed there as a safety precaution to prevent wagons or animals being swept away by the spring floodwaters. The road would then have joined the present Bath road just beyond the train tracks.

At some time, the road was moved a little further out into the bay with a short causeway and a small bridge thus making it somewhat shorter and safer. I am not too certain just when this happened, there are references to work of this kind being done in the "Complete Index to Kingston Newspapers" in the Kingston Public Library. This is a wonderful reference source but in this case it does not make it sufficiently clear just what work is done and when for us to understand just when this happened. Another good reference source is "History as we wait" the James Reid advertising supplement in the Kingston Whig-Standard. It tells the story of how the then Bath Road became the 'Old Road'. The November 9, 2010 edition of the "Whig" ran the following story. Thursday, Nov. 9, 1922. "A death trap which has existed at Collins Bay seven miles west of Kingston is at last to be removed." The article goes on to explain that the two railway crossings that the old 'Bath Road' was forced to cross were to be removed and the road straightened across the end of the bay between the two crossings using a causeway. The effort was to be financed by the Dominion, the Province and the Grand Trunk Railway.

The road was further straightened by the removal of the rock out-crop between the two marinas. The rock was used to make the causeway. The result was a better, safer, shorter Bath Road. The locals, unofficially, dubbed the part left between the two rail crossings 'The Old Road' until some historically deprived bureaucrat saw fit to call it 'Hillview Road' after the subdivision that grew up at the east end of the road. We kids called the little bit of road that was eliminated around the out-crop when the 'Bath Road' was straightened "Lover's Lane" ---- for good reason.

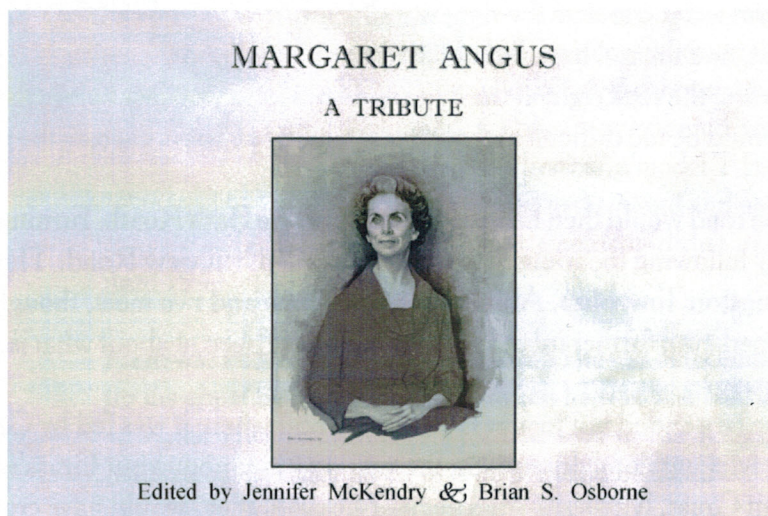
The Frontenac Heritage Foundation announces the publication of "MARGARET ANGUS A Tribute" edited by Jennifer McKendry & Brian S. Osborne.

The Directors of the FHF take great pride in publishing this book of tributes to Dr Margaret Angus (1908-2008), one of the founders of the Foundation, loyal supporter of the Kingston Historical Society, author of *The Old Stones of Kingston* and numerous articles in *Limelight*, and a pre-eminent heritage advocate in the Kingston area. It is appropriate for current and future generations of heritage enthusiasts to know of the enormous contribution she made to the recording and understanding of Kingston's lengthy history and its architectural legacy. The publication of these fifteen essays assists in this regard.

Reasonably priced at \$15, it is also available by mail (\$4 postage, address given at www.heritagekingston.com), in Novel Idea bookstore, and at FHF meetings. Plan to buy your copy at the KHS Wednesday, 18 May meeting in the library.

Perfect bound cover in colour, 72 pages,
6 x 9 inches, 41 illustrations.

Authors include Andrew Hill, President, Frontenac Heritage Foundation; Brian S. Osborne, Professor Emeritus, Queen's University; Michelle Jean, Governor General of Canada; The Hon. Peter Milliken MP; The Hon. John Gerretsen MPP; Harvey Rosen, Mayor; J.A. Euringer, Professor Emeritus, Queen's University; Janet M. Brooke, Director, Agnes Etherington Arts Centre; Edward Grenda, President, Kingston Historical Society; George Muirhead, Frontenac Heritage Foundation; James A. Low, Museum of Health Care, Kingston General Hospital; Bruce Downey, Architect; Carol White, Teacher; Elspeth Morgan, Granddaughter; Jennifer McKendry, Architectural Historian



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THIS MONTH'S MEETING

Wednesday, 18 May 7:30 PM

The Many Lives of James Douglas

(of Douglas Library fame)

Herb Helmstaedt

Wilson Room, Kingston Frontenac Public Library
Johnson St. at Bagot

Refreshments

All Welcome

RETIREMENT – DOUBLE THE PLEASURE!

by *The Scribbler*
Bill Fitsell



Retirement gatherings are rites of passage that most people of a certain age endure and enjoy. The spring social season in Kingston was brightened by two such send-offs for a special pair of citizens who have been great friends and workers for the city's heritage community.



John H. Grenville was saluted and extended best wishes at Renaissance Event Venue on March 28. Nine days later at the Senior Staff Mess of Royal Military College his partner Susan M. Bazely was given equally good wishes by friends and colleagues, including many Kingston Historical Society members.

John, like his late parents, has been a particularly valuable contributor to KHS and worthy historical projects in Kingston and area. His zest for history started at age 18 as a "Huge" member of the guard at Fort Henry, where he became Curator and Historical Research Officer. After six years' service developing public programs for Parks Canada at the Halifax Citadel, he returned to Kingston and presented well-researched papers to our Society. I first got to know him as a fellow member of the RCHA Brigade Association historical committee.

In the past quarter century as Area Superintendent at Bellevue House National Historic Site he has been in the forefront of every Sir John A. Macdonald gravesite service and celebration. And he has given special service as Chair of the Society's plaque committee, which climaxed with the publication of *An Illustrated Guide to Monuments, Memorial & Markers in the Kingston Area* in 2000.

John was praised for his integrity, loyalty, generosity, fun-loving nature and his care and concern for things past. The only comment coming closest to a "roast style quip" was a retort about kilt-wearing and John's penchant for mixing tartans.

Accolades poured forth for Sue and her exemplary service as the moving force behind the Cataraqui Archeology Research Foundation and bringing the profession to the whole community. Fresh out of University of Toronto in 1983, she went on welfare in Kingston to qualify for an archeology dig at Fort Frontenac and from Day One took the foundation upward and onward.

Her energy, optimistic spirit and dedicated leadership as executive director led the foundation through many moves and homes and made invaluable discoveries that put Kingston in the forefront of the archeology world. And she has brightened several KHS meetings with illustrated presentations—from Molly Brant to "History Beneath Our Feet."



Both in the prime of life and dedicated explorers, these young retirees—who tied the marital knot just six years ago—indicate they are not abdicating their heritage initiatives. In addition to being deeply involved in the Williamsville Community Main Street Study, Sue is continuing her activities as a licensed archaeologist but on a freelance basis. And John continues to contribute his expertise to Parks Canada. In June they are off to the Orkneys and England and still keen on devoting their time and talents to this historic city. Happy retirements both and keep on digging!



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Speakers' Corner

with Alicia Boutilier
and photos by Peter Ginn



At the Society Meeting of 20 April, architectural historian Jennifer McKendry gave an illustrated talk on "Unravelling the Histories of the Sir John Johnson House and the Parish House." The Johnson House, one of Kingston's earliest known structures, was built in 1788 west of Bagot Street and south of Princess Street. Built of logs, it was dismantled and the materials reused elsewhere in 1827 when Brock Street was extended through Selma Park. The Parish House, also known as the Bishop's House (a title McKendry does not favour), was built in 1822 (previously thought to be c1812) as a two-storey stone building in a neoclassical style under the patronage of the Reverend William Fraser and Bishop Alexander Macdonell. Originally a presbytery for priests, in 1846, it became a nunnery for the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame who taught Catholic school girls. In 1877, the Sisters had the original hipped roof removed and added

a storey plus a mansard roof. The convent, which had grown along Johnson Street, was demolished in 1972 but the Parish House's stone walls were saved and incorporated into a new public library. McKendry made the case for attributing the Parish House to architect Archibald Fraser who was the supervising architect of the Stone Frigate and likely the designer of the Fort Henry Garrison Hospital. The talk was well-received by an enthusiastic packed crowd, at the end of which respected art historian (and Kingston Historical Society Council member) Dorothy Farr presented the speaker with the Society's Murney Tower pin.



At the next and last Society Meeting of the season, Herb Helmstaedt will regale the membership on *The Many Lives of James Douglas* (of Douglas Library Fame). The talk will be held on Wednesday, 18 May, 7:30 pm, in the Wilson Room at the Kingston Frontenac Public Library, 130 Johnson Street.

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