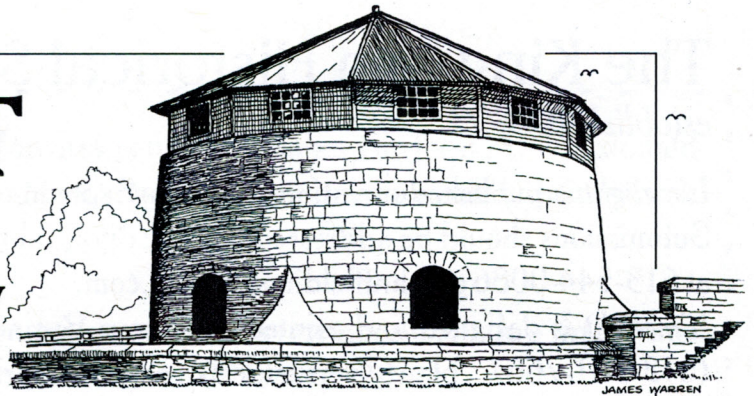


LIMELIGHT

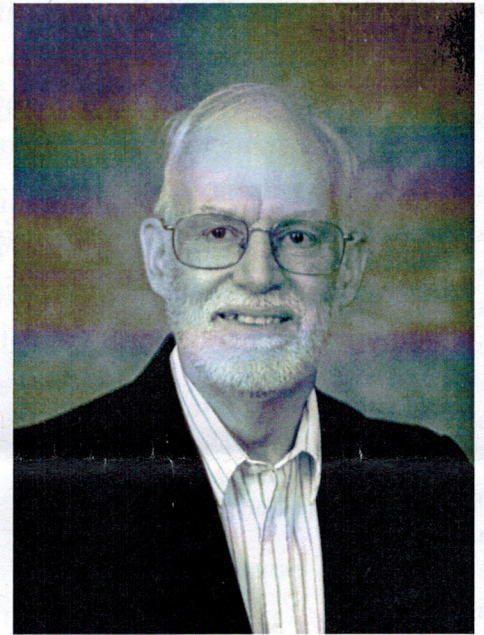
Newsletter of the
Kingston Historical Society

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The concept of a Living Museum has always intrigued me. It is in contrast to the sterile room of display cases that you look at but cannot touch. Perhaps setting the alarms off by getting my nose too close to the display case is part of the reason! I far prefer a living museum where you can get your hands dirty – at least figuratively. Louisburg and Williamsburg are two obvious examples, but there are others closer to here. One of my great moments as a grade 8 teacher was taking a class into Fort Henry and having them paraded by the Guard. They could not ignore what the sergeant shouted at them and began to realise what it was to have been a soldier. And when they didn't perform properly, he shouted louder. It was unfortunate that I was not able to use that technique in the classroom. Even today, a visit to the Fort in the winter, and a walk across the Parade Square with the wind howling and the snow hurting your face, makes me realise what the raw recruit, newly arrived from England, having hoped that he might have been sent to a warm colony, thought of this remote posting.



Remember this summer as you wonder where to take your visitors that the Fort and the Murney Tower are there both to welcome you to step back in time, and to help you feel more what it was like to live in considerably more prime conditions than we are privileged to live in today. And do you have favourite places you have visited that recreate the past that is so much part of our heritage? I'd be pleased to hear from you about them. Enjoy your summer historical experiences!

Peta Goner

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The Kingston Historical Society

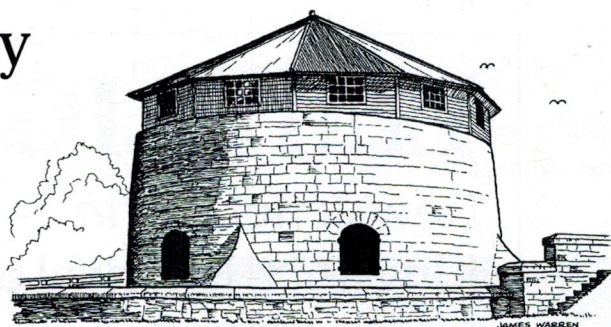
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KHS holds monthly talks or events, usually at 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of the month, September to May, usually in the Wilson Room of the Kingston Public Library on Johnson Street at Bagot Street. Special annual events include a dinner and talk 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 \$50 individual, \$60 family, \$60 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

Wednesday, 15 May 2013 7:30 PM

**THIS
MONTH'S
MEETING**

***Murney Tower and its role in the defence of Kingston:
The development of defences on Murney Point
and the evolution of the tower from fortification to national historic site***

Bob Garcia

**Wilson Room of the Kingston Frontenac Public Library
Johnson Street, at Bagot Street**

Refreshments

All Welcome

Tributes to MARJORIE SIMMONS

Photo by Jennifer McKendry



I first met Marjorie in 1987 at my Waterfront Art Exhibition. We arranged to meet at the Cataraqui Cemetery for a picnic. This started a beautiful friendship. We both loved history. We along with Gord Smithson held "A Tribute to Cataraqui Village" exhibition at Kingston Monuments Ltd. Gord did the history, Marjorie displayed her collections of village photographs and I displayed the paintings. We raised enough money to buy 5 granite park benches for the cemetery. I always listened to her advice. I wasn't too sure though when she thought I should do a show of the walls of Kingston and took me out in a big snowstorm to show me walls. "If Walls Could Talk" turned out to be one of my most successful shows! Marjorie displayed two albums of her wall photographs at the show. I will always treasure our wonderful times together along with my visits to her Regent Street home and later at Rideaucrest. She was a real Lady! I am sure going to miss her. -Tribute by Shirley Gibson-Langille

"For several of us, our association with Marjorie was in "her" places. For so many years, the first place was her parlour in her home where we sat discussing matters of historic import, interrupted by cups of teas and examination of documents or photographs on which she wanted an opinion. In later years, the ambience of that experience was transferred to her room in the retirement home that was personalised by her paintings on the walls and ever-present books on shelves and tables. The second place for so many of us was Cataraqui Cemetery. A walk with her around the grounds there transformed it into an archive of names and stories. And every 6 June, never was the "garden-cemetery" designation more apt than when Marjorie and her group of friends, ignored the arrayed seats, appropriated a section on the hillside with their chairs and umbrellas, and ensured that they became part of so many of our memories of that day." -Tribute by Brian S. Osborne

Whenever a good friend or colleague departs this world, and a life is celebrated, it is rewarding to have the public persona one knows enriched by the private and personal memories of family members.

Such was the case on April 8th when final tributes were paid to Marjorie Jean Simmons at James Reid Funeral Home. Many of the mourners were well aware of her public contribution to the Kingston heritage community spread over most of her 93 years.

She was a genuine genealogist and a devoted historian and her dedicated service brought both these organizations closer together in gathering and recording the region's rich past.

"A love for family history was growing in me long before I knew," she wrote in a "Finding My Roots," a brochure distributed at the funeral service. Marjorie personally traced the Compton family back to its native England, and her hobby propelled her to the highest office—President of the Ontario Genealogy Society and was a founding member of the Kingston branch. As her detailed death notice stated: "She continually encouraged others to find their own roots and was always willing to help others."

A long-time member of the Kingston Historical Society, she was content to serve in key executive positions and take leading roles in special projects:

- A member of the Arts 100 committee and keen contributor of paintings to the exhibition that celebrated the KHS centenary in 1993;
- Co-author of the 2004 book *Williamsville Revisited*, which took her back to her Compton Family roots and the hamlet located on Kingston's west end;
- Co-author of *The City of Kingston (Mayor's) Portrait Collection*.

She was honoured in 2000 with the KHS Award "in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history."

The skills gained and polished as a medical secretary and real estate manager shone forth in her community service, including The Cataraqui Cemetery Company. In all her civic endeavours, she was precisely focused, resolved and resourceful and devoted to excellence. Her lawyer son, James Compton Simmons of Sudbury, succinctly summed up her talents in two phrases: "an engine of enthusiasm" and "a library of knowledge She was a wonderful Mom...and enjoyed a rich and wonderful life and made many friends....Her curiosity remained unabated." Grandson, Jim Simmons described his grandmother as a woman of letters who loved words and the written word and hated to be unprepared. "She loved books and had dictionaries all over the house." Great grandson Nicholas expressed appreciation for inspiring in him a love and passion for Kingston. "She had a positive outlook that could not be destroyed," he emphasized. "She wanted you to be a thinking individual." Her incredible, admirable life, he added, could be summed up in one word: "Marvellous!"

Even in death, she left a credo for young and for old: "Absorb the good, the kind, the useful and store it—and let the rest go."

Marjorie Simmons rests after a lifetime of good and faithful service. -Tribute by The Scribbler—J.W. (Bill) Fittell

Olden Green Ltd. 78 Princess St. Kingston, Ontario 1978-2013

by Shirley Gibson-Langille



I remember Olden Green when it sold only antiques and plants. In 1981 I had just started to work on my "Memory Lane" series of paintings when I came upon Olden Green with all its antiques. I got very excited and quickly asked permission to come back and paint there. I spent three wonderful weeks there getting to know Glenda Meyer the owner and Heather Burnett who worked there.

Years went by and the store changed into a very successful classy gift shop. It sold quality jewellery, clothing, accessories, hats and scarves, bath products, cards, children's plush toys and many other items.

Through the years Glenda generously donated prizes that helped me make money for different causes at my art shows.

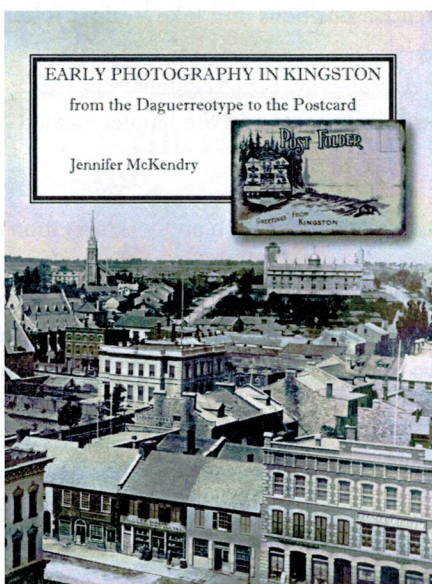
Glenda decided to close the business. She thought 35 years was enough.

It is now March 28th, 2013 and the last day of business at Olden Green.

Again I am sitting in the almost empty store with Glenda and Heather writing this story to go along with my paintings of the store in hopes that Olden Green will never be forgotten.



EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY IN KINGSTON FROM THE DAGUERRETYPE TO THE POSTCARD



Jennifer McKendry will have copies of her new, fully illustrated, book for sale at our May meeting. It features fascinating images of the city's people and places from the mid 19th century into the 20th century, including early postcards. About 100 photographers are described from J.J. Abbott to D.A. Weese. Entries on Barrow, Henderson, Powell, Sheldon & Davis and others. Technical aspects are illustrated and discussed. This is the first time Kingston postcards have been included as a topic in a book. It will be available at a special, one-time offer of \$20 (regular price \$24 plus tax) at the May meeting. Thereafter, it will be for sale at Novel Idea.

Jennifer McKendry, recipient of a KHS award in 2002, photographer and architectural historian, is the author of many books including *Kingston & The Islands Then & Now* with Arthur Milnes and Peter Milliken.

Growing up in Kingston between the two World Wars

Written by Bea Corbett

When you come into Kingston from the East, you drive through the Barriefield cut. On the left is Fort Henry. On the right is the Barriefield Common, where HMCS Cataragui and the Constantine Arena now stand. Between the Wars the Common was often used as a campground or a sports field. In the spring or the fall you might see Gypsies in their bright coloured clothing. They would camp there for several nights before continuing on their journey to participate in circuses and fairs across the country. People would often go to the Barriefield Common to watch the Gypsies dance or have one's fortune told.

Continuing over the La Salle Causeway one came to the foot of Princess Street. This street was a dividing line between the older part in the East (some say north of Princess) and the West part closer to the Lake. The area east of Princess Street, often considered to be inhabited by the working class, was another world to those of us who lived on the west side. One did not live over there.

When I was growing up between the Wars, Kingston was a town of approximately 22,000 people. The majority of the inhabitants were Army families including anyone on faculty at RMC, United Empire Loyalists and, people who had emigrated from the United Kingdom and Ireland. The latter group comprised those who were entrepreneurs and brought prosperity to the town.

Society in Kingston was very stratified. One always addressed each other as Mr. or Mrs. Mrs. Norman Leslie and Mrs. Frederick Etherington were the acknowledged leaders of society. An invitation to one of their gatherings was highly sought after. House dances were regularly held as were tea dances for young people. Some met their futures spouses at these parties.

It was an era when the formal use of calling cards was still customary. There was a certain protocol to be followed. When you called on someone you presented your card to the maid. Ladies would leave one card and gentlemen would leave two. If you had attended a dinner party you were expected to call on the host or hostess within ten days to say thank you. As for the invitations, the hostess would specify if it was a white or black tie dinner. Ladies always wore hats during the day when they went out whether it was to go shopping or attend a social gathering.

Nearly every household employed a maid. Some had two. During the Depression they declined in numbers and after the Second World War there was very little need for domestic help. With the advent of modern conveniences such as washers, dryers and vacuum cleaners the woman of the household could do these chores herself or hire a cleaning woman to come in once a week.

People walked or rode a bicycle to get around as cars were considered a luxury. As a young child I used to ask my father why we couldn't have a car. His response was that he could not afford one. There was never any lack of money for a sailboat or two, including one which was custom built during the depression.

For many people the Depression era between 1929 and 1939 was a time of extreme hardship. Unlike today when there are social benefits and student loans available, a student would often have to leave school and find employment so that he or she could help to support one's family. Those who did continue on at school and went to university often took a year off to earn enough money to complete their studies.

At that time Ontario Street was a muddy road with train tracks which bisected it. Being a busy ship building centre and a major port, there were many boats in Kingston Harbour. The St. Lawrence Seaway was opened in 1959. My father predicted that with the advent of the seaway, Kingston would be finished as a port - and it was. I was never allowed to go down to Ontario Street alone without an adult accompanying me. The only time I went there when I was young was when I was taken with a family friend to take food to some people who lived there. Today it is a gentrified street with a beautiful waterfront trail and expensive condominium buildings.

To paraphrase the words of Dickens, the years between the Wars when I was growing up were the best of times and the worst of times. I was one of the fortunate ones to have lived here during that time.

Beatrice Corbett is member of the Kingston Historical Society. She grew up west of Princess Street and north of Ontario Street on Gore Street two doors up from a bootlegger.



Bea (Grant) Corbett outside her home on Gore Street during the Spring of 1927.

History Related Announcements

The Kingston Branch of the **Ontario Genealogical Society** will meet in the Wilson Room of Kingston Frontenac Public Library, 130 Johnson St., on Saturday, May 18, 2013 at 10 a.m. "In Search of Your Civil War Ancestor" by Bill Cookman and Jane Miller. Visitors welcome. Further info at www.ogs.on.ca/kingston

Tuesday, May 14, 2013 - Dinner Meeting of Kingston Branch, **United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada** at Donald Gordon Centre, 21 Union Street, Kingston Ontario, 5:30 for 6:00 pm dinner. After-dinner speaker will be Jean Rae Baxter whose three historical novels dealing with the Loyalist trek north to Canada have all won awards. A former teacher in L&A County, Jean Rae has a way of making history come alive and involving young and old alike in exciting stories from the past.

Guests and visitors are most welcome. Tickets are \$34 each and may be obtained from Carol at 613-546-2256.



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The **KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY** invites you to remember Sir John A. Macdonald on Thursday, 6 June 2013 with an event that combines commemoration, pageantry, history and conviviality in a special outdoor setting.

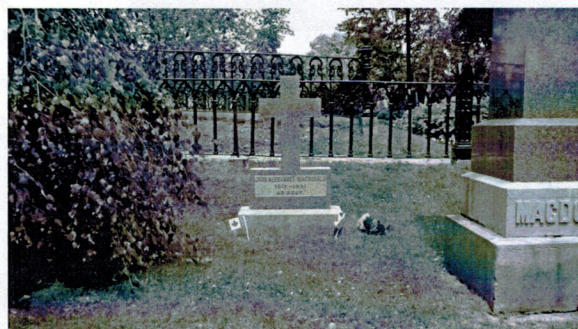
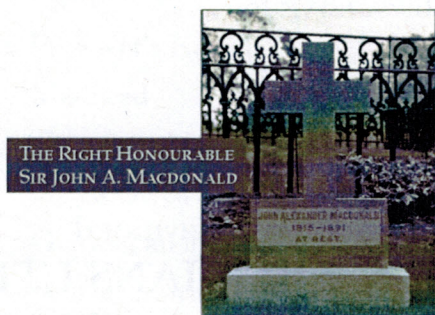
Please join us on at 1:30 p.m. in Kingston's Cataraqui Cemetery to remember Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John Alexander Macdonald who died on this day in 1891.

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, provincial and national 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. Christopher Pennington. Dr. Pennington holds a doctorate in history from the University of Toronto. He specializes in the history of Canadian politics and foreign relations. He has taught at Trent University, Ryerson university and U of T. Currently he works as a manuscript editor for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Two years ago he published *The Destiny of Canada: Macdonald, Laurier and the Election of 1891*. In this account of Macdonald's last election, Pennington brings to life one of the most bitterly fought elections in Canadian history. Dr. Pennington's talk will focus on aspects of this event which pitted the "Old Man" against the young new Liberal leader, Laurier.

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.

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



Speakers' Corner

Fort Henry Guard

Presented by Steve Mecredy

by Ron Ridley
Photos by Randy Levi

Steve Mecredy presented an illustrated talk on "From 'contemptible little guard' to Ontario's Own," the story of the Fort Henry Guard. Mr. Mecredy called on his many years of association with Fort Henry, from joining as a cadet in 1974, rising to become Guard Captain, returning as the Historical Research Officer and finally as Guard Commander until he left for a career in education with the Limestone Board of Education in 1999. One of the features of the opening in August of 1938 was the formation and first performance of the Fort Henry Guard. The Guard was a revolutionary concept at the time. The brainchild of Ronald L. Way, who had been brought in to oversee the historical restoration of the Fort, he conceived of the Guard as a logical way of bringing the Fort to life. In the process, he was one of the originators of historical interpretation of heritage sites, a concept that has been copied worldwide at military sites.



The Fort Henry Guard is well documented in photographs in the Fort's collection and Mr. Mecredy showed many images of the Guard through significant events, from Royal Visits to the two trips that the Fort Henry Guard made to England's Royal Tournament. The images illustrated the evolution of the Guard from scrounged Canadian militia uniforms to a more accurate representation of the British Army of 1867, the date chosen for interpretation of the site. The photographs showed how the Guard, composed then, as now of university and college students, was able to impress the professional soldiers of the United States Marine Corps as far



back as 1954, leading to an ongoing relationship that continues to this day. The Guard has also evolved, keeping up with changes in Canadian society, with the introduction of women into the unit in the 1990's. The presentation was especially fitting as this season the Fort prepares to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the not only the opening of a restored Fort Henry in 1938 as a historic site, but also as the birth of the Fort Henry Guard.

John Grenville seated here in the front row beside Ron Ridley thanked Mr. Mecredy on behalf of the KHS members and visitors.

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