

THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

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HOMESTEAD

The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Kingston Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites and the City of Kingston.



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President's Message

by Paul Charbonneau

I am very excited to have been chosen President of this esteemed society. I want to thank Vincent Durant for his exceptional leadership through the difficult times the world and our society have endured during his tenure. The cancelled events, such as our monthly meetings, the Heritage Dinner and various others, either happened virtually or not at all. I am so grateful that, as I begin my term, I have the support of a fabulous group of people who volunteer hundreds of hours to serve on the council. I am also pleased to have four (4) Past Presidents still on Council to mentor, guide and steer me straight when I veer off course.

The Kingston Historical Society is in excellent financial shape, as is the Murney Tower Museum. We have received financial support from many levels of government and, despite not opening much during the pandemic, our donations have increase several fold. Through COVID-19 our museum staff, Dr. Tabitha Renaud, Simge Erdogan-O'Connor and numerous students working under several grants, have taken on the herculean work of cataloguing the museum's collection.



The KHS Awards returned this year, and we were thrilled to present three (3) at the virtual AGM.

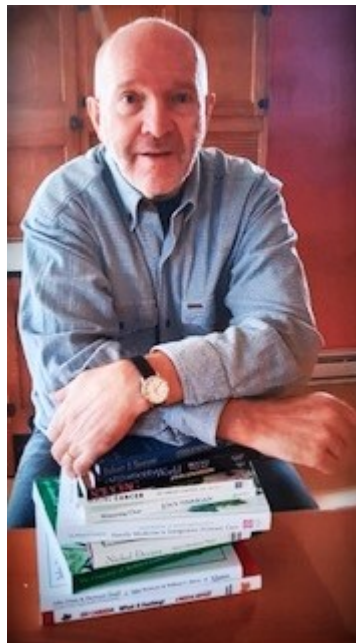
Congratulations to Paul Robertson from the City of Kingston and Bob Hilderley and Susan Hannah of Kingston Press; you can read more about the awards here in Limelight.

As our world opens back up, I look forward to greeting and meeting you at face-to-face events, and to continuing the great work of the Kingston Historical Society. If you have ideas, suggestions or comments, please feel free to reach out to me at bearsden1017@hotmail.com

Kingston Historical Society Awards for 2021



Susan Hannah
Bob Hilderley



At its annual general meeting, Wednesday, February 16, the Kingston Historical Society recognized three local residents for their contributions to the preservation and promotion of the history of the Kingston region. The awards are normally presented at a December event, but had to be cancelled in 2020 due to COVID restrictions – the first year missed since they were first presented in 1993! It was decided that the 2021 awards would be presented as part of this year's AGM. The meeting was held via ZOOM, and very well attended.

Awards were presented to the following:

Susan Hannah who, through her work at Kingston Press, formerly Quarry Press, continues to encourage local Kingston authors, particularly those whose interests are in the historical aspects of Kingston. Amongst Quarry Press's better-known books are the revised edition of *Sir John A. Macdonald: The Man and the Politician*, *St. George's Cathedral: Two hundred Years of Community*, and *Kingston: Building on the Past for the Future*. Kingston Press also produced two wonderful issues of the Kingston Calendar and have supported a number of smaller projects whose worth she saw. The authors Susan helped remember her working to the last minute to get corrected manuscripts to the printer on time, and then collecting the published books to arrive at a book launch – just in time! Susan's contribution to Kingston's writers of history has been invaluable.

Bob Hilderley who was a long-time president of Quarry Press, later The Kingston Press, who encouraged local Kingston authors, such as Diane Schoemperlen and Mary Alice Downie, and particularly those whose interests were in the historical aspects of Kingston. Amongst Quarry Press's better-known books are the revised edition of *Sir John A. Macdonald: The Man and the Politician*, *St. George's Cathedral: Two hundred Years of Community*, and *Kingston: Building on the Past for the Future*. Kingston Press also produced two wonderful issues of the Kingston Calendar and have supported a number of smaller projects whose worth he saw. The authors Bob helped remember him working to the last minute to get corrected manuscripts to the printer on time, and then collecting the published books to arrive at a book launch – just in time! Bob's contribution to Kingston's writers of history has been invaluable.

Paul Robertson who has been Kingston's City Curator of Heritage Services since 2011, the year in which he was hired to inaugurate the position. He came to his new role in Kingston with admirable academic qualifications and professional experience. To his initial degree in journalism from Carleton University, Paul added an MA in history from Carleton and a degree in museum technology which provided him with an abiding foundation in material history. In Ottawa, Paul undertook heritage work at the Museum of Civilization and the Official Residences Division of the National Capital Commission. The curatorship of the Museum of Health Care brought him to Kingston and allowed him to establish that museum as an upcoming and soon major part of the city's museum collection. His appointment to the city curatorship in 2011 underscored Kingston's determination to reinforce its storied history and culture. Among other things, Paul oversees the city's wonderful collection of art and artifacts, as well as managing programmes of heritage outreach (e.g. wrapping utility boxes with historical signage). Paul was also president of the Ontario Museum Association. Paul has also proved a great ambassador for local heritage. His public lecture on the stained-glass windows in Memorial Hall at City Hall was a marvellous example of the depth of his research and his ability to deliver his expertise in a compelling fashion.



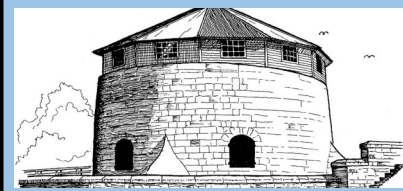
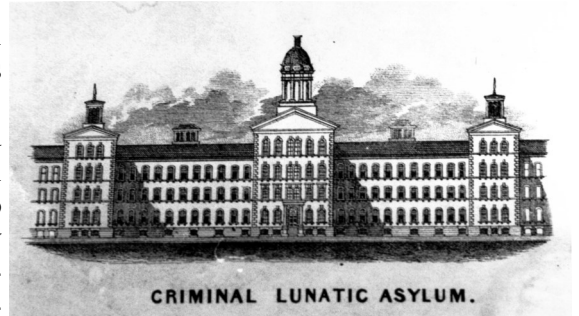
Paul Robertson

Photo Whig Standard

Putting Names to Buildings

Goethe described architecture as “frozen music.” Buildings reveal the lyricism of an age and carry the tune through time. In this respect, Kingston, the “Limestone city”, offers its citizens a heritage symphony of sculpted stone and brick. Of this pleasant reality we were reminded by Dr, Jennifer McKendry, who put her many years of studying local architecture on display in an erudite talk at the Society’s annual general meeting on February 16th. While many Kingstonians have a passing familiarity with Kingston’s heritage buildings – its churches, courthouses and grand homes – they generally cannot name the architect who translated intention into reality in their construction.

McKendry’s aim was to set the work of a select group of local architects into an 1825-1923 frame (seminal years in Kingston’s evolution) and thus examine their work in relation to the ethos and styles of their time. Drawing on exhaustive archival and newspaper research and backed by illustrations ranging from blueprints to construction contracts, Jennifer set out a who’s who of notable local architects. The great Rockwood Asylum not only reflected the imagination of architect William Coverdale (1801-65) but also served as a reflection of mid-nineteenth century attitudes to mental illness.

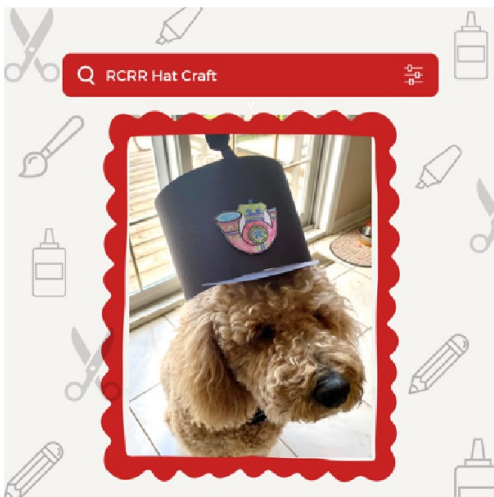


Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

Update from the museum’s manager Simge Erdogan O’Connor

Murney Tower Museum is welcoming the spring with an exciting, collaborative community initiative. We have created a fun and family-friendly activity for this year’s “March of the Museums” community event, taking place between March 14-18. The Kingston Association of Museums, Galleries, and Historic Sites (KAM) has created this initiative for museums around Kingston to create engaging art and craft activities for kids aged 5-12.



In our crafts, we are bringing the Tower’s military heritage to life by exploring the lives of people who lived in the Tower. Our educational activity recreates the uniform hats worn by the men of the Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment – the men who not only guarded and manned the Tower but also lived in Murney Tower itself. This activity aims to encourage engagement with the history of the people who inhabited the Tower some 150 years ago and urge kids to think of how daily lives have changed over time. By looking into the lives of the people who lived in the Tower, we seek to foster a connection between kids and the heritage of Murney Tower.

Our crafts will be available on the museum’s YouTube Channel (Murney Tower) mid-March.

From the recent past, taken from the Kingston Historical Society’s Newsletter THEN – March 1992

“KAM Anyone? The proliferation of acronyms in our language makes KAM a welcome relief. It abbreviates Kingston Association of Museums, Galleries and Historic Sites. It meets monthly at each museum in rotation, sharing problems and solutions with the Kingston Area Economic Development Commission...KAEDEC...”

Our Humble Beginnings, or Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Wolfe?



Present day logo

"We are grateful to Victoria Stewart for establishing the Wolfe Island Historical Society, and pursuing her dream to honour General James Wolfe."

WIHS President Brian McDonald at James Wolfe plaque unveiling, Nov. 28, 2009

In September of 2009 the four-year-old fledgling Wolfe Island Historical Society came under attack, during my watch as founding president, no less—figuratively, not literally.

A four year planned event, unveiling a plaque honouring General James Wolfe, the island's namesake, by WIHS founder Victoria M. Stewart, was suddenly "not permitted on township property" by township council, two days before the ceremony. The result went viral – to use today's term – for three consecutive days in the Kingston Whig Standard. And CBC Radio. Let me explain.

The Big Bad Wolfe symbol, 2009



Our event was the 250th anniversary of the death of General James Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, Quebec. Our plaque unveiling the event with the RMC military band was planned for Sunday, September 13. In a press release giving the time and place to local radio, Stewart added: *"According to CTV's Saturday evening news, Quebec separatists are planning to read the FLQ's 1970 manifesto from the Plains of Abraham on Sunday. Would you help stir Canadians to come to our event on the island to show the separatists that we're not afraid to celebrate our own English heritage?"* Our event became political. It wasn't. Our event was misconstrued as French bashing. It wasn't.

We survived and the plaque was unveiled with ceremony that November.



Founder Victoria Stewart at LaRush House (Old House Museum) 2009

Our WIHS really began through a chance meeting by a non resident (me) and a brand new resident of Wolfe Island. Let me take you back to the scene of the crime. Not figuratively. Literally. On a hot August afternoon in 2005, Montrealer Victoria Stewart wanted to know more about her new home on Wolfe Island. By coincidence this newcomer was sitting next to me, listening to a panel of novelists during Wolfe Island's 'Scene of the Crime' mystery writer's festival. This weekend event took place on Wolfe Island every August beginning in 2002. Asking my name afterwards, she learned I had done a story for the Kingston Whig Standard about centenarian farmer Herbert Armstrong a few years previously. The late Herb and Mary owned the farmhouse she now called home. "Could I have a copy?" she asked. A few weeks later Vicki had her copy and showed me her newly renovated house on Button Bay Road. "Wouldn't it be great," she said, "to gather

these stories before they're lost."

Stewart's enthusiasm at first frightened me. "Has there ever been, or talk of, a historical society for Wolfe Island?" she asked. While there had been plowing matches, quilting bees and heritage days over the years and a present heritage committee that I didn't know much about, I answered that I didn't think so.

I assumed the St. Lawrence and Wolfe Island Women's Institutes also looked after historical events but wasn't sure. "Then we need to start one," she said.

Saturday night, December 3, 2005, at the General Wolfe Hotel with several guests present, Stewart announced our plans and an election of officers took place. I was elected president. I wasn't even there. I'd been called into work that afternoon on the ferry; Victoria came up to the wheelhouse afterwards and delivered the news. I was almost overwhelmed. Our plan was to have island historian Johnny O'Shea in that position. Mr. O'Shea is Wolfe Island's unofficial historian/storyteller/bard; so, what happened? Victoria told me he'd simply turned it down. Later, after talking with Johnny, I – very humbly – accepted.

On January 27, 2006, we held our first meeting. Our constitution was drawn up and amended. It was moved that island resident historians John O'Shea, Capt. R.F. Fawcett, Miss Carmel Cosgrove and Garden Island resident John D'Esterre be admitted as honorary members.

Our second meeting took place at the General Wolfe Hotel on Saturday March 25, 2006, and was open to the public. It was very well-attended. The officers were introduced: Brian Johnson, president; Hendry Connell VP administration; Victoria Stewart, VP Special Projects & Secretary; Brian MacDonald, Treasurer; John O'Shea, Donna Ivey, Norma Kelly and Theresa Broeders, Directors. Victoria Stewart announced her plans to honour the island's namesake in 2009 with a planned ceremony and statue, and the possibility of opening a museum somewhere on the island.

Our biggest event to date was the 150th Anniversary celebration of the village of Marysville, named for early resident Mary Hinckley Davis Hitchcock or "Aunt Polly" as she came to be known. This all-day event on Saturday, August 23, 2008, started out with the largest parade to date led by town crier Chris Whyman. It seemed like every horse carriage and wagon was there. Other events were church tours, a bonnet contest, a pie contest, village tours, historical photos and other displays, ending with a dance with the White Pine Bluegrass Band followed by Robert Graham's band at St. Margaret's Hall. Our membership soared that day.

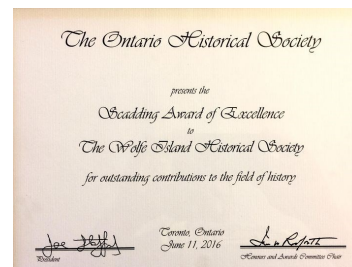
On July 28, 2009, the Tiner LaRush house, "the oldest house on the island," opened as the WIHS Old House Museum. The last resident, David Helwig had moved out a year ago and it became available for purchase. The Township of Frontenac Islands purchased the property and building and turned over the keys to our historical society for museum purposes. Eventually, with volunteers guided by Executive Director Kathy Horton, the museum became a popular spot for visitors and islanders alike, especially with island resident John Posthumous spinning wool into yarn in the front room. Sadly, the General James Wolfe celebration didn't fare so well. Three years later, founder Victoria Stewart succumbed to lung cancer on March 5, 2012.

As part of War of 1812 celebrations, then President Denis Chercuitte and directors of WIHS hosted the Voltigeurs de Quebec at the town hall in July, 2012. These are proud ambassadors of the oldest French Canadian regiment, one of the most enduring symbols of the union of Quebec City with musical and military arts. A fantastic turnout.



l-r: Brian Johnson, President Hank Connell, Brian MacDonald & Hon. Ken Keyes at Queen's Park, Toronto

Our annual newsletter became an award winning magazine called "Windword". Starting as a newsletter of a few pages, our editors Wilma Sjonger and Mike Bromley propelled us toward winning the Ontario Historical Society's Scadding Award of Excellence for outstanding contributions to the field of history on June 11, 2016. This was presented by the Hon. Ken Keyes at Queen's Park, Toronto, to then President Hendry "Hank" Connell with past presidents Brian MacDonald and Brian Johnson.



Our Old House Museum received a much needed ‘facelift’ in early 2013. Executive member Judy Greenwood-Spears found material ideal for the project at a bargain price. Dark, treated wood now covers the exposed and worn, weathered timbers and makeshift coverings over the outer shell of the two story wood frame structure. A steel roof added years ago still keeps the rain out. Unfortunately, Covid-19 safety measures closed the museum for two seasons now. Our speaker series is on a long hiatus as well.

Hopefully, that can change this coming summer. “Thanks to ‘The Market’ at Wolfe Island Commons, the WIHS was given booth space at no charge,” said President Kimberley Thomas in her opening message in the 2020-2021 Windword. Thomas, a new resident of Wolfe Island, is our longest serving president to date, elected on October 12, 2017. “We were able to sell memberships, Windword, other publications and other items.

“We have generations of families here who have taken this island and made it what it is today,” she continued. “We have newcomers who have been welcomed to the community and enjoyed the caring and the generosity of the residents to help them fit in and get involved. We have welcomed visitors and shared what we could graciously and with pride. Pride in Wolfe Island.

“In my opinion if one has to self-isolate, Wolfe Island has been the place to do it in.”



WIHS Old House Museum today, Marysville, Wolfe Island

Please visit us on Facebook – ‘Wolfe Island Historical Society’, or our website www.wolfeislandhistoricalsociety.org.

Book Report

by Peter Gower

Some Historical Fiction

There is historical fiction, and there is fiction set somewhere in an often mythical past. The latter is often full of handsome and virile young men, who are expert with sword and gun; and of winsome damsels who never seem to dress appropriately for the weather. There is also historical fiction which tries to set the story on as realistic a stage as possible. Extra reading time over the past two years has led me to one new favourite, and the new books of an old favourite.

Pat Barker has long been renowned for, among other books, the *Regeneration* trilogy (*Regeneration*, *The Eye in the Door*, *Ghost Road*). She uses real people (Siegfried Sassoon, W. H. R. Rivers) and places (Craiglockhart Hospital) to put into fiction the damage caused to both soldiers and civilians in the First World War. Her *Life Class* trilogy (*Life Class*, *Toby's Room*, *Noonday*) follows the lives of young artists in London as they struggle with themselves during the same war. Both trilogies are very realistic and give us a view into a difficult time long past, and, hopefully, not to be repeated.

Now she has chosen the Trojan War in which to set her latest two books – I don't know if a trilogy is planned. *The Silence of the Girls* opens with Achilles leading the Greek army in the destruction of Lyrnessus. Our narrator, Queen Briseis can only watch with the other women from a high tower, the citadel, as their men are slaughtered. She watches Achilles hack her father and her two brothers to death, just three of the sixty he killed that day. She, and all the other women, know their fate. They are taken to Troy and distributed among the Greek army. She becomes Achilles' property, and she describes, realistically, life in the Greek camp from her point of view.

When *Women of Troy* opens, the besieged city has fallen and the Greeks await a favourable wind to take them home. But the Gods have been offended: King Priam lies unburied. Again, we learn in intimate detail of the lives of the women. At last, the wind changes and “Odysseus is the first to leave. He’d always been the one chafing at the bit: the one most desperate to get home.” Pat Barker certainly has the reader re-living those difficult times, and hopefully we will follow Briseis to wherever she is taken.

Ellis Peters is probably better known to you. In 1977, she created her loveable Brother Cadfael. Originally working in Shrewsbury for a wool merchant, he left England (and his love) in 1097 to fight with the Crusaders. After service in the Holy Land and in France, he returns to Shrewsbury in 1120 and becomes a Benedictine Monk, albeit one with a wealth of worldly experiences and, as he acknowledges, an inquisitive mind and an innate curiosity about people. He becomes the herbalist and apothecary, which allows him freedom of movement throughout the countryside.

Peters lived in Shropshire, and knew the countryside well. She also researched twelfth century England carefully, and pulls no punches about the difficulties of life. You walk everywhere, or go by pony, or horse if you are lucky. The weather affects daily life, crops, and what you can eat, if anything. There is Civil War, and when King Stephen successfully besieges Shrewsbury Castle, he simply hangs the 85 survivors (his renegade sister’s supporters) from the battlements. What else is expected of him?

Cadfael, of course, finds a mystery here (read *One Corpse Too Many*) and it is probably worth reading the books in chronological order. The first, *A Morbid Taste For Bones*, gives us an insight into Cadfael’s nose and intruding behaviour – and his cleverly reasoned solutions. Because there are cross references, it is worth reading them in chronological order, though reading any one of them will give you a wonderful insight into twelfth century life, as well as being a good crime mystery. There is enough in Peters’ language to let you know this is early medieval England: “‘So her maid told me,’ Miles confirmed vehemently, sweating. ‘Judith told her so last night, when the girl attended her to bed. I knew nothing of it until this morning. But it seems she has not been here. She never reached here. And she has not come home again. Midday, and she has not come home! I dread something ill has befallen her.’” And there is enough to keep you thinking, and trying to be cleverer than the ever-inquisitive Cadfael.

Welcome, new members

John and Slava Bullock



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