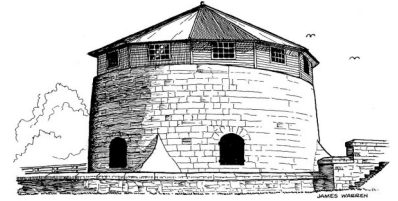


Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

September 2022

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Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures



Nathan will explore the connection of the Mohawk language to the land in and around Kingston, noting how the Mohawk language has been embedded in local names such as Cataraqui, Ongwanada and Ontario, how these names lost meaning over time and then recovered that phasis on Tyendinaga.

meaning. There will be special em-

Professor Brinklow teaches Mohawk language and culture at Queen's.

Dianne Fielding has extended to all KHS members an invitation to attend a celebration of John Fielding's life to be held at the Renaissance Event Venue, 285 Queen Street, Kingston, on Saturday, September 24, from 1-4 p.m.

It is noted with regret, the death of Paul Robertson, 7 June 2022. a former member of the Kingston Historical Society, and a recipient of a Kingston Historical Society Award in 2021.

THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

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



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Tabitha Renaud, Director of Murney Tower; Anne Richardson, Heritage Event Chair; Paul Van Nest, Membership Chair;

Peter Gower, Editor of Historic Kingston, and Webmaster

President's Message

by Paul Charbonneau

Where has the summer gone? Given this is the first summer when we have gotten to stretch our legs and get back to some normalcy of life post-pandemic; it flew by away too fast.

The KHS Annual Commemorative Ceremony on June 6th of the death of Sir John A. MacDonald was particularly unique this year with the address by the Honourable Murray Sinclair, a former Senator and now Chancellor of Queen's University. You can read more about it below.

It has been a year since the statue of Sir John A. was removed from City Park and no resolution has yet been reached as to where it will reside. The Board of the Cataraqui Cemetery has voted to no longer support a plan to have the statue erected within the grounds of the cemetery, a national historic site, so we await the fall municipal election and further discussion from the new city council and staff.

September brings the dawn of a new season of the Society's Lecture Series and Dr. Duncan McDowall has lined up a varied group of presenters.

Noam Chomsky said: "A language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It's all embodied in a language."

Our first lecture presenter, Dr. Nathan Brinklow of Queen's, will focus our thoughts on reconciliation with a spotlight on the "Mohawk Language: Loss and Recovery".

The KHS council is finalizing plans for a hybrid presentation of in-person and Zoom in the future; stay tuned.



The ANNUAL 6 JUNE COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY of THE DEATH OF SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

By Alan MacLachlan, Chair: 6 June Commemoration

The ceremony commemorating the death of Canada's first prime minister was, for the second year in a row, a video Zoom event due to the Covid pandemic. However, the ceremony was unique and as one of our members stated, "It was a truly astonishing commemoration".



To respect the heritage of the guest speaker, MC Don Richardson used English, French and Mohawk in his opening and closing remarks. As well, an Indigenous version of O Canada concluded the ceremony.

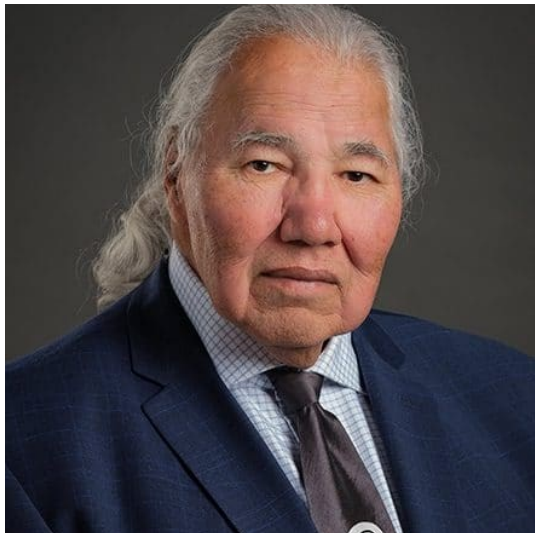
Our guest speaker, the Honourable Murray Sinclair, is a former member of the Canadian Senate and is a First Nations lawyer who served as chairman of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission from 2009 to 2015. A judge in Manitoba from 1988 to 2009, he was the first Indigenous judge appointed in the province, and the second Canadian Indigenous judge. At present he is the Chancellor of Queen's University in Kingston.

Sinclair gave a different view of Sir John and his legacy which was entitled, **"A slightly different light: a more complete image of Sir John A. Macdonald."**

It was a balanced assessment which recognized, on one hand, the role that Sir John played in creating Canada and expanding Canada to the Pacific, "a man of great will, great ability, political acuity, and a willingness to undertake and achieve something quite significant," and, on the other hand, that he was a man who had flaws: "We should also acknowledge that what he did to build this country was at great cost to the Indigenous people of Canada." In his closing remarks, he said, "I hope that [my comments] help all of us in the process of reconciliation, to which I know we are all committed."

The success of this year's Zoom presentation was due to the creative efforts of many individuals. Our video recorder and editor, Craig Pettis, was superb in his suggestions and editing; Don Richardson was sparkling as MC, and, in an innovative move, in deciding to incorporate our Indigenous heritage into his remarks; Duncan McDowall was brilliant in his proposal of Murray Sinclair as our guest speaker; Paul Van Nest was invaluable with his technical knowledge for the video production.

Our thanks go to Tabitha Renaud and the Murney Tower for their financial grant input, to the Cataraqui Cemetery staff for their assistance, as in the past, with preparations at Sir John's grave site and to Eva Barnes for her assessment of the video.



The Zoom video may be accessed at the Kingston Historical Society website:
<https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/events-news/>
Scroll down to 2022 and **Murray Sinclair and the Sir John A Macdonald memorial service**. Please note there is a 5 minute musical intro before the actual memorial begins.

Perhaps next year we shall have a live commemoration at Sir John A. Macdonald's grave site in the Cataraqui Cemetery.

Ship Ahoy! – Kingston's High Seas Adventure

The Society's May lecture took us to far and distant seas. Maurice Smith, former director of the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes and a maritime historian, gave us a fascinating portrait of the activities of the Calvin Company's global reach as a timber-exporting enterprise from its Garden Island base. Founded by American émigré Dexter Delano Calvin in the 1840s, the company became one of Kingston's leading industries and employers. At a time when Canada's economy was heavily reliant on the export of staple products, the Calvin Company excelled in harvesting timber from the continental interior and then moving it through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River system on schooners and rapids-running rafts for eventual delivery across the Atlantic to lumber-hungry Europe. Smith began with a fascinating telling of the mechanics of the timber trade – how rafts were built for the treacherous journey down the river, what constituted the company's huge seasonal workforce, how it built a lake schooner on Garden Island to convey squared timber to the island for assembly into rafts. We also got glimpses of the social life of the men who worked for the Calvins – as many as 700 every driving season. The Calvins were shrewd and considerate owners. Their workers were a motley lot – French-Canadians, Irish and Indigenous. Churches and drink were banned on the island in the interest of harmony. The company's demise in the 1920s was dictated by the progressive exhaustion of the timber frontier. At base, the company engaged in clear cutting the forests, hardly commendable by today's environmental standards, but, at the time, a driver of the Canadian economy. Smith ended his talk by describing the Calvins' ambitious attempt to push their empire onto the high seas. In 1877, they launched a 170 foot, three masted barque, The Garden Island, sent it down the St. Lawrence and set it trading in wheat and coal to as far away as India. The venture never really proved profitable, especially when a cargo of wheat spoiled in the ship's hold. She was sold to Norwegians. The ship's sturdy construction would keep her at sea until 1906. Smith illustrated his talk with wonderful contemporary pictures of rafting timber and ship building here in Kingston. His paper will appear in *Historic Kingston*, the KHS journal. Maurice expressed a willingness to make arrangements for anyone wishing to explore Garden Island's fascinating heritage.

barque2@cogeco.ca



Murney Tower Operated by the Kingston Historical Society



***Murney Tower has had a busy summer
with many in-person visitors and special
events. To read about them, explore
this site!***

[https://](https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/the-murney-tower/)

***[www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/the-
murney-tower/](https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/the-murney-tower/)***



**Art on the gun platform by
Tracey-Mae Chambers**

The Knotted Rope by Jean Rae Baxter

Book Report by Peter Gower

Jean Rae Baxter spoke to the Society in February 2018 on the Black Loyalists story (see *Historic Kingston* 68, pps 35-45). Now she has retold that story in a fact-based fiction book, *The Knotted Rope*. It tells, in a dramatic and easily-readable format, the story of Broken Trail, a white boy brought up by the Oneida, and now an employee of Joseph Brant who, to Broken Trail's disgust, treats his slaves as most of his contemporaries did. Broken Trail meets with Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe as he is about to start legislating the abolition of slavery in Upper Canada. We must remember that life was not exactly as C.W. Jefferys portrayed it in our history text books. Simcoe has a difficult road to travel because many of the legislators were slave owners, and slavery was common throughout the British Empire.

Simcoe explains to Broken Trail that all that he can do at present is to proclaim a law stating that nobody coming into Upper Canada 'shall be subject to the condition of slavery.' It would be a start, but slavery would continue here and throughout the Empire until 1834.

If Brant treated his slaves with contempt, Broken Trail's host in Newark, Mr. Steele, treated his with cruelty. When Rosa drops her master's chamber pot, he orders her to be whipped. Slave Joseph refuses, and Steele decides to sell them both. This is all too much for Broken Trail, who had been wondering what he could do ever since encountering Chloe Cooley in most unfortunate circumstances.

Broken Trail sees a loophole in the new law, and is quietly supported by Simcoe. He puts his plan into action, and we go with him throughout the Niagara Peninsula, and under the Falls, in a fast-moving and simply-, but satisfactorily, constructed story. The action, and the humanity (or lack of it) should attract adolescent readers, as well as incidentally teaching them something about our past which may surprise them.

The Knotted Rope is part of Baxter's *Forging a Nation* historical fiction series for teenagers. It both entertains and educates, and shows the wonders and the promise of Proclamation Day.

In April **Jean Rae Baxter** was nominated for the 2022 the Pierre Berton Award, the Governor General's History Award for Popular Fiction.

The Pierre Berton Award was created in 1994 by Canada's National History Society to recognize those who have made outstanding contributions to popularizing Canadian history. The first recipient was Pierre Berton, who then agreed to lend his name to the prize. In 2011, the Pierre Berton award was incorporated into the Governor General's History Awards under the category of Popular Media, in recognition of the many ways Canadians interact with their history. Since 1994, the award has recognized a diverse group of authors, filmmakers, organizations, and digital initiatives.

The indexes of *Historic Kingston* volumes 1 to 54 are available in five print volumes (1-20, 21-25, 26-33, 34-44 and 45-54) at \$10 each, including postage. The format in each index is different. They can now be searched on the Kingston and Frontenac Public Library pages, at indexes.digitalkingston.ca. Click Explore the Indexes or Search the Index on the left of the Library screen to continue.

The indexes of *Historic Kingston* volumes 55 to 68 are available on our website (www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca). Go to Publications/ Historic Kingston index. Or you can find the Names index at <https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/HK-55-68-names-index-1.pdf>

and the Topics index at <https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/HK-55-68-topic-index.pdf>

Michael Davies and Rick Neilson

On a quiet weekend at the end of March, two obituaries appeared in the *Kingston Whig-Standard*, both with special relevance to the Kingston Historical Society, but celebrating contrasting lives. They remind us of the wide spectrum of our membership. Michael Davies had been a life member for at least 30 years – as far back as I can trace continuous membership records - and Rick Neilson had been a member for at least as long.

Michael Davies was born into a privileged and literary family. His grandfather had bought the *Daily British Whig* in 1925, and then the *Kingston Standard*. He amalgamated them in 1926 to become the *Kingston Whig-Standard*. Michael's father Arthur became Publisher in 1951 and Michael took over in 1969. His uncle, Robertson Davies, had been Editor and then Publisher of the *Peterborough Examiner* from 1942 to 1965.

While Michael Davies was immersed in publishing newspapers, Rick Neilson was working at Alcan and immersed in reading newspapers. I suspect that he may have read every surviving page of a Kingston newspaper, and made notes on them. He became an expert on maritime history, black and other ethnic communities, and Kingston businesses that used bottles. I suspect he is the person most often thanked in *Historic Kingston* for 'help given in writing this article'.

While Rick was underwater exploring the wrecks of Lake Ontario, Michael was on the water exploring the Great Lakes and western North Atlantic in his sailboat *Minstral*, and, later, all the oceans on his 67-foot fiberglass yacht *Archangel*, circumnavigating the world twice.

Rick's gift to Kingston was discovering lost knowledge and facts, and I hope that his extensive files and collections will be maintained and be publicly available. Michael made money, and it was almost fortunate that, for tax reasons, the exceptional newspaper he nurtured could not be handed on to his family; instead, the profits were used to help create the Community Foundation for Kingston and Area, and for the Davies Charitable Foundation, both of which have supported countless Kingston projects, many related to history and heritage.

These two members left us within a few days of each other, two members who led very different lives, who each left very special legacies. Kingston Historical Society can be proud that they were members for so long.
Peter Gower, May 2022

Elaine Davies has extended to all KHS members an invitation to attend a celebration of Michael Davies' life to be held on Sunday, September 25, from 4:30 until 6:30 at the Isabel Bader Centre.

The City Heritage Planning team is thrilled to announce the launch of the Heritage Digest Newsletter. Each issue will cover these areas: meet the team behind Heritage Planning and the other groups that support heritage conservation, stay in the loop with important updates and policies related to heritage properties, and learn about exciting restoration work taking place in Kingston. New issues will be shared on a bi-annual basis, arriving in June and November of 2022.

Keep up to date on Kingston's latest heritage events and exciting conservation initiatives. **Sign up for the "Heritage Digest" newsletter here:** <https://www.cityofkingston.ca/subscribe> or email HeritagePlanning@CityofKingston.ca or call 613-546-4291 ext. 1389.

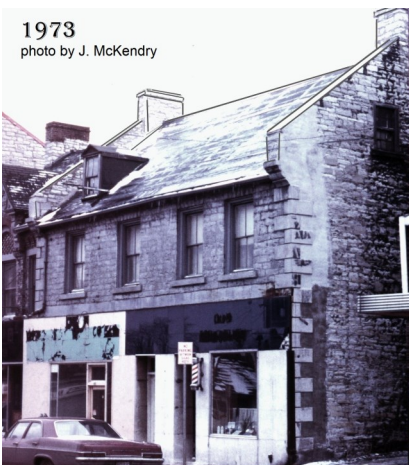
The Heritage Planning team, Jennifer, Andrea, Ryan, Alex and Phillip

Still Standing
Looking at Regional Architecture with Dr. Jennifer McKendry
The Rocheleau House of 1808

It was a heart-stopping moment to hear on August 4th that there was a fire at the rear of 70-72 Princess Street, known as the Rocheleau House, but then came relief upon finding that only limited damage was done to the building's stone fabric. Built in 1808, this is the oldest stone building surviving in downtown Kingston.

The owner and builder was master stone mason Francis Xavier Rocheleau Senior, 1761-1812, who had been in Kingston since at least 1787. The house passed to his son Francis Xavier Rocheleau Junior and, in 1818, was sold to lawyer Barnabas Bidwell, 1763-1833, who, in turn, passed it in 1827 to his daughter and to his son, Marshall Spring Bidwell, 1799-1872. The Bidwells, father and son, both lawyers, had their share of notoriety. Barnabus had been attorney general for Massachusetts, but left the United States in 1810 after dipping into the till while a treasurer. In Canada, he was suspected of having republican sentiments. In 1828, under the Upper Canada reformers, Marshall became speaker of the house in the legislature. In 1837, worried by the antagonism aroused by the Rebellion in Upper Canada, he returned to the United States, where he remained. It was not until 1863 that he sold the Princess Street property. The new owner was John Robb, a policeman and a grocer. Much later, the main-storey streetfront was altered for commercial reasons. By 1973, the building was deteriorating (fig. 1) but, fortunately, was rescued from potential demolition four years later.

Rocheleau Sr. may have designed the building. The pattern of openings is slightly irregular for the Classical style, but the quoins and base course place it in this style. It is the first surviving example of parapet end-walls with corbels at the corners (one is inscribed FXR 1808, fig. 2). By 1865, there was a two-storey stone wing at the rear.



The architectural and historical importance of the Rocheleau House makes it an outstanding contribution to Kingston's heritage (fig.3).



KHS is pleased to announce that, starting this fall, all members who receive *Limelight* by email will also receive electronically, each quarter, the newsletter of the Ontario Historical Society, as part of their membership, at no additional cost.

John A. Macdonald's Law Offices

by Dr. Jennifer McKendry

There is general agreement about three of John A. Macdonald's four Kingston law offices, but there is controversy about one, supposedly at 70-72 Princess Street, known today as the Rocheleau House.

His first office at 169-171 Wellington Street (Fig. 1) is well documented thanks to a descriptive advertisement he placed, at age 20, in the *Kingston Chronicle & Gazette* on 24 August 1835. He was there for four years. His third office was at 343 King Street East (Fig. 2) from 1849 to 1856, again well documented. His fourth one was at 93 Clarence Street (Fig. 3), as confirmed in the 1857-58 city directory. But what about his second one in the 1840s? Secondary sources, such as E.E. Horsely, in 1942 place him in 70-72 Princess Street, but without any documentation. James Roy repeats this in 1948. In 1839, a notice in the *Chronicle & Gazette* of 18 December informs us that Macdonald has moved next door to Douglas Prentiss's dry goods store on Princess Street. A year earlier, Prentiss had purchased parts of two adjacent city lots on the north side of Princess, between Wellington and Bagot streets in Ward 4. Buildings in this area were burnt in a fire of April 1851. Macdonald's link as a tenant to Prentiss is confirmed in the 1842 tax assessment. Significantly, 70-72



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Princess was in Ward 3. Aside from these facts, the owner of 70-72 Princess was Marshall S. Bidwell, whom Macdonald would probably not want as a landlord due

to Marshall's father Barnabas's association with an unsavory American past, and Marshall's political link to the reformers in Upper Canada.

Welcome, new members

John Woollett

Dennis Jelinski


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