

Limelight

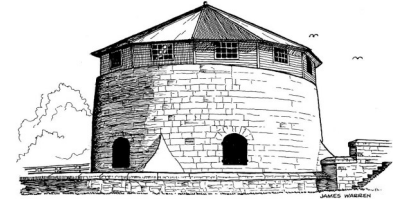
Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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February 2023



The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.



Monday, February 20, 2023

Kingston Historical Society

is celebrating

Kingston's Heritage Month

in collaboration with the

Frontenac Heritage Foundation.

An afternoon event at

Memorial Hall in City Hall

with afternoon tea.

The event will centre around the book launch of **Dr. Robert Banks'**

Warriors and Warships: Conflict on the Great Lakes and the Legacy of Point Frederick
(Dundurn).

Dr. Banks' lecture will focus on the research and writing of the book and his personal perspectives on Kingston heritage.

RSVP: contact@frontenacheritage.ca

The Frontenac Heritage Foundation & The Kingston Historical Society

*invite you to celebrate
the launch of*

Dr. Bob Banks'
WARRIORS AND WARSHIPS

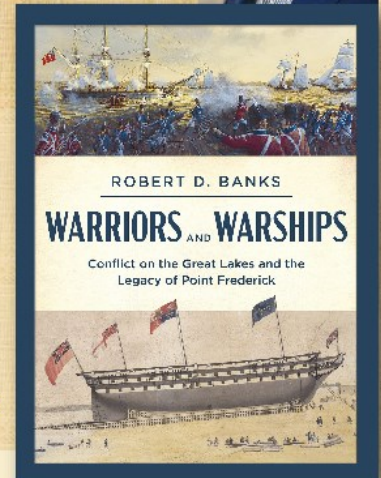
Monday, Feb. 20, 2023

Memorial Hall, City Hall
216 Ontario Street, Kingston

2 p.m. Light Refreshments

Books for sale by Novel Idea

Please RSVP to
contact@frontenacheritage.ca



Kingston Historical Society Founded 1893
P.O. Box 54, Kingston, ON Canada K7L 4V6
www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca



Kingston & District United Empire Loyalists' Association meeting Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

Zoom or live at St. Paul's Church Hall, Queen & Montreal Streets

Our Branch Genealogist Anne Redish will speak on

"Herchmer's Secret: The Loyalist Family, the Land and the Kingston Fall Fair since 1830."

If you've ever lived in mid-town Kingston, you've been on Herchmer land.

Zoom link will be at <https://www.uelac.org/Kingston-Branch/> closer to the date.

We've changed from our former January and March schedule, to have meetings in February and April.

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.

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



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



HOMESTEAD

President: Paul Charbonneau Vice President: Peter Gower Past President: Vincent Durant

Treasurer: Peter Ginn Secretary: Don Richardson

Councillors: Betty Andrews, Editor of Limelight; Warren Everett, Member-at-large;

Alan MacLachlan, Sir John A. Macdonald Commemoration Event Chair; Duncan McDowall, Programme Chair;

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

American author Steve Berry said, "A concerted effort to preserve our heritage is a vital link to our culture, education, aesthetics, inspirational and economic legacies - all of the things that quite literally make us who we are."

Kingston's Heritage Month is an opportunity to shine the spotlight on all the history of our 350-year-old community. Many museums will have special events to celebrate their focus of preservation of who we are.

Be sure to mark your calendars for Monday February 20th for the Kingston Historical Society's celebration, in collaboration with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation, of Kingston's Heritage Month; details are above.

February is also the time for KHS's Annual General Meeting which will be held on Wednesday February 15th. It is important that members attend and hear all that the Society has accomplished in 2022 as we continue to normalize our socialization. It is equally important to be an active member; consider volunteering as a Council member or on one of several committees. Our special speakers will be the Murney Tower Museum's director, Dr. Tabitha Renaud, and the curator/manager, Simge Erdogan-O'Connor, who will give an outline of the latest projects and activities of the museum, which is operated by our Society.

Happy Heritage Month



169 Years of “communal comfort”

It is often remarked that the two unavoidable aspects of life are death and taxes. Each of these tells us much about the ethos and values of our society. While the Kingston Historical Society is reluctant to proffer tax advice, on the evening of January 18 it received an intimate revelation of how, over the years, Kingston has handled the inevitability of death and burial. We were joined by James Reid and his daughter Sarah of the James Reid Funeral Home here in Kingston who guided us through the almost seventeen decades of the family's caring for the deceased and ministering to those they left behind. Jim Reid described this dedication as a process of providing “communal comfort.”

Jim Reid is a fourth-generation member of an Irish family that migrated out of County Down in Northern Ireland in the late 1820s. Their initial *métier* lay in carpentry, providing domestic necessities of frontier life. But this same skill was soon readily applied to the provision of coffins. In 1854, the Reids added a funeral parlour to the rear of their Princess Street furniture showroom and quickly acquired the skills of handling the dead and the sorrow of survivors. Nineteenth-century funerals, Reid said, were set piece affairs: standard liturgy, somber and spiritually austere. Many funerals were, for instance, accompanied by a tradition of “crying”, which entailed the tearful overseeing of a coffin through the night before the funeral. (One member of the Reid clan even insisted that all male corpses be clothed in a suit). Joined by his daughter Sarah in his commentary, Reid described the growing array of services provided by the family: ornate, horse-drawn funeral cars, carriages to carry family members to the cemetery and eventually a dedicated chapel.

The Reids reinforced this telling of their evolving family business and its ties to the Kingston community with many fascinating illustrations of their profession drawn from their own archives. In doing so they reminded us that there is a continuing tradition in Canadian society of the family-owned funeral business, one that is still often connected to the sale of furniture. The James Reid Funeral Home exemplifies this tradition. Reid's has, however, kept pace with society's changing preferences in funerals: 85% of funerals now entail cremation. Similarly, another tradition that is changing in the funeral business is its recent pronounced shift away from being a largely male-dominated profession. The presence of Sarah Reid, of the fifth family generation, at the lecture as Reid's assistant manager testified to this growing trend. Women perhaps bring a more maternal touch to the bereavement that always follows death. Indeed, James commented that the deathly focus of nineteenth-century funerals has now been supplemented with a much more pronounced emphasis on comforting the living, a mandate taken on at Reid's by Sarah. Funerals today, Jim noted, tend to be “celebrations of life.”

The James Reid Funeral Home provides Kingston with a durable example of an institution that has served a central necessity of life with compassion while at the same time bending to the changing reality of death in our society. The Reids' talk will soon appear on YouTube and in *Historic Kingston*.



A Kingstonian saves many lives in the American Civil War - Part 2

By Paul Van Nest

Introduction: Kingston has a relatively unknown resource, the Civil War Round Table of Greater Kingston which meets 10 months of the year ever since 1993. One of our members is Dr. Cheryl Wells, a history professor and an expert on the American Civil War. She grew up north of Brockville, where she now lives. One of her achievements is a book on Dr. Francis Wafer, based on his memoirs and letters around his service as an Assistant Surgeon from March of 1863 to the end of the war. This is his story: Part 2.



Part 1 has our Kingstonian arriving at his unit in March 1862: 108th New York Regiment. This regiment had recruited 950 men from the Rochester area the previous summer, but, by the end of Fredericksburg, its strength was reduced to 350 men by the casualties at Antietam and Fredericksburg, and disease! The Battle of Chancellorsville was fought on 2nd and 3rd May 1863. Chancellorsville is a crossroads, west of Fredericksburg, Virginia. 2nd Corps held the centre of the Federal line. It was only lightly engaged on the first day but took heavy casualties on the second day. The stress and exposure weakened Wafer's health, but he recovered after being assigned to the rear at the Potomac Creek Corps Hospital on Aquia Creek, north of Fredericksburg. The next major battle was at Gettysburg. Here, the 2nd Corps again held the centre of the Union line and, on the third day, the 108th New York faced "Pickett's Charge", protecting Arnold's Battery just north of the Bloody Angle. Wafer had set up his field station in a small stone house on the Taneytown Road, about ¼ mile in the rear of the battleline. He described the death of two Canadian officers: Evans of Toronto and Lt. MacDonald of Kingston. His description of the

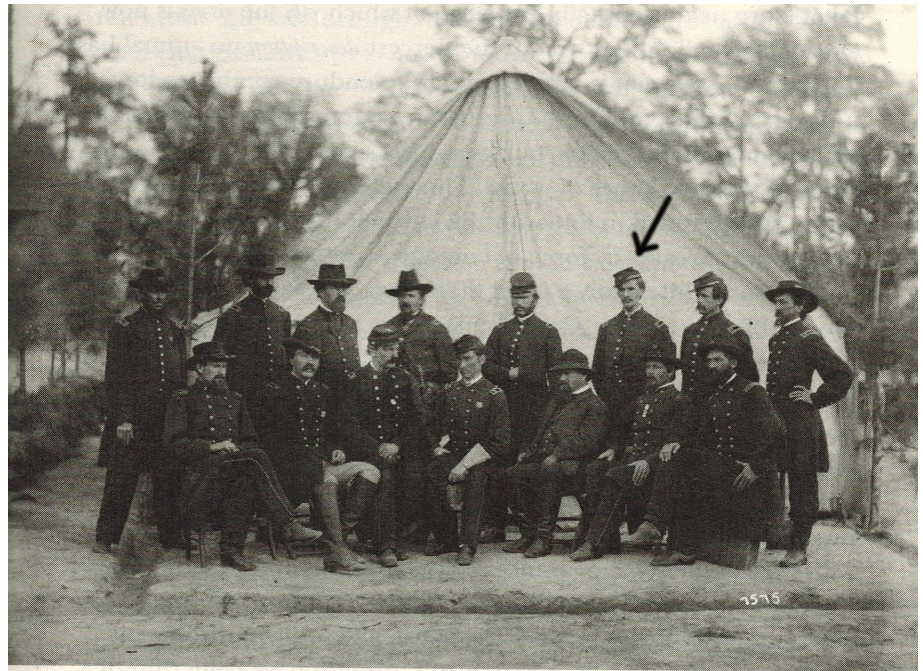
shelling and the wounded is graphic. In all, the 108th took 86 casualties, 16 killed and 70 wounded; this totalled one third of the regiment.

The corps followed Lee's retreat back across the Potomac, but little action followed. Wafer applied for sick leave and, on 7th September, he checked into a hotel in Georgetown (just south of Washington). On 26th, he returned to his regiment, seemingly recovered.

It was on 11th February that he was given a leave of absence of 15 days. It took him four days to get to Kingston from Brandy Station via Washington, New York City, Albany, Rome, and Watertown, all by train. He crossed at Cape Vincent, arriving in Kingston on 15th February. He mentions very little of his activities while here but, in a letter to his brother written in mid-March, he mentions the names of friends in Kingston: William Hickey; Royce; Kernehans; Maggie and Willy McLaughlin; Charley, Joe and Kitty Franklin; and his neighbours, the Vanhorns. [His home is still in the Vanhorn family).

The Overland Campaign began in May 1864 with Grant now in command of all US Armies. He attached his headquarters to the Army of the Potomac and directed its affairs. First was the Battle of the Wilderness, fought on 5th to 7th May, over some of the same fields as the Battle of Chancellorsville one year earlier. Here Wafer was very close to this intense action, leaving his orderly behind the lines because he was married with two children. As nightfall came on, he was directing corpsmen to carry the wounded of his regiment back to his field hospital where he joined them to carry out his relief work. He was then ordered to Division Hospital where he assisted in surgeries. One surgery was on Brigadier General Samuel Carroll, his brigade commander, digging a bullet out of his left arm. At the upcoming Battle of Spotsylvania, Carroll was wounded yet again in his left arm, resulting in its amputation at the shoulder. Wafer was the first to treat him and subsequently assisted in the surgery.

Following the Battle of the Wilderness, a draw, Grant pushed his army further south towards Spotsylvania Courthouse. Lee had anticipated this movement and got there first. Wafer wrote that the night of 11th -12th May at Spotsylvania was his worst night ever: so many wounded, so many seriously, in a cold rain. He was exhausted but managed some sleep between 2 and 6 a.m. The Battle of the Salient was the following day, led by the 2nd Corps which included his decimated 108th New York. Again, there was no victor at Spotsylvania, but Grant continued his southward push, fighting at the North Anna with Richmond only 10 miles south. On 31st May Wafer wrote his sister from Hanover Courthouse these words, "I can assure you that although the darkest pages in the annals of human misery are continually open before me, I manage to remain calm & helpful through all those trying times." Sounds like a dedicated doctor!



Surgeons of the Second Corps, 2^d Division at Petersburg, 1864. Francis M. Wafer, third surgeon from the right in the back row. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC

At Cold Harbour, northeast of Richmond and still about 10 miles away, the 2nd Corps conducted a major frontal attack against fortified positions and suffered a great loss. The 108th lost 4 killed and 17 wounded, one of whom was the regimental commander, only a Captain. The Colonel, Lt. Colonel and Major all had been replaced. This Overland Campaign had taken a severe loss in officers as well as enlisted men. The Union had lost 55,000; the Confederates 33,000. And the campaign had not yet ended. Grant now took a great gamble, dividing his army by crossing the wide James River on two pontoon bridges to attack Petersburg, some 20 miles south of Richmond. His army failed, resulting in a siege which began in early June 1864 and ended 10 months later with Grant finally breaking Lee's line the following 1st April 1865. Appomattox and Lee's surrender followed on 9th April.

Wafer's memoirs end abruptly with a letter to his brother dated 17th February 1865 at Hatcher's Run, the west end of Grant's line. At the end of that letter, he summarizes his experience in the American Civil War, "as for great events, are we not participators in & spectators of the greatest not only of the century but of History?"

His epilogue will follow in our next issue of Limelight in a much briefer essay, based entirely on Wells' book.

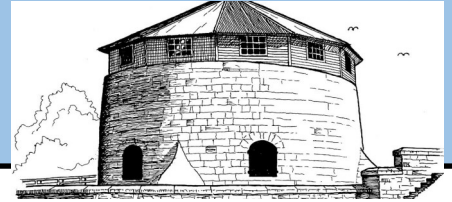
References:

- Wells, Dr. Cheryl: "*A Surgeon in the Army of the Potomac, Francis M. Wafer*", McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008. [The primary source for this article.]
- Barris, Ted: "*Rush to Danger*", Harper Collins, 2019. [Chapter 2]
- Brzezicki, Tom: editor of the Civil War Round Table newsletter: www.cwrtingston.org [Archives, search under 'doctor']

Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

murneytower.com



Murney Tower Museum Update

Simge Erdogan-O'Connor



What a year Murney had! 2022 was an amazing year and we're proud of everything we've accomplished. We welcomed 9,311 visitors to the museum, we created two new exhibits, organized four special events, launched five new educational programs, and had twenty outreach initiatives. From new exhibits to off-season activities, from collaborative events to educational programs, the museum staff worked enthusiastically to invent

and implement creative ways to stay connected with the community. The work will continue in 2023 and we have many exciting new things to look forward to! The museum has two major projects this year. The first is an audio tour which is made possible by a generous grant received from the Community Foundation for Kingston and Area. The works for the audio tour are currently in place and we are aiming to make the tour available both online at the museum's website and onsite at the tower in the summer of 2023. This project will move us a step closer to our accessibility goals and allow us to provide a unique and engaging museum experience to our visitors. This year, we will also develop last year's hit "Voices of Murney" exhibit further. Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the Regional Tourism Organization 9 (RTO-9) for exhibit development, we are currently buying display cases and developing informative panels, which will bring to light more aspects of the life of the people who lived in Murney Tower.

If you would like to know more about our activities and achievements in the last three years, join us at the Kingston Historical Society AGM on February 15th. The museum's director, Dr. Tabitha Renaud and I will be giving a detailed presentation on Murney Tower Museum's projects and activities and will have an in-depth discussion about its transformation.

Please mark **Wednesday, February 15, 2023**, on your calendars as this is when our **Annual General Meeting** will take place.

This is your opportunity to be informed of Council activities in 2022; to see reports from all members of Council, and to hear the treasurer's report. This will be a hybrid meeting, which means you can attend either at the Kingsbridge Retirement Community or via Zoom. Details about signing in to the Zoom meeting will be available shortly before the meeting.

The museum's director, Dr. Tabitha Renaud, and the curator/manager Simge Erdogan-O'Connor will be present to give an outline of the Murney Tower Museum's latest projects and activities.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT.

This is notice of Council's intent to present the following amendment to our constitution at the AGM.

CURRENT CONSTITUTION

Constitution Part A

Section III, Council

1. The conduct of the affairs of the Society shall be entrusted to a Council constituted as follows:

(a) Five Executive Officers, namely the

President,
Vice- President,
Secretary,
Treasurer
Immediate Past-President, and

(b) Seven elected Councillors whose responsibilities will include the Murney Tower, the newsletter, and the website.

2. Members of the Council, with the exception of the Past President are to be elected annually by the membership of the Society.

Amended 16 February 2022

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Motion to amend the constitution as follows:

Constitution Part A

Section III, Council

1. The conduct of the affairs of the Society shall be entrusted to a Council constituted as follows:

(a) Five Executive Officers, namely the

President,
Vice- President,
Secretary,
Treasurer

(b) 5 or 6 elected councillors.

Elected Terms

The President and Vice-president shall serve two-year terms. The remainder of the councillors shall serve one-year terms, either acclaimed or elected at the AGM. The immediate Past-president shall serve until replaced by a president leaving her/his role.

There shall also be 3 appointed councillors, namely the Chair of the Murney Tower Committee, the editor of *Historic Kingston*, and the editor of *Limelight*. These councillors will be appointed at the first Council meeting following the AGM and will have the same constitutional rights as the elected councillors.

These positions may also be filled by elected councillors.

M/S: Don Richardson/Warren Everett

Patrice Dutil has an interesting article on the recent treatment of Canada's first prime minister: **Six ways used to erase Sir John A. Macdonald.**

Read it in the 12 January 2023 edition of the National Post at

https://apple.news/ALMQDw_WBRvibHYepU9huBQ

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.

Welcome, new members

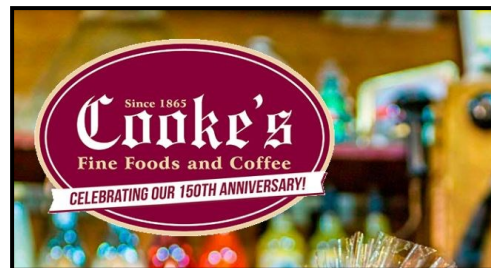
Melina Fragis Gary Rogers
Lola Hulton Don Bourke



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