

# Limelight

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

Volume 25 no 3 ISSN 1488-5565 March 2023



**KHS MEETING March 15, 2023, 7 p.m. In person or by Zoom**  
**Kingsbridge Retirement Community 950 Centennial Drive**

**Military historian Dr. Matthew Barrett will discuss his ground-breaking use of graphic art - cartooning - to convey historical narrative and analysis. Dr. Barrett's pictorial chronicles of events, such as the battle for Hill 70 in World War I, have been widely featured in the press.**

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



## ***Dr. Tabitha Renaud receives the KHS 2022 Award***

*In commemoration of the one hundred and twenty-ninth anniversary of the founding of the Kingston Historical Society in 1893, this award is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history.*

The award was presented at the Society's annual general meeting on Wednesday, February 15, 2023, in recognition of Dr. Renaud's outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history.

"Dr. Tabitha Renaud has served the City of Kingston with outstanding vigour and imagination. A historian by training – with an MA degree from the University of Ottawa and a doctorate from Queen's University – Tabitha initially proved herself as an insightful scholar of the early "contact" of Aboriginals and early European immigrants to eastern North America.

## ***Dr. Tabitha Renaud***

"In tandem with this work, she donned the hat of a public historian, mindful of the need to convey academic discovery to wider audiences. Beginning with an affiliation with Kingston's Museum of Health Care, Tabitha involved herself widely with the city's voluntary heritage network through the Kingston Association of Museums, convinced that heritage is best pursued through broad-front collective activity. In 2019, she was appointed Director of the Murney Tower Museum, an affiliate of the Kingston Historical Society. With imagination and forceful advocacy, Dr. Renaud broadened the museum's traditional military focus, making the museum a prism of the wider Kingston community's evolution, an evolution which she ensured now acknowledged Kingston's Aboriginal beginnings. She initiated seasonal internships, welcomed Doors Open visitors, introduced new technologies of display, initiated youth activities and gave the Tower an active web presence. Her tenure as director thus saw a dramatic professionalization and modernization of an 1840s military relic into a rejuvenated focal point for local heritage."

**MOLLY BRANT**  
**Remembering and  
Forgetting this  
Indigenous Woman**



**SUE BAZELY, MA**  
PHD CANDIDATE, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

Wednesday 8 March 2023  
Honouring International Women's Day  
Everyone is welcome  
285 Queen Street, Upper Salon  
Doors Open at 7 pm, Talk at 7:30 pm

Sponsored by:  
Frontenac Heritage Foundation



Photo Credit: Rob Mooy

## THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Established 1893*

### MAILING ADDRESS:

Kingston Historical Society  
P.O. Box 54,  
Kingston ON K7L 4V6  
[kingstonhs@gmail.ca](mailto:kingstonhs@gmail.ca)  
[www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca](http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca)

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*Please forward submissions to the Editor [betty.andrews@gmail.com](mailto: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.*

Welcome New Sponsor

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.*

**Secker Ross & Perry LLP**

Chartered professional accountants  
tax and business advisors

The Woolen Mill  
4 Cataragui St. Suite 300  
Kingston ON K7K 1Z7

T: 613.507.1209  
F: 613.544.8870

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

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Duncan McDowall, Programme Chair; Tabitha Renaud, Director of Murney Tower; Paul

Van Nest, Membership Chair; Peter Gower, Editor of Historic Kingston, and Webmaster

## President's Message

by Paul Charbonneau

February may be the shortest month of the year; however, at KHS, it was one of the busiest.

An excellent AGM followed by a well-deserved presentation of the annual KHS Award to Dr. Tabitha Renaud. Congratulations, Tab! You have accomplished so much in a very short time.

Then less than a week later KHS co-hosted, with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation, the launch of Dr. Robert Bank's latest book, **"Warriors and Warships: Conflict on the Great Lakes and the Legacy of Point Frederick"**.

Robert Frost said: "A cloud comes over the sunlit arch, a wind comes off a frozen peak, and you're two months back in the middle of March."

Whether a frozen peak or a frozen river I am sure March will hit us with spring in the morning and winter in the afternoon.

This month's edition of Limelight features the last part of Paul Van Nest's trilogy on Captain Francis M. Wafer, a Kingstonian in the American Civil War.

Dr. Duncan McDowall's piece on the Martello Towers, particularly our little piece of living history, Murney Tower, adds to the presentation at our AGM by Dr. Tabitha Renaud and Curator Simge Erdogan-O'Connor.

As we turn the page on the calendar, beware the Ides of March, a turning point in Roman history.



## A Kingstonian saves many lives in the American Civil War - Part 3 of 3: Epilogue

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 in Brockville and now lives in the area. One of her achievements is a book on Dr. Francis Wafer, based on his memoirs and letters about his service as an Assistant Surgeon from March of 1863 to the end of the war. I conclude his story with Part 3: the Epilogue

Although not stated in his memoirs, we can assume that Captain Francis M. Wafer continued with 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps as Assistant Surgeon, his regiment participating in the breakthrough on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1865 at Petersburg and the ensuing pursuit to Appomattox where Lee surrendered on 9<sup>th</sup> April. The Union Army marched “home” via Washington. The 108<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment ended the war in Smyth’s 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade, Hay’s 2<sup>nd</sup> division, Humphrey’s (Hancock’s) 2<sup>nd</sup> corps, and was part of the Grand Review in Washington on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. The regiment was subsequently mustered out on 28<sup>th</sup> May in Syracuse. Wafer arrived back in Kingston on 31<sup>st</sup> May but to no fanfare, except within his family. They must have been shocked at what they saw.

In the fall of 1865, he returned to medical school at Queen’s University and matriculated on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1867. He took up practice with Dr. Michael Sullivan, first at 82 Princess Street, then at 123 King Street. While maintaining his private practice, he taught at the Faculty of Medicine at Queen’s University and was on staff at the Kingston General Hospital. And he was active in his community, especially at St. Mary’s Cathedral. However, his health had been ruined by the war.

He returned from the war “emaciated” and “broken down”. He had left three years earlier with the health and strength of an athlete but it was not so in 1865. He had developed back pain in February 1865 at Petersburg, but the pain intensified upon his return. The cause was diagnosed as tumours, one on each side of his spine, which was so painful that they had to be suppured with an incision, a procedure to release the pus built up in a tumour. This was done on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1866 while he was still in school. The doctor performing the surgery also found two abscesses in his pelvis. Living with this pain, Wafer continued his practice until 1872 when he had to reduce his activity. At age 42, he was 5 feet, 9 inches tall and weighed 120 lb.

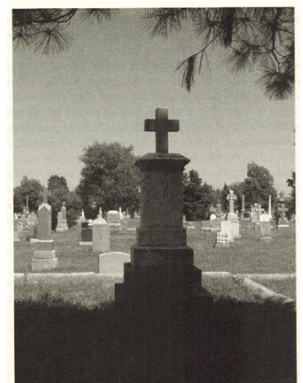
About this time, he decided that he might qualify for a Federal pension from the American government and hired a lawyer in Watertown. This was the start of a sorry story as the Pension Board threw up many hurdles, requiring affidavits from his fellow doctors, some of whom were hard to track down. In 1873 his disabilities confined him to bed for nine months, his tumours oozing pus through abscesses in his back. This is probably the period when he wrote his memoirs. By that time he’d have had access to the history of which he had been a part, which shows in his writings. It might also account for the abrupt ending of his memoirs. Recall that they ended in February 1865. Certainly, his story didn’t.

He died on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1876, 11 years to the day of Lee’s surrender to Grant at Appomattox, aged 46.

A funeral procession escorted his body from his home at 123 King Street to St. Mary’s Cathedral and his interment in St. Mary’s Cemetery. He was honoured by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Queen’s Alma Mater Society. He was survived by his father and mother and siblings John, Maggie, Agnes, Maria, Martha and Elizabeth.

Irony of ironies, his application for a pension was approved in May 1876, one month following his death. His father Peter tried but failed to receive a pension for the loss of his son. His mother Elizabeth died 28<sup>th</sup> January 1879 and his father Peter died 20<sup>th</sup> June 1888, 22 years following the death of his son, Francis Moses Wafer. **Reference:**

Wells, Dr. Cheryl: “A Surgeon in the Army of the Potomac, Francis M. Wafer”, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008.



Francis M. Wafer's Tombstone, St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery, Kingston, Ontario. Courtesy of Cheryl A. Wells, 2007

## ***A Towering Achievement on the Kingston Waterfront***

In the mid-1840s, Britain reinforced the fortifications of its Upper Canadian garrison outpost at Kingston. Still mindful of the lingering American threat posed by the War of 1812, a fear fanned by the tensions of the Oregon Crisis, British engineers built a string of five sturdy Martello Towers along Kingston's waterfront. Perhaps because of their deterrent power, the towers never fired a shot in anger. The Americans never came and after Britain pulled its troops home in the 1870s, the formidable towers fell into military obsolescence and dormancy.

In 1924, the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (forerunner to Parks Canada) signed an agreement with the Kingston Historical Society giving over management of the westernmost tower – Murney Tower – to the Society to showcase it as a museum celebrating Kingston's military past. Through the rest of the twentieth century the Murney Tower became a quietly successful tourist destination.

The twenty-first century, however, brought a dramatic expansion to that role. At the Society's annual general meeting on February 15<sup>th</sup> the membership was given a bracing update on the Murney Tower's recent reorientation as a cultural facility by its director, Dr. Tabitha Renaud, and its manager and curator, Simge Erdogan-O'Connor. Under their vigorous guidance, the museum has adopted policies designed to expand the engagement of the museum with a broadened Kingston community. The speakers outlined their five-point campaign to "modernize" the tower's appeal, while not abandoning its military heritage. This encompassed the adoption of new ways of outreach: an electronic newsletter, digitalization of collections and audio tours. Educational programs bringing in school children to special events and appeals to the community for Murney memorabilia extended this engagement. The Tower's artifacts have been subjected to modern preservation techniques and the building has been floodlit by night. Students have been hired as summer interns to prepare exhibits. Initiatives such as these have attracted wide publicity with museum's new dedication to "living history", attracting national coverage on CTV National News as well as local coverage on CKWS.

The fruit of all this imaginative rebranding has been to place the Murney Tower front and centre on Kingston's historical and tourism stage. In 2022, over 9,300 visitors walked up the ramp into the tower's precinct to discover its treasures and perspectives. Thank you, Tabitha and Simge.

### ***Announcement of New Awards***

***by Paul Van Nest***

#### ***Kingston Historical Society Annual History Awards for Kingston High Schools***

Council had been considering the topic of a major project and landed on the idea of an annual award in history to a top student in each of Kingston's nine secondary schools. These nine schools include the two French-speaking schools (Separate and Public) but not private schools. Our treasurer didn't flinch when we considered valuing the award at \$150 for an outlay of just under \$1350. We are assured that this amount would be welcomed and respected by the recipients.

A committee was formed, composed of President Paul Charbonneau, Secretary Don Richardson and me to pursue the idea. I contacted the Limestone Board first of all and consulted with Jessica Silver (Director of Student Services) and Corinna Dupuis of Loyalist.



Criteria were developed with Corinna and the committee and approved by Council. Announcements were sent to the schools last week and we are expecting up to 9 awards to be presented this June. Here are the criteria:

*This award is presented to a graduating student in each of the nine City of Kingston Secondary Schools who has shown an aptitude and passion for history in any of its many forms. As performance in grade 12-level Canadian and/or world history course (s) will be a factor, the student's teachers will have input into the selection of the successful recipient. The criteria may also include the candidate's intention of pursuing further education in the humanities and/or social sciences. By history, we include its many forms, such as archaeology, anthropology, cultural heritage, social history, museums, etc.*

We hope that you our members concur. Additionally, we may be asking for volunteers to make the presentations at each school's convocation, if invited by the schools to do so..

### Website News

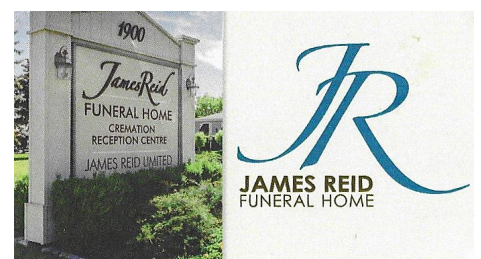
KHS has been given the remaining booklets from the now defunct Pittsburgh Historical Society. These include many, but not all, of the 'A Collection of Talks' series, and the 20th Anniversary booklet. Their contents can be accessed from the KHS website ([www.KingstonHistoricalSociety.ca](http://www.KingstonHistoricalSociety.ca)), using the tab Publications, and then Historic Kingston index. Many of the booklets are available for sale. The website also has an updated index to Historic Kingston, including the 2022 volume, #72.

### KHS Annual Membership Fee Changes

Peter Ginn, Treasurer

The Pandemic has had many negative impacts but it also provided the impetus for Council to find new ways to deliver our programs. We have made wider use of ZOOM, and found new cost- free meeting facilities for our monthly meetings for instance. These changes have reduced our costs and, by unanimous vote at the recent annual general meeting, the membership supported a reduced fee structure as shown below, beginning with the 2024 annual membership fees.

	Annual Membership
Family	\$50
Single	\$40
Institution	\$50
Student	\$10



**February 20 , 2023    Book Launch: *Warriors and Warships* by Robert D. Banks**

**Coming to the Point**

**by Dr. Duncan McDowall**

To celebrate Family Day and Heritage Month in Kingston, the Society joined forces with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation in the Memorial Hall of City Hall to welcome author Dr. Robert Banks. Dundurn Press has just published his book ***Warriors and Warships: Conflict on the***



***Great Lakes and the Legacy of Point Frederick.***

Against the beautiful backdrop of the hall and the serving of afternoon tea, Dr. Banks described the “on the ground” archaeology, archival research and digital reconstructions he used to document the thriving military establishment that once occupied Point Frederick (where present-day RMC stands) in the era of the War of 1812.

Dr. Banks conveyed much fascinating evidence of Kingston’s pivotal military importance as a bastion against American incursion. For instance, the *St. Lawrence* , a three-deck, 105-gun ship, larger than Nelson’s Victory, was constructed in Navy Bay. Kingston thus boasted the largest freshwater naval base in the world, something the famous American naval historian A.T. Mahan argued made it

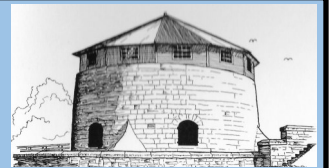
the strategic gateway to the Great Lakes. This and much more is detailed in Banks’ fine book, and in the upcoming 2023 issue of *Historic Kingston*.

**Murney Tower**

**Operated by the Kingston Historical Society**

***From the Murney Tower Annual Report***

**[www.murneytower.com](http://www.murneytower.com)**



**OUR MISSION**-The Murney Tower Museum NHSC is a public, non-profit museum which strives to connect visitors with Kingston’s military and cultural history through collection, preservation, research, and interpretation.

**OUR VISION**-At Murney Tower Museum, our vision is to create meaningful experiences and provide a sense of place for our community by representing Kingston’s distinct cultural and military heritage through programs, research, and interpretation as a designated NHSC.

**OUR VALUES**-As Kingston’s oldest museum, our values are as time-honoured and deep-rooted as our institution.

**Murney Tower is part of the March of Museums taking place at the Military Electronics & Communications Museum on March 13-17 from 10 AM through 3 PM.**

**For the event, we developed a special activity which recreates the Long Service of Good Conduct medal given to the soldiers of Murney Murney.**

**In addition to crafts, there will be special booths and performances (drummers, puppeteers, stories) <https://www.kingstonmuseums.ca/events/march-museums>**

**Since 2019**

**50% more visitors**

**100% growth in social media following**





## NEW MUSEUM INITIATIVE IN KINGSTON

### MUSEUMS OF KINGSTON

By Eva Barnes

The historic architectural landmark at the corner of Princess and Clergy Streets, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kingston, founded in 1817, will be welcoming visitors in the very near future to view two newly developed museum spaces adjacent to its majestic Victorian sanctuary.



In the fall of 2022, a small committee of volunteers cleared two unused vestries, restored the interiors, and curated displays of artifacts, pictures and furniture highlighting over two hundred years of church history and the role of St. Andrew's within the greater community.

Some of the featured items on view for visitors include a portable communion kit that survived the great church fire of 1888. The outer casing was charred, but the contents were spared, except for the stem of the small goblet, which was slightly bent by the heat.



There is a special Victorian corner devoted to the Machar family. The Rev. Dr. John Machar was a founder of Queen's College (later University) in 1841. His daughter Agnes, who grew up in the manse, became a famous Canadian writer, artist, social activist and environmentalist much before her time. Original family watercolour portraits of the era are on display.

Of note is a carefully preserved 'Sunday best' dress dating to 1911, which was worn to a church social before WWI. And there is a recreation of an 1860s young lady's manse gardening ensemble, complete with

bonnet. The gardens around St. Andrew's manse were once considered the loveliest in the city.

Those with an interest in military history will notice the commemorative wall plaques, which include a photo of Billy Bishop, the famous WWI flying ace. He carved his name into a back pew during his days as a cadet at RMC during a particularly long Sunday sermon.

It is envisioned that future museum tours could start at the open doors of the Barclay Chapel on Princess Street, and be led by a docent through the Penney Vestry and into the sanctuary with its formidable organ and many carefully preserved historic elements. The final viewing area would be the Gallery of Portraits, a second vestry, which displays pictures of the twelve ministers who served



Photos by Eva Barnes

the congregation during more than two hundred years. This special gallery also includes large Victorian era glass cabinetry containing many unique historical artifacts, complemented by formal furnishings from the 1800s.

*It is possible to take a personally guided preview tour, by appointment, of the new St. Andrew's museum spaces, Tuesday to Thursday mornings, by contacting the church office via (613) 546-6316. Museum visitors are also welcomed after Sunday morning services. Info at [www.StAndrewsKingston.org](http://www.StAndrewsKingston.org)*



*Welcome, new members*

David Craig  
Barbara Carr

John and Jean Mair  
Scott Henderson