

# Limelight

## Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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



### Kingston Historical Society Meeting

April 19, 2023

presented live at 7pm, in the theatre lounge of the

**Kingsbridge Retirement Community** at 950 Centennial Drive off Princess Street

and simultaneously offered via >>>Zoom

**John Grenville**, former Curator and Historical Research Officer at Fort Henry and long-time investigator of Kingston's military architecture will report on his research into the city's iconic

### ***Market Battery: Kingston's Forgotten Fortification***

The Market Battery was built in the mid-1840s along with Fort Frederick and three other Martello Towers during an era of uncertain relations with the United States. Its purpose was to defend Kingston, its harbour and the entrance to the Rideau Canal. It was turned over from the British to the Canadian government in the early 1870s, and the fortification wall along Ontario Street was demolished in 1875. Much of the stone was used elsewhere. By 1885 the Market Battery was gone completely. This well-illustrated presentation will examine where the Market Battery fits into the defence plan for Kingston, its construction, armament and operation, and the civic and commercial pressures that led to its disappearance from Kingston's landscape.



### **Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston Announces:**

*Skyline Investments* has donated the **S.S. Keewatin** to the Marine Museum. Built in 1907 in Scotland, and owned by CP Rail, 'The Kee' ferried tourists, settlers, and cargo on the Great Lakes until the 1960s. Of approximately 3,800 similar ships built in the UK between 1900 and 1920, only Keewatin survives. Following its transportation

from Port McNicoll this spring to a shipyard for repairs this historic artifact will be integrated into the Museum's extensive transportation collection covering the last 200 years of Great Lakes history.

## THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Established 1893*

*LIMELIGHT is published nine times a year, September to May.*

*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.*

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### Featured 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.*



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

## President's Message

*by Paul Charbonneau*

“April hath put a spirit of youth in everything.” – With Easter quickly approaching we turn our attention to our youth with an Eggs-stream Easter Fun at the Museum event in conjunction with the Museum of Healthcare; read more about this below.

Staycation became a well used word over the last few years; as you begin to plan your holiday time, consider visiting our local museums and historic buildings and landmarks. Find all the information you need to plan an ‘historic’ Staycation @ @ <https://www.kingstonmuseums.ca/explore>



At the March meeting of KHS Council, the following appointments were made: Betty Andrews - Editor of Limelight; Peter Gower - Editor of Historic Kingston; Dr. Tabitha Renaud – Director of Murney Tower Museum. As well, several members and volunteers were appointed to the Museum Committee: Chair – Dr. Tabitha Renaud; Peter Ginn; Don Richardson, Tanya Scott and Liz Watkins as members at large. Congratulations to all the appointees and thank you all for your willingness to serve in these vital roles with the Society.

*Still Standing*  
*Looking at Regional Architecture with Dr. Jennifer McKendry*  
*The Empire Life Building*

**“The New Commercial Bank is one of the sights of Kingston.”**

The *British Whig* reported on 21 April 1855:

The New Commercial Bank [now Empire Life Insurance Co., King East at William] is the handsomest erection of 1854. It stands in King Street, on the corner of William Street, vis-à-vis the Bank of Montreal [225 King E.]. It is a very large and a very elegant building with cut stone fronts, highly ornamented. Of the precise style of Architecture, we cannot speak; it is not Gothic, and it is not Grecian; it certainly belongs to none of the five recognized orders, and yet it is very stately, and very grand. But, by the way, why should the Moderns not originate orders, instead of copying so servilely from the Ancients? The design is by Mr [William] Hay, of Toronto, but superintended in Kingston by Mr [George Sr] Cliff. The interior is very elegant and does infinite credit to the Architect. It is very elaborately adorned and painted by Mr [Thomas] Savage, and cannot be surpassed in real beauty by any building of its kind in British North America. The New Commercial Bank is one of the sights of Kingston.

This is still a major sight in the city. Its fine stone carvings, mouldings and balconies are outstanding and its Renaissance Revival style a novelty to the newspaper in 1855. It was known as the Merchants Bank of Canada about 1870 (fig. 1).

On 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1931, architect Colin Drever called for tenders to build a one-storey wing along King Street for the Mutual Relief Life Insurance Company. By this time, the building had seen a number of changes in function, for example, a Catholic theological college, Regiopolis, in 1896; the James Richardson & Sons Ltd. in 1916; and an Oddfellows Hall in 1925 (fig. 2).

It was not until 1935 that Empire Life merged with Mutual Relief and the building became known as Empire Life. Designated in 1976 as of architectural value, it is of great importance to the city's heritage.

Fig. 1- Merchants Bank of Canada c1870  
(Private Collection)



Fig. 2– Oddfellows Building c 1926 Collection J. McKendry

Fig. 3 – Feature above the door



Fig. 4 – Empire Life

Fig.3,4 – Photos: J. McKendry





# The Lower Burial Ground - A Story of Survival

By John Grenville

The Lower Burial Ground (LBG) on the northeast corner of Queen and Montreal, has had a difficult life. After being laid out for the arrival of the Loyalists in 1783, it has had a church built in the middle, a significant fire, a church hall built in the northwest corner, a parking lot established on the east side, a wall that once protected it partially removed, and a 20<sup>th</sup> century structure built to join the church and hall. The graveyard has been described at various times:

The Cemetery has become the receptacle of filth, of the bones and offals of dead beasts; the play ground of idle and mischievous boys, and the place where some of the neighbours hang out their washings to dry. Several of the monuments are dilapidated, the railings round the graves broken down, and the enclosures of the ground, and the eastern gates in a ruinous condition. (*Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, 4 November 1843)

A stranger on entering this old grave-yard and casting a casual glance over it and noting its state would not for a moment suppose that those tumble-down piles of stones and broken fences mark the spots where the mortal remains of those who were first and chief among the early inhabitants were interred. . . . *Could not the newly-formed Historical Society [1893] take the matter into serious consideration and add some practical work to what they do in talk and on paper?* (*Kingston Daily News*, 31 March 1894)

Alas, to the shame of the Church having this God's acre in trust, and to the inhabitants at large, the hand of time and the elements, assisted by the despoiler and desecrator, have had full sway for nearly three-quarters of a century; with the result that the burial place has become a spot of desolation, with few of its monuments or headstones left standing. (Edwin E. Horsey, *The Story of Cataraqui, Fort Frontenac, Kingston*. Unpublished Manuscript. 1937)

These quotes over the course of almost 100 years demonstrate the difficulty in maintaining a graveyard that had its beginnings as the burial place for those arriving with the contingent of refugee United Empire Loyalists.

**Boys sitting in front of the Stuart Lair, probably in the 1890s, on an altar stone marker for the grave of one of the members of the Markland family. (Queen's University Archives, Kingston Historical Society Collection)**



The maintenance problems continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century when the west wall along Montreal Street was damaged in the early 2000s by a truck hitting it and then again in 2007 when a portion of the wall collapsed on its own. Doug Thompson, one of the parishioners of St. Paul's, was asked by the Rector to see what could be done without using parish funds. With that in mind, Doug took the lead with the formation of the Lower Burial Ground Restoration Society (LBGRS) with a focus on understanding the history and heritage of the Lower Burial Ground and conserving the graveyard and its monuments.

Since its formation the LBGRS has undertaken projects relating to the history of the site and the conservation of the monuments and structures: Bill Patterson and Brian Osborne compiled a comprehensive history of the site; the Forsyth monument, the Montreal Street wall and the Stuart Lair, three important landscape features, were stabilized; Alex Gabov, a Kingston area conservator with expertise in stone monuments, completed an assessment of the exterior heritage resources; a brochure and an interpretive panel were prepared to explain the history to visitors; and a website was developed to spread the word on this important site, who was buried there and the conservation work that was being done by the Society.



**This image was taken by photographer M.O. Hammond in 1923 from a position in the northeast corner of the graveyard, looking south towards the corner of Queen and Montreal Streets behind the trees. The photo shows the extent of the cast iron fencing, many more upright markers and the general condition of the Lower Burial Ground. The Forsyth monument (the roofed structure on the left) and the two more robust markers for the Macaulay family (in the centre of the photo behind the fencing) are still standing in the cemetery today.**

Both St. Paul's Church and its Church Hall were built in the graveyard in 1845-47 and 1872 respectively. While an effort was made to minimize the construction disturbance of the graves by digging only where needed for the foundation and not constructing a cellar, there is no question that burials were disturbed. The graves under the church were further disturbed by a destructive fire in 1855 when the interior and roof burned and collapsed onto the graves and markers below. In 2018 the Society received a grant from the City of Kingston's Heritage Fund (CKHF, administered by the Kingston Association of Museums (KAM)) to better understand how the area under the Church Hall had evolved. At first glance it appeared that it had escaped relatively unscathed and that the original stone markers were still standing. However, this was not the case.

In addition to the disturbance from building the foundation, over the years a significant amount of debris had been deposited, the area had been altered by the installation of modern services, and stabilizing work on the foundation walls had further changed the area. As a result of the work done in 2019 by volunteers under the guidance of a professional archaeologist (Sue Bazely), tons of carefully-screened debris were removed; pieces of memorial stones, foot stones and one complete grave marker were uncovered and a variety of church related artifacts were retrieved.

After several false starts in 2020 and 2021 that had to be abandoned because of the pandemic, another CKHF/KAM grant enabled additional work to be done in 2022. More debris has been removed, more foot stones have been found and careful recording and mapping has shown how much the existing memorials have been moved. None of the markers that are shown in a 1937 drawing are in the same place. In addition to the work under the Church Hall, a historian conducted oral interviews and researched newspapers and other sources to fill in the gaps in the site's 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century history.

Since its formation the Restoration Society has raised approximately \$150,000 from a variety of sources and supporters: "Friends of the Wall" campaign, The Community Foundation for Kingston and Area, the City of Kingston's Heritage Fund, the Frontenac Heritage Foundation, Jessup's Foods, the United Empire Loyalist Association, the St. Andrew's Society and numerous private donations. The leadership and work of the Board is dependent on a dedicated group of volunteers, especially Doug and Marianne Thompson, who were recognized in December 2015 by the Kingston Historical Society for their initiative and leadership in the Lower Burial Ground Restoration Society.

If you would like to support the work of the LBGRS (in addition to on-going maintenance, the Cartwright monument needs to be stabilized and a marker was badly damaged by a large tree branch that was downed in a storm), cheques payable to the LBGRS can be sent to Treasurer Marianne Thompson, 207-115 Barrett Court, Kingston, ON K7L 5H6. Charitable tax receipts will be issued.

For more information on the history of the Lower Burial Ground and St. Paul's Church, the work of the Restoration Society and who's buried in the graveyard, go to – [www.lowerburialground.ca](http://www.lowerburialground.ca)

**Under the Church Hall after project completion in 2019 and where additional work was done in 2022.**  
(Photographer: Sue Bazely)



### *Calling On You to Share Your Knowledge of Kingston*

**From the Director of Active Living at St. Lawrence Place Retirement Home, 181 Ontario Street :**

Each month I need presenters to come in to speak with the residents about different topics of interest.

I'm wondering if there is someone in the Kingston Historical Society who would be willing to come in and speak to the residents for 30-45 minutes, anytime in the next few months, about interesting aspects of Kingston's past.

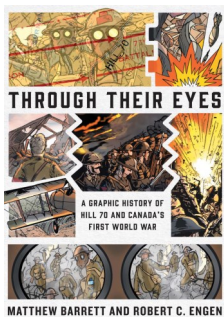
Thank you,

Sarah Cobb

613-544-5900 Ext. 2005

[Sarah.Cobb2@reveraliving.com](mailto:Sarah.Cobb2@reveraliving.com)





We tend to think of “history” as something researched and presented in print – by book, article and signage. New technologies such as film and internet blogs have in recent years expanded that bailiwick showing us that history’s message can be very protean. KHS members were reminded of this at their March meeting when military historian Dr. Matthew Barrett talked about his innovative adventure into what he calls “graphic history” – the artistic representation of history in book or booklet form. Graphic history is emphatically not comic book history. It represents the transfer of traditional historical research – in archives, through oral history and by treading over battlegrounds in this case – into an artistic narrative, not one fancifully made up, but one rooted in solid historical fact and supposition.

Barrett, a recent doctoral graduate from Queen’s, proved his traditional historian’s skill by publishing a book – *Scandalous Conduct* (UBC Press, 2022) – about the courts martial in the Canadian armed forces in the two great wars. He was then drawn into a project to bring greater recognition to the 1917 Battle of Hill 70, a battle often overshadowed by the more celebrated battles of Vimy and Passchendaele. The project not only aimed at erecting a long-overdue monument to those who fought on Hill 70, but also at arousing broad Canadian respect for that crucial moment in Canadian military history. To spread this message, Barrett turned not to the written word, but to the artistic representation of the strategy and deeds of the Canadians in action on that front. The result is his new book *Through Their Eyes: A Graphic History of Hill 70 and Canada’s First World War* (MQUP, 2022), a splendid mixing of meticulous archival research – ranging from the strategic calculations of the general staff to the grim experience of the soldier in the muddy trench – with a vividly colourful, page-by-page pictorial of the battle’s unfolding. In all this, Barrett (and his fellow author Robert Engen) breaks new ground in the way we confront the past.



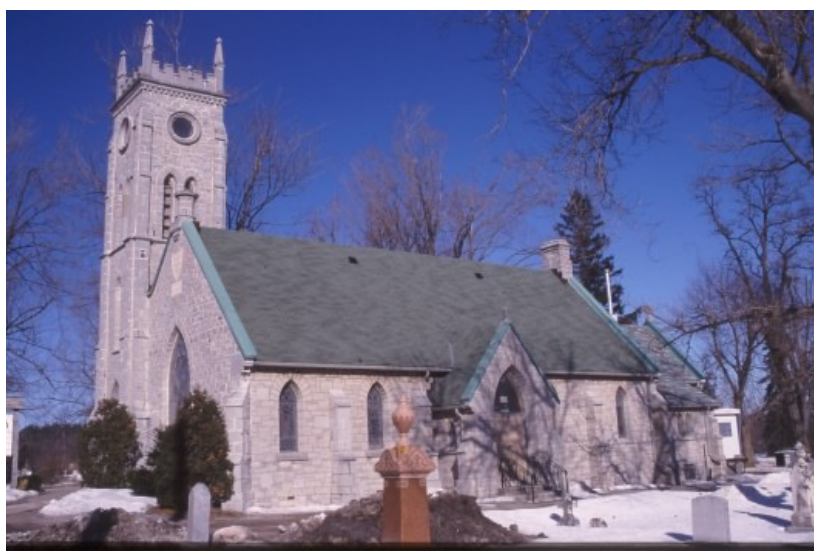
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Barrett provoked the KHS audience into pondering the implications and utility of this strikingly-new method of “telling” history. What license, for instance, does the artist-historian have to crafting the bias of his message? There can, however, be no denying that graphic history has finally placed Hill 70 in the pantheon of Canadian military achievement and in the lexicon of historical endeavour.

## Christ Church Cataraqui

**April 30<sup>th</sup> 2:00 pm**

Christ Church Cataraqui fronts on Sydenham Road within Cataraqui Cemetery. On Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm, Dr. Jennifer McKendry will talk informally about the church architecture and Peter Ginn will



join her to review the history of this iconic historically-designated Gothic Revival church. Attendees (no charge) are encouraged to park at the Parish Centre at 990 Sydenham Road and walk through the cemetery to the church.

## Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

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



\* Simge Erdogan-O'Connor, now the full time manager and curator of Murney Tower, was recently elected to the KAM Board of Directors.

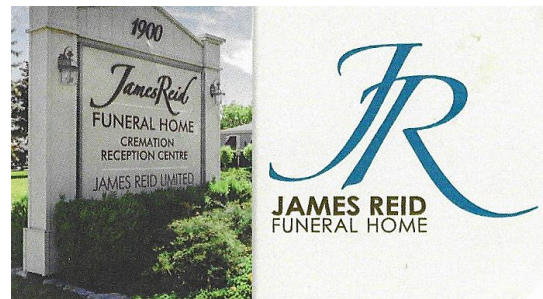
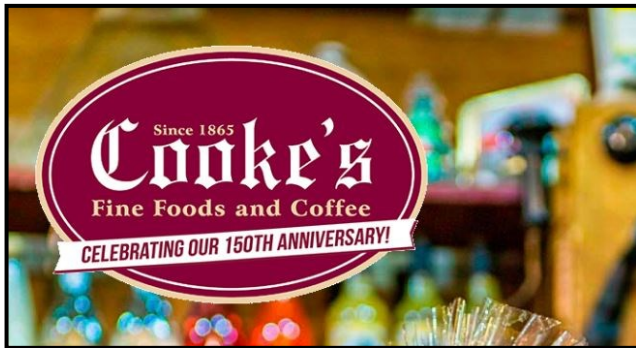
\* The city has given approval to place a Curbex sign outside the tower.

\* Created in partnership with Murney Tower Museum and the Museum of Healthcare at Kingston, "Eggs-tream Easter Fun at the Museum" is a family-friendly event which includes an Easter egg hunt and Easter-themed crafts. Easter eggs will be hidden in both museums waiting to be discovered! You will visit both sites and venture inside to find the hidden eggs and win a special prize.



*Welcome, new members*

**Karen Pagratis    Major John Cartwright**



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& Perry LLP**

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**HOMESTEAD**