

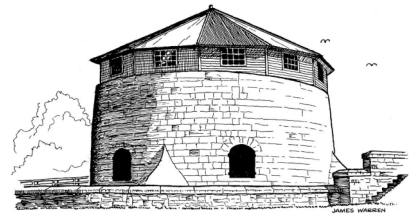
Limelight

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

Volume 25 no 5 ISSN 1488-5565

May 2023



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



Kingston Historical Society Meeting May 17, 2023

7pm at Kingsbridge Retirement Community ,
950 Centennial Drive off Princess Street, and , *also via Zoom*



The point is often made that our world of instantaneous communication through the internet was foreshadowed by the telegraph in the nineteenth century.

Graeme Roy, a docent and board member of the **Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario**, will give us an intimate glimpse of how the telegraph connected Canadians in the early years of Confederation. He will reinforce his lecture with a **demonstration of telegraphic equipment** brought from his extensive collection at the Smiths Falls museum.

Free bimonthly **2023 Heritage Hour talks** , a continuation of the Heritage Resource Centre Lecture Series running since 2014, will be held in Memorial Hall on the second floor of Kingston City Hall, 12-1 p.m., on select Thursdays in June, August, and October. Some Heritage Hour sessions will be filmed and made available on the City's YouTube channel. For information, visit [CityofKingston.ca/HRC](https://www.cityofkingston.ca/HRC)



Jane's Walk Weekend - Friday, May 5 to Sunday May 7, 2023

Walks are on, rain or shine. For information Visit [https://](https://janeswalkkingston.wordpress.com/)

janeswalkkingston.wordpress.com/

It is noted with regret, the death of Robert Cardwell, on March 24, 2023. He was a long-time member of the Kingston Historical Society and a 2005 winner of the KHS Award.

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

Reprinting of articles from the Limelight must be accompanied by an acknowledgement of the Society, the issue and date. Photo credits and by-lines must be retained.

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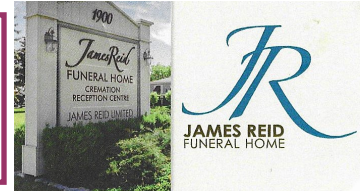
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Featured Sponsor

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.



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Dr. Duncan McDowall, Programme Chair; Dr. 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

"The world's favorite season is the spring. All things seem possible in May." – Edwin Way Teale

As we shake off the last vestiges of winter's attempts to stay around, we turn our thoughts and hopes for a month that gently eases us into a fabulous Canadian summer. A time of adventures and, perhaps, travel to enjoy museums, beaches, hiking or all manner of watersports.

The staff at the Murney Tower Museum are busy dusting off the artifacts, adding new displays and readying for a new season of visitors so they can enlighten them about our little gem of history.

On a sad note, later in this issue of Limelight, we acknowledge the passing of a giant of a man in Kingston's historic and heritage communities, Mr. Robert Caldwell. Barriefield Bob, as some referred to him, began the restoration of his home, the James Medley House, soon after arriving in Kingston in 1966. Robert gave back to Barriefield Village, Pittsburgh Township and the City of Kingston, with unending knowledge and passion for our history and heritage, as well as with humour. You will be missed Robert.



A posthumous letter of appreciation to John A.

By Brian Porter

DEAR JOHN A.,

It was at 10:15 p.m. on Saturday, June 6, 1891, that you left us (132 years ago). Your life and your record of accomplishments have been examined and written about by many scholars. Your latest biographer, Richard Gwyn of Toronto, said in his two-volume work that you are “the man who made us.” No Macdonald, no Canada, he has firmly stated, and I concur.



Professor Peter Waite of Dalhousie University in Halifax has written that, “Sir John Macdonald was and is tremendous company.” As I have come to know you through extensive reading, I would agree whole-heartedly.

This is a letter of appreciation and affection for “the better angels of your nature.” So often we Canadians choose to focus on the flaws and magnify the mistakes of our leaders. Today I choose to do the exact opposite.

Character matters, and you were a man of strong character, and many of your contemporaries spoke of your charm, your good-natured personality, your humour, friendliness and conviviality.

You said once, “As far as I am concerned, I’ve gone through life with one principle: Be to our faults a little blind and to our virtues always kind.”

You also said about flattery, that “almost anybody can take any amount of it.” So I shall proceed with some flattery, as I accent your virtues.

In a speech in St. Thomas, Ontario, back in 1860, you said “I am, like you who hear me now, a Canadian, heart and soul.” Thirty-one years later, during your final election in the winter of 1891, you said, “My sins of omission and commission I do not deny, but I trust that it will be said of me in the ultimate issue, ‘much is forgiven because he loved much,’ for I have loved my country with a passionate love.”

The Toronto Empire, that stalwart Conservative newspaper, in an epitaph in June 1891, wrote; “Canada was the object of his love and Canadian progress the product of his wisdom. To the people of Canada he gave, by and through the power of a popular party, the basis of its national structure and the bond of provincial unity.”

I admire your strong patriotic feeling for our country.

On a return visit to Prince Edward County on June 17, 1861, as Premier of Canada West and Attorney-General, you reminisced about your early days growing up there at Hay Bay and Glenora and having your first court case at the new Court House in Picton in 1834. The Picton Gazette quoted you as saying, that “long before you thought you should occupy your present position, you were an idle sort of boy, liking everybody and a good many people liking you.”

Alexander Campbell, your former law student, law partner, Cabinet colleague and later Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario wrote, “in tone of voice and manner he is as thoroughly a Bay of Quinte boy as if he had been born there,” and he added also, a good story teller and excellent mimic.

In her diary on July 6, 1867, your wife Lady Agnes wrote that, “ He is so equable and so good-natured that being near him is always refreshing. I tell him that his good heart and amiable temper are the great secret of his success. He is so thoroughly patient and gentle in spirit. It is remarkable in so hard-worked, so busy and so thoughtful a man..... The humblest, least assuming, most gently judging of mankind.”

Your friend of many years and avid supporter, Eliza Grimason in Kingston, a Belfast native and owner of Grimason House on Princess Street (your election headquarters over the years) said at that sad time, “ There’s not a man like him in the livin’ earth. I hope the lord will spare him for many a year ... for what will become of the country without him?”

And on the occasion of that anomaly in Kingston in 1878 when you lost your seat in the election, Eliza wailed that “ I went around the next day cryin’ ‘til I hadn’t an eye in me head.”

On June 7, 1891, the day after your death, David Creighton, editor of the Toronto *Mail* wrote to Martin Griffin, the Librarian of Parliament, “ I have never realized till this, how I have personally loved the old man.”

Such devotion, such support – how you inspired so much loyalty and affection!

Sir John Willison, editor of the Toronto *Globe* from 1890 to 1902, which under founder and editor George Brown had kept you under relentless attack, wrote in his *Reminiscences, Personal and Political* (1919), “Sir John Macdonald ... was a profound student of character. He had humour, adaptiveness and readiness. He could break the force of an attack with a story or epigram. He had that mysterious quality of personal magnetism, which gives to its fortunate possessors a strange and mighty power over their kind. ... He deemed no man beneath his notice He had clear and definite ideals. He could face a popular clamour with signal courage.”

It was no common man who so touched a nation’s heart and as time passes we see his stature more clearly and forget the way in which some things were done in gratitude for all that was achieved.”

So many of your contemporaries talk of your spirited liveliness. One reporter noted, “ His physical alertness still matched his astounding buoyancy of spirits,” when at age 74, on June 7, 1889, you received an honorary degree at the University of Toronto. He went on to say, “ He was an old man with a strangely youthful elasticity of spirit.”

You also had an ability to laugh at yourself, to not take yourself too seriously. There was that time in Toronto when an apprentice barber held your nose in order to shave your upper lip. You quipped, “ You’re the only one who can lead me by the nose and you have your hands full.”

Lord Dufferin was Governor-General from 1872 -1878 and wrote a dispatch home saying, “ Macdonald is charming in conversation, gentleman-like, with excellent manners, quick apprehension good-natured, placable and magnanimous, with a great faculty for managing other people.”

In a letter to Lord Kimberley at the Colonial Office in October 1873, Dufferin wrote that you were “very popular even among his opponents Above all things it is remembered that it is to his skill, talent and statesmanship that the Dominion owes its existence.”

Sitting across from you in the House of Commons in 1887 – Charles Langelier, Liberal M.P. from

Montmorency, painted this word portrait, “ His eyes lively and his look pleasant, a charming smile, an enormous mass of curly hair, a slim build, his walk an elegant nonchalance and a nose that made up his whole glory.”

Your loyal, long-time cab driver, Patrick Buckley in Ottawa, summed it up well to the Toronto *Empire* reporter as you lay dying, “ He is the most whunderful man in the worruld. Dear, dear they say there is no hope. My, my his like will never be seen in Canada again.”

You connected well with all levels of society. Sir John and the Great Coalition, which brought you and all of the Fathers of Confederation together at Charlottetown and Quebec City in 1864, has led to a successful nation in the world today – a prosperous, trans-continental, bicultural, federal parliamentary democracy. Well done Sir John!

Affectionately
yours,
Brian Porter



Brian Porter, a former teacher from Brockville, has, for many years, been a John A. Macdonald impersona-

Comments excerpted from the Kingstonist newsletter of April 6, 2023, regarding the acquisition of the *S.S. Keewatin* by the Marine Museum

“The people in Kingston are getting a gem, certainly. But the people from Port McNicoll are even happier because it’s going to save their ship forever.”

“The Friends of Keewatin, as a group, have met and decided that the best place for her is Kingston,” Conroy emphasized. “That’s why they’re all here right now... working on the ship... putting everything together to send it to Kingston, all being done by volunteer labour. So, to say that the town is against [it is] such nonsense.”



MMGL released a statement which reads in part, “The Museum was approached as a home for the Keewatin and responded as part of our mandate and responsibility for Canadian cultural heritage property relating to the Great Lakes. We have not ‘appropriated’ the ship – we have accepted a donation after being approached as a potential home for the vessel.”

Keewatin at rest in Saugatuck Photo from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Robert Cardwell

October 8, 1936 – March 23, 2023



I met Robert Cardwell in the fall of 2016, when he, as program director of the Pittsburgh Historical Society, invited me to give a presentation at a Society meeting. I became a member of the So-

ciet that same evening. It didn't take me long to appreciate the tremendous impact that this gentleman had on the Kingston District of Pittsburgh (former Pittsburgh Township before the City of the Kingston amalgamation in 1998), the Village of Barriefield and the general Kingston Area. Robert's knowledge of local history, and his exceptional dedication to the preservation of its historical heritage, are legendary.

Robert arrived in Barriefield from Peterborough in 1966 and moved into the beautiful 166-year-old historic 'James Medley' limestone House on James Street. He lovingly restored that notable home, with his passion for local historical preservation.

Immediately before coming to Barriefield, Robert studied at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, and embarked on a career as a graphic artist for the Department of National Defence. His artistic skills were often visible in his work on local history and heritage projects.

For about four decades, Robert was active in a number of historical and heritage organizations in the Kingston area. He was a founding member of the Pittsburgh Historical Society in which he served in many roles, including president. He was chairperson of the Pittsburgh Township Local Architecture Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC). He wrote, edited, and published numerous articles, as well as having given many oral presentations on local history and heritage topics at various venues in the Kingston area.

Robert was a long-time member of the Kingston Historical Society. At one point, he served as curator and treasurer on the Murney Tower National Historic Site Museum Committee. In December 2005, the Kingston Historical Society presented Robert with an award recognizing his 'outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history.'

Robert had a significant influence on the growth of the Village of Barriefield. He helped the Barriefield Village Association in its successful effort to achieve Provincial Heritage Conservation status for the Village in 1980. In 2014, he was deeply involved in the 200th Anniversary Heritage Festival of the Village, for which he was awarded the Lt. Governor's Ontario Heritage Award. He co-authored the delightful, commemorative Book entitled, *Barriefield: Two centuries of Village Life*. Christine Sypnowich, also a co-author of the book and a village resident, offered some thoughts, shared by practically everyone, who knew Robert. 'Barriefield Bob', as she liked to call him, was a 'friendly and kind person who saw the best in people. He played a pivotal role in the conservation of the village's heritage which ensured it remain such a special place' and '... he spoke with compassion and thoughtfulness about the people in his life'.

Robert has left a solid foundation for future generations to carry on his mission of preserving the historical heritage of Pittsburgh District 12.

Thank you, Robert, for your generosity of character, skills, and lasting gifts. You will long be remembered.

Gord Sly (Former president of the Pittsburgh Historical Society)

6 JUNE COMMEMORATION SERVICE of the DEATH OF SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

The KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY invites you to remember Sir John A. Macdonald on Tuesday, June 6, 2023. Please join us at 1:30 p.m. in Kingston's Cataraqui Cemetery to remember Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John Alexander Macdonald, who died on this day in 1891.

This year our guest speaker is Dr. Duncan McDowall of Queen's University. He is noted for the op-ed pieces and essays in popular history he has contributed to such national publications as *The National Post*, *The Queen's Quarterly*, *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*. His recent publications include *The Sum of the Satisfactions*, on Canada's highly-acclaimed system of national accounts, and *Another World: Bermuda and the Rise of Modern Tourism*. In 2016, Dr. McDowall wrote a history of Queen's University since 1961, under the title *Queen's University, Volume III, 1961-2004: Testing Tradition*.

His address is titled *"Sir John A. Swings on the Pendulum of History."*

Following Dr. McDowall's talk wreaths will be laid at Sir John's graveside.

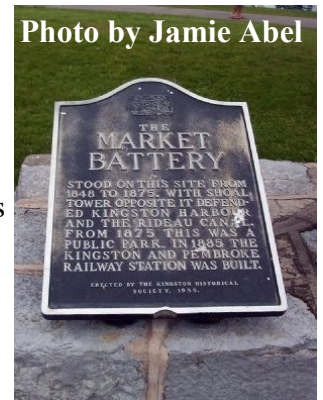
Before and after the ceremony, visitors are welcome to tour the historic and picturesque Cataraqui Cemetery, which is now a National Historic Site.

Speaker's Corner

by Peter Gower



John Grenville has long been involved with historic sites and Kingston history beginning at Fort Henry as a student in the Guard and later as Curator and Historical Research Officer at the Fort. John got his undergraduate degree and his MBA at Queen's and studied history at Queen's, Dalhousie and St. Mary's. He worked for Parks Canada in public program development and operations at the Halifax Citadel and then at Bellevue House as Area Superintendent. In his last position with Parks Canada before retirement he was Historic Site Program Manager for Eastern Ontario. He has been a Vice-President and Treasurer of the Kingston Historical Society and a member for as long as he can remember. His parents before him were also long-time loyal members. He would have become President but for his posting to Halifax. Since retirement he has been enjoying the opportunity to do more research and writing even venturing out of his comfort zone in the 19th century and into the 20th century with research on the Bell Telephone Company and the development of wartime housing in Kingston. John's most recent presentation to the Society was on the defence of the western approaches to Kingston during the War of 1812 with a focus on the last surviving blockhouse known locally as Rooney's Castle. In the year when we had no meetings, John wrote a paper for *Historic Kingston* on Snake Island and its military use beginning with the War of 1812. This month, **John Grenville** spoke about the **Market Battery: Kingston's Forgotten Fortification**. (cont'd next page)

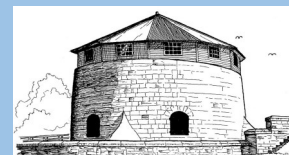


The Market Battery was built in the mid-1840s along with Fort Frederick and three other Martello Towers during an era of uncertain relations with the United States over the Oregon crisis, and just where Canada's southern boundary would be. The Battery's purpose was to defend Kingston, its harbour and the entrance to the Rideau Canal. 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 and well-received presentation examined where the Market Battery fit 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. Many of the audience expressed surprise that it had existed. I suspect Confederation Park will be receiving some new visitors this summer who will look for the visible remains.

Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

www.murneytower.com



Curator-Manager Recent Activities

- *in partnership with the Kingston Regional Heritage Fair, visited a grade 7 classroom with a hands-on collection
- *recorded a video about the Murney Tower with Beyond Classrooms Kingston as part of their school program
- *developing new informative panels for the basement rooms
- *getting all scripts, promotional materials and exhibit texts translated into French
- *getting ready for the summer season: staff uniforms, brochures, carrying exhibits from storage



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Photo by Vincent Durant

Determined to see every epoch in its own terms (as opposed to the terms dictated by his epoch), he searched for the ideas and tendencies that rule it, comprehending rather than passing judgment, applying scientific principles where, before, murky humanistic ones had prevailed...a methodology he summed up...how it really was. Re historian Leopold von Ranke (1795 - 1886) Judy Jones and William Wilson