

Limelight

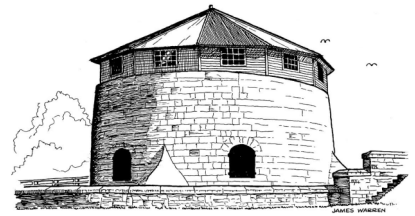
Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

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.



The Kingston Historical Society Award Nominations Request

The Kingston Historical Society Award is given to individuals, groups and institutions in recognition of their contributions to the preservation, understanding and interpretation of local Kingston history. Kingston Historical Society members are asked to nominate those that they believe meet these criteria. Please send nominations by email to Paul Charbonneau at Bearsden1017@hotmail.com or by letter to Chairperson, KHS Awards Committee, Box 54, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 4V8.

Include contact information for your nominee and the reasons for your nomination.

The deadline for nominations is December 31, 2023.

The awards will be presented at the KHS/FHF event on February 20, 2023, which will be held at the Memorial Hall in City Hall.

Ear to the ground

Elizabeth Durno reporting on events of interest to history buffs

Just in time for Christmas Kingston Ornament is releasing four ornaments, two of which celebrate our historical sites: CKWS Television Building, built in 1955 is one of Kingston's first modernist commercial buildings. The tennis club on Napier Street. The Club is 100 years old this year.

The Empire Life Building at 243-263 1/2 King Street East has been sold to local developer Jay Patry. Built in 1853-1854 this building is located on the site of Kingston's first jail. It has served as a bank, office for prominent grain merchants and a high school for boys before becoming an office for insurance companies.

The Fairfield-Gutzeit House, 341 Main Street, Bath, is undergoing extensive renovations thanks to an Ontario Trillium grant. Originally built in 1795 by the Fairfield family of Vermont, loyalist migrants, this Georgian style house will be closed for the 2023/24 season.

Artifacts related to wartime healthcare from the **Museum of Health Care of Kingston** have been featured in an episode of the History Channel's documentary-series 'Our War'. The episode features historian nurse Jill Galant as she investigates the story behind a photo of her great-great aunt Rena McLean, a PEI nurse who was killed on a hospital ship in June 1918 during the First World War.

It is noted with regret, the death of Colonel A. Britton Smith on October 30, 2023, a Life Member and sponsor of the Kingston Historical Society.

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.

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.

HOMESTEAD

President: Paul Charbonneau Vice President: Peter Gower Past President: Vincent Durant Treasurer: Peter Ginn Secretary: Don Richardson
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President's Message

by Paul Charbonneau

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is time for home." — Edith Sitwell

The very successful 2023 Lecture Series has concluded and the line-up below for 2024 looks equally as thought provoking and enlightening – from cultural history of the Black community in Kingston to railway research to “vice” in the 19th/20th century in Kingston to military history to brewing in Kingston to architectural history of this great city we call home. I look forward to seeing you all in person or on Zoom for what I believe is one of the most important accomplishments of our Society.



Thank you, Peter Gower, for the illuminating tribute to one of Kingston's own sons, Colonel Arthur Britton (Brit) Smith. I only met Brit once; however I will never forget his passion to help, and our city is the better for his love of helping his fellow citizens.

In February the “Kingston Historical Society Award” will be presented at the Heritage Month event hosted with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation. Please muse over nominations and submit them before December 31st, 2023.

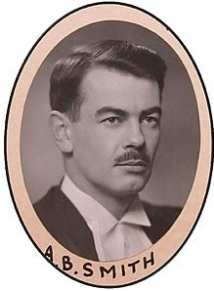
No matter what faith or manner in which you may celebrate the upcoming holidays, be led by kindness and hold near those that most fulfill your life.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays.

"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right." — Oprah Winfrey

Colonel Arthur Britton Smith, CM, OOnt, MC, CD, KC, 10 May 1920 – 28 October 2023

By Peter Gower, based on Frank B. Edwards obituary of Brit in the Globe and Mail, 8 November



Brit, as he was best known, died peacefully on 28 October, aged 103. Born in Kingston on 10 May 1920, to Cyril and Edna Smith, he always had the army on his mind and on his 15th birthday he joined Kingston's 32nd Field Battery. He graduated from RMC in 1940, and by August was in England with the Royal Canadian Artillery. When he reached France on 7 July 1944, Capt. Smith was a troop commander in the 4th Field Regiment in charge of four 25-pounder gun crews. He rode his lightly armoured Bren gun carrier to the front line on 20 July, going into action at Troteval Farm with Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, as a forward observation officer (FOO).

He disguised himself as an infantry rifleman and directed a creeping barrage that delivered a moving curtain of explosives to destroy enemy positions. After the Farm was captured, he identified targets and co-ordinated defence of the farmyard until he was injured by a grenade and hit by machine gunfire. Machine guns raked his carrier as he raced back to his own lines. He was awarded the Military Cross for "his coolness and bravery under heavy fire as well as his complete disregard for his own safety." His luck ran out four days later when his vehicle hit an anti-tank mine. He was shot in the head but was rescued before bleeding to death.

He returned to Kingston and married Sally Carruthers. By 1948, he was practicing law in Kingston and dabbling in real estate. He continued his real-estate pursuits as a sideline to his law practice and averaged a new apartment building a year. In 1954, he incorporated his real-estate business as Homestead Land Holdings Ltd. and raised his ambitions.

While Homestead is generally well regarded by individual tenants, its high-profile projects have regularly met fierce opposition from community groups. The company has faced long fights, and occasional defeats, over proposed developments in prime locations along Kingston's waterfront and in historical neighbourhoods. City councillor Conny Glenn notes his complex position: "one foot in the past and one foot in the future. Despite the conflicts, he was appreciative of heritage.... It wasn't a perfect situation, but he had good intent."

Mr. Smith had many other interests beside law and real estate. He joined the Princess of Wales Own Regiment and became its honorary commanding officer. He served three terms on city council in the 1950s.

He invested money as well as time in his local interests. When road construction blocked access to the RMC Memorial Arch, he shouldered much of the cost to relocate it, using his own construction crews to rebuild its limestone walls; several years ago, he purchased 1,400 white pith helmets to be worn by cadets with their scarlet tunics, reviving a long-time tradition that the government refused to fund.

Through his foundation, Mr. Smith gifted millions of dollars to Queen's University's medical and nursing schools, St. Lawrence College, the United Way, and Kingston hospitals. When the City failed to guarantee a permanent home for the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes in 2019, he funded the purchase of its original lakefront facility from a rival developer for \$3.2 million. In 2022, the Smith-Homestead Foundation donated \$1 million to Home Base Housing, a charity for disadvantaged youth. Most Kingston fund raising groups would, early in their discussions, remember "There's always Brit Smith."



He was named to the Order of Canada in 2019. On his 100th birthday he playfully talked about his money with the Kingston Whig-Standard. "What else can I do with it?" he asked. "When you get to my age, it's hard to figure out a way to spend money. I'm too old for most things."

Kingston Historical Society mourns the death of Life Member Colonel Arthur Britton Smith, CM, OOnt, MC, CD, KC.

Kingston Historical Society 2024 Lecture Series

Wednesday, January 17th: Professor Gordon Dueck of the Queen's history department will talk about his research into the cultural history of the Black community in Kingston under the title "Barbers in Blackface? African-Canadian Musicians in Fin-de-Siecle Kingston."

Sunday, February 18th @ 2:00 pm in the Memorial Hall of City Hall: In conjunction with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation, the Society will celebrate Family Day/Heritage Month in Ontario with a lecture by architectural historian Dr. Jennifer McKendry. Her talk will showcase her latest book *Architects Working in the Kingston Region 1920-2000*. Books will be available for purchase and a high tea will be served

Wednesday, March 20th: Kingston railway way historian Eric Gagnon will talk on his extensive railway research under the title "Two Miles, Two Tracks, Two Railways, To Obscurity." Eric's most recent books – *Smoke on the Waterfront* and *Stories on the Waterfront* – have focused on the railway's impact on Kingston's economy, especially the Hanley Spur which connected our waterfront to the Grand Trunk/CN main line.

Wednesday, April 17th: Queen's doctoral student Margaret Ross will talk about her research into the problem of "vice" in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Kingston and the City's attempt to control its sex trade. She will draw on her article "'Your Town is Rotten': Prostitution, Profit and the Governing of Vice in Kingston, Ontario, 1860-1920s," recently published in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*.

Wednesday, May 15th: Military historian and first Deputy-Director of History and Heritage at the Department of National Defence, Ian Macpherson McCulloch, will talk on his 2022 book *John Bradstreet's Raid 1758*. The raid, which saw French-held Fort Frontenac fall to Bradstreet's troops, proved a pivotal point in the so-called French and Indian War in supplying the British-American army with effective tactics later used in the war along the Niagara and St. Lawrence fronts.

Thursday, June 6th: The Society will host the annual commemoration of Sir John A. Macdonald at his graveside in Cataraqui Cemetery. Details to be announced on the Society website nearer the date.

Wednesday, September 18th: Kingston lawyer and historian of Ontario's widespread, community-rooted nineteenth-century brewing industry, Alan McLeod, will discuss his research into Kingston brewing and its role as precursor of today's bustling craft brewing industry.

Wednesday, October 16th: William Galbraith will draw on his biography *John Buchan: Model Governor General* to illustrate the life of famous Scottish author – perhaps best remembered for his thriller *The Thirty-Nine Steps* – and Canadian Governor-General John Buchan to provide a broad context of Buchan's lasting impact on Canada, and in particular Kingston, where Buchan's papers and library were left to Queen's.

Wednesday, November 20th: Well-known local architectural historian and archaeologist John Grenville will discuss the interesting career of architect Ernest R. Beckwith (1879-1963) who worked in Kingston as City Engineer and operated as an architect in the years before World War I, leaving a built legacy in both residential and commercial Kingston still evident today.

Speaker's Corner

by Dr. Duncan McDowall

The “Dark” Side of Kingston Heritage

The Society's November lecture obliged it to somewhat revise the long-standing upbeat perception of Kingston's heritage – limestone, Macdonald, Loyalism – and see it in a new and amplified light. Kaitlyn Macdonald, a doctoral student at Queen's, reminded us that the city is now frequently portrayed in an unfamiliar, more sinister light, one that accentuates a less positive, less upbeat side of its evolution. She reminded us of how the powerful touristic pull that such phenomenon as the popular prison tours of Kingston Penitentiary and the annual spook-fest at Fort Fright have insinuated themselves into our local sense of heritage.

Kaitlyn is applying her background in “public history” to this newfound orientation. Public history investigates the way historical events are staged for popular consumption by museums, in exhibitions and in heritage promotion. In the past, the tendency has been for public history to direct its focus on events of national uplift. More recently, however, that focus has also foregrounded less savory, less congenial sites of historical memory – cemeteries, executions, social upheavals, etc. This has given rise to “dark tourism.” Perhaps most conspicuous in this vein of active history are the haunted walks many communities offer and such attractions as Kingston's penitentiary tour.

Dark tourism invites intelligent scrutiny. How is it researched and presented? How does it resist ghoulish voyeurism and find a balance between credibility and sensationalism? How does it ensure the inclusion of all the “voices” involved in a phenomenon? How does the historian patrol its veracity? How should the tourist approach such performances of history? Should it be subject to ethical and moral checks? Kaitlyn's pursuit of these thorny questions has all the making of a groundbreaking doctoral thesis and ultimately, in the spirit of good public history, an engaging book and probably many enticing events.

Visit: www.queensu.ca/history/people/macdonald-kaitlyn

Alexander Henry - Icebreaker

Alexander Henry, the Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker that has been replaced at the marine museum by the S.S. Keewatin, has its own interesting history.

The ship, launched July 18, 1958, was built at the Port Arthur shipyard, and named after a fur trading pioneer who gained recognition for befriending Ojibwa tribes. Among them was the minor chief Wawatam, who adopted Henry as a brother.

The icebreaker entered service in July 1959 with the Department of Transport's Marine Service as CGS Alexander Henry using the prefix "Canadian Government Ship". In 1962, the ship was transferred to the newly created Canadian Coast Guard, becoming CCGS Alexander Henry with its homeport at Canadian Coast Guard Station Parry Sound.

The ship and its crew worked on maintaining the aids to navigation system—fixed, floating, and electronic aids that help determine position and course, indicating best or preferred routes and warnings of danger. They also transported lighthouse keepers, along with supplies, to and from seasonal lighthouses. Though manned with a crew of 34, the ship had a sleeping capacity of 51.

In 1984 an explosion in its engine room took the ship out of service. Repairs were not undertaken as its technology was deemed obsolete; the ship was decommissioned and was given to the Marine Museum to be on display in Kingston. The Alexander Henry served from 1986 until 2016 as an attraction at the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes (recently renamed The Great Lakes Museum), operating for some time as a bed and breakfast during the summers. In August of 2016, when the museum property was sold by the government to a private developer, the ship lost its berth. It was moved to a wharf near Prinyer's Cove in Prince Edward County, Ontario, while its disposition was discussed. One of the options considered was sinking the ship, converting it into a diving attraction (cost \$422,000). Another was having the ship cut up for scrap metal (cost \$326,000). A third was to sell Alexander Henry to Thunder Bay, where the vessel originated. The Alexander Henry returned to Thunder Bay after 30 years away, towed there at a cost of \$250,000 (partly paid for with \$125,000 from the city of Thunder Bay and \$50,000 from the city of Kingston). Charlie Brown, chairman of the Lakehead Transportation Museum Society, headed the movement to have the Alexander Henry returned to Thunder Bay. The Lakehead Transportation Museum Society purchased the vessel for \$2. Alexander Henry departed Kingston on 20 June, 2017, and arrived in Thunder Bay on 28 June. The vessel was docked temporarily at the C.N. Ore Dock until a permanent site was ready at the Pool 6 site along the city's waterfront. The museum ship opened to public tours on July 18, 2018, marking the 60th anniversary of her 1958 launch at the Port Arthur Shipbuilding Company.

Information is from an article by Ryley Fingler, June 18, 2017, in Thunder Bay's Chronicle Journal, from an August 2018 article by Laurie Abthorpe in the Walleye digital magazine and from Wikipedia.



CBC photo

Opening of Alexander Henry
to the public in
Thunder Bay, July 18, 2018

Still Standing

Looking at Regional Architecture with Dr. Jennifer McKendry

STONES GABLES: “the handsome new home of T.A. McGinnis”

In 1923, Thomas A. McGinnis (1887-1958) requested to purchase a large property to be subdivided from the government land, on which stood St Helen's. To the west was Alwington House (demolished in 1958 after a fire). His stone house (figs. 1 & 2), built the next year, would become the centrepiece between these two prestigious residences. Today it is known as 462 King West and, since 1984, has been owned by the government.

It is logical that McGinnis chose stone as his building material, given that he was part-owner of a construction company, McGinnis & O'Connor, that had quarries and specialized in road construction. The texture of the exterior walls is deliberately rough stonework, as favoured by the fashion of the time. The steep-pitched roof, interrupted by a large gable and with pronounced chimneys, plus the various forms of the house, attached lower wing (added in 1929) and garage give it a timeless quality. The south façade, facing the lake, is warmed by the sun, which records the time of day on a sundial incised with “Stone Gables 1924.”

Despite changes in ownership and government renovations, the interior still possesses some aspects of when it was the McGinnis home and features oak woodwork (figs. 3 & 4).

The Montreal architects were John S. Archibald and David Sheenan, who are included in Dr. McKendry's new book on architects working in the Kingston region, 1920 – 2000.

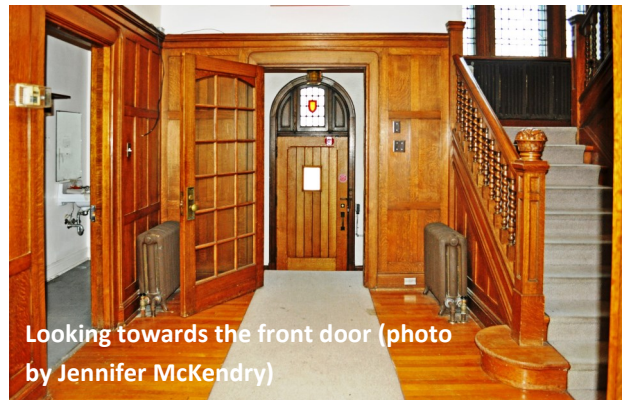
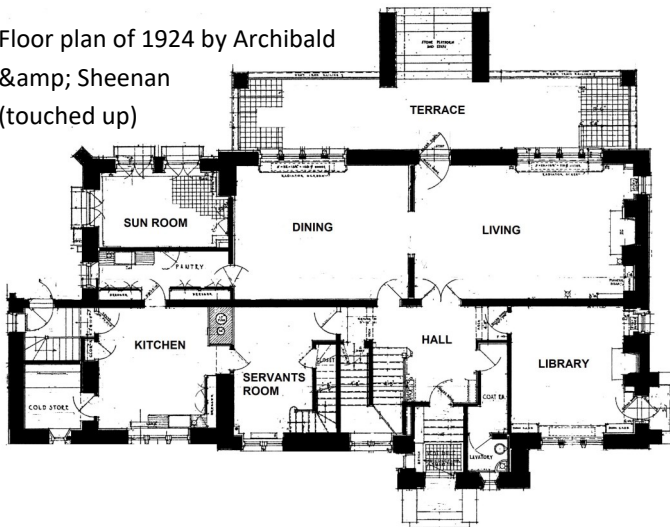


Fig. 1
Left south
view in
1949
(Kingston
Whig-
Standard,
Jan. 8)



North view in 2014 (photo by Jennifer McKendry)

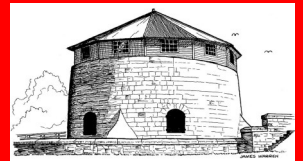
Floor plan of 1924 by Archibald
& Sheenan
(touched up)



Looking towards the front door (photo
by Jennifer McKendry)

Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society www.murneytower.com



Murney Tower Museum Update

Dr. Tabitha Renaud reports that community response to the numerous activities continues to be very positive and the tower receives much praise for the variety, quality, creativity and professionalism of the work done.

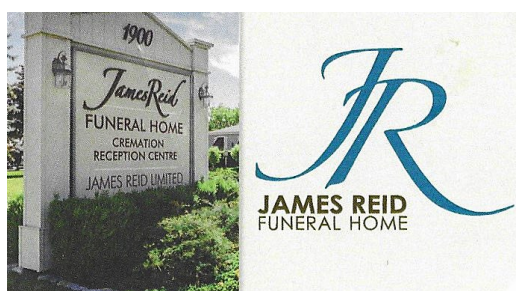
The Murney Tower welcomes new student interns, George Hocking, a second-year BAH history student at Queen's, and Michelle Zhao from Vancouver, a student in the Concurrent Education program at Queen's.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Murney Tower Museum is looking for volunteers within Kingston communities to join its 100th-anniversary planning committee!

Established by the Kingston Historical Society in 1925, the Murney Tower Museum is the oldest operating museum in Kingston, having celebrated its 98th birthday last summer. An event planning committee has been formed which will work closely with the museum's manager and staff members to develop special projects and events to celebrate the *100th birthday in 2025*.

If you have experience in event planning and are interested in joining this planning committee, email us at info@murneytower.com



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Welcome, new members

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Michael Boire

Gordon Dueck

