

# 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 Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Meet in person 7pm

at the beautiful ***Kingsbridge Retirement Community***,  
950 Centennial Drive,  
simultaneously offered via >>>Zoom

**Eric Gagnon**, Kingston railway historian, presents  
**“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 the waterfront to the  
Grand Trunk/CN main line.

## 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 re-*

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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Duncan McDowall, Programme Chair; Liana Shaw, Director of Murney Tower; Paul Van Nest, Membership Chair;

Peter Gower, Editor of Historic Kingston, and Webmaster

Secretary: Don Richardson

## President's Message

*by Paul Charbonneau*

*"Our life is March weather, savage and serene in one hour."*  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

As I sit to write this month's message, I reflect of my first term as this distinguished Society's President, much has been accomplished through the diligent work of the KHS Council and many volunteers. At our AGM on February 21<sup>st</sup> we welcomed two new volunteers as Council members who have stepped forward to share their gifts for the betterment of KHS; welcome Liana Shaw and Craig Pettis.

Also, at our AGM, we presented the Kingston Historical Society's Award to the "Volunteers of the Great Lakes Museum"; enjoy the piece below describing this award in Speaker's Corner by Dr. Duncan McDowall.

Over the past several years, Vincent Durant and I have been members of the Bellevue House Community Advisory Committee, providing guidance and advice regarding the new vision for the historic site. Bellevue House will re-open in May with what may be called for, a better balance of the story of Macdonald, not just in Kingston, but in all areas of this great country. Parks Canada is providing several pieces over the next few months to tell of the properties' renewal in preparation for its unveiling.

And finally, thank you for all your support and trust as you acclaimed me President for another term; I look forward to what's next as we create our history.



*'March is the month of expectation.'* - Emily Dickinson

## Bellevue House: Macdonald, from Bellevue through Confederation

By Bruce Macmillan

*With Bellevue House reopening this May, Parks Canada is sharing the story of the house's renewal in a series of articles over the coming months.*

While Bellevue House renovations were ongoing, through to their completion in 2020, site staff were beginning to reimagine how the grand rooms and multi-level space could be used to tell the story of Macdonald's life and legacies. With so many stories to tell, only one thing was clear: the house needed to present a more fulsome story than the pre-2018 presentation that focused heavily on the house's unique architecture and the story of Macdonald's immediate family in 1848.

New interpretation would need to work in line with the parameters of a Parks Canada's new *Framework for History and Commemoration*, published in 2019, by setting the large objectives of renewed exhibits and programming. Key points for consideration were to:

Make Bellevue House a place that presents a bigger story.

The importance and legacy of Macdonald is not just linked to Bellevue House and Kingston. He is a national figure and to speak about him means addressing his ties to actions and events that happened in all corners of the country.

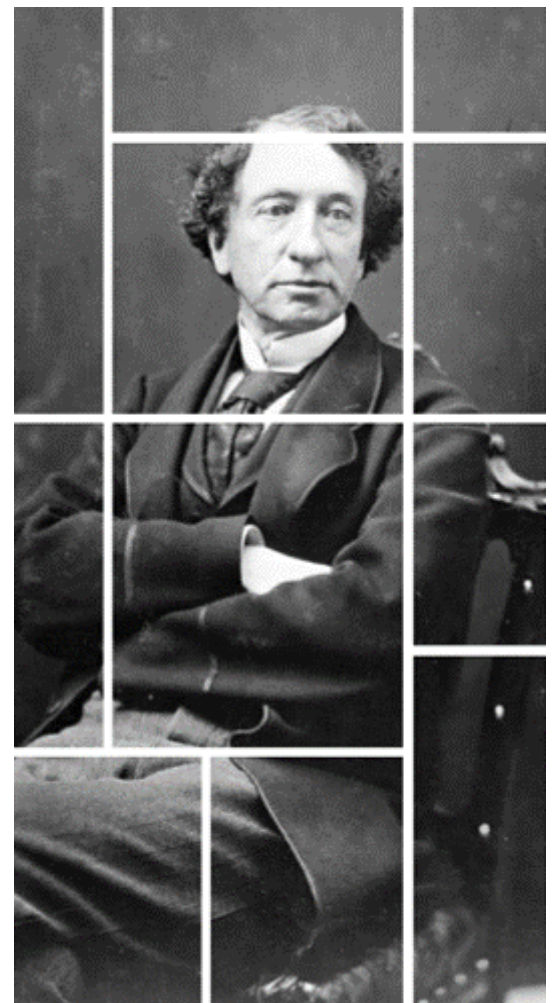
Address the conflict and controversy that surrounds Macdonald's complex legacy. Presenting facts from a variety of viewpoints offers opportunities for Canadians today to learn from diverse sources, to become better informed about how the past still impacts the present, and to make conscious choices about the Canada they would like to see in the future.

Offer an opportunity for Indigenous voices to speak their truths and present their perspectives about Macdonald.

In society today, Macdonald is clearly tied to lasting harms caused to Indigenous Peoples in Canada and it is important for Bellevue House to become a space for conversation.

Engage the public in the development of the narrative presented at Bellevue House. There are many knowledge holders to history, and building knowledge and presenting many aspects of the past will enhance understanding of Macdonald and the significance of Bellevue House.

Provide a place where all Canadians have an opportunity to speak about their backgrounds and lived experiences. Encouraging visitors to share, reflect and discuss their viewpoints is an important component of building connections and a better understanding of the past, and how it informs the present.





With these broad points in mind, Parks Canada recognized the need for outside input and help in defining the topics Bellevue House should cover, while being limited by the scope and scale of the historic house as a hosting venue. The COVID-19 pandemic presented a challenging environment for extensive engagement, but staff responded to the challenge by organizing innovative online engagement processes alongside internal and external working committees. Through public engagement, the scope of the renewal was more clearly defined, and an approach to the presentation of sensitive subjects with many voices started to take shape in a way that is meaningful and respectful for all audiences.

Next month Parks Canada will be sharing more information about the content of the new exhibits which include Macdonald's Victorian influences and results and impacts of his actions from a current perspective.

## Speaker's Corner

by Dr. Duncan McDowall

### Celebrating Our Built Heritage

On a blustery winter day, members of the Kingston Historical Society and the Frontenac Heritage Foundation ( FHF) gathered in the City Hall's beautiful Memorial Hall to celebrate **Heritage Month**. This year's heritage celebration focused on Kingston's built heritage and the architects who brought it to life throughout the twentieth century. Our speaker was the prominent local architectural historian Dr. Jennifer McKendry, who has dedicated many years of research and numerous publications to appreciating the bricks and mortar of our community. McKendry has built her doctoral studies at the University of Toronto – an investigation of prominent nineteenth-century Kingston architects William Coverdale, and John and Joseph Power – into a wider ranging catalogue and analysis of Kingston's streetscapes and skylines. On February 18th we gathered with the FHF to recognize Jennifer's latest addition to that dedication – her volume *Architects Working in the Kingston Region 1920-2000*.



**Speaker Dr. Jennifer McKendry and Shirley Bailey of the Kingston Heritage Foundation**  
Photo by Eva Barnes

The book provides a comprehensive encyclopedia of local and outside professional architects undertaking commissions in the city and linking them with the buildings they designed. Churches, university libraries, commercial buildings and domestic residences are all caught and copiously illustrated in her book. McKendry underscored her book's message in her remarks which traced some of the formative influences in the emergence of "modern" architecture in Kingston – new applications of materials such as steel and glass and stylistic trends ranging from brutalism to neo-Gothic, for instance. McKendry's expertise, reinforced by an ample afternoon tea, memorably accentuated Kingston's heritage uniqueness.

*Eva Barnes comments: Nice to see so many people in attendance, in spite of the utterly terrible weather and driving conditions.*



## **KHS Award Ceremony and AGM**

### **A Shipshape Example of Volunteerism**

The arrival in Kingston harbour last October of the S.S. Keewatin as the Great Lakes Museum's marvelous new museum ship was greeted by a flood tide of public acclaim in the city. Much credit went to the museum's director and board not only for negotiating the acquisition of the ship but also for the resuscitation of the museum itself after its eviction from its waterfront location and subsequent near bankruptcy in 2016. The generosity of a local benefactor helped the museum regain its premises. Persistent and clever negotiation of Keewatin's transfer followed. Behind the headlines of this drama, a crew of 150 volunteers provided the muscle and dedication that brought tangible reality to the museum's strategic ambition. Once the museum's building was regained, volunteers painted, carpentered, wired and designed exhibits that made the future possible. To honour this altruism, the Kingston Historical Society presented its annual award for heritage activism to the volunteers of the Great Lakes Museum at its annual general meeting on February 21. A group of the volunteers attended to collectively accept the award. Museum manager Doug Cowie spoke on their behalf, outlining the volunteers' wide-ranging talents and activities. All present shared a sense that happy sailing lies ahead for the volunteer crew of the museum and the good ship Keewatin.

**On behalf of his fellow volunteers, Dave Shurtleff accepts the KHS award from Peter Gower.**

**Photo Peter Ginn**



### **The Volunteers of the Great Lakes Museum**

**I**n 1975 the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes was founded, and for 40 years it slowly expanded its activities, its contents and its recognition both in, and far beyond, Kingston. The *Alexander Henry* was its flagship.

If we had been pleased with the work its volunteers did during the first 40 years, we have to be overwhelmed with gratitude for what they have accomplished in the past four years, putting the building, quite literally, into ship-shape condition, ready to receive visitors with new interpretative displays, a new ship, SS *Keewatin*, and more enthusiasm than could ever have been expected on that bleak day when they saw what had happened to their building. Knuckles may be grazed, and muscles weary, but they can be proud of what they have done for Kingston, for maritime history, and for themselves. Kingston Historical Society wishes to show its appreciation for the work of the **Volunteers of the Great Lakes Museum** by honouring them with its 2023 Award for their contribution to Kingston's history.

Signed and sealed at Kingston, Ontario this 31st day of December 2023



*Doug Cowie*

**Doug Cowie, a volunteer with the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes, addresses the gathering.** Photo Peter Ginn



**KHS council bids farewell to Dr. Tabitha Renaud and Warren Everett and welcomes Liana Shaw and Craig Pettis to 2024-25 council.**

FYI

The KHS website contains a complete set of **Limelight** and its predecessor **Then** going back to 1992. In addition, Paul Van Nest prepared an **index by subject** as a Covid project in 2021 and he has just updated it to include the articles in 2023 issues. See the KHS website [www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca](http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca) under the tab "Publications > Limelight Newsletters".

## KHS Initiates a New Legacy Project: The Kingston Historical Society History Award: 2023

by Paul Van Nest

In the fall of 2022, Council considered new ventures that could best utilize the capital we have accumulated over the years. One was a history award given to a grade 12 graduating student from each of the 9 area High Schools. Paul Van Nest volunteered to undertake the leg work to develop a proposal, in collaboration with the Limestone School Board as a starting point. Corinna Dupuis, Head of Student Services at Loyalist Secondary School, and he developed the wording below, avoiding reference to grades at her suggestion as the award could not, nor should not, be based solely on marks. Paul felt strongly that senior history teachers were to have a significant input in the selection process. Council felt that the society could commit \$1500 a year towards this legacy project into the foreseeable future. There being 9 secondary schools in Kingston we determined, again in consultation with the schools, that a \$150 subject award was appropriate and would be well received by a graduating student. No such award existed in any of these schools, and so Council committed to making this an annual award on behalf of the Society. After many iterations from consultations with history teachers and heads of student services, the following wording was accepted:

*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.*

All nine schools participated and last June the following graduates received our award.

Limestone School Board:

<b>Bayridge</b>	Eric Burke	<b>Frontenac</b>	Maranda Krampitz
<b>LaSalle</b>	Natalie Van Wylick	<b>Loyalist</b>	Eli White
<b>Kingston</b>	Claire Tennant		

Algonquin and Lakeshore Separate School Board:

<b>Holy Cross</b>	Samantha Pringle	<b>Regiopolis</b>	Jacob Stelter
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Francophone schools:

<b>École Secondaire Catholique Marie-Rivier</b>	Dillon Simmons
<b>École Secondaire Publique Mille-Îles.</b>	Noah Ducharme

Members of the Society were asked to make the presentations at each school's graduation ceremony. We succeeded in recruiting representatives for each graduation ceremony: Pres. Paul Charbonneau\*, Jean Rae Baxter\*, Duncan McDowall\*, Michael Murphy\* (our Francophone representative), and Paul Van Nest. (\* two schools).

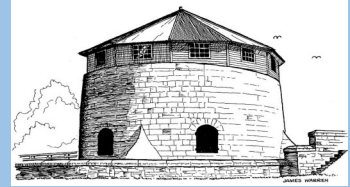
All were warmly welcomed at the schools, and made the presentations on stage.

All schools and their teachers are anticipating next year's awards. We've made a mark on the lives of 9 young people; many more will follow, thanks to this legacy project.

# Murney Tower

## Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

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



### MTM Committee 2024

Simge Erdogan-O'Connor – Staff

Liana Shaw - Chair

Don Richardson - Human Resources

Peter Ginn - Treasurer

Melina Fragis – Secretary

External

Paul Charbonneau - KHS President

Liz Watkins-McLean

Rebecca Marquez

### *Murney Tower Update*

Dr. Tabitha Renaud, long-time director of MT Museum, has moved to Ottawa, turning the reins over to Liana Shaw.

Students for the summer were hired in February.

New interns for the present term are Eva Sheahan and Alexa Williams. There is also a student doing an education practicum who will assist with the March of the Museums and the Kingston Heritage Fair events.

The MTM will be joining the Museum of Healthcare in providing arts and crafts and games for children during the March break, March 11-15.

On the 30th of March, for an Easter event, the tower will be open 10 AM-4 PM for an Easter-themed treasure hunt and arts and crafts activities. We will collaborate with the Museum of Healthcare and charge \$5 per person.

The tower will be open all day on April 8<sup>th</sup> for the solar eclipse at 3pm. Apparently Kingston is one of the best places from which to view the eclipse.

The Agnes Etherington Art Centre has asked that the MTM be included as **official partner in an upcoming art project**. **Long Branch** is a “music, sound and indie rock collective that composes and performs site-responsive music, experimental sound, and rock shows.” The Agnes is hosting their experimental sound and music performance, “Follow the Arc of the Sun,” on 21 March, from dawn to dusk.

**Long Branch** had a site visit and field recording at the Murney Tower in anticipation of the 12-hour sound performance at Agnes.

*Welcome, new members*

Denis Magnusson

Benjamin Savage

Peter Burpee

Gary Luton



**The Museum of the Great Lakes** continues its 'Nautical Nights' lecture series Wednesday, March 6th at 7:00 p.m. at Kingston Yacht Club. **Duncan McDowell** will give a presentation "**HMCS Thiepval, Kingston's Little Ship that Could**". His talk focuses on Kingston shipbuilding, Canadian naval policy, adventure on the high seas and a rocky fate on the Pacific coast. Register on the museum's website - [www.marmuseum.ca](http://www.marmuseum.ca)

**The Historical Society Ottawa** will be holding a meeting Wednesday, March 13th at 7:00 p.m. Richard Collins will be exploring stories of historical figures instrumental in shaping Ottawa's past. To pre-register for the virtual (Zoom) presentation visit their website <https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/activities/meetings>

**So you think you're Irish!** Ken McKinley is giving a presentation on "Researching Your Irish Roots" at the **Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society** March 16th at 10:00 a.m. For Zoom link to the meeting. <https://kingston.ogs.on.ca/>

# Programming Revitalization



## Participation

If you are an educator, museum professional, Indigenous, or a local community member, and wish to participate, please contact us at [info@fcsmuseum.com](mailto:info@fcsmuseum.com) or by phone at 613-544-9113 for more information

## Time Commitment

- 2-3 meetings
- 4-6 hours total

## Focus Groups

The Frontenac County Schools Museum is organizing focus groups to seek input regarding revitalization of our programming. Focus groups are composed of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion about a particular product before it is launched, or to provide ongoing feedback.



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# HOMESTEAD

