

Limelight

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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April 2024



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



Kingston Historical Society Meeting

Kingsbridge Retirement Community

at 950 Centennial Drive

Wednesday, April 17th

7pm

Also by *Zoom*

Margaret Ross , Queen's doctoral student

"Your Town is Rotten":

Sex Work and Moral Regulation in Kingston, 1860s-1920s

Exploring the history of

local sex workers

locations

municipal policy

cleanup projects

sex worker activism

Ear to the ground

Elizabeth Durno reporting on events of interest to history buffs

The **Historical Society of Ottawa** sends along news of the following speakers for April:

April 10 at 7:00 p.m. **David C. Martin** will present 'Paupers and Parishioners' and 'The First Golden Age of Jewish Life in Ottawa'.

April 27 at 1:00 p.m. **Paul Corvette**, friend and colleague of the Karsh brothers will be presenting 'the Karsh Brothers Canadian Legends of Photography'. Contact for Zoom link: <https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/activities/meetings>

The **Kingston Branch Ontario Genealogical Society** will host a virtual meeting on Zoom Saturday, April 20 at 10.00 a.m. The guest speaker is Rowena McGowan, Curator of the Museum of Health Care at Kingston. The title of her presentation is 'From Lungs and Wax Faces: A Journey Through the Museum of Health Care at Kingston'. Go to [Kingston.orgs.on.ca](https://kingston.orgs.on.ca) for the Zoom link.

Greg Anderson has produced a video highlighting the wealth of national historical sites we have in Kingston. You can enjoy this comprehensive introduction to our historical places using the link <https://youtu.be/pHsUB9jHwPg?si=QrDiK5NtXCJtK6F7>

THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

MAILING ADDRESS:

Kingston Historical Society
P.O. Box 54,
Kingston ON K7L 4V6
kingstonhs@gmail.ca
www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

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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.

Kingsbridge
Retirement Community *by Signature*

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

President's Message

by Paul Charbonneau

"April is the sweetest month of the year, the mellow season of rebirth and renewal." — Mary Sojourner

As we transition from winter to spring and look forward to saying goodbye to what has not been the worst winter in Kingston, I am eager with anticipation for the total solar eclipse on April 8th. The last total solar eclipse in Kingston was almost 700 years ago and the next one will be 375 years from now. It is anticipated that hundreds of thousands of visitors will be coming to our historical city; it is a great opportunity to raise their curiosity about Kingston, Canada's First Capital. Enjoy the event but view it safely with proper eyewear.



Our staff and volunteers, under the fabulous leadership of the Murney Tower Museum curator Simge, are busy preparing for another season. Our little gem of a museum continues to grow its following, and the number of visitors continues to rise; take time this season to stop in and be amazed at what they have done.

I look forward to greeting you on April 17th at our monthly meeting where Margaret Ross, a Queen's doctoral student, will discuss "Your Town is Rotten": Sex Work and Moral Regulation in Kingston, 1860s-1920s.

"April is a reminder that life is a beautiful, ever-renewing cycle." — E.E. Cummings

Bellevue House: Old look, new feel

by Bruce MacMillan

Bellevue House is reopening in May. Parks Canada is sharing the story of the house's renewal in a series of articles for Limelight

Bellevue House is a symbol of Kingston in the 1840s, a city that had already experienced almost 200 years of colonization and settlement. Vast numbers of European immigrants were swelling the city's population. The city's wealthy and political elite, seeking to escape the crowded city centre, were building grand homes, including Bellevue House, in an emerging suburb west of town.

Today, Sir John A. Macdonald would still recognize the opulence of the Bellevue House National Historic Site. As it was in his time, visitors are today invited to present their calling cards when they enter the house and step into an era of colonial expansion and change.

For decades, historians, political experts, and the public have discussed Sir John A. Macdonald's life and career. New exhibits at Bellevue House recognize this, and visitors will hear voices that speak from many perspectives about Macdonald's influence. Visitors will also be invited to reflect on how that influence affected or still affects them.

The presentation of the main floor immerses visitors in life in Kingston in the 1840s with a focus on Macdonald, his family, and the connections of home, status, and privilege in Victorian society. On the ground floor, the grandeur of what Bellevue House was, when built, is on full display.

As visitors transition to the upper levels, they leave luxury behind; the focus shifts to Sir John A.

Macdonald's place in Canada's colonial history, and broader themes of society, politics, power and consequences are explored. As the leader of his party and the country, Sir John A. Macdonald authored and endorsed many regulations, acts, and policies. Indigenous Peoples, women, and racialized Canadians had almost no opportunity to be part of governance actions, and no way of broadcasting their voices to wide audiences. New content recognizes that colonial values are embedded in laws and political practices. Visitors are invited to interact with objects, recordings, oral histories, written documents and photographs that illustrate Macdonald's political actions and personal life and present different views of the past. Some exhibit content includes Indigenous and racialized community members speaking about Macdonald's history, politics, and policies, and the impact felt by their communities. Visitors are invited to participate, give their feedback and become part of a larger discussion about Canadian history.

The stories being presented at Bellevue House are as much about personal identity as they are about national identity.

Canada is difficult to define—it cannot be summarized by a single moment, culture or person. It has been a constantly evolving place, even before it became a country in 1867, just as the way Macdonald has been remembered has constantly changed over time.

Next month Parks Canada will present more information about the activities and experiences planned for May 18, 2024, when you are invited to come join the conversation.



Hear from even the smallest voices



I was sorting through photographs recently and came across several from 1987 featuring the Nathaniel Lines House, a home that once stood on Ontario Street and was probably the oldest house in Ontario at the time. That sparked memories of a great project that involved a number of parties who worked together to make sure that part of our local history remained current. As the years have passed the house has faded from our collective memory. This note is an attempt to give it a place in the continuously unfolding history of our city.

The Lines House was located at the corner of 106 Ontario and 12 Earl Street. It was a wooden post and beam double house and may have been one of the buildings brought from Carleton Island in 1783. In October of that year the Crawford Purchase was signed on Carleton, but the island itself was eventually ceded to the new United States as part of the border alignment after the American Revolution. Or, it may have been built in Kingston shortly thereafter. What is certain is that Nathaniel Lines, the interpreter for the Indian Department, had been given a pass and trader's licence for the area on September 1, 1769, and had been living on Carleton Island. By 1785 he was living in his house in Kingston and would continue to do so for the next 30 years or so.

Mr. Lines' first wife and his daughter died in 1808. Nathaniel married again but he and his second wife, Mary McLaughlin, both died in 1813 and Mary's sister and brother inherited the house. Over time the owners changed. The Driscolls, who were innkeepers, lived there in the 1850's. It was a boarding house and tavern in 1863. The Lovett family were owners by 1865 and the house was still in their family in 1987.

Enter the Frontenac Historic Foundation (now the Frontenac Heritage Foundation). Among other things, each year the FHF recognised local contributions made by individuals who had made significant efforts to maintain our historic built environment. I was privileged to be the President of the FHF as this story unfolded.

One of the award recipients in 1986 had been Joel Watt for the restorative work he did on King Street on what became known as the Kilborn apartments between William and Johnson streets. In conversation with Joel, I learned that he intended to acquire the Lines House with the objective of building three townhomes on the property. To do so, he would have to demolish the building. Despite its significance, it had never been designated as a heritage property, so there was no provision to offer even limited protection. We began to discuss the possibility of alternatives.

We approached the City to suggest a partnership to rescue this significant historic dwelling and were met with enthusiasm. A committee was struck to investigate options and to search for a suitable site for the house. The City had plans to enhance the Anglin Bay area and offered to build a new foundation for the house in what was then called Molly Brant Park. Council readily accepted the proposal to move the house to the park. The Parks and Recreation Department and Commissioner Doug Fluhrer, working with the FHF, took on the responsibility to coordinate the move. Council resolved to allocate \$10,000 to the project. Joel agreed to sell the house to the City for \$1.00 and to donate \$6,000 to help with moving and restoration costs. The FHF embarked on a fund-raising campaign, chaired by keen heritage advocate Margaret Angus, to further offset the costs of the move and the renovation. Plans were underway to effect the move in April of 1987.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the project was the co-operation exhibited by the parties involved. Canada was a signatory in 1976 to an international document that aimed to foster such co-operative awareness – the World Heritage Convention. Two of the important elements of the document are:

- To adopt a general policy that aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community,
- To integrate the protection of that heritage into a comprehensive planning programme.

Here was a Kingston community-based example of this hoped-for outcome. It was certainly a step towards the goal of a long-term, multi-level awareness and appreciation of our built heritage and the personal stories that went with that.

It was a challenge to get all levels of government to commit to these goals. In fact, to the dismay of many, not too long before work was undertaken on restoring the Lines House, the provincial government body that was supposed to be the steward of our cultural heritage had arbitrarily demolished the historic gatekeeper's cottage at the psychiatric hospital without regard for that very heritage, and contrary to the City's requirements for notice.

Once the plans for relocation were confirmed, one of the first actions was to determine an appropriate use for the building. It did not appear that it could support itself as a museum without an obvious mandate and a lot of capital. On the other hand, it could not be left vacant for any length of time while we planned for future use.

Some thought was given as to who would be suitable tenants. Whoever it was would have to share some affinity for old buildings and the characteristics associated with them. It had to be someone who shared our vision that this was a house to remain as a part of our community. And, it had to be an entity that recognised the hard slogging that lay ahead as we proceeded towards our goal.

We were fortunate to make contact with Monica Stewart, the Director of the Community Information Centre at 286 Montreal Street. Monica had a keen interest in history and readily accepted the value of the Lines House. The CIC provided information on legal and health services, education, home support, child care, housing, employment, transportation and a wealth of other services. It was in cramped quarters on Montreal Street when our discussions began. Monica felt it was important to remain close to the downtown to maintain services, and the Board of the CIC was looking for a venue that would afford a higher profile. They determined that the Lines House would serve their purpose.

As a result of those conversations, the CIC entered into a long-term lease with the City to make the Lines House their new home. Monica joined the Lines House Committee, and brought her writing abilities to bear by pursuing grants through the Community Facilities Improvement Programme.



Raised and ready for the journey.

On the move. The Lines House began its journey along Ontario Street, Saturday, November 28, 1987



**Photos by
Barry
Keefe

The Lines
House
passes by
Kingston
City Hall**

The funds needed for the move had been fully raised by November, 1987. The FHF presented a cheque for \$7,000 to the Mayor and City Council on the 10th. This amount was in addition to amounts donated by the Kingston Historical Society, the UEL Association, the King's Royal Regiment of New York and others. The \$5,000 initially offered by the provincial government never materialized.

**Historic buildings intersect - 3 works in progress
November 1987**



**The Lines House 1783, Bajus Brewery 1835,
Bajus Condominium 1986**

By the end of November 1987 the Lines House was resting on its new foundation in Molly Brant Park. The importance of the building was now confirmed by the following recommendation of LACAC, the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee of Kingston that:

The Lines Building on North Street be designated as a building of historic and architectural value or interest pursuant to the provisions of Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, 1974.

The reasons for designation are as follows: North Street - Historic and Architectural Significance

This post and beam, clapboard cottage, with addition, was built before 1786 and is the oldest house in Ontario. Nathaniel Lines, interpreter, lived and dwelt with the Indians in this building which is a fine example of the earliest Loyalist homes; and further –

That the City publish its intention to designate the property in the manner prescribed by the Ontario Heritage Act.

The house was settled on its new foundation in the last days of November. Fundraising continued and grant applications were submitted. The original plan called for a move-in date of April 1st, 1988. Negotiations with the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications for a restoration grant dragged on over the winter months. The Ministry indicated a \$50,000 grant would be forthcoming but kept delaying their decision, so the structure sat alone in the park on its new foundation, boarded up by the City until restoration work could begin.

In the early morning hours of Easter Sunday, April 3, 1988, I received a telephone call at home. The caller, who had been following the story in the newspaper and knew I was involved, was listening to the police band and had heard that there was a fire raging down by the waterfront of Anglin Bay and reckoned I would want to know. I jumped in my car and arrived at the Lines House site to witness the flames engulfing Ontario's oldest house. Up with those flames went all the hard work undertaken by so many over the course of the past twelve months. It was heartbreaking for all of us. Someone had broken into the building and set a fire. It took just a few moments for the 204-year-old wooden interior to become an inferno.



Mayor Gerretsen's New Year's message at the beginning of 1988 had offered the following:

On March 4th, 1988, we in the City of Kingston will be celebrating the 150th Anniversary of our incorporation as a town. One has only to read some of the many accounts of the City's history to realize that our community has had a diverse and interesting heritage. That realization within this community of our rich historical and architectural heritage will hopefully fill all of us with pride in the knowledge of our unique position within Canada. Let us continue to work together to make the promise of the future as bright as our historic past.

It is a sad irony that the brightness witnessed on that Easter Sunday morning was a blaze that brought an end to a broad-based effort to conserve our local architectural heritage.

For almost 175 years, railways have been a formation factor in Kingston's existence. In the mid-nineteenth century, Kingston's political and commercial elite realized that the city must attach itself to the Grand Trunk Railway which was being constructed as the all-season, east-west spinal cord of the provincial economy. The challenge was to connect the Grand Trunk mainline, running somewhat inland, to the city's dockland, the epicentre of its traditional lake-borne prosperity. At the March meeting of the Kingston Historical Society, prominent local railway historian **Eric Gagnon** told the story of the Hanley Spur, the three-kilometer branch line that linked the mainline to Kingston's shore.

Gagnon brings a lifetime of research and writing to his passion for railways and their ability to change both a city's landscape and its society. The Hanley Spur was a shared corridor carrying both Grand Trunk (later CNR) and Kingston and Pembroke (later CPR) trains to their respective terminals on the waterfront directly (and somewhat unsightly) across from City Hall. Today's Kingston Tourist Bureau inhabits the one-time K & P terminus, a creation of well-known local architect William Newlands. Gagnon argued that the Hanley Spur, active until the late 1970s, was the feedstock for a diverse array of heavy industries ranging from the trans-shipment of coal and timber to locomotive manufacture and shipbuilding. He did so by drawing on a fascinating gallery of old photographs and maps, which he often counterpoised against illustrations of Kingston's post-railway landscape today.

Gagnon concluded his lecture by acknowledging that the age of coal and steam has passed in Kingston. Our waterfront now dedicates itself to tourism, but, he reminded us, there are many vestiges of the railway age still evident in the city – repurposed stations, restored industrial buildings and even an apartment building named "The Locomotive". You can indulge in Eric's research, books and railway vignettes by accessing his blog at trackside.treasure.blogspot.com Or view at <https://youtu.be/sLOQhziraQI>

FY INPUT

"Then" newsletter— Have you any copies of Then, the forerunner of the Limelight newsletter? If you do, it would be appreciated if you would lend or give any copies before 1992 to Paul Van Nest for his ongoing scanning/indexing project.



FY INPUT

Project of Historical Interest on Pittsburgh Township Anyone?

As a result of a generous endowment by the Pittsburgh Historical Society, the Kingston Historical Society invites modest research proposals (including aid to publication) focused on the history and heritage of Pittsburgh Township. Proposals should include a brief statement of purpose, intended outcome/audience and budget (joint participation with other sponsors is encouraged). Proposals will be adjudicated by the KHS Council.

Deadline for submissions: May 15, 2024.

FY INPUT

Baseball Mystery The KAM office received a request for information about a baseball uniform that was donated recently to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. It is thought to have links to Kingston or region sometime in the 1950s. If **you are** able to offer insight, please contact Lindsay Earle.

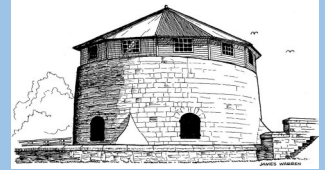
curator@baseballhalloffame.ca



Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

www.murneytower.com



From the Murney Tower AGM brochure

MURNEY TOWER MUSEUM YEAR 2023

YEAR AT A GLANCE

IN NUMBERS

12,600 VISITORS
We welcomed local residents, local tourists and international tourists into Murney Tower.

1,500 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS
Our educational programs, special events and community activities engaged more than 1,000 people.

16 OPERATING WEEKS
The museum site was open from 21 May through 4 September 2023.

18 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
Between January and December 2023, we organized school visits, onsite educational activities, and online arts and crafts tutorials.

4 EVENTS
We organized the first-ever holiday-themed and summer events in 2023.

10 SCHOOL TRIPS
In 2023, the museum welcomed more than ten school groups from grades 2 through 9 into the Murney Tower.

10,000 CLICKS
The museum website was visited by more than 10,000 people from all across Canada and around the world.



April 8 Eclipse event

The museum will open for special site visits and solar-themed arts and crafts activities on **Sunday, April 9th from 10 AM through 4 PM.**

In April, Manager, Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor, will be participating in the Canadian Museum Association's (CMA) Annual Conference, in a panel entitled "Small Museums, Big Topics" and will discuss the Murney Tower's accessibility initiatives and bilingual audio tour.

Manager, Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor, is featured in a 15-minute podcast called Museum Archipelago, speaking about the value of small museums.

LISTEN HERE

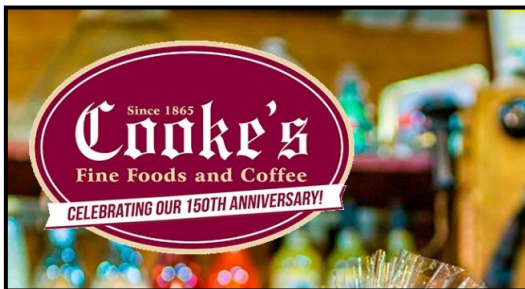
<https://www.museumarchipelago.com/104>

Welcome, new members

Keith and Nancy Fairbank

Kaitlyn MacDonald

Marg McIntyre



Secker Ross & Perry LLP

Chartered professional accountants
tax and business advisors

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

T: 613.507.1209
F: 613.544.8870

