

Limelight

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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May 2024



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



Come and join us!

Kingston Historical Society Meeting

Kingsbridge Retirement Community

at 950 Centennial Drive

Wednesday, May 15, 2024 7pm

Also by *Zoom*

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: A Riverine Operation of the French and Indian War

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.

Kingston Historical Society History Awards: presenters needed

FY INPUT

This is our second annual award for a graduating student in each of the 9 Kingston High

Schools, as determined by each school's awards committee, assisted in our case by their history teachers. The Society would like to personalize each award at each school's commencement event with a member of our society presenting the cheque to the awardee: \$150. If you would like to volunteer to be such a person, usually in the late afternoon in mid- to late June, please contact Paul Van Nest

at pvannest@cogeco.ca or 613-532-1903 (phone or text).

Thank you for considering this avenue of service to the Society.

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 acknowledgment of the Society, the issue and date. Photo credits and by-lines must be retained.

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.

MAILING ADDRESS:

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

Featured Sponsor



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

"May is the month of expectation, the month of wishes, the month of hope." — Emily Brontë

All of our expectations about May blossoms are upon us; the azaleas, cherry blossoms, budding trees or whatever your favorites may be.

May also brings the blooming of a new tourist season to our historic city.

Our own Murney Tower Museum will open its doors in May, Fort Henry and the Kingston Fortifications will unlock those giant metal gates to enrich people's knowledge of life in Kingston in the 19th century. A new and re-balanced story of Bellevue House will challenge tourists and citizens of Kingston to consider the effects of colonialism and how we move forward with Truth and Reconciliation in a mindful way.

And of course, The Keewatin, the centre piece of the Great Lakes Museum will be a most eye-catching addition to our immense inventory of historical sites and attractions.

Please join us on May 17th, at our monthly meeting, where Ian Macpherson McCulloch will discuss another of our great historical sites, Fort Frontenac, and it's fall to Bradstreet's troops.



Then you have to remember to be thankful; but in May one simply can't help being thankful that they are alive, if for nothing else.

Lucy Maud Montgomery

Bellevue House: Old house, new experiences

by Bruce MacMillan

With Bellevue House reopening on May 18, Parks Canada is sharing the story of the house's renewal in a series of articles for Limelight.

Mark your calendar! At 10:30 a.m., Saturday, May 18, you are invited to the official reopening ceremony for Bellevue House. Free entry is being offered for the day.

In addition to being able to explore all the changes to the house, visitors will also be able to hear from some of the people who have contributed to how the story of Macdonald is shared with the public. The support and input from local Kingston Indigenous community members, surrounding Indigenous Nations, racialized voices, tourism stakeholders, historians, and other experts, have enabled Parks Canada to create a more complete and engaging way to tell the stories and history of Macdonald. These stories have allowed for the creation of unique visitor opportunities; a whole new suite of regular programming options will be available this summer.

Self-guided tours enable guests to experience Bellevue House National Historic Site at their own pace. Visitors are encouraged to download the Parks Canada mobile App and the Bellevue House self-guided tour content to enhance their experience with additional information than what is provided by the exhibit panels.

Participating in a guided tour is a great way to enhance a visit to Bellevue House, engage with staff and other visitors, and join the conversation about Macdonald's place in history. Several new guided tours are available for individuals/families and for larger groups and schools.

Bellevue, in brief does just what it says; it provides an introductory experience for visitors to Bellevue House, helping them uncover connections between the picturesque Italianate villa and what it symbolized in the life of Sir John A. Macdonald. This 20-to-30-minute tour will be offered daily in July



and August, in English at 11:15 a.m. and 3:15 p.m.; and in French at 10:15 a.m. and 2:15 p.m.

Keeping up appearances is a guided experience that delves into how class segregation was an inherent part of life in the 1840s. Participants will learn what it was like to live in a time when social status literally defined what doors you could open. Challenge yourself to understand what life would have been like if you had been a woman, a maid-of-all-work or an upper-

class gentleman. The tour is 2 to 2.5 hours long and will be offered in July and August. Those interested in participating are encouraged to call 613-545-8666 or email bellevue.house@pc.gc.ca to reserve a spot for July and August or to book a private group tour for September and October.

Unpacking Macdonald is a guided tour that gets into more detail about Macdonald, the lifelong politician who had great influence in shaping Canada into the country it is today. There is a lot to unpack about his complex legacy. This tour engages visitors in discussion around social class structures, racism, and sexism in Victorian Canada while looking closer at some of Macdonald's political decisions. Tours run between 60 and 90 minutes and are offered from May 20, through October, 1:00 p.m.

Get out with your friends this summer and experience all that is new at Bellevue House. There is something new for everyone, even those that have been in the past and a visit is a great way to learn a little more about Kingston and Canadian history. The Parks Canada team look forward to seeing you at our old house this summer, and introducing you to new experiences!



Guided tour on new pathway

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 Thursday, 6 June, 2024. 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 annual commemorative ceremony will feature a guest speaker and wreath layers.

This year our guest speaker is **Dr. Stephen Smith** who is a graduate of Mount Allison University. He completed his Master's degree and PhD in Canadian history at Queen's University.

He has worked in various capacities at a number of museums and National Historic Sites.

He has been a historian with Parks Canada since 2019 and has been working on the Bellevue House renewal since then.

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

The service will close with a toast to Sir John.

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

972 Purdy Mills Road off John Counter Boulevard

Medal event in Hamilton

Nothing special planned for Sir John A's birthday

The 156th anniversary of Sir John A. Macdonald's birth will go unobserved in Kingston next month despite the fact he is buried in Cataraqui Cemetery and represented Kingston for most of his political life.

But in Hamilton, all babies born on Jan. 11 will receive

bronze medallions commemorating the birth of the nation's first prime minister.

Hamilton is planning elaborate celebrations Jan. 10-11. The activities are being arranged by the Hamilton Progressive Conservative Association.

Lt.-Col. Louis J. Flynn said

the Kingston Historical Society has taken over, effective 1971, the annual memorial service marking his death on June 6 at Macdonald's grave in Cataraqui Cemetery.

Previously, the service was arranged by the Progressive Conservative Association for Kingston and The Islands.

Attempts have been made in recent years to have more school children participate in the graveside testimonial.

"We were asked by the PCs if we'd take over the memorial service in June and we agreed," Col. Flynn said. Detailed arrangements for the service will be made several weeks before the June 6 event.

* * *

Major Edward Friel, curator at Bellevue House, Macdonald's short-term residence here, said no special plans have been formulated to mark the 156th anniversary.

He said the house, restored to its original state at a cost of \$150,000, will be open to the public between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. on that day.

"We've had not word that special groups intend to visit Macdonald's home on that date (Jan. 11), but we'll certainly welcome anyone who does pay us a visit."

* * *

Col. Flynn expressed the hope that Kingston Jaycees would choose Jan. 11 as the date for their annual "Citizen of the Year" award.

The event is generally held in January, but on no specific date.

FY INTEREST

A Kingston Whig Article advertising the non-celebration of Sir John A. in 1971

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

Kingsbridge 

Retirement Community *by Signature*

Members Please Note

Membership Cards ceased being distributed once Covid hit in 2020. They are still available, of course, in person at our meetings, but our Membership Chair, Paul Van Nest, has created a facsimile which can be sent via email upon an email request, printed in Word, and signed by the recipient. Besides being "proof" of membership, these cards are honoured by Novel Ideas with a 10% discount against purchases.

FY INTEREST



TOWER OPENS — Kingston's Murney Tower opens Saturday and to mark the occasion this year, Mrs. G. F. G. Stanley and Mrs. B. W. Trumpour will be pouring

—O'Hearn—Staff
tea for the Kingston Historical Society. The women are the wives of the society's president and secretary.

A Kingston Whig Article
advertising the opening of the
Murney Tower in 1961



2024 Murney Tower Opening
May 18, 2024

Murney Tower To Open

One of Kingston's historical sites will again be on display for the summer when the Murney Redoubt tower is opened to the public this Saturday.

Located in Macdonald Park, the tower was constructed in 1846 for the defence of the city against the possibility of invasion. At that time war seemed possible between Great Britain and the U.S. over an Oregon boundary dispute.

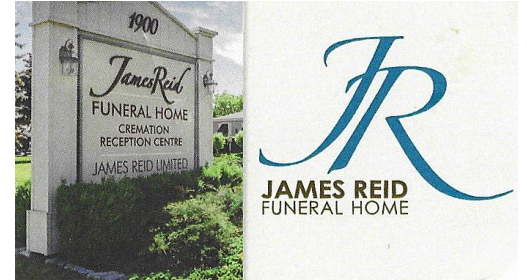
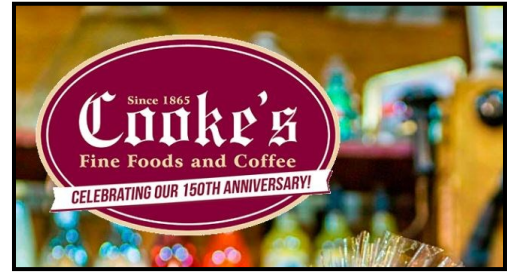
The tower is owned by the department of northern affairs and leased for a dollar a year to the Kingston Historical Society.

A nominal admission fee is charged by the society.

For the opening ceremony, at 3:30 this Saturday, a tea will be served to members of the society. Visitors will also be admitted.

The tower is annually open for the months of July and August. Last year visitors to the site numbered over 3,000.

On display are various historical objects from the era of the tower's construction.



HOMESTEAD



CATARAQUI

CEMETERY AND FUNERAL SERVICES

(613) 546-6545 cataraquicemetery.ca

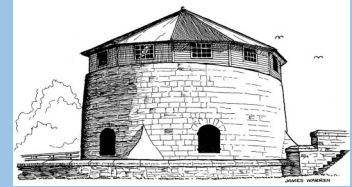
Owned and Operated By The Cataraqui Cemetery Company • Since 1850



Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

www.murneytower.com



Murney tower update

Three students have been engaged to work in the Murney Tower for the summer. There is also a student volunteering for the summer as an intern in the office with Curator Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor as well as in the Tower.

The **Eggs-tream Easter Fun** sold-out event took place March 30, 2024 in collaboration with the Museum of Health Care at Kingston, featuring an Easter egg hunt and arts and crafts activities.

Total Solar Eclipse Event **8 April 2024**

The museum opened Sunday, April 7 from 10-4 for a special eclipse-themed arts and crafts event, and guided tours. There were about 200 guests, mostly visitors to Kingston.

The Murney Tower 100th anniversary preparations are in progress. *Watch for updates here.*

The 2024 Heritage Fair will be held at Queen's University Faculty of Education on May 10, 2024. The Murney Tower Museum will have a booth at the Fair. A special heritage-themed card game was developed for the event to be played with the students to engage them with the history of Murney Tower.

Eclipse over Murney Tower



Photo by Peter Gower

Murney Tower Opening May 18

Welcome, new members

Trevor Aurocca

Olga Oleinikow

Julie Lee

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.

kingstonhs@gmail.ca

The World's Oldest Profession Comes to Kingston

Kingston's storied history has traditionally been cast in Whiggish terms with tales of nation-building, limestone architecture, learned communities and military vigilance. It therefore came as somewhat of a surprise when our April speaker, Queen's doctoral candidate Margaret Ross, applied startling terms such as "tenderloin district," "madame" and "vagrant prostitute" to the local canvas. Maggie is completing a doctoral thesis on what is now called the "sex trade" in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Kingston.

In the nineteenth century, Kingston's large military and waterfront population stimulated vibrant brothels with well-known brands such as the Iron Clad on Johnson Street and Spencer's Grove in the North End. These, Maggie told us, were "successful businesses" generating steady earnings for the madames who ran them, the landlords who rented out the premises and taxi drivers who conveyed the clients. Ross's interest in local prostitution is, however, not so much in its detail, but more in the communal reaction to and coping strategies for local brothels. How did Kingston tolerate or attempt to regulate a trade in human desire that was proscribed by the 1892 criminal code as illegal? To find this, Ross gained access to Kingston's police court records for the years 1880-1920 and meticulously mined them to highlight the fines and sentencing judgements meted out to local prostitutes in those years.

Ross' research reached many revealing conclusions. Her abiding ambition was to treat those active in the trade in terms of their own dignity as humans forced by socio-economic circumstances into precarious and often dangerous lives. In the nineteenth century, the touch of moral regulation was overt and regular but generally ineffectual with brothel owners and prostitutes habitually cycling through the justice system. As Kingston urbanized and the military departed in the twentieth century, prostitution became more tolerated and lightly-regulated by the City with hands-on supervision of the trade provided by quasi-state agencies such as the Children's Aid Society. War in 1914 brought a toughening of attitude to the sex trade in a city now faced with growing wartime debt and the sanctimonious pressure of patriotism. When an alderman complained that prostitution was turning the city "rotten" the local police and the military began raiding brothels, thereby reaping in fines for city coffers and keeping the soldier boys dedicated to their military duty.

Ross concluded her talk by outlining her volunteer work in support of local sex workers today, women she feels deserve the dignity of a legitimate trade and the safety, rather than the prosecution, of society. (See: SWAG – Sex Workers Action Group Kingston.) Maggie has recently reported her research in the Journal of the History of Sexuality.

Ear to the ground

Elizabeth Durno reporting on events of interest to history buffs



Contact the Great Lakes Museum to book your tour of the historic S.S. Keewatin starting after May 25th. Check their new website to reserve your space: greatlakesmuseum.ca

At 10:30 a.m., Saturday, May 18, you are invited to the official reopening ceremony for Bellevue House.

The Kingston Branch of Ontario Genealogical Society will hold a virtual meeting on Zoom

Saturday, May 19th at 10:00 a.m. **Thomas MacEntee** will be presenting: 'After You're Gone: Future Proofing Your Genealogical Research'. Go to Kingston.ogs.on.ca for the Zoom link to this meeting.

Jane Jacobs was a well known community activist promoting better city planning and neighbourhoods. This year the Jane Jacobs walks here in Kingston take place May 3rd to 5th. Go to <https://janeswalkkingston.wordpress.com> to see several free walks pertaining to the history and current plans for areas of Kingston.