

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

19 March 2025

presented live at 7pm, *Kingsbridge Retirement Community*, 950 Centennial
and simultaneously offered via >>>Zoom

Professor Ralph Boston presents

“A History of the Mississauga People North of Kingston”

Professor Boston’s research seeks to set
the Queen’s University Biological Station in the context of the Indigenous People who inhabited the area long before white settlement.

KHS AGM The new Council from the February Annual General Meeting of the Kingston Historical Society, held on 19 February 2025, features new members Kat Macdonald and Ann Stevens. Members leaving council are Vincent Durant and Alan MacLachlan.

Apology and Correction: Please note that *Historic Kingston 73* has the wrong year on the spine and cover. It should be 2023. Then it will properly fit between 72 (2022) and the newly published 74 (2024). The year is the year in which the talks were presented

It is noted with regret, the death, on February 14, 2025, of Sue Kilpatrick, a longtime member of the Kingston Historical Society.

It is noted with regret, the death, on February 4, 2025, of Stewart Renfrew, a former longtime member 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 re-

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A Primer in the History Wars

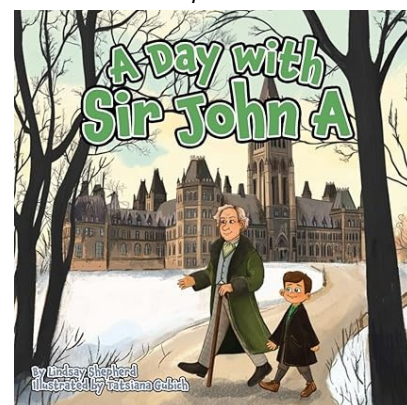
A book Review by Dr. Duncan McDowall

Over the last decade or so Canada has been embroiled in what are often called “the history wars”. Canadians have vigorously contested the legacies of our past, legacies ranging from the treatment of our Indigenous peoples to the building of national infrastructure and institutions. Central to this often-heated debate has been the role of Kingston’s Sir John A. Macdonald as our first prime minister. Hero or villain? Builder of Anglo-French biculturalism or architect of the residential school system? Our reconsideration of Sir John has had many dimensions, but it has always been a contest of views between adults, who, as mature citizens, are activated by the nature of their citizenship and its evolution.

Victoria author Lindsay Shepherd has produced a compelling small book that reminds us that children should also be part of this debate as citizens in the making. Her *A Day with Sir John A.* tells the story of a school outing to what is called the “Museum of Canada’s First Prime Minister” under the guidance of their teacher, “Ms. Kingston”. Handsomely illustrated by Belarusian artist Tatsiana Gubich, Shepherd’s narrative does not shy away from controversy. One of the students, Emerson, escapes the tour by slipping through a secret door to find himself in the presence of Sir John A. in mid-nineteenth century Kingston. As they walk their way along city streets, their conversation turns to the good and bad of Sir John’s character and policies. Railways are built. The Mounties are created. We meet Macdonald the family man and learn of his personal tragedies – a “very ill” daughter and a son lost to crib death. Yet, we also learn of Macdonald’s determination to change Indigenous culture, his insistence to make them “read, write, and farm” and to ban the potlatch. The day ends when Emerson returns to the present day, telling his classmates that history isn’t “boring” but instead that he had “the most wild day I’ve ever lived.”

Shepherd accompanies her tale with a “note for parents” designed to help adults guide and provoke young readers through this graphic version of the history wars to reach their own balanced view of our past. “It is unfair,” she writes, “to judge a historical figure by only magnifying their wrongs and vilifying them through our present-day values.” By examining Macdonald’s “mistakes” and his “embodiment of leadership” our next generation of adults will be better citizens. In providing a tonic for “under-informed vilification”, Ms. Shepherd deserves a Bravo!

A Day with Sir John A. (2024) is available through Amazon (ISBN 987-0-9939195-9-6).





Kingston Historical Society Award

2025: Alan MacLachlan

In commemoration of the one hundred and thirty-first anniversary of the founding of the Kingston Historical Society in 1893, this award is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history.

The Kingston Historical Society recognizes Alan MacLachlan in appreciation of his tireless efforts in support of the Kingston Historical Society and local Kingston history, over a period of 25 years. Alan MacLachlan served the Society, first as an eager councillor, then as President and Past President. After his service with the Executive of the Society, Alan MacLachlan continued his work on Council and is best recognized as the manager of the June 6th, Sir John A. Macdonald grave site ceremonies. During the 12 years he held this position he worked diligently to make this commemoration of an important Kingston historical event, often under trying circumstances as Sir John A. later became a figure of National controversy. He ensured that Kingston VIPs such as the Mayor, local MP, MPPs as well as the Fort Henry Guard were on site to add to the significance and importance of the ceremony. He was instrumental in bringing to the event speakers of national and political importance; each of these speakers added to the threads of the history of Kingston. Perhaps the most important quality of Alan was his level headiness in decision making and his wonderful sense of humour. There is no question that Alan MacLachlan enriched the Kingston Historical Society and Kingston during his time, and he is richly deserving of this award. Signed and sealed at Kingston, Ontario this 31st day of December 2024

Paul J. Charbonneau President

2006 KHS excursion



2007 KHS excursion



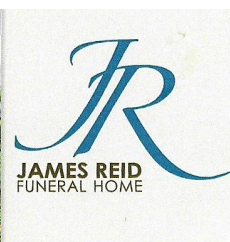
2008 KHS excursion



Excursions organized by Alan MacLachlan

- 1st Annual 2002, Ottawa Earnscliff (SJA), Kingsmere
- 2nd Annual 2004 Prince Edward County.
- 3rd Annual 2005 Ottawa and Merrickville
- 4th Annual 2006 Sacket's Harbour.
- 5th Annual 2007 Rideau Canal tour with 50 participants.
- 6th Annual 2008 Singer Castle, Remington Museum, Brockville
- 7th Annual 2009 Estate of Col. Sam McLaughlin, Air Force Museum
- 8th Annual 2010 Loyalist Routes and Glengarry County

Incidentally, Alan has 81 entries in the Limelight index.



Museums of Kingston and Area

Welcome to the Museum of Lennox and Addington

What's Our Story?

JoAnne Himmelman, Curator/Supervisor

Where It Started

The Lennox and Addington Historical Society (LAHS) was the County's original collector, beginning as early as 1907. However, more formal exhibitions of County history started to take root by museum volunteers in the County Memorial building using objects from the LAHS collection in the 1950s.

In 1976, the County of Lennox and Addington and the Lennox and Addington Historical Society created a partnership to protect the County story and material culture. It was agreed to renovate the former County Jail for the permanent home of the Lennox and Addington County Museum & Archives. The LAHS Collection would be managed by county staff but the Historical Society would continue to oversee its ownership. It operated like this until the LAHS signed the entire collection over to the County of Lennox and Addington in 2014.

The Re-Awakening

In 2012, the museum closed its doors for 2 years (2012-2014) to undergo a significant expansion to the Archives Reading Room and Vault, along with a renovated reception area, program room, and overhaul to the 1976 gallery spaces on the main floor. Further to this, in 2020, the museum renovated the large gallery space at the front of the building, which was the former Jailer's residence.

The museum's new surroundings welcomed inspiration for a new way of doing things. Museum staff were inspired to look beyond talk-based programs and cases stuffed full of things. It was decided, as a team, that the museum would be an immersive experience – perhaps a space that was a little more untraditional for museum goers. In our space, people could sing, dance, get their hands dirty with paint, clay, glue, and yes– dirt! We would learn from our community and let them be the experts. Our community could teach us about different cultures– show us how to make an Indigenous drum, tell us the newcomer stories; we could sip Turkish tea while we were taught mosaic art. The museum could advocate that hate has no space within its walls–and that everyone was welcome. Race, religion, sex, and gender played no part in our decision making–however the stories that came from the diversity of Lennox and Addington lives did.



Main Entrance 97 Thomas Street E., Napanee



The Reading Room in the Archives

We quickly learned that not everyone was going to be happy with us all the time. It is a balance – making room for everyone– and we do make space at the museum table for everyone. The traditional visit is there too. We continue to host monthly history lectures, author signings, research workshops, and you can bring your class to the museum for a program that ties perfectly with the Ontario School Curriculum.

When one layer of deep introspection is done, you begin to look at the other layers too. Programs changed – so did the way we collect and exhibit. We decided that exhibits needed to be rotated more frequently and with themes that went beyond the County scope. Yes, we are Lennox and Addington, but we are also Canada, and our regional history is impacted by national and global events. In doing this, we instantly expanded our story telling and collecting abilities and our audience. In the 10 years since the museum has re-opened, we have shortened our name to Museum of Lennox and Addington, we created a strategic plan based on value and mission statements that mean something to the team who oversee them, and we have welcomed over 70,000 people. We believe our change in practice was needed by everyone and our dedicated community has opened its arms to it.

While the museum was already changing its focus, COVID hit the world; revelations about Residential Schools came to light crushing Canadian history as it had been taught. However, these events also forced wonderful change in museum practice. Museums need to be places of relevancy, compassion, empathy and truth, but need also to be rich in learning, fun and community. It will be a long road for museums, but one that is worth walking.

A Hopeful Future

The Museum of Lennox and Addington continues to push boundaries. We are changing the narrative, updating the stories, including all people, stories, traditions, and FUN for all who live here. I mean – have you been here? If not, you have to come for a visit! You can enjoy all of the objects on display – these are our stories – but we also have art, theatre, music, speaker series, tea-leaf readings, reiki, drum circles, yoga and zumba, and even carnivals now!



You are encouraged to participate with your senses. The museum will continue to transform; it is not finite, it will change as the community needs it to change. BUT – what stands clear and firm– the museum will always be a place of wonder and curiosity that explores our past, present, and future in vivid colour, sound, smell, touch, and yes sometimes taste. Come and find us in Napanee and discover a community of stories– including your own!

www.countymuseum.ca @landamuseum

@museumoflennoxandaddington



INFORMATION PLEASE

Collier (Collyer) Island and Nigger Island

My name is Andrew Weil and I am a historian/archaeologist in St. Louis, Missouri. My family has owned Collier Island (near the Glen House) since the 1920s. Among the family papers is a reference to an 1874 Bureau of Indian Affairs(BIA) map of the Islands that shows Collier (sometimes spelled "Collyer" historically) as having been named "Nigger Island" at that time. An unfortunate name indeed. I recall seeing that name listed on a map in Clayton NY once many years ago, but I was a child at the time and don't recall where. I am interested in finding that BIA map because it supposedly shows the location of a building on the property that pre-dates my family. I am also interested in the possibility that the Island played a role in the Underground RR given its name and the region's history. Any assistance you might be able to provide would be appreciated.

If you have answers to these recent questions to our website, please send them to Kingstonhs@gmail.com If you have any suggestions where I could find records about the military units, the events, or the people named below, I would be most grateful. I'm happy to answer questions or share materials I've gathered, if it would help.

Captain Lee was on duty at Amherstburg in 1837. "Later [he] was in command of the military at Kingston" "He was in charge of the forces when Von Shultz was hanged" I'm trying to validate those claims through other records. Information from other sources attests that: J.S. Lee enlisted in the 4th Incorporated Militia at Kingston on November 5, 1838. Lee had the rank of lieutenant, and served under Lt Col Joseph Hill. J.S. Lee served in the 1st Provincial Regiment, under Thomas Wily, from 1839-1842, until the regiment disbanded; those dates are an educated guess. In 1855, J.S. Lee sent 3 letters to the Office of Deputy Adjutant General, Canada West, requesting a commission to lead a company. I don't know what the response was, if any. I don't know when J.S. Lee attained the rank of Captain.

I am working on a novel of historical fiction set in Kingston in 1812-14 and am wondering if there is a member with expertise to whom I can pose questions of daily life, society, personal or community impacts of war etc. as they arise in the work.

Vimy Barracks- This is a query about the history of CFB Kingston, specifically a good summary of the 1930s construction of Vimy Barracks, and the post-Second World War expansion to McNaughton Barracks, ideally with good maps.



**Doane
Grant Thornton**

Ear to the ground by Elizabeth Durno

*Reporting on events of interest to
history buffs*

I am a recently arrived (back) in Kingston, retired officer, who is now working part-time as a reservist in the RCAF History Office. My work there is on the unrelated subject of the RCAF in the Cold War (I am working on what will become the next volume of RCAF official history), but I am curious about the history of the base here. Can anybody recommend any good overviews?

On March 15th the Kingston Branch Ontario Genealogical Society's 10:00 a.m. meeting will feature Thomas MacEntee, who will outline 10 must haves for genealogy and family history success.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUpc-tqD4uGdTHwxgmmmc9qiZ2edHPMQXv8>

Stewart Renfrew (1940-2025)



Stewart and his parents came to Collins Bay in 1945. He attended Collins Bay Public School and later Collins Bay High School (now Frontenac Secondary School). Going through the 1957-58 CBHS Yearbook *Silhouette*, I was reminded that Stewart played on the senior boys basketball team, the *Falcons*, and once had a lead role as the King of Hearts in a play called *The Knave of Hearts*. He was a Collins Bay cub scout and later a sea scout. Stewart's father William (Bill) was the sea scout Leader for many years.

Stewart received a BA from McMaster University and later, an MA from Leeds University in England. He taught history for a while at the high school level and later became an archivist working for many years and ultimately retiring from the Queen's University Archives in 2000. He played an important role in bringing the Queen's Archives into the 21st century by working on its first website, database and early digitization.

As a longtime member of the Kingston Historical Society, he was active in many activities of the Society. These included giving presentations and writing numerous articles for *Limelight* about local history, especially about Collins Bay and the Old Bath Road.

Stewart loved words and was an avid reader, especially history. He was constantly inquisitive, digging below the surface of the past. His favourite history reads were Thomas Macaulay's 4 volumes of *The History of England*, Edward Gibbon's 6 volumes of *The History of the Decline of the Roman Empire*, and Winston Churchill's 6 volumes of *The History of the Second World War*. He also enjoyed classical music, especially Mozart.

Stewart and yours truly, were about to finish writing a book about the history of Collins Bay, called *Collins Bay: A Heritage of a Hometown*, when Stewart passed. It had been the great pleasure for me to have been invited by Stewart to share in this nostalgic journey into the past, as co-author and editor, over the last few years. Both of us grew up in Collins Bay, he a couple of years ahead of me, but we shared many of the same experiences. I intend to complete the book for publication, hopefully, by this coming summer. I'm sure Stewart would be pleased.

Our sincere condolences to his wife, Janet, daughter Carmen and son Mark.

The **February 23 Heritage Event** sponsored jointly by the Frontenac Heritage Foundation and the Kingston Historical Society, held at Fort Henry, and addressed by former Murney Tower Curator Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor will be reported upon in the April edition of *Limelight*.



Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society



This season the Murney Tower will have a new Manager-Curator, **Alison Dringenberg**, and a new Museum Co-Ordinator, **Alexa Grandy**, as well as three new student guides.

Alison Dringenberg holds an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master of Arts in History in the Public Sphere, having studied at Central European University (Vienna and Budapest), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and the University of Florence. Alison's career in the heritage sector began at Murney Tower Museum in 2021-22, and she has since worked with institutions across Canada and abroad, expanding her expertise in research, curation, and collections management. She has held roles at the Museum of Jewish Montreal and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, where she worked extensively with collections, digitization, and exhibit development. She is excited to return to Murney Tower in a leadership role, bringing its history to life for the Kingston community and beyond.

Alexa Grandy has officially accepted the role of Museum Coordinator, a position she has successfully held on an interim contract basis since December. Alexa holds a diploma from Fleming College's Museum Management and Curatorship Program, where she trained in programming, administration, collections management, and site preservation. She also earned a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Canadian Studies from Trent University. She first joined Murney Tower Museum in 2024 as an intern, working closely with then-Director Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor to gain hands-on experience in all aspects of museum operations, including collections management, program development, social media marketing, visitor experience and day-to-day operations. This foundation has prepared her well for her new role as Museum Coordinator.

The Murney Tower will be participating in the Heritage Fair and the March of the Museums this spring. **Centennial Celebrations** — *Modern Fuel Art Exhibit* — The jury has selected five artists. The *Mr. Murney* book is scheduled to go to the printer in mid-March.



Welcome, new members

Marc and Marjorie Sequin Mary Kelly
Kayla Lacroix Ian Gemmill