

Limelight

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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April 2025



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



Kingston Historical Society Meeting April 16, 2025

presented live at 7pm, in the theatre lounge of the
Kingsbridge Retirement Community at 950 Centennial Drive
and simultaneously offered via >>>Zoom

Dr. Sandy Campbell, emerita professor of women's studies at Carleton University,
presents



Kingston's Kathleen Hammond, the Lusitania and the White Plague

A story of World War I, happiness and tragedy



We note with regret, the death, on February 14, 2025, of David Nicholson, a member of the Kingston Historical Society.

We note with regret, the death, on March 8, 2025, of Donald Smithies, a member of the Kingston Historical 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.

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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.

President: Peter Gower Vice-President: Kat MacDonald Past President: Paul Charbonneau Treasurer: Peter Ginn Secretary: Don Richardson
Councillors: Betty Andrews, Editor of Limelight; Duncan McDowall, Programme Chair; Craig Pettis, Webmaster; Liana Shaw, Director of Murney Tower;
Ann Stevens, Member-at-large; Paul Van Nest, Membership Chair. President Peter Gower, Editor of Historic Kingston.

President's Message by Peter Gower

And so, after the AGM, your Council (now officially a Board) met, and following Paul Charbonneau's announcement that he would be moving out of Kingston and so would not continue as President, I found myself back in the saddle again, both pleased at the confidence my colleagues had in me, and worried about what may be before us. With a little bit more thinking, I have realized that half of your Council has now served for at least ten years, and the newer members have most impressive backgrounds to further the objectives of the Society.

Kat MacDonald, whom many of you met when she spoke on *Dark Tourism*, is a fourth year PhD Candidate in History at Queen's University. Her research examines commercialization of the past in the heritage and tourism industry in Kingston. She graduated from Queen's in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts, Honours, with a major in History and minor in German Studies. She later received a Masters in Public History from Western University. Recently, she received news that she will be designing her own undergraduate seminar on public history and heritage at Queen's. When she is not teaching or learning, she is a professional face painter: "It's what has helped me pay for all three of my degrees so far." She is serving as your Vice-President this year.

Also joining us is Ann Stevens, a retired journalist who worked as assistant director of news and communications for 15 years at Queen's. Prior to that, she worked in communications for Ohio State University and University of Toronto. She was born in Oakville, Ontario, and was in the first class in Canadian Studies at Trent University. She has lived in Kingston since 1981. Ann served three terms as a writer with the Whig-Standard community editorial board. Currently she volunteers at the Heritage Resource Centre at City Hall and also with the city's Heritage Properties Review Committee. Ann will be involved in our public relations activities.

Finally, I offer thanks to Paul Charbonneau for guiding us so faithfully and well through the past three years. We look forward to his always sage advice this year. I offer sincere commiserations to Paul Van Nest for the difficulties he had with the March meeting. We were told only a day before that we would not be able to be in Kingsbridge. Dr. Ralph Boston, at 96 years of age, almost certainly our most mature speaker yet, was to speak. The electronic marvels that Paul conjures with had to be set up in a new venue and, unfortunately, due to an unforeseen glitch, the conjuring just did not work. My apologies. The talk has been recorded and put onto YouTube, is reported upon in the Spreaker's Corner this month, and will be a fascinating read in *Historic Kingston* 75.



Ear to the ground

Elizabeth Durno reporting on events of interest to history buffs

We are happy to note that the Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society is carrying on its website the notices for the Kingston Historical Society's meeting and events!

On Saturday, April 26 at 1:00 p.m. the United Empire Loyalists meet at St. Paul's Anglican Church Hall, 137 Queen Street. Cheryl Levy will speak on "Redcoats, Loyalists, a Privateer and...a Patriot." Cheryl's work has uncovered intriguing, forgotten family connections to the American Revolution. For the Zoom link visit: www.Uelac.org

From Ottawa

The HSO is proud to be founder and patron of the **Ottawa Regional Heritage Fair** being held this year at the Canadian War Museum, on Tuesday, April 29.

<https://ottawaheritagefair.org/>

Public attendance is welcome.

HSO's newly updated **Educational Resource List for schools**, designed to support your efforts in doing so:

<https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/resources/features/hso-resource-list-for-schools>

Wednesday, April 9 @ 7:00 p.m. Ottawa's Early Baseball History Via Zoom

Steve Rennie delves into Ottawa's early days of baseball, dating back as early as the 1860s, uncovering spirited rivalries, bygone teams and memorable games.

Visit website for full details and the link to pre-register:

<https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/activities/events/eventdetail/153/16,17,18,19,20,21,22/ottawa-s-early-baseball-history>

The digital version of Steve Rennie's new HSO Pamphlet, "Forgotten Gems: Ottawa's Early Baseball History (1865-1900)":

<https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/publications/bytown-pamphlets/pamphlets-available-for-download/forgotten-gems-ottawa-s-early-baseball-history-1865-1900>



From KHS Newsletter of April 1996

MACPHERSON HOUSE IS OPEN

The Lennox & Addington Historical Society announces that their charming historical home Macpherson House in Napanee is now open from noon to 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday. For 475 you can enjoy their membership package which includes tickets to the Wine Tasting, 2 to 4 on Sunday 21 April, later a Strawberry Social, Lobster and Harvest Suppers, not to mention afternoon teas with fried cakes in July and August. Or a simple membership is only \$15. Call Elizabeth Hunter at 354-5982.

Still Standing
Looking at Regional Architecture with Dr. Jennifer McKendry
Macpherson House, Napanee

“...a house of distinction and beauty,” Jeanne Minhinnick, 1961



pre 1913 Walter Herrington, *History of the County of Lennox and Addington*, 1913



1961 *Century Home*, Nov.-Dec. 1988

Jeanne Minhinnick, author of *At Home in Upper Canada* (1970), had the foresight and knowledge, along with architect Peter Stokes, in 1961 to see beyond the decrepit state of this c1826 frame house and thus to encourage the Lennox & Addington Historical Society to purchase and restore the once proud house of Allan Macpherson, mill owner. Today the responsibility of the building and grounds rests with the Lennox & Addington Museum. The house, at 180 Elizabeth Street, is open to the public during the summer



C.1962 *Century Home*, Nov.-Dec. 1988

In 1962, volunteers worked arduously to bring the two-storey, five-bay house back to a point where the public could admire it. Now restored, note the doorway glazing and 12 over 12 windows seen in the pre-1913 view but lost by 1961.

The general proportions, symmetry and central focus reflect the Adamesque or Neoclassical style. Despite the overall bulk, the house seems light and delicate due to the Classical refinements of pilasters and the intricate pattern of the transom and sidelights. It was likely designed by a Kingston architect, such as Thomas Rogers, c1780 -1853. He worked for peers of the Macpherson family, for example, Gildersleeve and Cartwright. In 1834, he was the architect of the first St. Mary Magdalene Church in Napanee (correspondence with Jane Foster 2022).

1975 photo by Jennifer McKendry

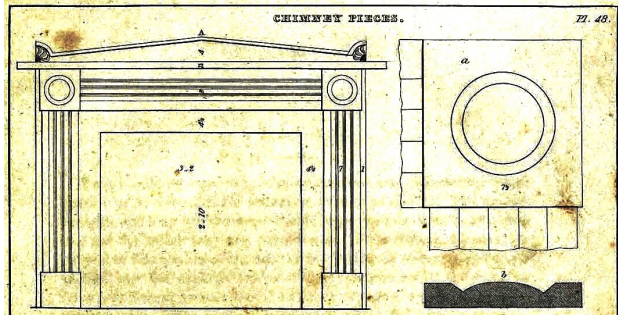


1975 photo by Jennifer McKendry





c1962 Lennox & Addington County Museum & Archives



1833 Asher Benjamin, *The Practice of Architecture*, 1833

The kitchen with its bake-oven, built-in cupboards, cranes and cooking equipment is well worth inspecting.

For more interior views and information about visits and events, see

<https://countymuseum.ca/exhibit/macpherson-house-park/>

c2024 Lennox & Addington County Museum website

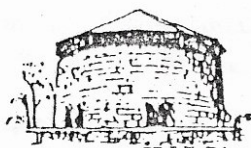


1988 *Century Home*, Nov.-Dec. 1988

The interior has many original features and is well furnished with antique items. Alcoves acted like frames to show off sideboards and desks. The corner boxes on fireplace surrounds (and the exterior doorways) with round motifs were popular in the 1820s and '30s.



From March 1977 issue of the KHS Newsletter noting Jennifer McKendry as speaker!



Kingston Historical Society

Founded 1893

P.O. BOX 54

KINGSTON, ONTARIO

CANADA

REPORT --- Vol. 4, NO. 3 ----- March 7, 1977 ----- William Angus, Editor

I. REGULAR MEETING

The next Regular Meeting of K. H. S. occurs one Day before St. Patrick's. (And that reminds me of directions I got, as a stranger passing through, years ago in Rockford, Illinois: "You turn right two blocks this side of the bridge.")

On Wednesday, March 16, at 8 p.m. we meet in St. George's Hall for brief business agenda and to hear JENNIFER MCKENDRY speak -- with slides illustrating her talk. She entitles it "A Romance Laid to Rest."

Murney Tower: A Tower of Varied Strengths



Liana Shaw, Murney Tower Chair



FHF President Kristine Hebert



Dr. Duncan McDowall, KHS Programme Chair

100 Years of the Murney Tower Museum



Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor

Every February, the Society joins with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation to celebrate Heritage Month in Ontario. This year the celebration was held on February 23rd in the Great Hall at Fort Henry, a location redolent of Kingston's venerable heritage with its nearby fortifications and splendid view over the city's domed and steeped skyline. Our speaker was **Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor**, until recently the dynamic curator of the Society's Murney Tower museum. Her scintillating talk served two functions: it celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Society's stewardship of Murney Tower, Kingston's oldest museum, and it provided a fascinating biography of a building long familiar to Kingstonians, but little appreciated in its historical context.

Simge began by showing how British American tensions during the Oregon Crisis of the 1840s, tensions that still echoed the War of 1812, prompted a military reaction in Kingston. Even though Oregon was on the distant West Coast, the British military worried that Kingston, so close to the US, offered an inviting point for invasion, given its strategic location at the head of the St. Lawrence, Rideau and Great Lakes navigation systems. To guard Kingston harbour, four sturdy Martello Towers (based on a Spanish design) along with two watch towers, were hastily constructed; they provided an artillery shield along the city's coastline. Each had a state-of-the-art 32-pound Blomfield cannon mounted on its roof and was staffed by a resident gun crew who lived below, often accompanied by their families.

Kingston's Martello Towers never fired a shot in anger – perhaps proof that armed deterrence can work in diplomacy. The Oregon Crisis faded, Britain withdrew its Kingston garrison in the 1870s and the towers were mothballed. Dr. Erdogan-O'Connor skillfully chronicled Murney's subsequent history of neglect and restoration. Her research and the programs she initiated at the museum have made Murney a site of "living" history. We learned about the social life of the men and women posted to serve in the tower, including the fact that at least one baby was born in its precinct. Over time, Murney acquired changing meanings and uses as a site of memory. In World War II, its moat served as a wishing well for those caught up in the anxiety of the conflict. Archaeologists have explored its environs in search of relics of military life (and coins dropped into its moat.)

Dr. Erdogan concluded by suggesting that Murney has become an iconic Kingston site, one with many layers of meaning beyond its original military purpose. The land on which it sits is now, for instance, recognized for its Indigenous pre-settlement significance. Beyond her stimulating talk, Simge's legacy at Murney Tower lies in her imaginative inclusion of such varied perspectives in its displays. Last summer, to the credit of Simge and her staff, Murney welcomed 13,000 visitors.

Kingston's First Nations Neighbours: the Mississauga People

Over many decades, the focus of the Society's attention has almost exclusively rested of the impact and outcomes of white – French, English and Irish, in particular – settlement in the region. The question of “who came before?” was seldom raised. At our March meeting, that primordial question was raised by **Dr. Ralph Boston**, a long-time Kingston resident and inquisitive researcher.

Ralph Boston, a mechanical engineer and management consultant by training and profession, first came to the Kingston area when he purchased a cottage on Buck Lake in the 1960s. In the 1980s, he moved to the lake permanently.

There, he and his wife assembled a substantial acreage of adjoining land. In doing so, he acquired an understanding of “what it was like to live off the land.” It also brought him into contact with the Queen's University Biological Station on near-by Opinicon Lake. Eventually, the Bostons donated 103 hectares of their land to the station. In doing so, Ralph queried the academics about who has inhabited these lands before the white scientists came. Ever curious, he then set out on his own quest to answer that question.

Ralph's paper displayed his findings. Central to his inquiry were Mississauga Indigenous peoples who had frequented the land since about 5,000 BC when the ice age had receded northward out of the region. They were a nomadic people, hunter-gatherers who used the Rideau Lakes area as a winter hunting ground. Their numbers were never large, perhaps never more than 275 in the nineteenth century. Boston chronicles his team's archaeological effort to recover traces of their lifestyle, a difficult task since the Mississauga were so transient. An effort was also made to trace evidence of their summer activities on, for instance, Belle Island just upstream from Kingston on the Cataraqui River.

The great tragedy of Boston's history was the inevitable conflict between the Mississaugas' transient land-extensive way of life and the land-intensive culture of white settlement. The Crawford Purchase of Native Lands in 1783 and the subsequent shunting of the Natives on to reserves in the Bedford Mills area spelled the beginning of the end of an era. The Mississauga found some subsequent employment in the white man's industrial pursuits, but by the twentieth century they were virtually gone as a cohesive community.

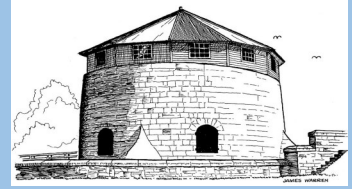
Boston displayed much sympathy for the Mississauga way of life, their diet and their eco-smart footprint on the land, in particular. This and greater detail about Boston's redemptive chronicle are available on the Society's YouTube version of the talk (Go to the KHS website and find the link under Meetings and Events) and in the next issue of Historic Kingston.



Murney Tower

Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

www.murneytower.com



Thanks to everyone who made March of the Museums 2025 a big hit!

The Murney Tower Museum has hired three summer student guides, more about them next month.

Welcome, new members

Ann Stevens

Sarah Burnett



Grant Thornton

HOMESTEAD

