

# 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.



### Thanks and Happy Retirement to Mark Bennett

by John Grenville

Mark Bennett, the Guard Commander for the Fort Henry Guard and long-time supporter of the Kingston Historical Society, is retiring after 42 years at Fort Henry. After university, Mark started at the Fort in 1983 in the retail store. He gradually moved to working as part of the Guard until he became Supervisor of Programs (formerly Guard Commander) in 1998 when Steve Mecredy left to teach in the elementary school system. As Guard Commander, Mark was always willing to make members of the Guard available to assist with the Society's programs. This included supporting the annual program to commemorate Sir John A. at Cataraqui Cemetery. Recently he helped Murney Tower celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of KHS's operation of the Tower as a museum by supplying display items. Murney Tower's float in the Santa Clause parade has been enhanced by members of the Guard. Assisting the Kingston Historical Society was one of many ways that he contributed to the presentation of Kingston's heritage. In 2012 he was nominated by Senator Hugh Segal and awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for "his efforts in making history real for the tens of thousands of visitors at Fort Henry every year". Mark's 27 years of service make him the longest serving Guard Commander since Ronald Way founded the Guard in 1938. Many of you will know or have seen Mark at the Fort.



After all, he has worked at Fort Henry for more than half of the time that the national historic site has been open to visitors. That's an impressive record, especially in an era when transitioning between employers is more the norm. As a friend of heritage and the Kingston Historical Society, we wish Mark Bennett all the best in his upcoming retirement.

## 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 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.*

*Kingsbridge*   
Retirement Community *by Signature*

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, Publicity; Paul Van Nest, Membership Chair; Peter Gower, Editor of Historic Kingston.

### *President's Message*

*by Peter Gower*

Suddenly, the first snow, a bitterly cold Remembrance Day, and the final KHS meeting of the year are behind us, and we will soon have to remember that the year is 2026.

I want to thank all who have made this another successful year:

The speakers who have maintained the quality of presentations and have not been afraid to be personal in their talks. Their appreciative audiences, either at home or at the Lower Lounge of the Kingsbridge Retirement Community (which has been full at times), attended with interest and asked insightful questions.

The Murney Tower staff who prepared a variety of experiences for those of all ages to celebrate the Kingston Historical Society's 100 years of looking after the Tower Museum – and in 20 years, we can celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday!

Those who are active in so many ways in producing our publications, including the quiet ones who are very necessary and rarely mentioned such as Elizabeth Durno, who informed us of area-related events in the *Ear to the Ground* column in *Limelight*; also the production team for the Zoom broadcasts. At each meeting, Craig Pettis signs in as a Zoomer at the back of the room so he sees and hears what the Zoomers are experiencing. At the November meeting, he called Paul Van Nest's attention to a problem: they were not seeing the slides changing. Somehow, Paul fixed it. Craig also edits our recordings for the website. (Zoomers, please ensure you are muted during the presentation.)



Part of your membership includes access to the Ontario Historical Society's quarterly publication, now an online magazine. You can read the Fall 2025 edition at

<https://ontariohistoricalsociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-Fall-OHS-Bulletin-Issue-226.pdf>

Have a wonderful and safe December. See you in January, when David Gordon visits again.

## A new book for you recommended by Dr. Duncan McDowall

### Mrs. Simcoe

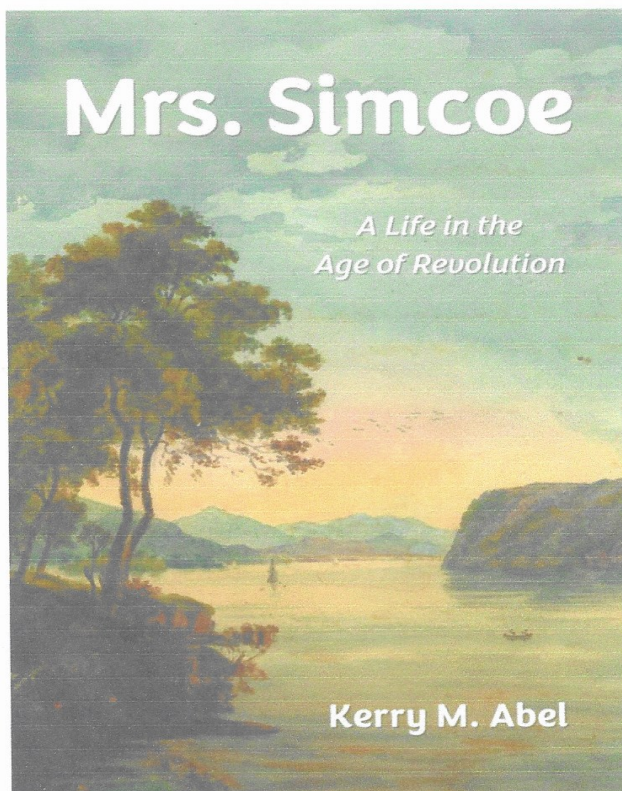
A Life in the Age of Revolution

by ■ Kerry M. Abel

### CONNECT WITH THE AUTHOR

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[www.kerryabel.ca](http://www.kerryabel.ca)



### About the Book

Born into war and orphaned at birth, Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim Simcoe lived through some of the most dramatic upheavals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the genteel world of the English landed gentry to rugged colonial Canada, she bore witness to political, industrial, and personal revolutions. *Mrs. Simcoe: A Life in the Age of Revolution* traces the impressive journey of a woman whose private life intersected with public change. As wife to John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, Elizabeth documented colonial life in words and watercolours, offering an intimate lens on empire, gender, and cultural change.

Historian Kerry M. Abel draws on rich archival sources to bring Elizabeth's world to life, exploring how one woman negotiated faith, family, and identity in an age of empire and social transformation.

This is a compelling read for history lovers, readers of women's biography and British history, and anyone interested in pre-confederation Canadian history. Mrs. Simcoe reveals the hidden influence of a woman who shaped and was shaped by her times.

### About the Author

Kerry M. Abel is an award-winning professor of history, retired from Carleton University, whose work has shaped the field of Canadian history. Her acclaimed books—including *Drum Songs* and *Changing Places*—have explored Indigenous history, settler communities, and the intersections of culture, place, and identity. A former member of the Canadian Historical Association and the Champlain Society, Abel received multiple national honours for her writing, including the Clio Prize, the J.J. Talman Award, and the Floyd S. Chalmers Award for best book on Ontario history. She lives in Ottawa.

In *Mrs. Simcoe: A Life in the Age of Revolution*, Abel brings together key themes of gender, empire, religion, and social change, to offer a fresh, inclusive portrait of an underappreciated historical figure.

### SPECIFICATIONS

History: Canada, Pre-Confederation (To 1867); Women;  
Europe, Great Britain

508 pages | B & W | 7 x 10 inches

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\$54.99 USD  
978-1-03-834979-8

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*Welcome, new members*

*Ryan Bowerman*



**"Holding history in your hand": Medals as Historical Narrative**

Just a week after Remembrance Day, the Society's November lecture reminded us of one of the most visible symbols of our collective memory as a society – the medals worn by our veterans and service personnel. Sociologists tell us that through the ages medals have provided a means of projecting the virtue of individual sacrifice in national service. We pin Order of Canada emblems on the lapels of those who have creatively shaped and led our society. Every Nobel Prize winner receives a sculpted medallion. The Royal Society of Canada annually awards the Lorne Pierce Medal to those who have enhanced our national literature. And every Remembrance Day our veterans and military personnel parade, proudly displaying medals honouring their service, while relatives recalling those lost in combat stand by clutching their lost ones' decorations. Our November lecture was delivered by **Warren Everett**, a thirty-year veteran of Canada's air force and a past president of the Kingston Historical Society. In retirement, Warren has devoted his energy to community service (especially in advocating a memorial in France to the Canadian soldiers who fought at Hill 70 in 1917) and in indulging his passion for collecting military medals and photographs. For his lecture, he brought two poignant examples of nineteenth-century British medals: the 1815 Waterloo medal and the 1850s Crimean War medal struck, much at the insistence of Queen Victoria. Studying medals, he argued, offers a means of "accessing" history, each offering a "narrative" that illuminates our understanding of the past. The Waterloo medal, for instance, was the first British military decoration given to all who fought in the campaign. Hitherto, only generals and heroes who stood like Horatio at the bridge were individually honoured. After Waterloo even the lowly private received a medal inscribed with his name. Similarly, Warren suggested, the Crimean War was the first conflict to receive almost instantaneous press coverage (thanks to the telegraph) and consequently medals distributed after the war reflected its democratic ethos. Warren concluded by noting that each medal in his collection "tells a story." To illustrate this, he connected various medals in his collection with local men who fought abroad, men like Captain Thomas Kelly of the 47th Frontenac Battalion, who fought and was decorated for fighting in Canada's Northwest Rebellion in 1885. In the immortal words of John McCrae, each medal seems to say to us: "We are the dead. Short days ago..." Warren was thanked for his presentation by Louis Grimshaw, a local collector of military antiques and a past president of the Society. Lou remarked that those who collect military medals do so, not as "owners" of the past but, as "custodians" of past valour and service who have the privilege of "holding history in their hand". Warren's talk is available on the Society's YouTube link and Lou Grimshaw can be contacted at [legrimshaw612@gmail.com](mailto:legrimshaw612@gmail.com)

**HOMESTEAD****Doane  
Grant Thornton**

# Murney Tower

## Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

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



### Liana Shaw Reports:

#### "Murney Tower Museum – Looking Ahead to 2026"



With another successful season wrapped, Murney Tower is already turning the page — and 2026 is shaping up to be an exciting chapter.

#### Education Gets a Refresh

Our Historian-in-Training classroom program has returned with updated content and worksheets. Staff are also preparing to resume in-school visits, supported by newly-sourced artifact replicas.

#### A New Exhibit Is Coming

Alison and Alexa are collaborating with **Queen's University Archives** on a new temporary exhibit. Early conversations have already opened some exciting directions, and archival selections begin soon.

#### Funding & Partnerships

Grant applications for next summer's student positions are in, along with a request to the **Churchill Foundation** to support educational programming. Staff continue exploring new ways to expand what the museum can offer.

Have ideas or are interested in helping? Email us anytime at [info@murneytower.com](mailto:info@murneytower.com).

#### Student Creativity on Display

New content from last season's students — including a podcast episode, two short website stories, and a virtual exhibit — will be released soon.

#### A Spook-tacular Success

This year's Halloween event welcomed about **170 visitors** and raised **\$400** for the museum. Thank you to everyone who joined the fun!

#### The Murney Gift Shop

If you've attended recent KHS meetings at Kingsbridge, you may have spotted a cheerful new addition near the coffee and cookies. Museum volunteer **Randall Thomlinson** and his wife **Karen** have been running a **Murney Gift Shop** table featuring summer merchandise, new items and KHS publications. Missing a back issue of *Historic Kingston*? We can help track one down."



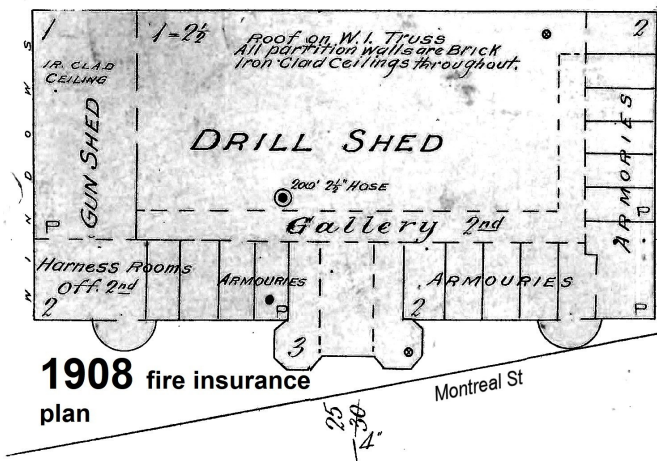
#### Correction

In the **Nov. 2025 Still Standing** article on round-corner buildings, the 2 images on the left top and left bottom are mixed up. At the top, it should be Wilson's Building (image "2") and at the bottom the Commercial Mart/Smith Robinson Building (image "6").



# STILL STANDING: Looking at Regional Architecture with Dr. Jennifer McKendry

## The Armouries on Montreal Street ~ The Princess of Wales' Own Regiment



1900: "One has no idea of the spaciousness of the hall, when judged by its exterior appearance only. The building, in style and finish, far surpasses that of the drill halls in many of the larger cities. It reflects a great credit on the contractors and the militia department of Canada."

**Architect:** David Ewart, 1841-1921, Chief Architect of the Department of Public Works, Government of Canada, & his staff  
**Supervising Architect:** Arthur Ellis of Kingston

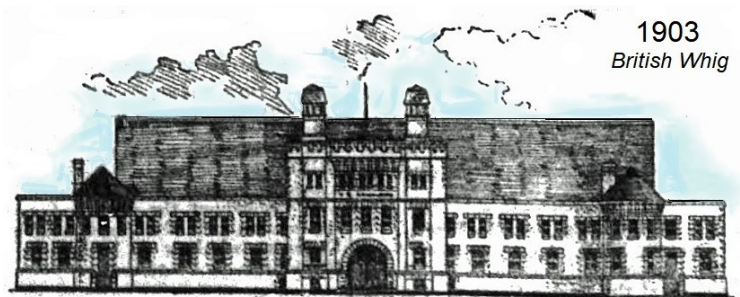
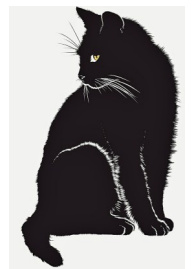
**Contractors:** Sullivan & Langdon

**Stone-cutters:** their strike in the spring of 1899 was settled by the

contractors when they offered an hourly wage of 22½ cents.

**Mascot:** a large, jet black cat, which followed the workers during construction.

The Armouries, planned in 1898 and functioning for drills in 1900, logically presented a military appearance originating in medieval European castles and defensive works. Battlements, turrets, towers and roughly textured stonework added to the picture. It had some similarities with the 1894 Toronto Armouries (demolished in 1963) with the important exception that the latter was brick with Kingston stone used in the trim and foundation. Its architect was Thomas Fuller. Both of these buildings with their bold round arches are in the Romanesque Revival style.



In 2005 William J. Patterson had published *Kingston's Own: The Princess of Wales' Own Regiment 1863 - 2004*.

There was a KHS talk given by Michael E. Schultz on the PWO Regiment which is in *Historic Kingston, Vol. 41*, for 1993.

# Kingston Historical Society

## 2026 Lecture Series

All lectures will be presented on Wednesday evenings at **7:00pm** in the Lower Lounge of the Kingsbridge Retirement Community at 950 Centennial Drive (free parking behind the building). Lectures will be simultaneously carried on ZOOM (with connection information sent to KHS members by e-mail the week before) and will subsequently be available on YouTube through the website. All lectures will also be published in the Society's journal, *Historic Kingston*.

**January 21:** Dr. David Gordon will speak on "*Conservative Surgery on Kingston's Fringe: The Evolution of Rideau Heights, 1952-1973*". Dr. Gordon is a professor in Queen's School of Urban and Regional Planning and a frequent commentator for *The Globe and Mail* and the *CBC*.

**March 18:** Jake Breadman, a doctoral candidate in history at Queen's and a Heritage Interpreter at Bellevue House, will speak on "*The Many Residents of Bellevue of House: A Microcosmic History of Kingston*". Jake took part in Parks Canada's recent remodelling of the focus of Bellevue House.

**April 15:** Thomas Harrison, a lawyer, artist and writer living in Prince Edward County, will speak on "*Richard Nixon's Secret 1957 Visit to Eastern Ontario, Prince Edward County and Hastings*", drawing on his recent book, *Searching for Richard Nixon: Finding Refuge and Making a Home in Prince Edward County*.

**May 20:** Dr. Kenneth Feigelman, Director of Operations for Kingston-based undersea exploration enterprise Deep Quest 2, will speak on diving "*The Mysterious 'Mythical' Marysburgh Vortex in Lake Ontario*". As part of his presentation, Dr. Feigelman will show a video, "*Rhapsody in Blue – Around the World Under the Sea*".

**June 6:** The Society will host its annual graveside commemoration of Sir John A. Macdonald on the anniversary of his 1891 death at his graveside in Cataraqui Cemetery at 1:30 pm. Speaker and event details will be available on the KHS website.

**September 16:** Dr. David Lenarčič will speak on one of Kingston's most prolific and outspoken historians, Arthur Lower of Queen's, under the title "*Confronting the 'Imperialistic Wolf-Hounds': Arthur Lower, Canadian Nationalism and the Coming of World War II*". After completing a doctorate at York University, Dr. Lenarčič pursued a teaching career and then served in various policy positions in Ottawa at DND and the Privy Council as well as at the Canadian embassy in Washington.

**October 21:** Alicia Boutilier, Chief Curator at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre and a prominent Canadian art historian and commentator, will speak on the evolution of the Art Centre at Queen's from its initial benefaction by local arts patron Agnes Etherington under the title "*Agnes Etherington's House: Tracing Changes and Intended Uses, 1926-2026*". Alicia is currently involved in the massive expansion and reorientation of the Centre, scheduled to open in 2027.

**November 18:** Dr. David More will share his extensive knowledge of the maritime history of the Great Lakes with us under the title "*Unforgiving Seas: The Schooner Women on the Great Lakes in the Age of Sail*". David holds a doctorate in history from Queen's, is a boat builder and the author of many books of historical fiction and non-fiction about the waters that lap Kingston's shore.

### Contacts:

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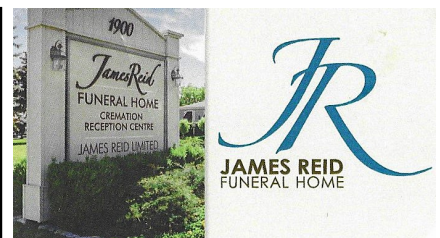
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Eva Barnes suggests an article of possible interest to you:

<https://winnipegssun.com/opinion/opinion-canada-wasnt-stolen-from-indigenous-people>



## ***A Letter of Appreciation for the Kingston Historical Society History Award***

**Why the KHS created the History Award**

**by Paul Van Nest, Committee Chair**

For the last three years, the Society has awarded one graduating student in each of our nine high schools a Kingston Historical Society award in History. The value is \$150. Last year, we had two thank you letters, one of which is reprinted here; this is why we do this.

Hello!...I am a Class of 2023 graduate of Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School. This year, I was the recipient of the Kingston Historical Society History Award at my graduation. To say I was pleasantly surprised and honoured to receive this award would be an understatement.

I grew to love the subject of history after first being taught it in my later years of elementary school. While those lessons only touched on the stories in early Canadian history, it opened a whole new world of study for me. My high school history journey began in Grade 10, while everyone was still under mask and vaccination mandates, which delved deeper in our Canadian history, with topics spanning from the early 20th century to the present day. I then went on to take an American History course in Grade 11, and finally a World History course in my grade 12 year. Out of the three, I can say with certainty that the World History class was my favourite. I could not tell you which topic of study interested me the most — they were all so very fascinating in their own way. As a matter of fact, I am returning to Holy Cross for a Grade 13 year and may have the chance to peer tutor in that course.

My goals for the future are to study history in some aspect in post-secondary, possibly at Ottawa University. After that, the current potential career is to apply to a faculty of education so I can teach history somewhere and help other people enjoy the wealth of knowledge as well

All in all, I just wanted to say a huge thank you for the gift of this award! As I said earlier, I was surprised but excited to be the recipient. Please pass my thanks on to your colleagues at the Society, and let them know that they are doing great work in our community. I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer, and the rest of 2023 as well!

Yours truly, and again many thanks...

## ***Time for Kingston Historical Society Membership Renewal***

*A clip-out Membership Form is in the November Limelight.*

Please Renew Your Membership for 2026 now. New members joining from September through December 2025 will receive credit for the year 2026.

- ☐ \$40 Individual   ☐ \$50 Family   ☐ \$10 Student  
☐ \$50 Institution; and   ☐ \$300 Sponsor

**You have three ways to join and pay your dues:**

1. By cheque and mail: Kingston Historical Society, PO Box 54, Kingston ON K7L 4V6
2. Via the website: <https://kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca> > Membership tab
3. By e-Transfer: [treasurer@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca](mailto:treasurer@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca)

If we don't have your mailing address and telephone number, please include or send separately.