

# Limelight

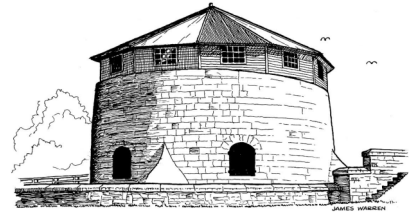
Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada

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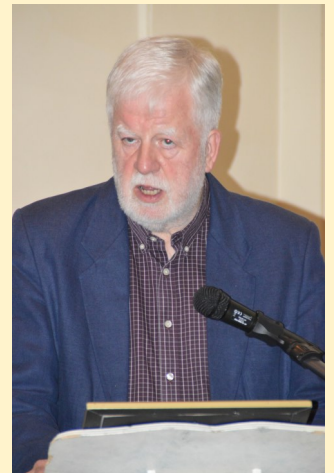


## Kingston Historical Society Meeting

20 November 2024

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

Well-known local historian, ***John Grenville***,



will discuss the interesting career of  
architect **Ernest R. Beckwith (1879-1963)**, who worked in Kingston as City Engineer and operated as an architect in the years before World War I, leaving a built legacy in both residential and commercial Kingston, still evident today.

Please tell your friends that visitors are welcome to attend KHS meetings  
at no charge.

It is noted with regret, the death, on September 30, 2024, of Floyd Patterson, a long-time member of the Kingston Historical Society.

# THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

## MAILING ADDRESS:

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*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.*

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.*

**HOMESTEAD**

President: Paul Charbonneau Vice President: Peter Gower Past President: Vincent Durant Treasurer: Peter Ginn Secretary: Don Richardson  
Councillors: Betty Andrews, Editor of Limelight; Craig Pettis, Member-at-large; Alan MacLachlan, Sir John A. Macdonald Commemoration Event Chair;  
Dr. 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

*"The patriot's blood is the seed of freedom's tree."*

*Thomas Campbell*

October 22, 2014, was a dark day when a terrorist shot and killed Cpl. Nathan Cirillo of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and attacked our house of democracy, Parliament Hill in Ottawa. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the terrible day propels us into November, a month of remembrance of history and so many sacrifices for our freedoms now enjoyed.



On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 106 years ago, the "War to End All Wars" was over, but conflicts continue to rage on even today. Take a moment please, to remember your own family military history, wear a poppy, attend a Remembrance Celebration at a cenotaph and thank a veteran; for we get to be who we are because of their sacrifices through time. Kingston has a special connection to our military and its current and past members.

Lots of great things happening at KHS; our monthly meeting/lecture series continues this month with John Grenville speaking about Ernest R. Beckwith. Murney Tower has been put to bed for the winter; however, plans are solidifying for a great celebration of 100 years of Murney in 2025.

Enjoy some last pleasant days of fall as Ole Man Winter descends upon us; stay warm.

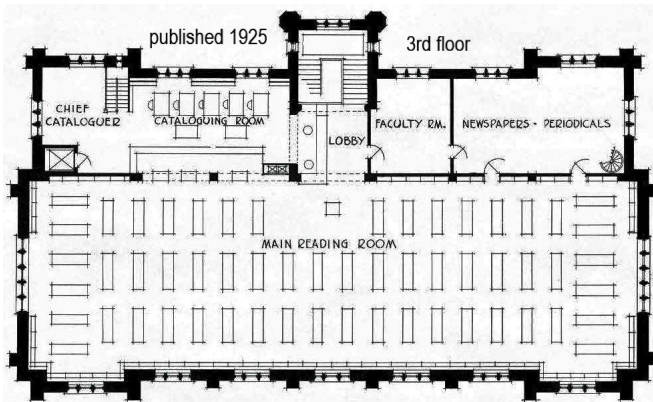
*"Let us never forget the solemn truth that the nation is not constituted of the living alone."*

*—Sir Robert Borden, 8th Prime Minister of Canada*

# STILL STANDING: Looking at Regional Architecture with Jennifer McKendry

## Douglas Library: an Essay in Gothic Revival

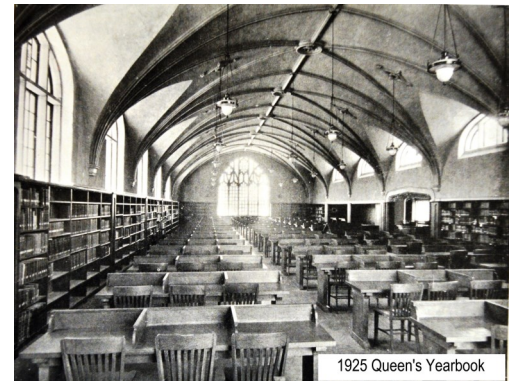
Plans for Queen's University's Douglas Library were under consideration as early as 1916 but delays, such as the stress of World War One and the death of benefactor James Douglas in 1918, meant that tenders were not called until 1922 and the library's formal opening not until 17 October 1924. One-hundred years later, on October 17, 2024, a celebration with a talk by Jennifer McKendry was held in the original Reading Room with about 150 persons in attendance.



Toronto architects Shepard & Calvin were the designers with Edward L. Tilton of New York as consulting architect. The tender for general construction was awarded to the Montreal firm of Anglin-Norcross.

During the building phase in 1923, the Queen's Journal predicted it would be "a noble building with nicely pointed walls, a beautiful Gothic roof and gables reaching high above the surrounding

buildings." The next year when the library was nearing completion, Professor T.L. Rutledge waxed enthusiastic saying that John Ruskin, a 19th-century art and architectural critic, would have considered it true Gothic. This raises a thorny question: can a pointed-arch "stone" building incorporating modern materials such as steel, reinforced concrete and hollow terracotta meet Ruskin's criteria of truth in materials?



What were the other choices for styles in the 1920s? The modern movement, promoting "form follows function", would have recoiled at the historicism of blanketing the library's exterior stonework and carvings while relegating modern materials to being hidden from view. Choosing Gothic plus modern materials fulfilled the client's need for conservative propaganda while constructing as fireproof a building as possible; the latter was, of course, a sensible idea.

The campus had established a tradition of Medieval Revival as early as 1879 at Theological Hall in Romanesque Revival. Gothic was added in 1909-1913 with Nicol and Gordon Halls. Other universities in Europe and North America used Gothic for their libraries. Towers dominated the English and Canadian Parliament Buildings, along with churches. In 1911-1919, Hart House at the University of Toronto made a strong visual impact in Gothic. Douglas Library, therefore, was in its company plus being a link in Queen's University's chain of medievalism, for example,

Miller Hall of 1930, the north wing of Douglas Library in 1964 and, arguably, Stauffer Library in 1990-1994.

Retardataire or not, Douglas was and is a success on the exterior with its stone carvings and splendid tower and, in the interior, the Memorial Chapel (removed in the 1960s) and Reading Room. It seems to be compatible with the Queen's motto carved on the tower, Sapientia et Doctrina Stabilitas (Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times).



**Is the evening not your chosen time to drive?** Would you like a ride to the monthly Wednesday night KHS meetings? **Happy to drive at night?** Would you be willing to drive members from your area to the monthly Wednesday night KHS meetings? **If either of the above applies to you, email your info to [kingstonhs@gmail.com](mailto:kingstonhs@gmail.com)**

**It is hoped a driving pool can be formed so all who wish to be at meetings in person can be.**

**Please Renew Your Membership for 2025 now.**

New members joining from September through December 2024 will receive credit for the year 2025.

\$40 for individual membership;  \$50 for family;  \$10 for student;  \$50 for institution; and  \$300 for sponsor.

Donation: Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Charitable receipts given for amounts exceeding \$19.99 with our thanks.)

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Street: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Methods of Payment:**

1. Mail this completed application form and a cheque made out to the 'Kingston Historical Society' to *Kingston Historical Society, Box 54, Kingston ON K7L 4V6*
2. Online with Visa or MasterCard or PayPal: <https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/> >Membership
3. eTransfer to [treasurer@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca](mailto:treasurer@kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca)

Paul Van Nest, Membership Chair, KHS, 613-532-1903 (text or phone), [pvannest@cogeco.ca](mailto:pvanne@cogeco.ca)

*KHS Membership includes 8 monthly lectures, the annual journal 'Historic Kingston' and 9 issues of the newsletter 'Limelight', some sponsor discounts and some special event discounts.*

*'Historic Kingston' purchase price to non-members: \$25.*

Probing the "Buchan Bubble"

In the years since Confederation, Canada has had thirty Governors-General serving as our head of state. Their names punctuate our history. Think, for instance, of Mackenzie King's constitutional contretemps with Lord Byng in the mid-1920s or Vincent Massey's appointment as the first Canadian-born Governor-General in the early 1950s. Few, however, would contest the assertion that nobody cut a bolder swath as GG than John Buchan during his residency at Rideau Hall from 1935 to 1940.

Buchan was a polymath, a man whose many-faceted reputation principally rested on his prolific output as a writer of thrilling fiction – *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) most famously – biography, public policy, military history and poetry. Scottish-born Buchan also served as a British politician, wartime advisor and journalist. His intense ability to immerse himself in his work led his children to complain that their father lived in a "Buchan bubble". From 1935 to his untimely death in 1940, Buchan poured his prodigious energy into serving, not just as Canada's head of state, but also a pivotal shaper of Canada's sense of nation.

Our October lecture saw Buchan's Canadian biographer, William Galbraith, probe that bubble, drawing on his biography, *John Buchan: Model Governor-General* (Dundurn Press). Buchan, Galbraith insisted, was no figurehead. He was, instead, an activist GG keen on helping Canadians find a firmer sense of their national identity. He, for instance, initiated the Governor-General's literary awards in 1936. His wife Susan promoted a scheme for stocking local libraries. Innumerable and often grueling trips allowed Tweedsmuir – the title he assumed on taking the Ottawa post – to "reach out" to Canadians regardless of region, religion or ethnicity. He spoke out freely on contentious issues such as the righteousness of Zionism. He used his back-channel access to President Roosevelt in Washington to nurture wartime cooperation between Canada and its southern neighbour. In short, Buchan won public trust and esteem as our "Governor Generality". When his frail health gave out in 1940, the nation grieved.

Galbraith's richly-illustrated lecture is now available on YouTube via the Society's website.

# PROPOSAL TO RECOGNIZE DR. FRANCIS M. WAFER WITH A PLAQUE

BY PAUL VAN NEST

Dr. Wafer was born and raised on the Middle Road in the limestone home immediately east of what was Roy's Pet Shop. His home is still standing and occupied. Wafer began his studies to become a doctor in 1861 at the newly founded Queen's Medical School but was soon drawn to volunteer in the American Union army as a surgeon's assistant in the 2nd Corps, commanded by Major General Hancock. He joined the army in the field in March 1863, in time for the Battle of Gettysburg. His regiment, the 108th New York, was in the centre of the Union line facing down "Pickett's Charge" and he tended to many of the wounded in his regiment following that battle. The 2nd Corps was at the centre of Union operations throughout the war and Captain Wafer with them. We know a lot of his story from his journal which ended abruptly in February 1865, two months before Appomattox and the surrender of General Robert E. Lee's Confederate army. A quote from his last letter to his brother summed up his assessment of this part of his life: "As for great events, are we not participators in and spectators of the greatest [event] not only of the century but of History?"

Following his return to Kingston, now just a shadow of the young man who had left three years earlier, he completed his degree at Queen's as a medical doctor, contributing much to the school of what he had learned in the field of battle. He also served the public from his office located in the 3-story red brick home at the south-east corner of West and King: 123 King Street East. Years later, Sir John A. Macdonald's statue, until a few years ago, faced his office across the intersection. He was clearly suffering from some disease as he had lost much weight and was emaciated upon his return from the army. Suffering also from two very painful tumours on both sides of his spine and abscesses, he finally had to close his practice in 1873 and, on April 9, 1876, aged 46, he passed away. His grave is in St. Mary's Cemetery. He was honoured by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Queen's Alma Mater Society. Details are available in three articles which I wrote that appear in the January, February and March 2023 issues of Limestone. (<https://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca/limelight-newsletter/>)

Much of his story is found in a book written by Dr. Cheryl Wells (the current president of the Civil War Round Table of Greater Kingston): *A Surgeon in the Army of the Potomac*.

**The proposal is to create a plaque honouring this famous Kingstonian for his service in the United States Army, in Queen's Medical school, and to Kingston's public as a practicing doctor.**

Supporting this initiative are the Kingston Historical Society, the now-disbanded Pittsburgh Historical Society and the Civil War Round Table of Greater Kingston. Additional support is being sought from the Frontenac Heritage Foundation. An application for a grant from the City of Kingston Historical Foundation is to be prepared for July 2025.



# Murney Tower

## Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

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



## ***Recent Activities at the Murney Tower Museum***

Fundraising to date totals \$18,675, \$1120 raised from the Julie Arsenault concert in September.

Funded by Centennial donations: 25–30-page illustrated children’s storybook in progress by Alex Lowe, telling the history of the tower and Kingston in collaboration with the Indigenous consultancy, Inclusive Voices, to include a five-page portion depicting the Indigenous history of Kingston.

Development of a special art exhibition in collaboration with the Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre — “Echoes: Reimagining Murney Tower”. The exhibition will be displayed at Modern Fuel in April 2025 and then travel to Murney Tower in the summer of 2025. (See Ear to the Ground)

Alison Smith, a third-year student at Queen’s University pursuing a joint-honours degree in Global Development Studies and History, is the new intern at Murney Tower.

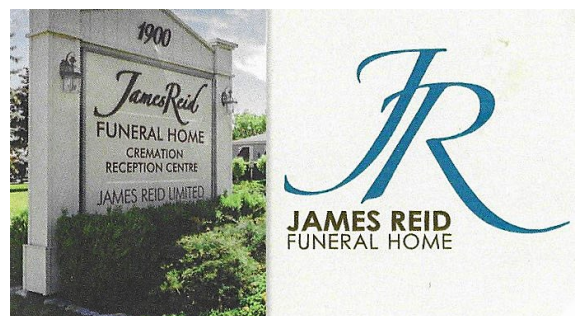
## ***Murney Bridge closing – October 2024***

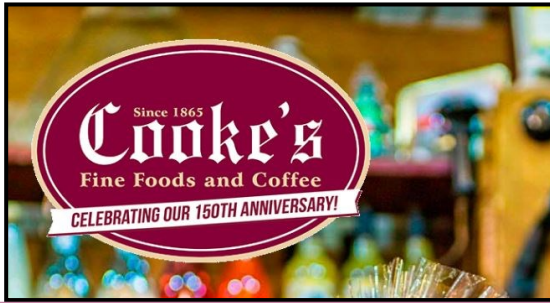
Another Kingston Causeway is closed to traffic! An annual inspection of Murney Tower by Parks Canada revealed that the bridge across the dry ditch and into the tower has deteriorated considerably since last year. For safety reasons, the bridge is closed to the public and has been chained off at its entrance. Unfortunately, this means we’ve had to cancel both of our autumn events, Phantoms of Yore’s paranormal investigation of the tower and our Halloween event, *Escape the Museum 2*, in conjunction with the Museum of Health Care. We will miss welcoming the public into our museum this fall but will be back with a fully operational bridge in time for our 2025 opening.

“For the second year in a row, the City of Kingston’s Public Works department is asking for submissions to name a snowplow.

In 2023, the Name Our Plow campaign garnered more than 400 name submissions. “Murney Plower” joined the fleet after receiving the most votes from the public.” From the Kingstonist October 28, 2024

  
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*Welcome, new members*

David Lenaric  
Randall Thomlinson was entered as a new member in September as William Thomlinson. Our apologies.

**Ear to the ground** **by Elizabeth Durno**  
*Reporting on events of interest to history buffs*

The Kingston Historical Society is now on Instagram! 📸 @kingstonhistoricalsociety

**The Kingston and District Branch, United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada**, will meet Saturday, November 23, at 1:00 p.m. Zoom is open at 12:30 p.m. Jane Simpson will speak on her latest book, 'Shades of Allegiance: Hidden Loyalties of the Giraud/Gerow Family in the American Revolution.' For the Zoom link visit [www.uelac.org/Kingston-Branch/](http://www.uelac.org/Kingston-Branch/)

**The Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society** will host a Zoom meeting November 16 at 10:00 a.m. Glenn Write, former researcher for Pierre Berton will give a presentation on how to take advantage of the Canadian-Heritage website. For the Zoom line, [Kingston.ogs.on.ca](http://Kingston.ogs.on.ca)

**For the latest issue of the Historical Society of Ottawa's quarterly newsletter go to**

<https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/publications/capital-chronicle-newsletter/capital-chronicle-2024-09>

### Remember

Your art piece could be part of the **Echoes Reimagining Murney Tower** art on display at Modern Fuel in the spring, and at Murney Tower in the summer.

Submissions are welcome in a wide variety of mediums, including, but not limited to, video, sound, painting, photography, sculpture, written texts, zines, prints, and performances.

The deadline for submissions is December 6. Information and submission forms are available at [www.modernfuel.org](http://www.modernfuel.org)