

Limelight

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston Ontario Canada



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



Volume 27 No 2

ISSN 1488-5565

February 2025

Kingston Historical Society Meeting

19 February 2025

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

The Annual General Meeting of the Kingston Historical Society

Screening APTN production of *Ghost Hunters of the Grand River* featuring Murney Tower.

If you missed Murney Tower Museum's starring role in the season premiere of *Ghost Hunters of the Grand River* APTN earlier this month, don't worry—we've got you covered! We'll be streaming the episode at our Annual General Meeting.

This popular show blends the traditional Indigenous perspective of its Six Nations Investigating Paranormal Encounters (S.N.I.P.E.) team with high-tech ghost-hunting gadgets and familiar historical locations. The episode features an interview with our former curator, Simge Erdogan-O'Connor, who shares her many insights into the tower's rich history.

Ontario Heritage Month Event

of the Kingston Historical Society and the Frontenac Heritage Foundation

Sunday, February 16, 2025, from 2–4.

Great Hall in the Fort Henry Interpretation Centre

Doors open at 1:30pm....ample parking A high tea will be served.

Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor will present

100 Years of Murney Tower Museum: Tracing the Legacy of Kingston's Iconic Landmark



THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1893

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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 acknowledgement 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 .

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Sir John A. Macdonald Commemoration Event Chair; 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

"While it is February, one can taste the full joys of anticipation. Spring stands at the gate with her finger on the latch." — Patience Strong

As I sat down to write my last President's Message, I reflected on the actuality that the Kingston Historical Society is so deep-rooted. Very few entities can look back on 132 years of presence and look forward to its sesquicentennial coming sooner than we will realize.

For 132 years, KHS has stayed true and will continue to be true to its mandate:

- ☑ To create, foster and maintain interest in the history and heritage of the City of Kingston and its environs
- ☑ To provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of papers with relevant historical content and to provide for the publication of such papers
- ☑ To organize, manage, promote and assist in providing and maintaining historical museums, plaques, cairns, and other monuments to the historical past
- ☑ To acquire documents, maps, books, photographs and other historical data and tangible articles of historic interest with a view to the preservation and display as such articles at such times and in such places as may be decided upon by the Society.
- ☑ To be an advocate for the preservation of buildings and areas of historic interest in the City of Kingston and district. This is still a concern of the Society.

It has been my extreme honour and pleasure to share my gift of volunteerism with the Society. My gratitude to the incredible members of Council who have encouraged me to undertake this role and supported me during my tenure.

"Make the most of yourself....for that is all there is of you." – Ralph Waldo Emerson



re-

Still Standing

Looking at Regional Architecture with Dr. Jennifer McKendry

The Pugh House, 1 Baiden Street



The Pugh House is located on a corner lot at Church Street purchased for £60 by John Pugh in 1851 from Samuel Brady, a Kingston merchant, who had acquired it ten years earlier for £25 from Richard Scobell. Irish emigrants, John (1812-79) and his wife Mary (1820-93) Pugh, built a 1½ storey, frame house by 1852. In 1860 (described as “being built” in the 1861 census), they erected a two-storey frame house to accommodate their growing family (seven people lived in the house by 1870). John was a cordwainer (one who works with leather), and taught the trade of shoe-making at nearby Kingston Penitentiary. John’s widow gave the property in 1889 to their son, Thomas, a tin-

smith and guard at the penitentiary, but he lost the property by defaulting on the mortgage in 1901 and William Westlake, a hotel keeper at 74-76 Yonge Street, took over as owner and landlord until 1912, when he sold the property to Francis (Frank) Moreland for \$700. Moreland granted it to Edna Irwin Marks for \$1 in 1929.



Under the ownership of the Marks family it was modernized, and then returned to its original appearance by Jennifer McKendry beginning in 1977.

The style is conservative for 1860 with severe Classical balance, and modest Classical detailing, such as dentils on the doorway surround. The frame house is two storeys on a stone foundation (the kitchen was originally in the basement) and under a gable roof and three bays wide with a centre doorway.

left Southeast view c1900 (priv. coll.) The original Classical door sur-

round, window headers, wood steps, 12-pane windows, brick chimneys and clapboarding are in place.

right Photo (coll. J. McKendry) showing the c1950s alterations: the chimneys have been rebuilt; the lower sashes have been reglazed into single sheets of glass, as has the transom; a modern door has been installed; the foundation has been stuccoed and the front cellar window stoned-in; cement steps have been installed and a pediment replaces the original entablature. The original siding has been covered with covered clapboarding.



left 2015 view: the glazing of the transom, cellar windows and lower sashes has been restored, as have the window and door surrounds. The steps are now stone with new iron railings.

Limelights: An Untapped Resource

by Paul Van Nest

Want to research some piece of Kingston's story? Our 250+ *Limelight Newsletters* may have what you need. And I've created an Index to all these past issues of *Limelight* and *Then*, its predecessor. All have been scanned and are viewable from our website. Visit our index to find what you might be looking for or to just put in some reading time. Here's hoping the index works for you – it was created by an amateur, namely me.

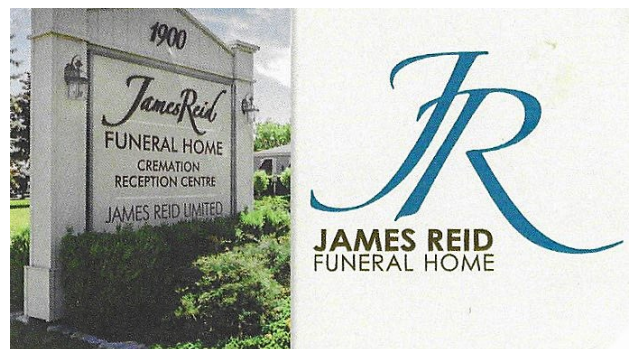
From the tab Publications > Limelights, you will see a link to our index. Please don't print it: it is over 50 pages AND it changes every few months. Not only do I add items from our latest *Limelight* but also I make changes on suggestions received from you.

When you find an item of interest on the index, note the month/year of the issue. Best then to click on the left-pointing arrow (left end of menu bar) to take you back to the main page, then scroll down through the issues by year and select the edition of *Limelight*. Therein you will find the article of interest.

The original is compiled in Excel. If you would like access to the database using your Excel skills, please ask me for the file. As an example, one skill would be the ability to sort by Author. Another is to use the Find feature <ctrl-F> in Excel. As another example, Jennifer McKendry's "Still Standing" articles could be either found individually or grouped using your skills in Excel.

If you have any suggestions at all that would improve your access to our *Limelight*, please send an email to

pvannest@cogeco.ca or phone 613-532-1903.



Dr. Duncan McDowall's *HMCS Thiepval: Kingston's Little Ship That Could*

We have met Dr. Duncan McDowall in several guises: as a KHS Council member who brilliantly arranges our Heritage Talks; as the respected historian who wrote the third volume of the history of Queen's; and now we meet him as a Navy Brat, whose father served in our navy during and after World War Two, and who was baptized in an upturned ship's bell. His interest in historical naval matters was piqued when, on a pleasure cruise off the British Columbia coast, he was told that he was sailing over a British warship wreck.

He knew that had to be wrong, and so he researched the Thiepval and found that it was a Canadian naval vessel, and that it had been built in Kingston, in the dry dock now occupied by S.S. Keewatin. It was a difficult build, with material and parts scarce in 1917, even before labour problems appeared. She finally started her voyage down the St. Lawrence for final fitting in Sorel, but when moored in Kingston harbour she was blown off her moorings in a storm and floundered on rocks by the La Salle Causeway, an omen of her future.

She finally was fully outfitted as a naval ship, and sailed to Halifax to serve as a defender of the convoys gathering in, and sailing from, that port. After the Armistice she left the navy and went to patrol the west coast, via the Panama Canal, to 'fly the flag'.

The navy took possession of her again in 1923. Her major action was to destroy a sea lion colony using her 12-pound gun! But possible fame lay ahead.

In 1924, a competition was set up to find which nation could be the first to fly (or rather hopscotch), an airplane around the world. The British entry asked colony Canada for help by setting up fuel and food bases on the west coast – just where Thiepval conveniently was. Dr. McDowall told the story of what happened as the ship tried to carry out its orders; there were visits to the Aleutian Islands, Russia (the Soviet Federative Socialist Republic), and Japan (still a very reclusive and little known country), where they acquired a black bear as a mascot. When McLaren reaches Kamchatka, the Thiepval carried out its duties resupplying him, but he took off in bad weather and crashed. He was unable to continue, and the wreckage was loaded onto the Thiepval, which completed a 34,000-mile voyage in Victoria.

The rest of her life was less exciting. She continued her life patrolling for rum runners and seals, and finally, in February 1930, she hit a rock in the Broken Group Islands, east of Barkley Sound.

Where she ended her life, Duncan McDowall began his explorations into the only Canadian navel ship sunk in peacetime, one whose story began in Kingston.

You may view the presentation at <https://youtu.be/OWRPta-Or4Y>



**Doane
Grant Thornton**



Over the past three and a half decades I have researched and written about Molly Brant, and I now have the opportunity to push her to the international stage in a chapter of an upcoming publication on monuments to women (or lack thereof). This work which started out as a 1980s report on the archaeological excavation of her last home, has grown to include a presentation to the KHS on the 200th anniversary of Molly Brant's death (see *Historic Kingston*, Vo. 45, 1997), and several archaeological conference papers, as well as public talks. Yet Molly Brant remains largely unknown and overshadowed by her brother Joseph. This new chapter gives an overview of what we know of Molly's life and traces efforts to commemorate her. It contrasts the limited attempts in the United States with the multitude of Canadian examples, many of which have occurred in Kingston. Some of these, though, are not without error.

In the US Molly Brant was seen as, and continues to be viewed as, a traitor. She is, however, recognized at Johnson Hall State Historic Site, in New York State's Mohawk Valley, a place where she lived with her family until the American Revolutionary War forced them to flee and seek refuge in what became Upper Canada. The book, *Molly Brant A Legacy of Her Own* by Lois Huey and Bonnie Pulis (1997), was mainly written, as Lois Huey later noted, "...to get rid of the legends of Molly Brant as a forest nymph or a concubine." (The Daily Gazette, 2016) In Canada Molly Brant is commemorated as a Person of National Historic Significance, a designation that occurred in 1994, well before the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada reframed its priorities to include more Indigenous people and women. The Board recognized that designations had focused on colonial history and the men of that period; the focus needed to change. Long before this national recognition, in 1956, the City of Kingston named a street for Molly Brant. Due to confusion between Macdonnell Street, named after the Roman Catholic Bishop, and the street named after Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, it was re-named Brant Avenue. It was reported in the local paper to be "...named after Molly Brant, daughter of Sir William Johnson, the 'Indian-tamer' and wife of Joseph Brant the Mohawk chief." (The Kingston Whig-Standard, March 31, 1956) Molly was certainly not either, but was Sir William Johnson's life partner and mother of eight of their children, as well as the sister of Joseph Brant!

Since naming the street, Kingston organizations, as well as provincial and federal institutions, have erected five plaques and a monument that recognize Molly Brant, presented an opera, named two buildings, and held a full day of commemorative activities to celebrate her life on the 200th anniversary of her death in Kingston. Books and articles were written by Kingstonians such as Earle Thomas (1989, 1996), Maureen Garvie and Mary Beattie (2002); presentations were made at the KHS, such as those by Ian Wilson (see *Historic Kingston*, Vol. 24, 1976), and Leopold Lamontagne (see *Historic Kingston* Vol. 8, 1959). Molly Brant, who spent the last 13 years of her life here beside the Cataraqui River, has been, it would seem, more than adequately recognized, and yet she and her story remain unknown. Her story, who was critically important to the re-settlement of displaced Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk) and to the success of British colonial settlement of Canada, remains invisible to her adopted community of Kingston and to her own people; she is largely ignored or disparaged in the United States. Surely, an annual Kingston celebration of the life of Molly Brant might illuminate her story.

Patrice Dutil: Sir John A. Macdonald & the Apocalyptic Year 1885

(Toronto: Sutherland House Press, 2024)

Book Review by Barry Keefe

Is it possible that the writing of history is shifting away from seeing the world through the lens of presentism to examining what can be deciphered by interpreting the past through the lens of context? A recent study of John A. Macdonald by Canadian historian Patrice Dutil is an encouraging sign.

Professor Dutil, author or editor of a dozen books and host of over 100 podcasts in the history series “Witness to History”, has written *Sir John A. Macdonald & the Apocalyptic Year 1885*. As he points out, years ago Pierre Berton wrote that 1885 was perhaps the most significant year in the first Canadian century. Using that year, the author places Macdonald in the unfolding events in Canada and also draws attention to what was happening in the larger world to place him firmly in his time.

Canadians did not live in isolation but were influenced by bigger trends, technologies and ideas that swept across borders. Railroads were changing travel and shipping patterns; the first universal time system was introduced; Karl Benz created his three-wheel motorized car; Ottawa gained electric lights; the first women graduated from the University of Toronto; Huckleberry Finn was published; Pasteur developed vaccines; Canada was not yet from sea to shining sea. All of which is to say that Dutil sets Macdonald in his time. Although it may be appealing to think that one would be immune to the prejudices of the past if one were able magically to transfer back to 1885, in fact we would probably share the same outlook on life as did our forebears. History has to consider that when examining the past. Will future generations think civilization reached its zenith in the 2020s, or will they be shocked at our behaviour? *They carried their mobile phones next to their vital organs — imagine!*

By letting Macdonald speak through his own words rather than the words current interpreters think he said, what appears is a portrait of a man with a multitude of talents who also is a person of the 1800s. He was a Conservative leader, yet the rebel William Lyon Mackenzie admired him for his ‘liberal spirit’. Lord Elgin described him as a moderate, hostile to the Family Compact. He admonished white settlers on the plains for their antagonism towards Metis and First Nations people. At a time when politicians in Quebec mounted a vigorous campaign against smallpox vaccinations, Macdonald insisted that all indigenous peoples receive the life-saving injections. An advocate of voting reform for women and indigenous people, he had a dream that Canada would be the first country in the British connection where women could vote.

The author covers many other issues facing Macdonald in 1885. He devotes time to the challenges of indigenous life on the prairies; almost a quarter of the federal budget was devoted to their support. The anti-Indian policies of the U.S. government at the time offered none, creating a steady stream of thousands of refugees who received aid in Canada. Professor Dutil covers the Riel Rebellion in some detail, as well, including the tragic number of deaths on both sides of the issue and the division among the regional First Nations over choosing sides. He also delves into issues of anti-Chinese sentiment, particularly on the west coast and that the

Macdonald government was an outlier in their positive attitude to Chinese immigration when common practice in the U.S. and elsewhere was highly restrictive.

Is this historical writing a trend? Is it the pendulum swinging back to equilibrium? As the American historian Heather Cox Richardson often asserts, if you write something, show the receipts. Professor Dutil doesn't paint a portrait of a saint, but he does provide a compelling picture of a man of vision who deserves to be recognized for the tremendous amount of work he extended to create the country in which we live. It is somewhat incredible that Ontario students graduate from high school without studying his foundational contribution.

Ear to the ground

Elizabeth Durno reporting on events of interest to history buffs

As part of the **Great Lakes Museum Speakers** series, Ralph Boston will share his experience of several seasons aboard the Cayuga in the early years of World War II. Tickets are \$12.00. This event will take place February 6th, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Call 613 542 2261 or tickets at the door.

Zoom into the Kingston and District Branch, United Empire Loyalists' Association Saturday, February 22 at 12:30 p.m. to hear author Dan Buchanan speak on his book 'The Wreck of HMS Speedy: The Tragedy That Shook Upper Canada.'
<https://www.uelac.org/Kingston-Branch/>

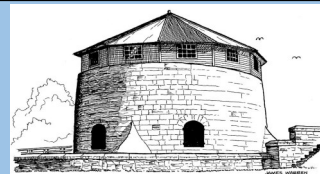
The **Kingston Branch Ontario Genealogical Society** is holding a zoom meeting on Saturday, February 15th at 10:00 a.m. Laurie Tyffe's great-great grandmother, Sarah Ann Gerrard died in the Kingston Asylum for the Insane in 1901. Laurie will trace Sarah's personal history and stories of other female patients in the asylum. Contact them at kingston@ogs.on.ca

Historical Society Ottawa has two events planned for February: Wed., 12 February -7:00 p.m. Jean Marie Guerrero presents a virtual tour of Ottawa, exploring the impact and contributions of Black Canadians to Ottawa. Sat., 22 Feb.-1pm Author Jamie Bramburger recounts Ottawa Valley train crash that took 38 lives and injured 15050. historicalsocietyottawa.ca

*An illustrated article by Dave LeBlanc, appearing in the Globe and Mail, Real Estate Section, Page H5, 17 January 2025, may be of interest to you. It discusses the refurbishing and reinterpretation by Parks Canada of **Bellevue House in Kingston**.*

Murney Tower Operated by the Kingston Historical Society

www.murneytower.com



From Murney Tower newsletter

In 2024 we welcomed almost 13,000 visitors, had 750 participants in our special events, hosted six special events, and participated in a variety of community events that connected us with people of all ages in Kingston and beyond. 2024 also saw the launch of the our Love Murney campaign and the beginning of our Centennial anniversary projects.

We've accomplished so much this year, none of which we would be able to have done without the support of our visitors, event participants, followers and our parent organization, the Kingston Historical Society. Thank you!

Welcome, new members

Sharon Van Nest

Debra Cole

Donna Chambers

David Lenaric