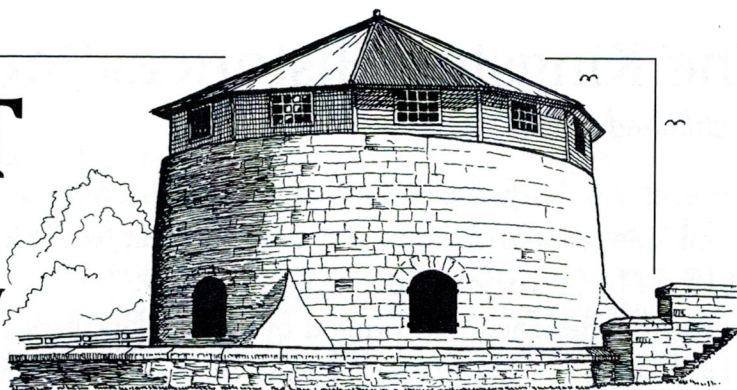


LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the
Kingston Historical Society

vol 15 no 9 December 2013 ISSN 1488-5565



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I have talked a lot about the use of history recently, and about how what we say and do can affect future generations. Proof of that has come from a surprising source. When the Ontario Municipal Board decided in favour of changing who is counted when creating municipal wards, they quoted no less than Sir John A Macdonald who, in 1872, a mere 141 years ago, noted 'while the principle of population was considered ... other considerations were also held to have weight so that different interests, classes and localities should be fairly represented, and that the principle of number should not be the only one.' Now his comments supported the plaintiff's successful claim. You never know where or when somebody will finally listen to your ideas!

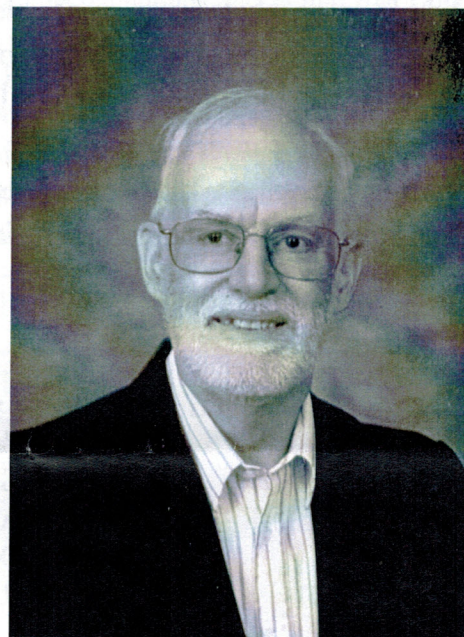
We had a most successful November meeting, with just about every chair filled, and all entertained and educated by Donna Ivey. We hope to see at least as many at our Awards evening on December 4th at the Renaissance Events centre. Doors open at 6, and the awards will be at 7, followed by a time for meeting and greeting.

There are three other opportunities for you to work with the Society.

As I mentioned at the November meeting, John Fielding will soon be stepping down as Editor of "Limelight". I would like to hear from you if you are interested in becoming the new Editor. This is the last call for those who wish to join the committee looking at possible Sir John A Macdonald bicentennial

celebrations in 2015 in addition to the Dinner and the graveside ceremony; and for those who would like to help draw up the Society's thoughts on the future of the National Historic Site that was Kingston Penitentiary. If you are interested in any of these, please contact me by December 15th.

I look forward to seeing you at the Awards ceremony, and at the Sir John A dinner.



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Peter Gonker

The Kingston Historical Society

established 1893

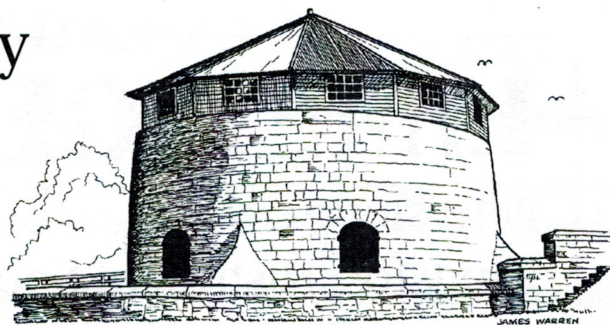
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KHS holds monthly talks or events, usually at 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of the month, September to May, usually in the Wilson Room of the Kingston Public Library on Johnson Street at Bagot Street. Special annual events include a dinner and talk honouring the birthday of Sir John A. Macdonald in January and a ceremony marking his death in June.

New members are welcome! Membership rates are \$50 individual, \$60 family, \$60 institutional or \$25 student. Memberships include *Historic Kingston*, published annually by The Kingston Historical Society.



Murney Tower by James Warren

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The Most Horrific Experience of my Life

Written & Painted by Shirley Gibson-Langille

It was a dark rainy Halloween day in 2013 when my daughter Tiffany and I met with a group to go on a tour of the Kingston Penitentiary, (1835-2013). Words on a page could never describe my nervousness and anticipation as we ventured through the massive heavy front door behind the walls!

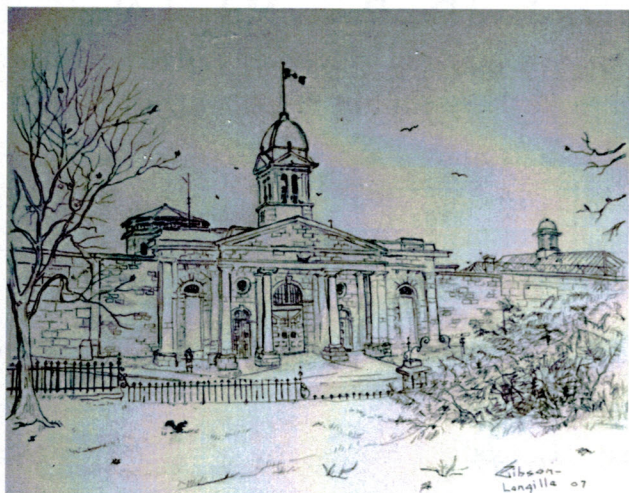
Just inside the door, I was amazed by the magnificent architecture and workmanship. Each stone was carefully sculpted and decorated. The smaller wooden door at the opposite end was 12 inches thick with amazing antique hinges and locks. From there we toured many other parts and buildings. The first room I remember was a large visitor's room with children's toys in one end and several round tables and chairs. Each table had a round listening device. A sign on the wall read: no making out, huddling, swearing, lap sitting, having sexual intercourse, no feet up on the chairs and must remain seated! There were two way mirrors, a glassed in observation booth and cameras. The other visitor portion was dreadful like what we have seen in movies. The prisoner is locked into an enclosed unit with the visitor safe outside, and communicate by phone. There was a roll of toilet paper beside each booth for tears I presume. We went to see one of the six furnished bungalows. Prisoners on good behaviour including Bernardo gets to spend three nights with their family every six months.

Things became quite gruesome when we started to go through buildings with floors of cells. The cells are extremely small many with no windows to the outside. They contain a bed toilet and sink with two small shelves. The first ones we saw were all double bunked. Prisoners had left some mementos behind including a hat, newspaper clippings etc. attached to wall. An artist had made his markings on one cell by painting squares on the ceiling and a self portrait on his wall. In the deep segregation area for inmates like Paul Bernardo each cell had glass doors in front of the bars. Russell Williams was behind a steel door that had a very small window. They were let out of their cells for an hour every day to an undersized enclosed outside area. The central focus of the tour was its main dome. Stretching out from it in spider like fashion are the cellblocks. On the floor there is a large glassed control station and fortress for weapons. I thought about the 1971 riot when 500 prisoners took six guards hostage and destroyed parts of the prison. Pedophiles and "undesirables" were rounded up and tortured. Two inmates were killed.

Throughout the tour I was haunted by the misery and desperation of ghosts from the past, especially when we got near the hospital. The worst experience came when we visited where the mental patients were kept. It was shocking! The small depressing cells with metal beds some wider as they had to be tied down on the beds. Nurses always had to have a guard with them when they gave inmates shots and medication. There were glass shields that could be put outside the bars to protect the guards and nurses from inmates throwing things including feces and bodily fluids. There was an appalling odor throughout the unit. I understand it was very hard to get the patients to take a shower. They were often rewarded with money as an incentive.

After two and a half hours, we left the Pen. All that night I had nightmares! I felt it was very important to put down my experience and to add my feelings that the Kingston Penitentiary should be kept open for tours for years to come! I feel strongly that after seeing what it is really like in prison no one in their right mind would ever commit a crime that would send them to prison. Because of this, I feel that it is imperative that all high school students take this tour!

When I did this drawing of the outside entrance of the Kingston Penitentiary in 2007, I certainly had no idea that I would now be sharing my experiences of the inside!



Kingston Penitentiary Closing Ceremonies

Written by Anne Richardson
Photos by Anne Richardson & Dianne Fielding



On October 24, I had the privilege of representing the Kingston Historical Society (KHS) at the closing ceremonies of Kingston Penitentiary (KP) and the Regional Treatment Centre (RTC).

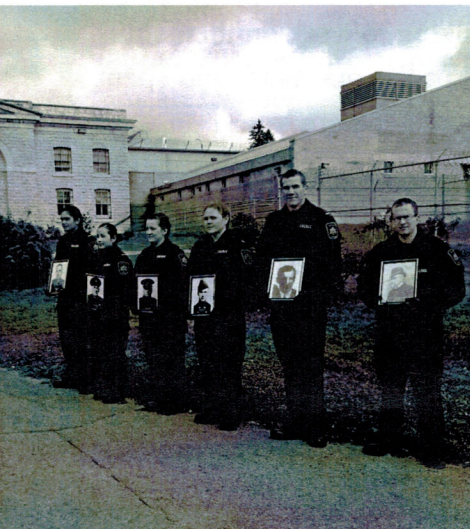
Since admitting its first six inmates on June 1, 1835, KP was the cornerstone of federal corrections in Canada and along with the RTC worked towards instilling in offenders the concept that they, along with staff, could change through a shared vision by working collaboratively to achieve results.

The ceremonies were led by Master of Ceremonies, Mike Ryan, Acting Regional Deputy Commissioner in Ontario. Once the official party arrived on the stage, Mr. Ryan introduced Dan Ross, a Mohawk Aboriginal Elder who worked at KP for many years, and Rev. Fergy Wilson, who is now retired but worked as the chaplain at the RTC. Each gentleman spoke about the individuals who went through the system and the opportunity afforded them to make a positive change in their lives.

Mr. David St. Onge, Museum Curator, spoke to the crowd about the history of the penitentiary. The idea of establishing Canada's first penitentiary was proposed to the government in 1826 by Hugh Thomson, Kingston's Member of the Legislature for Upper Canada. His suggestion came about as a result of the overcrowding, frequent escapes and incidents at the local and district jails in Upper Canada. By 1832, specific estimates for the establishment of a penitentiary were feasible; the search for a location began. Hatter's Bay, a neighbourhood of Kingston now known as Portsmouth Village, was chosen because it was isolated yet accessible to a major town, a

military establishment, limestone quarries and the waterway. One hundred acres of land were purchased in May of 1833 and the building was started. Over the years, the inmates produced iron rails for the railroad, uniforms for the North West Mounted Police, as well as limestone blocks used in the building of lighthouses and the Royal Military College.

We were then shown a slideshow presentation of the clearing of the ranges (cell blocks). This presentation depicted each range being cleared by individual guards wearing the various uniforms which had been worn over the years at the penitentiary. It was very interesting to see how the uniforms had changed with time!



Following the slideshow, the honour roll of fallen officers was read. After the name of each fallen guard was read, a bell chimed. The pipers lament was then played and the silence in the room made for a very poignant moment for everyone.

It was a moving ceremony which recognized the work of the staff whose sole focus was on people. Many speakers addressed the dedication that the staff brought to their jobs, protecting Canadians and changing lives.

Senior executives acknowledged the role of the staff that worked in KP over the years. They spoke of the tremendous contribution the staff and volunteers made through their commitment and dedication which

left a lasting impression in the community and on the inmates.

We were then escorted outside for the parade march of formed units, which was quite impressive with former and current staff marching in precision past the official party and guests. We watched as the Canadian flag was lowered for the last time at KP and the presentation of the flag was made to Mr. Don Head, Commissioner, and Correctional Service of Canada.



During the reception, I happened to meet Ms. Daphne Jenkins. She is the daughter of Officer William Wentworth, one of the seven staff members who lost their lives while on duty at KP. Officer Wentworth was killed November 24, 1961 by an unknown assailant. During our meeting we discussed the future of the Kingston Penitentiary. It is her feeling that she would like KP to become a place that is "peaceful and respectful".



With that in mind, the KHS Council is still seeking your input as to what you think should become of the KP. Please forward your thoughts and ideas to our web site at kingstonhs@gmail.com

Speakers' Corner

"They Walked to Work:

The Captains Irwin, Their Times and Neighbours at Kingston's Inner Harbour in the Mid-19th to early 20th century"

Presented by Donna M. Ivey

Written by John Fielding

Photos by Peter Ginn



A full house of Society members and friends were on hand as Anne Richardson introduced Donna Ivey for her November talk. And what a delightful presentation it was. All of those present will have a new way of seeing the neighbourhood along Rideau Street, from Cataraqui to Barrack Street, and west along Sydenham and Montreal. They can imagine the fall of land to the Inner Harbour of the Cataraqui River and the many dozens of Great Lakes mariners walking to work on their ships docked along the shores. Donna described the lifestyle of the mariners who spent most of their lives sailing their schooners, barges, tugs and steamers from Kingston through the Great Lakes moving tons of grain, coal, lumber and other commodities to dozens of ports during the years 1850 through 1910.

The lives of the Captains were expressed particularly through the experiences of Captain John Irwin and his son Captain Robert Chamberlain Irwin. The Irwin family grew up on Wolfe Island and from the 1880's lived in various homes in the "Swamp Ward". The Captains spent their working lives travelling countless miles in often dangerous, certainly unpredictable weather and rough seas to ports in Canada and the United States. Their health, indeed their very lives, were at risk daily with unsafe water, harsh winds and sometimes unpredictable vessels.

Wives raised their children until Father came home to work for the winter, perhaps building ships for Montreal Transportation. Many ran a small grocery business out of their homes, others maintained small suburban farms.

Many interesting nuggets were revealed such as the international incident when a U.S. felon who had escaped from police custody in Chicago landed in Canada via the Edward Blake, under Captain John Irwin's command.

In attendance were three great-grandchildren of Captain John Irwin: KHS member Norma Kelly and her siblings Olivia Sparks of Bracebridge and Irwin Kelly of Mississauga. Their father's family originated here in Kingston on Princess Street. Alicia Boutilier, on behalf of the KHS, thanked Donna for her much appreciated research and charmingly told presentation.



*Launching of the Minnedosa,
(Dominion Illustrated), April 26, 1890.*



IN MEMORIAM Robert James Andrews 1937-2013



The Kingston Historical Society has been blessed over the years in having in its ranks some very gifted and dedicated historians and members. On 2 November of this year we lost one such individual. Robert (Bob) Andrews joined the KHS in the year 2000 and immediately became a very active member on Council. He came to us after an illustrious career in education as a teacher and principal having retired in 1992 as Executive Superintendent for the Board of Education for the City of London. During his career, he was the founding author of the Ginn Studies in Canadian History but Bob's longest and most extensive project has been as the editor of The Journals of Jeffery Amherst; The Daily Journals and The Personal Journal [Volume One] and the author of The Journals of Jeffery Amherst: A Dictionary of People, Places and Ships [Volume Two], which is to be published in 2014.

As a member of the KHS, Bob chaired the Publications Committee and in that role Bob edited and annotated the Journal of First Lieutenant Charles Allan Parker and also oversaw the production and publication of Favourite Son?: John A. Macdonald and the Voters of Kingston 1841-1891 by Ged Martin. He has served on several of the Society's committees and on several occasions has been an eloquent MC of the 6 June Commemoration Service of

Sir John A. Macdonald's Death. Bob's presentations to the Kingston and Pittsburgh Historical Societies and other local groups have always been enlightening and educational. His knowledge, expertise, and insight have benefited many museum and historical organizations - local, national, and international - of which he has been a member. In December 2011, he was a recipient of the Kingston Historical Society Award.

Bob will be greatly missed by Betty, his wife for over 50 years who has also been a partner in his participation as well as a contributing member, his family, and his many friends. And yes, there will be a void in our Society because of the extensive role that Bob Andrews has had over the past 13 years. Thank you, Bob.

Written by Alan MacLachlan
Photos courtesy of J. McKendry
Above, Bob at book launch 18 Feb 09
Right, Bob in 2003



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14th Annual Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner



Our guest speaker for this year's Sir John A. Macdonald Anniversary Dinner, **Saturday January 11 2014**, will be Dr. Sarah Gibson. Dr. Gibson is well known through her articles on Kingston Street names which appear weekly in the *Whig Standard*.

The dinner will take place at the Senior Staff Mess at the Royal Military College. Please gather in the Mess any time after 6:00PM to meet our guest. The dinner will commence at 7:00PM. The cost for the dinner will be \$60.00 for Society members and \$75.00 for guests of members. Please fill out the tear off portion below and send it along with your payment made out to the:

Kingston Historical Society
c/o W. Everett,
253 Willingdon Ave,
Kingston, ON K7L 4J2

All reservations must be received no later than December 21, 2013.

The dinner is again being held at the Senior Staff Mess RMC. A Commissionaire will be available to assist in parking and directions to the mess.



Sir John A. Macdonald Anniversary Dinner, Saturday January 11, 2014

Name(s): _____

Telephone & email: _____

Number of Members _____ Number of Non-Members _____

Number of Vegetarian meals Required: _____

Food Allergies: _____

Please ensure you include the names of all those attending the dinner.

**NEXT
MONTH'S
MEETING**

Wednesday, 15 January, 2014 7:30 PM

"A Boy, a Company, a Town:

The story of Batawa, the Bata Shoe Company and its People."

John Fielding

**Wilson Room of the Kingston Frontenac Public Library
Johnson Street, at Bagot Street**

Refreshments

All Welcome