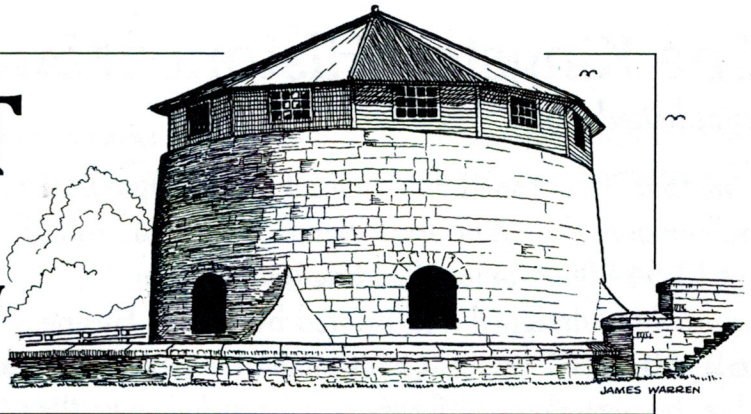


# LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the  
Kingston Historical Society

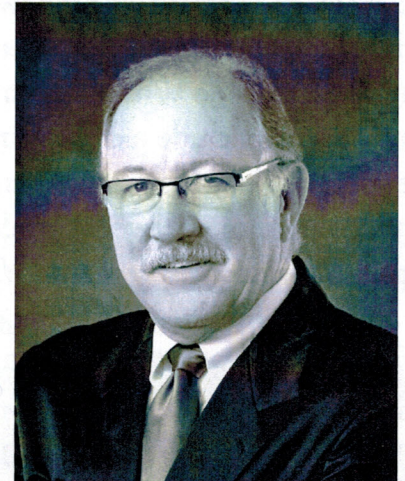
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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The month of October brings our Fall Conference into sharp focus. The weekend of October 26-28 will generate the excitement of a number of excellent presentations on the War of 1812.

The Four Points Sheraton hotel in downtown Kingston will host this unique event, one of many benefits of membership in the Kingston Historical Society. While much has been said about the conference over the last two years, it is suddenly upon us. If you are one of the people who have not yet registered, make a point of doing this very soon. You can choose between the KHS website or use the registration form in the September Limelight. If you're out of luck on both counts, contact someone on Council, who will come to your assistance.



And this is truly a unique event. Most 1812 events are re-enactments. This is not. The Saturday program is a full day of mini-talks on aspects of the war and its legacy in various communities in Eastern Ontario and Northern New York State. We will have the perspectives of Canadians, Americans and the Aboriginal community. An excellent day! It's oh so reasonable! The registration of \$110 buys you 8 mini-lectures, lunch, dinner, and an after-dinner address, as well as the Friday evening reception. There will be a coffee/juice break morning and afternoon.

You will learn a great deal. Your knowledge of the War and its legacy throughout Eastern Ontario and Northern New York State will be both broadened and deepened.

This will be a great weekend, and the prime beneficiaries will be members of the Kingston Historical Society. I hope to see you all there.

*Gordon Sinclair*

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# The Kingston Historical Society

established 1893

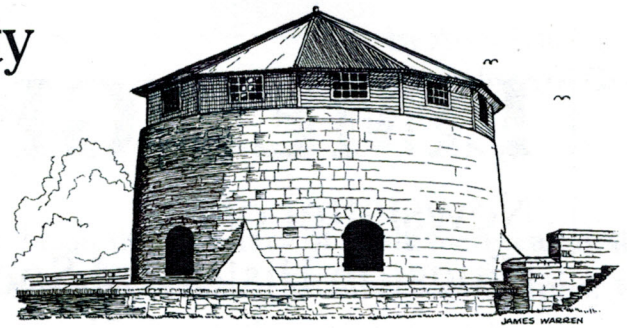
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KHS holds monthly talks or events, usually at 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of the month, September to May, usually in the Wilson Room of the Kingston Public Library on Johnson Street at Bagot Street. Special annual events include a dinner and talk 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

## Kingston Historical Society

Box 54, Kingston, ON K7L 4V6  
kingstonhs@gmail.com  
www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca

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The Kingston Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Government of Ontario

## THIS MONTH'S MEETING

Wednesday, 17 October 2012

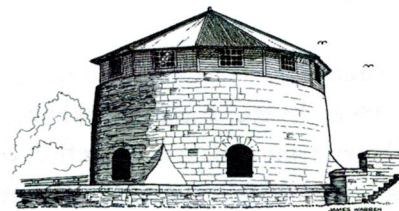
7:30 PM

Mud, Mire and Inconvenience:  
Walking in Nineteenth-Century Kingston  
Georgia Carley

Wilson Room, Kingston Frontenac Public Library, Johnson St. at Bagot  
Refreshments All Welcome



## SIDESHOW OR MAIN EVENT: Putting the War of 1812 into Regional Contexts



This special opportunity to gain knowledge and new insights into a fascinating and pivotal era of international history is offered to the general public. Nine acclaimed historians present research papers illuminating the perspectives and experiences of Americans, Aborigines and Canadians. An entertaining and engaging guided bus tour on Sunday examines the influence of the War of 1812 on Kingston.

**Featured Key Note Speaker:** Dianne Graves, acclaimed author of *In the Midst of Alarms: the Untold Story of Women and the War of 1812*

**Where:** The Four Points Sheraton Hotel, in the heart of Kingston's welcoming historical precinct, close to City Hall, Market Square, and the picturesque harbour

**When:** Friday October 26th to Sunday, October 28th, 2012

**How:** Registration on line at [www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca](http://www.kingstonhistoricalsociety.ca) or by mail, with a cheque to the Kingston Historical Society, Box 54, Kingston, ON Canada, K7L 4V6

**Cost:** \$110 plus \$10 for the bus tour. Meals included.

**Information:** Gordon Sinclair, KHS President and Conference Chair,  
tel: (613) 531-9413      [sinclair@kingston.net](mailto:sinclair@kingston.net)

### PRESENTERS:

**Connie Barone**, Sacket's Harbour Battlefield

Theme: How the War of 1812 touched the lives of ordinary citizens in America's Northern Frontier.

**Alexander Campbell**, Glengarry

Theme: How the Treaty of Ghent in 1814 exacerbated factionalism within the Mohawk territory of Akwesasne.

**Dennis Connors**, Onondaga Historical Association

Theme: How the disintegration of the historic Onondaga arsenal reflects collective American memories and knowledge of the War of 1812.

**Dr. Jane Errington**, Kingston

Theme: How the Upper Canadians not "in battle": farmers, women, merchants, and artisans, coped with the conflicts of the War of 1812. Victory on the battlefield depended upon the ability and willingness of the civilian population to keep the home fires burning.

**Dr. John Grodzinski**, Royal Military College, Kingston

Theme: Kingston as a wartime command centre during the War of 1812 and the forward headquarters of Lt.-Gen. Sir George Prevost, the commander-in-chief of British North America.

**Matthew MacVittie**, Onondaga Historical Association

Theme: The Battle of Oswego, both sides of the battle, and why it is still considered to be a victory by both British and American forces.

**Jonathan Moore**, Kingston

Theme: Shipwrecks, a century of underwater exploration of the sunken Kingston built naval vessels from The War of 1812.

**Jamie Robertson**, McMaster University, Hamilton

Theme: An examination of the role of religious faith for the Canadian soldiers in the battlefield, and belief in who was favoured by God and why, as it framed the contest with America.

*Engaging presentations, congenial company, and good food in celebration of the past...  
Kingston, and the splendours of autumn,  
welcome one and all.*



# Murney Tower Museum

Prepared by Warren Everett,  
Chair, Murney Tower Museum Committee

In the early 1920s there was keen interest amongst the members of the Kingston Historical Society, to have a showcase of military arms and curios to reflect the military heritage of Kingston. The rapidly decaying Martello Tower on Murney Point seemed an ideal, central location in the city for this new museum. On August 1st, 1925 the Society opened the Murney Tower Museum. Since the opening the Murney Tower was recognized as a National Historic Site and most recently, as part of the Kingston Fortifications, became a World Heritage Site. August 1st of this year marked the 87th anniversary of the Murney Tower Museum which has entertained the citizens of Kingston and visitors from around the world.

Many interesting stories regarding the tower have worked their way into local lore. In 1882 a baby was born in the tower and named "Murney May" in honour of the tower and for the month she was born in; later in 1932 she visited the tower museum. In 1921 a gale force wind blew the wooden roof off the tower and killed a young child. As an aside, local rumor has always had it that the roof could be quickly dismantled by pulling a pin out of the frameworks of the roof allowing it to fall into the ditch. Clearly wrong, as filling the ditch with the remnants of the roof would preclude the defensive purpose of the dry ditch. Another interesting story is that of Mr. Smeaton. He was four years old during the construction of the tower and for cleaning up stone chips he earned the great sum of fourpence! When the tower was opened as a museum in 1925, he returned as the first curator and held the position until 1931 when he retired at age 90!

The museum has faced many challenges over these years. During WWII, when the Society was inactive, the dedication of LCol Courtland Strange kept the museum open and after the war he was instrumental in reviving the Society in 1950. Disinterest in military arms and curios in the last quarter of the 20th century changed the thrust of the museum and today it is the life of the 19th century soldier and his family that is depicted in the tower. The general downturn in tourism and especially the decrease in American tourism following 9/11 and later the high Canadian Dollar have contributed to falling revenues. Fortunately, we have been successful in acquiring a number of grants and the museum still shows a small annual surplus.



Our latest challenge is parking. While we have defeated the ravages of time and changes in interests, less tourism, it may be that parking will defeat us. Both lots at Macdonald Park are increasingly used as adjunct lots for KGH staff and visitors. Because we are a drive-by-attraction, parking is essential for our existence. We hope to partly offset this by requesting that the Kingston Tourist Trolley Bus include the Museum as one of its hop-on-hop-off stops.

This year we had all new student staff. Still, they met the challenge, and in the end, notwithstanding parking issues, the museum had a good year. As we look to the future, a new Chair of the Committee will be coming on board. In 2013 Graeme Watson will take up the helm of the museum. Graeme brings new enthusiasm and ideas to the museum. Electronic interaction in the form of interactive displays is one area we will be investigating. I remain confident that the museum has a great future.

From left to right in front row: Daniel Potvin, Sophia Atwell, and Paul Mills  
back row: Warren Everett and Graeme Watson



# Bank of Montreal celebrates a Long Kingston History

The Bank of Montreal has enjoyed a long history in Kingston. From meagre beginnings as early as 1818, the bank moved into the still-handsome quarters at William and King Street in 1842. This building is currently occupied by the Frontenac Club Inn. Prior to that it housed the Frontenac Club.



After occupying the building at King and William until 1906, when the building was sold to the Frontenac Club, the Bank moved to a building on the site of the present structure (King at Market). While the present structure was being completed, the bank was housed at City Hall until the new structure opened in 1924.

Currently at the main branch of the bank is a large poster depicting scenes of the history of the bank in Kingston.



Photos courtesy of BMOFG Corporate Archives

Article by Gordon Sinclair

## Correction

Captions for the images in the article *“Points of interest...which strike the traveller” – an American perspective* by Jennifer McKendry were inadvertently mixed. The images with the correct captions are reprinted below.



Figure 1. Cedar Island in 1856 with minimal tree coverage for military reasons. *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, collection Jennifer McKendry.

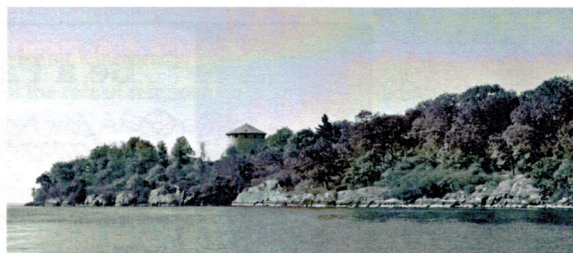


Figure 2. Cedar Island in 1857; the small building in front of Cathcart Tower is likely a privy, *Ballou's Pictorial*, collection Jennifer McKendry.

Figure 3. Cedar Island credit Jennifer McKendry.



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# Announcements of Historical Interest

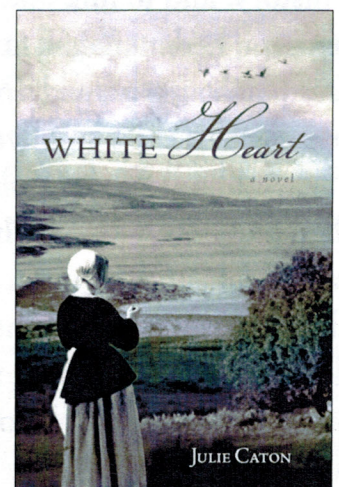
The **Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society** will meet in the Wilson Room of Kingston Frontenac Public Library, 130 Johnson St., Saturday, October 20, 2012 at 10 a.m. Sandra Joyce will speak about her book, *The Street Arab, The Story of a British Home Child*. Visitors welcome. Further info at [www.ogs.on.ca/kingston](http://www.ogs.on.ca/kingston)

## Mark Your Calendars!

Our guest speaker for this year's **Sir John A. Macdonald Anniversary Dinner** Friday, January 11 2013 held at the Royal Military College. Our guest speaker for this year will be, Ruth Abernethy, a well known Canadian Sculptor. Noted amongst her sculptures is the life size bronze of Oscar Peterson at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Her latest commission is a life size bronze of the young Sir John A. for Picton, Ontario. Prices are the same as last year: \$60.00 for members and \$75.00 for guests.

## Book Shelf: New Books of Local Interest

On the side of Highway 33 at Parrot's Bay, Amherstview, stands an Ontario Historical plaque in honour of Madelaine de Roybon d'Allonne, the first woman to own land in this region. It relates how she was of noble birth, arriving at Fort Frontenac about 1679 where she supported the governor and seigneur of the fort, Cavalier de La Salle, in his explorations to the west. In return, he granted her a seigneurie in the vicinity of Toneguignon (Collins Bay) where she engaged in farming and trading with the First Nations. Attacked by raiding Iroquois in 1687, she was taken prisoner by them, released after a year, and spent the rest of her days in Montreal until her death in 1718.



A dramatic-enough story in plaque-style but a scholar-cum-novelist, Julie Caton, has produced a fictive account in *White Heart*, a novel of Madelaine's experience. She tells the story of her life in the court of Louis XIV, her escape to a new life in Canada as an aristocratic fille de roi, and of her role as teacher to the Hurons and pioneer entrepreneur. Then she is captured by the Iroquois and Caton produces an evocative account of how this traumatic event affected Madeleine's personal and spiritual life. A rich story, full of local and temporal detail, this novel is a welcome addition to the shelves of Kingstontalia. (Available now at our own Novel Idea)



## Speakers' Corner

Fair Fugitive": The Life and Legacy of Harriet Powel(l), c.1815–1860

Presented by Jo Stanbridge

By Alicia Boutilier

Photos by Peter Ginn



It is not my usual practice to begin the summary of a talk by revealing the ending, but Jo Stanbridge's denouement was such a perfect metaphor for what unfolded the evening of 19 September, that I couldn't resist. Stanbridge described how, in preparing for her talk, she decided to revisit the grave of her subject, Harriet Powel, a stone's throw away from John A. Macdonald in Cataraqui Cemetery. Having seen the headstone before, she was quite surprised at how overgrown and difficult to read it had become. But Stanbridge had support in her cause: Rick Neilson in clearing the stone and Alexander Gabov in making the inscriptions "reappear" through Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI). What was revealed among other things? "Powel" spelled with one "l."

In many ways, Jo Stanbridge's talk itself was a recovery. In her carefully wrought narrative, she unraveled Harriet Powel's little-known story as a one-time slave who escaped from Syracuse to Kingston. As the speaker pointed out, Powel is more celebrated in Syracuse than here, even though she lived in Kingston for more than twenty years in the mid-19th century. Stanbridge's talk did much to change Powel's unknown status in our local history, and to link that history to others. We heard the gripping details of how Powel, originally from Mississippi, had managed to slip away from her owners (who were visiting family in Syracuse), with the help of a free black man named Tom Leonard and other abolitionists. The Friend of Man newspaper reported on her successful escape in November 1839, and Powel set about getting used to her first Canadian winter. We also heard about Powel's marriage to Henry Kelly, a musician and occasional labourer, and about the children that they had in their house on the corner of Montreal and Queen Street. And then Stanbridge went on to outline Powel's legacy after her death in 1860 and to the successful lives of her offspring in Brampton, Toronto, Guelph, and as far away as Winnipeg.

Stanbridge's talk about the "Fair Fugitive" was an excellent launch for our fall season. After thoughtful questions and a thank-you with a promised Murney Tower pin, we all converged on the refreshments provided by John McKendry.

