

LIMELIGHT

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

Kingston

Ontario

Canada

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lou Grimshaw



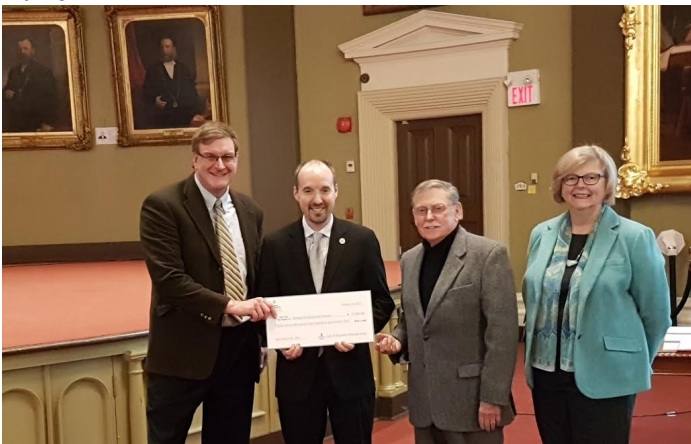
I am delighted to report that the Society is off to another active and exciting year. Our annual Sir John A Macdonald Birthday Dinner on 14 January was a great success, despite having late notice change of speaker and unavoidable absences of a few of the "usual suspects". John Gerretsen provided an informative and entertaining talk. This week The KHS received City of Kingston Heritage Grant of \$37,495 to be apportioned between the Society itself and the Murney Tower Museum operations. This will be of enormous help this year and we are most grateful to those who put

the grant application together and to the City. **The next event is the AGM on Wednesday 15 February at which the usual annual business will be dealt with and a special painting of Murney Tower will be unveiled.** *Don't miss it!*

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Murney Tower Director Graeme Watson and KHS President Lou Grimshaw accept a Kingston Heritage Grant Cheque for \$37,495.00 from Mayor Bryan Paterson, and Karen Pagratis of the Kingston Association of Museums.



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Frontenac Heritage Foundation presents Peter Milliken who will speak about his time as Speaker of the House of Commons. After serving ten years as the longest serving Speaker of the House of Commons, what were the highlights for him? How difficult was it to make what are now considered to be landmark rulings when he was required to break a tie? The event is being held Tuesday, January 31, 2017, at 193 Ontario St., 2nd floor. For details, call [343-363-1901](tel:343-363-1901).

Marcus LeTourneau and John Whitley help prepare Volume 63 (2015) of Historic Kingston for mailing. Photo by Peter Ginn



Kingston Historical Society AGM

February 15, 2017

Seniors Centre 56 Francis Street 7:30pm

The Kingston Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society will meet at the Kingston Seniors Centre, 56 Francis St., on Saturday, February 18th at 10 a.m. Annual General Meeting plus Joanne Stanbridge from Kingston Frontenac Public Library, will speak on "Back to Basics: My Favourite Tips and Strategies". Visitors welcome. Further info at www.ogs.on.ca/kingston

THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Established 1893*

LIMELIGHT is published nine times a year, September to May. Reprinting of articles from the Limelight must be accompanied by an acknowledgement *of the Society, the issue and date.* **All photo credits and by-lines must be retained. Please forward submissions to the Editor Betty Andrews.** betty.andrews@gmail.com

The KHS gratefully acknowledges the support of our sponsors in producing Limelight .



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2016-17 KHS Executive Council

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Councillors

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Ben Holthof

Alan MacLachlan

Tabitha Renaud

Anne Richardson

Paul Van Nest

John Whiteley

NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

Membership includes an invitation to attend monthly meetings; nine issues of *Limelight*, delivered electronically or in hardcopy; and a copy of *Historic Kingston*, the KHS annual journal containing the substance of the papers delivered at the monthly meetings.

Membership also includes free admission to the Murney Tower, Kingston's oldest museum; and a discount at some of our sponsors' places of business.

Sponsors receive monthly advertising in Limelight and, it is hoped, the patronage of KHS members.

If you are interested in the advantages of being a sponsor, please speak to the president or to the membership chair.

MEMBERSHIP RATES

\$50 Individual	\$60 Family
\$60 Institutional	\$25 Student
\$300 Sponsor	

At the Sir John A Macdonald Birthday Dinner

Don Richardson and Dinner Organizer Anne Richardson; Lou Grimshaw, KHS President; John Gerretson, Dinner Speaker; Peter Gower, KHS Past -president

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People Flourishing at the time of Confederation

Kingston's Stonemason Prime Minister,

The Honourable Alexander Mackenzie

By John Morgan - a great-great grandson



Upon arriving in Kingston in May 1842, the young stonemason and future prime minister, Alexander Mackenzie, wrote home remarking on its “most picturesque scenery” and the “majestic river”. He saw a happy future there for his widowed mother and brothers still in Scotland, but noted that “it was no country for idlers”. As if an ominous foreboding, his resolve was quickly put to the test.

Finding his tools were too soft for Kingston’s hard limestone and having no money to buy new ones, he started to work for a building contractor by the name of Schermerhorn, and quickly gained a solid reputation for his skill and hard work. Later claiming financial hardship, the contractor convinced Alexander to accept a promissory note in lieu of cash. It proved to be worthless, leaving Alexander with nothing to show for his summer labour. He kept the note as a hard lesson learned for the rest of his life.

His hardship came to the attention of John Mowat, father of Oliver Mowat, who offered Alexander and the family of his future wife, the Neils, the use of his log cabin and farm in Loughborough Township. Over the winter Alexander worked a bit in Sydenham and also helped to clear the land on the farm. However, other than Alexander, no-one was prepared for the hardships of farming in the bush. After the winter, having been almost killed by a falling tree, Alexander returned to Kingston.

He quickly won a contract and, with his work crew, set about cutting stones and building a bomb proof arch at Fort Henry. This was followed by other jobs including dressing the stones at the front of St. Mary’s Cathedral. Alexander had started to be politically vocal against the Clergy Reserves, the privileged Establishment, and corruption in government. He arrived one morning at St. Mary’s to find his work had been vandalized by the Tories. Another lesson learned...

With a slow-down in work around Kingston, Alexander accepted a job on the construction of the Beauharnois Canal outside Montreal. It was here that a one ton stone fell and crushed his leg. His leg was saved by thick wet mortar but it never regained its strength. In June 1844, after convalescing for a number of months, he accepted a foreman’s job working on the Welland Canal. The following winter he returned to Kingston to cut stones on Long (Wolfe) Island for the Welland Canal. It was during this time that he would cross the ice to visit his fiancée, Helen Neil, and on two occasions he fell through. Having learned his lesson the first time, Alexander subsequently carried a long pole that saved him on the second occasion.

Surviving his mishaps that winter, Alexander and Helen were married at St. George’s Cathedral in March 1845. It is curious that they were married there... they were both Baptist; a Baptist church had been built in 1842 nearby on Johnson Street (now a Greek Orthodox Church); authority to perform marriages had been granted recently to many religious denominations; and, Alexander had been a vocal opponent of the privileged position of the Church of England in Canada West.

After the couple spent the summer in Matilda, they returned to Kingston where Alexander became a foreman on the construction of its four Martello towers. It was at this time, early in 1846, that Helen suffered relapses of a fever she had contracted while in Matilda. Her health was then permanently weakened when she was administered excessive doses of mercury-based calomel, by a drunken doctor.

It was while working on the Cathcart Tower on Cedar Island in September 1846 that tragedy struck. Alexander’s work crew was returning to their families for the weekend, when a wave struck and capsized their Jolly boat. Seventeen lives were lost and Hamilton Cove was subsequently renamed Deadman’s Bay. While overcrowding was a factor, there was also a suggestion that alcohol was involved. Alexander had all too often seen the effects and family hardship caused by alcohol.

Shaken by the loss, Alexander’s work on the Martello Towers carried on through the rest of the year. He accepted a foreman’s job on the Lachine Canal early in 1847 but returned to Kingston quickly with the tragic death of his first child in May. The Mackenzie’s then decided to move to Sarnia to join Alexander’s brother, Hope, and begin anew. It was here that his mother and other brothers joined them from Scotland, where a son was born and died, a daughter was born and survived, and where his

beloved wife, Helen, succumbed in 1852 to the effects of calomel.

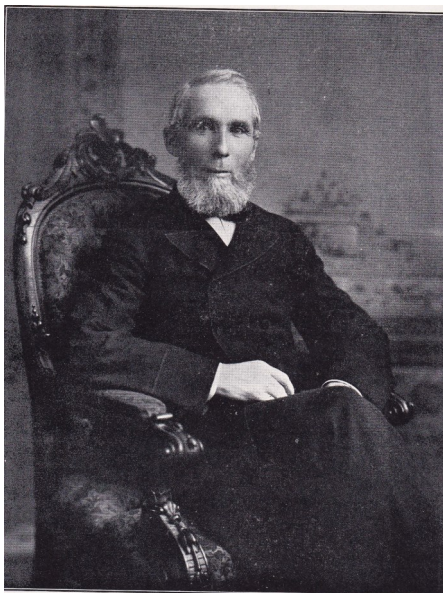
Alexander married Jane Sym in 1853. He became the Secretary for the Lambton (Sarnia) Reform Party and was the key organizer who helped George Brown win his first seat. Alexander's own political career took off. After George Brown's resignation from the Great Coalition Cabinet in 1865, Alexander turned down Sir John A. Macdonald's offer to replace him, thereby precluding himself from becoming a Father of Confederation. Alexander was a strong supporter of Confederation but believed firmly in the two party system and that Reform (Liberal) principles would be severely compromised in a coalition government with the Conservatives.

With the fall of Macdonald's government in 1873, Alexander became Canada's second prime minister. It was a testament to his character and hard-work that someone with his humble background, who left school at the age of 13, could rise to the highest position in the land. A man of principle, known and loved for his honesty and integrity, Alexander fought passionately for parliamentary democracy, honesty in government, equality and tolerance. Amongst many other accomplishments, his government brought in the Supreme Court, electoral reform including the secret ballot, the Office of the Auditor General and the Royal Military College. Like the structures he built, these institutions were built with clean lines... and were built to last.

While making an unannounced tour of Fort Henry in 1875, Prime Minister Mackenzie caught the Commandant by surprise announcing the thickness of the Fort Frederick Martello Tower wall as being five feet six inches. "I know for I did build it myself!". No doubt, it was Alexander's knowledge from his earlier days that caused him to champion the creation and location of the Royal Military College in Kingston.

With his government's defeat in 1878, and struck by a mysterious nervous disorder and stroke that sapped his strength and severely limited his ability to speak, Alexander continued to sit as an undefeated MP until his death in 1892.

Alexander Mackenzie declined knighthood three times, but was nevertheless referred to by historian T.G. Marquis as the Sir Galahad of Canadian politics. He built Kingston and Canadawith a solid foundation.



HONOURABLE ALEXANDER MACKENZIE
Founder of the R.M.C.

Tributes to Mackenzie's Character

Lord Dufferin – "as pure as crystal, and as true as steel, with lots of common sense."

Chief Justice Sir Louis Davies – "the best debater the House of Commons has ever known."

Sir Wilfred Laurier – "one of the truest and strongest characters to be met with in Canadian history. He was endowed with a warm heart and a copious and rich fancy, though veiled by a somewhat reticent exterior, and he was of friends the most tender and true."

Sir George Ross – "Mackenzie was *sui generis* a debater. His humorous sallies blistered like a blast from a flaming smelter. His sterling honesty is a great heritage, and will keep his memory green to all future generations."

Edward Blake – "God give us more such as he was, honest and true."

Rev. Dr. Thomas (eulogy) – "stood four square, to all the winds that blow." (Tennyson's *Ode to the Death of the Duke of Wellington*)

The London Times – the untiring energy, the business-like accuracy, the keen perception and reliable judgment, and above all the inflexible integrity which marked his private life, he carried without abatement of one jot into his public career.

Westminster Review – a man, who although, through failing health and failing voice, he had virtually passed out of public life, yet retained to the last the affectionate veneration of the Canadian people as no other man of the time can be said to have done.

Charlottetown Patriot – in all that constitutes the real man, the honest statesman, the true patriot, the warm friend, and sincere Christian, he had few equals. Possessed of a clear intellect, a retentive memory, and a ready command of appropriate words, he was one of the most logical and powerful speakers we have ever heard.

Toronto Globe – he was a man who loved the people and fought for their rights against privilege and monopoly in every form.

Philadelphia Record – Like Caesar, who twice refused a knightly crown, Alexander Mackenzie refused knighthood three times. Unlike Caesar, he owed his political overthrow to his incorruptible honesty and unswerving integrity.

St. John Telegraph – he was loved by the people and his political opponents were compelled to respect him even above their own chosen leader. As a statesman, he has had few equals. Montreal Star – it is one of the very foremost architects of the Canadian nationality that we mourn. In the dark days of '73 Canadians were in a state of panic, distrusting the stability of their newly-built Dominion; no one can tell what would have happened had not the stalwart form of Alexander Mackenzie lifted itself above the screaming, vociferating and denying mass of politicians, and all Canada felt at once, there was a man who could be trusted.



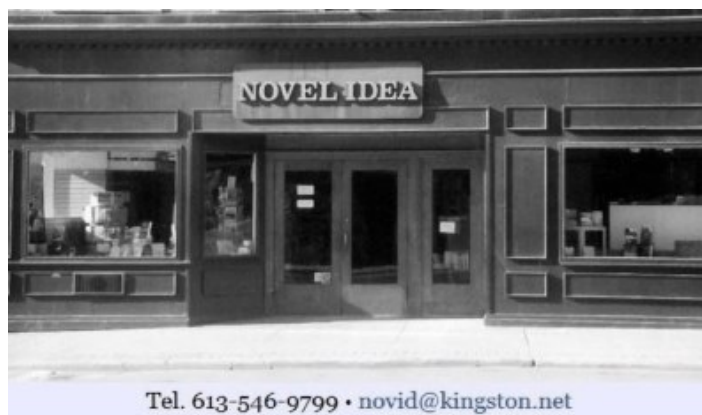
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Speaker's Corner

by Lou Grimshaw



Jean Rae Baxter Photo by
Tabitha Renaud

Our first regular meeting of the year on Wednesday 18 January was extremely well attended, requiring additional chairs to be set out.

Our speaker was Jean Rae Baxter, an accomplished author and speaker, discussing *The Governor and His Lady*, with reference to Colonel John Graves Simcoe, who was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada in 1791, and his wife Elizabeth. Drawing heavily on *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, she concentrated on the five years that the Simcoes were in Upper Canada. In her discussion of the Simcoes, she explicitly avoided the error of "presentism" in which 18th century people are viewed through 21st century eyes, ignoring that those people were creatures of their time and held some views and values quite different from the present time. Her account of the Simcoes' life in Upper Canada was quite fascinating and certainly inspired me to pull out my copy of the *Diary* to re-read.

The February KHS meeting on the 15th will be the **AGM** and will feature Don Connolly discussing his new painting of the Murney Tower.

Senior Centre 56 Francis Street 7:30pm

STILL STANDING:

Looking at Regional Architecture with Jennifer McKendry, Architectural Historian

A dilemma with “Still Standing” is assessing what should still be standing. Is there a magical cut-off date and/or aesthetical/historical standard for saving regional architecture? Many persons are not sympathetic to modern architecture and find it disturbing that certain 20th and 21st -century buildings may need to be listed or designated by the city to ensure their preservation. But this does not make rational sense. All buildings were modern in their day – meaning that a cut-off date is not a sound idea. Also, architecture is a continuum — a flowing and evolving process. The factors that drove architects in the 19th century are still applicable – today’s clients need housing, businesses, administrative centres, places to worship, etc. The crunch is when a new project is a replacement for a historic building or is so dominating in scale that it threatens the atmosphere of neighbouring historic buildings. “New” can become a destroyer or a bully.

There are other factors needing to be considered, such as knowledge of what we have – an inventory. Is a particular building under threat one of only a few surviving from the period in which it was constructed? If so, then it needs to be preserved, even if mediocre in design, in contrast to accepting the demolition of a mediocre building if one of many similar ones. We need to include for survival both buildings that are outstanding and ones that are typical, as both tell us how and where we lived.

Portsmouth Olympic Bldg credit Jennifer McKendry 15 June 2013 011

An example of a modern building under threat during the current “visioning” process around the Portsmouth harbour and Kingston Penitentiary is the Portsmouth Olympic Harbour Building, designed on Yonge St by the Architects Consortium of Cromarty, Dominik, Inglis, MacLennan, Mill, Ross and Sorensen in 1974-1976. It is an important and worthy contribution to the modern movement in the Kingston area. It rejects historicism and yet respects the nearby heritage area due to its low profile and reasonably successful attempt to



merge into nature with the artificial slope on the north. Its subtly angled ribbon bands seen from the water echo the choppy waves. The terraces allow seating for dining and advantage points for viewing the lake. The mix of materials from natural wood to textured concrete allow for variety and warmth. In the interior, honesty in construction is achieved in the foyer and Sail Measuring Room with open steel truss work and posts. It should be safeguarded by the city.



Portsmouth Olympic Building credit Jennifer McKendry 25 July 2013 038



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Sir John A Birthday Saturday, January 14, 2017

by Anne Richardson



Photos by Tabitha Renaud

Our evening reception at the Royal Military College Senior Staff Mess opened with John Hall on the piano. He played delightful music which was highlighted by his selection of WW1 music. John also was gracious enough to bring paper copies of the music which he shared with the guests.

The head table consisted of our guest speaker, Mr. John Gerretsen, Lou and Heather Grimshaw, Lorraine and Kenneth Coull, from the St. Andrew's Society of Kingston, Peter Gower and

Don and Anne Richardson. Following tradition they were piped into the dining room by our excellent piper Doug Green. It was a tremendous spectacle.

This year's dinner is the first event for the historical society in this our sesquicentennial year. One of the highlights of the evening was having the Murney Tower Interpreters Johanna Strong and Tim Romyn attend dressed in period costume!! The toast to the Queen was provided by Lou Grimshaw, KHS President while Past President Peter Gower offered the toast to Canada and Confederation.

After the meal, our members and friends retired to the lounge for dessert, tea and coffee, and then listened to our guest speaker John Gerretsen. Mr. Gerretsen spoke to the dinner guests about Sir John A. and Sir Oliver Mowat, fellow Kingstonians, who were both in office at the same time and both for an extended period of time. Each had worked in the same law firm in Kingston and enjoyed a long, sustained rivalry over the issue of the conflicting roles of the provincial and federal governments and their respective powers. These issues sometimes still exhibit themselves today from time to time.

The KHS would like to extend sincerest thanks to the staff at the Senior Staff Mess for a delicious meal and the always impressive service from the staff.

I extend my sincere thanks to Warren Everett for assistance in planning this year's event. Your KHS Council is looking forward to seeing everyone next year.



- 1 John Gerretsen, Dinner Speaker
- 2 Ed Green, Piper; Warren Everett; Lou Grimshaw
- 3 Lorraine and Ken Coull from the St Andrews Society, Marilyn Good-year-Whiteley
- 4 Rex Verschuren, Alex Donkin, Sandra and Gordon Sinclair
- 5 Dianne and John Fielding
- 6 Jack and Eva Barnes
- 7 Johanna Strong, Murney Tower Chief Historical Interpreter; Tim Romyn, Historical Interpreter



Proposed By-Law Amendment – Webmaster

The Society requires an individual to proactively manage the Society's website. In order to co-ordinate the Society's activities with the information posted on the website, this individual should be a member of Council.

Moved that the current section II Council 1 (c) of the Society by-laws be deleted and replaced with Four appointed Councillors, namely The Chair of the Murney Tower Committee, the Editor of *Historic Kingston*, the Editor of the newsletter and the Society's Internet Webmaster.

Proposed

II Council

The conduct of the affairs of the Society shall be entrusted to a Council constituted as follows:

Five Executive Officers, namely:

President,
Vice- President,
Secretary,
Treasurer
Immediate Past-president

Seven elected Councillors

Four appointed Councillors, namely: The Chairman of the Murney Tower Committee, the Editor of *Historic Kingston*, the Editor of the newsletter, and the Society's internet webmaster.

Members of the Council, with the exception of the Past President and the appointed Councillors, are to be elected annually by the membership of the Society. (Amended 18 April 2007)

Proposed KHS By-Laws section XI

Pending legislation governing non-profit corporations will set requirements for independent review of the financial records of non-profit corporations. A full audit will only be required for non-profit corporations whose annual revenues exceed \$500,000. For non-profit corporations with lesser annual revenue, the legislation will permit the preparation of Financial Statements supported by a review engagement report.

For grant purposes, the city audit threshold is \$250,000. The Society's revenue (including the Murney Tower) in 2016 will be in the order of \$65,000.

A full Audit is costly and the use of a review engagement report prepared by a licensed public accountant offers considerable savings.

To ensure compliance with the Society's Constitution, By-laws and Policies, it is recommended that, in addition, a non-Council member be appointed to review the Society's financial records and report annually to the membership.

Moved that By-Law section XI Auditors be repealed and replaced by

XI Financial

A review engagement report and financial statements of the Society for the preceding fiscal year shall be presented by the Treasurer to the Annual General Meeting.

At each Annual General Meeting, the members shall appoint a licensed public accounting firm to prepare a review engagement report with financial statements for the members at the next Annual General Meeting. The accounting firm shall hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

At each Annual General Meeting, the members shall appoint a non-Council member to review the financial records of the Society and report to the members at the next Annual General Meeting on their compliance with the Society's constitution, by-laws and policies.