

The Wives of Sir John A. Macdonald

Les épouses de Sir John A. Macdonald



Photo credit / Mention de source: Cheryl O'Brien

Isabella Clark Macdonald

*Artist unknown, Isabella Clark Macdonald, early 1840s, Oil on canvas
Artiste inconnu, Isabella Clark Macdonald, début des années 1840, huile sur toile*

Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston Purchase, Chancellor Richardson Memorial Fund, the City of Kingston, Kingston Economic Development Corporation and Diana Weatherall, 2006, (49-017)

Centre d'art Agnes Etherington, Université Queen's, Kingston Acquéreurs : Chancellor Richardson Memorial Fund, Ville de Kingston, Société de développement économique de Kingston et Diana Weatherall, 2006, (49-017)

Born in Scotland, Isabella Clark (1810-1857) married John A. Macdonald in 1843, the same year he launched his political career as an alderman in Kingston. She bore two sons: John Alexander (1847-1848) and Hugh John Macdonald (1850-1929). Isabella suffered from tuberculosis and was an invalid for most of her marriage. They moved to Bellevue House in 1848 in an effort to improve her health.



Née en Écosse, Isabella Clark (1810-1857) épousa John A. Macdonald en 1843, année où ce dernier entama sa carrière politique en tant qu'échevin de Kingston. Elle lui donna deux fils : John Alexander (1847-1848) et Hugh John Macdonald (1850-1929). Isabella souffrait de tuberculose et fut en mauvaise santé pendant presque toutes les années de son mariage. Les Macdonald s'installèrent à la villa Bellevue en 1848 dans l'espoir d'améliorer la santé d'Isabella.

Sir John A. Macdonald

*Portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald, oil on card
Artist: William Sawyer, 1863
Collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 44-021.
Gift of Margaret E. Ettinger, 2001*

*Portrait du Sir John A. Macdonald, huile sur carte
Peintre : William Sawyer, 1863
Collection du Centre d'Art Agnes Etherington, Université Queen's, 44-021.
Don de Margaret E. Ettinger, 2001*



Lady Agnes Macdonald

Topley Studio, Ottawa, Lady Agnes Macdonald (née Susan Agnes Bernard), March 1873 photograph, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (PA-025341)

Topley Studio, Ottawa, Lady Agnes Macdonald (née Susan Agnes Bernard), mars 1873 photographie, Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, Ottawa (PA-025341)

In 1867, John A. Macdonald married Jamaican-born Agnes Bernard (1836-1920) in England, just as the British North America Act was passed. They had one daughter, Mary (1869-1933).

As Prime Minister of the new Dominion, Sir John relied on Agnes to undertake official entertaining and to create a personal home-life as a buffer to politics. Intelligent and rather imposing, she was staunchly supportive of Sir John through the ups and downs of his career.



En 1867, simultanément à l'adoption de l'Acte de l'Amérique du Nord britannique, John A. Macdonald épousa, en Angleterre, Agnes Bernard (1836-1920) originaire de la Jamaïque. Ils eurent une fille qu'ils prénomèrent Mary (1869-1933).

Alors premier ministre du nouveau Dominion du Canada, Sir John s'en remettait à Agnes pour organiser les réceptions officielles et pour créer une vie familiale qui lui donnait un répit de la politique. Intelligente et de stature plutôt imposante, Agnes fut d'un grand soutien à Sir John au cours des hauts et des bas de sa carrière.



City Hall Collection Enhanced By "Sir John A. and His Wives"

Among the recent enhancements to City Hall, which include "Politics and Paint", a collection of selected portraits from Kingston's civic collection and the Mandarin self-guided tour brochure, an interpretive text panel entitled "Sir John A. and His Wives" was installed in Memorial Hall on August 4, 2011.

This 2'X3' sepia-toned panel is prominently displayed on an easel to accentuate the oil portrait of our Nation's forefather, also located in Memorial Hall. A brief biographical history of Sir John A. Macdonald's two wives, Isabella Clark Macdonald and Lady Agnes Macdonald, are lovingly detailed in both English and French translations.

The "Sir John A. and His Wives" panel features a photographed reproduction of an 1848 oil portrait of Isabella Clark Macdonald, original portrait on display at the Agnes Etherington Museum, Queens University. And a 1873 black and white photograph which was taken at Topley Studio, Ottawa was used for Lady Agnes Macdonald's picture.

Built at a time when Kingston was the Capital of a United Canada, City Hall is filled with astonishing historical artifacts. The building itself is an excellent example of British Renaissance, neoclassical architecture.

Within the vast civic collection, one can experience an amazing breadth of history from the tribute to the British monarchy as part of the Royal Way tour, to the Victoria Library, filled with artifacts and gifts to the City from many national and international visitors.

Experience the beauty and majesty of City Hall with a free guided tour. Tours are offered daily by trained volunteers offering expert insight on the facility and civic collection. Group tours are available and special accommodations can be made for individuals by calling (613) 546-4291, ext. 1520.