



Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg
and
District Historical Society

March 2012 — Issue 250

Wesleyville: The Little Village That Could

In Victoria Hall on Tuesday, March 27, Sue Stickley and local artist Kathryn McHolm will present the fascinating story of the heritage community of Wesleyville. Through the Friends of Wesleyville Village, Kathryn and others have been instrumental in the preservation and restoration of the Wesleyville United Church on Lakeshore Road, west of the downtown core of Port Hope. The church, built in 1860, had been all but abandoned, inhabited only by a large bat colony.

Doors open at 7:30 and the presentation begins at 8:00. All are welcome so bring a friend!

Our next meeting:

Tuesday, April 24, 2012	Annual General Meeting and Members' Night	Meeting details to be announced
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Our last meeting

Jane Kelly, publisher and editor of *Watershed Magazine*, regaled a near capacity audience with stories of her magazine's history. Her reminiscences ranged from Percy Climo's dentures to the restoration of a Halifax bomber fished from a Norwegian lake, from delivery trucks stuck in the mud to reunification of wartime refugees and from author remuneration by non-profit publications to care of the aged.



Archives Update

We continue to work to the March 31 dead-line to transfer our archives to the Town of Cobourg. It is unfortunate that the front page story in the March 8 issue of The News Northumberland contained so many factual errors and misconstrued what was happening. At the March 5 Municipal Council Meeting the by-law which named The Cobourg and District Historical Society Archives the official repository for the Town of Cobourg was rescinded. Under the mandate of that by-law the CDHS Archives has cared for and maintained certain Town records for the past six years. That responsibility, however, comprised only one aspect in the operation of the archives. Since the move into the C. Gordon King Centre in 1995 the Town has provided us with a grant to cover the rent for our portion of the building. Over the last few years the Town has also provided us with an annual grant to cover supplies. For the past two years the County has provided a \$40,000 grant to cover wages and other expenses.

The Town has assured us that everything in the archives will remain safe and secure in the present location. Although the arrangements between the County and the Town have not been completed, the County's newly hired Records Manager, Emily Cartlidge, has archival training and it is expected that she will be overseeing the archives. New donations will be accepted as everyone continues to work towards developing a County Archives.

Progress and Prosperity—Cobourg 1837

Judith Goulin

Speaking of Cobourg in the 1830s George Henry, author of *The Emigrant's Guide, Canada As It Is*, said: "Cobourg is the first village of any consequence after leaving Kingston, a place newly sprung up and a most delightful little town it is, sloping down to the very water's edge. The houses are all nearly new, clean and well-built, mostly surrounded by carefully laid-out gardens."

Formerly, the burgeoning village of Cobourg was called Hamilton, and west of it was the tiny village of Amherst. These villages acquired a new name in 1828 when the area was renamed Cobourg to honour the marriage of Princess Charlotte to the German Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg in 1828. The addition of the letter "o" in the village's name was a clerical error that stuck.

In 1837 Cobourg achieved town status. As a point of interest, it was the same year that Princess Victoria ascended the throne to become Queen Victoria.

The era of the thirties was one of prosperity and abundant job opportunities. By 1837 the town had begun to develop in earnest. Cobourg boasted a newly-constructed harbour, many stores, schools, post office, inns, brewery, tradespeople, even a few sidewalks! The population had risen to about 1,000 residents.

The land south of King Street and west of D'Arcy had been subdivided into town lots. In the downtown area there were about 150 modest houses, mostly of wood frame construction, but farther away some distinctive homes and other buildings constructed of brick or stone were already in

existence: the stately dwelling known as the Woodlawn, on Division Street, a beautiful home at 18 Spencer Street East, and the magnificent Victoria College on University Avenue.

Although the market building was yet to be built, there was a market place where local vegetables and fruits from surrounding farms could be purchased. An agricultural society was holding regular meetings and fairs.

Three churches were already in existence: St. Peter's Anglican Church, then a wood frame building, a Methodist chapel known as Trinity Church, the Auld Scotch Kirk, a Presbyterian Church and there were plans to establish a Catholic parish in Cobourg.

Cobourg society was quite well established. Fashionably-dressed women visited one another's homes for tea and book society meetings.

At the same time, thousands of immigrants were landing at the Cobourg pier, on their way to settle around Peterborough.

No wonder a visitor described 1830's Cobourg as a fine and flourishing place. It was already a far cry from the cedar swamp that Eluid Nickerson, the first settler, encountered when he arrived in the area in 1798 and built a cabin around the area known today as King and Division.

One hundred and seventy-five years later, Cobourg is still a fine and flourishing place.

Cobourg Market

In May of 1932 Cobourg Council was concerned with the local market. The result of their deliberations was Bylaw 1489, passed 06 May 1932, which provides comprehensive guidance for the sale of food in Cobourg. Some of the issues of 80 years ago included requiring onions to be sold only in 90-pound bags, disputes regarding weights of goods be settled with a public weigh scale and speeding through the market area at "a pace faster than walk" be prohibited. As still today, deceptive packaging was a problem!

Although on the books until this month, many of these regulations have been ignored for years. The following are a few excerpts from the thirteen typed pages signed by then Mayor George Thompson:

That the public Market house, and Market Square heretofore established on Second and Third Streets, and now existing within the Town of Cobourg, shall be the Market house and Market Square and all persons using and frequenting the same shall be subject to the rules and regulations hereinafter set forth.

...

Each, every and any and all person or persons bringing into the town of Cobourg for sale any wood, fruit, roots, vegetables, poultry or dairy products, eggs or any article required for family use, or other commodities such as are usually sold in the market (except wheat, barley, rye, corn, oats or any other grain and fresh fish) shall not sell the same at anyplace within the limits of the Corporation except at the Market house and Market Square or other places used as a public Market, before the hour of nine o'clock in the forenoon between the first day of April and the first day of November, or before the hour of ten o'clock in the forenoon between the first day of November and the first day of April, and all such persons bringing such articles or commodities into the town as aforesaid shall bring the same to the public

market, and remain there until the hours above stated.

...

When potatoes, turnips, carrots, parsnips, beets, onions, are offered for sale, or sold by the bag, each bag of said articles shall weigh ninety pounds, Dominion weight Avoirdupois, exclusive of the weight of the bag, and none of the said articles shall be offered for sale or sold by the bag unless said bag contains the said weight, and any person acting contrary to this section shall be deemed guilty of a breach of this By-Law and shall be dealt with accordingly.

...

No person shall sell on the Market or public street adjacent thereto any small wares, such as jewellery, trinkets, &c. drugs or medicines in any form, salves, preparation or compound patent or proprietary without the consent of the Chief of Police.

...

No huckster, dealer or other person shall kill or pluck on the market place any description of fowl, or any butcher or other person kill or clean any animal there or in any public street or place, or in the market building, and if any such person do so he shall be deemed guilty of a breach of this By-Law and liable to the penalty thereof.

...

Butter offered or exposed for sale or marketed within the Town of Cobourg, in rolls or prints or other packages shall be sold by weight and not otherwise, and when stated or represented to contain a certain amount it shall be lawful for the Clerk of the Market or lessee or any other person appointed to weigh such butter, and if found short or light of weight from what it was represented to be, said Clerk, lessee or person shall immediately summon before the Police Magistrate or magistrate acting in his stead, the person offering, it for sale, and making such misrepresentation, who shall be dealt with as for a breach of this By-Law and

the said butter shall be forfeited to the use of the poor.

...

There shall not be any trick or device or other fraudulent means used whereby any meat, fish, fowl, produce, commodities, articles or things exposed or offered for sale is or would be deceitfully enhanced in weight, bulk appearance or apparent value, and any person using any such trick, device, or means, shall be deemed guilty of a breach of this By-Law and shall be dealt with accordingly.

...

Any person who shall make use of profane, swearing indecent or abusive or blasphemous language or who shall be guilty of wrangling, or other disorderly conduct in the Market place, shall be deemed guilty of a breach of this By-Law.

...

No person shall be guilty of the offence of forestalling, regrating or monopolizing within the town of oats, wood, meat, fish, fruits, roots, vegetables, poultry or dairy products, eggs or any article required for family use, or such as are usually sold in the Market, brought into the town for sale, and no person shall buy any of the said articles except for his own family use before the hour of ten o'clock a.m. No butcher, grocer, huckster or any merchant shall buy at the Market directly or indirectly for resale any produce or other article of goods.


Mayor.

From the Archives

Public attitudes change. Comments that are anathema in one century are commonplace in another. The death of a child mauled by a bear would be front page news across Canada today. In 1882 the news was less prominently mentioned than extensive reportage of the recent Cobourg Council meeting detailed in the same paper.

A Baby Killed by a Bear

One of the eight little children belonging to the gang of Arab gypsies was killed by a large half-starved black bear at the gypsies' camp, twenty miles from here. Several of the children were teasing the animal, who had been chained to a sapling by his master, when suddenly a 3-year old youngster, who had been poking at stick at Bruin, approached too near, and was seized suddenly by the animal, and crushed to death. One of the men hearing the animal growl, tried to save his infant, but arrived on the scene too late. Whereupon, seizing a large club, he beat the poor bear nearly to death. The child was buried a few hours later by the roadside, and the band packed its luggage and moved along, hardly missing the little dead infant from the motley throng of bears, monkey, dogs, donkeys, and villainous looking humans.

The ceremony over the grave of the infant was a very curious one. The entire band taking hold of each other's hands, formed a circle round the open hole—for it was certainly not a grave—chanted a doleful melody, and then went around and around. Suddenly stopping, one of the men repeated a jargon prayer then in concert men, women and children chanted "Melah!" "Melah!" "Melah!" This ended the ceremony, and all hands engaged in covering up the corpse, when had been placed in the grave on a bed of dried leaves, and covered copiously with same.

Cobourg Sentinel, Friday, December 8, 1882

Membership Matters

Membership renewals

The time for annual membership renewal is fast approaching. To coincide with our fiscal year, the membership year ends March 31, by which time the goal is to have all renewals in. Attached for your convenience is a renewal form. Consider being an early bird and getting this chore out of the way! Those who have renewed by March 31 will be eligible for a surprise draw.

New members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members who joined at our February meeting:

Judy Harris

Ethelwyn and Al Rempel

CDHS Officers

Officers will be elected at the CDHS Annual General Meeting in April. If you would like to take a more active part in the operation of our Historical Society, then running for office provides a perfect opportunity to make a difference. If you would like more information on the duties or to put your name forward please contact any member of the current CDHS Executive. Their contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

Constitutional Reform

No, not the Canadian Constitution but the Constitution of The Cobourg and District Historical Society. Our Constitution has not changed in five years but the recent transfer of the Cobourg Archives to the town necessitates a few alterations. Ubiquitous computer communication has made the separation of duties of Recording and Corresponding Secretaries unnecessary. We also want to obtain enhanced input into the future directions of our society. We have included a proposed amended Constitution with this issue of the newsletter. Proposed additions are indicated with a

double underline and deletions with a ~~double strikethrough~~. A discussion and vote on the proposed changes will be part of the CDHS Annual General Meeting in April.

Notes and Notices

Bus Tour May 29: Circle This Date!

The programme Committee is working on a tour of Alderville, a place we all drive through, but know very little about! We are planning a guided bus tour of the Alderville Reserve, an area filled with interesting history. Some of the highlights of the tour will be the unique war monument, the c. 1850 Methodist church and industrial school, Alderville Cemetery, a short tour of the Black Oak Savannah Tallgrass Prairie and the Red Cloud Cemetery, a box lunch at Roseneath fairgrounds where the 1906 carousel will be up and running and perhaps an art gallery or two. Watch for more details and ticket information.

Needed: Books, Wanted: Buyers

Are you thinking about annual spring cleaning yet? If you have any history-related books that you're clearing out, please donate them to the CDHS. If you've already done your annual spring purge, you probably have room for more books, so browse and buy at our next meeting.

Profits from the sale of books will be used toward the expenses for this year's May bus trip.

Websites

There are many websites with great Cobourg-related historical material. The following are just a few of the many that you will enjoy.

CDHS Archives: www.cdhsarchives.org

Cobourg Museum Foundation: northumberlandheritage.ca

Snippets of Cobourg history and current happenings:

www.hardscrabble.ca

Cobourg History: www.cobourghistory.ca/

Ontario Veteran Archive: www.ontarioveteranarchive.ca/

Ontario cemetery records: ocfa.islandnet.com/

History of Great Lakes travel: www.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/

Cobourg and Peterborough Railway: www.harwoodmuseum.ca

CDHS Executive for 2011 – 2012

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Submissions

The CDHS Newsletter welcomes submissions – short articles, announcements, book reviews, letters to the editor, etc. – that will be of interest to our members. Articles should generally be limited to 300 words although exceptions can be made. Submissions should be sent to the editor at 24 Pebble Beach Drive, Cobourg, ON, K9A 2C5 or by email to

ken.strauss@sympatico.ca