



Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and
District Historical Society

November 2010 — Issue 239

Sandford Fleming — Beginnings: Getting Established in the New Land

The Cobourg and District Historical Society invites you to join us for Jean Murray Cole's vivid presentation of Sandford Fleming's experiences and accomplishments soon after his arrival in Cobourg. There will also be a look at mid-19th century Canadian times and business practices.

Copies of *Sir Sandford Fleming: His Early Diaries, 1845-1853* edited by Jean Murray Cole will be available for purchase at the meeting.

Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall on Tuesday, November 23. Doors open at 7:30 and the presentation begins at 8:00.

All are welcome so bring a friend!

Our next two meetings:

January 25, 2011	Rob Washburn	Hot Off the Presses: The Role of Cobourg Newspapers in Creating a Community
February 22, 2011	Ian Montagnes	Writing a Small Town's History: Port Hope

Transportation to Meetings

Some of our members have trouble getting to our meetings. Walking is not an option for many and not everyone has a car. To reduce the problem the CDHS Executive will be attempting to match those who need transportation with those who are willing to drive. If you would like a ride to a meeting or can provide one please contact Ken Strauss, 905-377-9854 or email to ken.strauss@sympatico.ca. Remember to include your phone number and address!

What does the archivist do?

Some may wonder about the work of the archivist at the CDHS Archives. The following summarizes some of Ciara Ward's work for just the month of October:

- Wrote newspaper articles about Bowmanton cemetery and St. Peter's cemetery
- Worked on the Ontario Trillium Grant project including
 - Met with the West and East high school teachers and project coordinator
 - Created an orientation program and package for the students, purchased the necessary supplies and assembled the packages
 - Started calling veterans for the orientation on 6 November 2010
- Completed a review of the data bases including diagrams of the inputting screens and checking the work of the data entry persons
- Spoke with the East Durham Historical Society about their Heritage Fair to be held 27 March 2010

- Created six new fonds: Marsh Family, Lenah Fisher, Lois Anne Verney, Haldimand Documents, Drumm Family, and McKenna Family. "Fonds"

(plural) is the archival term applied to a collection which can include documents (photographs, letters, manuscripts, notes, diaries etc.) or artifacts (tea cups, clothing, military medals, furniture etc.). “A fonds” is a finding aid, box list, and any other information about the collection which is created in a specific format and made available to researchers. In this case the archivist researched the topic/person/family etc, and then accumulated the details of the collection itself and combined it all on paper.

- Inventoried the collection. We have 25 completed fonds (with box lists), 57 collections without fonds, and approximately 83 unidentified collections. We have about 165 collections, not including photo and artifact only collections, or municipal/county documents.
- Received 16 queries in October. The CDHS Archives has received 139 queries since January, 2010.

Letter to the Editor

I have just read the CDHS newsletter and enjoyed David’s piece entitled “A Mystery at Victoria Hall”. He did, however, call the Court Room “The Old Bailey Court Room” which is not its name. The Court Room does not have an official name and never did. I realize that almost everyone calls it that but it always frustrates me because it is misleading. Often, people will say that it is named after the Old Bailey Courtroom in London, England. Actually, there is no court room named as such. The criminal court **house** in London is called The Old Bailey and it contains several court rooms. Our court room is similar to one of the original court rooms in the Old Bailey because it was a deep well court room as is ours. When Victoria Hall Volunteers were working on the brochure for Victoria Hall with the town, we pointed this fact out to town staff and after some research they finally conceded that our Court Room had never been officially named. Many of them, however, still insist on referring to it as the Old Bailey. I personally feel that an organization such as the Cobourg and District Historical Society should be historically correct and refer to it as The Court Room in Victoria Hall—at least until and if it is ever officially named.

Thanks for letting me rant.

Wendy McQueen

**VICTORIAN SECRETS: AN EXHIBITION OF WOMEN'S UNDERGARMENTS
C. 1910-1915**

Saturday, December 11, 2010 10am to 3pm

Sunday, December 12, 2010 noon to 3pm

Boyd Heritage Museum, 21 Canal St., Bobcaygeon ON

705 738 0918

This exhibit has a very personal connection with one of our CDHS members. When some of our members went on our biennial trip to Bobcaygeon in May 2010, Judy Cross told the curator about some early 20th century clothing, mostly ladies' undergarments, c. 1910-1915, which she thought might have some interest to a museum. It did! Subsequently, Judy and her sisters donated a substantial number of items of clothing to the Bobcaygeon Heritage Museum.

Judy related that she came from a family of hoarders. Until recent years, Judy's step-mother's mother, Rachel Wilson, lived in a house on the site of Mt. Sinai Hospital in Toronto, where a box containing the clothing was discovered. Exquisite bodices or camisoles, pantaloons, petticoats, children's dresses [remember that infant boys also wore dresses] and a beaded purse are among the articles on exhibit.

The family believes that the lingerie belonged to Rachel Wilson, although some items appear to predate 1917, the year that Rachel was married. One wonders whether Rachel had been saving these items in her hope chest.

Rachel's family was apparently middle-class people of means. They engaged the services of an itinerant seamstress who would visit the family home twice a year to make clothing for the family. The speculation is that the seamstress made the beautifully sewn undergarments that you will see in Bobcaygeon.

As a point of interest, Rachel Wilson is connected to the Cobourg Wilsons.

Several CDHS members have expressed a desire to have a peek at Victorian Secrets. If you would like to carpool to Bobcaygeon on Sunday, December 12, please call or e-mail Judith Goulin at 905 372 7684 or jgoulin@hotmail.com .

The Obscure Cobourg Subway

by Judith Goulin

Now over 40 years old, a weathered plaque on William Street commemorates the James Campbell Subway. The title on the plaque elicits two questions: Does Cobourg have a subway? Who was James Campbell? The word “subway” brings to mind a subterranean train system designed for rapid transit, but another definition of the word is an underpass.

Until 1968 cars traveling on William had to go under a train overpass then immediately climb a hill to cross a second set of tracks. Many accidents resulted from this dangerous configuration. The road was excavated to create a lower level and a new train bridge was built so that traffic could then pass safely under both sets of tracks. The use of the word “subway” as underpass in reference to this construction on William Street becomes clear.

James Campbell, to whom this subway is dedicated, was a very well-respected employee of the town of Cobourg. During his long employment with the town, from 1909 until 1948, Jim served as Fire Chief and Town Foreman.

Drive along William and you can easily miss the plaque, but take a walk along the west side of William and stop to read more about Cobourg's subway. The plaque is mounted on a pole that stands between the two overhead bridges.

This article is based on personal interviews with Bryan Baxter and Donald Mackin and Cobourg Early Days and Modern Times edited by John R. Spilsbury, pages 166, 167 and 182.

A Perfect Christmas Gift

We were fortunate to acquire a portfolio of 16 original watercolour sketches depicting scenes of early Cobourg, painted in the 1890s by a resident, Mrs. Cox. Two of these Cox watercolours have been reproduced and were introduced to the Society members at our meetings last spring.

Producing prints of the original watercolours and making them available for sale is a fund-raising initiative to benefit our Society. The prints are attractively matted with the size of standard 11x14-inch off-the-shelf frames in mind. They are packaged for retail sale, and each print includes information describing the subject matter.

These historical Cobourg scenes make attractive and unique gifts, especially for newlyweds, visitors, those newly arrived in the community, or old friends moving away. Prints will be offered for sale at our November meeting. In addition, they are available for purchase at the Burnham Family Farm Market on Hwy 2, With All My Art at 26 King St. W., the Painted Tree at 264 Division St., the Art Gallery of Nothumberland in Victoria Hall, Reg Ward Insurance at 409 Division St. and the CDHS Archives at the C. Gordon King Centre. The prints are priced at \$30.00 each or \$55.00 for the pair. Please keep the Cox watercolours in mind when you are looking for a distinctive and special gift.

In Memoriam

Angus Read

We mourn the passing of long-time CDHS member Angus Vaughan Read. Among his many accomplishments Angus served in the Canadian Army for 40 years, served three terms as Mayor of Cobourg (1985 to 1994) and was instrumental in the revitalization of the Cobourg harbour and the Lucas Point Industrial Park. He wrote a well-received autobiography 'Don't Tell Me It Can't Be Done, The Story of Angus Vaughan Read'. He was an asset to Cobourg and the CDHS in particular and will be missed by all who knew him.

New Members

Please join us in welcoming Ken Willcocks, Barb Shea and Hal Cooper to the membership of CDHS.

Notes and Notices

Are you a home-owner in Port Hope?

The Port Hope Archives needs histories and photos of local homes and properties. Their "Let's Make History" project is being funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and allows the PHA to develop a "living history" registry of homes and buildings in the Municipality of Port Hope. Fill out a LMH booklet, submit a photo of your home and you too can "make history" for future generations of Port Hoppers! Contact the Port Hope Archives at 905-885-1673 or archives@porthope.ca for more information.

Victorian Secrets

There will be an exhibition of women's undergarments c. 1910-1915 at the Boyd Heritage Museum, 21 Canal St., Bobcaygeon ON, (705)738-0918. The museum will be open Saturday, December 11, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm and Sunday, December 12, noon to 3:00 pm for this very special showing. If you would like to carpool to Bobcaygeon on Sunday please call or e-mail Judith Goulin at 905 372 7684 or jgoulin@hotmail.com

Websites

There are many websites with great Cobourg-related historical material.

The CDHS website: www.cdhsarchives.org,

Snippets of Cobourg history and current happenings: www.hardscrabble.ca

Cobourg History: <http://www.cobourghistory.ca/>

Ontario Veteran Archive: <http://www.ontarioveteranarchive.ca/>

Submissions

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

CDHS Executive for 2010 – 2011

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