



Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District

Historical Society

April 2022 — Issue 331

Rum Runners—The story of Ben Kerr and Prohibition

We are pleased to welcome author and speaker Dan Buchanan to our April 26 meeting.

Every community has its favourite prohibition characters and stories. It was a time we think of now as almost cartoonish in nature and we use it more as a punch line than anything else. In reality, it was all based on money and could often be very dangerous. Can you picture gun battles on Lake Ontario?

In Brighton, one of our prohibition characters was Ben Kerr, the notorious rum-runner who worked out of Presqu'île Bay for a couple of years near the end of the 1920s. He was handsome and easy with money when he liked you. He had a fancy car and a honking speedboat. The mechanics at Wright's garage were particularly attentive when Kerr brought his car in for repairs.

How did Ben Kerr end up in the quiet little town of Brighton? It is the story of prohibition from start to finish, beginning in Hamilton and developing through the decade of smuggling and speakeasies. Of course, this all happened because politicians deemed it so. What on earth were they thinking? This presentation explores all of that and more. Strap in; it's a fun ride.

Join us in the Concert Hall of Victoria Hall on April 26, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. and learn more about the life of Ben Kerr. All required public health measures must be adhered to. Admission is free for members and \$5 for guests.



Our May Social Event

WEDNESDAY
MAY 25/2022



STANDARD GUIDED TOUR

Step inside the walls of Canada's oldest penitentiary and explore the living and working areas, some dating back to the 1830s. Hear the personalized accounts from former staff and learn about the history and the daily routines, including stories of escapes, riots and everything in between on this 1.5-hour guided tour.

Designed for a mature audience and is not recommended for children.

C.D.H.S. Social Event

KINGSTON PENITENTIARY GUIDED TOUR

Board Franklin Charter Bus at 8:30 a.m.
Carpool lot Burnham St, north of Hwy 401, west side

Arrive Kingston 10:30 a.m.

Two groups, guided tour starts 11:00 a.m

Board bus approximately 1:00 p.m. for lunch at the Legion and Q & A with our host, a 30-year guard supervisor

Board Charter Bus return to Cobourg 3:00p.m.
for arrival 4:30 - 5:00 p.m.

\$75/person - Bus, Tour & Lunch Included

Guests welcome - All public health measures adhered to
Purchase tickets in advance - cash, cheque, e-transfer. Tickets available at
March & April CDHS meetings OR contact Carla at 289-252-1684 or
cgrucelajones@gmail.com

Seats are limited so book soon. Tickets will be available for purchase at our April 26 meeting or contact Carla today to reserve your place.

Our Previous Meeting

A Night of Mystery

We were delighted to have Maureen Jennings as our first in-person presenter in over two years. Maureen has written four series in the crime fiction genre for a total of seventeen novels. She is perhaps most famous for a series set in 1895 Victorian Toronto featuring detective William Henry Murdoch. Her *Murdoch Mysteries* television series, broadcast by CBC, is currently in its fifteenth season.

Ms. Jennings treated her audience to some insights into how she researches before beginning to write each work. Rather than relying on Google, she often reads newspapers from the relevant period to get a feel for what was important at the time. Surprisingly, various



instruction manuals are among her favourite sources. For example she read excerpts from an instruction manual for the acceptable conduct of US soldiers in the UK during WWII. This instruction manual provided detailed material on disparate matters from how much to eat if dining with locals to the importance of respect for the Royal Family. She also emphasized the importance of creating gender appropriate characters for the period being portrayed. For example, a stenographer in 1910 would likely be male but female in 1930.

Ms. Jennings was born in Birmingham, England and emigrated to Canada as a teenager. She has a BA in psychology and philosophy from the University of Windsor, and an MA in English Literature from the University of Toronto. She lives in Toronto with her husband Iden Ford, who is a professional photographer and their dog named Murdoch.



Our first post-pandemic meeting was very well attended by both our members and by numerous guests. Fortunately, the Concert Hall of Victoria Hall provided ample room for everyone to be appropriately distanced.

On Being Cornish...

by *Sherrell Leetooze*

When I started my genealogical pursuits, I had no idea I was Cornish. No one ever talked about that part of the lineage. Once I was made aware of it, I was not sure how to find information for my research. I knew my paternal Grandmother was from Kingston, and I knew my mother's people were from Newfoundland—Devon immigrants she thought. But where would I look for Cornish information? A lot of researchers have this problem. It seems the Cornish didn't have the right promotion in order for their descendants to have a nice easy pathway back in time. Not like the Irish did!



As a member of the Toronto Cornish Association and the Durham Region Cornish Society, I am always asked: “How do I find that?” and “Where do I look for that?” So, to help researchers, we have formed a Cornish Research Group and we are ferreting out all the repositories of Cornish information we can find to order to build a database that researchers can access—sort of like a digital sourcebook—that would send researchers to all parts of Ontario. To wherever their Cornish ancestors settled in the early to mid-1800s. Once completed this database would be available on the Toronto Cornish Association website at <http://www.torontocornishassociation.org/>.

To give you some background into Cornish settlement patterns, you have to know the religious affiliations they had. Most Cornish immigrants were Wesleyan Methodists with the Bible Christians drawing a very close second place. The Wesleyan Methodists were made up of people from many places, however, the Bible Christians were made up of people from Devon and Cornwall for the most part (there is always an exception of any rule). So, if you want to find Cornish folk, look for Bible Christian Chapels. There was a Wesleyan Methodist church just down the road.

I've done that too! Early in the 2000s I researched and wrote a trilogy about the Bible Christians—the people, the chapels and the preachers. Armed with all the places our Cornish ancestors settled, I know where to look for Cornish information. Now comes the big job of finding who has what—which libraries, which societies, which archives. It will be a huge job, but doable—maybe not in a year, or two years—but doable. So my plea to Ontario archivists, no matter where you work, is this: do you know of any Cornish families in your jurisdiction? (Look for a Bible Christian Chapel). Please tell me what you have (documents, books,

photographs, personal research) and I'll add it to the list. My plea to the public is this: are you of Cornish descent? Where in Ontario did your ancestors live? How did you find your information? Can I add your resources to my list? Publicizing our search will be the big chore. Our plea will go onto the Toronto Cornish Association website. It will go in articles like this one in various newsletters and other publications. It will go on Facebook and Twitter and Instagram. We will write to every archival repository we can think of. Hopefully, once we are all done, we will have one of the most outstanding databases for Cornish research found anywhere in this country.

If you can be part of this huge undertaking, please contact me: Sher Leetooze, at sherleetooze@gmail.com. All personal information will be kept confidential—only your resources will be put on our database.



The image of the Camborne Bible Christian Chapel to the left is from the *Name and Place Index to Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Northumberland and Durham, Ontario*, published by H. Belden & Co. in 1878. If you go up the road, past the mill in the foreground, to the cross-road, then turn

right, the last buildings on the right are the Bible Christian Chapel, drive shed and cemetery out behind. They were built in 1851 and replaced in 1898 with the red brick Methodist Church known today.

If you are interested in further information on the Bible Christians you will want to read the article at <https://www.cdhs.ca/images/reviews/Historical-Review-26.pdf> starting on page 13. Note that this article was published over 15 years ago and some of the links are no longer valid.

TOWNSHIP OF TOXTETH PARK

Extracts from the Order of the POOR LAW BOARD.

PUNISHMENTS

FOR

MISBEHAVIOUR OF THE PAUPERS IN THE WORKHOUSE

(2) www.wvtroups.org.uk

Art. 127. Any Pauper, being an inmate of the Workhouse, who shall neglect to observe such of the regulations in this Order as are applicable to him as such inmate;—

Or who shall make any noise when silence is ordered to be kept;

Or shall use obscene or profane language;

Or shall by word or deed insult or revile any person;

Or shall threaten to strike or to assault any person;

Or shall not duly cleanse his person;

Or shall refuse or neglect to work, after having been required to do so;

Or shall pretend sickness;

Or shall play at cards or other games of chance;

Or shall refuse to go into his proper ward or yard, or shall enter or attempt to enter, without permission, the ward or yard appropriate to any class of paupers other than that to which he belongs;

Or climb over any fence or boundary wall surrounding any portion of the Workhouse premises, or shall attempt to leave the Workhouse otherwise than through the ordinary entrance;

Or shall misbehave in going to, at, or returning from Public Worship out of the Workhouse, or at Divine Service or Prayers in the Workhouse.

Or having received temporary leave of absence, and wearing the Workhouse clothes, shall return to the Workhouse, after the appointed time of absence, without reasonable cause for the delay.

Or shall wilfully disobey any lawful order of any officer of the Workhouse.

Shall be deemed **DISORDERLY**.

Art. 128. Any pauper, being an inmate of the Workhouse, who shall, within seven days, repeat any one, or commit more than one, of the offences specified in Art. 127;—

Or who shall by word or deed insult or revile the Master or Matron, or any other officer of the Workhouse, or any of the Guardians.

Or shall wilfully disobey any lawful order of the Master or Matron after such order shall have been repeated;

Or shall unlawfully strike or otherwise unlawfully assault any person.

Or shall wilfully or mischievously damage or soil any property

Or shall wilfully waste or spoil any provisions, stocks, tools or materials, or work, belonging to the Guardians;

Or shall be drunk;

Or shall act or write indecently or obscenely;

Or shall wilfully disturb other persons at Public Worship out of the Workhouse, or at Divine Service or Prayer in the Workhouse;

Shall be deemed **REFRACTORY**.

Art. 129. The Master may, with or without the direction of the Guardians, punish any disorderly pauper for substituting, during at time not greater than forty-eight hours, for his dinner as prescribed by the Dietary a meal consisting of eight ounces of bread, or one pound of cooked potatoes or boiled rice, and also by withholding from him, during the same period, all butter, cheese, tea, sugar or broth, which such pauper would otherwise receive, at any meal, during the time aforesaid.

Art. 130. The Guardians may, by a special direction to be entered on the minutes, order any refractory pauper to be punished by confinement in a separate room, with or without an alteration of diet, similar in kind and duration to that prescribed in Art. 129 for disorderly paupers; but no pauper shall be so confined for a longer period than twenty-four hours, or, if it be deemed right that such pauper should be carried before a Justice of the Peace, and if such period of twenty-four hours should be insufficient for that purpose, then for such further time as may be necessary for such purpose.

Art. 131. If any offence, whereby a pauper becomes refractory under Art. 128, be accompanied by any of the following circumstances of aggravation: (that is to say,) if such pauper

Persist in using violence against any person;

Or persist in creating a noise or disturbance, so as to annoy other inmates;

Or endeavour to excite other paupers to acts of insubordination;

Or persist in acting indecently or obscenely in the presence of any other inmate;

Or persist in mischievously breaking or damaging any goods or property of the Guardians;

the Master may, without any direction of the Guardians, immediately place such refractory pauper in confinement for any time not exceeding twelve hours, which confinement shall however, be reckoned as part of any punishment afterwards imposed by the Guardians for the same offence.

JAMES MOUNDING Clerk to the Guardians

Member Matters

If you missed it

If you missed our March meeting you can enjoy the recorded version on YouTube. No special sign-in is required and you can view the video at any time on computers, tablets, smartPhones and smartTVs: <https://youtu.be/hDSrwwWPSRQ> Rolland Briere of Tracy Hanes Multimedia in Cobourg filmed our meeting and did the excellent editing. Contact him at tracyhanes@yahoo.ca if you have a video or still photography project.

New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest CDHS members:

Wendy Bannon

Donald and Anne Macintosh

Vanessa Gardiner

Don Cooper and Sharron

Janet and Bert Sedgwick

Skidmore

Victoria Hall Display

The CDHS has obtained approval to display various Cobourg related artifacts in the lobby of Victoria Hall. We plan to have the display assembled by month end. Watch for it!

AGM

The April meeting will begin with our Annual General Meeting (AGM). If you would like to volunteer for any position on our Executive please contact any of the current members (see last page of this newsletter) to discuss the opportunities. You will receive all AGM materials by email prior to the meeting.

Proposals for Meetings

Speaking at a CDHS meeting is an honour and you are urged to submit a proposal for a topic that you would like to present at a meeting. The Program Planning Committee carefully considers all proposals to select the best for our meetings. If you have a recommendation for a presenter we would also appreciate the suggestion. If you do not wish to be a presenter but have a topic that you would like to learn more about, please let us know and we will attempt to locate a presenter for a future meeting.

Announcements

Historical Reviews

In earlier years CDHS meeting presentations were published in an annual *Historical Review*. Although these publications are long out-of-print their material is an outstanding source of information on the history of Cobourg. To ensure that this information is not lost, Carla Jones and Hannah LeBlanc have spent many hours scanning original copies of *Historical Review*. Their work means that over 1,000 pages of presentations from 20 years of meetings dating

back to 1980 are available on the CDHS website. Topics include “Royal Proclamations in Cobourg”, “Amherst”, “Corvette Cobourg”, “Baltimore - Its Past and Present” and hundreds more. Visit <https://cdhs.ca/resources/historical-reviews>

Battle of the Atlantic Dinner

The Cobourg Legion with members of the local naval community will host a commemorative Battle of the Atlantic dinner, Saturday April 30th commencing at 1800 (6:00 pm).

Traditionally, members of the Royal Canadian Navy commemorate the loss of ships and sailors on the first Sunday in May at cenotaphs across our nation; this is Remembrance Day for the navy. Part of this tradition is a commemorative dinner held on the evening prior.

Guest speaker will be Roger Litwiller, an area naval historian who will speak about the History of HMCS Cobourg. A special presentation honouring HMCS Cobourg will be made by the Town of Cobourg.

Tickets are \$30 per person, cash bar, naval traditions during the dinner, business attire, blues and greys with medals for veterans, mess dress for serving members.

Hoping to “splice the main brace” with a rum tot to all in honouring our navy. Tickets can be purchased by calling 905-373-4738.



Museum Foundation Book Store

The Cobourg Museum Book Store offers both new and used books at reasonable prices. They specialize in books by local authors and of local history, but also carry an interesting selection covering Canadian history, the military and “general interest”. Delivery in the Cobourg/ Grafton/ Port Hope area is free or pick-up at the Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre in Cobourg can be arranged. Visit <https://cobourg-museum-foundation-inc.square.site/> to view and purchase books for pick-up or delivery.

Lakeshore Genealogical Society

The regular monthly meeting of the Lakeshore Genealogical Society is available via Zoom on Thursday, April 14, at 7:00pm. Use the following to join the Zoom meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81361768224?pwd=SDVrREFZUks0NnJpNWZ5T081dzFrQT09> Visitors are welcome. Every meeting has a program ranging from member discussions to guest presenters on topics of interest to genealogists and family historians, whether researching locally or far away.

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