

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District
Historical Society

February 2017 — Issue 286

Jimmy Roberts: Gentleman Player

Our speaker February 28, 2017 is Todd Denault. Todd is a freelance author, researcher and member of the Society for International Hockey Research. He has written four books and his shorter works have been published in a number of print and online publications. His book *Jacques Plante: The Man Who Changed the Face of Hockey* is the first full-length biography of one of the most important hockey players in history. His other books, *The Greatest Game: The Montreal Canadiens, the Red Army, and the Night That Saved Hockey*, *A Season in Time: Super Mario, Killer, St. Patrick, the Great One and the Unforgettable 1992-93 NHL* and *Unbreakable: 50 in 39 – Wayne Gretzky and the Story of Hockey's Greatest Record*, have been widely praised and have made Todd an acknowledged expert on hockey.

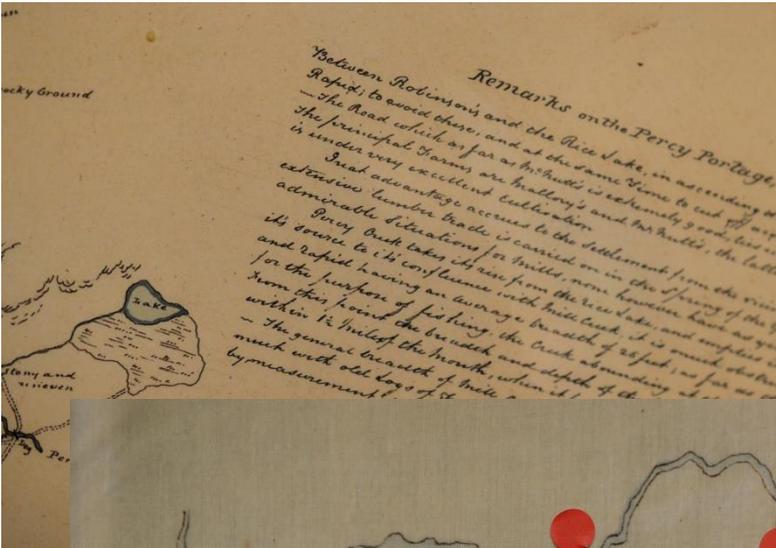
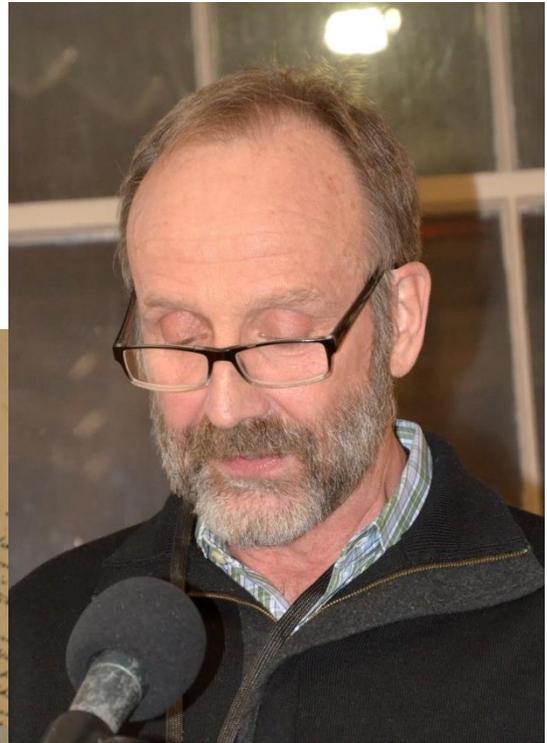
Todd will be talking about Port Hope NHLer Jimmy Roberts who played more than 1,000 games for the Montréal Canadiens and the St. Louis Blues. Roberts was a solid, defenceman, a tireless player and a gentleman. The story of Jimmy Roberts and the greatest game that saved hockey is the perfect way to celebrate an exciting part of what makes up 150 years of Canada.

Join us on Tuesday, February 28, in Victoria Hall's Citizens' Forum. Doors open at 7:00 PM and the meeting begins at 7:30 PM. Coffee and cookies will be available before the meeting. Admission, including refreshments, is free for members and \$5 for non-members. Annual membership is \$25 for individuals and \$30 for a family. All are welcome, so bring a friend!

Our Previous Meeting

Champlain's Route to Lake Ontario

In 1615 Samuel de Champlain and a small group of French soldiers were led by a large force of Algonquin and Huron allies south through our region. The destination of their journey was roughly where Syracuse, New York is today and their purpose was to engage the Iroquois Nations in what would be his third and final battle. At our January



meeting CDHS member Stewart Richardson described this journey. Illustrating his talk with a number of maps, drawings and letters he explored the merits and likelihood of various alternative routes Champlain’s force might have taken south after entering Rice Lake.

Future Meetings

<p>Tuesday, February 28, 2017 Citizens’ Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Todd Denault <i>The Greatest Game: The Career of Jimmy Roberts, Gentleman</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, March 28, 2017 Citizens’ Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Katie Hull <i>Heritage Lost and Found: Managing the Cultural Heritage of the 407E Corridor</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, April 25, 2017 Citizens’ Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Annual General Meeting of the Cobourg and District Historical Society followed by Richard Randall <i>Historic Cobourg Postcards</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, May 30, 2017 Ballroom, Victoria Hall 7:00pm <i>This meeting is open to the public without charge.</i></p>	<p>Alison Torrie Lapaire <i>The Canadian Flag—What a History!</i> Presentation will be followed by entertainment and refreshments.</p>

February is Black History Month: Railway Porters

Judith Goulin

It was while reading *Some Great Thing* by one of my current favourite authors, Lawrence Hill, that I became aware of some interesting historical facts about train porters, which I then set out to research further.

In the United States there was a long tradition of black men serving whites on the railroad, beginning with George Pullman's invention of the Pullman sleeping car in 1864. Pullman hired only black men to serve as porters. Similarly, during the early years of railways in Canada, circa 1880-1950, exclusively black men were hired as sleeping car porters. In earlier eras there were precious few opportunities for blacks males to find jobs except on the railroad. The Canadian railways hired blacks from Canada, U.S., Wales, the Caribbean and the Dutch East Indies. The fact that some of these black men were highly educated did not matter when it came to finding decent jobs. They needed employment and the railways needed porters. Conductors, however, were always white men.

Hamilton-born Ray Lewis was a member of the Olympic track and field team. He won medals at the 1932 Olympics and the 1934 British Empire Games but during the Thirties when his running career ended and he was no longer a celebrity, he was just another black man looking for a job. He found employment as a porter. Porters worked long hours for low wages. Their tasks were making beds, shining shoes, mopping floors and serving drinks and snacks to passengers. Although a typical run or shift was 72 hours, the men were not provided with sleeping quarters on the train, unlike the well-appointed Pullman cars where white passengers slept. Porters had to catch naps wherever they could. They were allowed to eat in the dining cars outside of regular dining hours, but even then only if no Whites happened to still be dining. In his biography Lewis commented that: "I came into the porter's job with several national titles to my name. I had my name in the paper many more times than many of the people I would serve on the train."

The prevailing attitude of this earlier era in Canadian history was that Blacks were socially inferior to whites and consequently were meant to work in jobs that reinforced the stereotype. It was not only the optics – the reality was that Blacks were in a servile position.

Porters sought to improve their working conditions but because white railway unions would not allow Blacks to join them, black porters began to form their own unions. Early attempts at

unionizing CPR porters failed, but in 1939 they gained the support of the American Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The first bargaining agreement was finalized in 1945. This meant a salary increase, overtime pay and a one week paid vacation.

Black men continued to be discriminated against when they aspired to becoming conductors, a role reserved for whites. This changed in 1954 when George V. Garraway became the first black Canadian conductor.

For additional material on porters you may enjoy:

Rapid Ray, published by Tundra Books, Toronto, 2002, ASIN: B01FJ0QCJS

And <https://humanrights.ca/blog/sleeping-car-porters>

Announcements

5th Annual
Brighton History Events

Celebrating 150 years of our history

Brighton One Five Oh!

Don't miss either of these two exciting events

Brighton One Five Oh! Travel through history in Stories and Songs	Open House Displays and Heritage Tea
Saturday, February 18, 6:30 pm with encore performance Sunday, February 19, 2:00 pm	Saturday, February 18, 10 am- 4 pm
Music and song by Brighton's own RandR	Visit displays from local and regional organizations
Stories by Brighton "History Guy" Dan Buchanan	Premiere of Brighton Digital Archives video project
Special Guests with great stories to tell	Enjoy the Heritage Tea presented by the local Women's Institutes (\$5)
Admission by Donation	Free Admission Donations encouraged

Supported by: 

Both events at King Edward Community Centre

Brighton Digital Archive Open House

Held the third Tuesday of each month, from 2 pm to 4 pm and then from 6 pm to 8 pm. The next date is February 21, 2017.

Bring your family pictures and documents for the Brighton Digital Archive volunteers to review for digitizing and possible publication on the BDA web site at

<http://vitacollections.ca/brightonarchives/search>

Lakeshore Genealogical Society

The Lakeshore Genealogical Society has a number of meetings planned:

- **March 9:** Cheryl Levy from the Quinte Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society
- **April 13:** Bob Dawes- "Finding Your English Connection"
- **May 11:** Dan Buchannan- "Stagecoach King: The Story of William Weller"
- **June 8:** Suzanne Séguin- "Early Homes of Cobourg"

Meetings are from 6:30-9:00 pm in the Rotary Room, Cobourg Public Library. Visitors are welcome.

National Trust for Canada Workshop

A one day workshop organized by the National Trust for Canada and its partner, Faith and the Common Good will be held in Peterborough on February 25th. Many places of faith face decreasing financial and human resources that is putting beloved community landmarks at risk. This one-day workshop aims to foster a constructive dialogue between the key players that need to address these issues. Through interactive panel discussions and small discussion groups, participants will learn how to tackle key issues threatening places of faith through community engagement strategies; cost reduction techniques, innovative space sharing models and successful re-use strategies.

Further information is available at <https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/?eventid=1927739>

Looking for Photos

Cobourg Police Chief Kai Liu is looking for old photos of early Cobourg police officers. They are hoping to recreate some historic uniforms for 2017, and would appreciate any photos that our members may have and be willing to share. He can be contacted by email at

kai.liu@cobourgpolic.com

Jacob's Ladders - Exercise Your Faith

Judith Goulin

Do you know what a Jacob's Ladder is? If you guessed that it's a toy, or a plant, or a movie, you are correct. Give yourself three silver stars.

However, the Jacob's Ladder up for discussion in this article is none of the above.

Jacob's Ladder is a colloquial term for a connection between the earth and heaven named after Jacob, the Old Testament patriarch who dreamt of angels ascending and descending a ladder from earth to heaven, as related in Genesis: 28, 10-22.

Dreams aside, in a Christian and modern context, a Jacob's Ladder is a man-made structure, though not a ladder, but a stairway that leads from one point to another. Why the name? Once we've added Christian to the equation, it's a no-brainer to see the significance of the ladder imagery: Climb the ladder or stairway from earth and get to Heaven.

Did you know that there are two Jacob's Ladders in our area? Give yourself two gold stars if you know where they are located. Perhaps you need a hint: The local Jacob's Ladders are stairways, not ladders.

One of the Jacob's Ladders is located at the south end of Baltimore, along Highway 45 on the east side, just opposite Dale Road. When you ascend the 139 wooden stairs you will end up at a cemetery that is connected with Baltimore United Church, formerly a Methodist church built in 1899.

The other Jacob's ladder is in Port Hope on the east side of Mill Street at the south end of town. The access is from Dorset Street which runs east off Mill. When you reach the top you can look down to enjoy a lovely view of Port Hope's picturesque downtown. The summit of this "ladder" leads you to St. Mark's Anglican Church on King Street.

This writer is uncertain whether these Jacob's Ladders were constructed to lead people to Heaven, or simply as a means to assist in scaling a steep hill. One fact is guaranteed: If you climb these Jacob's Ladders regularly, you will be led to better health. If you achieve this, then give yourself a whole box of gold stars!

If you have any additional information about the history of these Jacob's Ladders, Judith would like to know so she can share the information.

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