



# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District  
Historical Society

February 2018 — Issue 294

## **The Day the Prince of Wales Came to Cobourg**

At our February 27 meeting, George Parker will tell us the story of the Prince of Wales' brief visit to Cobourg on September 6, 1860. George will tell the story from the viewpoint of the "Floor Manager" at the Ball which was held that night at Victoria Hall to celebrate the occasion. As Floor Manager, George will be informing us about the types of dances and music on offer and also reminding us about Victorian ballroom etiquette. The Floor Manager will appear again the next day, to give us his appraisal of the evening as well as details about the Prince's departure from Cobourg followed by his visit to Harwood and Hiawatha.

George has provided several previous outstanding presentations to the Cobourg and District Historical Society. We can look forward to an animated and exciting evening full of fascinating details.

Learn about the events of this important day in Cobourg's history at George's presentation on Tuesday, February 27, at Victoria Hall. Doors open at 7:00 pm for coffee and cookies, before the meeting begins at 7:30 pm. 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 or two!

## Our Previous Meeting

### The Secret Life of William Lyon Mackenzie King

Our guest speaker for January, Christopher Dummitt, cancelled his appearance due to unforeseen circumstances that prevent him from travelling to Cobourg. We hope to reschedule his presentation for a future meeting. If you would like to hear Michael Enright's interview with Dummitt on Mackenzie King's diaries go to

<http://www.cbc.ca/listen/shows/sunday-edition/segment/14651875>



## Schedule for Remainder of 2018

Tuesday February 27 2018 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	<b>George Parker</b> <i>The Day the Prince of Wales Came to Cobourg: September 6 1860</i>
Tuesday March 27 2018 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	<b>Gareth Metcalfe</b> <i>Small Scale Maple Syruping: Then and Now</i>
Tuesday April 24 2018 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	<b>Annual General Meeting</b> followed by <b>Roseanne Quinn</b> <i>The Importance of Knowing Your Community Heritage</i>
Tuesday May 29 2018 Details to be announced	End of the season social event

## A Good News Saga of a Steeple

*Judith Goulin*

St. Mary's Catholic Church, with its beautiful spire, has been an iconic landmark for almost 150 years in the village of Grafton. In recent years, water leaks caused extensive damage to both the tower and steeple of the church, following earlier inferior repairs by a restoration company no longer in business. Inside the church the damage was apparent on the ceiling of the choir loft where water was leaking in through the flat roof of the bell tower, just below the bell.

To understand why this happened, we need to look back to 1875 to see how the church was constructed. As the workers were half way through the construction of the tower, they saw that they were going to run out of bricks. Even though they had ordered 194,000, they were still 2,000 bricks short. Unfortunately, instead of purchasing more bricks they decided to compensate for the shortage by using lumber between the outer and inner bricks, creating a brick sandwich with wood as the filling, a decision that would spell near disaster many years later. The tower walls should have been four bricks thick.

When Sky-High Restoration hired in 2017 to repair the task was to remove the steel

tower to investigate the cause of the leakage. They discovered that the lumber between the bricks had completely rotted. The jaw-dropping visible result of this was that both the tower walls and the steeple were leaning.

At first the parishioners felt that it would be too costly to both repair the tower and replace the steeple, so they voted instead to have the tower walls repaired, the steeple taken down and replaced with a cross on the flat tower roof. When Sky-High presented a figure that was deemed to be manageable, parishioners and local people alike were pleased to hear that their beloved landmark spire could be saved after all.



Company was  
damage, their first  
cap at the top of the

The 126-foot high scaffolding around the tiny village church was an impressive sight that could be seen from as far away as Highway 401. Some called it the Grafton Skyscraper. Sky-High did a remarkable job of removing the cladding from the steeple, taking down the cross, replacing the water membrane, shoring up the bell tower and buttresses, then installing new cladding on the steeple and re-installing the cross. The work on the tower was touch and go at times, especially when the architect gave the order to "Quit ringing the bell" until the repairs were completed.

The steeple showed extensive damage. It was interesting to note that the former steeple was mostly intact. Only a few pieces needed to be replaced. The new coloured steeple, clad in copper, is a thing of beauty.

The final cost of the restoration rose above the earlier quote because after the tower was examined more closely, it became apparent that more extensive repairs and restoration were an absolute necessity. The cost of the scaffolding alone was \$100,000. Although parishioners and local benefactors are donating money and holding fund raisers to pay for this restoration, it will be a while before the financial goal is reached. One might say that the debt is "sky-high".



The wood below the water membrane was damaged. It was the wood skeleton of the steeple that was intact. Only a few pieces of sparkling new silver-lead-coated copper, is a restoration rose above the tower was examined apparent that more restoration were an cost of the scaffolding. Although parishioners and donating money and pay for this restoration, it financial goal is reached. debt is "sky-high".

Once again the bell tolls and the steeple rises above the Grafton countryside. The clergy and the dedicated members of St. Mary's Church realized the importance of preserving their local heritage and are justifiably proud to have played a proactive role in it.

## **The Architecture of St. Mary's Church**

*Marie Jones*

St. Mary's Catholic Church was built in 1875 in the Gothic Revival style of architecture. More refined in design than later examples of this style, it lacks any fanciful decorative ornamentation, with the main focus being its impressive side bell tower and tall octagonal

spire with louvered dormers and Celtic cross. The 1600 pound bell was cast in Troy, New York, by Meniely and Company.

Several buttresses support the structure on all elevations. Built primarily of yellow brick, the structure has contrasting horizontal bandings of red brick with matching red sills and window surrounds. A trio of slender Gothic stained glass windows graces the front facade. The principal entrance is from a front vestibule with double doors and a semi-elliptical window with interlacing glazing bars above. St. Mary's Church endures as an important landmark in the village of Grafton and a reminder of the Irish immigrants who settled in the area.

### References

*Northumberland Today*, August 23 2017, page 1

*Northumberland News*, January 25 2018, page 7

Richard Holland Report

*St. Mary's Parish History 1875–1975*

## Membership Matters



The Cobourg and District Historical Society has always taken an interest in the James Cockburn Room at Victoria Hall. Although not an exact replica of James Cockburn's 1860s law office, it does contain a number of period pieces and is a favourite stop on tours of Victoria Hall. Members of the CDHS have acted as docents in the past, the most recent being the late Richard Randall who was a knowledgeable and dedicated guide. He has been difficult to replace.

We are pleased to announce that Bill Fraser, the former Superintendent of Building and Maintenance at Victoria Hall for over thirty-five years, has agreed to take on the responsibility of opening the room for special events in Victoria Hall. He will provide information to interested visitors about James Cockburn, the Cockburn Room and Victoria Hall. Bill was raised in Cobourg and has fond memories of meeting Lenah Field Fisher when his mother would take him to Victoria Hall as a little boy. He and his friends played in the derelict Concert Hall before it was restored, and he was very much a part of the whole restoration process of the building through the 1970s and early 1980s. He has stories to tell

about this building and the town itself. His love of Victoria Hall, which has been such a large part of his life for so many years, is evident when he talks of the place. We appreciate Bill's volunteering to take on this job, and we welcome him to the Cobourg and District Historical Society.

## **Announcements**

### **Lakeshore Genealogical Society**

Grant Karcich will present "Legacy of Vanished Trails - Native trails and portages, linking Lake Ontario to the Inner Lakes" at the Lakeshore Genealogical Society meeting on Thursday, March 8. The meeting starts at 6:30pm and will be held in the Rotary Room, Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario Street, Cobourg.

### **Rural Roots History Show**

The Rural Roots History Show will be in the Brighton Community Centre on Saturday, February 24, 7 pm to 9 pm and will be repeated on Sunday, February 25, 2 pm to 4 pm. Dan Buchanan will present Rural Roots, following the history of farming from early settlement to the farm of today. Pictures and lots of history are mixed with rousing music by RandR to provide an entertaining and enlightening experience.

### **Rural Roots Open House**

On Saturday, March 3, 2018, 10 am to 4 pm the Brighton Community Centre will be full of displays and interesting people to talk to about the history of farming. Brighton Digital Archive will be there with their Barns of Brighton and other projects. Sam Hazelwood will have his blacksmith display and look for a fascinating display of old farm machinery, in miniature. Proctor House will be there along with the Northumberland County Archives. The History Guy will also have lots of boards and time to talk. The Heritage Tea, presented by the Women's Institutes, will provide snacks for your enjoyment. Come and see the displays and visit with friends. For all events, no admission, donations appreciated to cover costs. For further information contact Dan Buchanan, (613)439-8992, [danbuchanan@cogeco.ca](mailto:danbuchanan@cogeco.ca)

**COBOURG'S GILDED AGE:  
SUMMER COLONY &  
GRAND COTTAGES**

**Thursday April 5th at 7:30 pm  
in the Concert Hall, Victoria Hall, Cobourg**

Tickets are \$20, plus handling & HST.  
Call the Concert Hall Box Office, 905-372-2210  
or on-line [www.concerthallatvictoriahall.com/](http://www.concerthallatvictoriahall.com/)

Refreshments will be served.

Rob Mikel, Cobourg's premier historian, will speak about the gilded age of American summer homes in Cobourg. His presentation will be illustrated with photos, past and present, of the imposing hotels and mansions of wealthy American visitors who called their adopted town "the Newport of the North".



Ravensworth is one of the homes being featured on April 5th. It remains in caring hands and is one of the few Cobourg tourist colony estates to reach the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Photo courtesy of Suzanne Séguin, Lighthouse Press

Presented by  
Victoria Hall Volunteers



## CDHS Executive for 2017 – 2018

President	Alison Torrie Lapaire	<a href="mailto:alisontorrie@gmail.com">alisontorrie@gmail.com</a> (905) 269-8094
Past President	Judith Goulin	<a href="mailto:jgoulin@hotmail.com">jgoulin@hotmail.com</a> (905) 372-7684
Vice-President	Leona Woods	<a href="mailto:leonawoods@sympatico.ca">leonawoods@sympatico.ca</a> (905) 372-7624
Secretary	Carla Jones	<a href="mailto:cgrucelajones@gmail.com">cgrucelajones@gmail.com</a> (289) 252-1684
Treasurer	George Kamphorst	<a href="mailto:gfkamphorst@gmail.com">gfkamphorst@gmail.com</a>
Membership	Vacant	
Programme Chairperson	Diane Chin	<a href="mailto:dianemchin@gmail.com">dianemchin@gmail.com</a> (289) 435-2015
Programme Committee Members	Carla Jones Marie Jones Leona Woods Judith Goulin Art King Gerry Brown Alison Torrie Lapaire	<a href="mailto:cgrucelajones@gmail.com">cgrucelajones@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:mahughesjones@gmail.com">mahughesjones@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:leonawoods@sympatico.ca">leonawoods@sympatico.ca</a> <a href="mailto:jgoulin@hotmail.com">jgoulin@hotmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:artking69@gmail.com">artking69@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:blackcat21@sympatico.ca">blackcat21@sympatico.ca</a> <a href="mailto:alisontorrie@gmail.com">alisontorrie@gmail.com</a>
Members-at- Large	Gerry Brown  Diane Chin	<a href="mailto:blackcat21@sympatico.ca">blackcat21@sympatico.ca</a> (905) 372-3984  <a href="mailto:dianemchin@gmail.com">dianemchin@gmail.com</a> (289) 435-2015
Newsletter Editor	Ken Strauss	<a href="mailto:ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca">ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca</a> (905) 377-9854