

# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District  
Historical Society

February 2019 — Issue 302

## ***Armistice 18: A Historical Fiction Novel***

Our upcoming speaker on Tuesday February 26 is our own Gerry Brown. A retired history teacher who loves to write, Gerry suggests that historical fiction has an important role to play in our understanding of people in other times and other places, and uses examples from his recent book, *Memories of a Grey Wooden Box*, about daily life in Cobourg during and following WW1.

His prime contention is that much of our historical study focuses on major world events somewhat in isolation from its influence on ordinary people leading their lives, be it here in town or in other cities, other countries. How were those who stayed home influenced by the horrific battles in Europe? How did they cope with hardships, loss of workforce, deaths in the family and in their circle of friends? How has our town changed since then? Through the eyes of his main character, Arthur, we see it all: the battles, the mud, the barbed wire, the boys he knew who didn't make it home and the ones who did who were never the same. You will recognize real names and real places so you know for sure that it's Cobourg, but this great story could be a slice of life in the wartime era for any small town in Canada. Gerry's writing makes you feel like you were really present in Cobourg during WW1.

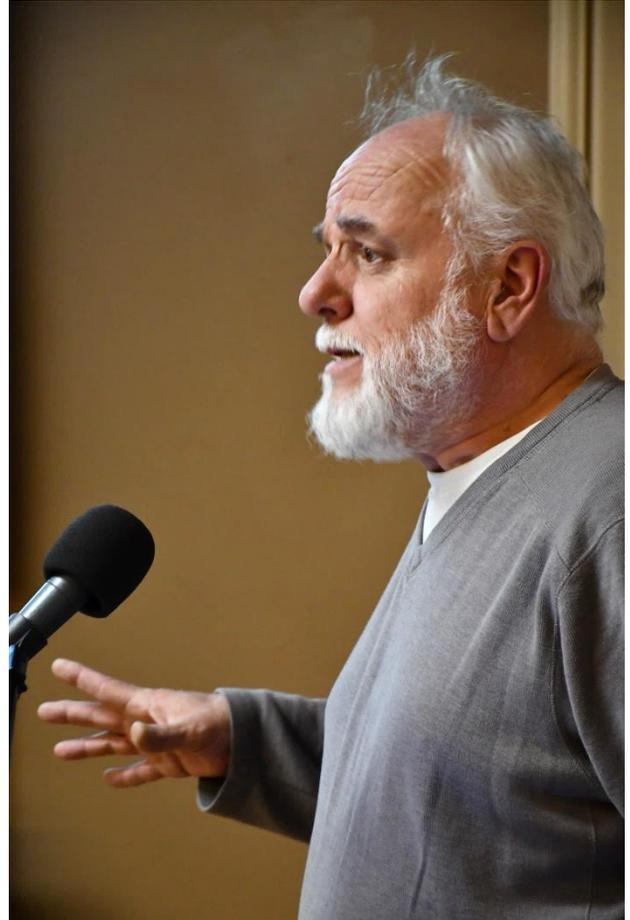
Join us on Tuesday, February 26, at Victoria Hall to hear more about this story from Gerry Brown. Doors open at 7:00 PM for coffee and cookies. The meeting begins at 7:30 PM.

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***

### **A Social History of Alderville**

Dave Mowat is the quintessential historian — dedicated to the subject he is presenting, possessed of massive amounts of detailed knowledge and at the same time is a warm and engaging man, one committed to expanding the understanding of the indigenous people, their culture, their values and their place in the broad picture of Canada. He has an amazing amount of detail, specific facts related to the topic at hand, be it contemporary relations, the contribution of members of the Alderville community or the individuals who fought at Crysler’s Farm against the American attempt to capture Montréal in order to isolate British and colonial forces and so hand Canada to the putative American nation.



Mowat recounted almost forgotten details of the

achievements of Albert Smoke, an Olympic marathon runner from Alderville. Smoke represented Canada on the Olympic Marathon Team in the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp. Smoke failed to win gold but after his return he won the 1921 Hamilton Herald Road Race in 1:50:04, and then in 1922 placed third in the Boston Marathon..

## Future Meetings

<b>Tuesday, March 26, 2019</b> Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	<b>Judith Goulin</b> <i>Jackson and Jex: Renowned Cobourg Builders</i>
<b>Tuesday, April 23, 2019</b> Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	Annual General Meeting <b>Ross Quigley Sports Hall of Fame</b> <i>Cobourg Sports History</i>
<b>Wednesday, May 15, 2019</b> Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	<b>Hugh Brewster, Moderator</b> A Panel to Debate: <i>The Secret Diaries of Susanna Moodie</i> End of season social event

## Member Matters

### ***New Members***

Please join me in welcoming our newest members: Stewart Richardson, Janice and Robert Pearce, Ann and Brian Murphy and Catherine Tozer.

## February is Black History Month

*Judith Goulin*

Every year in Canada we set aside February as Black History Month as a time to acknowledge the presence of Black Canadians in our history and to shed light on their many achievements and contributions to this country. You may not be aware of just how long Black people have been a part of our historic landscape.

Mathieu Da Costa was the first Black man to set foot on Canadian shores. He worked as a navigator and interpreter on Champlain's voyage to Canadian shores in 1605. Some of the United Empire Loyalists who came here in 1776 following the American Revolution were Black people who settled in the Maritimes. John Graves Simcoe abolished slavery in 1807. Black soldiers fought in the War of 1812. Since then Blacks have continued to serve our country in wartime.

Regarding slavery, there is a tendency to think that the Underground Railway was exclusively an American initiative whereby escaped slaves were sheltered in safe houses throughout the American South. Eventually though, some runaway slaves found their way

north, crossing Lake Erie to freedom in the area of Southwestern Ontario that is Kent County. 30,000-40,000 fugitives found their way to the Chatham area. In the 1850s one third of the Chatham area population was black.

The Black Mecca Museum in Chatham and the nearby Buxton National Historic Site, form a Canadian Black History Trail. The Buxton Museum is built on the original site of a Blacks Only colony once known as the Elgin Settlement. Learn more by visiting <https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/properties/uncle-toms-cabin>.

Test your knowledge of Black Canadians who have achieved fame by matching the names in the left column with the achievements in the right column. Answers are on another page!

Emily Howard Stowe	Challenged segregation in Nova Scotia
Elijah McCoy	Member of Parliament
Viola Desmond	Made a name for himself
Donald Oliver	First practicing woman doctor in Canada
Lawrence Hill	First Black person to set foot on Canadian soil
Larry Hall	Lt. Governor of Ontario
Lincoln Alexander	Author
Michaelle Jean	Port Hope promoter of Black history
Jean Augustine	Governor General
Harry Jerome	First Black male Senator
Mathieu Da Costa	World's fastest man

## Announcements

### ***Lakeshore Genealogical Society***

The Lakeshore Genealogical Society has scheduled several meetings of particular interest. Their meetings are on the second Thursday of the month from 6:30PM to 9:00 PM in the Northumberland County building at 600 William Street in Cobourg.

- **April:** Dave Clements: *The Nehemiah Smith Story*
- **May:** Wendy MacDonald from Trenton LDS Family History Centre: *Family Search Basics*.
- **June:** Peter Brotherhood: *The role of the Parish Church of St. Peter's in the development of Upper Canada*

## **Local Connections to Iceland**

Iceland has become one of the hottest and coolest tourist destinations. Canadians are flocking to the land of fire and ice, which is just a short, relatively inexpensive flight away. But few know about the loss of the HMCS Skeena off Reykjavik in the Second World War:

"On the evening of Oct. 24, 1944, in the midst of a fierce storm, the Second World War naval destroyer known as the HMCS Skeena smashed against the shores on Videy Island in Iceland. Fifteen young men, most of them in their 20s, died, and several others were hospitalized. Of the 15, one man was never found, and a single mass grave was dug for the fallen as wood was considered a scarce commodity."

*Northumberland News*, October 18, 2018.

Port Hope's **116 Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps (RCSCC) Skeena** is raising funds to send a group of cadets to Iceland for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking, next autumn. Learn about this incredible

local connection from Lt. (N) Chris Barker and Lt. (N) Dianne Kulavica, who are both passionate about sharing the story of the Skeena. Appreciate the beauty of Iceland with local musician and writer David Newland, who travelled around Iceland by ship last summer. David will host [Adventure Canada's Iceland Circumnavigation](#) and [In the Wake of the Vikings](#) trips in 2019. Wednesday, February 27, 7:30 PM, Capitol Theatre, 20 Queen St., Port Hope. <https://www.skeenaiceland.eventbrite.ca> Admission: \$20.



## **Forest to Farmland**

George Parker, a CDHS member, will be giving a presentation "Forest to Farmland" to the North Shore Probus Club on the morning of March 20th at the Lions Centre. Probus welcomes visitors for a nominal fee. George has made several very well received presentations to the Cobourg and District Historical Society. If you attend you will hear an interesting speaker and have the opportunity to see if Probus and its offerings interest you.

## **Susanna Moodie: Fact and Fiction**

The Victoria Hall Volunteers will present "Susanna Moodie, Fact and Fiction" a discussion with Cecily Ross, author, *The Lost Diaries of Susanna Moodie*, and Michael Peterman, author, *Susanna Moodie: A Life*. This event, moderated by historian Hugh Brewster, will be held at

Victoria Hall, 55 King Street West in Cobourg, on Wednesday May 15, 2019 at 7 p.m. Ticket costs, including complimentary refreshments, are \$25 adult and \$15 students, available at the Concert Hall Box Office 905 372 2210, <http://concerthallatvictoriahall.com/> or from Victoria Hall Volunteers members.

Susanna Moodie, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century pioneer to Hamilton Township, is an influential and important early Canadian author. *Roughing It In the Bush*, her personal account of pioneer life in Upper Canada, is often read on university Canadian literature courses.

Cecily Ross is an award winning Canadian author and journalist. Her work has been published in *The Globe and Mail* and *Chatelaine*. Michael Peterman is Professor Emeritus at Trent University. He has published several books on the two pioneer Upper Canada sisters Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill. Hugh Brewster is an historian and playwright. His play “Last Day, Last Hour” was the centerpiece of Cobourg’s Armistice 1918 celebrations held here last fall.

The Programme Committee of the CDHS thought that this event would be an opportunity to support the work of the Victoria Hall Volunteers in their preservation of the historical aspects of Victoria Hall, and would also provide us with an evening to socialize and end an interesting year of speakers. This promises to be an exciting event, the talk of the town. More information will be forthcoming in March when tickets will be available to our members.

### ***Railway Day at the Library***

***Train Show!***  
*Wood, Iron, Water...  
 and Steam!*  
 An Exhibition of the  
 Cobourg & Peterborough  
 Railway Story



- Operating Layouts
- Models
- Artefacts
- Drawings
- Photographs

**Opens: 10AM, Sat. March 2, 2019**  
 in the Rotary Room, C. Gordon King  
 Centre (aka Cobourg Library)  
 200 Ontario St., Cobourg.  
 Layouts Will Operate Until 3PM.

Presentation from 3PM to 4PM:  
*Where Have All The Giants Gone -  
 The Lumber Trade in 19<sup>th</sup> C. Ontario*  
 Note: There will be *No Vendors*  
 Admission is Free!

Presented By: *Friends of the  
 Cobourg & Peterborough Railway*

Emily Howard Stowe	First practicing woman doctor in Canada
Elijah McCoy	Made a name for himself
Viola Desmond	Challenged segregation in Nova Scotia
Donald Oliver	First male Black Senator
Lawrence Hill	Author
Larry Hall	Port Hope promoter of Black History
Lincoln Alexander	Lt.-Governor of Ontario
Michaëlle Jean	Governor-General
Jean Augustine	Member of Parliament
Harry Jerome	World's Fastest Man
Mathiu Da Costa	First Black man to set foot on Canadian soil

**Cobourg Museum Foundation Dinner**

You are Invited to  
the

**COBOURG  
MUSEUM  
FOUNDATION'S**

**Fundraising  
Dinner**

Celebrating  
**40 YEAR OF  
CFMX IN COBOURG**

*"beautiful music  
for a crazy world"*



GUEST SPEAKER  
**Mike Duncan CFMX**  
Cobourg boy  
Long time radio personality



**COBOURG BEST WESTERN**

**Wednesday, May 29, 2019**

**\$70 (\$20 tax receipt)**

**For tickets contact Mary:**

**cmftickets@yahoo.com  
or  
289-691-3845**



## CDHS Executive for 2018 – 2019

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