

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and
District Historical Society

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Not the Bayeux Tapestry but the Baltimore Tableaux

The most discerning among you will have noticed the “x” at the end of tableau, denoting the plural. The writer acknowledges that some licence was taken in this instance because she liked the visual balance between Bayeux and Tableaux.

How many times have you driven north on Hwy 45 through Baltimore and wondered about its past? Today, Baltimore is a just another rather unremarkable stretch of houses and commercial buildings lining the highway, with not much business and even fewer people walking around. Would you like to know more about the village that was?

CDHS member, Doreen West—author, historian and needle worker *par excellence*—has created an almost three metre long work of art in fabric illustrating the history of her beloved birthplace, the village of Baltimore. She tells its history well, having

lived there most of her life. Created using the applique technique, Doreen's colourful masterpiece of folk art is historically accurate down to minute details of persons, places and things. Our imaginations will soar as we see the bustling village of Baltimore of Doreen's childhood with its myriad people, houses, stores, churches and schools. This Baltimore bears little resemblance to the village we see today. We are fortunate to be able to see it through a little girl's eyes. When you see this remarkable piece of work, look carefully to spot the child Doreen in it. Other examples of Doreen's historical needlework creations hang in the Baltimore Community Centre and in the Baltimore United Church.

Don't miss this opportunity to see the Baltimore Tableaux and to learn more about the history of Baltimore in Victoria Hall on Tuesday, January 24. Doors open at 7:30 and the presentation begins at 8:00.

All are welcome so bring a friend!

Our next two meetings:

Tuesday, February 28, 2012	Jane Kelly	The Scoop on Watershed's First Ten Years
Tuesday, March 27, 2012	Kathryn McHolm	Wesleyville: The Little Village that Could

Submissions

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

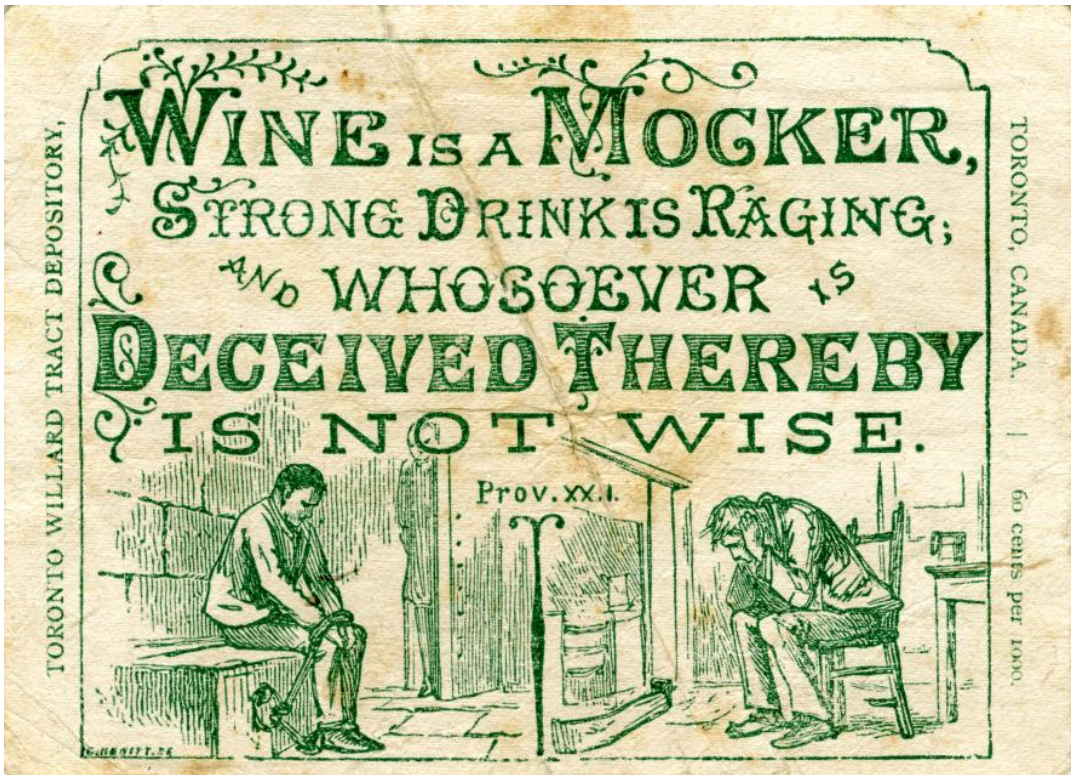
Tracts, Prohibition and Rum Running

Judith Goulin

Religious Tracts

A tract is a medium used to communicate a message, usually political or religious. As religious literature, tracts have been used since the time of the Protestant Reformation and are still being distributed today. A tract can be a lengthy, scholarly discourse of many pages, a leaflet or a small piece of paper that is handed out by proselytizers such as Latter Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses and others. While leafing through an old book in an antique store, this writer came across an original 1886 religious tract that had been slipped between its pages. It warned against the evils of drinking wine and other alcoholic beverages. Being both a wine drinker and a church goer herself, she had an overpowering need to own this most fascinating piece of history. To possess it was well worth the price of an otherwise throwaway book.

The Willard Tract Depository was an evangelical publishing company founded in Toronto in 1877 by William Holmes Howland, an evangelical philanthropist. In 1886, tracts such as the one illustrated below, sold for 60 cents per thousand. One can imagine a lot of zealous Victorian teetotalers passing these out on street corners. The message: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise", is taken from the Book of proverbs in the Old Testament.



Temperance and Prohibition

During the late 1800s, the prevalence of widespread drinking and the societal problems associated with it became an important focus of reform and thus the Temperance Movement came into being throughout Canada and the United States. Temperance proponents criticized excessive alcohol use, promoted complete abstinence of alcoholic beverages, or pressured governments to enact anti-alcohol laws or completely prohibit alcohol. It was a period of frantic, sometimes fanatical activity of preaching in very strong opposition to the consumption of alcoholic beverages. To drive their no alcohol message home, crusaders sometimes resorted to violence toward drinkers. It was common for men and women of all ages, even

children, to *take the pledge* never to drink alcohol. As a point of interest, both men and women who had taken the pledge had no conscience about drinking alcohol for *medicinal purposes* and pledged women were always quick to justify the use of rum and other spirits in their baking. Queen Victoria drank diluted Canadian Club whiskey to cure her digestive problems.

The Temperance literature circulated in the US in the late 1800s held that the worst thing one could say about a man was that he *took to drink*, because the belief was that a drinker was destined to a tragic, wasted life that would lead to folly, vice, degradation and crime. During the 1920s-1930s, there was another intense period of Temperance activity.

At various times in the histories of both Canada and the United States laws banning the sale of liquor have been enacted, then later repealed. This legislation went by the name of Prohibition and the term Prohibition defined the time when the countries were dry.

References

Hallowell, Gerald (1988). "Prohibition in Canada". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Hurtig Publishers.

Noel, Jan. (2004). "Temperance Movement" *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*. 2004.

Rum Runners Tour

Whoever said history cannot be fun has never been on Windsor, Ontario's Rum Runners tour. Prohibition lasted only a few years in Canada but spanned 13 years in the U.S., from the Roaring Twenties to the early years of the Great Depression, 1920 to 1933. With only a mile-wide river separating Canada and the States, it is no wonder that 75% of all the liquor that entered the U.S. during those years was transported across the river. Rum became the catch-all term for all liquor that

crossed the river. Smuggling alcohol yielded huge profits. Consequently many people got rich very quickly and rum running became a part of everyday life for ordinary and extraordinary people. Men and women of all ages, even grandmothers, just about anyone who owned a boat, workers who made the daily commute to Detroit on the ferry and gangsters like Detroit's Purple Gang and Al Capone were all transporting liquor across the river.

As my friends and I boarded the bus to begin the Rum Runners tour we had to suspend out disbelief and put ourselves into a Roaring Twenties frame of mind. We were greeted by our two hosts: a suspicious-looking man wearing a fedora and "Benny da Weasel". We were taken to various sites where other Rum Runner tour hosts appeared. As the day progressed, the story of rum running, or more specifically, the transporting of whiskey from the Windsor area to Detroit during the years of American Prohibition, c. 1920-1930, unfolded. From Detroit, the point of entry, liquor was shipped all over the U.S.

A Twenties policeman regaled us with tales of how sneaky and clever liquor smugglers were. It was very hard to catch them, he said, especially since so many people in positions of trust were on the take. Booze was concealed in a myriad of creative ways: in lunch boxes, under bulky clothing with big inside pockets, strapped to bodies, in baby carriages, in crates of eggs, in boats and cars and sleds when the river was frozen. World War I bombers, owned by Al Capone were a common sight traveling back and forth across the Detroit River. The planes, of course carried cargoes of whiskey. Since it was legal to ship liquor to countries where Prohibition laws were not in effect, countless crates of booze were transported across the river every day, the boxes addressed to locations such as Cuba. It was an open secret that it only took a very short time for liquor to arrive in Cuba, meaning Detroit!

Outside of Sandwich Methodist Church we were greeted by a stern and pious-looking Temperance lady, holding a round sign about the size of an all-day sucker, with its warning against *demon rum*.

Temperance was a social movement promoting abstinence from alcoholic beverages.

As soon as we were seated inside the church, Rev. J.O.L. Spracklin, a colourful clergyman of the era, preached to us loudly and passionately about the evils of drink. Spracklin, more than any other person during Canadian Prohibition symbolized the often dramatic fight between Temperance people and rum runners. He became a liquor inspector as well as a fanatic. He told us, rather dispassionately, how he had pulled a Colt 45 out of his belt and shot and killed Babe Trumble over their differences about alcohol.

An actor in the persona of Blaise Diesbourg, made several appearances during the day. In heavily accented French, Blaise told us how he made so much during Prohibition that he kept his folding money in bushel baskets in his home!

Lunch was served at the still existing Chateau LaSalle, a haven for drinkers and rum runners and well-known as a watering hole through both countries' Prohibition years. We were educated and entertained during lunch by the very colourful and engaging flapper, Bertha Thomas who just happened to be at Chateau LaSalle the day of our tour. Historically, the late Bertha Thomas owned and operated Edgewater Thomas' Inn, just east of Windsor, for many years both during and after Prohibition. She regaled us with tales of how she bribed liquor inspectors during Canadian Prohibition. When she got word from the lookout man in the upstairs window of the tavern that an inspector was about to enter the premises, she would make a trail of ten dollar bills beginning at the front door and ending at the back door. The inspector would collect his bribe and be on his way. Sometimes just a few drinks or other favours would suffice.

Along Riverside Drive in Windsor, Holy Rosary Church is a prominent landmark. Since it faces the river it is very visible from downtown Detroit. It is said that Al Capone donated an electric cross for the steeple of this church. When the cross was

lit, it was a signal that the coast was clear of inspectors and rum running boats could make the quick trip across the river. No doubt the parish caretaker was on Capon's payroll.

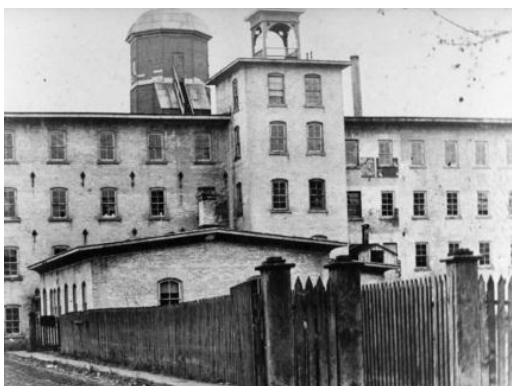
The tour culminated at the original front office of the Hiram Walker distillery, also on Riverside Drive, a magnificent example of Italianate architecture built c. 1870. Their whiskey was and still is aged in oak barrels, so inside every room of this well-appointed office, oak abounds. The paneling, floors, desks, chairs and tables, all made of oak are exquisitely beautiful. Downstairs in a private office stands a round oak table measuring close to four metres in diameter. The diminutive but feisty Hiram Walker arranged shipments of whiskey with Al Capone around this huge table, away from the more public areas of the building. It was interesting to stand in this place and try to imagine the legendary Capone and others around the table negotiating with little Hiram.

Fittingly, the Rum Runners tour culminated with a whiskey-tasting in another room of the incredibly beautiful Hiram Walker building. We were told that Mr. Walker set out to create a blended whiskey which would be different from the popular American bourbon. His whiskey is comprised of corn, rye, rye malt and barley malt. The Canadian Club brand, established by the Hiram Walker distillery in Walkerville, now Windsor, is famous throughout the world.

We sampled four vintages of Canadian Club, the oldest being CC Sherry Cask. The taste master described it as having "an intriguing presence of sultanas, dates and figs in balance with toasted grains and mellow oak."

Despite the fact that we were not given 750 ml bottles of HW's finest blended whiskey to take home at the end of the day, the Rum Runners tour was a great way to spend an afternoon.

From the Archives



The photograph in the last issue of *Historically Speaking* was of the Ontario Woolen Mills on Factory Creek near the current corner of King Street West and Tremaine. The mill, originally owned by Stuart E. MacKechnie, opened in 1846 and continued until 1913. At its peak it is said to have manufactured over 400,000 yards of cloth a year and was one of the largest woolen mills in Canada.

The MacKechnie house at 173 Tremaine is now a bed and breakfast inn. See their website at <http://www.mackechniehouse.com> for some recent photographs of the interior of the house.



Water power was essential to many of the early Cobourg industries. Edwin C. Guillet described some of the local creeks in his book *Cobourg 1798–1948*:

By far the largest stream in Hamilton Township has long been known as the Factory Creek, though it is officially called Cobourg Brook on maps. With many branches in its upper reaches, one of which rises in Haldimand and enters Hamilton near the front of the 4th Concession, it drains a large part of the township. Its three greatest floods were in 1838, 1864, and 1889, in all of which dams and bridges were swept away and much other damage done.

The names of this stream have varied with the locality and the heyday of prominent millers. At various times it has been known as Jones', Henry's, Ham's, and Harris' Creek. Walter Riddell, father of the late Mr. Justice Riddell, whose care in recording the history of Hamilton Township has added so much to our knowledge, gives this compilation of early mills along the creek:

“Upon entering the township from Haldimand it formerly drove Williams' saw mill, shingle, and carding mill. It also furnishes water power for all the mills, etc., about Baltimore. Near the rear of the second concession this branch is joined by Solomon's Creek, which rises near the rear of the sixth concession and used to drive Roberts' grist mill, Fisher's, Burnett's, and Cochrane's saw mills, Dawson's oatmeal mill, and Solomon's saw mill. Another branch of this creek formerly drove Lent's grist and saw mills and McKeyes' grist mill. Still another branch of the main stream flows past Camborne and formerly was the power for a grist mill, a saw mill, and a pail factory there. These two branches unite a little southwest from the site of McKeyes' old grist mill; here they turn eastward, and used to furnish the water power for a saw mill, pail factory, and distillery formerly situated near the old Court House. They then join the main stream, which, after being reinforced by Solomon's Creek, used to drive the Leaderbough planing, carding, and shoddy machine, White's grist mill, Perry's mill, Ham's mill, a carding and fulling mill, axe factory, distillery, and a large woollen factory before entering the lake.”

All these creeks were much larger than now —if, indeed, they remain at all. The Factory Creek, for example, provided some shelter for boats before Cobourg harbour was constructed, as did a small harbour opposite Gull Light, where the island, some two miles from the mainland, used to be considerably larger—some two acres in extent—and with three trees.

The citizens of Cobourg might well prevent the dumping of refuse into these creeks, a practice that not only leads to the overflowing of banks but makes an eyesore of what might well be kept a thing of beauty and an aid in the perpetuation of her history.

Notes and Notices

Tell Me Your Hurricane Hazel Stories

I am currently researching Hurricane Hazel's impact on Cobourg and Hamilton Township. If you lived in the area in October of 1954 and have stories to tell, I would like to record them. Please contact Judith Goulin at jgoulin@hotmail.com or 905-372-7684. Thank you in advance.

Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre Event

On the evening of February 1, 2012, the Cobourg Museum Foundation will present "An Evening at the Old Mill", a fundraiser for the Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre, at the Old Mill Dining Room, 990 Ontario Street, Cobourg. Tickets are \$50/person. To purchase tickets or for more information call 905-372-0698 or email info@cobourgmuseum.ca.

New Book on Port Hope History

George Sweanor and Peter Bolton have produced a new book entitled *Military Contributions of a Small Town*. The book includes information on the veterans of all wars who have affected Port Hope. To purchase the book or for further information contact the Port Hope Archives at 906-885-1773 or email archives@porthope.ca.

Websites

There are many websites with great Cobourg-related historical material. The following are just a few of the many that you will enjoy.

CDHS Archives: www.cdhsarchives.org

Cobourg Museum Foundation: northumberlandheritage.ca

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

Cobourg History: www.cobourghistory.ca/

Ontario Veteran Archive: www.ontarioveteranarchive.ca/

Ontario cemetery records: ocfa.islandnet.com/

History of Great Lakes travel: www.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/

Cobourg and Peterborough Railway: www.harwoodmuseum.ca

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