



# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District  
Historical Society

March 2017 — Issue 287

## Cultural Heritage of the Highway 407E Corridor

On March 28 Dr. Katie Hull will present *Heritage Lost and Found: Managing the Cultural Heritage of the Highway 407E Corridor*. The massive Highway 407E project – consisting of three linear corridors totaling 33 square kilometers – presented a huge challenge for those involved in cultural heritage. The swath that the highway project cut through the Durham countryside impacted hundreds of above and below-ground heritage resources. This resulted in the need for the identification, documentation, and/or excavation of a variety of extant structures, landscapes, and archaeological sites relating to the history of the Region. The identified resources range from early Archaic (circa 9,500 years before present) archaeological sites to nineteenth-century Euro-Canadian farm complexes. This presentation will highlight some of the results achieved and the challenges faced during this multi-year assessment.

Katie received her doctorate from the University of Toronto in 2004 with a dissertation focusing on the archaeology of the Great Irish Famine. Katie currently serves as the archaeological advisor to the Ireland Park Foundation, an editor for the *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* and is a member of LACAC-Heritage Whitby.

Join us on Tuesday, March 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

## Jimmy Roberts: Gentleman Player

Our speaker on February 28, 2017 was 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.

Todd provided numerous anecdotes about hockey based on his extensive research and personal interviews with many of the legendary figures in the game. He emphasized the career of 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 was the perfect way to



celebrate an exciting part of what makes up 150 years of Canada.

Many in the audience were old enough to fondly remember the Canada-USSR Hockey series. Their memories were refreshed by Todd's evocative descriptions of the mood at the time. During the question period following the presentation they were able to clarify numerous points related to the events.



## Future Meetings

Tuesday, March 28, 2017 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	Dr. Katie Hull <i>Heritage Lost and Found: Managing the Cultural Heritage of the 407E Corridor</i>
Tuesday, April 25, 2017 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm	Annual General Meeting of the Cobourg and District Historical Society followed by a special presentation related to Cobourg's history (details next month).
Tuesday, May 30, 2017 Ballroom, Victoria Hall 7:00pm <i>This meeting is open to the public without charge.</i>	Alison Torrie Lapaire <i>The Canadian Flag—What a History!</i> Presentation will be followed by entertainment and refreshments.

# Canada's Part in the Plume Boom

*Judith Goulin*

Spring brings to mind flowers blooming, birds singing, Easter and Easter bonnets -- at least until the Seventies when fancy hats for women went out of fashion. Before then, hats were worn all year and were an integral part of a woman's wardrobe. During the period from 1870 to 1920 hats adorned with feathers were the pinnacle of fashion. London was the centre of the global plume trade in 1913, but New York and Paris were also heavily involved in the business of feathers. To say that the global trade in feathers became big business is a gross understatement. Feathers were a monumental business and big business doesn't always have a conscience. This fashion caprice, or sordid business to some, was known as the Plume Boom.

During the Plume Boom years tens of millions of birds were slaughtered for their feathers. By 1885 hunters in North America were targeting an estimated 50 bird species. Egrets and herons were the birds most sought-after, because of their long white feathers. Some other popular birds harvested for their feathers were terns, eagles, condors, bustards, falcons, parrots, hummingbirds and birds of paradise. Bird feathers and skins were often valued at twice their weight in gold during the heyday of the Plume Boom. When the more exotic bird feathers were not available, milliners used the feathers of common barnyard fowl. Birds were everywhere for the taking, so women and children earned easy money by stoning birds or killing them with pea shooters and selling them to milliners.

The Florida Everglades and the Everglades of the North, the Kanakee Swamp in Indiana, were heavily hunted by plume gatherers. Hunters harvested the plumes on site and left behind the skinned carcasses. The defenseless young birds that were left to fend for themselves often starved to death. A rookery of birds could be swarmed by plume hunters and totally wiped out in three days. New Guinea, Brazil and the peaks of the Andes Mountains were also sites of bird-killing atrocities.

Lest you think Canadians were not part of the business of the Plume Boom, read on: the majestic Trumpeter Swans, the largest of the three North American swans, were exploited by market hunters along the shores Great Lakes where they overwintered. Overhunting and other factors resulted in this majestic swan being almost extinct east of the Rockies by 1900.

It was not only women in big cities like Paris and London who adorned their hats with feathers. For sure Canadian women were also sporting feathers on their fashionable bonnets. For example, the 1901 Eaton's catalogue offered "a bonnet trimmed with mechlin net, overlaid with lace, four ostrich tips and rosettes of black velvet ribbon." Listed under Millinery Trimmings were ostrich and osprey feathers.

By the early 1900s, massive overhunting by European, North American and other nation's hunters had wreaked havoc on avian populations, but the good news was that people began to protest this needless killing of birds for the whims of fashion. Around the same time, Jack Miner pioneered conservation efforts at his home in Kingsville Ontario. He began by digging a pond and providing grain in an open field to create a favourable habitat for migrating ducks and Canada Geese, in an era when geese did not exist in great numbers. By 1913 he had converted his entire property to a sanctuary. The Jack Miner Bird Sanctuary, one of the first of its kind in North America, is still in existence today. It is ten miles away from the very popular birding destination, Point Pelee National Park that Miner helped to designate as a National Park in 1918. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by King George VI in 1943 "for the greatest achievement in conservation in the British Empire."

Ironically, before the Plume Boom, the great naturalist James Audubon insisted that there were so many birds in North America that nothing could wipe out a species! In 1914, only 50 years after his death, the last Passenger Pigeon died.

As a result of American activists lobbying to protect birds killed for their feathers, the National Audubon Society was formed in 1905 and later the Migratory Bird Protection Act was passed. On the heels of these conservation efforts was the outbreak of World War I that finally heralded the end of the global trade in feathers. International shipping schedules were no longer reliable and goods became scarce. People's minds were on more pressing matters. The flamboyant fashions of the time began to look extravagant and unpatriotic. Feathers had no place on the simple cloche and slouch hats worn over the new 'bob' hairstyle that became the fashions of the Twenties. Thus hunters and feather merchants were driven out of business.

***Sources Cited:***

Eaton's Catalogue: *Spring and Summer, 1901*

Internet Sources using the keywords "Plume", "book" and "Jack Miner"

# In Memoriam

*by Alison Torrie Lapaire*

**Richard Peter Randall - U.E.L.**

**April 13th, 1952 - February 22nd, 2017**

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Richard Randall, an active, long-standing member of the Cobourg and District Historical Society. Richard was a thorough and indefatigable researcher and his passion for local history was truly infectious. One couldn't help but be excited by the rich, interesting stories he was able to relate about the Town's past.

He regularly volunteered to staff the James Cockburn Room in Victoria Hall during public events, ensuring that the room was open and accessible and that information about James Cockburn was up-to-date and available to visitors, and that the artifacts in the room were properly cared for.

Richard personally curated an extensive collection of artifacts and over 200 postcards that he has shared at events such as Doors Open Northumberland, Local Government Week, and the 2011 Ontario Heritage Conference that was held in Cobourg and that welcomed delegates from across the province. Richard kindly allowed his postcard collection to be made publicly available online through the Cobourg and District Historical Society's website.

Richard was dedicated to Cobourg's heritage for several decades. He was involved with the Society for the Preservation of Victoria Hall and with an Ad Hoc Committee for the preservation of the Second Street Firehall. In the 1970s, Richard personally restored a building from the 1890s situated at 123 King Street. Richard served as a member of Cobourg's Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC), and sat on Cobourg's municipal Heritage Advisory Committee. His interest in genealogy led him to discover his own family's history, including ties to the United Empire Loyalists.



Richard had a great love of music, and was a member of the band at CDCI East in his youth, and a member of Trinity United Church choir for over 40 years. Richard was a very active member of Trinity United Church, and volunteered extensively in the community. He was an avid gardener, and has planted special Canada 150 commemorative tulips outside of Trinity United Church that we will all be able to enjoy this Spring.

Richard made valuable contributions to the conservation and promotion of Cobourg's history. His enthusiasm and engagement with local historical organizations and events greatly enriched our community. Our organization was greatly enriched by Richard's membership. We will miss him dearly, and remember him fondly.

## **Membership Matters**

### ***New Members***

Please join me in welcoming our newest members Audrey and Gordon Hanson.

### ***Membership Renewal***

CDHS memberships are from April to April. It would be appreciated if you were to renew your membership early. If you have not renewed prior to our Annual General Meeting in April you will not be able to vote in the election of officers. We will be happy to accept your dues at the March meeting!

## **Announcements**

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

The Lakeshore Genealogical Society has a number of meetings planned:

- **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.

### ***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](mailto:kai.liu@cobourgpolic.com)

## CDHS Executive for 2016 – 2017

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