

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District
Historical Society
May 2022 — Issue 332

Our May Social Event

Unfortunately, we have been unable to meet the number of people required for the bus contract.

The Programme Committee would like to propose a Plan 'B': either hire transport suitable for a smaller group or, if infeasible, arrange carpooling.

We will advise you of our findings once we obtain updated information and costs.

In the meantime, keep the date of May 25 booked as there is a committed group still wishing to make our way to Kingston for the tour and lunch.

Thank you to members who have purchased their tickets and be assured that if this event were to be cancelled, all money would be returned in full.

You can contact Carla at (282)252-1684 or cgrucelajones@gmail.com with your questions and comments.

**WEDNESDAY
MAY 25/2022**

THE COBOURG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STANDARD GUIDED TOUR

Step inside the walls of Canada's oldest penitentiary and explore the living and working areas, some dating back to the 1830s. Hear the personalized accounts from former staff and learn about the history and the daily routines, including stories of escapes, riots and everything in between on this 1.5-hour guided tour.
Designed for a mature audience and is not recommended for children.

C.D.H.S. Social Event

KINGSTON PENITENTIARY GUIDED TOUR

Board Franklin Charter Bus at 8:30 a.m.
Carpool lot Burnham St, north of Hwy 401, west side

Arrive Kingston 10:30 a.m.

Two groups, guided tour starts 11:00 a.m.

Board bus approximately 1:00 p.m. for lunch at the Legion and Q & A with our host, a 30-year guard supervisor

Board Charter Bus return to Cobourg 3:00p.m.
for arrival 4:30 - 5:00 p.m.

\$75/person - Bus, Tour & Lunch Included
Guests welcome - All public health measures adhered to
Purchase tickets in advance - cash, cheque, e-transfer. Tickets available at March & April CDHS meetings OR contact Carla at 289-252-1684 or cgrucelajones@gmail.com

Our Previous Meeting

Rum Runners—The story of Ben Kerr and Prohibition

Author and speaker Dan Buchanan presented the story of the Canadian rum runners at our April 26 meeting.

Every community has its favourite prohibition characters and stories. It was a time we think of now as almost cartoonish in nature and we use it more as a punch line than anything else. In reality, it was all based on money and could often be very dangerous. Can you picture gun battles on Lake Ontario?

In Brighton, one of our prohibition characters was Ben Kerr, the notorious rum-runner who worked out of Presqu'île Bay for a couple of years near the end of the 1920s. He was handsome and easy with money when he liked you. He had a fancy car and a honking speedboat. The mechanics at Wright's garage were particularly attentive when Kerr brought his car in for repairs.

In the story of prohibition from start to finish, beginning in Hamilton and developing through the decade of smuggling and speakeasies we learned how Ben Kerr ended up in the quiet little town of Brighton.

Dan wove the story of prohibition into both an educational and enthralling tale of crooked police, a hodgepodge of conflicting laws, desire for taxes by our Federal government and entrepreneurs with egos.



CDHS Vice President Randy Barber displayed a selection from his extensive collection of antique liquor bottles – some still filled – as an appropriate complement for Dan’s exciting tales of the prohibition era.



Jane's Walks: In Honor of Jane Jacobs (May 4, 1916 – April 25, 2006)

Jane Jacobs was a journalist, born in the US, who spent much of her life in Toronto. She is the legendary author of, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a work that has never gone out of print and that has transformed the disciplines of urban planning and city architecture. The book is a critique of 1950s urban planning policy, which it holds responsible for the decline of many city neighbourhoods in the United States. A more local example is the development in the 1950s of Regent Park in Toronto which has since been torn down in the early 2000s.

Jacobs organized grassroots efforts to protect neighborhoods from urban renewal and slum clearance – in particular plans by Robert Moses, referenced in the latest version of *West Side Story* to overhaul her own Greenwich Village neighborhood. She was instrumental in the eventual cancellation of the Lower Manhattan Expressway, which would have passed directly through an area of Manhattan that later became known as SoHo, as well as part of Little Italy and Chinatown. She was arrested in 1968 for inciting a crowd at a public hearing on that project. After moving to Toronto in 1968, she joined the opposition to the Spadina Expressway and the associated network of expressways in Toronto that were planned and under construction.

Jane wrote her most famous book in the 1960s while living in New York and yet her observations are relevant for almost all Canadian cities and large towns. Her observations are even more poignant today. She observed that billions had been spent on erasing old neighbourhoods and creating large projects to house people. Neighbourhoods were gone and the infrastructure that supported them was also erased. Gone was the neighbourhood grocery store with a proprietor who knew your family. Gone were the houses with neighbours sitting on their front porches watching that the children playing outside were safe. Life depended now on the car to access goods and services, even for children. Gone were connections to neighbours. Instead, people drove to big box stores and malls where no one knew you. Loss of human connections meant a loss of neighbourhood and increasingly unsafe environments amongst the towers grew as people walked less and drove more. Not only were people negatively impacted but so too the environment. Jane Jacobs sought to reverse this through changes to planning processes and redevelopment.

Jane's Walk is a series of neighbourhood walking tours. Jane's Walks are held annually during the first weekend in May to coincide with her birthday. Jane's Walks are led by volunteers, and are offered for free. The walks are led by anyone who has an interest in the neighbourhoods where they live, work or socialize. They are not always about architecture

and heritage, and offer a more personal take on the local culture, the social history and the planning issues faced by the residents. Since its inception in 2007, Jane’s Walk has happened in cities across North America and around the world. In 2014, over 40,000 people took part in a Jane’s Walk led by volunteers in 134 cities across 6 continents.

For more information visit: <https://janeswalk.org/canada/cobourg-on/>

Jane’s Walk—Cobourg will take place on Saturday, May 7

Walk #1: At 10am, Denny Manchee will lead a walk in the west end called “From Rifles to a Religious Retreat – the history and current delights of the Monk’s Cove neighbourhood”.

Walk#2: At 1pm, author and local historian Robert Mikel will lead a walk in the east end, centred around the Brookside property and discuss the past and future possibilities for the site.

Ontario Heritage Conference: June 16 - June 18, 2022

Heritage Elizabethtown-Kitley invites you to join us for the Ontario Heritage Conference in 2022. Nestled between the St. Lawrence River and the Rideau Canal, the region is robust in United Empire Loyalist and Early Irish Settlement history. Elizabethtown township opened for settlement in 1784. Brockville, originally named Buell’s Bay, was renamed after Sir Isaac Brock in 1812.

ACO along with CHO is sponsoring this conference.

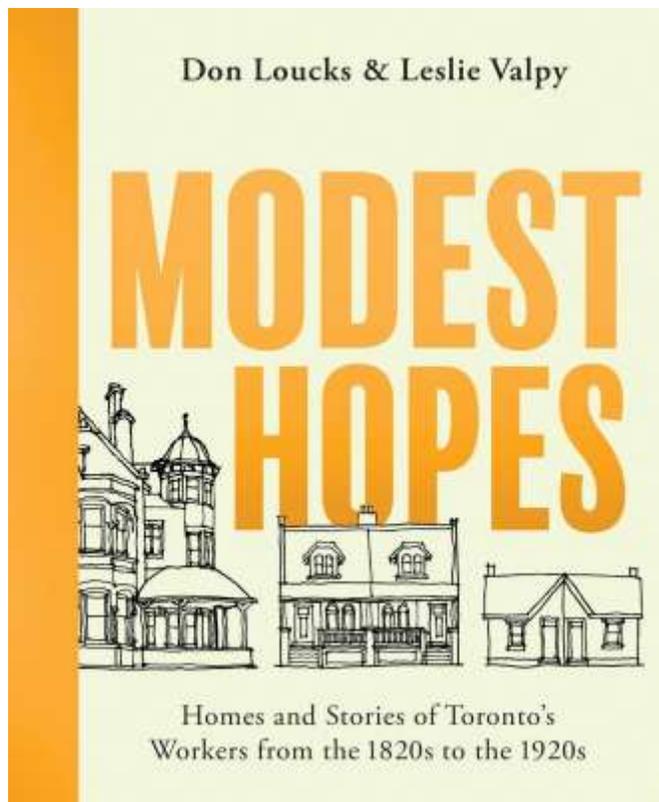
For more information email to dianemchin@gmail.com or visit the website at <https://ontarioheritageconference.ca/>



Modest Hopes by Don Loucks & Leslie Valpy

Reviewed by Diane Chin

As a born and bred Torontonionian, I was motivated to read this book written by ACO member architect Don Loucks. I was not disappointed. Growing up first in Cabbagetown, attending St. Paul's School in Corktown, and eventually moving up in the world to the Beaches, was for me the same story as so many of the individuals whose lives and homes are recounted here. Too often history and heritage stories are those of the wealthy and grandiose. Too often the workers and the immigrants, many of whom built this country, are forgotten. This book sets the record straight, at least in telling the stories of the working class neighbourhoods that today for the most part are gentrified and sell for millions.



Don and Leslie have done extensive research providing examples of photos of the homes, photos of the families, plans of the neighbourhoods and remarkably stories of eight individuals who lived in these Modest Homes.

For those of you interested in architecture, there is information on the form, detailing and architectural style, that would not have occurred to me, given that one would think that these homes were so humble as to be architecturally insignificant. But many have details and many, surprisingly, are still standing. "Many displayed aesthetic expressions of larger homes on a smaller scale, with Second Empire, Georgian, or Gothic motifs, or a combination of styles and references. Regardless of their architectural influences their aesthetic was often pleasing."

For many of us in the heritage sector, the stories behind the streetscapes and landscapes are part of the reason for their preservation. I loved the fact that eight individuals and their families were brought to life as a result of what must have been extensive research. One only

needs to look at the bibliography to realize this. The stories reflect a diversity of religions and races, too often forgotten in what was once mainly the British outpost of York. The struggles, tragedies and celebrations as individuals aspired to lives in these Modest Homes, are these stories. "What these little houses meant in terms of the improvement in the quality of their day-to-day existence should be reflected in the heritage value and preservation of these Modest Hopes today."

I, for one, will be taking strolls this summer to personally view some of these Modest Hopes.

More Ontario History Now Online

by Amanda Hill, Archivist

Were your ancestors newsworthy? You might find mention of them in our online copies of local papers. A major project of the Community Archives in the past year has been the digitization of many of our local newspapers: *The Daily Ontario* and *The Intelligencer* in particular. Our microfilm reader is able to automatically scan a reel of microfilmed papers and take digital copies of the pages. These are then grouped together in monthly batches and shared online through the Internet Archive.

We have scanned papers dating from 1833 to 1971 and you can get to all of them for free at <https://archive.org/details/cabhc>. If you put a name or phrase into the "Search this Collection" box and check the button "Text contents," you will be taken to any mention of a person or topic within the digitized files. The search can be further refined by choosing a particular year or decade in the left-hand side of the page. We hope you enjoy exploring the newspapers: let us know what you discover!

Looking for more help with local history research? You can always email us at archives@cabhc.ca, or call 613-967-3304. Our website is at www.cabhc.ca.

This report first appeared in the Hastings County Historical Society newsletter.

Interesting Material from the Past

In earlier years CDHS meeting presentations were published in an annual Historical Review. Although these publications are long out-of-print their material is an outstanding source of information on the history of Cobourg. To ensure that this information is not lost, Carla Jones and Hannah LeBlanc have spent many hours scanning original copies of *Historical Review*.

Their work means that over 1,000 pages of presentations from 40 years of meetings dating back to 1980 are available on the CDHS website. To enjoy this trove of information on the history of Cobourg visit <https://cdhs.ca/resources/historical-reviews!>

The following presentation is as relevant today as when first presented at a Cobourg and District Historical Society meeting 35 years ago. It is part of *Historical Review* #15.

Researching Old Homes

by *Donalda Badone*

It's a pleasure to come to Cobourg to talk about researching old houses. We've seen a number of handsome buildings here and know they are appreciated. We put together our book, *The House Detective*, partly because we were threatened with a very large development across the road from us. At this time our house seems to be fairly safe from demolition.

Our deed says our house was built in 1923 but there were construction details that made

us think it was much older than that. For one thing it had originally been built with no plumbing! Our woodwork and trim were much more substantial than noted for houses built in the 1920s, and there were round plaster marks in the ceilings between the windows in the two front rooms. We found the answers to these mysteries and produced the book as a guide for others who might have similar mysteries in their homes.

First, we discovered that there were some common house types in nineteenth century Ontario. The characteristic features are a simple rectangular plan, a symmetrical arrangement of windows about a central doorway, a low-pitched roof, and the use of stone, brick or frame construction. The simplicity of these buildings developed partly as a result of the materials available to builders at the time, and partly from the use of tools and construction methods with which they were familiar. Interior design, that is, the number of rooms and how they were to be arranged, also dictated form. And last, but not least, it was a response to the need for a pleasing harmony.

In 1983, Darrell Norris published in *Ontario History*, the results of his analysis of inventories of pre-1939 housing stock. His well-illustrated work revealed that the average popular, or vernacular, house could be described by the form of the roof (gable, central gable or hip) and the number of stories which varied from one to two and a half. Based on Norris' definitive descriptions, our house of one and a half stories and central gable appeared to be one of the

second most common house style of the nineteenth century. Rather than being a twentieth century house, our home was likely that of an earlier period.

We started our investigation with the North York Historical Society and were directed to the Canadiana section of the public library. There we found information on Elihu Pease, who built a house on the property in 1834, and photographs of his wife and his son, Edward. Later we found an auction notice of a sale of contents of household goods and equipment from his tannery. Also Tremaine's map of the 1860s showed where the Peases had a house. At the Ontario Archives we found a copy of Elihu's will, also mentioning a house and its contents. All this archival documentation fitted in with the evidence of the house itself. Certainly, wood for interior trim was more plentiful and cheaper a hundred and fifty years ago. As well, it was evident from marks on the plaster that parlour stoves once stood between the windows, with pipes to take the heat through the ceiling to the upstairs rooms.

Now, how can anyone else, like ourselves without special expertise, go about researching property? First of all, look carefully at the structure for clues. Does it have stained glass windows, for instance, or distinctive moulding on the wooden trim? For research in libraries and archives you will need the legal description of your property which can be found on your deed, tax bill and assessment notice.

The first place to look for information is probably your local public library. They will have local historical photos, newspapers and documents. Also peruse local histories and journals of early settlers. The local historical society, a branch of the Women's Institute and other organizations may also have done research. The LACAC (Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee) researches and rates properties for designation as historic sites and yours may be among them. Your local and/or county archives may also have information.

For the history of the land beginning with the first Crown grant, the County or City Registry Office is the source. Here you will find deeds, mortgages, and wills, all involved only with the property. Indirectly, they may refer to buildings on the land.

For a building on the land, try the assessment rolls of your municipality. They are the records of the annual assessment of a property made for tax purposes. Another local government source of information is the Building Permits office. There may be a record of the construction of your house or of an alteration made to it. As well, the Archives of Ontario and the Metro Toronto Reference Library have large collections of nineteenth century data including inventories of historic buildings compiled by both Ontario and Parks Canada staff. City and

town directories can show when a house first appeared. Also fire insurance maps were prepared from 1850 on showing in great detail the layout of streets and buildings. Other maps, particularly Tremaine's of the 1850s and 1860s, can show buildings and indicate lot holders. County atlases also contain maps and pictures of houses. Census records, church records, even old cemeteries can yield useful information.

The Archives of Ontario hold many of these records. The facility is simple to use, but you must register and obtain a card. In addition to microfilms of vital statistics, you will have access to their large holdings of newspapers. Notices of marriage can signal a new house, or a death a change of property owners. The Metro Toronto Reference Library has collections of historical journals complemented by the additional resources of the Baldwin Room and the John Ross Robertson Collection of pictures.

Finally, be on the look-out for old photos or sketches at antique stores or flea markets. The best of luck to any of you who are researching houses—it can be frustrating at times, but also very rewarding. We think of our book as a “roots” for houses and the search is very similar to genealogy.

Concluding the slide presentation, were two last slides: one illustrated how the Badones' house might have looked, as it was a drawing of the house belonging to the daughter of Elihu Pease: and to bring us back to the present, the second slide showed where the original Pease house once stood at, what is now, the entrance to Proctor and Gamble's high-rise headquarters on Yonge Street in Greater Toronto.

Editor's note:

If you are curious, Donalda Ewart Badone passed at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington on July 26, 2016 in her 89th year. Used copies of her book, *The House Detective*, are available from Amazon and several semi-local libraries (<https://www.worldcat.org/title/complete-house-detective-an-ontario-house-and-its-history/oclc/17768601>).

Member Matters

If you missed it

If you missed our April meeting you can enjoy the recorded version on YouTube. No special sign-in is required and you can view the video at any time on computers, tablets, smartPhones and smartTVs: <https://youtu.be/UksbrvDXQZw>

Proposals for Meetings

Speaking at a CDHS meeting is an honour and you are urged to submit a proposal for a topic that you would like to present at a meeting. The Program planning committee carefully considers all proposals to select the best for our meetings. If you do not wish to be a presenter but have a topic that you would like to learn more about, please let us know and we will attempt to locate a presenter for a future meeting.

Cobourg Civic Awards

Diane Chin, currently serving on our Programme Committee and as Member at Large, was the recipient of Cobourg's Heritage Award at the April ceremony held in Victoria Hall's



Ballroom. Diane is the President of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO). She was instrumental in the reopening of Burnham House near Grafton and has been active in many other historical preservation projects. Her



award included a pewter replica of Victoria Hall crafted by Hoselton Sculptures.

Congratulations to Diane on the well-deserved award for her many hours of hard work!

Announcements

Lakeshore Genealogical Society

Monday, May 16, 7:00 – 9:00 PM, Salvation Army Community Church, 59 Ballantine St. Cobourg Scott Baker will talk about his family research and the many Cornish families including the Bible Christians who settled in this region between 1830 and 1860. In “Tinney Tales Too or Why Catherine Went to Cornish Hollow, Scott talks about his ancestors that lived in the area of Hamilton Township and gives us a good understanding of the history of the significant size of this immigration.



Saturday, June 11th, 1:00 – 4:00 PM, Rotary Room, Cobourg Library, 200 King St. West, Cobourg Whether you are just starting out or need a little help to get over that ‘brick wall’, drop by the Rotary Room of the Cobourg Library. Members of Cobourg Library and Lakeshore Genealogical Society will be on hand to help with Land Records, Cemetery Location, Military Search and more.

All are welcome; free admission. Register: register@lakeshoregenealogicalsociety.ca

Museum Foundation Book Store

The Cobourg Museum Book Store offers both new and used books at reasonable prices. They specialize in books by local authors and of local history, but also carry an interesting selection covering Canadian history, the military and “general interest”. Delivery in the Cobourg/ Grafton/ Port Hope area is free or pick-up at the Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre in Cobourg can be arranged. Visit <https://cobourg-museum-foundation-inc.square.site/> to view and purchase books for pick-up or delivery.

Hastings Historical Society

The latest edition of *Outlook*, the newsletter of the Hastings Historical Society, is available at https://hastingshistory.ca/photos/custom/Outlook_April2022.pdf

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