



# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District  
Historical Society

September 2020 — Issue 316

## The History of Barbering and Shaving

On Tuesday, September 22, Randy Barber (who else?) will present the fascinating history of barbering and shaving which goes back at least 5000 years. Randy will sprinkle his talk with examples of Barberiana from his collection of almost 3000 items dating back to 400AD.

Randy resided in Markham with his wife Solveig for over 40 years. Between 1994- 2000 he served as Ward Councillor for the Town of Markham. He has held federal government appointments as an Administration Law Judge for the National Parole Board, CPP Disability and EI appeals. He now consults to the legal cannabis industry relative to compliance and regulation. Randy is a collector of rare books, antiques, military artifacts, Winston Churchill memorabilia, and hand carved decorative decoys. He speaks on Trench Art, Sir Winston Churchill and the History of Barbering at every opportunity.

All members are welcome to join us electronically on September 22, 2020 at 07:30 PM. Please register in advance for this webinar by visiting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_d\\_Z-1kGEQpmYwul2L-y7jA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d_Z-1kGEQpmYwul2L-y7jA)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. If you are not a member of the Cobourg and District Historical Society but would like to attend our “meetings” please contact Brian Murphy, Membership Chair at [brianincobourg@gmail.com](mailto:brianincobourg@gmail.com)

We look forward to you joining the upcoming the first 2020 CDHS webinar!

## Future Cobourg Historical Society Programs

The CDHS Programme Committee has planned a great selection of speakers for our 2020-2021 season. Although the ongoing pandemic has forced us to cancel our physical meetings we will have virtual meetings each month. You will be able to enjoy a glass of wine while listening from home. Unfortunately we have no way to deliver Leona's cookies!

CDHS members will receive a webinar registration email approximately two weeks prior to a meeting. Those who register will be sent a reminder email shortly before each meeting.

### **October: *Mini Benson Hubbard: Trek Across Labrador***

Speaker Karin Wells

Karin, an internationally recognized documentary film maker who worked with the CBC for over 40 years and reported from over 50 countries is a wonderful storyteller.

Mina Benson Hubbard (April 15, 1870 - May 4, 1956) was born on an apple farm in Bewdley, Ontario and was the first white woman to travel and explore the back-country of Labrador. She accomplished what her husband was unable to when his expedition was cut short by his death in 1903. Mina was the first to accurately map the Nascaupsee and George River systems in 1905. She was a trailblazer who lived an adventurous life.

### **November: *Sinking of the Skeena***

Speaker: Chris Barker

Chris Barker will tell us the story of the HMCS Skeena, a World War II destroyer that sank ships, saved lives, and then lost 15 of its own when it ran aground. What was a tragedy has become a unique story that is part of Canada's naval history. And in Northumberland, the Skeena is remembered by the Skeena cadets out of Port Hope who will have a role to play in the presentation. This is an interesting story that is fitting for November, the month of Remembrance.

### **January: *Lost Villages of the St. Lawrence***

Speaker: Jim Brownell

The Lost Villages were several small communities near Cornwall that were deemed unnecessary in the light of major economic forces and future prosperity for the entire Great Lakes watershed. 1950s reasoning focused on big economic pictures rather than on individual rights, historical traditions or ecological concerns, so the access of ocean-going

shipping as well as hydro-electric generation took precedence. Jim Brownell is a former MPP and has been deeply involved in the preservation of artifacts and social history of the people from these villages for years.

**February: *What is Sir John A Macdonald's Real Place in Canadian History?***

Speaker: Arthur Milne

Our first Prime Minister's governance has recently become a topic of controversy. Arthur Milne will explore this topic.

**March: *The History of the Cobourg Public Library***

Speaker: Heather Viscount

There is evidence to indicate the presence of a public-use library in Cobourg as early as the 1830's. Referred to as a Mechanics Institute, the early library was designed to provide educational opportunities for workmen and tradesman through books and lectures. By 1886 there were 128 subscribers from Cobourg and Hamilton Township. What fun to discover where these early locations were and how an institute became a public library.

**APRIL: *The Wreck of the HMS Speedy: The Making of a History Book***

Speaker: Dan Buchanan

The History Guy, Dan Buchanan will endeavor to speak on the challenges of writing a history while also telling the fascinating story of the loss of the Speedy in Lake Ontario off the coast of Brighton in 1804. This is Dan's latest book, just out in August available at Let's Talk Books. Meanwhile you can watch videos on Dan's website where he talks about the wreck of the Speedy. Visit <http://danbuchananhistoryguy.com/videos.html>

**MAY: *Social at the Loft***

Having had to cancel our social earlier in 2020, we will hope to have in person meetings by this time and if so -

Wine & Cheese evening at the Loft. View film "The Darkest Hour" and enjoy the company of our fellow members. Our physical meeting will be replaced by a webinar if the COVID-19 situation is unchanged.

## Websites

There is an enormous amount of historical material online to enjoy. For hours of reading pleasure visit some of the following sites to enjoy fascinating, mostly Cobourg-related, historical material:

- Details of the Juno Beach Centre with a special relevance to the CDHS Treasurer George Kamphorst: <https://www.junobeach.org/familystoryofolivia/>
  - Story of a quarantine island in the middle of the Rideau River: <https://ottawarewind.com/2020/04/19/virus-bridge-a-forgotten-1800s-iron-bridge-that-carried-plagued-citizens-to-isolation-island/>
  - The Archives of Ontario has a wealth of material. Their website was discussed at the recent online presentation of the Lakeshore Genealogical Society: <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/index.aspx>
  - Video about the restoration of Victoria Hall: <youtube.com/watch?v=a-OF2lpcXs8>
  - Cobourg Museum Foundation: <northumberlandheritage.ca>
  - Ontario cemetery records: <ocfa.islandnet.com/>
  - Ontario Historical Plaques: <www.ontarioplaques.com>
  - Architectural Conservancy of Ontario: <aontario.ca>
  - Where Art and Historic Places Meet <https://historicplacesday.ca/visitlists/where-art-and-historic-places-meet/>
  - Natalie's New Brunswick <https://historicplacesday.ca/visitlists/natalies-new-brunswick/>
  - Ten places that will help you understand Canada's story <https://historicplacesday.ca/visitlists/10-places-that-will-help-you-understand-canadas-story/>
  - Recent copies of the Hastings Historical Society newsletter are available online: [April 2020 newsletter](#)  
[May 2020 newsletter](#)
- Many of their meetings are on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=hastings+county+historical+society](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=hastings+county+historical+society)
- You can listen to dozens of interviews with local residents, historians, politicians and others at <https://northumberland897.ca/legacies>

If you are interested in Cobourg's government, both current and historical Council minutes, bylaws and other material is searchable at: <cobourg.civicweb.net/Portal/VirtualLibrary.aspx>.

Don't forget that the Cobourg and District Historical Society website ([cdhs.ca](http://cdhs.ca)) has all CDHS newsletters since 2010, many issues of *Historical Review*, hundreds of vintage Cobourg related postcards and several dozen recordings of interviews with veterans ranging from WWII vets to those who served in Afghanistan.

## **Member Matters**

### ***Dues Reminder***

CDHS memberships usually run from April to April. However all 2019-2020 memberships were extended to compensate for cancelled meetings. However, dues are now due for your 2020-2021 membership. Our usual physical meetings will be replaced with an outstanding lineup of virtual presenters. In addition to our "virtual" Zoom Webinars each month, we are still providing our newsletter and continuing to keep our Facebook and <https://cdhs.ca/> website updated. Even without meetings we will be incurring costs that include hosting of the Zoom webinars and website; honorariums to our presenters, preparation and production of promotional materials (pamphlets, banner), and contributions to permanent historical features that are part of our town. Unfortunately, we have no way to deliver Leona's cookies!

We have kept the membership fees the same as last season:

Individual Membership: \$30

Family Membership: \$50

Payment can be made by either Cheque or e-transfer. Please make your cheques payable to the Cobourg and District Historical Society and mail it to :

CDHS Membership Chair

P.O. Box 911, Stn Main

Cobourg. ON K9A 4W4

If you wish to use e-transfer, please send the transfer to our Membership Chair:

[brianincobourg@gmail.com](mailto:brianincobourg@gmail.com)

### ***New Members***

Please join me in welcoming our newest member: Alison Blodgett.

## Vi Milstead Warren: A Wartime Hero

Many Canadian women performed heroically at dangerous jobs to aid Canada's wartime efforts. Some of these women have had statues erected in their honour, some found new careers and never returned to Canada while others returned to Canada and continued to contribute to their country but have been largely forgotten.

An outstanding example of these almost forgotten brave women who returned to their Canadian lives is Vi Milstead who lived on a farm near to Cramahe until her death in 2014. The following is largely excerpted from the website of The Canadian 99s.

Born in Toronto October 17, 1919, to Edith and Harold Milstead, As a young teenager Vi wanted to be a surgeon, but when her mother opened a wool shop, Vi was taken out of school, thus ending that dream. In the meantime Vi set her sights on aviation. To advance her chosen career she helped out in her mother's shop and saved all of her earnings to pay for flying lessons.

When she began flying lessons, her instructor had a film made, *Let's Learn To Fly*, starring Vi. No doubt he chose Vi to demonstrate that "even girls can learn to fly". Soon after she completed her Private Pilot License, her mother sold the wool shop and Vi lost her income source. So she started her own business to earn money to pay for her commercial lessons. Vi passed her Private Pilot's Flight Test, #3339 in December, 1939, her Commercial Licence in April, 1940 and earned her Instructor's Rating at Trenton, Ontario in July, 1941.

Vi instructed at Barker Field in Toronto until civilian flying ceased in Canada in November, 1942. When civilian flying ceased during WWII, Vi looked for ways to assist the war effort.



She applied to BOAC in Montreal for service in the British Air Transport Auxiliary. At that time she had approximately 1,000 flying hours and easily passed her check out in the Harvard AT-6, going overseas in 1943 to ferry aircraft

between manufacturers, maintenance facilities and Armed Forces' units throughout Britain.

After preliminary training at ATA Headquarters, White Waltham Airfield in 1944, Vi was based at Cosford. She ferried 27 different types of single engine aircraft and 17 different types of advanced twin-engine aircraft, as a First Officer (equivalent to a Captain's rank in the military). She most fondly remembered transporting the Spitfire and the de Havilland Mosquito.

When the war came to an end in May 1945, the Cosford base closed. Vi was transferred back to White Waltham Airfield and ferried similar aircraft between Britain and Europe until the end of June, 1945.

She returned to civilian life instructing in Canada working for Leavens Brothers Air Services at

Barker Field. Vi married Arnold Warren in 1947 and they moved north to Sudbury to fly for Nickel Belt Airways. Vi taught flying on floats during the summer and skis during the winter. She flew a Fairchild Husky, interspersed with charter and bush flying in the north,



was featured as one of Canada's first female bush pilots and was featured in several national aviation publications.

Followed a busy two years (1950-1952) The Warrens re-established the Windsor Flying Club. They then spent two years in Indonesia where Arnold was

recruited to be the Chief Flying Instructor at the Indonesian Aviation Academy in Djakarta.

Both were back in Canada by the end of 1954 and employed in the aviation industry in Toronto. Vi obtained a position with Orenda Engines and served as secretary to Alan Wingate, an RCAF veteran who Vi had taught to fly in 1941!

They continued to fly for recreation, owning a PA-12 then a Mooney which they used to fly to their home in the Magdallen Islands in Quebec. They both retired in 1973. Vi was presented with an Amelia Earhart Medallion by the First Canadian Chapter of the 99s. In September, 1995, she was honoured by the Rusty Blakey Heritage Group at a Banquet in Sudbury, Ontario. There was a formal dedication of a granite plaque, with a nostalgic fly-by of seaplanes over the shore of Ramsey Lake, where bush flying had been a way of life in the 40's and early 50's.

The Warrens, due to Arnold's frail health, scaled down their living in the nineties, from a large two-storey Victorian home in Colborne, to a smaller, custom built log house on the shores of Lake Ontario. After Arnold's death Vi lived alone, with an adopted black Labrador dog called Harriet and enjoyed her gardening. She was a very modest lady, but enjoyed talking about her experiences and wartime flying. She was featured in a television documentary "A Time for Courage" and was a special guest at the 99s East Canada Section's 50th Anniversary Banquet 2000 when she was "interviewed" by June Callwood, a well-known Toronto journalist and author and one of Vi's early students.

In 2010, Vi Milstead Warren was inducted as a Member of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. The citation for her induction reads:

*"During the Second World War she served with the Air Transport Auxiliary in Great Britain, flying 47 different types of aircraft, including trainers, fighters and bombers from factories to airfields as the longest serving Canadian woman pilot with the ATA. Post-war, she flew as a flying instructor and as one of Canada's first female bush pilots, a role model for women seeking careers in aviation."*

Ms. Milstead-Warren died on June 27, 2014 at her lakeside home in Colborne at the age of 94.

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[brianincobourg@gmail.com](mailto:brianincobourg@gmail.com)

### ***New Members***

Please join me in welcoming our newest member: Alison Blodgett.

## CDHS Executive for 2020 – 2021

|                                   |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
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