

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District
Historical Society

April 2018 — Issue 296

Why Local History Matters

With artifacts, photos and personal stories, Roseanne Quinn will explain that communities have stories to tell from the collective histories of families. It is incumbent upon the current generation to record these details and to retain memorabilia. Often people do not realize that what they perceive as just old photos are actually community history and, as such, invaluable. What makes history come alive are the human stories, the challenges, tragedies and the celebrations that occurred on farms, and in villages, cities and wilderness areas. We owe it to our descendants to convey this information and to retain the artifacts of lives well lived.



Roseanne's family emigrated from Ireland in the 1840's and has mostly lived in the Castleton area since. Ms. Quinn has a long personal story to add to the community history of Northumberland.

Learn why Roseanne feels that a sense of time and place is important in the history of her family and the built heritage they owned, inhabited and helped to preserve. Join us for Roseanne's presentation on Tuesday, April 24, at Victoria Hall. Doors open at 7:00 pm for coffee and cookies, before 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

Maple Syrup Production Then and Now

For decades Gareth Metcalfe has been passionate about the history and the making of making maple syrup. His 75 acres of maple bush is north of Trenton near Frankford. There are over 200 trees that he taps each year for the rich maple syrup that his family and friends eagerly await. Gareth started his talk with a humorous “Ode to Making Maple Syrup” and followed with a history



of making maple syrup and tips for making your own “liquid gold”. He provided a cornucopia of historical and technical information about maple syrup production: heating methods to concentrate the syrup, the impact of shallow versus deep evaporation pans, the importance of using three



containers for better control, the relationship of degrees Brix to sugar concentration, relative quantities of maple syrup versus maple sugar produced today and 150 years ago, approximate historical prices for maple syrup, impact of taking syrup on the health of the trees, storage of syrup awaiting reduction, impact of barometric pressure on the boiling point of the syrup, etc, etc.

Everyone left the meeting with a greatly enhanced appreciation of the difficulties and niceties of maple syrup production! We now even know that 66 Brix maple syrup boils at 7° degrees F above the boiling point of water or 219° F at an atmospheric pressure of 29.9 inches mercury!

The Way We Were

The Cobourg District Historical Society is hosting an evening of memories about Cobourg,

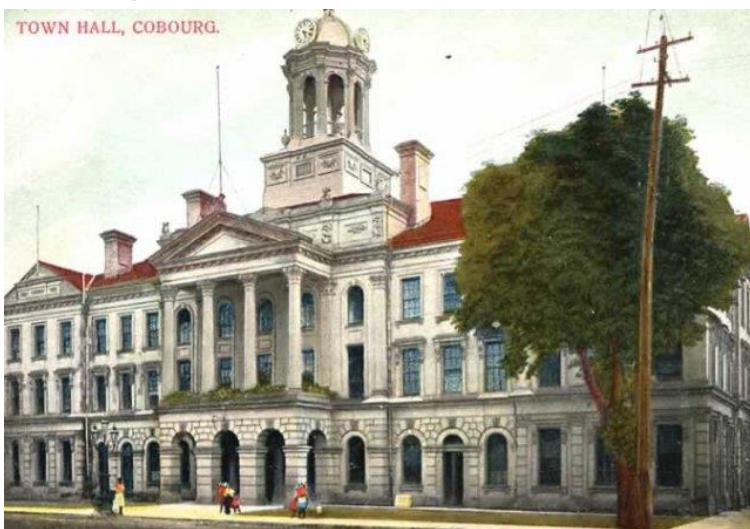


“The Way We Were”, on Tuesday May 29, 2018 from 7–9pm in the Concert Hall at Victoria Hall. This is our year-end social which promises to be both educational and entertaining. The event is free and we will be advertising to encourage members of the public to drop in as well. We have confirmation of attendance at tables displaying memorabilia, information, artifacts and treasures from several Cobourg residents who post on the

Cobourg Yesteryears Facebook page. Representatives from the proposed Sports Hall of Fame, Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre, the Architectural Conservancy, and The Marie Dressler 150th Celebration will also be there. Come and chat with people who are passionate about Cobourg and its history. See photographs, postcards and newspaper clippings that bring back memories of the way we were. Get a burning question answered. Make connections. A cash bar will be available. Save the date: Tuesday May 29, 2018 from 7–9pm!

Film and Book about Victoria Hall

John Draper



In October 2014, historian John Taylor announced that he would be creating a documentary film about the history of Victoria Hall. He hoped to get a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts but it seemed they did not think a documentary film was art so his request was denied. But now, he is planning a book and a 15 minute documentary and wants to use his own money plus raise \$25,000 from

donors. John currently lives in Vancouver and works in the film industry but he previously

lived in Cobourg and was Executive Director of the Society for the Restoration of Victoria Hall from 1971 to 1975. At the Cobourg Council's Committee of the Whole meeting on April 2, he talked about the project and how the history of Victoria Hall was inextricably intertwined with that of the Cobourg Peterborough Railway.

John did not ask for financial support from the Town but did promote the project and presumably wanted permission to film inside the building.

John described his project at the recent Council meeting:



The Town Fathers of Cobourg rolled the dice in 1853. They would build a grand Town Hall – ‘not just for present but for future purposes’ – and they would build a railroad to Peterborough. The Railroad would go straight across Rice Lake, on the world's longest bridge. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

He then showed a very professional looking 5 minute clip that has already been made for the film. It is a re-enactment of a Council meeting where the architect Kivas Tully was engaged to build Victoria Hall.

Taylor plans to raise money using INDIEGOGO which is a crowd funding site. On that site he says:

The Cobourg & Peterboro Railroad and Victoria Hall

I first saw Victoria Hall when I was 33. I am now 80 and have been unable to let go of this story. For four years I served as Executive Director of the Society for the Restoration of Victoria Hall, and I have always had a guilty feeling – that I must tell the story of how that building came to be.

The book that will be produced at the same time will tell the story of Cobourg from 1798 to the present time and donors of \$100 or more will receive a copy of it plus a reproduction of an original £100 bond issued to finance the railway.

Fundraising and the Indiegogo campaign are in preliminary stages and John gave no timetable for his project. If completed it would be a great asset for the Town and help make Victoria Hall better known. If you would like to be kept informed about this project you can sign up for notices of progress Indiegogo without committing to a donation at this time. Visit https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-grand-gamble/coming_soon/pies

Did Reuben Jackson Sign This?

Judith Goulin



Remember this photo in last month's CDHS newsletter article, where the question "Did Reuben Jackson Sign This" was asked? You may also recall learning that Jackson was known to leave his signature in his houses during their construction.

While looking around Cobourg at Jackson Houses, Judith Goulin met a homeowner who told her how he discovered Reuben Jackson's name on an inside piece of a doorframe, uncovered during a renovation. When the homeowner proudly showed it to her, it was as if she had found the Holy Grail, because she thought she was looking at a piece of history: Reuben Jackson's signature. The homeowner was dubious. He surmised that it was the top board of a load of lumber addressed for delivery to Jackson.

With high hopes, Judith borrowed the 2X6 signed board and contacted Reuben's granddaughter, Carol, to arrange a meeting. When they met, Carol brought many documents, signed by her Grandfather Reuben, from her collection of inherited memorabilia. Judith's balloon was burst when they compared signatures. Try as they might to convince themselves otherwise, the two women agreed that the signature on the board was not the same as the signature on the documents. Undaunted, Judith continues to search for an authentic Reuben Jackson signature still hidden in one of his houses. Hope springs eternal...

Announcements

New Cobourg Book Released

When the yacht, *Breeze*, sailed into Cobourg harbour in the summer of 1863, touchpoints in the history of the British Empire, the American Civil War and the Cobourg Regatta all came together. Historian Marc Seguin presents a lively, illustrated talk based on his new book, *The Cruise of the Breeze: The Journal, Art and Life of a Victorian Soldier in Canada*. Thursday, April 26.

Cobourg Yacht Club (beside Cobourg Harbour parking lot). Doors open at 7:00PM. Presentation at 7:30PM. Free admission



Lakeshore Genealogical Society

There are several upcoming Lakeshore Genealogical Society meetings:

- April 12: Brian Tackaberry, "The Effect of World War 1 in Small Town Ontario"
- May 10: Tom Holden, "Using Webinars"
- June 14: Day Excursion to Trenton Air Museum.
- September 13: Annual AGM and "Finds and Frustrations"
- October 11: Allison Torrie Lapaire, "The Canadian Flag"

Meetings are on the second Thursday of each month and are held in the Rotary Room, Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario Street, Cobourg and starts at 6:30pm. Visitors are welcome.

Book with a Tale

CDHS was recently contacted by someone who has come across a copy of a book titled German Classics Vol. 3 with an inscription indicating it was presented by Miss Wilson and Miss Ellis of Hatfield Hall School. Hatfield Hall was a private school for girls located on Green Street in Cobourg. It opened in 1927 and closed in 1952. If anyone has a special interest in this book, please contact Randy Thompson at randythompson06@yahoo.com

Membership Matters

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 our April meeting!

Distinguished Civic Award for Community Service

Our warmest congratulations are extended to CDHS Vice President Leona Woods, who was awarded a Distinguished Civic Award for Community Service by the Town of Cobourg in a ceremony on April 5th, 2018. Leona's contributions to CDHS are nothing short of amazing. She is an enthusiastic member of the Programme Committee, actively finding interesting and engaging speakers. She also oversees room rentals for our monthly meetings, coordinates the rental of the wireless microphone, and generously provides coffee and home-baked goods for our meetings. Leona played a key role in organizing the



CDHS's Canada 150 celebration of the Canadian flag and provided thoughtful insight to the *ad hoc* Scholarship committee. Leona contributes equally to other organizations in our community, including the Victoria Hall Volunteers and the local Legion, where she coordinates the annual student public speaking competition. She gives more than 100% to everything that she does. CDHS is grateful to have her as an active member, and we are thrilled to congratulate her on receiving this Civic Award in recognition of all she does to make Cobourg a truly feel-good town! *(Photo by John Draper)*

Nominating Committee

The CDHS Nominating Committee has found members who are willing to fill most positions. The Committee proposes the following slate of officers for CDHS for 2018-2019:

President, Leona Woods; Vice President, Carla Jones; Membership Coordinator, Vacant; Treasurer George Kamphorst; Member at Large, Gerry Brown; Secretary Carla Jones; Programme Chairperson, Diane Chin; Newsletter Editor, Ken Strauss.

If you are willing to become more involved in Society activities please contact any member of the current executive (see the last page of this newsletter) to discuss the opportunities. The slate will be formally presented at our April AGM and voted upon at that time.

CDHS Executive for 2017 – 2018

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