



Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and
District Historical Society

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The Scoop on Watershed's First Ten Years

On Tuesday February 28 we welcome Jane Kelly, publisher and editor of the very successful *Watershed Magazine*, a publication we all look forward to receiving like a guest into our homes. In Jane's words: "Watershed taps into our region's unique blend of rural and urban charm by celebrating the arts, the culture and the wonderful people who are part of the landscape." Jane has many stories to share.

Please join us in Victoria Hall on February 28th to meet this interesting personality and enjoy hearing her tell about the fascinating, creative people she has met and the myriad of experiences she has had publishing *Watershed*.

Doors open at 7:30 and the presentation begins at 8:00.

All are welcome so bring a friend!

Our next two meetings:

Tuesday, March 27, 2012	Kathryn McHolm	Wesleyville: The Little Village that Could
Tuesday, April 24, 2012	Annual General Meeting and Members' Night	

Our last meeting

Doreen West gave us a fascinating glimpse of small town Ontario life 65 years ago via her exquisite needlework. She melded vignettes of Baltimore life into a folk art depiction of life in a bustling community. For those who did not have an opportunity to closely examine her work the details of several of her images from the large work are shown below.



Note that the details are actually considerably smaller than the size that they are reproduced here. The actual needlework images are smaller than a postage stamp!





2012: A Year of Celebrations

Judith Goulin

The year 2012 is a significant one in our Canadian history because it marks the anniversaries of some stellar events ranging from national to local significance:

- The bicentennial of the War of 1812
- The 175th anniversary of the 1837 Rebellion led by William Lyon Mackenzie.
- The 175th birthday of the incorporation of the town of Cobourg
- The 175th anniversary of the establishment of the first Catholic parish in the Cobourg area

Briefly summarized, the War of 1812 had its origins in a maritime conflict between the United States and Great Britain. American pride was irked by the British

practice of intercepting American shipping to enforce a blockade against Bonaparte's Europe. U.S. Congress declared a war that Britain wanted to avoid, but the U.S. president ordered multiple invasions of Canada in order to punish the Brits. Most of the battles happened early in the conflict and occurred mostly in Ontario, then called Upper Canada. Our Canadian history books tell us that Canada won the War of 1812, but many Americans claim that the victory was theirs. Look up Peter Shawn Taylor's enlightening, sometimes amusing article, *Damn Yankees*, in *Maclean's Magazine* [October 17, 2011]. An American, Donald Hickey, quips: "Americans are happy because they think they won. Canadians are happier because they know they won. And the British are happiest of all because they've forgotten all about it."

Over the next three years, Ottawa is undertaking a massive campaign to remind Canadians of the War of 1812. The defense of Canada during the War of 1812 was a pivotal moment in our history, as significant to the birth of our country as Confederation. Throughout Ontario this year there will be many celebrations to commemorate the War of 1812. See www.visit1812.com to find a detailed schedule of events.

One hundred and seventy five years ago marks the 1837 Rebellion, a period of unrest marked by rebellions in both Upper and Lower Canada. In Upper Canada there were a series of skirmishes, raids and other small actions against the elitist Tory government. There was one skirmish that had great significance on a level fairly close to home. Lives were lost after Pickering settlers who were rallied by William Lyon Mackenzie took up arms and marched on Toronto to demand political reform.

Every September the Pickering Museum Village presents an award-winning presentation, *A Spirit Walk*, commemorates Pickering's role in the 1837 Rebellion. Led by a lantern-bearing spirit guide named *Hannah*, the audience is led around the dark village in small groups as scene-by-scene the actors reveal the drama of the Rebellion. William Lount and Peter Matthews, who lived in Pickering Township,

were hanged as traitors for their participation in the Rebellion. It is this pathos that moves the story along as the widow Hannah Matthews masterfully draws her audience in emotionally. By the end, the audience are no longer just bystanders but participants. At first they have only witnessed scenes of the men who took part in the Rebellion as they planned and skirmished, but in the final scene with the widow Hannah standing beside a gallows and back-lit by the fire she pours out her grief. Onlookers are left speechless as they ponder the widow's final revelation: Queen Victoria sent an official pardon but it arrived too late: Peter Matthews and Samuel Lount were already dead by the time it arrived!

A Spirit Walk will be presented at the Pickering Museum Village on the evenings of September 14, 15, 21 and 22. Tickets are \$16.50. Interested? The Programme Committee is prepared to arrange tickets and car-pooling.

The two Pickering men were the only two individuals hanged as a result of their participation in the Rebellion.

A Spirit Walk is a play not to be missed, especially in this anniversary year.

In the same year as the Rebellion, 1837, an act to incorporate the town of Cobourg was passed in the legislature of Upper Canada. At that time, Cobourg had a population of c. 1000 people. One hundred and seventy-five years later, Cobourg is a thriving, lively town of 18,519 citizens.

There will be many local celebrations throughout the year to celebrate Cobourg's 175th birthday. One of the biggest fetes will be on June 9th when The Cobourg Museum Foundation will open its first project, The Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre, located at the corner of Orr and Durham Streets. The Saturday opening will include events that are part of a summer-long celebration of the 175th anniversary of Cobourg's incorporation. A Core Planning Group representing the town, some 20 heritage groups and historically-minded individuals, is hard at work planning

celebration events and exhibits. Watch this newsletter and the local newspapers for further information on upcoming events.

The year 1837 also marked the beginning of the first Catholic parish in Cobourg. The first church building, then named St. Polycarp, was a just a small frame structure that the burgeoning Catholic population began to outgrow very soon. So in 1895 the cornerstone of the present St. Michael's Church on Division Street was



laid. It is built in the Romanesque Revival style, utilising red brick with a locally quarried stone foundation. The main entrance is flanked by two square bell towers crowned by four spires. Towering far above the front door is a statue of St. Michael the Archangel. Inside, beautiful oil paintings by Toronto artist P. C. Browne, grace the ceiling and walls. Over time, the church interior was “modernized” by those with good intentions but no sense of history. Many of the original design features had been painted over but in the past ten years much restoration work has been done. The oil paintings, done on thin canvasses, have been cleaned and many of the original stenciled designs painted on the walls have been uncovered. After 117 years this building retains its elegance both inside and

out. This summer, St. Michael's will acknowledge its 175th anniversary with festivities.



To mark some of these important 2012 anniversaries, your Programme Committee is working on selecting speakers for the fall of this year who will tell us more about the War of 1812, the history of the town of Cobourg and the 1837 Rebellion. Meanwhile, celebrate!

Sources Cited

Boland, Edgar J. *From the Pioneers to the Seventies A History of the Diocese of Peterborough 1852-1975* 1976, Peterborough: Maxwell Review Ltd.

Guillet, Edwin C. *Cobourg 1798-1948*. 1948, Oshawa: Goodfellow Printing.

UEL Association of Canada. *Loyal She Remains*. 1984, Toronto: Southam Murray Printing.

Maclean's Magazine Oct. 17, 2011.

www.cityofpickering.com/museum

Archives Update

The news from the Archives is bittersweet. Members will recall that at the AGM last April, a resolution to separate the Archives and CDHS into two entities was brought forward and passed. This was followed by a letter to the Town and County Councils stating that it was the wish to bring this about by the 31st of March 2012. That is indeed happening, but with more finality than we naively anticipated. As it stands now, the Archives will become the Town's responsibility as of April 1st, 2012 while the management of the Archives will be undertaken by the County. The downside of this news is that without the continuation of the County's previous grant, Ciara Ward's contract cannot be renewed. As our full-time archivist, Ciara has brought the Archives to new heights and we have been exceedingly pleased with her expertise, enthusiasm and professionalism. We are very sad to see Ciara go and wish her every success in new endeavours.

Camborne School House

Katelyn Bierworth

I've been growing up in Camborne, and there has been an old school house in my backyard. I have always been intrigued by it; wondering who built it and why or why it was even built in the location it was. Maybe that location was the main road for Camborne at the time.

The Camborne School House was built in 1895, although there was a previous school before the one still standing off Albert's Alley. The school was previously used for Sunday School and social gatherings before it was used as a formal school. In 1874 the school trustees bought extra land beside the existing building to make a playground for the students. The playground has been demolished, and there was a new park put beside the old Camborne School since the 2000s. The school house has only one room and two washrooms. In 1949, renovations were done to the porch to enlarge it so a heated bathroom could be used, and a board fence was built as well.

Until May 1993 the school was used as a nursery. In 1864 a teacher working here would earn only \$240 per year.

In 1962 a four room school was built on Kennedy Road which is now the main school for Camborne children. There have been additional sections added on to hold students from junior kindergarten up to grade 6.

The Old Camborne School House is still used today for dance classes, and can be rented for parties or social gatherings. This is the only one room school house that still stands in the Township of Hamilton. All others have been sold to be renovated into a house, or destroyed. The school house celebrated its 100th year being part of Camborne in 1995.



Katelyn Bierworth attends the CDCI West High School and was a CDHS Archives Co-Op Student from September 2011 until the end of January 2012.

Membership Matters

Membership renewals

The time for annual membership renewal is fast approaching. To coincide with our fiscal year, the membership year ends March 31, by which time the goal is to have all renewals in. Attached for your convenience is a renewal form. Consider being an early bird and getting this chore out of the way! Those who have renewed by March 31 will be eligible for a surprise draw.

New members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members, who joined at our January meeting:

Simon and Gurnee Jensen

Leona Woods

Notes and Notices

Needed: Books, Wanted: Buyers

Are you thinking about annual spring cleaning yet? If you have any history-related books that you're clearing out, please donate them to the CDHS. If you've already done your annual spring purge, you probably have room for more books, so browse and buy at our next meeting.

Profits from the sale of books will be used toward the expenses for this year's May bus trip.

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

CDHS Executive for 2011 – 2012

President	Ken Strauss	ken.strauss@sympatico.ca
Recording Secretary	Jackie Hick	mikeandjackie@sympatico.ca
Archives Chair	Cath Oberholtzer	cober@eagle.ca
Membership	Martha Watson	mwatson5@sympatico.ca
Programme	Judith Goulin	jgoulin@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Ken Strauss	ken.strauss@sympatico.ca
Past President	David Gregory	

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