

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District

Historical Society

February 2023 — Issue 337

Sir Winston Churchill — His Life and Accomplishments

A study of Churchill's ninety years of life show him to be a true Renaissance Man. He had a huge breadth of existence not only as a WWII leader but as an author, painter, bricklayer, pilot, horseman and all with a notable wit! Learn the myths and truisms from the Chairman of the International Churchill Society-Canada, Randy Barber.

Randy resided in Markham with his wife Solveig for over 40 years. Between 1994 and 2000 he served as Ward Councillor for the Town of Markham and is a newly elected Cobourg Councillor. 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.



Join us on **Wednesday, February 22**, in Victoria Hall. Doors open at 7:00 PM for coffee and cookies. The meeting begins at 7:30 PM. Guests are always welcome. Admission, including refreshments, is free for members and \$5 for non-members. All are welcome so bring a friend or two. **Note the change from the usual meeting date.** See you on **February 22!**

Our Previous Meeting

The History of the Ontario Car Ferry

Our January speaker, Peter Delanty, was a former Cobourg Mayor and local high school Principal. His past and continuing commitment to many organizations and causes, include his position as Treasurer in 1980 at the then newly minted Cobourg and District Historical Society.

The ferries and their passengers significantly influenced Cobourg's residents and the local economy for almost 50 years. The company and the actual ferries were unique in Great Lake sailing. Peter's presentation included vintage photographs of the ferries, details of the captains of these unique ships and the ultimate fate of the ferries. He explained both why the ferries existed and, perhaps more



importantly, why Cobourg was one terminus for their runs.

Peter told the ferry from Cobourg's perspective.

You might enjoy reading about the ferry from the perspective of Rochester residents. See <https://www.rochestersubway.com/topics/2013/04/ontario-car-ferry-company-rochester-to-cobourg/>

CDHS 2023 Program

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

More than a Foote: Canadian Women You Should Know About

Celebrating International Women's Month, speaker Karin Wells' new book is aptly titled for this month's celebration of women. Karin highlights women from the area including Canada's first astrophysicist and a Dr. who discovered treatment for Hodgkins Lymphoma, as well as several others. Karin has included Mina Benson Hubbard whose story she presented last year as the first chapter and will share new source material with us. This is an opportunity to celebrate women who have made a difference.

Tuesday, April 25, 2023

HMCS Cobourg

Our distinguished speaker, Roger Litwiller, is a Canadian author, historian and lecturer. He has written the books, *White Ensign Flying* and *Warships of the Bay of Quinte* as well as numerous articles for magazines and newspapers. HMCS Cobourg was a modified Flower-class corvette that served with the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War. She fought primarily in the Battle of the Atlantic as a convoy escort. She was named for Cobourg, Ontario.

FRIDAY, May 26, 2023

Social and Trivia Night

Join us for our end of season get-together and since COVID, our first in-person Trivia Night and Social. Sit with members and friends at tables and enjoy trivia covering trivia in all categories from local to Canadian questions, while enjoying a drink and treats. Details will follow.

Member Matters

New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest CDHS members:

- Susan Edwards
- Marlene Amos-King

Preserving our past and preparing for our future

Katie Kennedy

With over 400,000 archival materials and more than 600 artifacts, preserving and storing the past while ensuring space for future growth is an important consideration for the new NCAM.

“To meet our current requirements as well as our future needs, we had to seek out expert advice to develop a specialized storage system”, commented Abigail Miller, NCAM Archivist. “We needed a storage system that would meet a high, curatorial standard.”

Working with SpaceSaver Solutions, who are specialists in the field of archival storage, a system was designed to prioritize the needs of the artifacts and provide an enhanced experience for visitors. Special features include:

- Storage cabinets with visible shelving for display and secure showcasing;
- Oversized tray drawers for storing large plans and maps;
- Mobile racks for safely storing and displaying framed artwork and photographs;
- Oversized shelves for storing and displaying large artefacts.

The storage units are moveable to maximize space and have a sophisticated drive system for smooth, balanced movement to prevent shifting or damage to fragile artifacts. This state-of-the-art system, installed in a secure, climate-controlled environment, will help NCAM to work to achieve a Category A Curatorial standard designation, which will enable staff to acquire and borrow cultural property of outstanding significance and national importance to Canada.

The current archive collection will be carefully relocated to the new facility's collection storage room in 2024. Once the items are safely stored, the remaining available space will still provide over 40 per cent new storage space for future growth.

“With over 50 thousand linear feet of storage we plan to be able to continue collecting for another 15-20 years,” explained Miller. The specialized shelving unit will be funded with the generous support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund.

For more information on the entire Golden Plough project visit

<https://www.northumberland.ca/en/living-here/gpl-redevelopment-project.aspx>



Prince of Hearts

In 1860 Queen Victoria sent her 18-year-old son to Canada. It was our first royal tour and it caused a sensation.

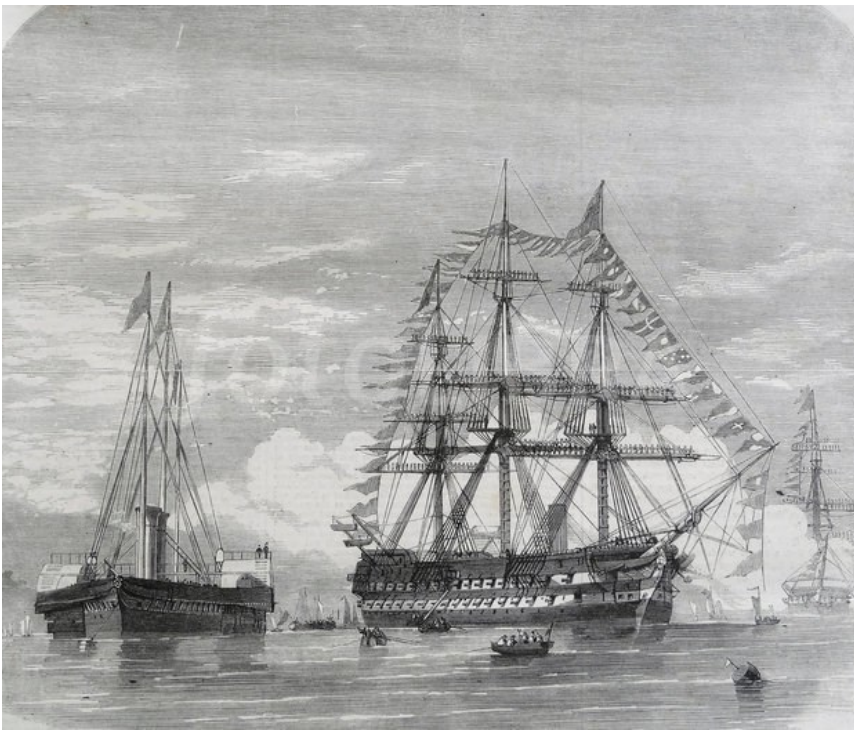
“Sound the trumpets! Beat the drums!
The Princely heir of England comes!” –R.J. de Cordova

Sixteen-year-old Lizzie Wilmot of Cobourg was consumed with excitement. “Everybody in town was agog over the impending celebration,” she recalled over sixty years later. “New gowns, decorations, and surmises as to whom should dance with the Prince were the topics of the day... and locally, Mrs. Connells had fitted many fluttering hearts with taffetas and tarlatans and heavy embroidered satins.”

The focus of so many fluttering hearts was Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, the second of Queen Victoria’s nine children. The queen would have raised an eyebrow at the notion of her teenaged son as royal heartthrob since she found him rather plain (“handsome I cannot think him.”) Nonetheless, in the summer of 1860 scores of Canadian young women nursed the impossible fantasy of winning the heart of the heir to the throne and becoming Queen of Great Britain and the Empire.



The impetus for a royal visit to North America had begun with the construction of a Montreal railway bridge across the St. Lawrence that was hailed, with civic hyperbole, as 'the eighth wonder of the world.' In May of 1859 the Parliament of the United Canadas invited Queen Victoria to officiate at the opening of this bridge that would be named in her honour. The queen was unable to attend but it was decided that the Prince of Wales should come in her stead. Victoria and her husband Prince Albert thought it would be good for Bertie, as he was known within the family, to make the first royal tour to North America. But they had plenty of misgivings. Bertie had always been their problem child. Prince Albert thought him rather dim since he did not excel at the strict Germanic schooling regimen he had devised for his children. Bertie's elder sister Vicky, by contrast, was able to discuss books with her father in three languages by the age of six. Yet some of Bertie's more sympathetic tutors reported on his kind nature and affable manner which they thought would serve him well in his royal role.



So it was that on July 10, 1860, the Prince of Wales and his retinue left Plymouth, England, on board the 91-gun *HMS Hero*, accompanied by the steam frigate *HMS Ariadne*. On the morning of July 24th, the prince stepped ashore in St John's, Newfoundland, to deafening cheers from thousands of spectators who had spent the night carousing and setting off fireworks. Despite a sudden downpour, the cheers continued as the

prince processed in an open landau through the ceremonial arches erected across streets hung with patriotic banners, flags and bunting. At a ball that evening the young prince danced with great gusto till three a.m. and a reporter from the New York *Herald* cheekily observed that: "His Royal Highness looks as if he might have a susceptible nature and has already yielded to several twinges in the region of his midriff."

As the *Hero* departed for Halifax the next day, all aboard agreed that the St. John's visit had been a great success. In *Royal Spectacle*, his definitive study of the tour, historian Ian Radforth cites a letter from the prince's governor, General Bruce, to Prince Albert, reporting that his son had "entered cordially into the spirit of the thing." The Prince Consort replied that all he knew about the place was the Newfoundland dogs and thus he could only picture the Prince of Wales "surrounded by these animals and their taking an animated part in the prevailing enthusiasm." A Newfoundland dog was, in fact, presented to the prince and it soon became a favourite of the crewmen on the *Hero*.

"Halifax did not know itself on the 30th of July," wrote the correspondent for the *Times* of London. "It was completely buried in green leaves and flowers and metamorphosed into a gigantic bouquet." Other Maritime capitals such as Fredericton and Charlottetown followed suit and evergreen trees and branches were used to disguise every shanty and shabby building. When the royal flotilla approached Montreal on August 25th the steamers plying the St. Lawrence were ornamented with spruce trees and "even the very buoys were decorated." As the largest and richest city in British North America, Montreal was determined not to be outdone in the splendour of its celebrations. Cannons boomed as the young prince stepped onto Bonsecours Market Wharf on August 25th and a crowd of 50,000 roared its welcome. In Ian Radforth's description, an enormous red-and-white pavilion stood on the wharf below which red-carpeted stairs led up to a dais with a gilded throne. The prince was escorted up these stairs by the mayor of Montreal, Charles-Seraphin Rodier, who had draped his rotund figure in scarlet robes lined with white satin in imitation of the Lord Mayor of London. Monsieur Rodier then proceeded to read his grandiloquent welcome in English and French and bowed so low each time the Crown was mentioned that his ceremonial sword poked skywards and his chain of office jingled against his boots, to the amusement of the foreign press.

That afternoon, the prince laid the final stone of the Victoria Bridge which became the scene of a spectacular evening fireworks display. Two days later he attended what was billed as "the largest ball ever held on the Continent" held in an elegant wooden pavilion constructed at the foot of Mount Royal. Surrounded by gardens lit by twinkling lanterns, the hall featured refreshment tables with fountains of champagne encircling a 300-foot dance floor on which the prince danced tirelessly till five am. The next night over 8,000 citizens dressed in their finest gathered in the ballroom for a gala concert that included a cantata written in the prince's honour. The following day he took part in a military review and paddled in a flotilla

of birchbark canoes with Indigenous Canadians. As the royal party departed for Ottawa on August 31, the ballroom complex began to be dismantled. In a more lasting tribute, Mayor Rodier erected a statue of Bertie atop his house on Rue Saint-Antoine and dubbed it 'Prince of Wales Castle.'

A Gothic pavilion had been erected in Ottawa for the laying of the cornerstone of the new parliament buildings. The prince also visited Chaudière Falls beside which an enormous ceremonial arch had been constructed by Ottawa's lumbermen using 180,000 feet of sawn lumber and assembled without a single nail. Lumbermen in neckerchiefs then escorted him on a thrill ride down the timber slide by the falls.

So far the royal visit had been a smashing success but on September 4th as the prince's party sailed through the Thousand Islands in perfect sunshine, a storm was brewing that threatened to disrupt the entire tour. In Canada West the Protestant Orange Order was a powerful force and the bane of the Roman Catholic Church. The Orangemen were dismayed by how prominently the Catholic clergy had received the prince in Quebec and were determined to show that they were the most loyal followers of the Crown in this part of Canada.

The Duke of Newcastle, the man in charge of the tour, had made it clear that sectarian dissension must not mar the prince's visit and had asked local authorities to prevent the Orangemen from co-opting the celebrations. But as the royal party sailed into Kingston harbour, thousands of Orangemen stood massed on the wharf in colourful sashes with fluttering banners and a brass band blaring out Orange marching tunes. Suddenly the steamer *Kingston* veered away from the wharf and anchored out in the harbour. The mayor of Kingston came out by boat to meet with the duke and proposed that the prince's procession detour around the Orangemen and their two ceremonial arches. The duke stated that unless the Orange display was removed by nine the next morning, the prince would not come ashore. That night the Orangemen held a 'No Surrender' rally and loudly denounced the whole thing as a 'Popish plot.' The following day the steamer *Kingston* sailed away from the town to the great disappointment of thousands onshore.

The next stop was Belleville where ten ceremonial arches had been erected and every building bedecked with flags and flowers and banners. But when an emissary of the governor general reported that a crowd of militant Orange brethren had arrived by train from Kingston, a furious Duke of Newcastle gave the order to sail for Cobourg. The Kingston

Orangemen, however, would not be deterred. With drums beating, they boarded a train for Cobourg—a train that would never reach its destination. As the Duke of Newcastle described in a letter to Queen Victoria: “By some curious accident (which will sometimes happen when the Government has the road in its own hands) the train broke down in a wild part of the line.”

Crowds jammed the Cobourg pier that evening as the prince disembarked from the steamer *Kingston* and climbed into a carriage which local men then pulled to the new town hall. During the speeches that followed, in the words of one newspaper: “The Cobourg folks rang out their huzzas loudly and freely.” With the building now officially named Victoria Hall in honour of his mother, the prince went inside so the dancing could begin.

“NEVER SHALL I FORGET THE EVENING OF THE BALL” recalled Lizzie Wilmot in capital letters. “I wore a snowy grenadine with puffed white sleeves and long frilled skirt and a wreath of pink rosebuds on my hair. The ballroom with its blazing gas fixtures ablaze with light, the gay uniforms and handsome gowns was a fairy land to me.” After the prince departed at about three a.m, Lizzie recalled: “...there was a great rush to see who could be the first to drink out of his wine glass. I do not remember participating in this.”



Despite his late evening the prince was up early the next morning for a nine-thirty departure for Rice Lake where he boarded the steamer *Otonabee* for a trip to Hiawatha First Nation. The tour’s physician, Dr. Henry Acland, was charmed by the view from the steamer and created a

colour sketch as well as some quick studies of the Mississauga people in canoes. An arch had been erected at the Hiawatha landing place and local men fired their guns in welcome as the steamer approached. The Mississauga chief presented the prince with a ceremonial scroll and birchbark baskets filled with beadwork and other handicrafts Dr Acland would continue to paint and draw Indigenous people throughout the tour and in Toronto he sketched a young Mohawk from the Six Nations Reserve named Oronhyatekha. This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship during which Dr. Acland helped Oronhyatekha study at Oxford where he was a professor of medicine. Oronhyatekha became a distinguished physician, athlete and Mohawk statesman.

After brief stops in Peterborough and Port Hope, the royal party boarded the steamer for Toronto where huge crowds waited to greet him on the waterfront near a towering ceremonial arch. But another arch, erected by the Orangemen near St James Cathedral at King and Church Streets, would bring simmering sectarian tensions to a boil. Atop its 60-foot tower was an illuminated King William of Orange on his white horse. The Duke of Newcastle had given orders that this arch be dismantled but civic officials had reached a compromise with the city's twenty Orange lodges whereby King Billy and the Orange regalia would be removed.

When the prince arrived at the cathedral for Sunday morning service, his carriage carefully avoided the unadorned arch in front of the church. During the service, however, a group of militant Orangemen arrived to drape the arch in banners. When the prince and his party emerged from the church some Orange militants tried to pull the prince's carriage toward the arch. The quick-thinking coachman, however, managed to make a speedy getaway and the police then subdued the crowd with only two arrests being made. The *New York Times* wrote a highly-coloured account of the disturbance and other U.S. and U.K. newspapers followed suit, though any shade cast on the tour was only temporary.

This article was written by Hugh Brewster, originally appeared in Zoomer Magazine and is reproduced here by permission. Due to its length it will be divided between this and future newsletters.

Announcements

Cobourg Museum

The Cobourg Museum's website has been updated to include "Harbour Story" with two pages on the ferries. It includes a first-person story of a young boy's trip across the lake. Visit their website at https://www.communitystories.ca/v2/cobourg-harbour_port-de-cobourg.

The Cobourg Museum's YouTube channel now includes a short video showing one of the ferries docking in Cobourg. To view this and more than a dozen other Cobourg related videos visit https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdTovcVcpHN_Wgc-WMuDRBQ.

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IN WORDS, IMAGES, AND SONG

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Hastings County Historical Society

Invites You to a Public Presentation

Gold, Greed and Power: The Trials of Madoc's A. F. Wood

With Madoc Historian/Author
Gordon Pitts



The year 1866 should have been a triumphant one for A.F. Wood, Madoc Township Reeve, Hastings County Warden and rising star in Confederation-era Tory politics. His general store was raking in cash from the Eldorado gold rush; he was laying down his own bet on a gold venture. But Wood suddenly found himself in a personal scandal that threatened to derail a promising career.



Gordon Pitts is a journalist with 40 years of experience in Canadian daily newspapers, and a prize-winning author of eight books focusing on the Canadian economy and the business landscape of this country. Having retired from the *Globe and Mail* a decade ago, he has written six books chronicling the history of his home town of Madoc and of Hastings County. His latest books are *"Who Killed Charlie St. Charles?"* and *"The O'Haras, Lives and Legacies of a Pioneer Family"*.



Date: Tuesday, February 21, 2023
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Maranatha Church
100 College Street West, Belleville

Enter by main front doors. The presentation is in the main auditorium, which allows for plenty of spacing between seats.

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