

# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District

Historical Society

January 2023 — Issue 336

## The History of the Ontario Car Ferry

Our speaker, Peter Delanty, is a former Cobourg Mayor, Principal, and recipient of the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. 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 passenger 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 will include vintage photographs of the ferries, details of the Captains of these unique ships and the ultimate fate of the ferries. He will explain both why the ferries existed and, perhaps more importantly, why Cobourg was one terminus for their runs.

Join us on Tuesday, January 24, 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. See you on January 24, 2023!

## Our Previous Meeting

# Tales of Life in Prince Edward County and Cobourg

Janet Kellough has written and appeared in numerous stage productions that feature a fusion



of storytelling and music. As well, she is the author of seven books in



the Ontario history based Thaddeus Lewis Mystery Series, the fifth book of which, *Wishful Seeing* was short-listed for the 2017 Crime Writers of Canada Arthur Ellis Best

Novel Award and subsequently developed into a play of the same name by Ontario's 4<sup>th</sup> Line Theatre. She has also written two contemporary novels and the speculative fiction thriller *The Bathwater Conspiracy*, which was nominated for a 2019 Alberta Book Publishing Award.

As a storyteller, Janet released two CDs – *Swear On My Mother's Grave*, a collection of Prince Edward County tales; and *Fowke Tales: Live at Lang*, a journey into the roots of Ontario folk music.

Janet's well attended presentation delighted our members with the details of how she develops characters and events. She emphasized the importance of dialogue and actions that could have plausibly happened. For example, how could a single man be visiting several towns when many never ventured more than a few miles from their homes? One must be careful if a real person is named as a character. An actual historic character who was an admired and caring minister should not be depicted as a brutal murderer!

# CDHS 2023 Program

*Tuesday, February 28, 2023*

## **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 Canadian Society, Randy Barber

*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 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.

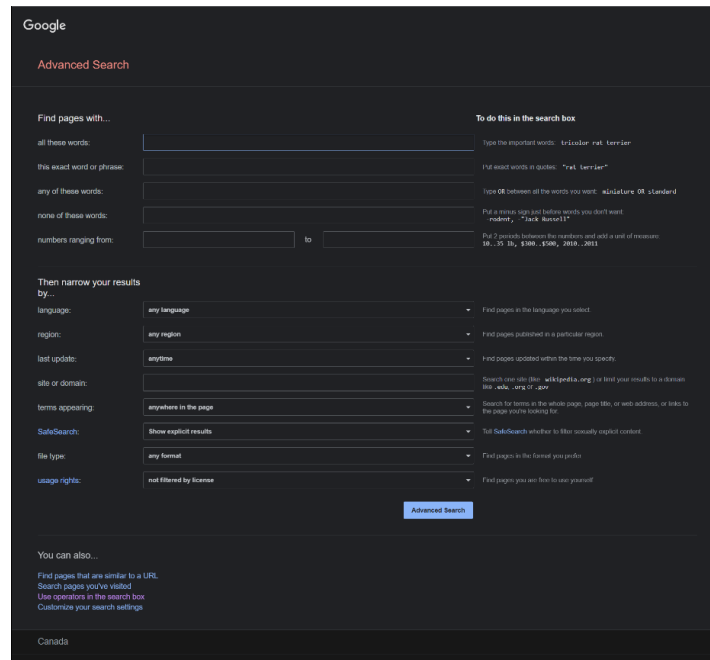
# How Do I Find...

Most everyone will tell you to use Google. Unfortunately, it is not always easy.

Perhaps you want to find information on John Smith who is a distant relative who lived part of his life in Cobourg. Entering a Google query of *John Smith Cobourg* returns over six million “hits”. Is your search hopeless? Not at all but you need to be clever!

Go to [https://www.google.com/advanced\\_search](https://www.google.com/advanced_search) and you’ll see a screen something like:

It looks complicated but you only need to fill in the blanks that apply to your search. You want to find people with a name of “John Smith” and not just all webpages that contain both “John” and “Smith”. So type *John Smith* into the box for “this exact word or phrase”. Type *Cobourg* into the box for “all these words”. This will give a slightly more manageable result of only 56,800 “hits”.



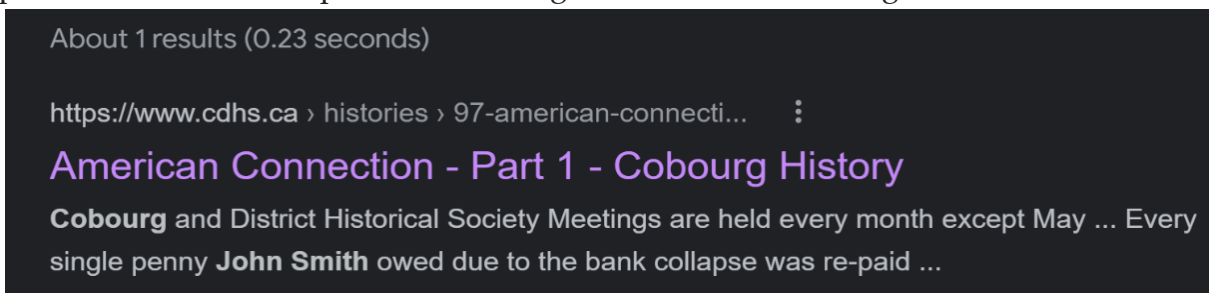
What do you do next? Perhaps you remembered that the Cobourg Historical society has a website. Enter *cdhs.ca* into the “Site or Domain” box on the form.

This gives a single hit on the website of the Cobourg and District Historical Society. You have found something on your distant relative John Smith and how he dealt with his debts!

If you hate filling in forms you can get a similar result by typing in:

`google.com site:cdhs.ca "john smith" cobourg`

The quotation marks are required! You will get a result of something like:



Visit <https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/2466433> for many more helpful tips.

## Snippets from the Past

Reprinted from *Historical Review* 16, 1998-1999

### **Fighting Progress**

It is human nature to stick with the old ways. Persons trying to change the way things were done often met stiff opposition. That sounds like today, doesn't it? The *Cobourg World* of June 17, 1921 reported on the opposition expressed to the paving of King Street. Indifferent to the horse manure, the dust, the mud and the ruts that were the nature of the road, opponents to a cement surface voiced their concerns to the council. They presented three points: 1) Cobourg could not afford the \$110,000 to pave King from William Street to the east limits of town; 2) if the Town waited for a few years, construction costs would surely fall; and 3) there were also complaints that the disruption would drive visitors away.

The Town went ahead. Within one year, people's attitudes had changed. Concerned citizens presented a petition to pave Division Street all the way up to the C.N .R. tracks (*Cobourg World* June 9, 1922). I guess progress did not tum out to be all that bad.

### **An Outing the Salvation Army Would Never Forget**

The Arlington Hotel, built on King Street on what is now the north end of Victoria Park, was the place for high society before World War One. It attracted wealthy and famous patrons from as far away as Texas. On one summer evening our local Salvation Army was singing outside the Arlington. To their surprise and delight, a guest from the Arlington stepped outside and joined in their hymns. That guest was the great Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso!

Caruso is gone. The Arlington is gone. However, if you walk along Walton Street some day, you may note the houses at 309, 311, 313 and 315 have a similar appearance. The bricks on these homes are said to be from the old Arlington Hotel.

### **The Cobourg Connection**

Most of Canada's Arctic was discovered in the search for the missing expedition of Sir John Franklin. Earlier in Franklin's career, he had gone across Canada and then headed up to the Arctic coast. On one trip, he and his party camped at the mouth of Factory Creek, regaling the locals with stories of his travails.

In the 1840s, the men in the Franklin expedition, searching for the Northwest Passage, vanished, as did their ships, the *Erebus* and *Terror*. The massive hunt saw more men and ships in the Arctic than had ever been seen, or would be seen for the next 100 years. In 1930, Cobourg's Major Lachlin Burwash found some remains of the doomed expedition — ropes, canvas, barrel staves, coal and metal. (Burwash was also in the party that flew over the North Magnetic Pole for the first time.)

# Providing for the Less Fortunate

Providing for the less fortunate – whether their condition is due to illness, age, drink, “feeble mindedness”, illegitimate pregnancy or other reason – has been an issue since long before the beginnings of Canada. Decades before Confederation, in 1837, a group of reformers established Toronto’s House of Industry in an unused courthouse on Richmond Street to house the “deserving poor”. The House of Industry, colloquially called the “poor house” was to serve the poor and penniless, many of whom settled in what was then Toronto’s St. John’s Ward District. By 1848 the facility was moved to a permanent home, designed by architect William Thomas, at Elizabeth and Elm Streets.

By the time of Confederation housing of the poor was recognized as a significant problem. The Municipal Act of Ontario (1867) brought changes. This legislation required that the council of each county establish a house of industry and refuge for their poor, to be erected within two years. Due to significant opposition this act was amended by in 1869, leaving this construction as an option of the county council. Through the next fifty years there were numerous changes implemented. To encourage local housing, County governments were given grants of up to \$4000 to construct a building on at least 45 acres of land in which to house the destitute. Finally, in 1903, new legislation enforced that every county had to provide a House of Refuge for the destitute, feeble-minded, paupers, aged and infirm. Regardless of local opposition, by 1914 there were 71 houses of refuge with a total of 7,986 inmates. It is interesting to consider the number of persons in severe poverty in 1914 compared to today. In 1914 Ontario had a population of about 3 million so 8,000 inmates is equivalent to 40,000 today. Considering the same proportions, Cobourg’s share would be 53 or about the number that is often reported as the number of the local homeless.

By the early 1890s Cobourg had built an impressive facility near the corner of James and George Streets to house the elderly, indigent and destitute of the community. Soon there was

3520 Chap. 290. HOUSES OF REFUGE. Sec. 1.

## CHAPTER 290.

An Act respecting Houses of Refuge.

HIS MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:—

### PART I.

**1.** This Act may be cited as *The Houses of Refuge Act*.  
2 Geo. V. c. 82, s. 1.

**2.—(1)** The corporation of every county, which has not already established and erected, shall forthwith establish and erect, and the corporation of every county shall at all times maintain a house of refuge for the reception of persons of the classes described in section 14.

**(2)** In lieu of establishing separate houses of refuge, the councils of two or three contiguous counties may, with the approval in writing of one of the Inspectors of Prisons and Public Charities, enter into an agreement for the establishment, erection and maintenance of, and may establish, erect and maintain a joint house of refuge for such counties.  
2 Geo. V. c. 82, s. 2.

**3.—(1)** The corporation of every city and separated town may establish, erect and maintain a house of refuge for the purposes mentioned in section 2.

**(2)** In lieu of establishing a separate house of refuge, the corporation of a city or separated town may, with the approval in writing of one of the Inspectors of Prisons and Public Charities, enter into an agreement with the corporation of the county in which the city or town is territorially situate for the establishment, erection and maintenance of, and they may establish, erect and maintain a joint house of refuge for such city or separated town and such county.

**(3)** In the cases provided for by subsections 1 and 2, the house of refuge may be located within or without the limits of the city or separated town. 2 Geo. V. c. 82, s. 3.

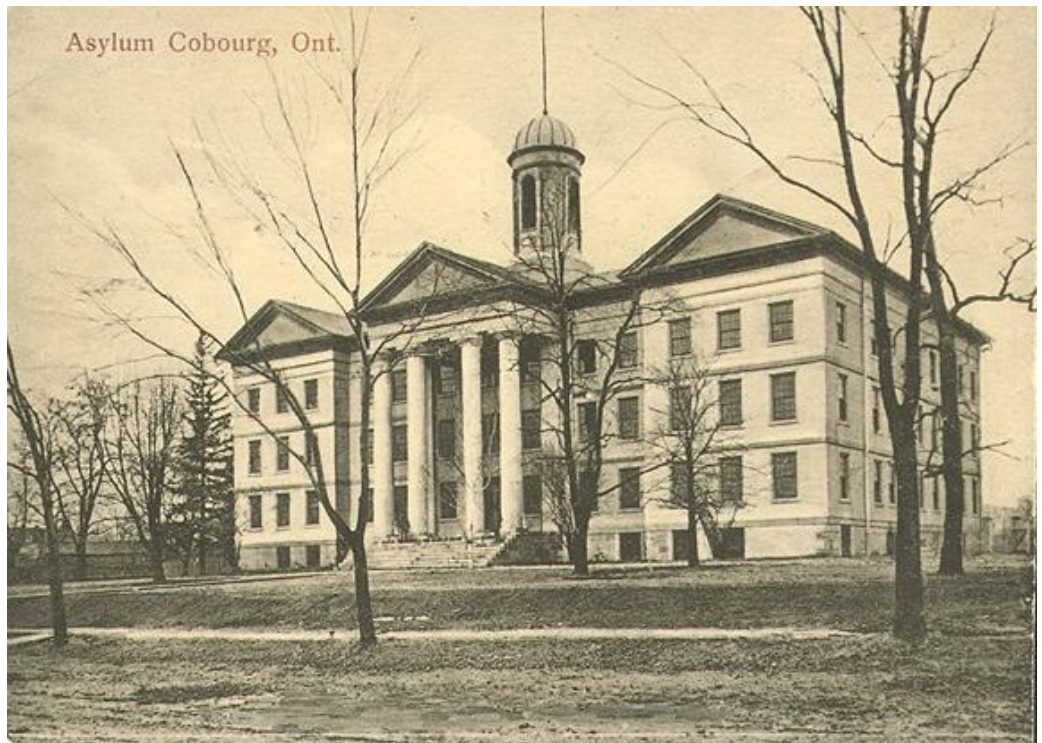
**4.** A house of refuge shall not be erected until the plans of it have been approved by one of such Inspectors. 2 Geo. V. c. 82, s. 4.

**5.—(1)** Where a county has established or shall hereafter establish a separate house of refuge the council shall appoint

a need for a hospital and a portion of the home was converted to medical uses. In time the



need for a larger hospital and Home became evident. The judicial court by this time had moved to the recently opened Victoria Hall, so the Hospital was moved to a site on D'Arcy Street and the Home was moved to its present site at



Burnham and Elgin streets or the old courthouse and jail. Originally this was known as New Amherst. including one in Cobourg.

During World War I, when Victoria College was no longer a school, it became a convalescent hospital for soldiers returning from the trenches of World War I. Almost all the patients were victims of shell-shock. It closed as a military hospital in 1920.

Around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century several acts were passed by Ontario's Parliament to "solve" the problems of the poor:

### **House of Refuge Act 1890**

- County governments were given grants of up to \$4000 to construct a building on at least 45 acres of land in which to house the destitute.
- In 1903, new legislation enforced that every county had to provide a House of Refuge for the destitute, feeble-minded, paupers, aged and infirm.

### **House of Refuge Act 1919**

- Physicians could diagnose and recommend the transfer of anyone "feeble-minded" from the House of Refuge to the institution in Orillia. The examining physician could transfer "fallen" women from houses of refuge such as the Haven in Toronto, run by the Salvation Army, and place them in an institution such as in Orillia and Cobourg.
- Feeble-minded women and their illegitimate babies and children could be placed in Cobourg's asylum which often served as an overflow when Orillia or Fouses of Refuge were full.

The Royal Commission of 1938 was charged with investigating the treatment of inmates. They were shocked to find women put away in Cobourg simply for being pregnant. Cobourg was ostensibly a training school for domestic servants placed on probation. The Commission found that 62% of women locked up were mentally retarded. The suggestion of the Commissioners, to allow their release, was to have the women sterilized in order to return them to the community.

## **Member Matters**

### ***New Members***

Please join me in welcoming our newest CDHS members:

- Fred Auchterlonie
- Louise Fernane
- Marianne Rowlands

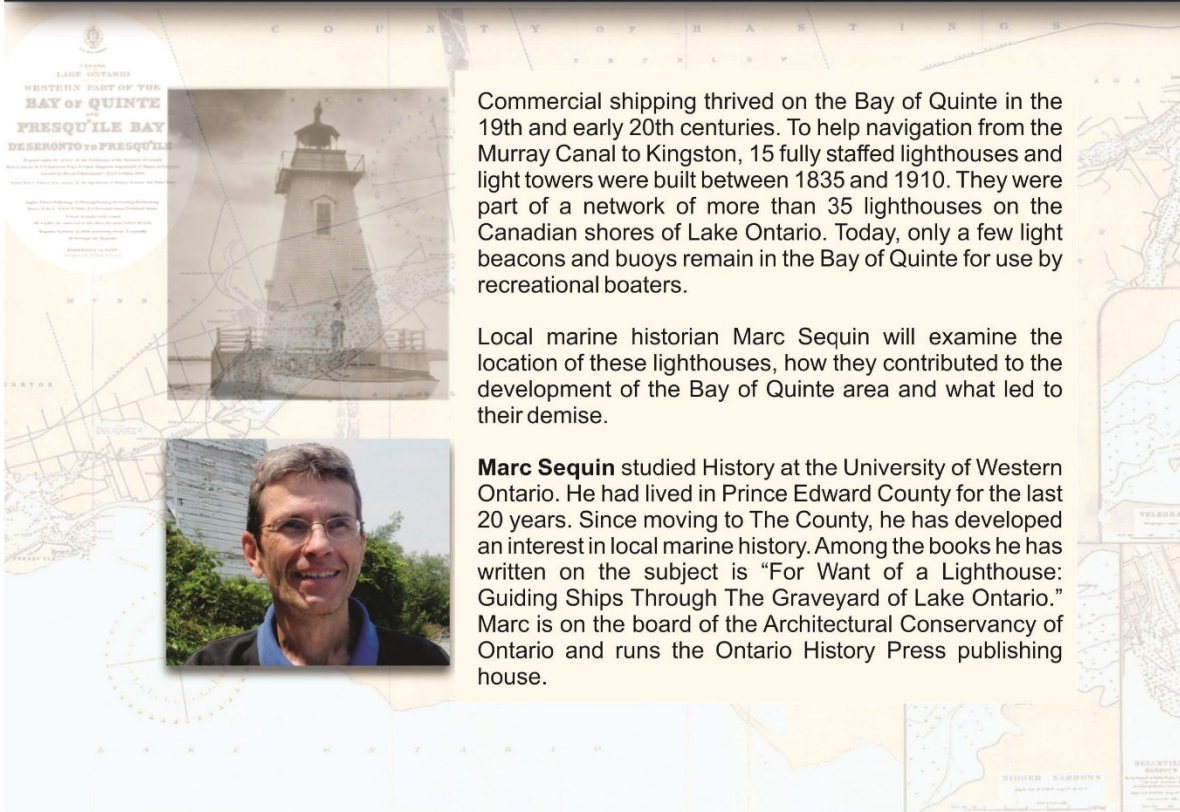
# Announcements

## Hastings County Historical Society

Invites You to a Public Presentation

### *Where Have All the Lighthouses Gone?*

With Local Marine Historian/Author  
Marc Sequin



Commercial shipping thrived on the Bay of Quinte in the 19th and early 20th centuries. To help navigation from the Murray Canal to Kingston, 15 fully staffed lighthouses and light towers were built between 1835 and 1910. They were part of a network of more than 35 lighthouses on the Canadian shores of Lake Ontario. Today, only a few light beacons and buoys remain in the Bay of Quinte for use by recreational boaters.

Local marine historian Marc Sequin will examine the location of these lighthouses, how they contributed to the development of the Bay of Quinte area and what led to their demise.

**Marc Sequin** studied History at the University of Western Ontario. He had lived in Prince Edward County for the last 20 years. Since moving to The County, he has developed an interest in local marine history. Among the books he has written on the subject is "For Want of a Lighthouse: Guiding Ships Through The Graveyard of Lake Ontario." Marc is on the board of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario and runs the Ontario History Press publishing house.



**Date:** Tuesday, January 17, 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.

## CDHS Executive for 2021 – 2022

President	Carla Jones	<a href="mailto:cgrucelajones@gmail.com">cgrucelajones@gmail.com</a> (289) 252-1684
Past President	Leona Woods	<a href="mailto:leonawoods@sympatico.ca">leonawoods@sympatico.ca</a> (905) 372-7624
Vice-President	Randy Barber	<a href="mailto:randy.barber1947@gmail.com">randy.barber1947@gmail.com</a> (905) 377-9421
Secretary	Open	
Treasurer	George Kamphorst	<a href="mailto:gfkamphorst@gmail.com">gfkamphorst@gmail.com</a> (905) 375-8563
Membership	Brian Murphy	<a href="mailto:brianincobourg@gmail.com">brianincobourg@gmail.com</a> (289) 634 2727
Programme Co-Chairs	Carla Jones Randy Barber	<a href="mailto:cgrucelajones@gmail.com">cgrucelajones@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:randy.barber1947@gmail.com">randy.barber1947@gmail.com</a>
Programme Committee Members	Gerry Brown Diane Chin George Kamphorst Leona Woods	<a href="mailto:blackcat111343@gmail.com">blackcat111343@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:dianemchin@gmail.com">dianemchin@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:gfkamphorst@gmail.com">gfkamphorst@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:leonawoods@sympatico.ca">leonawoods@sympatico.ca</a>
Members-at-Large	Gerry Brown  Hannah LeBlanc  Diane Chin	<a href="mailto:blackcat111343@gmail.com">blackcat111343@gmail.com</a> (905) 372-3984 <a href="mailto:h18leblanc@gmail.com">h18leblanc@gmail.com</a> (905) 376-4937 <a href="mailto:dianemchin@gmail.com">dianemchin@gmail.com</a> (289) 435-2015
Newsletter Editor	Ken Strauss	<a href="mailto:ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca">ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca</a> (905) 377-9854