

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District
Historical Society

March 2020 — Issue 311

Based on the advice from the Town of Cobourg and the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, the March 24 meeting of the Cobourg and District Historical Society is cancelled.



The status of future events is undecided. We will email updates as the situation changes. You can visit <https://www.cobourg.ca/covid-19> for information updates from the Town of Cobourg.

Our Previous Meeting

Delicious Mirth: Life of James McCarroll

Our speaker for Tuesday, February 25, was Michael Peterman, Professor Emeritus at Trent University. He taught at Trent for 37 years. He currently writes a fortnightly column called “Culture Matters” for the *Peterborough Examiner* and continues to write books on early Canadian authors and their achievements. His subjects have included Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill, Isabella Valancy Crawford, Robertson Davies, Timothy Findley, Margaret Laurence, and John Craig. His biography of James McCarroll, entitled *Delicious Mirth*, was published in 2018 to excellent reviews. Copies are available from Let’s Talk Books (25 King Street E.) and Amazon (<https://www.amazon.ca/Delicious-Mirth-Times-James-McCarroll/dp/077355467X>).

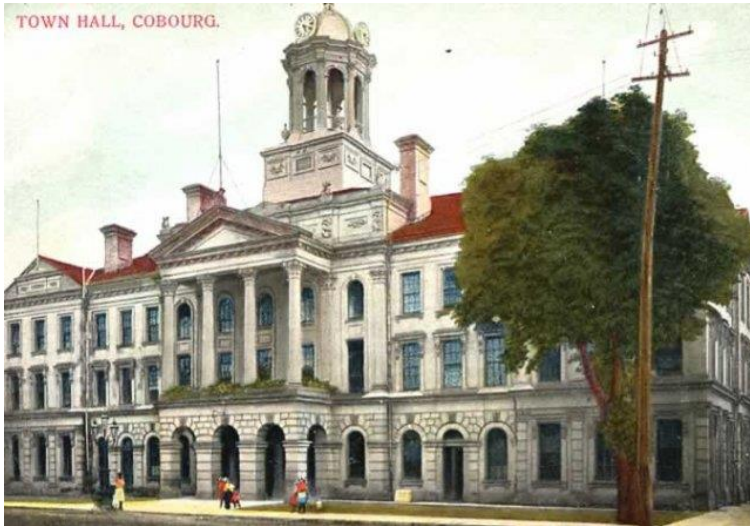


James McCarroll came to Canada in 1831 as an Irish teenager from county Leitrim and settled in the Peterborough area. During McCarroll’s time in Cobourg he taught music, edited a newspaper and worked for the Customs Department. He was a friend and confidant of local businessmen including William Weller and Henry Ruttan.

Future Cobourg Historical Society Programs

Date	Speaker	Topic
March 24, 2020	Leigh Barnum	The Barnum Family History
April 28, 2020	Dave Patterson	The Extraordinary Number of Indian Gifts to the World
May 26, 2020	Randy Barber	Wine and Cheese social at the Loft Discussion of Churchill followed by screening of <i>The Darkest Hour</i>

Film about Victoria Hall



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. Further details of his efforts to fund a film about Victoria Hall is in the April 2018 issue of *Historically Speaking* which is available

at <https://cdhs.ca/images/newsletters/NewsletterApr18.pdf>

Taylor's very professional 14½ minute video can now be enjoyed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-OF2lpcXs8>

Member Matters

Historical Reviews

The CDHS would like to have copies of all issues of our annual publication *The Historical Review* available on our website. A limited selection of back issues can already be read at <https://cdhs.ca/resources/historical-reviews>. Unfortunately a number of years are missing from our collection and there are no electronic versions extant. If you have copies that you no longer need or even that you would be willing to loan for scanning, your help would be greatly appreciated. This project is being coordinated by Judith Goulin. If you can help, please contact Judith at jgoulin@hotmail.com

New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest member: Robert Washburn.

A Heritage Matter

Judith Goulin

Remember the story of Chicken Little who warned his fellow creatures: “The sky is falling”? The sky didn’t fall, but the meaning of the story is clear. Chicken Little was warning all who would listen and perhaps those who would not, that he truly believed that something frightening was about to happen.

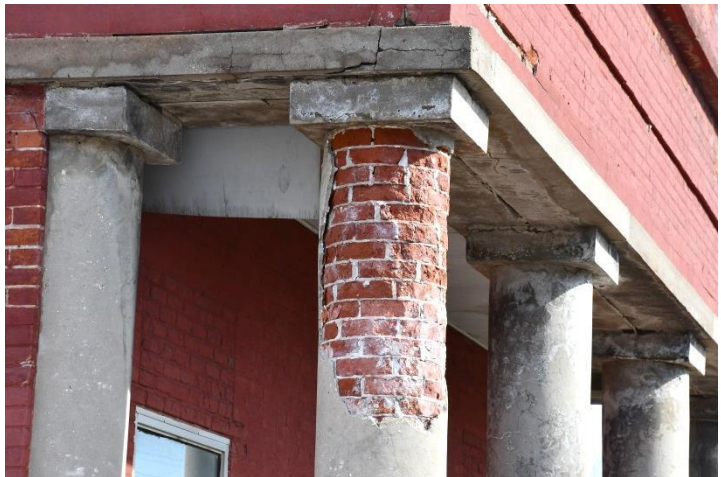
The expression “The sky is falling” has become a metaphor for imminent disaster. The diminutive red brick Classical Revival building, with its sagging roof and disintegrating Doric columns, located immediately north of the railroad tracks on Ontario Street, could be Cobourg’s imminent disaster.

This building, sometimes known as the Certo building, was built in 1909 as the administration office for a new company called Provincial Steel. The building accorded service for 99 years through many iterations: steel, munitions, then food, with Certo, General Foods and finally Kraft.

When Kraft closed in 2008, the Classic Revival building and many other buildings in the industrial complex sat empty. Anyone who regularly travels Ontario Street has witnessed the roof of the little building sagging more and more and its cement Doric columns deteriorating over the past three years.

Why should we care what happens to this heritage building?

The Provincial Steel complex was built by the firm of Martin Jex whose name is still prominent in Cobourg’s building history, not only for his elegant houses but also for other fine buildings such as Thomas Gillbard School, now Mansions on George. Diane Chin, our CDHS Programme Director and President of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario [ACO Cobourg] comments that: “As part of a 1909 industrial complex, it is the last remaining vestige of the town’s early manufacturing days”. Thus, the little building is important both architecturally and historically.



When FV Pharma Inc. purchased the industrial complex in 2017, the building had already been designated as a response to the previous owner's request for a demolition permit. After an ACO presentation by President Diane Chin and Vice-President Jackie Tinson, the Town had also decided to designate the three heritage buildings in the industrial complex, under the Ontario Heritage Act. The new owner, Mr. Thomas Fairfull of FV Pharma, affirmed that he intended to restore the Classical Revival building. Good news indeed!

Even better news is that restoration work has begun on the little Certo building. There was concern, as expressed in Pilcher Engineering's report that: "Having been abandoned with no maintenance for more than a decade, the roof may collapse". Most recently, one of the



workers involved in the removal of the old roof expressed his concern that, after the roof was gone, a wall might buckle. At the time of this writing, with the roof completely gone, the interior of the building is open to the elements, but the walls

are intact. The roof tarping will be installed shortly by another contractor. A professional structural engineer along with the Town's Chief Building Official are on-site daily to monitor the work.

The sky has not fallen. The roof has not fallen. We can look forward to seeing this 1909 Classical Revival building given a new lease on life and a useful purpose.

The answer to why should we care is that our heritage matters.

Victoria Hall Display Case

CDHS has received permission to display several selections of artifacts in the display case at the northwest corner of the Victoria Hall lobby. The first display contained a number of items from Randy Barber's extensive collection of trench art.



Trench Art

Trench Art is described as items made by POWs and wounded soldiers from the detritus of war, behind the front lines. This activity goes back centuries and includes items made from bone, fabric but mainly brass items such as fired shells decorated with all sorts of pictures and some text. After the war ended, a cottage industry sprang up to supply souvenirs for visitors visiting battlefields and war-graves. That eventually morphed into a commercial enterprise where more complex methods were used, melting down the millions of spent shells and equipment parts to produce smaller items, usually with the name of the battle or city where it took place. My collection of over 300 pieces spans time from the Napoleonic wars to the most recent Gulf War, with the preponderance from WWI/II. This war refuse is widely sought and collected.

Randy Barber

The display case currently features a variety of handiwork artifacts such as tableclothes, placemats, doilies, hankerychiefs, crocheted afghans, knitted garments, and hooked rugs. Women have also created decorative pieces such as samplers, wall art, and playful items such as dolls. These items have been kindly supplied by Leona Woods, Randy Barber and others. Thanks also to Ann Murphy for the arrangement and presentation of the display.



We plan to have a display of antique tools next month. Visit Victoria Hall's lobby to examine some fascinating artifacts!

Announcements

Family History Research Information Day

On Saturday, April 18, Lakeshore Genealogical Society members will be in the Rotary Room of the Cobourg Library to answer questions and help with your research. Visit between 10:30am and 1:30pm. The support will be valuable whether you are just starting out, or need a little help to get over that “brick wall”. At 2:00pm, genealogy expert Leanne Cooper will present *The Wonders of WikiTree: Adventures in Collaborative Genealogy*. There is no charge but registration for the afternoon session is required. Please email: lgs16215@gmail.com to register.

This event may be affected by COVID-19, please confirm prior to attending.

Heritage Cramahe Presents

Heritage Cramahe is providing an eBook called *How Firm a Foundation* by Eileen Argyris. This is a history of the Township of Cramahe and the Village of Colborne. Download it for free from <https://heritagecramahe.ca/how-firm-a-foundation-by-eileen-argyris/>.

Lakeshore Genealogical Society

The Lakeshore Genealogical Society has scheduled several meetings of particular interest. LGS meetings are on the second Thursday of the month from 6:30pm to 9:00pm in the HTM Building, 1185 Elgin St. West, Cobourg. On April 6 Linda Corupe will present *Making Her Presence Known*. This talk will guide you through the records in archives & libraries that researchers can use to gain knowledge of female ancestors. Visitors welcome.

This event may be affected by COVID-19, please confirm prior to attending.

Sifton Cook Heritage Centre

The Sifton Cook Heritage Centre will reopen on May 16, 2020. During May, June, September and October the Centre is open: Saturdays and holidays from 10am – 5pm. For July and August the Centre is open Wednesday to Saturday and on holidays from 10am – 5pm. From May to October they are open on Sundays from 1pm – 5pm. Visit their website at <https://www.cobourgmuseum.ca/> or phone (905)-373-7222 for further information.

Cholera in Cobourg

Ken Strauss

Past epidemics provide a little perspective for our current situation. In the first half of the 19th century there were two Cholera epidemics that seriously affected Canada West. As a primary port of entry for immigrants, Cobourg was worse impacted than many other towns and villages. The VirtualMuseum (<https://tinyurl.com/trryskq>), created by Cobourg's Museum Foundation, describes the situation:

That year [1847] 5,393 immigrants landed at Cobourg in poor health. The Board of Police had to provide temporary shelter for them in barn-like "immigrant sheds". Approximately half of them moved northward to Peterborough, but many remained in and around Cobourg.

Scugog Carrying Place: A Frontier Pathway by Grant Karcich devotes many pages to the scourge of cholera in our area:

A thrice-weekly boat service from Rochester, New York, to Cobourg, Port Hope and Oshawa Harbour was in place. ... 1849 brought a flood of new settlers and another cholera epidemic to the country. Both the 1832 and 1849 epidemics had come on the heels of two peaks in immigration. In both years cases were first reported in the eastern part of British North America before spreading to Upper Canada, starting in the months of June, with the number of deaths from cholera progressively increasing until August when they trailed off and ended in the last few weeks of September or the beginning of October...

In 1849 Cobourg's newspaper summarized the situation:

Several steamers plying between Toronto and Kingston have lately deposited numbers of sick and helpless emigrants on our wharf, although their passages were paid to Toronto, Hamilton and other places. It is preposterous that a small town like this should be deluged with

these poor people while the wealthy cities turn them off and is obliged to provide for them from the very small sum annually collected for local improvements.

Cobourg Star, July 25, 1849

Cobourg's 1832 cholera epidemic had less impact on the town than in 1849. After months of misery, Cobourg's newspaper happily announced the end of the epidemic:

The Board of Health have the satisfaction to announce to the public that no cases of Cholera occurred in this village or neighbourhood since the 1st. The whole number of cases from the first appearance of the disease have been six and two deaths; the remaining four who had been attacked by the disease in a milder form have recovered. As the disease

still exists in several towns below and above this place, and reasonable apprehension may still be entertained of its re-appearance amongst us, the Board would impress upon the inhabitants the duty of adhering to the cautions already enjoined, especially in respect of clothing, diet, temperance, and cleanliness.

A.N. BETHUNE, Chairman

Cobourg Star, July 18, 1832

Note: In 1832 Cobourg's population was about 1,300 so the 6 cases of cholera that were reported would be equivalent to perhaps 100 cases in Cobourg today.

Although cholera was often fatal, there were reports of very successful outcomes. The following description by a Cobourg physician was published in the *British America Journal of Medical and Physical Science* for 1849-1850:

ART. XXXII.—THE CHOLERA IN COBOURG, C.W.

By GEO. GOLDSTONE, M.D., Cobourg, C. W.

For your information I have procured from the Secretary of the Board of Health, a list of the cholera cases reported by the medical gentlemen of this town. By this list I find 21 cases reported, of which 14 died and 7 recovered. The first case was on the 10th August, but to my own knowledge cases occurred as early as the middle of July; and I expect before that period. The last case was on the 8th September. Nearly all were among the residents, and predisposed to the disease, wanting the comforts and even the necessaries of life. As far as I can learn, all had neglected the premonitory symptoms.

In addition to the cases reported to the board, there prevailed in the town throughout the summer, a very unusual number of bad cases of common cholera, and scarcely any one passed the summer without more or less derangement of the stomach, &c. There has also been a good deal of dysentery and diarrhoea, both of which, as well as common cholera, were very manageable when attended to at an early period.

There has been nothing unusual in our treatment of cholera—large and small doses of calomel, tr. ferri-mur, sulphur, &c. Stimulants internally and externally have all been tried without any benefit. In fact, in all those cases which are in a complete state of collapse, it appears to me that no treatment has any effect.

In all the severe cases of common cholera in my own practise, about 40 in number, and which I believe many physicians would have reported as Asiatic cholera, my plan was to give ten grains of calomel with two of opium in form of pill, to keep my patient quiet in bed; and apply hot flannels to the extremities and to the abdomen. I invariably found my patient much relieved within half-an-hour, and within an hour completely so of all distressing symptoms, such as vomiting, purging, pain in the abdomen, cramps in the hands and feet, &c.

Five hours after the pills, one ounce of castor oil was given, and it was generally requisite to repeat the oil three hours afterwards, when an enormous quantity of the most offensive fœces was discharged. None of those cases required any particular treatment afterwards; they all recovered in a few days' time.

The advantage of giving the calomel and opium in the form of pill, is that the patient is less likely to reject it, and if he does, the pill can be seen and the dose repeated.

I send you the foregoing in compliance with your wish as expressed in the journal.

Cobourg, Oct. 16, 1849.

Wash your hands; keep your social distance; good luck to all!

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