

# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District  
Historical Society

March 2021 — Issue 321

## Mechanics Institute to Public Library

On March 23 Heather Viscount will explain how a Mechanics Institute, formed in the 1830s to provide educational opportunities for workmen and tradesmen through books and lectures, became the Cobourg Public Library. Heather is currently the Manager of Support Services for the Cobourg Public Library. Part of her duties includes the upkeep and maintenance of the special collections of the Library, including local history and genealogical materials.



Heather was born and raised in Eddystone. After graduating from Lakehead University as a Library Technician, she began working part-time at her local Library in Centreton. In the years following she moved up from Assistant, then to Branch Manager, and then to CEO of the Alnwick/Haldimand Public Library. Heather was hired to work part-time at the Cobourg Library in October 1993 in the Reference Department. This is where her interest in Local History and Genealogy began. Her ancestors came to Haldimand Township in the early 1800s, mostly settling in the areas of Centreton, Eddystone and Vernonville. She has spent many lunch hours (and after hours) researching her family.

She continued working in both locations until she was hired full-time in Cobourg in 2004. Her interest in Local History and Genealogy continues today. The availability of online

resources, and the Library's subscription to Ancestry, have opened more doors, lead to more questions, and keep the search alive.

All CDHS members are invited to join us electronically on Tuesday, March 23 at 07:30 PM. Please register in advance by visiting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_oh8CcY3iTwGZB13nGAH6KQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oh8CcY3iTwGZB13nGAH6KQ)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. If you have any questions concerning registration, please contact Brian Murphy, Membership Chair at [brianincobourg@gmail.com](mailto:brianincobourg@gmail.com)

We look forward to you joining our upcoming CDHS webinar!

## **Our Previous Meeting**

### **Fearless and Determined: Two Years Teaching in a One-Room School**

On February 23 Linda Hutsell-Manning talked about the history of the school building, about various activities and situations at the school and give a reading from her latest book.

Linda's writing career spans forty years and includes an impressive variety of genres including poetry, plays, TV, short fiction and novels. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1940, she moved to Ontario at age nine. After graduating from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and Toronto Teachers' College she taught for two years in a one-room school between Cobourg and Port Hope, Ontario. Following this, she attended the University of Guelph as a mature student, graduating with a B.A. Encouraged by two of her university professors, she began writing full time in 1981.



She has worked as a free-lance journalist, taught creative writing at several community colleges and hosted an author reading series. In the first twenty years, she published primarily juvenile fiction including three picture books, three juvenile plays, two time-travel novels and scripts for TVO's Polka Dot Door. During this time, she gave countless school/library workshops across Canada as well as in Germany and Luxembourg.

She has lived in many Canadian communities from Kamloops, BC to Cobourg, Ontario, where she now makes her home, writing in the attic office of a century farmhouse. More information about Linda's publications can be found at <http://www.lindahutsellmanning.ca/>

## **Future Cobourg Historical Society Programs**

The CDHS Programme Committee has planned a great selection of speakers for our 2020-2021 season. Although the ongoing pandemic has forced us to cancel our physical meetings we will have virtual meetings each month. You will be able to enjoy a glass of wine while listening from home. Unfortunately, we have no way to deliver Leona's cookies!

CDHS members will receive a webinar registration email approximately two weeks prior to a meeting. Those who register will be sent a reminder email shortly before each meeting.

**April: *The Wreck of the HMS Speedy: The Making of a History Book*** presented by Dan Buchanan:

The History Guy, Dan Buchanan, will speak on the challenges of writing a history while also telling the fascinating story of the loss of the Speedy in Lake Ontario off the coast of Brighton in 1804.

### ***After Meeting Social***

When the virtual meeting finishes don't change the channel; stay around for some fun! After each meeting we will open the Zoom webinar to everyone for a "social". You will be able to see all participants who have their camera enabled. If you have a microphone you can ask the speaker questions one-on-one, chat with the crowd and generally do what we usually do at a physical meeting.

# Of Iron and Ozone

**Ken Strauss**

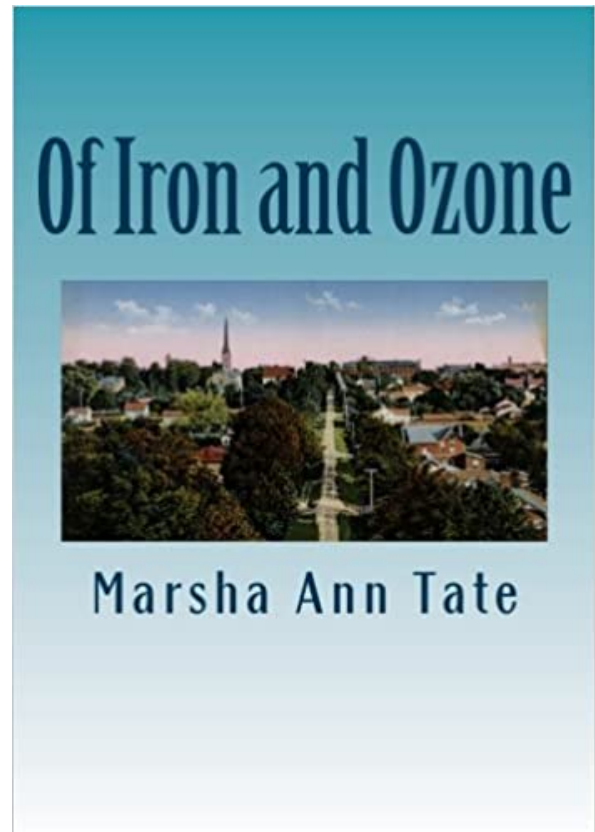
Every nice Summer day numerous visitors, mostly from the Toronto area, come to Cobourg to enjoy our free beach. Mostly day-trippers they often arrive in the morning, swim, play volleyball, consume a picnic lunch, swim/sun some more and then return home. We often hear that Cobourg has always been a tourist town but have things changed?

Marsha Tate provides a very well documented story of the rise and fall of Cobourg being a favoured destination of wealthy visitors. In the 1870s the popular press and even some physicians claimed that ozone had significant therapeutic value. Cobourg promoters widely touted the “plethora of pleasures and healthful surroundings which await Summer

vacationers” but also often mentioned ozone. For example, a Cedarmere Hotel brochure from the period proclaimed that “there is an abnormal amount of ozone in the air second only to the Alps in Switzerland.”

The many wealthy guests of the Arlington Hotel included the Governor of New Jersey, General Charles Lane Fitzhugh’s family, General George McClellan and other luminaries. Numerous veterans of both the Union and Confederate Armies visited Cobourg after hearing glowing reports from their former comrades. The wives of both Ulysses S. Grant and President Jefferson Davis came to Cobourg! By 1876 it was claimed that the Arlington Hotel alone contributed over \$10,000 annually to Cobourg’s economy. In a few years there were often 700 well heeled tourists in town in addition to Cobourg’s usual population of about 5,000.

Unlike today’s day-trippers, Cobourg’s tourists contributed greatly to the town’s prosperity. They stayed for months rather than only for a few hours. Some built or extensively renovated grand homes – Sidbrook, Ravensworth, East House, Strathmore, Cottesmore Hall and many others. They shopped downtown and local stores offering quality women’s clothing, superior



grocery items and beverages did extremely well. A sampling of contemporary advertisements from local merchants shows that King Street had a far greater variety of quality merchandise to tempt their customers than is available today.

**GUILLET BROS**

**Such an Ideal  
Summer Resort  
as COBOURG**

**Deserves and Needs an IDEAL GRO**

Such a Grocery we aim to keep. We sell the best, guarantee delivery promptly, and spare no pains to serve our customers to complete satisfaction.

Our **Zimbal Tea** is famous, and costs only 1/2. Our **Household Blend Coffee** has many epicures, and costs only 30c. a pound.

**MOST SUMMER VISITOR  
BUY FROM US.**

**SAM CLARKE'S  
BUSY  
STORES**

29 KING ST. W.

**LEADING TAILOR**

WHILE in Cobourg, should you require anything in the Clothing line, call at our stores and inspect our stock of fine imported Woollens, comprising:

**Home and Scotch Tweeds,  
Striped Flannels, Golf Suitings,  
Homespuns, Fancy Vestings**

and choicest English, Scotch and Irish products.

For reference would refer you to numerous past American customers.

SAM CLARKE.

**GENERAL DRY GOODS**

**Dress Goods, Silks and Satins,  
Fine Linens, Laces, Embroideries,  
Etc., Etc.  
Gents' Furnishings,  
Fine Boots and Shoes**

LADIES' SUITINGS—Homespuns, Cheviots, Friezes, etc., etc.

HIGH-CLASS FURS—Representing that well-known Fur House, HOLT, RENFREW & Co., Toronto.

SAM CLARKE.

**GUILLET BROS**

ESTABLISHED 1832

**FIELD &**

OPPOSITE VICTORIA HALL  
Importers and Dealers in

**STAPLE AND FANCY DRY GOODS**

Dress Goods, Silks and Satins, Priestley's Celebrated Black Goods and Serges, Irish Linens and Scotch Shawls, Rugs, etc., Carpets, Oil Cloths and House Furnishings.

**FIELD & BRO.**  
Directly opposite Victoria Hall

DEALER IN . . . TELEPHONE 144.

Choice Groceries,  
Fruit, Confectionery.

Fish and Oysters in Season. Tobaccos and Cigars.

Go to **J. D. McINTOSH, KING ST.**

**The Dunham**

Cobourg's leading COMMERCIAL and all-year-round Tourist Hotel. All modern appointments. Largest Sample Rooms. Cuisine and Service first class. RATE, \$1.50 per day.

HARRY TAYLOR, Prop.  
Late of Toronto Hotels.

**The Alexandra**

Confectionery  
and Ice Cream.

Pure Cream and Cake Delivered for Parties.

A. F. PERKS, Prop., - KING STREET.

Tourists were not just of economic benefit to Cobourg; they contributed to local culture by staging balls, dinner dances, costume parties, recitals and even dramatic productions.

Cobourg was also a better place to live due to the town's desire to attract wealthy tourists who had high standards:

The citizens have been fully alive to the importance of this factor [providing a modern, well-maintained infrastructure] in this town's prosperity, and are supplementing what nature has kindly bestowed upon them by putting in a first-class system of waterworks and sewerage and keeping their streets in excellent condition.

From "Cobourg as a Summer Resort," *Cobourg World*, April 28, 1899

Some residents objected to well-intentioned municipal improvement projects. For example, in 1903 several asked the Court of Appeal to block the planned construction of a “granolith walk” in front of their properties. One of the objectors maintained that the planned “cement walk would be of no benefit” and that “a board or cinder walk would be more appropriate.” The important issues of Cobourg’s political disputes have changed very little since 1903!

#### WHY COBOURG IS THE FAVORITE RESORT



It is clean and healthy.

The temperature seldom rises above eighty degrees.

There are no swamps in the neighborhood to breed disease.

Its hotels are first class.

Its low assessment and reasonable rate of taxation make it an economical place to live.

By its merchants being fully alive to requirements of customers, it is possible to buy everything at prices and of prices equal to any city.

When preparing for next season’s outing, place Cobourg on your list and go and testify with the thousands of others that the lives of Cobourg’s citizens have fallen in pleasant places.

From a brochure published by the Town of Cobourg in 1900

Things continued to improve until after the turn of the century and many forecast continued prosperity driven by tourism. So why did the good times end? The Great War obviously distracted many from vacations and revelry. The problems of caring for the numerous recovering war-wounded and replacing those who had perished were significant. The brief but severe 1920—1921 recession ruined some who had speculated unwisely. Most of the older, original, elites passed. There was emerging competition from Southampton (New York) and even Port Hope worked to attract visitors away from Cobourg.

The United States’ passage of their Eighteenth Amendment (Prohibition) in 1920 was a temporary godsend. Although Ontario had a dry act, courts ruled that it did not prohibit the shipment of liquor out of the province. The Ontario Temperance Act prohibited the sale of alcohol in Ontario, but it allowed wineries to remain open and a number of distilleries continued to produce beverages for the export market. Unfortunately, ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment in 1933 brought the alcohol fueled prosperity to an end.

You can read Ms. Tate’s book to learn much more about the Gilded Age of Tourism in Cobourg. *Of Iron and Ozone: The History and Residents of the American Summer Colony in Cobourg, Ontario* is available in paperback from Amazon (<https://www.amazon.ca/Iron-Ozone-History-Residents-American/dp/1493579940/>) and, possibly, some area bookshops.

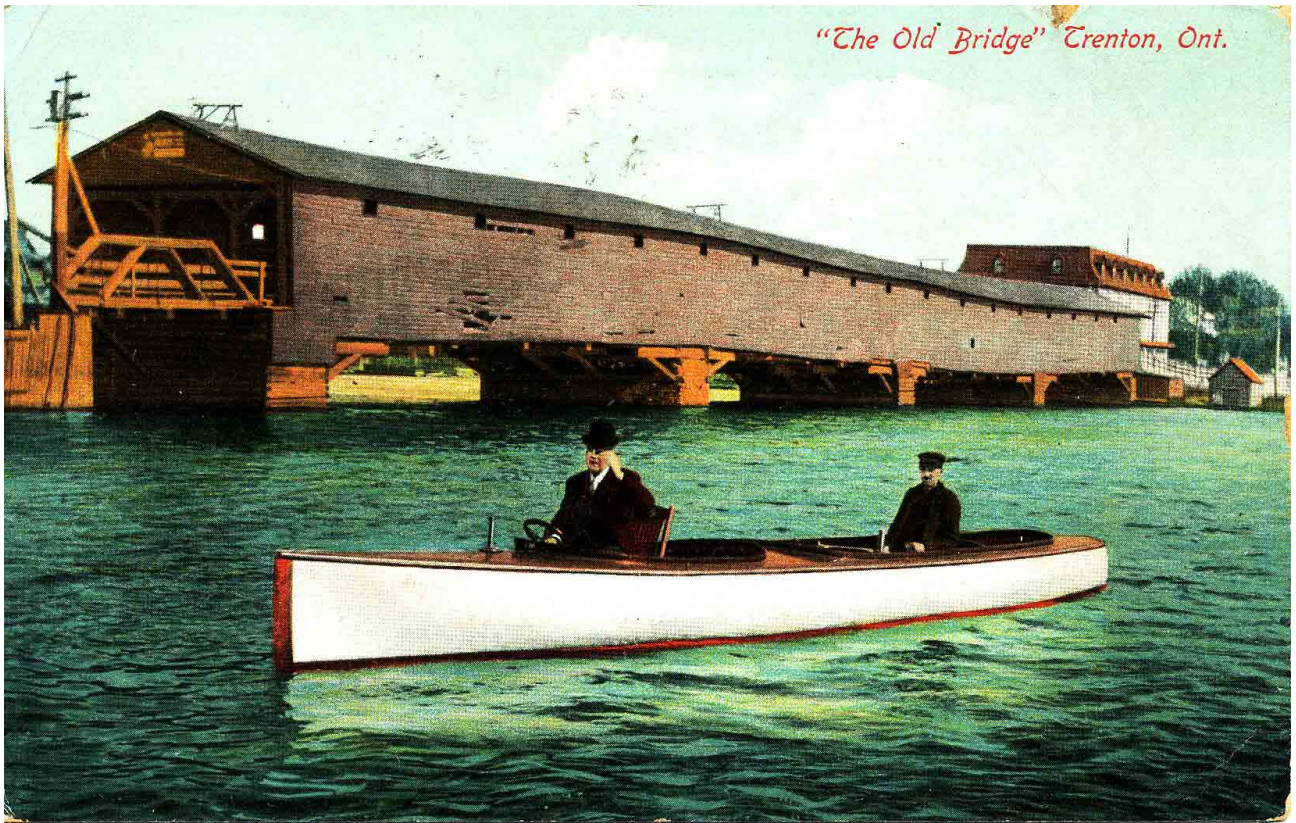
# Announcements

## Hastings County Historical Society

The Hastings County Historical Society invites everyone to browse their *Outlook* newsletter at [https://hastingshistory.ca/photos/custom/Outlook\\_March\\_2021.pdf](https://hastingshistory.ca/photos/custom/Outlook_March_2021.pdf)

## Local Historic Pictures Galore

Visit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/136519498@N04/albums/> to enjoy hundreds of historic photographs from Cobourg and the surrounding area.



Old Covered Bridge, Trenton, circa 1910

# Review Extra.

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## Fenians are coming

(BY TELEGRAPH.)

PORT COLBORNE,  
JUNE 1, 1866.—3.30 p. m.

Refugees from Fort Erie report the burning of a Bridge 4 miles back of Fort Erie by the Fenians.

They have possession of Taylor's Heights, one mile and a half below Fort Erie, near a place called Waterloo, and the highest land in the vicinity. They have commenced throwing up earthworks there, and have struck towards Brantford road. This you can rely on.

There were reports this morning about the capturing of Port Sarnia and Welland Canal.

FROM COBOURG.

The following telegram was received by Capt. Poole from Brigade-Major Patterson at Cobourg this afternoon:—

"All the Companies in my District are to assemble at Cobourg at once. Tell Captains Kennedy and Rogers, and send word to Capt. Leigh, Lakefield.

ALEX. PATTERSON,  
Brigade-Major."

Cobourg, June 1, 1866.

# Good day everyone!

**Keith Oliver**

Like many of you, I am doing more reading these days. For me that includes history. I have found a number of interesting quotations and remembered many others. I would like to share them but with no real newspapers left, no Lettres-to-the-Editor and no other means by which citizens can talk to each other, I have resorted to handing out copies. I believe that they are relevant to the times we are living in. As for yourself ... that is up to you to decide. Enjoy and feel free to pass them along to others!

## **About moments of national crisis and uncertainty**

*"The World has drifted from its old anchorage, and no man can with certainty prophesy what the outcome will be."*

**Robert Borden, 1918**

## **About human behaviour**

*"Since men love freedom, and the freedom of individuals in society requires some regulation of conduct, the first condition of freedom is its limitation; make it absolute and it dies in chaos."*

**Will and Ariel Durant, 1968, The Lessons of History**

## **About history**

*"The palace is not safe when the cottage is unhappy."*

**Benjamin Disraeli, 1848, Sybil**

*"While the Future is unknowable, the Past should give us hope."*

**Winston Churchill,**

*History of the English Speaking People, volume 4, page 387*

## **About Canada and Our History**

*"Every individual in Canada is now a member of a minority."*

**Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 1972**

*"The spirit of the past ages never dies – It lives and walks abroad and cries aloud."*

**Susanna Moodie, 1847, Victoria Magazine**

*"When the present does not recognize the wrongs of the past, the future will take its revenge."*

**Michaëlle Jean, 2009**

## CDHS Executive for 2020 – 2021

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 Chairperson	Diane Chin	<a href="mailto:dianemchin@gmail.com">dianemchin@gmail.com</a> (289) 435-2015
Programme Committee Members	Judith Goulin Gerry Brown Brian Murphy Randy Barber	<a href="mailto:jgoulin@hotmail.com">jgoulin@hotmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:blackcat111343@gmail.com">blackcat111343@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:brianincobourg@gmail.com">brianincobourg@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:randy.barber1947@gmail.com">randy.barber1947@gmail.com</a>
Members-at-Large	Gerry Brown  Hannah LeBlanc	<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
Newsletter Editor	Ken Strauss	<a href="mailto:ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca">ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca</a> (905) 377-9854