

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District
Historical Society

November 2020 — Issue 318

The Sinking of the Skeena

On Tuesday, November 24, Christopher Barker will present the story of the sinking of the HMCS Skeena, a World War II destroyer that sank ships, saved lives and lost 15 of its own when it ran aground near Reykjavik, Iceland.

Lieutenant Barker was born and raised in Cobourg. He graduated from the Cobourg District Collegiate Institute "West" in 1982. Upon graduation he attended the Great Lakes International School of Marine Technology and went to sea in the summer of 1982. After spending three seasons aboard various great lakes and deep-sea vessels employed as a junior engineering officer, he graduated with a Diploma in Marine Engineering Technology and successfully completed his Engineering Watch Keeper's exams from Transport Canada.

In the fall of 1985, Lieutenant Barker joined the Royal Canadian Naval Reserves, HMCS York in Toronto and had the opportunity to serve aboard several naval vessels including HMCS St Croix and HMCS Assinibone.

In 1993, Lieutenant Barker transferred to the Canadian Armed Forces Cadet Instructors Cadre and attended CFB Borden, where he completed his Basic Officer's Training Course. After further training at HMCS Cataraqui (CFB Kingston), he completed his Military Occupation Course and was commissioned in the fall of 1994. Upon commission he was granted a transfer to the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps "Skeena" in Port Hope. In 2003 he was awarded the Canadian Forces Decoration with a further bar in 2013. Since joining the ship's company of Skeena, he has been employed in various roles at the local unit and assumed command 2006-2009.



Lieutenant Barker is also a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 133 Cobourg, the Crow's Nest Naval Club in St. John's Newfoundland and the Naval Officers Association of Canada.

All members are invited to join us electronically on Tuesday, November 24 at 07:30 PM. Please register in advance by visiting

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xVd6VDyVQSC2mKUqm8QGoA

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

We look forward to you joining the upcoming CDHS webinar!

Our Previous Meeting



At our October virtual meeting Karin Wells, an internationally recognized CBC radio documentary maker, presented the fascinating details of the life of Mina Benson Hubbard. After the tragic death of her husband, Ms. Hubbard completed his planned trek of exploration and mapping across Labrador

A plaque erected in 1996 by the Township of Hamilton with the assistance of the Ontario Heritage Foundation and the Cobourg and District Historical Society reads:

MINA BENSON (1870 – 1956) AN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY CANADIAN FEMALE EXPLORER OF LABRADOR AND WRITER, MINA BENSON WAS BORN ON THIS PROPERTY, LOT 28, CONCESSION 7, TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON, COUNTY OF NORTHUMBERLAND. FROM JUNE 27 TO AUGUST 27, 1905, BENSON COMPLETED THE

ILL-FATED 1903 LABRADOR EXPEDITION OF HER LATE HUSBAND, LEONIDAS HUBBARD JR., A DISTANCE OF 576 MILES FROM THE NORTHWEST RIVER TO UNGAVA BAY. HER MAPS, ACCEPTED BY THE AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, WERE SOME OF THE FIRST TO RECORD THE NASKAUPI RIVER AND GEORGE RIVER SYSTEMS. IN 1908 SHE PUBLISHED AN ACCOUNT OF HER TRIP, A WOMAN'S WAY THROUGH UNKNOWN LABRADOR. LATER SHE REMARRIED, HAD THREE CHILDREN AND MOVED TO ENGLAND, WHERE SHE DIED.

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.

January: *Lost Villages of the St. Lawrence*

Jim Brownell

The Lost Villages were several small communities near Cornwall that were deemed unnecessary in the light of major economic forces and future prosperity for the entire Great Lakes watershed. Jim Brownell is a former MPP and has been deeply involved in the preservation of artifacts and social history of the people from these villages for years.

February: *What is Sir John A Macdonald's Real Place in Canadian History?* Arthur Milne

Our first Prime Minister's governance has recently become a topic of controversy. Arthur Milne will explore this topic.

March: *The History of the Cobourg Public Library*

Heather Viscount

There is evidence to indicate the presence of a public-use library in Cobourg as early as the 1830's. The early library was designed to provide educational opportunities for tradesmen through books and lectures. By 1886 there were 128 subscribers from Cobourg and Hamilton Township..

APRIL: *The Wreck of the HMS Speedy: The Making of a History Book*

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.

We Get Letters...

You guys are doing such a wonderful job bringing the CDHS online! I am so happy to be able to watch from home. Brian you do a great job moderating and administrating the meetings, and Carla your remarks manage to convey the same brightness and enthusiasm that gives our in-person meetings a warm, welcoming feel.

Thank you for making this happen this year.

Alison Torrie Lapaire

Karin Wells is such an excellent speaker. We enjoyed her presentation immensely. I like it using Webinar or ZOOM – nobody blocking my view and I can turn up the volume if need be. Karin did a wonderful job bringing Mina Benson to life. What an amazing woman she was. Congratulations to all those involved in bringing the presentations into our homes.

Alma Draper

My mother and her generation who were at the plaque unveiling have died and I know they would be pleased that the Cobourg Historical Society is giving our celebrated relative this attention. Here is another pic from the unveiling of my mother and her two siblings, Johnnie Lean and Dorothy Lean Mann. Also a pic of the Benson family reunion a few years ago in the community where Mina grew up, and where many of the Benson descendent in the photo still live, *e.g.*, the Manley family – Neil and Murray Manley, sons of Gertrude Manley, another granddaughter of the (prosperous) John Benson line.



FYI, my maternal grandmother Agnes Benson Lean and Mina Benson Hubbard were first cousins and grew up in the same community, attended the same church. My mother Mary Lean Lander unveiled the plaque with Charlotte Clay, who was my mother's student when

she was teacher and principal at Bewdley School. My uncle John Lean and aunt Dorothy Lean Mann were also at the unveiling of the plaque. My grandniece Mina Lander shown here proudly bears the name of her illustrious ancestor.

Dorothy Lander and John Graham

Announcements

The Hastings County Historical Society invites you to browse the latest edition of their *Outlook* newsletter. Go to

<http://hastingshistory.ca/photos/custom/Nov%20Outlook%202020%20Final.pdf>

Member Matters

New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest member: Lynne Moore of Ottawa.

Dues Reminder

CDHS memberships usually run from April to April. However all 2019-2020 memberships were extended to compensate for cancelled meetings. However, dues are now due for your 2020-2021 membership. Our usual physical meetings will be replaced with an outstanding lineup of virtual presenters. In addition to our "virtual" Zoom Webinars each month, we are still providing our newsletter and continuing to keep our Facebook and <https://cdhs.ca/> website updated. Even without meetings we will be incurring costs that include hosting of the Zoom webinars and our website; honorariums to our presenters, preparation and production of promotional materials (pamphlets, banner), and contributions to permanent historical features that are part of our town. Unfortunately, we have no way to deliver Leona's cookies!

We have kept the membership fees the same as last season:

Individual Membership: \$30 Family Membership: \$50

Payment can be made by either Cheque or e-transfer. Please make your cheques payable to the Cobourg and District Historical Society and mail it to :

CDHS Membership Chair
P.O. Box 911, Stn Main
Cobourg. ON K9A 4W4

If you wish to use e-transfer, please send the transfer to our Membership Chair:
brianincobourg@gmail.com

Interest is Welling in Weller

From: Brian Weller

Sent: Tuesday, November 3, 2020 9:39 AM

To: leonawoods

Subject: Re: WELLER, WILLIAM – Cobourg, On.

Leona,

Thanks for getting back to me. Despite the common surname, we have found no evidence that your William Weller is related, at least on this side of the ocean. My grandfather, William James Weller, (1878-1952) was born and raised in Kent and came over during WW1 for treatment of a War injury. Could we be related further back, before your William left England for the USA? That is a story for another day! My grandfather liked Canada so much that the rest is history. What does make the story unique is that your William's Stagecoach would stop at the Golden Lion Hotel, Yonge and Sheppard,



9005 Toronto-Richmond Hill Stage Coach. (Comm.) Dec. 5/31.

York County, today referred to as (Willowdale) and is reported to have sold his east/west Stagecoach in 1880 to the Hotel owner, James Thompson, who with his brother, Charles Thompson already

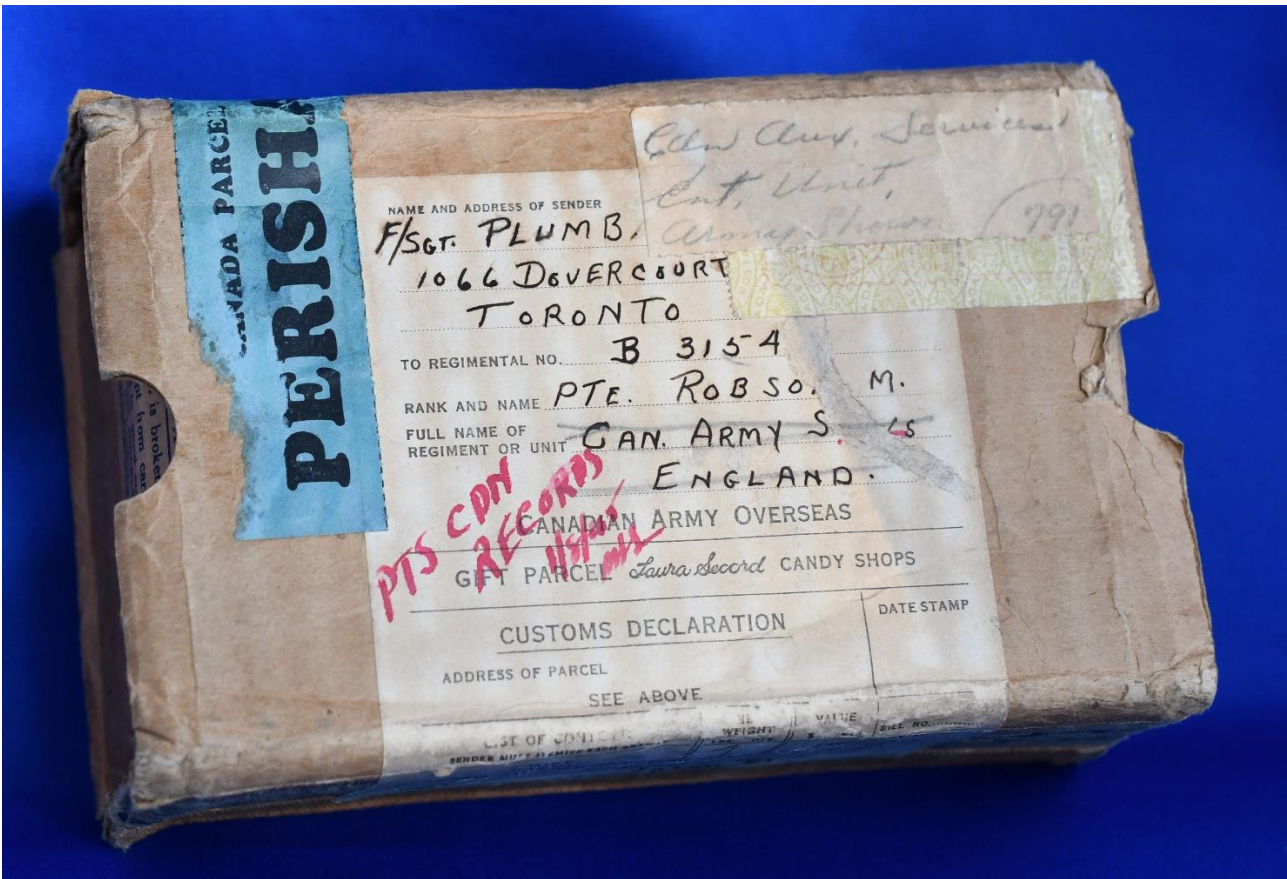
operated his own north/south Toronto to Richmond Hill Stagecoach that Charles named after his son, which is now on display at an Ottawa Museum.



Charles operated from 1880 until 1896 when Stagecoach travel ended when Rail service replaced it. We have traced Charles and James to my mother Anne Thompson so it is interesting how both family's history intersect. Again, thanks for getting back!
Brian Weller
6th generation of the Thompson Family.

Laura Secord Enters WW II

Judith Goulin

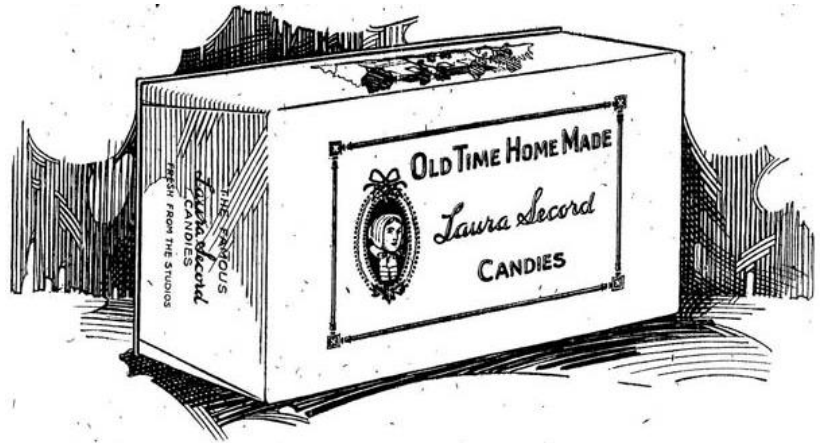


This box came into my hands courtesy of the De Lises — Dorothy and Godfray — long-time members of CDHS. Over the years they were avid collectors of many things. I thought this little cardboard box had been collected as a piece of WW II ephemera, since it was addressed

to a soldier in England, Pte Morris Robson. Although my conclusion was totally wrong, the box gave me an interesting research opportunity and ultimately the real story from Dorothy.

During WW II the Laura Secord Company, founded in Toronto in 1913 by Frank O'Connor, enthusiastically promoted the idea of sending their chocolates overseas to military personnel. The little box in my possession was the shipping box for a one pound box of delectable Laura Secord candies.

The chocolates cost 60 cents to buy and another 60 cents to mail. This is very inexpensive by today's standards, but even though the Great Depression ended in 1939, many Canadians were still living through hard times. Despite this, chocolates became a popular and convenient gift to send from the



home front. A close look at the shipping box suggests that the Laura Secord stores took care of the wrapping and mailing details. There is no doubt that sending treats to "our boys and girls overseas", was clever business strategy, especially as it played upon the emotions of those at home, but nevertheless it was also a thoughtful idea that Frank O'Connor planted in people's minds. It made the senders feel good and gave the recipients pleasure. O'Connor was known to be a kind and generous man. Over time, the candy business made him a wealthy man. He was recognized as being one of Toronto's most generous philanthropists. And now for the rest of the story: Over coffee on a pleasant sunny day, Dorothy very kindly told me how the cardboard shipping box came into her hands. Pte Morris Robson, was her uncle. The sender, F/Sgt. Plumb, was a friend of Uncle Morris. Dorothy also knew the Plumb family. All were Torontonians. After Morris' death, the box went to Shirley Plumb. Dorothy was the executrix for Shirley Plumb's estate. While going through Shirley's possessions, Dorothy found the little shipping box that her uncle brought home to Toronto after the war, but now it was full of postcards. Dorothy, in true collector fashion, was intrigued by the postcards, so she kept them intact in their Laura Secord shipping box as a souvenir of her favourite uncle.



The box came full circle: mailed from Toronto to England, brought back to Toronto by Pte Robson at the end of the war, kept by him until his death, then into the hands of Shirley Plumb in Toronto where it remained until Dorothy brought it to Cobourg some years ago. Finally, where this story began, the shipping box, minus the postcards, is still in Cobourg along with its significance and Dorothy's story of its journey.

*An Internet search using the words: **Historicist: A Box of Laura Secord-Toronto** provides additional information of interest to history lovers.*

Remembrance Days Past: 2013

As is common, Remembrance Day was wet and sombre. Many of our members are the



fortunate ones – too young to have been active combatants in WWII and too old to serve in Afghanistan. We are the first generation in a hundred years not to have been embroiled in a major conflict for King and country. Our parents fought in the Boer War, WWI, WWII and in Korea; thousands died.



CDHS Executive for 2020 – 2021

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