

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District

Historical Society

November 2023 — Issue 343

Camp 30: The Bowmanville PoW Camp

Our November meeting will present the history and possible future of Camp 30 near Bowmanville. The camp's first buildings were completed in 1927 to establish the Bowmanville Boys Training School for errant youth. With the advent of WWII it was realized



that the facility could be easily converted to house German prisoners of war. Soon the camp was expanded with barracks to house almost 800 prisoners, an indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, mess hall and even a small hospital.

The site was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in September 2013.

Our speaker, Marilyn Morawetz, is Chairperson for the Jury Lands Foundation whose mission is to rejuvenate this Canadian historic and architectural significant site. She will present details of the fascinating story of this facility.

Our presenter is a founding member of the Clarington branch of the ACO. For 34 years, Marilyn with her husband Tom, owned and operated an agri-business in Clarington. Since retiring from business in 2022, their family farm continues to be an important part of their life.

Join us on Tuesday, November 28 for an informative presentation. Doors open at 7:00 pm. All are welcome. Bring a friend or two! Members free -- guests \$5.00 – including coffee/tea and cookies.

Future Meetings of our 2023/2024 Programme

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

Cobourg was first called Amherst and then Hard Scrabble and in the 1820s the name was changed to Cobourg. Peter Delanty, Mayor of Cobourg 2000 – 2010, will present the history of Cobourg as told by street names. Several streets were named for the early prominent citizens, for ancestral heritage and business people. Commencing in the latter 20th century, new streets would be named after Mayors.

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Father Frances Patrick Duffy, born in Cobourg on May 2, 1871, was a Canadian/American soldier, Catholic Priest and military Chaplain. Duffy served as Chaplain for the US 69th Infantry Regiment in WWI. His exploits were of such renown that a very large statue of him was erected in Father Duffy Square in New York City.

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

D'arcy Jennish is a journalist, historian and playwright. He has written ten books and will present the history of the National Hockey League -- born in a Montreal hotel room on November 26, 1917. Mr. Jennish wrote the book *The NHL: 100 Years of On-ice Action and Boardroom Battles*. It's certain to be an interesting story that both hockey and non-hockey fans will enjoy.

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Annual General Meeting followed by a Member Show & Tell
Members are invited to bring something of historical interest like special objects, jewelry, letters, family diaries, medals of family members, old tools and documents or any treasures to display for fellow members to see and admire. Tables will be set up around the room to display items brought.

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

Social Event & Outing in Brighton, Ontario

Join us as we drive/carpool our way to Brighton, Ontario's community centre to hear Brighton resident and historian Dan Buchanan, The History Guy, present The History of the Murray Canal, which is now part of the Trent-Severn waterway. It is a story that is both complex and compelling. Presentation from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Following the presentation, we will meet for lunch at a local Brighton establishment before returning to Cobourg.

Our Previous Meeting

History of CDHS and an NCAM update

Our October meeting covered two topics with four presenters.

CDHS President Carla Jones and former Cobourg Mayor Peter Delanty provided fascinating



reminiscences and insights into the early days of the Cobourg and District Historical Society. Among the original CDHS members discussed were familiar names such as Peter Greathead (first President), Peter Delanty (first Treasurer). Early presenters included, Percy Climo (local author and presenter at the November 1980 meeting), C. Gordon King (library namesake



and presenter at the February 1981 meeting), Lenah Fisher (former Cobourg Mayor and saviour of Victoria Hall) and many others.

An update on the Northumberland County Archives and Museum (NCAM) was presented



by Katie Kennedy (Curator for NCAM) and Abigail Miller (Archivist at NCAM). Traditionally an archive is a repository for significant written materials – government records, diaries, deeds, speeches and similar items. Both Katies and Abigail emphasized that NCAM will be much more. It will include inputs from local First Nations Knowledge Keepers, his-



torical artifacts including shoes and other clothing, photographs and the window frame from Faraday Hall of Cobourg's Victoria College (pictured in the CDHS logo) in addition to the traditional contents of an archive. Further, there will be a nearby walking trail that will be accessible by those with mobility issues. Soon, for only \$127,249,219 plus anticipated additional cost overruns, there will be a new Category 'A' museum and long term care facility for Northumberland's residents!

Breaking News

Former POW camp dormitory, National Historic Site to remain

By Moya Dillon

In their November 9 meeting Clarington Council gave a definitive “NO” to plans to demolish the former Camp 30 dormitory building. The camp, located on Lambs Road in Bowmanville, is one of the only mostly intact Second World War



prisoner of war camps left standing in Canada, and was designated as a national historic site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 2013.

In June, the current owners submitted a heritage permit to demolish the camp’s triple dormitory building to make way for a new housing development. Clarington’s heritage committee reviewed the permit and recommended it be rejected.

“If we cannot preserve a national historic site then what chance do we have of preserving our local or municipal buildings?” said Steve Conway, vice-chair of the Clarington heritage committee, during a council meeting on Oct. 23.

Conway called the building’s state of disrepair an unfortunate reality that could have been avoided with regular maintenance.

“A growing number of heritage buildings seem to be falling into neglect, and no level of government is willing to hold anyone responsible,” he continued, noting there is a fine for demolishing heritage buildings without a permit, but no fine for what he referred to as “demolition by neglect.”

“Developers with heritage properties in our community are watching this decision very closely,” Conway said. “This decision could resonate well beyond our borders.”

Clarington staff supported the committee, recommending council deny the demolition permit, stating the application did not “sufficiently justify the proposed demolition as the only option.”

Several times in our past there have been numerous unemployed and unhoused in Cobourg. In these previous times the unemployed were looking for work and were willing to do almost anything for a decent meal. They were unemployed due to the lack of jobs in a generally poor economy rather than today's situation of being unemployable in a vibrant economy due to addiction and expecting society to provide housing and food.

Just Passing Through

John Jolie

It was the Dirty Thirties and there were masses of people, mostly men, moving around, desperate for work. Being on the CNR, Canadian Northern and Canadian Pacific lines, as well as Highway 2, our town had a large number of transients. These jobless people, in addition to our own jobless, created a terrific strain on our communities.

One day, we hosted a group of 12 "guests". Six of them were from the same family. The father was a veteran of the Great War, and down on his luck. He had lost his job in Toronto, then lost his home. Penniless, he hobbled together a cart to haul his children and whatever possessions they still owned. As he pulled the cart, his wife followed, pushing the baby carriage. They slept that night in Victoria Hall. The next day, house builder Reuben Jackson, the builder of those "Jackson Style" homes, gave the family a ride to Shannonville.

Unfortunately, that story was repeated countless times. The paper reported that hundreds of hungry and workless men were stopping in Cobourg. Some slept in the jail, some slept in Victoria Hall. When spring came, the homeless were kicked outside. I was told that one Bennettborough was up D'Arcy Street, just north of the tracks. [*R.B. Bennett was Prime Minister during the Great Depression hence the reference.*] Another one was on Brook Road North at the tracks. Sometimes, the wealthy had fundraisers to buy food. They brought the food to the jail for distribution.¹ Often, there was acrimonious debate in town Council about the homeless transients. Some Cobourg Councillors believed that feeding them simply encouraged them to stay in town.

In March of 1932, *The Cobourg World* reported on the large number of hobos jumping off the freight trains the previous night. Five transients were immediately rounded up while the others fled. While in jail, they set fire to their bunks. 1932 was not a good year!²

At one time Cobourg owned a townhouse located where Quigley's stood until 2004. The old firehall was across the street. One resident of the townhouse was the fire chief and others served as firemen and as wagon and truck operators.

Now, if you lived in Cobourg in the 1930's, you would see men standing outside that townhouse at 7 AM and again at 1 PM. They were praying that the town had some job for them to do that day. Sometimes, over 200 men would be standing outside. Included in that

group were men who had come to town hoping that, just maybe, Cobourg would be the town that could give them a break.

The town paid the workers \$2 a day. Bud Barr told me that one project was to have a person assign street numbers to every building in town. In the days before mail delivery and in a time when everyone knew everybody else, addresses didn't matter too much. For example, newspapers would carry ads, locating the store as "three doors west of the post office".

¹ *Cobourg Sentinel Star*, January 29, 1933

² *Cobourg World*, March 1931

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Announcements

Lakeshore Genealogical Society

December 13, 7:00 PM

Our Noteworthy Discoveries of the Past: Tell Us a Story (Zoom only meeting)

Genealogy brings us face-to-face with truly interesting information any time that we care to look. But what about that discovery that really amazed you? What was it and when did it happen? Have you come across something startling? Was it part of your research or someone you met? Members are invited to bring their stories to the December zoom meeting. All Welcome. Please pre-register: LGSregister@gmail.com

February 14 at 8:00 PM

Online Sources for Scottish Research (Zoom only meeting)

Have you exhausted the many online resources for finding your Scottish ancestors? Learn about some websites to consider for filling in the details of your ancestor's life. Speaker is Christine Woodcock **Note: 8:00 PM start time.** All Welcome.
Please pre-register: LGSregister@gmail.com

Member Matters

New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest CDHS members:

Natalie Ierullo

Steven Cosens

Our Members Ask

A CDHS member has a Cobourg related medal and is looking for any information on its history and significance. The

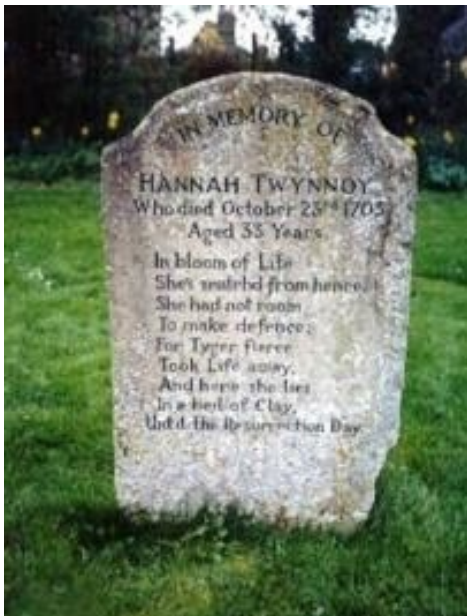


medal's current owner writes: "The medal belonged to my grandfather Edward Thompson. My grandmother gave this to her brother and supposedly said that the medal was presented to acknowledge his contributions to helping Brits to settle in this area. It has the British coat of arms on the front and, from the inscription on the obverse, it appears that my grandfather was the past president of a Cobourg lodge. Can anyone assist with further information?" Please contact The Editor at ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca and I will forward your information to our member.

How To Find Your Ancestors

CemSearch is a database of cemeteries and grave markers accessible on line at cemsearch.ca. It also includes considerably more information than just stone transcriptions but has many monument and people photos as well.

The CemSearch project started over 25 years ago (bef.1996) as a joint effort of the Lakeshore Genealogical Society in Cobourg and the Quinte Branch of the OGS. It was created to provide a searchable database for all cemeteries in the areas covered by the two initial founders (David Long and Ronald Smith).



As the project progressed, interest was shown from other areas and we were joined by the Lennox and Addington Archives, the Clark Archives from Clarington, the Haliburton Highlands Genealogical Group, and the Kawartha Branch of the OGS and now records are included from Oshawa to the Quebec border and a few beyond the above areas. The project is always open to any new area that would like to join and include their cemeteries in the database. If anyone would like to submit a single cemetery from beyond the covered areas, we will supply them with the necessary software to make the input at no charge.

With the most recent update, there were over 900 cemeteries included with over 440,000 records.

Inquiries should be directed to the CemSearch Coordinator, Ron Smith at rfrsmith@eagle.ca

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