

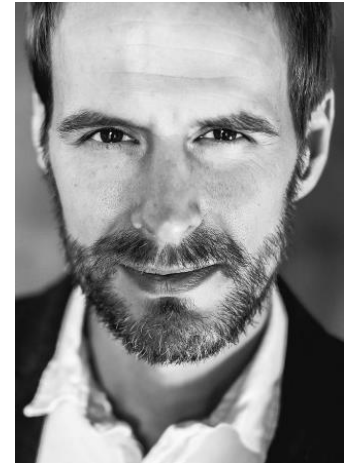
Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District
Historical Society

October 2018 — Issue 299

The Secret Life of William Lyon Mackenzie King

On October 23, 2018, we will be hosting Professor Christopher Dummitt, Professor of History at Trent University's School for the Study of Canada and also the co-founder of the Canada 150 project. Dr. Dummitt will be talking about the secret life of William Lyon Mackenzie King who served as Prime Minister for twenty two years and died as a respected but not particularly charismatic leader. After his death, Mackenzie King's private diaries were made public and the world learned that he was a man who led a double life. He was an eccentric bachelor who communed with the spirit world, his deceased mother and his beloved dog Pat. He also connected with prostitutes believing that he could "save" them. Christopher Dummitt's recently published book, *Unbuttoned: The Secret Life of William Lyon Mackenzie King*, is about both the story of the man and the story of the diaries themselves. This promises to be an intriguing evening which will raise questions about the public *vs.* private persona, the role of executors in destroying documents, the role of historians in exposing secrets and, of course, who William Lyon Mackenzie King really was. You can read more about Professor Dummitt and his work at <https://www.christopherdummitt.com/>.



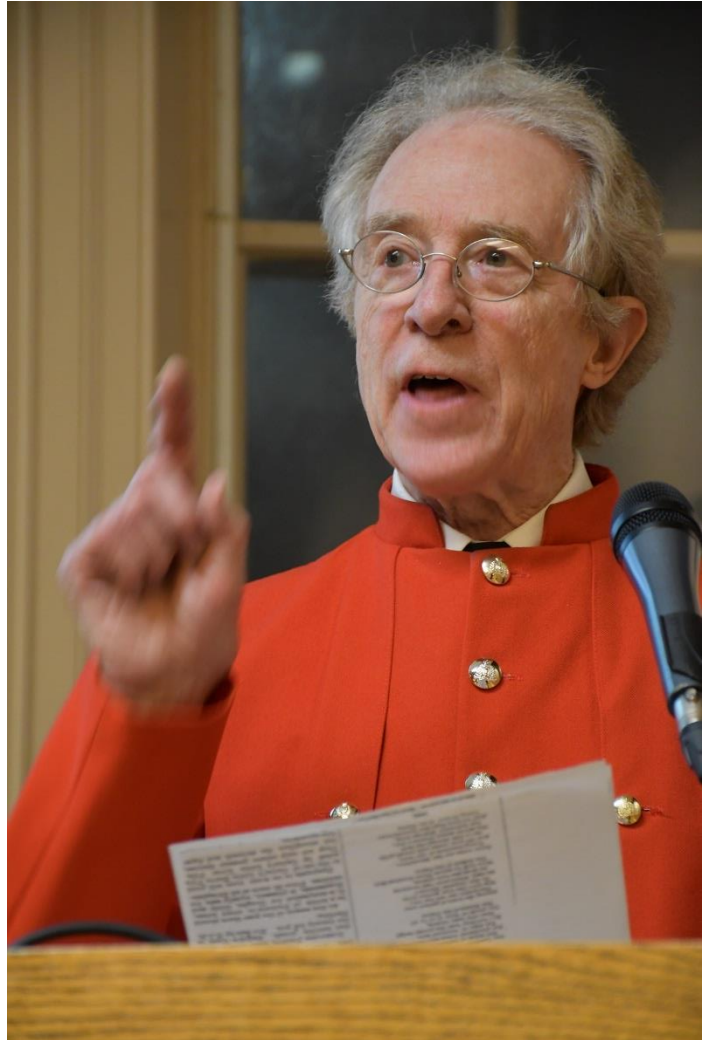
Join us for Dr. Dummitt's presentation on Tuesday, October 23, at Victoria Hall. Doors open at 7:00 PM for coffee and cookies. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. Admission, including refreshments, is free for members and \$5 for non-members. Annual membership is \$25 for individuals and \$30 for a family. All are welcome so bring a friend or two!

Our Previous Meeting

Major James Morrow Walsh

On Tuesday, September 25, we welcomed back Brian Porter for another outstanding presentation. Last October Brian and his wife excited our members with a re-creation of a speech by Sir John A. MacDonald. This time Brian wore an original 1873 Northwest Mounted Police uniform and provided insights into the life and times of Major James Morrow Walsh.

Born in Prescott, Ontario, Major Walsh was one of the original nine officers of the NWMP set up by Sir John A. Macdonald in 1873. He endured the Great March West in 1874 and set up Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills in 1875. His real claim to fame was meeting and befriending Sioux Chief Sitting Bull in 1877, when thousands of Sioux came to Canada after the defeat of Lt. Col. Custer.



After his presentation Suzanne Séguin, CDHS member and former Mayor of Prescott, thanked Porter and then happily shared anecdotes about Major Walsh's home in Prescott.



Future Meetings

<p>Tuesday, November 27, 2018 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Dan Buchanan <i>38 Hours to Montréal</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, February 26, 2019 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Gerry Brown <i>Armistice 18 Historical Fiction Novel</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, March 26, 2019 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Judith Goulin <i>Jackson and Jex: Renowned Cobourg Builders</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, April 23, 2019 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Annual General Meeting TBA Cobourg Sports History</p>
<p>Wednesday, May 15, 2019 Citizens' Forum, Victoria Hall, 7:30pm</p>	<p>Hugh Brewster, Moderator A Panel to Debate: <i>The Secret Diaries of Susanna Moodie</i> End of season social event</p>

Member Matters

Poppy Trail Guides

Guides for the Poppy Trail, part of the Armistice18 celebration, are needed. The tour is already outlined and will take about an hour with 20 stops. Hugh Brewster is leading a group on Oct `14 at 11am if you are interested in being a guide and want to see what it entails. We need guides for Oct 21, 29, Nov 4th and if schools wanted guided tours we will need guides at those times as well. Please contact Leona at leonawoods@sympatico.ca or (905) 372-7624 if you are willing to help or want more information.

New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest members Melanie Duras and Bruce Becker.

In Memoriam

Alberta Hazel MacMillan

August 19, 1939 - August 4, 2018

It was with sadness we said goodbye to Bert on August 4th, a long-time member of the Historical Society. The weather was lovely that day and reminded me of the times Kathy, Bert and I would head northwards on a day jaunt into the Northumberland hills. Bert knew every nook and cranny and often when Kathy and I would look at each other and wonder where the heck we were, just around the bend we would see the 401 and the familiar water tower.

Bert was a teacher until 1996. Active in raising her three daughters, Bert also found time to do volunteer work. By the time she had retired she became a full time volunteer for nine groups who needed volunteers in order to keep going. In addition to these groups, if help was needed elsewhere for a fundraiser, none hesitated to call Bert.

Despite leading a very busy life, there was always time to entertain. Her home on Glen Watford was forever the place to be – great food, lots of wine, and wonderful company.

A friend to so many, Bert always had time for those not well, those bereaved and provided a shoulder to lean on.

To commemorate her life, a white bench will be placed along the waterfront path she walked with the Turtles Walking group every Monday and Wednesday. A plaque will indicate it is sponsored by her friends. Do sit on it and admire the view; Bert would like that.



A Grand Gamble

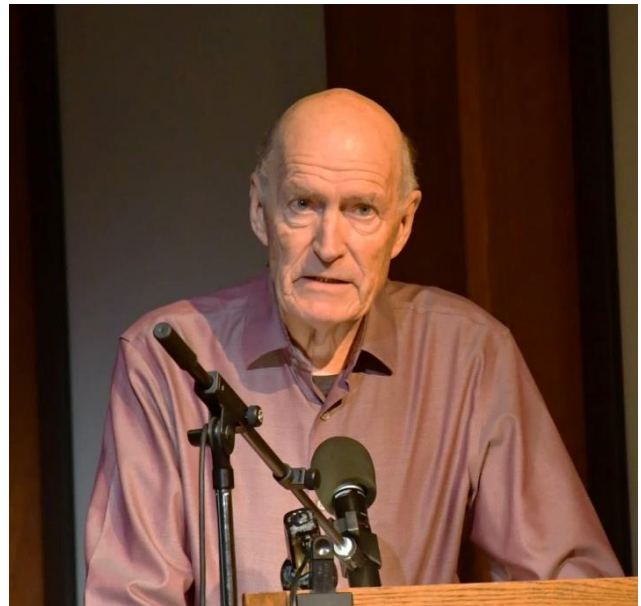
In the late 'forties and early 'fifties the citizens of Cobourg were certain that their town was destined to be a city and the belief was shared by many men of prominence in Ontario. A harbour good for the times had been constructed, the railway to Peterborough was expected to result in great prosperity and the population of Cobourg was increasing. It was natural, consequently, that noted Toronto architect Kivas Tully, should be employed to design a town hall commensurate with future greatness.

Excavation and construction were under way in 1856 and on the 1st of December Mayor D.E. Boulton and Clerk David Brodie issued a proclamation announcing the laying of the cornerstone "in a Public Manner with Grand Masonic Ceremony" and fixing the 18th of the month as a holiday for that purpose. *The Cobourg Star* commented that "great as our progress has been our past is but a trifle to the great future which lies yet unopened before us".

From *Cobourg 1793-1948* by Edwin C. Guillet.

So began the story of "Victoria Hall, that most magnificent of mid-Victorian civic buildings graces the small town of Cobourg in Southern Ontario, symbolic of its ambition at the time, of its aspiration to be a major centre in Canada West, and signifying its prowess in tapping the resources of the interior with a railway to the timber lands and developing area to the north" as described by Peter John Stokes in *Victorian Cobourg*.

On September 18 John P. Taylor, formerly Executive Director of the the Society for the Restoration of Victoria Hall, kept the rapt attention of a full house in the Concert Hall as he described the construction, narrowly averted destruction and the painstaking restoration of Victoria Hall.



After his presentation Hall screened Taylor's short docudrama, *The Grand Gamble*, that recreates the decision to build a grand city hall and the story of its restoration. You can learn more about the production of the movie at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXA83VqpDfA> or contribute at

<https://www.gofundme.com/the-grand-gamble>

“Discovery” of Obscure Local Railway Bridge

George Parker

To Cobourg’s chagrin, Port Hope’s railway enjoyed considerably more success than Cobourg’s line. Some proof of this can be seen in an impressive stone railway bridge, located in an obscure spot where the now-defunct Port Hope line crossed Baxter Creek on its way to Millbrook.

Constructed of limestone, this bridge is still in remarkably good condition a century and a half after it was constructed in 1868. It is a testament to the high quality of permanent structures that railways were capable of building – even in this early era. Had the Cobourg & Peterborough line been more prosperous, no doubt several bridges of this type would have been constructed on the Cobourg line, where it crosses Cobourg Creek half a dozen times in the vicinity of Danforth Rd.



Cobourg Councillor Forrest Rowden is shown inspecting the impressive workmanship on the bridge in a photograph taken this past summer by George Parker.

For those who are interested in seeing this obscure but nevertheless historic bridge, it can be visited by driving north on County Road 10 through Hope Township, and then west on the 4th Line of

Cavan Township. Shortly after passing the site of the 4th Line Theatre, there is a sign leading to a Ministry of Natural Resources parking lot on the left. There is a short trail to the bridge from the parking lot.

Pectin to Cannabis: The Certo Building Story

Diane Chin



On Tuesday, October 9, Thomas Fairfull, President and CEO of FSD Pharma had a ribbon cutting ceremony at the historic Certo building, easily viewed from Ontario Street, just north of University Avenue. In this ceremony he stated that he plans to work on, “converting the historic Certo building ... into a heritage museum and on-site dispensary. The

Certo building is an important part of Cobourg’s history and the Company plans to preserve this unique building.” It is worth noting that two other brick buildings on the old Kraft property are also significant and designated but no mention was made of their restoration. Having said that, they are not yet in the same state of disrepair.



The story of the designation and restoration of the Certo building is a long one with many ups and downs starting in 2011 when ACO Cobourg went to Council to ask for designation. This request was rescinded by ACO Cobourg when the owners of the building at the time, indicated that designation would delay work on the long brick building. Subsequently no work was done. In 2017, this same owner requested a demolition permit. ACO Cobourg and East Northumberland along with the Cobourg heritage Committee worked quickly to request designation thus effectively denying demolition. Cobourg Council agreed.

Shortly thereafter it was announced that the complex had been sold to Thomas Fairfull and FV Pharma, now FSD Pharma.

Many organizations in Cobourg interested in preserving the heritage of Cobourg and in sharing our history are hopeful that this announcement means that finally this architectural

gem will be restored and that part of the industrial history of Cobourg will be preserved for its citizens.

In the early 1900's it began as a munitions building in WWI and was purchased in 1919 by the York State Fruit Company which manufactured pectin. By 1925, it was known as the Douglas Certo Pectin Plant which became known as the General Foods Plant which merged with Kraft Foods in 1985. The plant closed in 2008. Subsequently some of the buildings were sold to the County of Northumberland.

Once again this little gem which was so significant in the early 20th century as the site of Certo which revolutionized the production of jam, will have new life in the 21st century for a use unique to this century as a pot dispensary, this bringing to life Cobourg's motto of being a "feel good town."

Announcements

Cultural Heritage Conservation: Vimy Monument

The Cobourg Heritage Advisory Committee is sponsoring an address by Dr. Julian Smith on Saturday November 3 at 2 pm in the Concert Hall. He is a world renowned architect, scholar, conservator, educator, and director of the Willowbank Centre in Queenston. Smith will be speaking about cultural heritage conservation and the restoration of Canada's Vimy Monument, a most relevant topic in light of our Armistice 1918 celebration.

Question

A Cobourg resident found a document from the Royal Templars of Temperance dated 1903 among her grandmother's papers. One of the names on the certificate is Jessie Field (née Gibson). Jessie was born in Cold Springs but married Arthur Stanley Field of Cobourg and moved to Cobourg to live out her days on Ball Street. Does anyone have information about The Royal Templars of Temperance in Cobourg or about Jessie? If so, please contact Leona at (905) 372-7624 or leonawoods@sympatico.ca

The Last Great Plague: The Story of the Spanish Flu

Open daily from Thursday, October 18 to Thursday, November 1, 2018, 9:00am to 5:00pm at St. James Cathedral, 106 King Street East at Church Street, Toronto. Admission is free. To book a tour contact Nancy Mallett at (416) 364-7865 or archives@stjamescathedral.ca. See www.stjamescathedral.ca/flu-exhibit for more information.

Armistice 18



Canada's largest celebration of the end of WWI will be in Cobourg. As part of the celebrations there is a special exhibition in the Art Gallery of Northumberland in Victoria Hall, a fascinating exhibit of trench art – items produced by soldiers in the trenches at the front and as prisoners of war – in

Victoria Hall. The trench art is part of the extensive personal

collection of CDHS member Jeremy Diamond (centre in the photo to the right). Other exciting events include an



original play – *Last Day, Last Hour* – which chronicles Cobourg's 1928 libel suit brought by Sir Arthur Currie. The play will be presented in the original venue for the trial in Victoria Hall. Another play, *Mary's Wedding*, is a moving story that highlights the last great cavalry charge of the war.

A fascinating new video highlighting Canada's role in WWI is on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMGHHP25fDs>

See <https://www.cobourgblog.com/news-2018/cobourg-remembers-the-great-war/> for more details on the opening event of Armistice 18. Further details about the plays and other events are available at <https://calendar.cobourg.ca/Town/Detail/2018-09-30-1200-Armistice18-Opening-Ceremony/Armistice18%20List%20of%20Events> Contact the Victoria Hall Box Office to purchase tickets to the plays or for more information.

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