

# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District  
Historical Society

October 2020 — Issue 317

## Mina Benson Hubbard: Trek 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.

Our October meeting will be presented by Karin Wells, an internationally recognized CBC radio documentary maker with a long and varied career. Trained as a lawyer, Karin has produced documentaries on subjects as varied as post conflict resolution in Mozambique and victim rights to opera in the English countryside. She has reported from more than 50 countries and was regularly heard on CBC Radio's *The Sunday Edition* as both a guest host and documentary maker. All members are invited to join us electronically on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 at 07:30 PM. Please register in advance by visiting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_sEKWWlzvQKaAqFutIsjhNw](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_sEKWWlzvQKaAqFutIsjhNw)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about watching 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 second 2020 CDHS webinar!

## 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.

### **November: *Sinking of the Skeena***

Chris Barker

Chris Barker will tell us the story of the HMCS Skeena, a World War II destroyer that sunk ships, saved lives, and then lost 15 of its own when it ran aground. What was a tragedy has become a unique story that is part of Canada's naval history.

### **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 the reality and the relevance of the accusations.

### **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.

## Show and Tell

We often forget that a century ago Cobourg was a thriving small town with a busy harbour, innovative downtown merchants and factories producing a variety of goods. CDHS member Randy Barber recounts how he found a spirit jug especially made for a local merchant.



*As I am wont to do on a sunny Sunday afternoon, I drove to Orono to visit the two large multi-dealer antique shops doing trade there.*

*I collect a number of things from militaria to old cigar boxes to razors and usually take a good look around all the nooks and crannies to make that elusive "find".*

*The stoneware jug was hidden away behind a shelving unit where I spotted it with Cobourg plainly visible on its side.*

*Having moved to the city in 2018 after building a new home in New Amherst, I have been keeping an eye out for unique Cobourg memorabilia in the shops. I recently got a Cobourg Dairy milk bottle also.*

*The undecorated jug bore a price of \$150 but the dealer had a 15% reduction in booth item prices which made it irresistible.*

*Don't tell my wife!*

Stewart Hooey was born in 1819 in Ireland, Cootehill, County Cavan. He immigrated to Canada in 1842 and settled in Cobourg. By 1847 he had opened a successful grocery and liquor store. Hooey & Sons sold groceries, but records indicate that their main emphasis was on wines and liquors. A son, William W. Hooey, was politically active and served as the Mayor of Cobourg in 1921.



Hooey's spirits were obviously popular considering the variety of custom ceramic jugs manufactured to contain their products!



Below is a circa 1910 photo of the interior of Hooey's store.

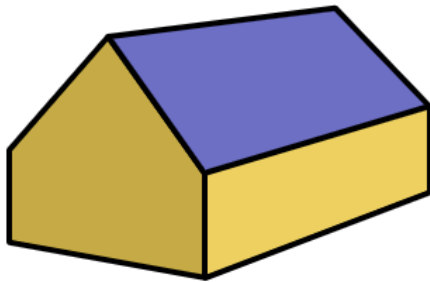


# Adventures in House Watching

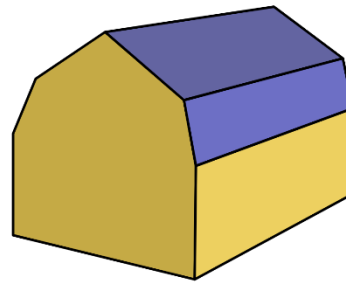
*Judith Goulin*

“Building Watching is similar to bird watching, except buildings don’t migrate and tend to stay in one place” said Ted Ray, an amateur house watcher, in his website about domestic architecture. It was a revelation that house watching could be such a captivating hobby. Since the late 1700s, at least 30 domestic architectural styles have been identified in Ontario. One of these, Dutch Colonial Revival, has become a favourite of this bird watcher turned house watcher.

The history behind the origin of the Dutch Colonial style was intriguing to discover, as were the facts uncovered about some Cobourg area houses. Dutch Colonial’s defining feature is its distinctive gambrel or barn roof. It has sloping sides or curves, as opposed to the very common gable roof. Once you recognize the gambrel style, you will spot gambrel roofs on barns and houses everywhere. New barns built after 1880 feature gambrel roofs rather than the common gable roof style.



Gable Roof



Gambrel Roof

Although the origin of the gambrel roof is obscure, history records that Dutch and English colonists in Manhattan, which they called New Amsterdam, built houses with gambrel roofs along the Hudson River at the southern tip of Manhattan in the 1600s. It is odd to discover that the gambrel roof style of house was never built in Holland! The Vander-Ende Onderdonk House {New Amsterdam, 1709}, is the oldest standing example of Dutch Colonial style architecture.

Two hundred years later, in a period of revivals in architecture, Dutch Colonial style houses, with their characteristic gambrel roofs became a trend in Ontario and elsewhere. They were most popular between 1910 -1930 and given a slightly different moniker: Dutch Colonial Revival. Architecture is full of contradictions. Dutch Colonial Revival houses can be sighted that were built both before and after 1910 to 1930 era. Still other houses, built much earlier

than the 1900s period, underwent renovations that included their gable roofs being replaced with gambrel roofs.

In the Cobourg area, at least seven Dutch Colonial Revival houses have been spotted. Some of these local houses did not conform, either by their date of construction, or by their exterior cladding which is usually clapboard or stone. Two houses on Henry Street, one at the east end of King St. and a double house on James fit into the early 1900s Dutch Colonial Revival period. They were easy ticks on the house spotting list, but three additional local houses were much harder to identify. It was as if they looked like familiar birds, but not quite. Something was amiss...

On Bagot Street there is an imposing white house that is a classic example of Dutch Colonial Revival, even to the small front porch, or stoop, with a bench on either side; but it looked too new and it is clad in stucco. A plaque on the front of the house reads Fisherman's Cottage 1850, but it was obvious that this large dwelling was no humble cottage! Further research revealed that this showpiece was built in 1989, over the foundation of fisherman Frederick Jex's house, or cottage, as a small dwelling is called. The original fireplace graces the interior. After Frederick's time, this house was deeded to Martin Jex, then to his son Roy, locally famous house builders and owners of Martin Jex and Company.



On Brook Rd. south stands a charming brick Dutch Colonial Revival house turned sideways, with its gambrel end and a very attractive sun porch facing the street. Research indicated that



this house has undergone many renovations since it was built c.1877-1880, as the Gardener's Cottage for the Tangmere Estate, located on the south side of King St. near Brook

Rd. When the house was enlarged, the gambrel roof and the sun porch were added. The gable roof of the original cottage can be spotted at the back of the house.

A farmhouse along County Rd. 2 in Hamilton Township is as mysterious as it is intriguing. In the same way that the "Fisherman's Cottage" looked too new, this Dutch Colonial Revival house looked too old to have a gambrel roof. This grey fieldstone dwelling with lighter coloured limestone quoins and granite lintels, suggested a much earlier date than the Dutch Colonial Revival period, possibly the late 1800s. After some serious observation, with the help of birding binoculars it was easy to observe that the stonework had been altered at the gambrel ends of the house. At first glance, it could be mistaken for a stone barn that had been converted to a dwelling. However, additional research helped to solve this building's mysteries. It was indeed an early house. In 1925 it had been seriously damaged by fire. After this calamity, the height of the house was raised and a green metal gambrel roof replaced the original gable roof. Although the house still retains its original storey and a half configuration the altered roof provided more height than the original sloping gable roof did.



Farther afield, there is an authentic Dutch Colonial house still standing in its original



location, at the bottom of Simcoe St., by the lake. This yellow brick farmhouse, now part of the Oshawa Museum complex, was built in 1855. Even farther afield, in Windsor, stands an attractive Dutch Colonial house built in 1898.

After the look of barns changed, from gable to gambrel, it brought about a change in domestic architecture. With the realization that a barn with a gambrel roof was higher, providing much more storage space for hay

or anything else that farmers needed to store, it was easy to see how this advantage could be applied to houses.

One theory of why this new barn roof style became popular with house builders is this: because the larger lower portion of the gambrel roof is almost vertical, it provides more useable space on the highest level. Upstairs bedrooms with eight foot ceilings are more desirable than sloping ceilings that limit headroom and the placement of furniture, and this style occupies the same footprint as a gable roofed house. What homeowner doesn't crave more space?

Having satisfied curiosity about Dutch Colonial Revival, one wonders what local domestic style will be next on this bird watcher turned house watcher's list: Regency? Georgian? Tudor? Edwardian? Post Modern? The binoculars are ready.

Driving around identifying myriad house styles is an enjoyable pastime. If you prefer armchair house watching , consult some of the sources listed below. To see the variety within



the Dutch Colonial Revival style, Google: "Dutch Colonial Revival House Plans 1930". You will find these and dozens more. No binoculars required!

## Sources Consulted

### Books

Cobourg: The Spirit of the Place	Robert Mikel	2017
Looking for Old Ontario	Thomas McIlwraith	1997
Ontario Architecture	John Blumenson	1990

### Internet Sources

<https://sites.google.com/site/buildingwatching/home>

Also, personal interviews with homeowners

## Member Matters

### *Dues Reminder*

CDHS memberships usually run from April to April. However all 2019-2020 memberships were extended due 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 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](mailto:brianincobourg@gmail.com)

### *New Member*

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

## CDHS Executive for 2020 – 2021

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