

# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and  
District Historical Society

September-October 2012 — Issue 253

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## ***A Spirit Walk***

On Tuesday, September 25, Julie Oakes will tell us about Pickering Museum Village's award-winning production. The play is based on the part Pickering farmers played in the Rebellion of 1837. Julie, in period costume, plays the role of the widowed Hannah, wife of Peter Matthews, who was hanged for his part in the skirmish after a pardon from Queen Victoria arrived too late.

## ***War of 1812 Re-enactment***

On Tuesday, October 23, Chris Robbins will present a re-enactment of some important events in the War of 1812. Be entertained by history teacher Chris and other brightly-costumed actors as we learn more about the battles of the War of 1812.

These meetings will be in the usual location in Victoria Hall's Citizens' Forum. Doors open at 7:00pm and the meetings begin at 7:30pm. Please note that these times are a 30 minutes earlier than last year. All are welcome so bring a friend!

## ***History Trivia Quiz Night***

For a change of pace, as well as a change of venue, CDHS will have our first-ever trivia night on Friday, November 30 at 7:30pm. There will be a party atmosphere as members, guests and anyone else who loves history will gather for this evening of fun and competition. Prizes and 50-50 draw. Details will be in the November issue of *Historically Speaking*.

## **Alderville Trip**

***Judith Goulin***

On what was to be a very hot day in May, a group of intrepid CDHS members boarded a bus to visit the Alderville First Nation Reserve. The small community of Mississauga Ojibway at Alderville is governed by a Chief and four Band Councilors. Dave Mowat, who is currently a Band Councilor, was our guide for the day. He met us at the attractive red brick Alderville Community Centre where he gave us a short history of the Mississauga Ojibway since their arrival at Alderville c. 1830.



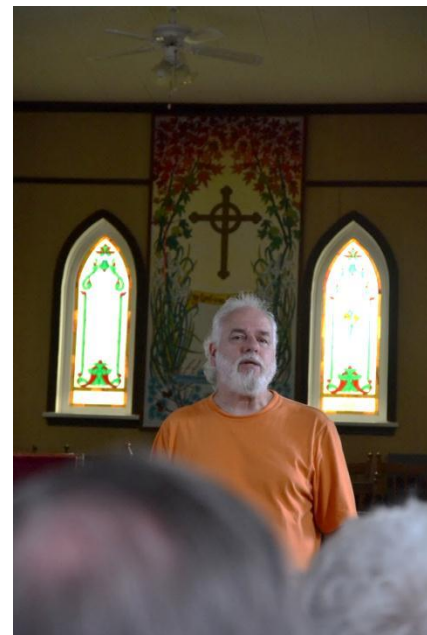


We walked a short distance to the striking white monument that is visible from a long distance along Hwy 45. It has been described as one of the most remarkable



monuments in all of Canada. This cenotaph, built in 1927 and recently refurbished, is dedicated to the honour and glory of those from Alderville who served in the two World Wars, the Korean War and Vietnam. As a point of interest, First Nation men were not drafted into military service but they wanted to serve their country.

Nearby, the Methodist Church and mission school were of great interest. The original church was built in 1837 and a second church built on the same site survives as a functioning United church. In the early days of Alderville, a number of the First Nation men became Methodist ministers and served their people. The mission school was a short-lived venture but the original school building is still standing and is used as offices by the band. Today, Alderville's children attend Roseneath Public School where classes in their native language are part of the curriculum.

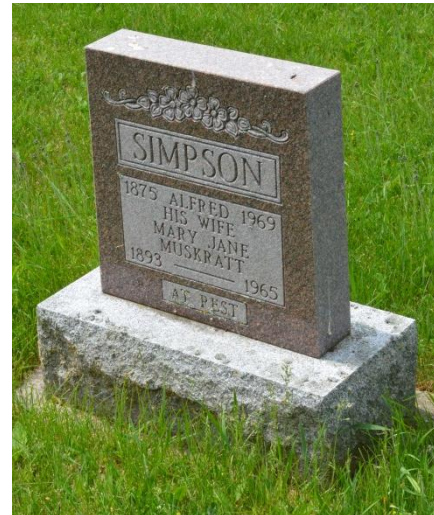


The Alderville Cemetery is located along a peaceful side road. To enter the cemetery, we passed through an exquisitely crafted cast iron gateway that depicts many native symbols. The cemetery

is large, the day was hot, so Dave turned our focus to his family's gravestones and in particular to



a recently installed monument that commemorates his most famous ancestor: his grandfather, Fred Simpson, who ran in the 1908 Olympics. This was the same year that Tom Longboat ran.



Paradoxically, although there was a strong bias against “Indians” at this time in our history, Simpson and Longboat were accepted by society as superior athletes who could conceivably win medals for Canada. Today, “Indian” is viewed as a pejorative by many; “First Nation” is the preferred term.

Fred Simpson is remembered in the Alderville community not only as a farmer, ricker, trapper and logger, but also as an awesome long-distance runner. Dave Mowat told us that his grandfather thought nothing of running from Alderville down to Cobourg.

Dave gave us an abbreviated walking tour of the Black Oak Savannah. We were interested to learn that this savannah is the largest intact piece of native grassland habitat left on the Rice Lake Plains. It serves as an important model in the future restoration of other prairie remnants in the area. This 50 hectare grassland site, both home and haven to many bird and animal species, is located close to the south shore of Rice Lake. Although the Black Oak Savannah is on Reserve land, everyone is welcome to visit this peaceful place.



It was a great day for a picnic, so we enjoyed boxed picnic lunches in the shade at the Roseneath Fairgrounds. We got in touch with our inner child by riding the historic Roseneath Carousel. This museum-quality merry-go-round was built in 1906 in Abilene, Kansas, by C. W. Parker who gained fame for the carousels he built. The Roseneath Agricultural Society bought it in 1932 for \$675.00. This carousel has 40 basswood horses that are all painted





differently. In 1986 it was painstakingly restored to its original condition, including the use of period paint and fine detailing on each unique horse. The mellow sound of the music it plays is unforgettable, generated by a 1934 Wurlitzer 125 Military Band organ.

Near Rice Lake, Dave showed us his community's work-in-progress, a solar farm being constructed on Reserve land. Looking northward to Rice Lake, Sugar Island looms out of the water like a giant green egg on its side. Owned by the Alderville band, but uninhabited, this island is used for camping, hunting and fishing. In the past Sugar Island was where the rice harvest took place. As we

gazed on beautiful Rice Lake, we learned that the gathering and processing of rice was an important ritual, central to the Mississauga culture. It was a time of celebration. Historically, everyone in the community would participate in gathering the rice into canoes, then cleaning, drying, parching or curing it before the two final steps in the process: dancing and winnowing. Dancing the rice is literally that: men wearing clean moccasins dance on the rice to remove the husks. Winnowing is shaking the rice on a blanket so that the wind blows away the chaff, leaving the rice grains that are then ready for consumption. We rounded out the day with a very welcome stop at a beautiful cool oasis: a store offering a great variety of native crafts made not only in Alderville but from all over Canada.

For a more detailed account of Alderville, look up the account of Dave Mowat's address to The Cobourg and District Historical Society in Historical Review 24, 2006-2007, which is available in the Cobourg Public Library.

## Cockburn Day 2012

Continuing a tradition, the Cobourg and District Historical Society participated in Cobourg's celebration of the life and contributions of James Cockburn. Cockburn had a successful law practice in Cobourg in the mid-1800s and was elected to the Cobourg town council in 1856, 1858 and 1859. He played an important part in the construction of Victoria Hall and the Cobourg to Peterborough Railway. He eventually became Solicitor-General and attended the Founding of Canada Conference in Quebec in 1864, thus becoming Cobourg's "Father of Confederation." Although he did not speak French, the House of Commons unanimously elected Cockburn to the Speaker's Chair for two terms.



The CDHS is responsible for the maintenance of the Cockburn Room in Victoria Hall. To ensure that everything was perfect Judy Cross meticulously arranged and polished the room's accessories including a brass lamp and cuspidor. During the event Richard Randall was present to provide guided tours and answer the questions of visitors.





Outside Victoria Hall the Town Crier Tom MacMillan announced the start of festivities.

Later Robert Franklin played Cockburn in a one-man play reminiscing about his many accomplishments.



## In Memorium



It is with profound sadness that we report the unexpected death of Dr. Cathie Ann Oberholtzer at Sunnybrook Hospital on August 18, 2012 at a very young and vigorous 72.

Cath was a warm-hearted and generous woman who loved and lived life to the fullest. She was there for all who needed her despite the long list of dreams she had set out for herself. At the age of 29 and with four children in tow, she began her university education and earned a BA and MA from Trent followed by a Doctorate of Anthropology in Native Studies from McMaster University. She then embarked

on a forty-year long career that specialized in Algonquian Art as expressed in their decorated clothing -- the only scholar in the world to do so. In an untimely way, Cath's book entitled *Dream Catchers: Legend, Lore and Artifacts* (ISBN: 978-1770850569) will be published in mid-September.

Cath was untiring in supporting the Cobourg and District Historical Society for over 20 years. She served as Vice-President starting in 1993, as President in 1996 and for many years as Chair of the Archives Committee. She also served as Chair of the Program Committee, delivered newsletters on her bicycle and edited several editions of the *Historical Review*. Her eagle eyed proof-reading contributed greatly to the quality of many issues of our *Historically Speaking* newsletter.

Cath will be sorely missed by her husband of 54 years, her four children and five grandchildren and many, many dear friends and colleagues worldwide.

## Membership Matters

### ***Membership Reminder***

As we start our new season of programs, we remind you that the old membership year officially ended in March. Those of you who have not yet renewed for the current membership year April 2012 to March 2013 are warmly invited to do so by using the attached form. If you are not sure whether you have renewed, just contact Martha Watson at [mwatson5@sympatico.ca](mailto:mwatson5@sympatico.ca) or at (905)372-2490. We look forward to seeing you soon!

### ***CDHS Officers***

Officers for the 2012-2013 term were elected at the CDHS Annual General Meeting in April. I would like to welcome Alison, Leona, Carla and Marilyn to our Executive. Contact information for all members of the Executive is on the last page of this newsletter.

## Notes and Notices

### ***Railway Hike***

To help Cobourg celebrate its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Pine Ridge Hiking Club is organising a historical walk along part of the old Cobourg and Peterborough Railway line. Very little remains of the line although there are a few sections left. On Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup> there will be a very pleasant autumn country walk to see remaining sections of the rail bed with ties and spikes, visit the Spirit of Canada Museum in Harwood, enjoy a picnic lunch at Drope Farm and listen to interpretative talks.

There is a choice of a four or an eight kilometer walk. Tickets, which are free, are required for the walk, shuttle bus and picnic lunch. Participants should be reasonably fit, wear appropriate footwear and bring a drink.

A shuttle bus will leave the Commuter Parking Lot at Highway 45 and 401 in the morning to take walkers to the start, then on to Drope Farm for a picnic lunch and a visit to the Spirit of Canada Museum. The bus will return to the commuter parking lot in the early afternoon.

For further information and to order free tickets send an email to [info@pineridgehikingclub.ca](mailto:info@pineridgehikingclub.ca) and state how many tickets you need, which hike you want and provide names.

### ***Without the Shedding of Blood***

It has been said that religion is the first to be recruited in any war and that truth is war's first casualty. Such was the case during the War of 1812/14 here in Canada, as it is in wars today.

The war was strongly supported by members of the British administration and leading citizens in Upper Canada but most of the inhabitants tried to avoid the conflict as best they could. *Without the Shedding of Blood* recounts major events of the war but focuses on the opposing views and experiences of two individuals: the vigorously patriotic Rev John Strachan and Emma Barclay, a spirited young Quaker woman.

Performances at Lang Pioneer Village Museum on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30pm. Doors open at 6:30pm. For tickets call (705) 295 6694 or 1-866-289-5264. Advance Tickets are \$18, Students and seniors \$16, Youth \$10. At the door tickets are \$20, \$18 and \$12 respectively.

### ***Viewpoint Lecture Series***

The Viewpoint Series is held every other year as one of the Victoria Hall Volunteers' fundraisers and consists of a lecture on an interesting topic by a respected speaker four Wednesday evenings in October. The 2012 Viewpoint Series will be:

- Wednesday, October 3, Dr. Sarah Meharg, Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Royal Military College of Canada will speak on "Identicide: The Problem with Post-War Reconstruction"
- Wednesday, October 10, Dr. Lloyd C. Atkinson, economic and financial consultant, will speak on "The Global Debt Bomb: Crisis in Thinking or Reality"
- Wednesday, October 17, The Honourable Peter Milliken, 34th Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons, will speak on "The Role of the Speaker in a Minority Parliament"
- Wednesday, October 24, Dr. Miriam Kaufman, Professor of Pediatrics at the Hospital for Sick Children and the University of Toronto will speak on "If Teens Chose Their Sexual Partners in the Same Way They Decide on a New Phone: Some of the Issues Surrounding Adolescents, Including Social Media"

All presentations are in the Victoria Hall Concert Hall at 8 p.m. Tickets for the four-speaker View-point Series are \$50. Tickets are available at the Victoria Hall Box Office, (905)372-2210 and at the Avid Reader Book Store on Division Street, Cobourg.

### ***A Spirit Walk***

*A Spirit Walk* commemorates Pickering's role in the 1837 Rebellion. It will be presented at the Pickering Museum (3 kilometers east of Brock Road and west of Westney Road) on the evenings of September 14, 15, 21 and 22. Tickets are \$17.50. For further information phone (905) 683-8401.

### ***Indian Trail Marker Trees***

On September 28 Paul O'Hara, botanist and native plant expert, will speak on "Indian Trail Marker Trees in Southern Ontario" at the Willow Beach Field Naturalists meeting. The meeting is at 7:30pm in Le Van Hall at Trinity College School in Port Hope. Phone (905)377-9854 for further information.

## **CDHS Executive for 2012 – 2013**

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