

# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and  
District Historical Society

September 2014 — Issue 267

## Gathering Shadows

Richard Pope will kick off our new season with readings from his latest book, *Shadows Gathering*. The setting is Haliburton-Muskoka at the turn of the last century. A gifted writer, Richard has captured the language, homes, work and hardscrabble existence of the era.

We will hear about the interesting twist of fate that occasioned the author's discovery that a treasure trove of information was waiting to be uncovered in his cottage backyard, so to speak, but he had to be in another country to find this out!

The meeting begins at 7:30pm on September 23. We would like to encourage everyone to arrive early to enjoy coffee, tea and cookies. Take this opportunity to reconnect with members you haven't seen since the spring, catch up with friends, and introduce yourself to a new member. This is a meeting not to be missed. Visitors are welcome. See you September 23!

## Our Next Meeting

Dan Buchanan will be our guest in October, and will give a talk titled “The Dr. King Story”. Dan grew up on a farm north of Codrington, and now lives in Brighton. He is an avid historian and genealogist, and he publishes much of his research online at [www.treesbydan.com](http://www.treesbydan.com). The Dr. King Story is of particular interest to Dan because the notorious murderer was a distant cousin and lived on the same farm near Codrington where Dan grew up. In fact, Dr. King was buried in the front yard of that same house. Dan’s research into the life and circumstances of Dr. King includes a rich and fascinating history of the people of Brighton in the late 1850s.

## More Trivia!

Our third Annual Historical Trivia Night returns in November. Stay tuned for more details in the October newsletter.

## Membership Matters

### ***Membership Renewal***

All memberships not yet renewed are past due. Please mail your dues and membership renewal form to Alma Draper, 10 Madison Street, Cobourg, ON, K9A 5R2. You can also pay your dues at our September meeting.

### ***Historical Review***

Alison Torrie Lapaire would greatly appreciate help with preparing our *Historical Review* for publication. She is very busy with her new job and does not have the time to do it alone. If you are willing to help, please contact Alison at [alisontorrie@gmail.com](mailto:alisontorrie@gmail.com). She will be grateful!

### ***Look Through Your Bookshelves***

This season we will once again feature our popular sale of history-related books. Some interesting books that have already been donated for the sale are *Great Lakes Lighthouses Encyclopedia* and *A History of Canadian Gardening*. Please look through your bookshelves for any books you no longer want and make room for others you may want to buy! Bring them to the September and October meetings, for the sale to be held in November. Your generous donations will assist with our historical society’s operating costs.

# Our Previous Meeting

On June 3 almost 30 CDHS members enjoyed a cruise on the the Trent-Severn Waterway followed by a visit to the Peterborough Museum. The waterway extends 386 Km (210 miles) from Port Severn on Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario near Trenton. Much of this distance is natural waterway however there are about 20 miles of manmade channel together with 45 locks and 39 swing bridges. Construction of the system began in 1833 with the building of a lock near Bobcaygeon. However



progress was slow and it was not until 1920 that a boat could travel from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron via Georgian Bay. Although the waterway was used to move timber and other material, its commercial usage was greatly diminished when the Welland Canal was

completed in 1932. Today the waterway is used almost exclusively for recreational purposes.





# Who Was Percy Climo?

*Judith Goulin*

If you are interested in local history, then most likely you have come across one of Percy Climo's books. But who was he? What was the measure of the man? How to define him?

This local legend was an enthusiastic historian among other things. He was indefatigable, a man of vision who was most generous with his time and skills. Percy was a great man, much loved and respected in the Cobourg community. When Percy Climo spoke, people listened.

Percy Climo was born in Cobourg in 1906 and lived a long and productive life, practically until the millennium. Percy's profession was engineering, but his avocation was history. His career took him to several other places, but in his retirement he returned to the area. Utilising his engineering skills, he advised with the construction of the Cobourg Bandshell in Victoria Park and developed a very ambitious plan for the development of the Cobourg Harbour.

Taking it easy in his later years was not his style. In his retirement he wrote books of local history and compiled many census indexes. The Cobourg Public Library lists over 30 publications by Climo. Some titles you may know are: *Early Cobourg*, *Cobourg 1914--1918*, *I Cover the Waterfront* and *The Honourable James Cockburn*. What a great legacy of history he has left us.

Here's a thought. Let's continue the kind of work that Mr. Climo did. Go to the library and spend a morning or an afternoon in the Local History Room. Peruse the books there and flip through the historical files in the filing cabinet in the back room. When you find something that interests you, write a short article for this newsletter. The newsletter editor will thank you.



# Daylight-Saving First Came to Cobourg

(Written by Murray R. Smith and originally published in *Cobourg 1798 -- 1948*)

When you glance up at the Town Hall clock, which is now very modern with an electric mechanism operated from a master clock, you may recall the old days when the town clock used to strike the wrong hour occasionally depending on its temperamental whimsy. If a citizen in the west end of town set his watch from the clock face visible to him, and proceeded to keep an appointment with somebody in the east end, the disparity between the hours recorded on the east and west clock faces often caused inconvenience; and the north and the south faces were sometimes not in agreement with either of the others.

A good story used to go the rounds in Cobourg, and it suggests that the town can boast of being the first in Canada to observe Daylight-Saving Time, although the distinction was not claimed by the citizens of the eighteen-seventies when the event occurred. It all had to do with the winding of the town clock and a prank played by Harry Pringle and Andrew Hewson, Cobourg youths of the time.

The official winder was Harry Pringle, son of Alexander Pringle, jeweller. Pringle shared the secret of this important duty with his chum Hewson, and both were members of the old No. 2 Company of the Fire Brigade. They owned boats, and like the rest of the younger people of the town, enjoyed an evening's sail off the beach whenever they were let off work in time.

It was quite an event in those days to go out on the East Pier-or better yet, out in a boat-and meet the Montreal steamer when it passed Cobourg at seven o'clock in the evening. But the trouble was that the stores remained open until that hour and prevented these two young gallants from regularly meeting the boat.

They got around that difficulty, however, by ingeniously adjusting the town clock. Starting the first of May they moved the clock on five minutes a week, not enough to be noticeable. By June the Montreal boat was apparently running about twenty-five minutes behind schedule, enabling young Pringle and Hewson to get out on the lake in time! Years afterwards Daylight-Saving time came into vogue, but Cobourg, even though unwittingly, was the first to inaugurate it!

## Plus ça change...

Gentlemen:

I am directed by the Council of the Cobourg Chamber of Commerce to advise you we are greatly surprised to learn of the decision of the Town Council to proceed with the installation of parking meters in Cobourg despite the strongest opposition of this Chamber of Commerce.

At the last regular meeting of this Chamber, held on 17 May last, it was our understanding that the Retail Merchants Division were to meet with the Town Council to discuss the question of the installation of parking meters in Cobourg. Apparently no consideration has been given this proposal.

We feel that this matter had been dealt with in undue haste for the following reasons:

- a) The citizens of Cobourg most vitally affected by this measure, namely the retail merchants, have been utterly ignored.
- b) The installation of parking meters in Cobourg, we believe, will prove contrary to the wishes of the majority of the citizens.
- c) Cobourg is extremely well equipped with parking facilities and an adequate by-law, properly enforced, would solve all parking problems. In consequence, we believe the installation of parking meters is absolutely unnecessary and quite uncalled for.

- d) The installation of parking meters will, we believe, prove extremely detrimental to the best interests of the town if only for the reason that farmers and people from neighbouring rural areas, who spend much money in town, will avoid coming to Cobourg. Furthermore, summer tourists will not stop but will pass on through.
- e) On the surface, this matter appears to have been dealt with in a manner open to the gravest suspicion.

In view of the foregoing it is suggested that before final steps are taken to have these parking meters erected, the entire matter be reconsidered and discussed.

In view of the fact that this entire question appears to have been rushed through without any opinion having been sought of the Cobourg Chamber of Commerce nor of the Retail Merchants' Division of this Chamber, we are, of necessity, constrained to forward copies of this letter to the Press.

I have the honor to remain,

Yours very truly

A.N.K Hobbs,  
Secretary-Manager

The above letter is reproduced from the front page of the *Cobourg Sentinel-Star* of May 30, 1946. At the time the feeling was prevalent that Cobourg Council was not heeding the desires of the people regarding matters such as installing parking meters in the downtown. The City Council ignored the strenuous protests of the merchants and other groups and installed meters which were subsequently removed. Déjà vu all over again as Yogi would say?

# Where the Hull?

*Judith Goulin*

During the early 1800s, there were already three distinct communities in the area we now know as Cobourg. One of them was the rapidly growing community immediately north of Lake Ontario that became Cobourg. To the west was Amherst and to the north, around Division Street and Highway 401, was Hull's Corners. In that era all of the communities were part of Hamilton Township. When Cobourg was established in 1837, the new town amalgamated both of the other communities, Amherst and Hull's Corners.

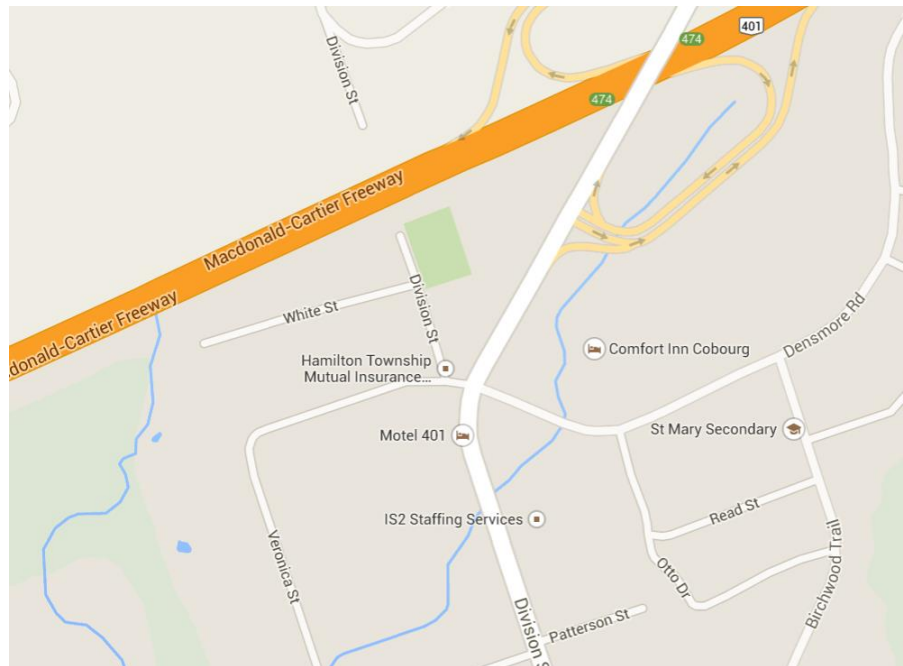
Very little recorded history has been preserved and not much physical evidence remains of Hull's Corners. Long gone are its first chapel, a brick kiln, a frame building that was a private school, its houses and probably a tavern.

The Hull's Corners community had its heyday in the early decades of the 1800s. It was named after Edward Hull, a tavern keeper. In 1820 an Episcopal Methodist chapel was built, the first such church in Hamilton Township. One of its founders was John McCarthy. The chapel was colloquially referred to as McCarthy's or the Back Chapel. The school was taught by Mr. E.C. Hull in the 1840s who was, presumably, also the tavern-keeper.

There are, however, a few significant remnants of Hull's Corners still in existence: Hull's Corners Old Methodist Cemetery and the sturdy brick Episcopal Methodist Chapel built in 1867 to

replace the earlier one. This chapel, located at 1186 Division St., is now a residence. With its bricks painted pale green and many modifications over the years, it is no longer recognizable as a place of worship. The cemetery is well-hidden, but the entrance is obvious beside the green house.

To get to the Hull's Corners area, turn west



on to Veronica Street at the intersection of Division and Densmore Streets. Veronica Street is now the west extension of Densmore. Turn immediately right or north at Division and look for the green house on the right. These directions may sound confusing, but it is important to keep in

mind that Division St. has been greatly altered over many years of development. Originally Division ran almost as straight as an arrow in an unbroken line from Lake Ontario to Dale Rd.

If only dead men could talk, what stories they might tell! Next time you drive along Division St. near Highway 401, pause to imagine the community of Hull's Corners. Visit the cemetery. Listen carefully. Spend some time reading the gravestones. Perhaps in the silence you will hear further tales of this vanished settlement.

**Sources:**

<i>Rolling Hills of Northumberland, A County History</i>	County of Northumberland
<i>Cobourg 1798-1948</i>	Edwin C. Guillet
<i>Early Cobourg</i>	Percy Climo

## Announcements

### ***Small Town Radio***

Small Town Radio is looking for programs created by local community personalities and groups, and the CDHS is very interested in participating. This is a great opportunity we have to present Northumberland's history in a fun way. Contact Carla Jones at (289)252-1684 or email [cgrucelajones@gmail.com](mailto:cgrucelajones@gmail.com) if you would like to participate in bringing our history to the air.



### ***Lakeshore Genealogical Society***

The Lakeshore Genealogical Society has scheduled the following meetings:

- September 11 *Great Moments in Genealogy*, our version of Show and Tell, members present what they've learned or worked on over the summer. The new CEO of the Cobourg Library, Tammy Robinson, will bring greetings. This is also the Annual General Meeting.
- October 9 *Maritime history in Kingston and Cobourg* presented by guest speaker Ron Walsh
- November 13 *Locked in the Library* is a presentation organized by the library staff to familiarize everyone with the 1921 Canadian Census
- December 11 *The Dr. King Story* presented by guest speaker Dan Buchanan

All meetings are from 6:30pm in the Rotary Room, Cobourg Public Library, C. Gordon King Centre, 200 Ontario St., Cobourg. Visitors are welcome.

### ***Heritage House Tour***

The Association to Protect Amherst Island is sponsoring a tour of heritage properties on Amherst Island on Saturday, September 27, from 10am to 4pm. For further details visit their website at [www.protectamherstisland.com](http://www.protectamherstisland.com) or email to [protectai@kos.net](mailto:protectai@kos.net).

## CDHS Executive for 2014 – 2015

President	Judith Goulin	<a href="mailto:jgoulin@hotmail.com">jgoulin@hotmail.com</a> (905) 372-7684
Past President	Ken Strauss	<a href="mailto:ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca">ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca</a> (905) 377-9854
Vice-President	Ken Willcocks	<a href="mailto:kenwillcocks@hotmail.com">kenwillcocks@hotmail.com</a> (905) 377-1309
Secretary	Carla Jones	<a href="mailto:cgrucelajones@gmail.com">cgrucelajones@gmail.com</a> (289) 252-1684
Treasurer	Marilyn Harris	<a href="mailto:robertharris7456@gmail.com">robertharris7456@gmail.com</a> (905) 373-7024
Membership	Alma Draper	<a href="mailto:adraper8@cogeco.ca">adraper8@cogeco.ca</a> (905) 372-5839
Programme	Alison Torrie	<a href="mailto:alisontorrie@gmail.com">alisontorrie@gmail.com</a> (905) 269-8094
Member-at-Large	Leona Woods	<a href="mailto:leonawoods@sympatico.ca">leonawoods@sympatico.ca</a> (905) 372-7624
Newsletter Editor	Ken Strauss	<a href="mailto:ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca">ken.strauss@pebblebeach.ca</a> (905) 377-9854