

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District

Historical Society

March 2025 — Issue 354

What are Rebellion Boxes?

Rebellion boxes are small, handcrafted wooden boxes made by prisoners from the Rebellion of 1837 as they awaited in jail for their trials. Retired teacher Darryl Withrow will present these unique artifacts and their fascinating stories at our March meeting.



Darryl first encountered rebellion boxes almost 20 years ago at a display of the palm-sized boxes at St. Lawrence Market in downtown Toronto. This discovery ignited a passion in Darryl and his wife, leading them on an ongoing quest to find these boxes and uncover the stories of the men who crafted them. What began as a display of thirty-nine boxes has now grown into a collection of 158, accompanied by an ever-expanding knowledge of the brave individuals involved in the Rebellion of 1837.

Darryl has been a dedicated volunteer at the Pickering Museum Village, where he played a key role in rebuilding their Woodwright Guild and worked onsite to maintain and repair their buildings. Since moving to Port Hope, he and his wife have continued their volunteer efforts at Lang Pioneer Village and are eagerly exploring the many opportunities available at this site.

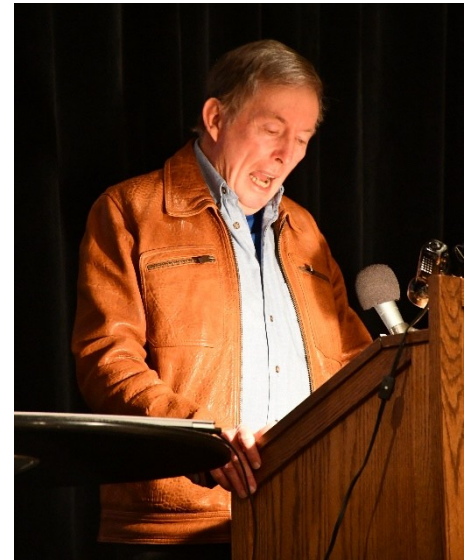
Join us on **Tuesday, March 18, 2025, (Note that this is a week earlier than our customary fourth Tuesday meetings to accommodate other users of Victoria Hall.)** for an informative presentation at Cobourg's Victoria Hall. Doors open at 7:00 pm, and the meeting starts at 7:30 pm. All are welcome. There will be coffee, tea, and the usual cookies, so bring a friend or two! Members attend for free, and guests are \$5.00.

Our Previous Meeting

Crime and Punishment in Northumberland

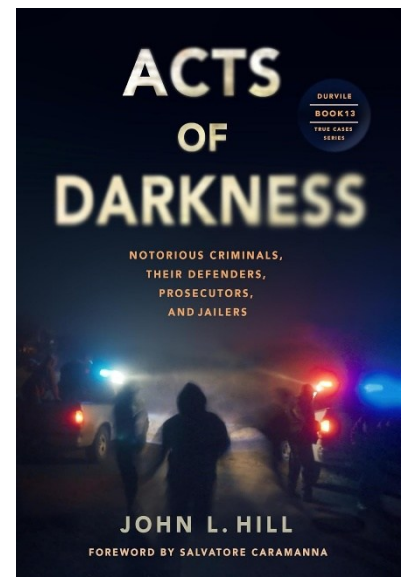
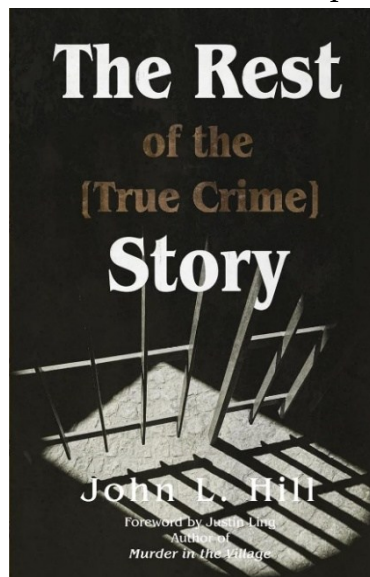
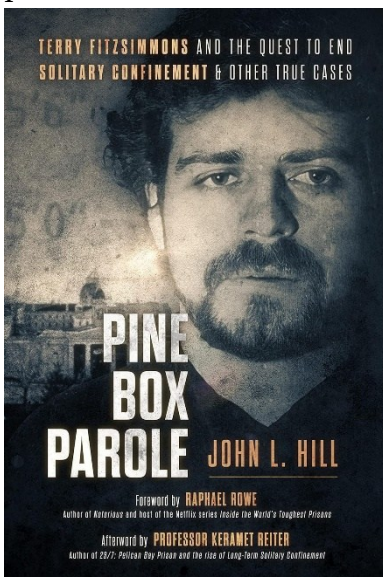
There have been four correctional centres in Northumberland County: the Cobourg Jail, Brookside Training School, Millbrook Institution, and Warkworth Institution. Only one remains. The histories of these prisons and their practices point to society’s limited knowledge of how to rehabilitate prisoners and mould them into functioning members of society.

Our presenter, Cobourg resident John L. Hill has practiced his specialty of prison law in each of the four correctional centres. He taught Prison Law at Queen’s and in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Windsor. For most of his career he was engaged in private law practice defending those accused of major crimes such as murder and drug conspiracies.



With the dozens of popular crime-oriented TV shows most are familiar with the work of investigators, lawyers, jurors and judges. However, few are aware of what happens after sentencing. Much of Hill’s presentation focused on the cruel punishments of the convicted including poor food, beatings by guards and other prisoners, lengthy solitary confinement and crowding to mention only a few. Rather than rehabilitation, the result is sometimes the mercy of suicide and resultant “pine box parole.”

To learn much more about prison life and possible improvements to the treatment of prisoners, John’s books are available both from local shops and from Amazon.



Future Events of Our 2025 Program

<p><i>What are Rebellion Boxes?</i> to be presented by Darryl Withrow. Rebellion boxes are some of the most prized artifacts in the Sharon Temple's collection. These small wooden boxes were handcrafted by prisoners from the Rebellion of 1837 as they waited in jail for their trials.</p>	<p>Tuesday, March 18, 2025*</p>
<p><i>CDHS Annual General Meeting</i> followed by <i>British Home Children</i>. Marg Graham and Dianne Conway will tell the home children's stories, dreams, nightmares and their contributions to life in Canada.</p>	<p>Tuesday, April 22, 2025</p>
<p>Dinner and presentation by author Gord Pitts. On December 30, 1905, Frank Steunenberg, the former governor of Idaho was murdered by a bomb set at his home. The assassin was a mystery man who was traced to his roots in Brighton, Ontario, and to a string of murders, frauds and cons that would make him the most notorious criminal of his time. Further details of time and place will be available nearer to the meeting date.</p>	<p>Tuesday, May 27, 2025</p>

***Some of our meetings have been rescheduled from the usual fourth Tuesday to accommodate usage of Victoria Hall by other groups.**

First Paving of King Street

Percy Lloyd Climo

The process of getting elected to municipal council can be very exciting. For those who sit on council for the first time, a whole new world of detail, routine involvement and fascinating procedures opens to them. It takes weeks and months of meetings to get accustomed to the maze, the network of intricate paths that must be followed in order to meet the requirements of municipal law. For those who have never been a member of council, I sometimes wonder how they can grasp, let alone understand this wide spectrum of municipal activity and detailed involvement, let alone vote intelligently on some complex issue. Council members are elected to learn the procedures and to make the necessary decisions.

This writer has been elected to local government five times. I was elected twice in Smith's Falls and three out of four elections in the former Grantham Township, now St. Catherines. I do have a bit of insight on what municipal politics is all about.

Immediately following WWI, the Cobourg town councils had a number of issues to deal with. One of these issues was the need to have King Street paved, a dirt-gravel road that was becoming harder to maintain yet serve the increasing traffic of Highway 2 to eliminate the mud of spring and dust of summer. The subject of paving had been around for some time,

but the war years had diverted any such projects. Money was scarce too. The town was still carrying the burden of the consolidated debt, acquired back in the 1850's. The Town Trust a local legal organization that controlled Cobourg's finances from 1850 to 1900, was not around now to tell councils how much they could spend. Nevertheless, councils were very much aware of the financial picture and tried hard to control their spending. Large projects, such as the paving of King Street, received much debate, and several deferments.

The subject received much attention from the 1921 Council. Estimates of costs were received from the consulting engineers. Again, much debate took place. The year 1921 saw full employment and high prices. A petition was received from King Street ratepayers against doing the paving. The decision was made to defer the work for another year when prices would be lowered. Can anyone imagine our present generation looking ahead to times of deflation? That is what happened in 1921!!

Early in the year 1922, the subject of paving King Street was again a hot issue. Newspaper talk argued much on how costs of the work should be distributed. They argued that the ratepayers of King Street should pay for the construction and not burden the whole town.

In April, four tenders were received for the paving job of King Street and the necessary installations that went along with the job. The area covered was from Ontario Street to the eastern town boundary which was then a bit east of present-day Abbott Boulevard. The total cost of the work was \$127,000, including engineering fees.

In June the contract was awarded to the Warren Paving Company. The consulting engineers were James, Proctor and Redfern, of Toronto. The same firm of today is known as the Redfern Group. Work was started immediately. Much of it was done by hand labour, there were no back-hoe machines for setting grades, etc. That summer, I walked many miles up and down King Street. It was then that I decided to train for an engineer. That decision was followed and a lifetime of engineering experience ensued.

The boys of the Factory Hill of that time had no playground, no organization to give leadership for youthful sports. We moved to the lakeshore and made the lake our playground, centred at Burnham Street. There we made our own crude, flat bottomed boats. We built diving towers in the open lake that withstood any storm but were destroyed by ice. We had a ball!

Just east of Burnham Street was a large accumulation of gravel and stone. The Warren Paving Company took over this beach, building a ramp planked road off Burnham Street and right past the front door of our dugout. Here they set up a stone crusher, a classification bin, a

conveyor, and a clam shovel. They cleaned out the beach for aggregate in their paving. Material was hauled to the site by trucks and stockpiled on adjacent side streets.

After excavation of the road, a large moveable batch paver mixer mixed the sand, stone and cement into concrete. Little dump motorized hopper trucks brought the measured aggregate from roadside stockpiles to the hopper of the mixer, The mixed concrete was run out for the levelling crews on a crane trolley bucket. Six inches of concrete formed the road base. Three inches of asphalt top, laid down and rolled, in two separate layers, gave the pavement the finished surface. Concrete curbs were placed before the main concrete paving. It was all a big job for Cobourg and by late fall the town had a new paved road from Ontario Street to the eastern town limits.

This article was originally published in the *Saturday Morning Post* for September 2, 1989.

Percy Lloyd Climo (1906–1991) was born in Cobourg to Elizabeth and Henry Climo. He left for Queen’s University in 1927 and earned an Engineering degree in 1931. Returning to Cobourg in 1973, he researched local history and authored three books on Cobourg’s history. Climo passed away at 84 years in 1991.

Member Matters

A Patron for the CDHS

A Patron will advocate for the importance of taking pride in Cobourg’s history and will help us to preserve and increase the knowledge of our citizens.

After careful consideration, your Executive concluded that the role of Patron should always be available and should be filled by the Office of the Mayor of Cobourg. We are delighted to announce that Mayor Cleveland not only agreed to this role but also felt honored to be our very first Patron.

At our April Annual General Meeting we will include a motion to formalize the new position of Patron. If approved, Mayor Cleveland will open and address the first meeting of our 2025-2026 program in September.

We believe that selecting a patron represents a significant step to preserving our heritage. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this new position, please feel free to



contact any of our executives via email or telephone. Their contact information is on the last page of this newsletter. We look forward to hearing your thoughts!

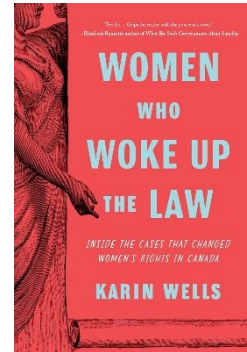
New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest CDHS members: Joanne Bonebakker, Herb and Debbie Tink, Stephen Cameron, Michelle Fobert, Dale and Jackie Rasmussen, Matt Rea and Norman Quinn.

Announcements

Women Who Woke Up the Law

Karin Wells's latest book features stories of various Canadian women — waitresses, teachers, secretaries, nurses aides — who found themselves in court asking for half the ranch, or a new definition of equality, or a divorce or defending themselves against a charge of murder. They are the women who brought about change when they dug in their heels. The book's launch will be on Saturday, March 8 at 2pm, upstairs in the Port Hope Library. Mayor Martin of Cramahe will be the interviewer.



March Lakeshore Genealogical Society

The March LGS meeting, *On the Backs of Babes: Researching British Home Children*, will feature guest speaker Christine Woodcock. Over 100,000 children were sent to Canada from Great Britain. The idea behind this scheme was to reduce the number of poor children who were living in workhouses or whose parents could no longer afford to feed and house them. These youngsters were sent to Canada to work on farms as indentured servants. The boys worked as farm hands and the girls worked as domestic servants.

All are welcome to participate in the meeting on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 7:30pm but they must pre-register for this Zoom only event via email to LGSregister@gmail.com

April Lakeshore Genealogical Society

The April LGS meeting, *Exploring Library and Archives Canada Online*, features guest speaker Ken McKinlay. The website for Library and Archives Canada has undergone numerous recent changes. This hour-long talk will explore the new site, touch upon using the new census search system, and explore other resources added for researchers.

A sought-after speaker by genealogy societies across Canada, Ken McKinlay shares his expertise through engaging talks and workshops. His topics have included researching those who have fought for Canada in the world wars, exploring the Canadian censuses, delving into the mysteries of Ontario Land Records, and an eight-part series covering "Back to Basics" research for the British Isles. His presentations also focus on genealogical methodologies and overcoming genealogy brick walls. Beyond public speaking, Ken shares

his insights on his blog at <https://familytreeknots.blogspot.com/> which provides valuable resource for fellow enthusiasts.

All are welcome to participate in the meeting on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 7:30pm but they must pre-register for this Zoom only event via email to LGSregister@gmail.com

Trent Valley Archives Theatre

Trent Valley Archives Theatre is producing a fundraising sequel to last year's hit play *Tide of Hope! Crossing Over* will be performed at the Market Hall Performing Arts Centre in Peterborough on the evenings of May 29, 30 and 31 at 7:30pm and the afternoon of May 31 at 2pm. The play follows a family aboard an emigrant transport ship as they set sail for their new life in Canada. Visit <https://tickets.markethall.org/eventperformances.asp?evt=433> for further details and to purchase tickets.

Mayors + One Challenge

Three former Mayors of Cobourg plus a friend are challenging the Museum Foundation to help them raise \$6,000 in support of the Museum's Permanent Cobourg History Exhibit. For every dollar donated in their name the Mayors + One will donate another dollar. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/MayorsPlusOne> for more information.



History Resources

Ontario Historical Society

The Ontario Historical Society publishes a wealth of scholarly information on the history of Ontario in their *Ontario History Journal*. For example, their Fall 2023 publication was devoted to research on the 1838 Upper Canadian Rebellion and its aftermath. That issue can be read at <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/onhistory/2023-v115-n2-onhistory08762/> Visit <https://www.erudit.org/> to locate articles of interest in back issues of *Ontario History Journal* and other publications.

Ontario Historical Plaques

Alan Brown, a retired school librarian, has created a website, www.ontarioplaques.com, devoted to Ontario's historical plaques. This site contains over 1500 pages, each with a photo of a plaque, a location map, the plaque's text, links of interest and comments from visitors. Plaques can be located through an index, a subject list, a locations list and by a search box.

Historical Marker Database

If your interests lie further afield, visit <https://www.hmdb.org/>. This site has information on over 230,000 markers worldwide of which about 5,300 are in Canada. You can search for markers by marker topic, keyword and location. If enabled in your browser there is even a choice to find all markers near to your current location!

Who is that Bearded Man Looking Down on Us?

John Jolie

A sculpted head hangs above the doorway in Victoria Hall. It has been gazing over people who venture inside the “Grand Old Lady of King Street” for a century and a half. Who does that sandstone head represent? That bearded head was chiseled in a lot across from Victoria Hall, as were the stone carvings of Scottish thistle, Irish lyre and English rose that adorn the building. A close examination of the wall shows the strata of rock, the lines of ancient sand deposits that settled on the seabed that covered Ohio several hundred million years ago. (Our area was also in that sea).



Immediately above the carved stone head is the old Cobourg coat of arms. A steamship is on the emblem. We built a few such boats and the lake was an important transportation link for Cobourg. Three fish illustrate the importance of fishing. Of course, farming sustained us. British symbols of lions, the Scottish lyre are found on the walls. Now, if you want a definitive answer about the identity of that head over the door, you should stop reading this, now. I don't know! However, I can summarize what others have thought over the years. *Cobourg Star* writer, Kevin Stevenson wrote about the trial of Dr. King in a few articles in June of 1978. Stevenson talked to descendants of Dr. King and they firmly believed that the head was the face of their “black sheep” ancestor. The doctor was hung on June 9th, 1859 and Victoria Hall opened on September 7th, 1860. The entrance was possibly among the last of the details to be completed on the outside. The timelines do not rule out Dr. King as the figure above the door. Edwin Guillet, the prolific writer of local history, wrote an article in the 1940's that the head probably represented Neptune, the God of the Sea. Neptune was a commonly carved figure.



There were no photographs taken of Dr. King, so we cannot compare them. A sketch of Dr. King in Guillet's book (*Cobourg 1798-1948*) suggests a vague similarity. The sculptor never recorded who he was portraying in his stone. So, whose face is on the building? Maybe you can make up a good story and incorporate it into the ghost walk tours.

The text of this article was originally published in the 2008 *Historical Review* #20.

Canadian General Service Silver Medal: Fenian Raid 1866



Samuel Fowler (1848-1911) was born at Goosehill, near Wakefield, Yorkshire. Samuel's father, John Fowler, was a successful "Contractor of Publick Works" in Yorkshire, UK and was invited in 1850 to come to Cobourg to complete the C&PR Railway across Rice Lake.



In later life, Samuel Fowler was a Canadian veteran who advocated for awarding a medal to those who had opposed the Fenian incursion from the United States. Eventually, in 1899, a medal was awarded to all members of the Imperial and Canadian forces who had taken part in the suppression of the Fenian raids of 1866 and 1870 or Riel's First Rebellion of 1870. Fowler was accordingly awarded the Canadian General Service Medal (pictured above) for his services. His coveted medal, engraved "Pte. S. Fowler", was recently offered on eBay by a Niagara Falls based coin and collectibles dealer for US \$599.99 plus shipping.

For further details of the Fowler family's impact on Cobourg and area visit <https://www.redriverancestry.ca/FOWLER-SAMUEL-1848.php>

Recent CDHS Meetings

For those who were unable to attend, videos of our recent meetings are available online:

Meeting Date	Link to Meeting Video
September 2024	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rYVUJdIENw
October 2024	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZggXbyOxbM
November 2024	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXiRv_TNk0w
January 2025	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7baHeZTTHtw
February 2025	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIgXDHab9io

Changes coming to Northumberland County Archives

The Northumberland County Archives and Museum (NCAM) is adjusting their services as they prepare to move to a new location later this year. NCAM's non-mandatory archival services, including research assistance and genealogical services, will be temporarily unavailable to allow staff to focus on preparing the collection for the move and setting up their new facility.

This fall, NCAM will be moving to a new location as part of an innovative collaboration with the County's new long-term care facility, the Golden Plough Lodge. This new facility will offer enhanced programming opportunities for the community, increased access to local historical and cultural collections and state-of-the-art archival conservation equipment to better preserve Northumberland's history.

As staff prepare for this move, they will organize, catalogue and ensure the safe packaging and transportation of over 530 linear metres of archival materials and hundreds of artifacts. During this transition period, staff will also begin preparations to open their new location, including setting up the facility and preparing exhibits for the museum space.

"This transition period marks an important step toward the opening of our new facility," states Northumberland County Archivist Abigail Miller. "We thank everyone for their understanding as we work behind the scenes to get the collection ready for its future home. We are very excited to welcome the community to the new space this fall and we encourage those who are interested in staying up-to-date with the move to follow the NCAM Facebook page @NCAMofficial for updates."

NCAM's last day open to the public in their current location was February 21, 2025. All requests for research that are currently underway will be completed. However, new requests for research assistance will not be accepted until NCAM reopens at their new location in the fall.

Essential services, including requests related to government records and FOI requests, will continue to be processed throughout the transition period.

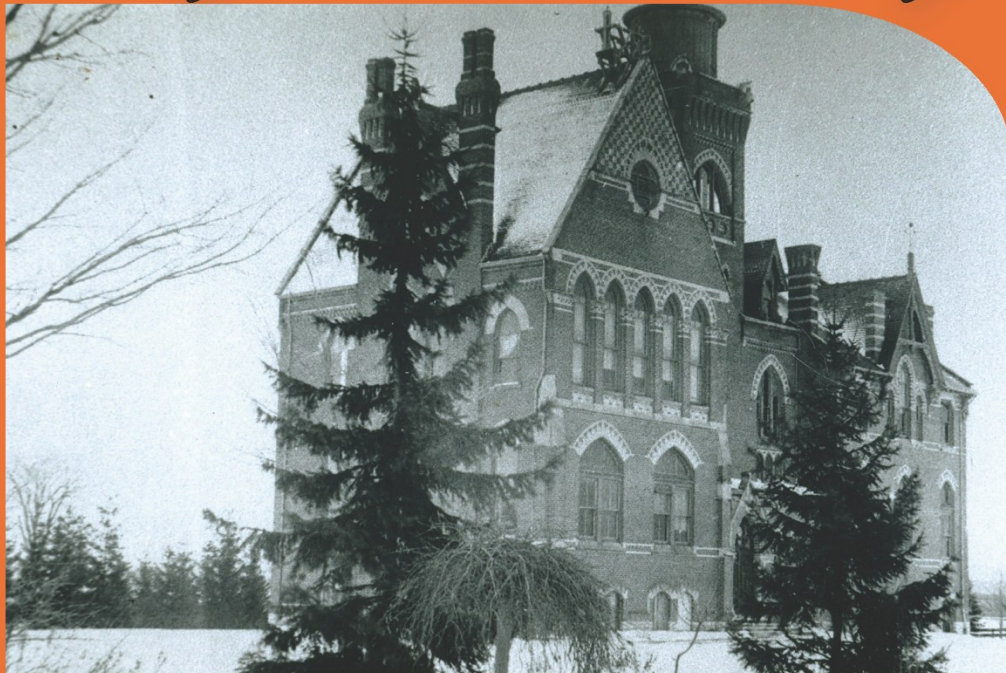
For any questions or concerns about these temporary changes to NCAM services, please contact the NCAM team by emailing ncam@northumberland.ca.

To learn more about NCAM and their new location which will be opening this fall, visit <https://www.northumberland.ca/en/discovering-and-exploring/northumberland-county-archives.aspx>.

MONDAY MARCH 3RD 7PM

Cobourg's Architecture &
History Lecture Series presents:

Cobourg's Lost Heritage



Join us for a fascinating presentation by Rob Mikel, historian and see why The Globe and Mail once called Cobourg "the prettiest town in Canada".

You'll be amazed at the stunning architecture, gardens and streetscapes that existed in Cobourg and have now been lost to posterity.

Discuss why it is imperative to retain and enhance what still exists and build our future on the foundations of our past.

INTERMISSION: REFRESHMENTS & WINE BAR



ARCHITECTURAL
CONSERVANCY
ONTARIO

COBOURG & EAST
NORTHUMBERLAND

Concert Hall, Victoria Hall

*55 King Street West, Cobourg
March 3rd 7pm
Doors open 6:30pm*

*Tickets available at Victoria Hall Box office
905-372-2210 or at the door.
Online: experiencecobourg.ca*

\$20 ACO members; \$25 non-members

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