

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District

Historical Society

April 2025 — Issue 355

British Home Children

From the late 1860s until 1948, approximately 118,000 children of various ages were emigrated to Canada to serve as indentured farm workers and domestics. These children, known as the Home Children, were sent by numerous organizations, including charities such as the Salvation Army. Although Canadians believed these children to be orphans, only about two percent actually were. Today, more than ten percent of Canadians are descendants of these Home Children; many of whom are unaware of their heritage.



The children were sent to Canadian farms under contracts whose terms required that children be housed, fed, clothed, and sent to school. A small fee would be paid for fostering younger children, older children would help with chores, and more extended labour would be required from adolescents. At 18, the terms of indenture were to be discharged. The clean, fresh air of a Canadian farm was seen as a far better alternative to living in the slums of a large city

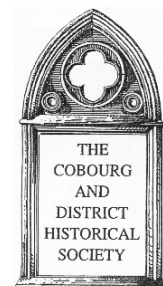
Marg Graham and Dianne Cosway, both residents of Trent Hills, will present details of the lives of the Home Children and their contributions to Canada. Marg has spent considerable time researching her family history, including her grandmother, Mary Mortimer, who eventually settled in Hastings, Ontario. Since retiring, Dianne has dedicated her time to researching her father-in-law, who was abandoned as an infant and sent to Canada to work as a farm-hand.

Join us on **Tuesday, April 22, 2025**, 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.

Dinner & Skulduggery

The Bigamist Brighton Bomber

The Legion Village Pub, 111 Hibernia Street
Tuesday, May 27, 2025 - 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Sit Down Dinner, Dessert, Coffee, Tea - \$25 per person
Bar open for Pop or Alcohol (extra charge)
Featured Speaker - Everyone is welcome



Speaker Gordon Pitts is a former senior writer for the *Globe and Mail's Report on Business* and author of seven books.

On December 30, 1905 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. Hear all about another famous Canadian?!?

Turkey Meatloaf

Ground turkey herbs and spices wrapped in bacon & topped with turkey gravy. Served with Colcannon potatoes & vegetable

Fish & Chips

1 Piece Haddock fillet, hand dipped in beer batter. Served with fresh cut French fries, lemon wedge & tartar sauce

Guinness Braised Beef & Mushroom Pie

Tender braised beef, mushrooms, carrots, potatoes, celery and onions simmered in Guinness stout & topped with a golden puff pastry cap

Vegetarian Shepherd's Pie (Vegan)

A medley of garden vegetables and vegetable gravy topped with Colcannon potatoes

If you plan to attend, **please email Carla Jones** at cgrucelajones@gmail.com **including your name, number of attendees and your menu choice(s)**. Payment via e-transfer to brianincobourg@gmail.com, or cheque mailed to P.O. Box 911, Cobourg ON K9A 4W4 or at the door with exact change.

Our Previous Meeting

What are Rebellion Boxes?

Rebellion boxes are small, handcrafted wooden boxes made by prisoners from the Rebellion of 1837 as they waited in jail for their trials. At our March meeting retired teacher Darryl Withrow, with assistance from his wife Chris, presented the fascinating story of these unique artifacts.

Darryl summarized the causes of the Rebellion of 1837 and then shared many fascinating details of the subsequent incarcerations and trials.

Darryl first learned of rebellion boxes almost 20 years ago from a display of these palm-sized artifacts at St. Lawrence Market in downtown Toronto. Since then he has studied rebellion boxes, collected examples, co-authored a book on them and made dozens of reproduction boxes in his woodworking shop. What began as an intriguing display of thirty-nine boxes has now grown into a personal collection



of 158 boxes, accompanied by an ever-expanding knowledge of the brave individuals involved in the Rebellion of 1837. Several skilled craftsmen were among those awaiting their trials. Using tools smuggled into prison they created elegant boxes with dovetailed sliding lids from fire-



wood. The boxes were then adorned with text from classical plays, poetry and various slogans of defiance using pens with the recently invented steel nibs. Darryl meticulously reproduces these

boxes by carefully measuring the originals and carving accurate copies. He photographs the text on the originals and creates silk screen stencils to print the text. To allow for delicate shading, the sketches on the originals are reproduced using pencil rather than ink.

Future Events of Our 2025 Program

CDHS <i>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.	Tuesday, April 22, 2025
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. For full details, see page 2 of this newsletter. Make your reservations today for a fun evening!	Tuesday, May 27, 2025

Member Matters

Thanks!

CDHS received an anonymous donation via Canada Helps. Thanks!

New Members

Please join me in welcoming our newest CDHS family members: Ralph and Norma Stoffers.

Announcements

Hastings County Historical Society

Camp Picton: Wartime to Peacetime Ian Robertson will provide an insightful look at Camp Picton during WWII where thousands of airmen from across the British Empire trained in bombing and gunnery. Tuesday, April 15, 2025 at 7pm, Maranatha Church Auditorium, 100 College Street West, Belleville.

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.

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.



CDHS-LGS Joint Event

The Cobourg and District Historical Society and the Lakeshore Genealogical Society will hold a joint event in the Cobourg Library from 11:00–3:30 on May 3. Dan Buchanan will provide a presentation on the story of the Murray Canal at 2:00pm.

Recent CDHS Meetings

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

<i>Meeting Date</i>	<i>Link to Meeting Video</i>
September 2024	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rYVUJdlENw
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
March 2025	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YitEaDWpO0U

Unfortunate Asa

Judith Goulin

“There’s a story behind Danforth Road, a tale of a shady contractor who had a rocky relationship with the colonial government that hired him. When it was all over, Asa Danforth wished he’d never set foot in Upper Canada.” {Tom Cruickshank}

It was 1792 when Danforth got wind of Governor John Graves Simcoe’s plan to create an inland road eastward from the burgeoning town of the new capital, York, that would connect it to Kingston. Asa was granted the contract to build this road with the agreement that he would be paid at the rate of \$90.00 per completed mile. His mission, as mandated by his employers, was “To avoid obstacles and build the road as quickly as possible.”

Work commenced in the summer of 1799. The first leg of the construction seemed like a breeze compared to what happened later. Asa and his crew began the task of cutting trees from virgin forest to create a path that was to be 33 feet wide, as stipulated in his contract. Imagine what felling trees must have been like in this early era. Within the 33 feet of the future road, 16.5 feet had to be graded well enough for wagons and sleighs to traverse. In addition, the crew also had to build bridges and flatten steep slopes. Remarkably, by the end of December, only a scant six months later, the road was completed as far as Port Hope.

However, when the road work was inspected, there was no good news. The inspector claimed that the bridges were unsafe, some of the slopes were still too steep, especially at the Rouge Valley, there were hollows that needed to be filled in and countless stumps that had to be removed.

The following spring, before Asa and his crew could move forward to build the next stretch of road, they had to take care of the outstanding problems. Then, despite the road work continuing to advance eastward, the government insisted that the work was still inferior and refused to pay Asa for his labours.

Both bitter and broke, Asa returned to his home in Syracuse, where he was swiftly confronted by those to whom he owed money. Unable to pay up, he was put into debtors' prison. Following his release, Asa negotiated with Upper Canada's government to complete the road project. Once again he and his crew were hired. Unbelievably, Asa's road reached Kingston in 1802.

In spite of completing the road, Danforth was never fully paid the entire sum of money owing to him. He returned to his home in Syracuse for the last time, broken not only in spirit, but flat-broke, never to set foot in Upper Canada again.

One of the greatest ironies of this sad saga was that Danforth Road was rarely used, except by the military during the War of 1812. Several decades passed before the road was improved and became a viable road for travellers. Two hundred years later, at least stretches of Asa's road still survive, even though they may have other names.

Next time you travel any part of Danforth Road from Toronto to Kingston, think of this sad saga. What did Asa Danforth get out of all of this? A road was named after him...small consolation.

Poor unfortunate Asa!

The Avro Arrow: Myths and Misconceptions

Palmiro Campagna

On Friday, February 20, 1959, 14,000 employees were immediately fired and sent home, after a project they had been working on since 1953, was abruptly cancelled. That project was the military, supersonic, advanced interceptor, the Avro Arrow. The company they worked for, A.V. Roe Canada Limited, had come into being just after the war, with the express purpose of designing and building both commercial and military aircraft in Canada. Its subsidiaries included Avro, responsible for developing and building the platform and Orenda, for developing the engines.

The first project of this new company was the C-102 Jetliner, the first commercial inter-city jet to fly in North America in 1949, and the second jet to fly in the world, behind the trans-oceanic British Comet. After being test flown successfully for three years and with potential orders pending, the Jetliner project was cancelled, allegedly in favour of committing all company resources to the development of the military sub-sonic CF-100. The Arrow was to be the successor to the latter, designed to intercept and destroy if need be, incoming supersonic bombers coming across the North Pole, from the then Soviet Union.

The Arrow was a sleek, twin engine, delta winged aircraft embodying many advanced features such as fly-by-wire controls, titanium and magnesium alloys for light weight and resistance to frictional heat, transistorized electronics and an advanced engine, the Iroquois. While some other aircraft may have included some of these advanced features, what made the Arrow unique was that all of them were built into this one singular aircraft.

Adding insult to injury, the five flying preproduction aircraft, including all technical documentation, tooling and jigs and fixtures and others in various stages of assembly, were ordered destroyed. Why was a project being hailed by aviation experts around the world, suddenly cancelled? In the absence of clear facts and in the presence of rumour and innuendo, debates have raged back and forth as to the reasons, sparking a series of myths and misconceptions about the entire affair.

In 1988, the late Canadian historian, Professor Desmond Morton, lamented the fact that he could not obtain any government archival documents on the Arrow, assuming they even existed. Out of interest, I decided to try my own hand in this endeavour. Since then I have uncovered and have had declassified thousands upon thousands of records including many Secret and Top Secret, ranging from memos, reports both scientific and financial, to minutes of meetings and letters. The list includes some from the United States and Great Britain as well.

Those documents which I deemed more critical, I have either quoted from or have reproduced in my books, with full references. Following is a discussion of some of the myths and misconceptions that the documents have helped clarify.

Arrow Destruction

Perhaps one of the most enduring myths is that the destruction of the completed Arrows and all else, was ordered by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, due to his hatred of the President of A.V. Roe, Crawford Gordon. Alternatively, it has been argued that it was Gordon who had everything destroyed as a spite against the Prime Minister. Neither account is true.

The government records from the Department of National Defence clearly show the order to destroy came from the Minister of National Defence, George R. Pearkes, after receiving that recommendation from Hugh Campbell, Chief of the Air Staff, and after conferring with numerous others including the Deputy Minister of National Defence and the Minister of the Department of Defence Production. The documents contain the signatures of those involved, all of whom would later deny publicly having any knowledge of the destruction, leaving the Prime Minister to be subsequently vilified for it. In fact, the paper trail ends with Minister Pearkes. The matter was not discussed with the Prime Minister at all.

Even today, when the Department decides to dispose of something – it does not matter if it is an aircraft, a tank, a ship or some other equipment – there is no need to seek approval or even advise the Prime Minister as to the manner of its disposal. In fact, all departments dispose of their equipment through an arm of the government. At the time it was called Crown Assets Disposal, but today it is renamed GC Surplus. The name may change yet again.

Lack of Affordability

This remains the greatest misconception of all. There is no question that the Arrow development was costly. But, the documented records, which include a summary audit report as well as statements, many originally classified, from the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, and others, do **NOT** support the contention that the project was cancelled due to a lack of affordability.

In 1958, the Minister of Finance at the time, Donald Fleming, is on record as having stated that in 1957 he had supported the Arrow development but that now, in 1958, it was the military that no longer wanted it. In 1957, a considerable sum of money had already been spent and yet the Finance Minister supported continuation. For their part, the military Chiefs of Staff, but not the Chief of the Air Staff, had this to say on February 6 1959:

“...they are still of the opinion that the changing threat and the rapid advances in technology, particularly in the missile field, along with the diminishing requirements for manned interceptors in Canada, create grave doubts as to whether a limited number of aircraft of such extremely high cost would provide defence returns commensurate with the expenditures.”

They were essentially echoing the words of a report they had tabled back in late August of 1958, wherein they had recommended termination of the Arrow for the exact reasons stated above.

What they were saying was not that the Arrow was unaffordable but rather, that the capability they would obtain from a defence perspective was no longer there, due to a reduced requirement for manned interceptors which in turn was due to a perceived diminishing bomber threat in light of a change in threat from bombers to missiles. Put another way, they felt the bang for the buck was gone given that the Arrow was a defence against bombers and not missiles.

Earlier on in the development, the Minister of National Defence had stated in Parliament that the future of the Arrow depended on the threat and that as long as that threat existed the development would move forward. Everything was focused on the threat. Affordability in and of itself, was not the issue.

In his memoir, John Diefenbaker wrote:

“...However, the issue was decided finally by the inability of the Chiefs of Staff to report any new military developments that would justify the Arrow’s production...”

On a final note, government records show that at the end of March 1959, \$262 million dollars in unspent monies from the Department of National Defence were returned to the government. Only \$40 million dollars had come from the Arrow. The rest had come from other cancelled projects, overestimations in initial appropriations of money, and from the salaries of employees who had passed away or otherwise moved on. This return of money is routine and applies to all departments to this day.

In the case of the Arrow, that \$262 million would have paid for the completion of the development as well as for the production of 37 aircraft. According to an audit summary at the time, another 83 aircraft were to have been purchased at \$3.75 million each, inclusive of tax. According to Avro, another 100 aircraft would have been sold for \$2.6 million dollars each.

All of this made the Arrow very much competitive with other aircraft that had been considered, namely, the single engined F-106.

American Pressure?

The notion that the US pressured Canada into cancelling the Arrow persists. But did they? The answer is complicated.

According to the Minister of National Defence George Pearkes, the US did pressure the Canadian military but it was for signing on to the NORAD agreement. This agreement though, led to the NORAD plan for continental defence. This plan included the use of aircraft and surface to air missiles, namely the American made Bomarc.

In interviews now available online, Pearkes stated that the American Deputy Secretary of Defense told him that Canada did not need to build the Arrow; that the United States had lots of aircraft. Pearkes further explains that in order to honour the NORAD agreement, he felt he needed to introduce the Bomarc missile, which would be the main defensive weapon for Canada. But he noted that if he cancelled the Arrow, Canada would not have an air defence in the ensuing time before the Bomarcs were installed and operational. However, if he struck a deal with the Deputy Secretary of Defense, wherein he would allow American aircraft to train from Canadian bases during that interim period, he could cancel the Arrow and let the US handle our air defence should the need arise. This admission by Pearkes is startling to say the least.

Apart from this admission by Pearkes, in my first book, I published a letter obtained from the United States which noted that there was an agreement between Canada and the US in relation to the defence sharing arrangements; arrangements wherein each country would allow the other's industry to bid on defence contracts. For Canadian industry this would mean having access to the vast numbers of American defence contracts. The letter though indicates that the Arrow was cancelled in part in exchange for allowing Canadian industry to bid on these American contracts.

I eventually discovered the minutes of a meeting regarding the defence sharing arrangements, also referred to as agreements, which occurred in 1958 and which were already declassified, in American archives. The meeting took place August 4th and 5th between American and Canadian officials. The first day was spent discussing the Arrow, noting that it was a good aircraft but that the US would not purchase it. The second day concerned the sharing arrangements.

The American Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy said:

“...if the United States would get Canadian agreement not to engage in making complex weapons systems, but instead to turn its efforts to components, he believed the problem of joint production would be solved...”

...[Canadian] Ambassador [Norman] Robertson pointed out that there would be numerous domestic and political difficulties if the Canadian Government tried to cancel the CF 105 program...

...Mr. McElroy repeated that he believed Canada should make components. Problems of tariffs and taxes could be solved...”

And there it is. The US Secretary of Defense was offering an exchange for the termination of the Arrow. At the time the Arrow was the only complex weapons system Canada was developing and Ambassador Robertson recognized immediately that this is the system the Secretary was referring to. It is interesting that according to McElroy, cancellation would help solve problems of tariffs, something being faced in Canada today.

The question remains though as to whether or not the words of McElroy influenced the decision to terminate. American officials believed that it did, and this is stated in an American paper written shortly after the cancellation. After acknowledging that the key reason for the cancellation lay in the diminishing threat and onset of missiles such as the ICBM, the paper continues:

“...The decision to terminate the CF 105 was predicated in part on the agreements to provide Canada with better chances to share in production of defence items of mutual interest...”

When the Arrow termination was announced, so too was the fact that Bomarc missiles would be installed in Canada and that the defence arrangements had been signed.

So, in answer to the question of American pressure, from the Minister of National Defence, there was pressure to sign the NORAD agreement which then had the follow-on effect of having the Bomarc missile introduced, which itself lessened the need to have the Arrow. But in addition, at least two attempts, if not more, were made to influence the decision to cancel, by both the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense of the United States.

As for the diminishing threat, it became known rather quickly after the termination, that there was no change in threat from aircraft to missiles and the US began demanding that Canada purchase aircraft – this too is well documented. The alleged switch to missiles, known as the ‘missile gap’, had been inaccurate. A quick check on the website of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in relation to the ‘missile gap’, reveals documents that indicate the missile threat from the Soviet Union had essentially been fabricated. After termination, Canada purchased the Voodoo. Even though the Soviets eventually did obtain ICBMs, Canada purchased the F-18 and is now awaiting the F-35, to fulfil the Arrow’s role of policing Canadian skies against foreign intruders.

In the final analysis, it is unfortunate that most of the documents discussed, as well as so many others, were and have been unavailable for years, just as Professor Morton had opined. This has made it impossible to confront those involved, in order to obtain and confirm the truth of what really transpired in the Arrow saga, much like in the case of its predecessor, the commercial Avro C-102 Jetliner – but that is yet another story.

This material was first published in *Dominion Review* (<https://dominionreview.ca/>) and is reproduced here with permission.

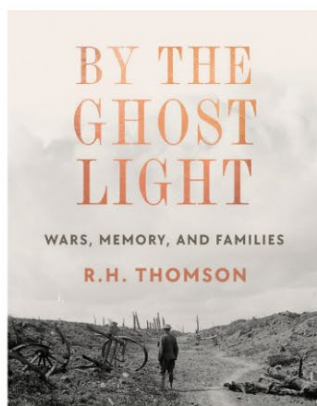
Palmiro Campagna is a retired professional engineer and author of four books: *Storms of Controversy: The Secret Avro Arrow Files*, *Requiem for a Giant: A.V. Roe Canada and the Avro Arrow*, *The UFO Files: The Canadian Connection Exposed* and *The Avro Arrow: For the Record*. All are available from Amazon and some local bookshops. He has written numerous articles, appeared in several documentaries, and been interviewed on radio and television. He is responsible for discovering and having had the most documentation on the Arrow declassified. He resides in discovering and having had the most documentation on the Arrow declassified. Campagna resides in Ottawa.



Victoria Hall Volunteers present



An Evening with R.H. Thomson



Actor, Author, and Creator of
The World Remembers -
Le Monde se souvient

talking about his book

**BY THE
GHOST LIGHT**
WARS, MEMORY, AND FAMILIES

on Friday, May 2, 2025, at 7.30 pm
at Victoria Hall, Cobourg

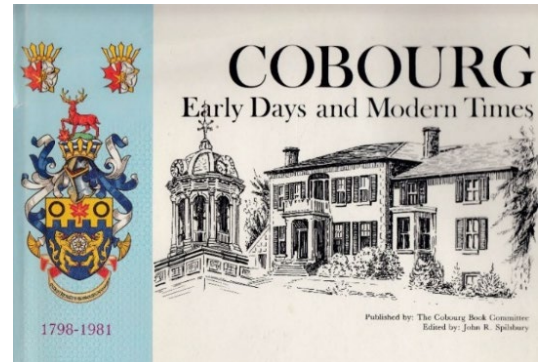
Tickets, \$30, available at Acanthus Interiors,
Readers' Nook, Furby House Books, and
the Victoria Hall Box Office | 905-372-2210

www.vhvcobourg.ca

Great Expectations

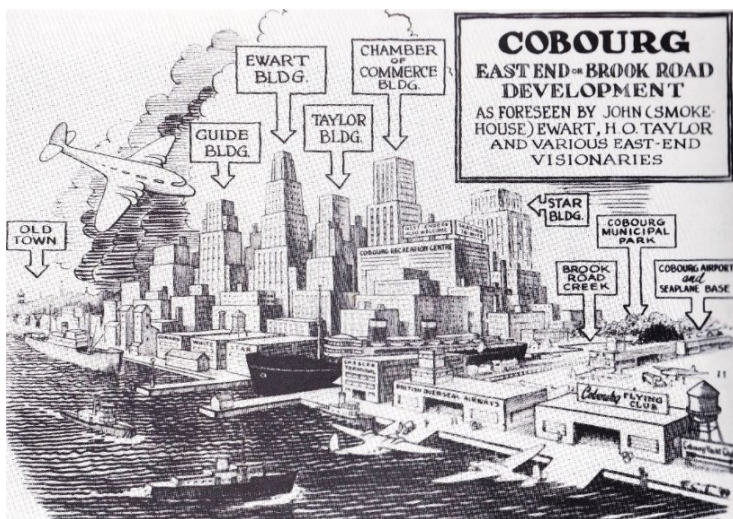
We often consider the current situation to be unique –never in the past and never again in the future. The following brief excerpt from *Cobourg Early Days and Modern Times* describes the Cobourg of 75 years ago. Other than the emphasis on controlling property taxes by using volunteers, it largely describes today's Cobourg:

Although the late Frank Taylor's cartoon of the growth of Cobourg after World War Two may seem exaggerated, it does typify the trend in people's thoughts at the time. Expansion was the keynote. It was demanded by the growth in population brought about first, by the veterans themselves, then by the influx of persons displaced by the tides of war and finally the waves of immigration of so many families from both Europe and Asia. These new arrivals brought with them the cultures of their homeland, cultures which may have enriched the Canadian scene from Halifax to Victoria. Persons from the Baltic States, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, India, Malta, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Tibet, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Vietnam and the West Indies have all made their imprint on the Canadian scene and have become proud Canadian citizens.



Modern Times 1949-1981: Town Affairs

Joesph Shuter Smith, the town's ebullient mayor, was re-elected in 1949 and again in 1950. Council found itself facing the problems of a rapidly expanding community as the war veterans' families were outpacing the facilities of the town. New schools, utilities, roads,



sewage disposal units, sewers, water works, recreational outlets were badly needed, along with expanded police and fire protection. Growing industry needed additional serviced land. This tremendous growth required financing. Council had to maintain a fine balance between capital expenditures and property taxes. The Memorial Arena site was chosen and construction started. A Recreation Commission was established

with Bob Cooper as a Director on a part-time basis. The police force and volunteer fire department were enlarged.



A Brief History of the Harwood Memorial Park

The Harwood Memorial Park was established in 1925 as a memorial to the citizens of Harwood who served in the military of World War 1(1914-1918). Many veterans returned but with great sadness, nine brave Harwood soldiers were killed in Europe.

Lt. James Alps
Pte. Percy Anderson
Pte. Baker
Pte. Burret Bell
Pte. Edgar Graham
Pte. Clifford Hutchinson
Gnr. Harry Robson
Gnr. Alexander Young
Pte. T. Bruce Drope



"We Stand On Guard For Thee"

The community mourned at this time and decided that a lasting commemoration be established. The Campbell family graciously donated the land for the Harwood Memorial Park. Special Memorial Gates were erected. Over the years numerous family events, sport games, picnics, etc. have taken place in the Park. Now, after 100 years, the Memorial Gates need restoration and hopefully with community support this will be accomplished.

"Save the Date" - Saturday, July 19, 2025 for the Anniversary of the Harwood Memorial Park. Plans are underway for a recognition of our Park in the village of Harwood. If you would like to volunteer and contribute with the Anniversary as well as the Gates Project, please be in touch. More details will follow during the year.

Information contact: harwoodhall@hotmail.com

5424 FRONT STREET, HARWOOD | SAT. JULY 19, 2025

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