



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society



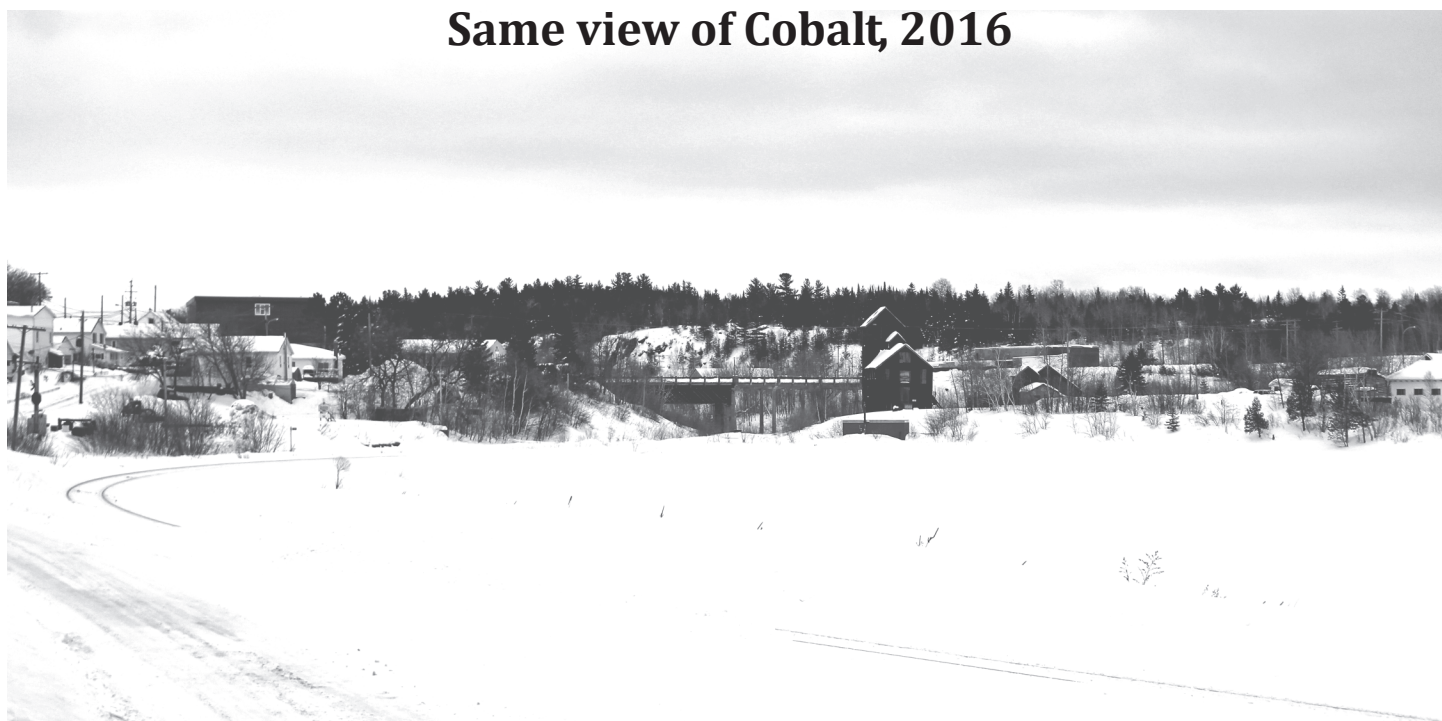
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P.O. Box 309
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Cobalt, looking north on Cobalt Lake 1910



Same view of Cobalt, 2016



Memories Of Silverland

by Mary H. B. Pond

[These memories of Cobalt were written after the Pond Family left Cobalt to return to New Brunswick. In Cobalt they lived on the McKinley-Darragh Mining Property at the junction of Cobalt Lake and Short Lake. She begins by saying that the song “Good old Cobalt, you’re the best old town I know” is sung with gusto by the young members of her family away down here in New Brunswick.]

Five of the younger members of the family were born in the northland and the older ones were young when taken to Cobalt, growing up with the Town and receiving good educations in the splendid schools established there.

There were only five shacks built in the part called the ‘Jut when we arrived here (1909) and one of them was ours. To a mother of three small children, going from a nice green-grassy farm, to a newly-burnt- over piece of ground, still smoldering with here and there a little tongue of flame thrusting itself up, as though in derision, with not a single blade of grass or even a weed to be seen, was depressing to say the least.

Ours was a tar-papered shack. Quite in style you know with only two rooms, sealed up with V-joint inside. My husband went to Town to buy our food supply and left us to get acquainted with our surroundings. Suddenly a great cry arose from a workman a few feet from our shack: “Fire! Fire!” he shouted and we all ran out to look. To my great amazement he angrily ordered to go in and close the door, informing us that a charge of dynamite was about to explode. We had never heard a blast and the terror we experienced was afterwards a source of great amusement to us.

After they sang out, “All over.” I ventured to enquire what it was all about. They told me they were blasting out stumps and we were to have a real road, instead of picking our way through burnt logs and ashes. And I wish you could have seen the result of their labour when they extracted all the stumps, filled the holes with muskeg and announced the road as ready for traffic. The first to travel over the new highway were the grocery rigs trotting quite smartly for a rod or so when suddenly without the least warning, down would drop the front wheels into a stump hole. In some instances the driver kept on going only to land in the stickiest kind of black mud.

But Cobalt was not standing still and allowing such conditions to exist. The streets in the Town proper were sometimes filled with mud to the hubs and the side-walks were built up on little trestles, making one shiver in fear lest the children fall to the road below. How quickly beautiful permanent roads were built and sewerage and water pipes laid- remembered with pride and admiration when one considers that trenching had to be blasted out of solid rock.

Typhoid fever, smallpox and cholera took a great toll of life among the early settlers. After sanitary conditions were established, Cobalt was a splendid healthful town.

The high altitude of the country, with its resultant dry atmosphere made the extremely low temperature in the winter east to bear. In summer the lack of humidity robbed the air of unbearable heat. Night always brought coolness and after one got accustomed to the roar of the stamp mills

and thump, thump, thump of the underground blasting which were sometimes directly under one's habitation, sleeping conditions were excellent.

Streets were on various levels, one of the highest having eighty-seven steps leading up to its level. Amusing, not to say dangerous predicaments were brought about by ice forming during a cold rain. The District Nurse had a call to visit a patient on the heights and found that she could reach the top only by creeping on hands and knees. The method of return journey was very childish also, as she had (sic) to sit down and slide from step to step to reach the bottom.

Behind our next home, on the mining property where my husband was employed, rose a great rock hill, the over-burden having been washed off by hydraulic pressure. In the blueberry season, parties climbed the steep sides to gather the fruit which grew in the crevices in abundance. Landscape lovers climbed for a different purpose, mainly to view the beautiful scenery. From it one could see four small lakes among the hills nearby and five miles in the distance the shimmering blue of Lake Temiskaming. Crowds of folk went walking on Sunday afternoons to visit these cool lakes. Little shady trails ran through the bush where raspberries, wild cherries, blueberries and hazelnuts abounded.

The new roads were made of waste rocks from the mines and sparkled with fool's gold or technically speaking, iron pyrites. There was no mud after the roads were built of rock for they were all up and down hill, making perfect drainage. Accidents were generally the outcome of the carelessness of the victim.

We had no lack of churches: on Cobalt Street stood the Irish Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Salvation Army Barracks, the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church and Lutheran Church with the Church of England [Anglican] nearby. The French Catholic Church was at the other end of Town.

Rough and ready was the town site of Cobalt but twelve miles north was the wonderful clay belt where New Liskeard was the centre for busy farming country, level as the prairies with fields of grain, pastures for cattle and splendid vegetable gardens. Special trains ran on Saturdays bringing produce to our market which was crowded with buyers. Each farmer had his own stall equipped with scales, paper and string. Customers were sent home with baskets laden with choice steaks, lamb, chicken or pork, the freshest of vegetables also butter and eggs. If not, it was "your fault" quoting from the old Cobalt Song, "If you don't live there, it's your fault!"

There was a friendly feeling in the air and that is why we all have that longing to turn our faces toward the old silver camp of Cobalt. It beckons us with memories of bracing air, beautiful scenery, an energetic life, work that was well paid for and congenial fellowship. We remained until the McKinley- Darragh Mine was worked to a finish [1925] and it seemed as though our mission was accomplished. So we came back to the homeland to find as we always do, when away for a period of years that people we loved had passed away and children, grown to adulthood, were strangers to us. No doubt if we should go back to Cobalt, the great disappointment of missing friends and closed mines and mills would madden our return.

Correction to our last newsletter: Date of school picture should have been 1946–1947, not 1950.

Agnico- Eagle Commemorative Plaque

Last June there was a ceremony to dedicate a plaque on the 7 Prospect Avenue building that used to be the Cobalt office of Agnico Mines Limited. It reads as follows:

“This plaque commemorates the founding of Agnico Mines Limited in Cobalt Ontario in 1957. It is dedicated to the men and women whose commitment, perseverance and spirit helped to transform Agnico into a leading international gold mining company.”

“Cette plaque commémore la fondation d’ Agnico Mines Limited en 1957 à Cobalt Ontario. Elle est dédiée à des hommes et à des femmes dont l’engagement, la persévérance et le courage ont contribué à transformer Agnico en un chef de file au niveau international dans l’exploration aurifère.”

Here are some historic details of this building: The Bank of Ottawa bought the site from Wm. Lowery in 1907 for \$4,500.00, opening that May. A fire in 1913 at the Prospect Hotel next to it burned all but the Bank’s vault. The existing building has fireproof cement walls, pressed brick front and stone trim. Original crenellations on the cornices have been removed. In 1919, the Bank merged with the Bank of Nova Scotia which ceased operation in 1943. The Bank of Nova Scotia sold the building to Silanco Mining and Refining Corp. in 1945 for \$2,500.00. Ansil Resources Ltd., Cobalt Consolidated and Agnico-Eagle Mines subsequently occupied the building. In 1979 it was designated a historical site because of its architecture. The Town of Cobalt came into possession of the building in 1999. In 2001, it was purchased as part of the Silverland Motel business and restored as it had been when used as a bank. In 2011 it then became Studio Luxe with Lindsay Inglis and Craig Clattenburg. In 2015 it was sold to Dominique King and is currently a private residence, with plans for a new business on the main floor.

Classic Theatre Commemorative Plaques

There are still opportunities to immortalize your family or yourself at the Classic Theatre. For \$200 you can purchase a 3½ x 1½ inch commemorative plaque that is placed on the back of the theatre’s seats. The plaques were established as a funding-raising effort when the renovated Classic Theatre opened. Charitable receipts can be issued. Cheques and desired designations may be mailed to The Classic Theatre, P.O Box 29, Cobalt ON P0J 1C0 or donation by Visa or Master Card can be made by phoning the Classic (705) 679-8080 on Thursday or Friday afternoons.

CHS Memberships for 2016

The Cobalt Historical Society has included a renewal form for 2016 memberships. Your support is important, and appreciated. Monies are used to maintain and improve the Historic Silver Trail, provide information to the public, historians and institutions to preserve Cobalt’s heritage.

We remind you also about the Historic Cobalt Legacy Fund, whose investment income will contribute to preserving local activities and organizations.