



# THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society



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*Cobalt Teen Town at Community Hall, photo by Ken Edgar 1964*

## A Cobalt Musician

Interview With Dennis Maloney,

December 5, 2016.

Dennis always loved to sing. Playing on the Buffalo Hill among the Buffalo Mines' Mill's ruins he would even practise yodelling. He entered Cobalt High School in 1954 at age 14. One day he heard music coming from the High School auditorium. It was Ed Laranger singing, accompanying himself on a guitar.

Ed invited Dennis to sing along with him. That evening Dennis asked his mother about a guitar hanging on a wall in their home. He had never heard it being played but it did belong to his mother who, when Dennis asked, showed him the chords. That was the beginning of Dennis' career as a musician. He sang

children to sleep; although only 15, he would be asked to play at the Legion, Cobalt Branch 44; he was invited to house parties at the homes of Walter and Cecile Frackleton, Basil Scully, Walter Purdy, Irene and Ricky Sullivan, Mike Keon, Don 'Melody' Jones, Colleen and Maurice Belanger.

Now in 1956 the Empire Theatre in New Liskeard held a Talent Show; in 1957 it was named a Contest with radio announcer Jess French handling the broadcast. Dennis was encouraged to enter. The contestants had three call-back opportunities. That June, Dennis 17, sang in competition against the Manners brothers—Doug, Mervin and Allen who sang in the style of the Everley Brothers. Never expecting to win, Dennis, by audience acclaim using an applause meter, went home with \$1,000. He sang "Lonesome Me" by Don Gibson, "Hula Love" by Buddy Knox and possibly an Elvis Presley song. What did he do with his prize? Dennis thinks it was a new guitar from Anderson's Music Shop in New Liskeard.

Dennis' band career began after this; he joined "The Stardusters" a back-up band that played at concerts. Then it wasn't too long before he held the position of rhythm guitar and lead singer. How did the musicians learn their repertoire? They played by ear listening to radio and records which the members begged and borrowed for their record players. Where did they play? The Pavilion at the New Liskeard Beach until it burned; Cobalt Teen Beat [its first engagement was on the third floor of The Cobalt Legion and afraid that the ceiling might cave in, was moved to the Cobalt Community Hall-this organization only lasted one year with the Band playing Sunday nights]; Cobalt Teen Town at the Community Hall played on Saturday nights until with no money for the Band, Teen Town continued on using recorded music.

Who were “The Stardusters”? The original Band playing electric as well as acoustic guitar and lead singer was Chuck Eckenviller, Gerry and Reg Massicotte on guitar and Bob Dubois on drums and booking. At one time they had Jim Dawson on piano, a two-year Haileybury Mining School student. The Band also had a live gig at Ville Marie Radio Station CKVM with announcer Roger D; afterwards they would play the Ville Marie clubs wearing their signature forest green cardigans and lime green shirts.

Eventually The Stardusters Band petered out. By this time 1965, Dennis was working at Silverfields Mine by Cart Lake in Coleman Township. He joined Marcel “Hardy” Mallais, voice and guitar with Joe MacDonald, playing fiddle. They performed at the Windsor Hotel in New Liskeard. [That Hotel was located on Armstrong Street across from the present Bank of Nova Scotia.] One night “Hardy” on night shift, asked Dennis to sit in for him as lead singer. That was the beginning of a six month gig. Dennis remembers the night that a grizzled hunter asked Joe if he could play. Nervously Joe handed over his fiddle. Well were they surprised—the guy was a professional! He was Rene Cote from Soo Michigan who had his own band but this time was on a hunting trip. The Bar was always full, the Black Label beer flowed and the applause kept them going.

Still in 1965, Bob Dubois formerly in “The Silverdusters Band” called Dennis to ask him if he would join with him, Allen Manners, lead electric guitar and Gerry Massicotte, electric rhythm guitar to play at a dance. That began a ten year stint as “The Emblems”. They played the Haileybury Legion Hall, at weddings, the Cobalt Haileybury Curling Club, the Cobalt Community Hall and the Cobalt Arena Dennis asked Ron Cook to join on bass guitar. By the late '70s they were playing the King George Hotel in New Liskeard; people would offer money to the Band for requests. The Hotel Management gradually changed their playing time; originally it would be 45 minutes on with a 15 minute break; it became 40 minutes on and a 20 minute break, finally 30 minutes on, 30 minutes off because people didn't buy beer when they played. Their attire consisted of plaid shirts affecting a “country look.”

By 1975 Dennis left “The Emblems” to play with Marcel “Hardy” Mallais; Ron Cook joined them to form a trio, then as Ron graduated from Mining School, Armand Leonard played drums. People knew where to

catch them from ads in the *Temiskaming Speaker*, hotel advertisements and radio announcements. The first night they played the Fraser Hotel in Cobalt [Jim and George McDonnell were the owners then] the record for the amount of beer sold was broken. In Haileybury they played The Lake Shore Hotel, [it was located at the site of the current City of Temiskaming Shores City Hall], the Matabanick Hotel [taken down in 2016], the Haileybury Hotel in the Ladies and Escorts Lounge [now the location of Leisure Inn Motel]. Over time these gigs stopped; they continued to play for the Cobalt Legion when asked; also for the Haileybury Legion's Winter Carnival Jam; for weddings and Christmas parties. Dennis says that he found the Veterans to be their most appreciative audience. He remembers when the bands would play from seven in the evening until seven in the morning.

When Dennis ran for Cobalt Council, he sat for three years and his music career was then as a solo performer. He owned a vintage Yamaha acoustic. Now he has a Hohner acoustic electric (two pick-ups), a Barcus Berry acoustic pickup with a D'Armand electric pickup guitar and a third guitar –Martin D28.

I asked if any of his five children inherited his talents? His son Marty and Marty's daughter Melissa replied Dennis. This Christmas season Dennis played at the Cobalt Legion on December 17.

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## Cobalt Historical Society Annual Report 2015-2016

This report was presented at the Cobalt Historical Society Annual General Meeting held in the Shaft House Office of the Society, Silver Street, Cobalt, Ontario, Monday November 21, 2016.

CHS Board Members: Vivian Hylands, Chairman; Reg. Holdsworth, Vice Chairman; Deborah Ranchuk, Secretary; Jack Church, Treasurer; Florence Dean; and Peter Greyson.

**Publications:** Last November and this November CHS promoted our organization through publications at the PRATH Bazaar held at the Coleman Recreation Hall. Last year it was Silver and Gold; this year we added the Cobalt Lode Newsletter. The book *Silver and Gold* was sold at the New Liskeard Fall Fair and is also sold at two museums: the Cobalt Mining Museum and the Little Claybelt Homesteaders Museum in the City of Temiskaming Shores. White Mountain

Publications book store in Cobalt carries it as well as the Heritage Silver Trail Guide and the pocket Mining Guide. The latter two titles are also available at the Cobalt Mining Museum.

The back legs supporting the shaft house had deteriorated over the last ten years so they were replaced and thank you letters sent to those who supplied the material and completed the installation.

The ONR Santa Claus Train arrived at the Cobalt Station December 3. As the Station was closed, the Shaft House Office was utilized to provide a rest room and a place to dispense hot chocolate.

In March Dan Laroque, a former Board Member, gave a PowerPoint presentation on behalf of his company North Country Aerial Ltd. We saw stunning drone overviews of mining sites in Cobalt and Coleman Township. The company is proposing to integrate The Heritage Silver Trail signage with aerial views on a QR [Quick Read] code link to an integrated website.

November 2016, Norman Hawirko, the other owner of *North Country Aerial*, gave this presentation at *University of Waterloo* to the *Canadian Archaeological Association*. He had copies of *Silver and Gold* available so that members could see the sites with photographs of the buildings. At the same time Mr. Hawirko delivered to Dr. Peter Russell at the University of Waterloo Earth Sciences Museum the geophysical instruments that had been acquired by CHS and once belonged to Cobalter John Sirola.

The first cheques from the Historic Cobalt Legacy Fund were distributed and CHS received \$550.00

Our application to Parks Canada for funding towards replacing the roof on the shaft house at The-Right-Of-Way mine buildings was not approved. Plans are to re-apply and re-state the urgency of this repair.

The Classic Theatre has memorial signs positioned on the reverse of theatre seats for \$200. The Society has paid for a plaque at seat N4 to help support the Classic Theatre fund raising.

The Society has a new website address and the site is under construction: [www.HeritageSilverTrail.ca](http://www.HeritageSilverTrail.ca) and [www.HeritageSilverTrail.com](http://www.HeritageSilverTrail.com).

For the next two years, the CHS office will be made available for the use of the Economic Development Officer Michelle Anderson who has been hired by Cobalt, Coleman and Latchford.

*Vivian Hylands*

# Cobalt Mining Museum/ Historic Cobalt Corporation Annual Report

December 5, 2016

The year 2016 saw the Cobalt Mining Museum continue its austerity approach to the hours worked by the Curator, especially during the winter months. However, with the coming of spring, the warmer weather signaled the retirement of long-time Curator Anne Fraboni. The loss of Anne certainly left a large space to fill. The Museum Board advertised for an interim Curator/Manager and over the next few months no fewer than three were hired. The Museum continued to operate full-time throughout the summer, experiencing more out-of-the-ordinary occurrences than I can ever remember. However when Felicity came on board in August as Curator/Manager, the Museum began to move along more smoothly again. I thank her for that. Much of the credit, however, for the Museum's successful summer season must go to the team of summer students hired by the Board this year. Jamie Morin-Kennedy, Carlie Dewar, Devin Williamson and Charlie Wowk stepped in and in reality took charge of the Museum and the adit tours. Without them and their mature sense of responsibility our summer operations would have suffered more than they did.

Throughout the year the Museum has been involved with many events and activities. The 3rd annual Silver Nugget Race fundraiser was held again in August and \$1,500 was raised. The Museum sponsored and organized the annual Mosher Run around Cobalt Lake road race. A poetry reading event *Poetry Meets History—History Meets Poetry*, was hosted by the Museum during the Miner's Festival. The Father Les Costello Collection was obtained and transferred to the Museum and subsequently loaned to the Town of Schumacher for a televised hockey event. The Museum participated in Culture Days in September with an Open House and free underground mine tours. The Museum also supported Cobalt Shines, a Cobalt business initiative held in November.

2016 saw the first benefit to the Museum from the Agnico-Eagle Cobalt Legacy Fund when \$2,200 was gratefully received. The amount will continue to grow and will provide sustainable funding for the Museum in the future.

I must thank all of the Museum's Board members who, particularly this year, have pulled together to help navigate the Museum through a few tough months. Brit Griffen and Marie Gutscher toiled long hours to have the Museum's operating grate ready before the deadline. Albert Chitaroni was always nearby to give support, sign cheques and generously donate to the donation jar. Marie Manchester, who came on to the Board during a turbulent time, stepped up and spearheaded a very successful 1908 Cookbook fundraiser. All fifty books were sold and more will be printed. Ken Walker, since coming on to the Board last year, has done yeoman service for the Museum, from electrical repairs to financial consultation. Eddie Labelle is the Museum's 'man for all seasons': carpentry, head frame repair, adit scaler. Eddie, you are always there.

I salute and thank all of you. I think the Museum is in good hands!

What will 2017 bring to the Museum? I am confident the coming year will see the Museum continue to be the heritage leader within the Cobalt National Historic Mining Site. In order for this to happen more community involvement would be welcomed. We have room for more Board members. We have need for more volunteers. We have a group in place which is dedicated to moving the Cobalt Mining Museum into a new and exciting future. Once again, thank you all for your dedication and support over the years.

*Reg Holdsworth  
Cobalt Mining Museum 2016.*



*The Site for the Mining Museum's Adit Tour*



## Save the Date: June 3rd, 2017

The Cobalt Historical Society is inviting speakers for a all-day symposium here in Cobalt. More details coming in the next Newsletter as we have them finalized.

## Membership Renewals

Renewal cards for your 2017 membership are enclosed with this newsletter. We hope you will continue with us. We're looking to bigger and better things in 2017.



## We Will Need Your Help

The Cobalt Historical Society maintains the Heritage Silver Trail. The-Right-of-Way mine is in need of a new tin roof to maintain the building's integrity. Estimates for this work have been done and it will need approximately \$30,000 to accomplish the work. Applications will be re-submitted with the additional information necessary. To gain matching funds from government agencies we will need to raise approximately \$12,500. We have raised some of the money and are awaiting the new application's results.