



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society



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P.O. Box 309
Cobalt, ON P0J 1C0

Cobalt Fire of 1977 Intrigues Visitors Forty Years Later



Two visitors to Cobalt, Carmen and Gordon Kubanek from Kars near Ottawa arrived in Cobalt the weekend of February 11–12, 2017. Gordon was interested in talking to people who had been living in Cobalt at the time of the May 24, 1977 fire, the one where the news spread round the world like a wildfire.

So Saturday morning we met at the *Silver Café* on Prospect Avenue to listen to Jack Church, Gerry McGarry, Doug McLeod and Joe Titonnel talk about their memories of that time. The cause of the fire was thought to be from cigarettes being smoked behind *Rowden's Hardware* located at the top of the first rise on Lang Street up from the Cobalt Square. As it was the May long weekend, not everyone was in Town, some having gone to open summer camps or to fish.

The weather was hot and windy. Quickly the wind began to toss the fire about across the Street and down the hill towards the north end of Town. It wasn't long before firemen from North Cobalt, Haileybury and New Liskeard arrived with their equipment, but to little avail. As Jack said the real problem was insufficient water pressure for the fire hoses.

Joe Titonnel actually lived at the north end of Town; he moved his possessions out of his house away from the area. The piano was left in the house as there was no way to move it. His house did not burn but when he returned there was no sign of the piano. When Joe saw his neighbours he learned that they had removed the piano to safety!

Cobalt Fire of 1977 Intrigues Visitors (continued)

From Gerry McGarry we learned the story of Alan Haarala's house on Earl Street. Alan was busy helping his neighbor remove his furniture from his house. Job done, Alan turned around to find that his own house was on fire; it burned to the ground.

The fire was prevented from advancing to the other end of the Town by the appearance of water-carrying planes from The Ontario Department of Northern Affairs

There were stories of the efforts of the Mayor Bruce Lonsdale who eventually became an M.P. Donations arrived from far and wide stored in the Arena.

Doug McLeod knew the details of what happened afterwards when some people had insurance and some did not. People with insurance did not receive as much money for rebuilding as those who did not! Hard feelings ensued from this state of affairs. They learned about the population loss as people decided to rebuild outside of Cobalt.

At noon, the visitors had lunch at the same table as the Mayor Tina Sartoretto and Evelyn Pickard. Tina was not in Town at the time but her relatives were and she told of their experiences. Evelyn remembered going to the Railway Station with her father Allen Pickard to watch the flying flames.

After lunch there was a visit to the crest of the Lang Street hill in order to look down to compare the buildings- the old and the new; the older flat roofs and the newer peaked roofs.

Later that day the visitors climbed the stairs to the *Canadian Legion Branch 44* where they met Roger and Emile Murray and heard more stories. Emile lived at the very end of Cobalt near the bridge leading out of Town. He sprayed water from his garden hose over his property. Eventually he tired of this and said to himself, "If it burns down, it burns down." But it did not!

Later a visit was paid to Tina Sartoretto's home to view a large painting of the fire.

Sunday morning the visitors attended services at *St. James Anglican Church* at Prospect Avenue and Nickel Street. Afterwards they met other Cobalters who told further stories of that never-forgotten fire. Our visitors were pleased with all the information they recorded and said they would try to return for the history Symposium to be held June 3 at the *Classic Theatre*.

Save the Date: Saturday June 3rd, 2017 Cobalt Historical Society

Presents Selected Chapters of Temiskaming Heritage at the Classic Theatre 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Save Some Money: Register Early

Early Bird Discount
\$50 by **April 30**
\$75 afterward

Includes Lunch and Registration Bag and a full day with 6 presentations. We are finalizing our Speaker List and Topics. The talks will be collected into a collectible volume so the history will remain available long after the event.

As a fund raiser for the CHS, the monies raised will be earmarked for the Heritage Silver Trail and/or the roof needed for the Right-of-Way.

Registration forms will be included in the April Newsletter for your convenience. The April Newsletter will come out earlier in April; we held this one hoping to have speakers confirmed. Full information will be available on the website (heritagesilvertrail.ca) and on our Facebook page.

Registrations can be mailed to the CHS office, any cheques being made out to the *Cobalt Historical Society* or left at White Mountain Publications Book Store at 50 Silver Street, Cobalt.

Cobalt Mines as at 1973

OPERATING MINES ●

(Including those under active development November 1, 1973)

Agnico-Eagle Mines Limited

1. Trout Lake (outside map area)
2. Canadian Keeley (outside map area)
3. Penn Mill
4. Temiskaming

Teck Corporation Limited

5. Silverfields Division

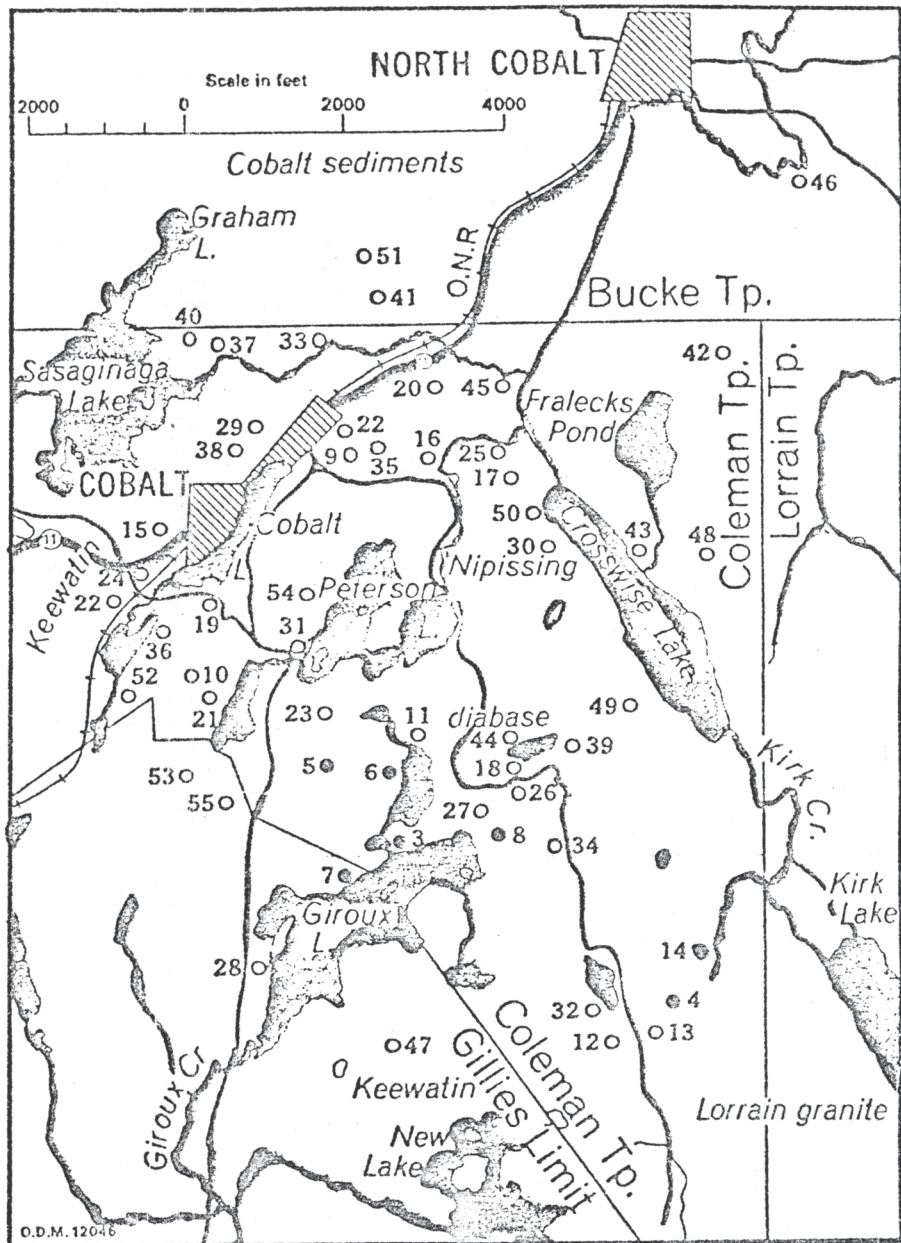
Canadaka Mines Limited

6. Bailey Mill
7. Giroux Lake
8. Conisil

NON-OPERATING MINES ○

(Including dormant properties, past producers, and properties awaiting development)

9. LaRose Mill
10. Nipissing 96 Shaft
11. Penn-Canadian
12. Christopher
13. Cobalt Lode
14. Beaver
15. Buffalo
16. O'Brien
17. Colonial
18. Crown Reserve
19. McKinley-Darragh
20. Nipissing
21. Cart Lake
22. Right-of-Way
23. Nipissing 407
24. Townsite
25. Violet
26. Kerr Lake
27. Lawson
28. Louada (Nu-Silco)
29. Patricia Silver
30. King Edward
31. Trinova (Silver Town)
32. Brady Lake
33. Chambers-Ferland
34. Hargrave
35. LaRose
36. Princess
37. Coleman Township Property
38. Coniagas
39. Drummonu
40. Hudson Bay
41. Silver Regent - Genesee
42. Silver Monarch



— Roads
○ Lakes, Rivers

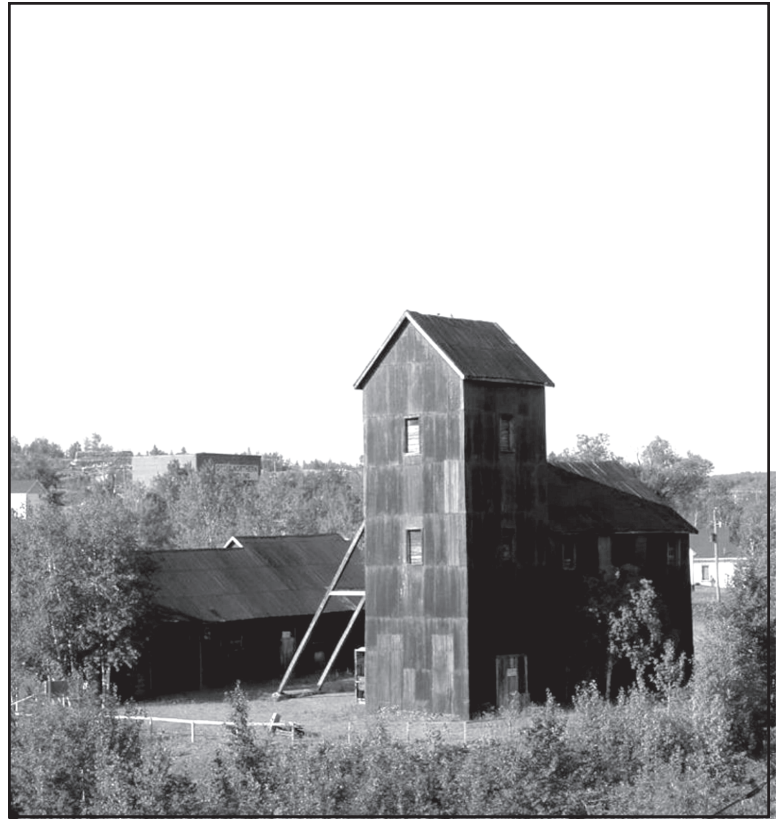
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|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 43. Deer Horn | 54. Chitaroni Minerals |
| 44. Silver Leaf | 55. Silver Summit |
| 45. Mentor | |
| 46. Pittsonto Mining Co. Ltd. | Outside Map Area |
| 47. Professor Silver | Agaunico |
| 48. Rockzone (Smith-Cobalt) | Bomont |
| 49. Silver Cross | Kirkland Townsite |
| 50. Silver Cliff | Larum |
| 51. United Cobalt | Millerfi |
| 52. Silver Pack | Langis |
| 53. Sudbury Contact | Louanna |

Membership Renewals

If you haven't renewed your membership for your 2017 membership, we hope you will continue with us. We're looking to accomplish bigger and better things in 2017, including new signage on the Trail, the repair/replacement of the Right-of-Way roof and the symposium on June 3rd, which we are hoping may become an annual event.

We 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 not re-submitted because there is a complication concerning the ownership of the building. We will need to raise all the monies, work-in-kind, however to fix or replace the roof. We have raised approximately \$1,800 so far.



The iconic Right-of-Way Mine



Cobalt- just beginning in 1904

The Cobalt Historical Society thanks Stan Lafleur of *Prism Publishing* for printing these newsletters.