



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society
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1903
Our History Shines
Volume 26 No 3
June 2017

Selected Chapters of Temiskaming Heritage

June 3rd, 2017, Classic Theatre, Cobalt, ON 9 am-4 pm



What do Thomas Edison, unmanned aerial vehicles, and vintage postcards have in common? If you were at the Cobalt Historical Society's first symposium on Saturday June 3rd, you would know the answer!



Organizers of the day-long event, Selected Chapters in Temiskaming History, are delighted to report that along with the five speakers, the mezzanine of the Classic Theatre in Cobalt was packed. Guests came from as far away as Waterloo and Ottawa.



First to speak, Dr. John Pollock presented an update to his archeological work at the mine sites in Cobalt and Coleman Township. Norm Hawirko then talked to the crowd about using drones to create a 3D model of the Townsite Headframe. You can see more at his website:

<http://www.northcountryaerial.ca/>



Latchford Mayor George Lefebvre shared his research into the Darby Mine, the property that famed inventor Thomas Edison acquired in Coleman Township, northwest of Latchford.



After lunch, Siobhan Angus presented an overview of an interpretative approach to vintage photos and postcards from the early Cobalt Mine Camp. She described how to use clues within

the images and notations written on the cards to gain insights to the issues of the day. She also warned about trusting everything you read on a post card. This point was reinforced when George Lefebvre pointed out that one of the postcards used in her presentation should not be titled "A Street in Cobalt, Ont." Instead, it's a street in Latchford!

To wrap up the event, Bruce Taylor shared some of the challenges he encountered during his research into the life of Stephen Lafricain.

Classic Theatre Vice-Chair Brigid Wilkinson remarked that the lively chatter during the breaks meant "Folks were engaged and enjoying themselves." Nina Chitaroni-Chamaillard said that the day "Was absolutely fantastic. Well organized, great speakers and just an overall fantastic event. Can't wait for next year!"

Maggie Wilson, President of the Cobalt Historical Society dedicated the day to the memory of Vivian Hylands, who passed away in April. "We are looking forward to next year, too," Wilson says. "We are encouraged by the response and hope to build on what we learned this year. Vivian would have approved."

The proceedings for this Symposium will be published in book form this summer and will continue to raise funds for the work the Cobalt Historical Society is endeavouring to do for the mining camp. Announcements concerning the book will appear on the website, and in the August edition of this Newsletter.

Correction to the Last Newsletter:

Rodney Button came in to clarify the story written by Vivian about his experience in the 1977 Fire. The first paragraph should be deleted, as his age and this connection to the Chitaroni brothers are both incorrect.

Also the fifth paragraph should be deleted as he did not hear about the Catholic church burning from the radio. Our apologies for any misunderstanding.

Cobalt's Early Banks

Compiled by Maggie Wilson

Recently, I was taking care of banking business for the Cobalt Historical Society at CIBC. The customer service representative just happened to be researching the bank's 150th anniversary this year. He thought I'd be interested in some of the stories he had dug up.

He was right, and I'll share with you some of the highlights from two articles he found: one focuses on the Imperial Bank of Canada (established 1875) and the other on the Canadian Bank of Commerce (established 1867). The largest merger of two chartered banks in Canadian history happened on June 1, 1961 when these two banks merged to form the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC). Both bank buildings stand today a short distance apart near the intersection of Prospect and Lang.

In 1953¹ E.T. Cuttle, the manager of the Cobalt branch describes bank manager Hedley F. Marsh who opened the Cobalt branch August 10th, 1905. At that time during the silver rush, banks were also in a hurry to get established as early as possible.

The Imperial Bank of Canada's "first premises were in a shack, local tradition is that it was originally a Chinese Laundry, but there is no historical data to support this."

On the same day, but a few hours earlier, The Canadian Bank of Commerce opened in a tent. John Purificati of the Facebook Group "Historic Northern Ontario"² writes:

"The Canadian Bank of Commerce was one of the first banks to exploit the potential of prefabricated buildings. Mining towns were popping up literally overnight and if a bank could establish a branch quickly it would gain the upper hand over other banks that would be trying to secure customers.

"The dilemma for the banks was one of erecting inexpensive structures in a minimum amount of time, which nonetheless reflected an air of stability and security to potential investors.

"Shown below is the Bank of Commerce at 12 Prospect Avenue in Cobalt. The bank had that particular building earmarked to be placed in Latchford, Ontario and instead decided to have it moved to Cobalt in August 1905. Built in the west-coast style, by the B.C. Mills Company out of Vancouver, this bank was unique in Cobalt and stood out compared to the others. It was designed to be the most beautiful and attractive bank in the town."

However, once the bank took delivery of the prefab unit, the bank manager reported that "...troubles came when we started to put the building together.

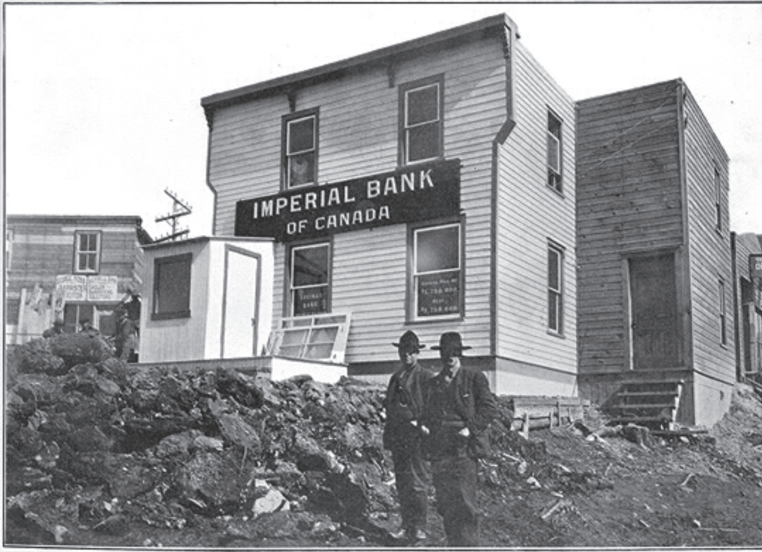
Every one was prospecting and it was very difficult indeed to persuade men to do manual labour. In the evening, I would get busy and hunt up possibly half a dozen men for work on the building next day, but the following noon my foreman would inform me that the men thought they would go prospecting in the afternoon, so the next night I would have to go



TEMPORARY OFFICE OF THE COBALT BRANCH 1905



1905 Canadian Bank of Commerce



THE IMPERIAL BANK OF CANADA, COBALT

through the same performance, and always with the same results. At last in desperation we wired Toronto for carpenters and in this way we got the building completed.

“By this time it was November 20, and in the meantime we were still living in the tent. After October 1 it was cold, the thermometer in many instances running down to from twenty-five to thirty-five de-

grees below zero. In order to keep ourselves at all comfortable we used to sleep with coon-skin coats on, and fur caps pulled down over our ears, and on top of this all the blankets we could bear. In the mornings, before we could wash, we had to wait until the water in the pails could be thawed out, as it was always frozen solid. Almost invariably we had to eat our meals with coat, cap and gloves on, and we had to be quick if we wished to eat our food while it was hot, for it very soon got cold. All this lasted until November 20, when we moved into our spacious and comfortable permanent quarters, where we had our own dining-room, cook, and everything that was reasonable to expect in a new country.”

1 Cobalt’s 50th Anniversary, Imperial Reporter, September 15, 1953

2 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HistoricNorthernOntario/>

3 *The Romance of Banking*, Victor Ross, Toronto Oxford University Press, 1922



Still at 12 Prospect Avenue, Cobalt, the Canadian Bank of Commerce has seen many uses over the years.

Heritage Silver Trail Update

At our June board meeting, we were joined by Josée Brazeau of Agnico Eagle Mines Ltd. and Ron Korman of Story Environmental. They shared with us the details of the upcoming mine site rehabilitation program for 2017 and 2018.

In the Cobalt Mining camp, the remains of several mills still stand. Each has potential hazards for people who visit. According to Regulation 240/00 of the Mining Act, mine owners are obliged by law to rehabilitate open pit structures over 3 metres high. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) is taking a broader interpretation of this regulation and have directed Agnico to include the mill sites on and around the Heritage Silver Trail.

2017 Rehabilitation Projects Affecting the Heritage Silver Trail

The Nipissing 96 Headframe

Drilling in late 2016 revealed voids and a potential for underground collapse in the parking area. The headframe and ore house will be leveled; access to the viewing platform overlooking the open cut will be removed. The site will be removed from the Heritage Silver Trail. We will make an inventory of items to salvage to place elsewhere on the trail. The viewing platform overlooking Cart Lake will remain.

Nova Scotia Mill

A recent underground collapse between the parking lot and the mill has been repaired, however potential for further damage remains. Again, drilling conducted last year revealed large voids underground. Timbers that were used to shore up the open stopes have rotted or fallen away leaving a potential for collapse. We will remove this site from the Heritage Silver Trail.

2018 Rehabilitation Projects Affecting The Heritage Silver Trail

Hellens' Mill or the Cobalt Lake Mine and Mill at the south end of Cobalt Lake

Structures above 3m will be levelled, including two buildings; the site will be cleared of hazardous metal protrusions, and the site may be turned into a park.

Mill at Mile 104 to be rehabilitated. It is uncertain at this time whether the site will be levelled or if the foundations will be fenced.

Low Grade Mill at Nipissing Hill to be rehabilitated – details unknown at this time.

Bat Conservation And Bat Gates

You may have heard about the sharp decline in populations of the Little Brown Bat. The bats are succumbing to a disease known as “White Nose Syndrome.” WNS is caused by the fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, and no obvious treatment or means of preventing transmission is known. In response, the Ontario Government has included the Little Brown Bat on Schedule 6: Specially Protected Mammals.

From the Ontario response plan: *P. destructans* can be spread by people visiting caves and old underground mine workings and requires no physical contact with bats. To prevent the spread of *P. destructans* between sites it is essential for individuals to avoid visiting sites where WNS has been identified or where bats may be present.

To this end, Agnico plans to install Bat Gates at the **Silver Cliff** and **King Edward Mines** in 2017. Neither of these mines is on the Heritage Silver Trail, but it is important that you are aware of the issues surrounding mine closure and bat conservation.

For more information:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/000240>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-nose_syndrome

https://www.registrelpsararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/gen_info/

[fs_speolotme_cvg_chs_v03_0215_e.pdf](#)

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, S.O. 1997, c. 41 <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/97f41>

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, including new signage on the Trail, the repair/replacement of the Right-of-Way roof .

Notes of Appreciation

Our thanks go to the Township of Coleman for their generous donation of \$2,000 to the Cobalt Historical Society. Thank you to Reiner Mielke for assuming the Trail Committee post on the Board, and his invaluable assistance during the Symposium. Thanks (again) go to our speakers at the Symposium and all who made it a great day.