



# THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society

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## From the President

Happy New Year to you all! I have nothing major to report: just a few odds and ends.

Unfortunately, no news regarding the **two ONR sites that were closed** almost two years ago. Well, that's not entirely true - their contractors have submitted the findings of their environmental assessments. Copies are available at Coleman Township and Town of Cobalt municipal offices. It is up to those authorities to share the information as they see fit.

And so, we wait.

On to happier news.

This summer, we met with Keith Calder, the son of John Calder, a lifelong fan of Cobalt's mining heritage. So much so, in his circle he was known as "Cobalt" John. John passed away recently, and in his father's memory, Keith donated money to the CHS to help **restore the bas-relief sculpture on Silver Street**.



**Sally Lawrence and Rob Moir in front of the bas relief sculpture on Silver Street. Photo by Kathy Armstrong.**

The piece, titled "Silver Threads", was created by Sally Lawrence and Rob Moir in the 1990s. Several decades later, weathering and vandalism have caused severe losses around some of the figures.

You may recall seeing the artists when they had set up their studio at the train station in 1992. Then, they were working on the miners' memorial that was to be installed in Kirkland Lake. Other of their works can be seen in the window above the main entrance, and a stone monolith in the annex of the Classic Theatre. Their drawings also illustrate Charlie Angus' and Brit Griffin's book *They Lived a Life and Then Some*.

You will be able to reconnect with the artists this summer. They have tentatively scheduled to be here the first week of June.

But that's not where the Calder gift ends. Keith also requested that we build a trail in his father's memory. As it happened, Agnico Eagle had a proposal of their own to **develop a side trail** near the Little Silver Vein and up over the hill behind the McKinley Darragh. We have a trail mapped out and are gathering input from neighbouring landowners. More to come!

Speaking of Agnico: the company has remediated parts of the former **Hellens Mill site** at the south end of Cobalt Lake. The skeleton of the frame building housing the hoist are the only remaining artifacts from the Cobalt Lake Mining Company's activity between 1906 and 1914. Late this autumn, Agnico built a new enclosure to protect the hoist from the elements. The hoist is still visible through two viewing portals.



*Photo by Charles Dumaresq*  
**Building containing the hoist at Hellens Mill Site before and after remediation work by Agnico.**



*Photo by Reiner Mielke*

In other news - Brian Dobbs has undertaken a big project - he is working on a **new website!** We've finally been able to secure our own domain name [cobalthistoricalsociety.ca](http://cobalthistoricalsociety.ca) The site is currently under construction. We'll announce the big reveal later this year.

And finally, news from the **Cobalt Public Library** where I volunteer my time as board member and researcher, and more recently, blogger. Here are the opening lines from a recent post:

*Back in 2017, Mayor Tina Sartoretto asked me to help her reboot the Oral History Project. At the time, transcriptions of the 1972 interviews were posted on the library's website and paper copies were stored on the local history shelves. Prior to this time, online content was published on one long page containing every interviewee's answers. Not ideal, but better than none. To add to the confusion, replies to the questions were difficult to understand without referring to the questionnaire for context – again, not ideal.*

*Then the library's website was rebuilt, but without the interviews! Definitely not ideal, especially for a history and research fan such as myself. I was more than motivated to see this project through.*

Happily, albeit five years later, I am pleased to announce that the interviews are once again available online. For a list of Cobalt residents who were interviewed, see <https://cobalt.olsn.ca/cpl/projects/list-of-cobalt-interviewees/>

### **The First Cobalt Arena** by Maggie Wilson

The inspiration for this article came from a letter written by Bill Lendrum, written during another January, in 2005. From Fort Saskatchewan, he wrote:

***Enclosed please find pictures of the old Cobalt rink taken on the day the roof fell in. My good friend, the late Gordon Bazinet heard about the collapse and went to see the results.***

***In the late '30s, I played goal for the high school [hockey] team. Boy, was that place cold – no one dared sit down to watch a game or you would be there 'til you thawed out in the spring.***

It seems fitting then, with the seasons past and present in alignment, that we expand upon the history of Cobalt's first arena.

Lifelong Cobalt resident Al Haarala recalls that the building sat at the corner of Miller Avenue and Lower Nickel Street, and that the front entrance of the "Cobalt Jubilee Arena", fronted on to Miller.

We are unable to confirm that the name "Jubilee," was used, either officially or informally. A Montreal rink, owned by people involved with the formation of the NHA and later NHL, was called *Jubilee*. Perhaps Cobalters adopted the moniker in homage.





COBALT SKATING RINK, COMPLETED JANUARY, 1909.

## COBALT'S NEW COVERED RINK

Is Daily Becoming More Popular Among The Skaters---  
Magnificent Arena Crowded On Every Occasion.

*Cobalt Daily Nugget Article - January 23, 1909*

The driving force behind the facility was the Cobalt Skating, Curling and Athletic Association Limited. Cobalt history buffs will recognize the names of the executive: Mayor H. H. Lang was President, Coniagas Mine Manger R. P. Rogers was Secretary Treasurer, and National Hockey League Association Vice President Thos. C. Hare was the arena manager.

Despite the lukewarm reception from the public, Lang, Rogers, and Hare saw a financial opportunity. As optimistic entrepreneurs in a booming mine town, especially with the newly born NHA, one imagines that these gentlemen did not think twice about the success of their project.

“When the idea [of an arena] was first suggested,” said the *Daily Nugget*, “it was received very conservatively and with nods of the head, but the patronage since the doors were opened has settled the question once and for all that even if the rink was not an absolute necessity, it was, to say the least, a facility much desired.”

Gossip of the day centered on the new arena. Many people doubted the scale of the project. To put rumours to rest, or more likely, recognizing an opportunity to promote the arena, Hare invited the *Nugget* on an inspection tour. The “splendidly” lit, 180 x 101’ arena held 2,800 seats around the rink. But with standing room for additional spectators, 3500 people could enjoy a game: an astonishing

number, nearly four times the population of the Best Ol’ Town today.

On the main floor, the facility contained dressing rooms for both men’s and women’s teams, another for curlers, and a space for “gentleman patrons.” The 155 x 72’ ice surface was flanked by two curling rinks. An electrical water supply system was used to flood the ice surface twice daily, a task undertaken by at least one of the twelve employees.

Upstairs, was a “commodious” space spanning the width of the building, 18’ deep. This unfinished area was designated as a heated tea room and coat check. The wall overlooking the game below was to be closed in with glass, so those enjoying warm refreshments could take in the game.



*Two Early Photos of the Original Cobalt Arena*

Unfortunately, the glass partition was not installed in time for the game two days later. That was when the wooden railing gave way and several spectators fell to the rink below. One man sued the Athletic Associate, and the courts settled in his favour. When he awarded damages, Justice Riddell said, “It seems to me that it is perfectly idle for the architect to say that he did not expect any such occurrence. Had he thought about the matter at all, he must have known that such an occurrence was not only like, but almost certain.”

**THE COBALT ROLLER  
SKATING RINK**

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OPEN  
AFTERNOON 2 till 4  
EVENINGS 7.30 till 10

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**Everybody's Doing it Now**

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**Good Floor, Skates  
and Music.**

**HOCKEY** COBALT SKATING RINK

<p><b>Haileybury Ladies</b> vs <b>Cobalt Ladies</b> <b>THURS. FEB. 6th</b> Come and see a good fast game <b>Admission 25-50c</b></p>	<p><b>Cobalt Lake</b> vs <b>McKINLEY-DARRAGH</b> <b>FRIDAY FEB. 7th</b> Special prizes for winners donated by C. D. Morrison <b>Admission 25-50c</b></p>
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RESERVED SEAT PLAN AT KELLOCKS DRUG STORE

**Cobalt Rink**

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**SKATING**

Band Concert by  
**COBALT  
BRASS BAND**  
**Monday Feb. 3**  
Admission - 25c

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**HOCKEY**  
NIP. vs. O'BRIEN  
**Tuesday, Feb. 4th**

*Cobalt Daily Nugget Ads in 1912 and 1913*

In January 1909, the Cobalt senior's hockey team was host to teams from Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Berlin [Kitchener], Brantford, and Guelph. Scheduling time on the ice must have been a challenge for Mr. Hare. Besides the fixed times for Cobalt senior and junior hockey teams, he allocated time for the Town League, the Ladies' Club, and for special games or other use of the space, for example a winter carnival or a costume ball. In the spring and summer, the Athletic Association organized tennis in the afternoons and roller skating in the evenings. Judging from the ads in the paper, community bands from both Cobalt and Haileybury provided entertainment and musical accompaniment for the skaters.

It was at this same period of time when Cobalt entered the National Hockey Association with its 'Silver Kings' team. Art Ross, a prominent hockey player of the day, adorned the Cobalt jersey in its debut year. The story of Art Ross and the Cobalt Connection is a worthy story in itself; hopefully to be covered in an article in a future newsletter.

Over the years, besides hockey, the venue hosted a variety of special sporting spectacles. One such event was in February 1911 when "Crack Speed Skater" Norval Baptie of North Dakota appeared. Another series of races in August, 1912 featured Harrison Fry of Richmond Indiana who was the world champion long distance roller skater.

But Cobalt had homegrown talent of its own, namely Dan Wink, champion speed skater of Northern Ontario. He was not only fast, he was an entertainer, too, wowing the crowds by barrel jumping and skating on stilts.

Back to Bill Lendrum's letter: on a mild Christmas day, 1940, the roof, laden with snow, was too much for one of the supporting pillars. Thankfully, no one was in the arena at the time, and even more fortunate was that the collapse did not occur during the opening game of the NOHA junior series two days later.

Since the Town owned the facility, and could not afford the repair cost, the building was demolished.

Almost a decade later, on December 18, 1949, a new facility was opened at the north end of town, on Argentite Street. It was later renamed the Father Les Costello Memorial Arena. In 2016, the Town, citing declining usage and an aging population as well as rising maintenance costs, put the building up for sale. It is now privately owned.

"It is an open question if there is a lady or gentleman, boy or girl in Cobalt, who, taking even a small interest in hockey or skating has not yet paid a visit to the handsome new covered rink situated at the south end of the town..." These words from January 23, 1909 are as apt today as they were during Cobalt's boom. These public places hosted throngs of spectators who cheered



*The Cobalt Arena Roof collapses  
on Christmas Day in 1940.*



for their team. Fans were by turn dismayed at losses or exhilarated by victories, and, like Bill Lendrum, more than a few had frozen bottoms to prove their dedication to the sport.



*Cobalt Ladies Hockey Team 1910*




*Cobalt Silver Kings NHA Hockey Team 1910*

**Membership Renewal 2023**

It's that time of year again when we reach out to all of our existing (and hopefully new) members with a reminder of the annual membership renewal. It is with your continued support to the Cobalt Historical Society that we are able to provide the many components of our work including the Heritage Silver Trail, newsletters, research, and all things history related to the Cobalt Silver Camp. We wish to thank you for your continued support and welcome all donations. They are much appreciated.

Feel free to cut or scan the membership card below and fill it in. You can mail it along with your payment by cheque (payable to the Cobalt Historical Society) or if you wish, e-transfer to [chs@heritagesilvertrail.ca](mailto:chs@heritagesilvertrail.ca)

	<p><b>Cobalt Historical Society</b>                  P.O. Box 309, Cobalt, Ontario P0J 1C0  <a href="http://heritagesilvertrail.ca">heritagesilvertrail.ca</a></p>	
<b>2023 Membership Form</b>		
Name: .....		
Street Address: ..... P.O. Box: .....		
Town/City: ..... Province: ..... Postal Code: .....		
Telephone: ..... Email: .....		
<b>Payment – Cheque payable to the Cobalt Historical Society or e-transfer to <a href="mailto:chs@heritagesilvertrail.ca">chs@heritagesilvertrail.ca</a></b>		
Annual Dues: <input type="checkbox"/> Little Silver Vein ( One Year Household Membership ) \$20.00		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Glory Hole ( One Year Corporate Membership ) \$50.00		
Donation: <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to make the following donation \$ .....		
<input type="checkbox"/> Please place me on the CHS email list.	<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to contribute articles to the newsletter.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to work on the trails.	<input type="checkbox"/> Please tell me how I can volunteer.	

**Help Support our Fundraising Efforts  
Cobalt Puzzles**



***Giachino's Coniagas Shaft House  
#4 circa 1945 as a grocery store.***



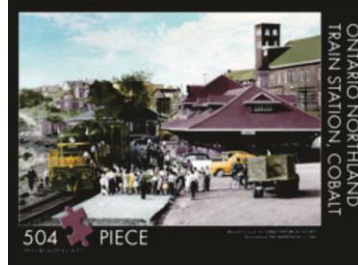
***The Iconic Right of Way Mine  
Photo by Charles Dumaresq.***



***Right of Way Mine Reflections  
Photo by Sue Nielsen.***



***Oblin's Cash and Carry  
Circa 1945 on Lang Street.***



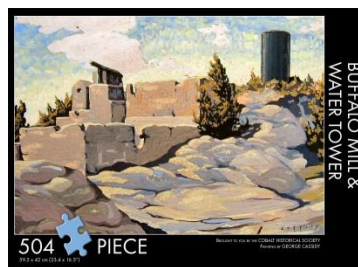
***Ontario Northland Railway  
Station Cobalt 1945.***



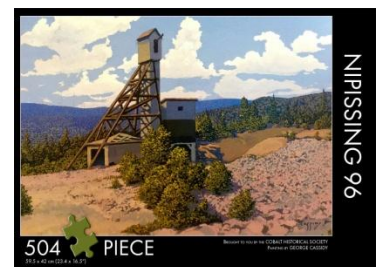
***Cobalt Public School  
Photo circa 1955.***



***Silver Miller Mine  
Photograph circa 1950***



***Buffalo Mine & Water Tower  
George Cassidy Print***



***Nipissing 96  
George Cassidy Print***

All puzzles are \$25 except the 2 George Cassidy Prints, which are \$30.  
Contact White Mountain Publications at 705-679-5555 or their website at [www.wmpub.ca](http://www.wmpub.ca) for further details.

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**The Board of the Cobalt Historical Society wishes to  
thank you for your continued support by way of your  
annual memberships, donations, fundraiser purchases,  
and contributions to our newsletters and research.**

**Visit both our website and Facebook Page.**

**We'd love to hear from you.**

**Stay safe and stay in touch.**