



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society

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Cobalt Historical Society Annual Report 2023

This report is presented at the Cobalt Historical Society Annual General Meeting held Monday, March 20, 2023.

We have been unable to hold an annual meeting since 2018 for a variety of reasons: the Speaker's Symposium in 2019, health issues in 2022, and COVID in between. What follows are the highlights of those five years.

This report is presented in four parts:

- 1. Preservation of the Heritage Silver Trail**
- 2. Promotion of the Cobalt Historical Society and the Heritage Silver Trail**
- 3. Publications**
- 4. Partners**

Preservation of the Heritage Silver Trail

Thanks to Trail Manager Reiner Mielke and board member Reg Holdsworth for regular inspection and maintenance of the sites along the self-guided tour. Thanks, too, to volunteers who helped with clearing the never-ending growth of vegetation.

CHS faced several challenges since 2018.

- ONR Closures – unresolved

In spring, 2021, Ontario Northland Railway erected barriers at the Right of Way and Townsite Mine properties, citing a need for environmental and structural assessment. The Ministry (NDMNRF) is conducting the investigation on behalf of ONR.

Tourists are permitted to view both headframes from a safe distance, though the barriers are not effective at blocking access. Determined visitors can easily enter the sites, though we, the guardians of the trail cannot. The situation is frustrating, and a grave concern for the Cobalt Historical Society.

CHS made a delegation to the Town Council, asking for their support; we conducted an information and letter-writing campaign, and several media outlets covered the story.

The closure of the Right of Way site is particularly problematic in that we have raised \$21,530 to repair the roof of the headframe. We must keep those funds in reserve, on the expectation that the site will reopen at some point in the future. But how long do we wait? Will the site ever reopen?

- Town of Cobalt and liability insurance - resolved

In the 2001 Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and Agnico Eagle, the Town agreed to indemnify Agnico against any claims related to the use of the trail. However, in the fall of 2021, we were surprised to learn that the Town of Cobalt did not own insurance for the Heritage Silver Trail. CHS made another delegation to Town Council, where it was agreed that the Town would pay our cost of liability insurance. This insurance covers visitors to the trail, volunteers who work on the trail, and it protects the officers and directors of the board.

- Town of Cobalt Designation of the Right of Way Mine as a heritage site - unresolved

In 2017, the Town agreed with our request to designate the Right of Way Mine as a heritage site, however, nothing happened. In 2021, with a change in administration, we revisited the request, but again, we unable to move forward.

- Vandalism – resolved on a case-by-case basis

Over the past several years, we have replaced or repaired several old and weathered signs. One site at a time, the entire trail is being upgraded. However, other signs had to be replaced due to vandalism or theft.

Vandals, like the weather, are a constant factor in terms of trail maintenance. Theft and deliberate damage will persist.

Promotion of the Cobalt Historical Society and the Heritage Silver Trail

We continue to make good use of social media to engage members and others who are interested in mining or family history. During the pandemic and lockdowns, we noticed a more than the normal amount of traffic at both the physical and virtual sites.

People also turned to their family history to occupy themselves. While not exactly promotion, we respond enthusiastically to any request for information regarding the Cobalt story. This is an opportunity to not only set the record straight – for instance, think: hammer, fox, and Fred Larose -- but also a great chance to learn more and share what we uncover.

Research requests come from around the world. These include relatives of Dr. Drummond, William Trethewey, Harry Rowdon, to list a few of the more recognizable names.

An ongoing project involves working with the biographer of J. Alex Castonguay, a former Ottawa policeman who came north to prospect for silver, and capture the frontier scene in pictures. Back home in his studio, a fire destroyed the glass negatives and all evidence of his time in the region was lost. Bit by bit, we have been able to identify his photos and rebuild his Cobalt portfolio.

Plan to attend the McMichael Gallery later this year for an exhibition of Cobalt's modern artists such as Franklin Carmichael, A. Y. Jackson, Yvonne McKague, and others. Art Historian Catharine Mastin approached us for help. A challenging and very satisfying part of the project was identifying the locations in the paintings that were simply named, "A Northern Silver Mine" for example. Also on display will be the E. Gilmour Smith painting that was donated to the CHS. We featured Smith in one of our newsletters and in doing so, learned about his artistic talents both here and later in Timmins.

Last October, our friends at the Haileybury Heritage Museum commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Great Fire of 1922. CHS board member Sarah Johnston helped with the event planning as well as with gathering new stories for the updated book published by Deborah Ranchuk, owner of Cobalt's book store and CHS Secretary. We have also taken part in several documentaries and TV series by assisting producers with research, photos, and in several cases, being filmed for programs such as *Still Standing* and TVO's *Crossroads* series *Beyond Boom and Bust*.

We continued to publish our *newsletters*, now under the editorship of board member Brian Dobbs. Brian is also rebuilding a *new website* to be launched later this year.

Publications

The 2019 Speakers' Symposium was a modest success, and we published the talks in *Selected Chapters of Temiskaming Heritage: Chapter Two*. There are no plans to host a similar event soon.

The souvenir puzzles continue to be a big hit and two more are planned for this tourist season.

We also provided research support to several authors who published books, for instance Debra North's *Sterling Women*, and Terry Grace's *Airy Somethings* which was co-authored by CHS chair Maggie Wilson.

Our Partners

Our relationship with Agnico Eagle remains strong and characterised by mutual respect and understanding. The mining company has taken the lead on several enhancements to the trail, including the formal addition of the Cobalt Lake/Hellens Mill property. Last autumn they began remediation of that site and erected a new shelter over the hoist, for example.

Our relationship with staff and council of Coleman Township is equally strong. They have appointed a councillor to attend our board meetings. We look forward to working together to promote and preserve the Heritage Silver Trail with new projects in the coming months, including a new side trail adjacent to the McKinley Darragh Mill site.

We have an excellent relationship with staff at the Town of Cobalt. Since The CHS office space on Silver Street has been declared unsafe until the stiff-legs can be repaired, the Town has granted us use of the Business Centre in the Community Hall for our meetings.

With the 2023 - 2028 municipal term comes a new Town Council. We await the appointment of a liaison for the new term.

We continue to work together with our very good friends at the Cobalt Mining Museum. While the museum maintains the indoor exhibits, and we are responsible for the Heritage Silver Trail, our work overlaps at the Colonial Mine Adit Tour, the principal source of funding for the museum. Every year, we keep the museum well-stocked with trail guides and maps. And every year, they run out. A satisfying outcome.

The Colonial Mine Site is a good example of how our partnerships matter. Before opening season last year, a team of volunteers helped us clear several years of brush. With the help of Coleman Mayor Dan Cleroux, SMC donated in-kind labour and materials to help repair vandalism. We installed security equipment on the site as well.

The History of 8 Prospect Avenue

Many have visited Deborah Ranchuk's bookstore at the old Coniagas #4 headframe at the corner of Prospect and Silver. The building is an historic landmark and has been home to several businesses since Antonio Giachino opened his grocery store in the late 1920s.

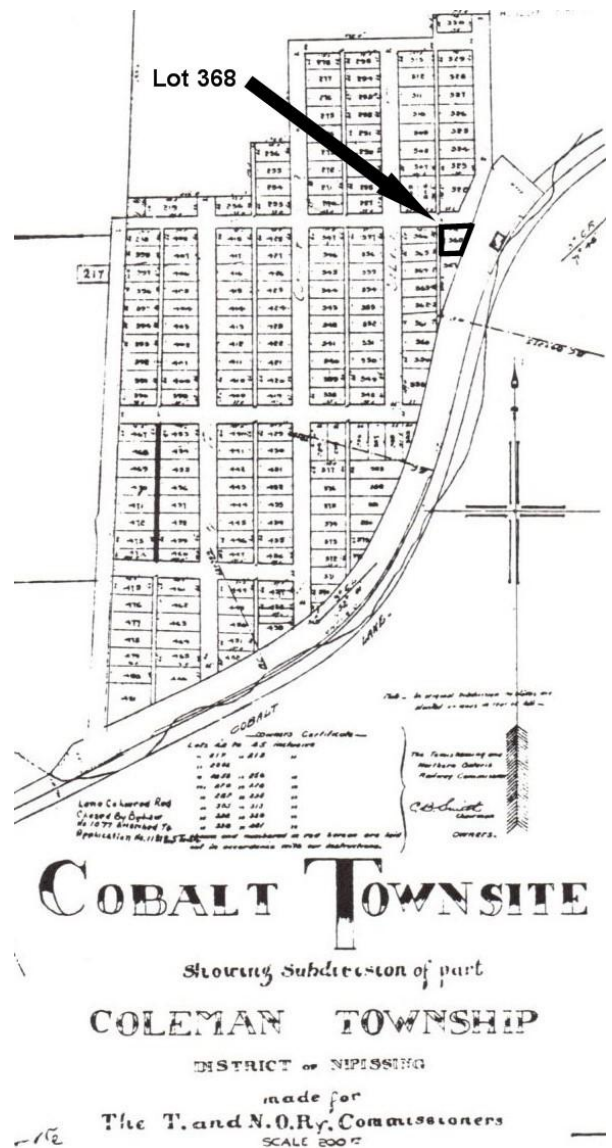
For your next trip to her bookstore, however, you'll need to travel further north along the avenue. Since September 2022, White Mountain Publications has occupied the building at 8 Prospect Avenue.

After silver was discovered in 1903, prospectors and merchants congregated along the ridge parallel to the shore of Cobalt Lake, some in tents, others in cabins. Ferguson Brothers was the first (but most definitely not the last!) business to conduct trade from this spot.

In 1905, commissioners of the T&NO laid out a townsite, and auctioned the land. Lot 368 of the T&NO subdivision of Cobalt Townsite was arguably the choicest location on the map.

Prominently situated overlooking the train station and Cobalt Lake to the east and "The Square" to the north, this property anchored the commercial section of the early mining town.

This lot changed hands a few times, selling in late 1905 for \$1500, then about a half year later, it resold for \$8000. Adjusted for inflation, that's about \$300,000 in today's values. In April of 1906, *The Speaker* reported that the new owner had plans to build an Opera House. Mr. Carr was already conducting business next door.





The Lyric Theatre and Milton Carr's department store.

Two distinct building blocks dominated the property. The Lyric Theatre aka The Opera House to the east and Milton Carr & Son General store next door.

This list includes some of the known occupants on the site from 1905 to 1912.

- Grand Opera House [or] Lyric Theatre
- O’Gorman & Coyne
- RM 16 GJ Stevenson magnetic healer
- WHP Jarvis stockbroker
- Cobalt Standard Mining Exchange
- Dr. Munro
- Art Wood’s Barber Shop
- Alred Hall barrister
- Henry & Deming [later Deming & Black] Jewellery Store
- Milton Carr & Son General Store
- Cobalt Light, Power & Water Co
- Residences of Patrick Hart, Archie and Thomas Black, among many others.



Fire of June 5, 1912

The entire block and beyond was destroyed by a fire June 5, 1912 and was replaced by two multiplexes: the Wallace Block/Hebert/Adams Block to the east and Milton Carr /Woolworth block to the west.

The two properties were occupied by lawyers, jewellers, medical professions, and other merchants and services, as well as residential tenants. Some notable names from 1912 – 1971

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| West Nipissing Store | HF Fancy residence | Davis & Dunn |
| Coleman Township Offices | Dominion Grocery Store | Woolworths |
| Employment Service of Canada | OPP Office | McKay & Todd Insurance |
| Northern Miner Press | Cobalt Fire Station | Victorian Order of Nurses |
| McDermot & Sullivan Ladies' Furnishings | AL Herbert Customs Broker | Silanco Mining & |
| Dr. EF Armstrong Dentist | Jack Church Residence | Refining office |
| Ontario Government Employment Bureau (depression era program) | United Steelworkers of America | Masonic Lodge meeting place |
| Canadian Industries Ltd Explosives (CIL) | Cam Eno's Barbershop | Purdy's Five and Dime |
| | Silverland Gem Shop | |

Then another fire in February , 1971 when both blocks were destroyed. The property was quickly rehabilitated. This time, the east end was a parking lot for the Tressiders who moved their grocery from up on Prospect Ave., by the Anglican Church and opened Red & White Grocery Store and operated here until 1980. A succession of groceries then occupied the building: Montemurro Foods, Metro, and the Miner's Market. Then, Barney and Lynne Galliot operated their Family Entertainment Centre here. Adroit Resources occupied the space through the early 2000's to about 2014. During the Cobalt exploraton "boom" in 2018, Cobalt Power Group had their offices here, but after that time, the building was unoccupied.

Until now, that is.

From <https://wmpub.ca/01-store.html>

White Mountain celebrated the end of its 40th year in business Aug 2022. For most of those years we operated as a home office. In 1996 we started selling books online. (Yes, before Google, before amazon....) We opened our store front at the end of July, 2014 at 50 Silver Street in Cobalt. Our Grand Opening was August 8, 2014. In September 2022 we moved to our new permanent home at 8 Prospect Avenue, Cobalt. It's only a couple of hundred feet from where we were, but has 4 times the space. We will be expanding the actual store as time goes on, but it's open now in the front space that's finished.

Be sure to plan a visit, to renew acquaintances with Deb and to check out Cobalt's bookstore's new home!



Wallace and Carr Blocks - 1913

**A Friendly
Reminder for
Your
Membership
Renewal 2023**

Feel free to cut or scan the membership card. Mail it along with your payment by cheque (payable to the Cobalt Historical Society) or if you wish, e-transfer to chs@heritagesilvertrail.ca



Cobalt Historical Society
P.O. Box 309, Cobalt, Ontario P0J 1C0
heritagesilvertrail.ca
2023 Membership Form

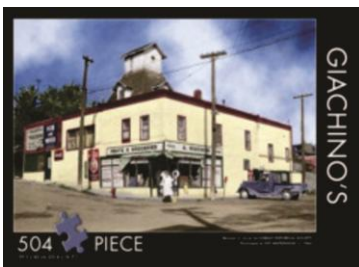


Name:
Street Address: P.O. Box:
Town/City: Province: Postal Code:
Telephone: Email:

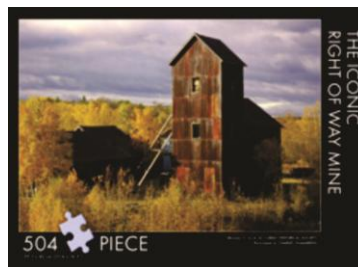
Payment – Cheque payable to the Cobalt Historical Society or e-transfer to chs@heritagesilvertrail.ca

- Annual Dues:** Little Silver Vein (One Year Household Membership) \$20.00
 The Glory Hole (One Year Corporate Membership) \$50.00
- Donation:** I would like to make the following donation \$
- Please place me on the CHS email list. I would like to contribute articles to the newsletter.
 I would like to work on the trails. Please tell me how I can volunteer.

Help Support our Fundraising Efforts - Cobalt Puzzles



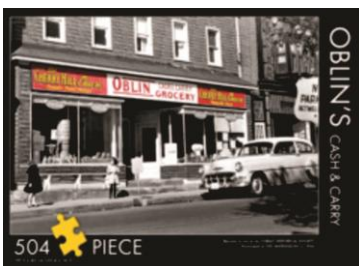
***Giachino's Coniagas Shaft House
#4 circa 1945 as a grocery store.***



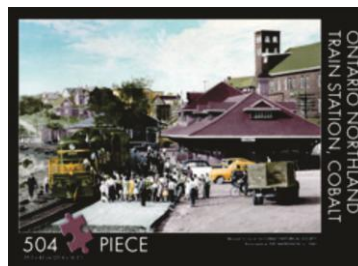
***The Iconic Right of Way Mine
Photo by Charles Dumaresq.***



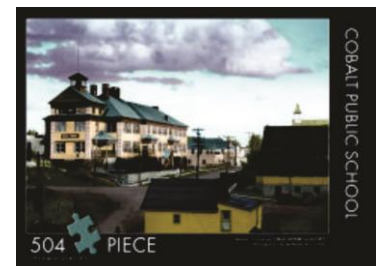
***Right of Way Mine Reflections
Photo by Sue Nielsen.***



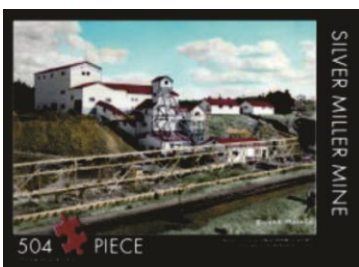
***Oblin's Cash and Carry
Circa 1945 on Lang Street.***



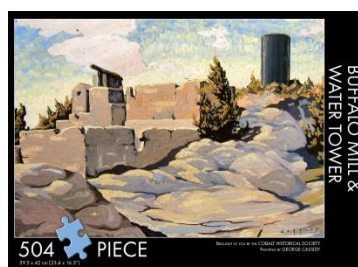
***Ontario Northland Railway
Station Cobalt 1945.***



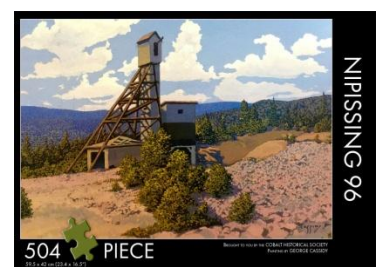
***Cobalt Public School
Photo circa 1955.***



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



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



***Nipissing 96
George Cassidy Print***

All puzzles are \$30.

Contact White Mountain Publications at 705-679-5555 or their website at www.wmpub.ca for further details.