

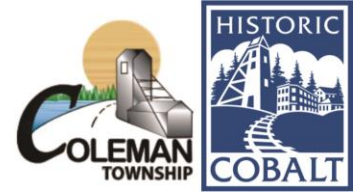


# THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society

Box 309, Cobalt, ON P0J 1C0 cobalthistoricalsociety.ca

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## Cobalt Historical Society Annual Report 2024

Presented at the Cobalt Historical Society Annual General Meeting held Monday, March 4, 2024.

### Preservation of the Heritage Silver Trail

Special thanks to volunteer board members Reiner Mielke and Reg Holdsworth for regular inspection and maintenance of the sites along the self-guided tour. Thanks, too, to those in the community who helped with clearing the never-ending growth of vegetation. Special thanks go to Connie Corville who donated his time and equipment toward the clearing of the proposed Calder Memorial Trail.

### ONR Closures – unresolved

- March 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 (NDMNR) is conducting the investigation on behalf of ONR. Phase I is complete and Phase II will begin this spring.
- 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 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.

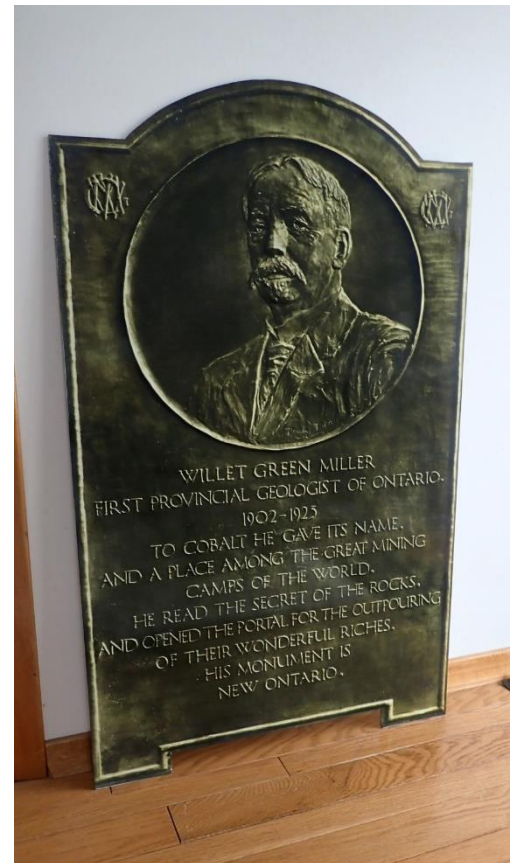
### Vandalism – resolved on a case-by-case basis

Vandals, like the weather, are a constant factor in terms of trail maintenance. Theft and deliberate damage will persist. Not until the first of September, did we experience any loss, but this particular theft was devastating. The bronze plaque in memory of Willet Green Miller was stolen, as well as two smaller bronze markers – a memorial to those miners who died on the job, and a time capsule.

We have purchased an aluminum replacement sign for the Miller memorial. Joe Dube donated a stainless-steel marker to replace the time capsule. These will be installed in the spring.

### The Calder Memorial Trail

We received funds from Keith Calder, in memory of his father “Cobalt” John Calder, a regular visitor to the area. A small portion was used to hire sculptors Rob and Sally Moir who restored the bas-relief installation on Silver Street. Additional funds will be provided to recondition the old switchback road that runs up and behind the McKinley Darragh. It will be designated as the John Calder Memorial Trail. Work will start this season.



*Aluminum Replacement Plaque for the Willet Green Miller Memorial.*

## Promotion

Social media is still a great way to engage members and those who are interested in mining or local history. We also assist those working on their family history, writing articles, or documentaries.

We spent upwards of 100 hours helping people from the McMichael Art Gallery. Our primary goal was identifying the mine sites painted by artists who came to Cobalt in the very early years, up to the 1930s. This was challenging and satisfying work.

## Publications

- We continued to publish our newsletters.
- Editor Brian Dobbs also launched the new website.
- We started to post articles on a new blog, “More to the Story.”
- Two new souvenir puzzles were launched in 2023.

## Consolidated Trail and Tourist Guide

As you know, we are the guardians of the Heritage Silver Trail. The bulk of our work involves the maintenance and promotion of those particular sites. Meanwhile, other trails are available for people to enjoy – the Town's Walking Tour and Keevil Walking Trail, and more recently the Vivian Hylands Art Tour and the Group of Seven Art Tour have been installed. These tours are not actively promoted. Plus, several trails overlap, and in the case of the Keevil Trail, no guide is available.

Online, we will publish a booklet that identifies all the trails and heritage and cultural sites. Visitors will be able to get a copy of the free guide at various locations within the Town and neighbouring communities.

## Our Partners

Our partnerships with Agnico Eagle, Coleman Township, and the Town of Cobalt remain strong. Cobalt councillor Pat Anderson has returned to the table as liaison for the Town.

We continue to support our friends at the Cobalt Mining Museum. In 2023, they learned that they were ineligible for funding from the Canada Summer Jobs program. We donated \$5,000 so that they could hire a summer student.

Together with our friends of the Haileybury Heritage Museum, we are working toward digitizing the Haileyburian newspaper in their archive. We are at the preliminary stages of this project.

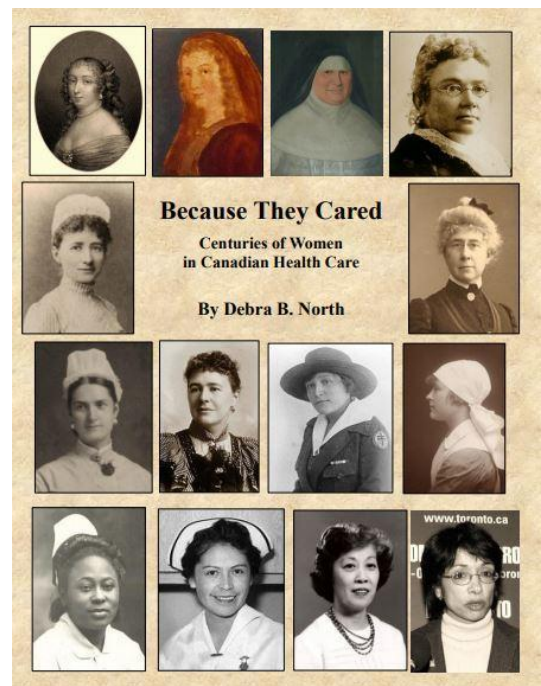
## New Local History Book Coming Soon

*Because They Cared – Centuries of Women in Canadian Health Care*  
by Debra B. North

Women have made huge contributions to Canadian health care over the centuries. In her latest book, *Because They Cared*, author Debra North profiles over 80 women who represent specific eras and developments. North describes the women's backgrounds as well as the social and political situations that influenced their work.

Each of the forty chapters discusses the women's work through periods of war and during times of peace, beginning with the First Nations, before and during initial European contact, to the Vikings in 1010, to the French Regime from 1535 to 1763, then the British era up to the present. By organising the chapters in chronological order, the reader can follow the impact women had on the development of Canadian healthcare through the years.

Not every woman profiled was a medical professional. Some were educated in their field while many others were not. But they built



hospitals, improved education, struggled against racism and gender barriers while they worked to improve care for civilians, the military, those who lived at outposts, remote districts and overseas.

The work is illustrated with over 275 photographs, maps and documents. Of local interest will be the chapters on Cobalt's Annie Saunders, Katherine Hair, Janet Linton, and Mary Rogers with her



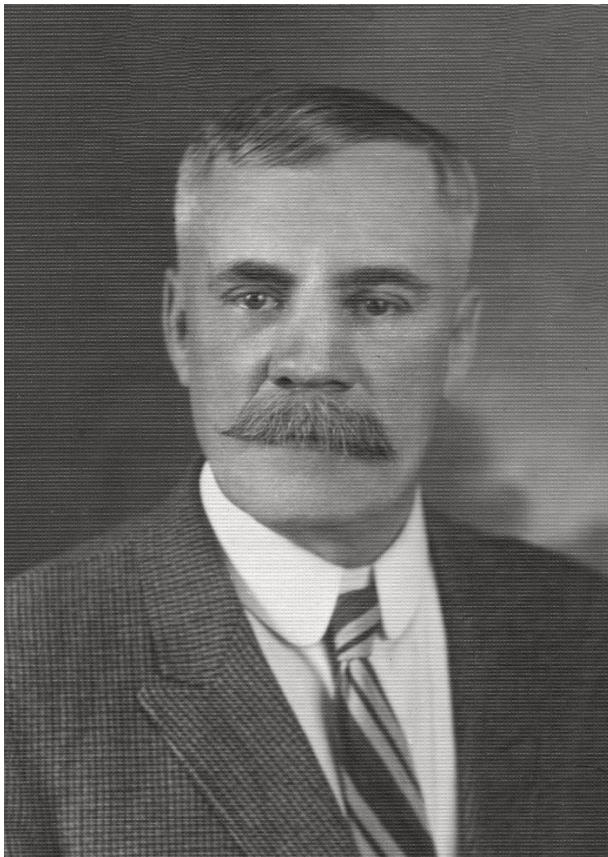
Debra is a Registered Nurse, who graduated from the Toronto General Hospital Campus of George Brown College in 1976 and earned her BScN in 2007. Her career has encompassed working in hospitals, nursing homes, teaching nursing and as a wound care specialist in visiting home care. She is an author and photograph enthusiast and writes about the history of Ontario, women and health care. She lives in Pickering, Ontario with her husband and two dogs.

work in the Cobalt Red Cross in WWI. North profiled these women in *Sterling Women of Cobalt 1903 - 1914*. This newest book has additional information about Nurse Linton, and Cobalt's first Victorian Order of Nurses.

North plans to publish the book later this year. We will update you when it becomes available.

### **Murray Watts – Cobalt's Famed Mine-Finder** by Brian Dobbs

In 1909 Murray Edmund Watts was born in Canada's cradle of mining, Cobalt, Ontario. At a very young age, his family pulled up stakes in Cobalt and headed to the Porcupine in search of gold. With the onslaught of the Porcupine Fire in 1911, his family refuged back to the Cobalt Camp. Growing up in "Silver City," he acquainted himself with many local would-be legends of the mining field. These included Noah Timmins of the LaRose, Cyril Knight of the Nipissing, and Richard and



Jack Pearce of the *Northern Miner Magazine*. No doubt these individuals sparked his interest to pursue a career in mining.

At the age of sixteen, he joined his first prospecting adventure in the Temagami area. This outing in the wilderness captivated Murray, and the following year, he set his sights further on the lure of gold in the Rouyn district and Red Lake.

Lacking a formal mining education, Murray chose to temporarily leave the blackflies and muskeg and return home to enroll at the Haileybury Mining School. A wise choice for him, he recalled, as it provided him training in mineral identification and many other practical aspects of mining. In 1929, Murray Watts graduated from the famed institution and was no sooner working for the Cyril Knight Prospecting Company, leading a prospecting party to the Lower Harricanaw-Mattagami Rivers in Northwestern Quebec.

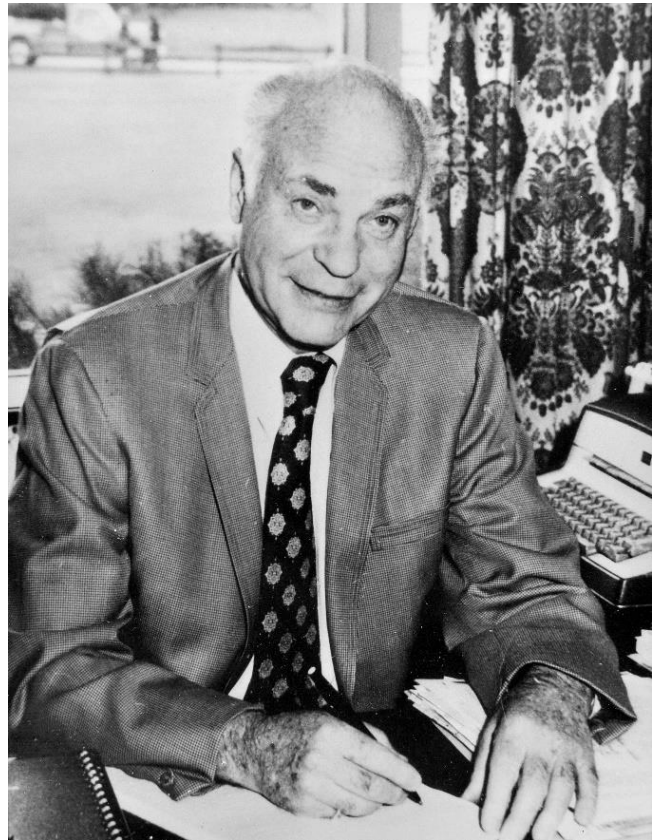
With practical mining education under his belt, Murray decided to attend Queen's University in the fall of 1929 in hopes of learning the business side of the trade. Falling short of funds and unable to pay tuition and lodgings, Murray was forced back to work. In 1931, Watts joined a prospecting expedition to Cape Smith on Quebec's northern Ungava Peninsula. Leaving from Moose Factory with an outboard on a twenty-two-foot canoe, Murray and fellow Cobalt prospector Mike McCart hugged the eastern shoreline of Hudson's Bay. The twelve-hundred-mile trip to their camp at Wakeman Bay took a month.

*Murray Watts.*

Murray's personal diary describes the winter months as nothing short of harsh and gruelling. Having to live off the land by catching fish and hunting caribou, they scoured the landscape in search of gold. Unfortunately for them, the prized gold was not located. Massive sulphide mineralization deposits were noted, but unfortunately, the market was not in tune with base metal discoveries at this time.

Murray returned to Queen's and completed his degree in 1935. Following graduation, he found employment with several companies, including Lake Shore Gold Mines and Prospectors Airways. In 1940, Murray became mine superintendent for Canadian Malartic Gold Mines, which became one of the lowest-cost gold producers in Canada. In June of that same year, he married née Marjorie Taylor. In 1946 Murray became vice-president of Chamberlain Management Corporation. His last stop before returning to Ungava saw him as the eastern manager of the Patty Harrison Contracting Co.

In 1948, Murray Watts joined Little Long Lac as General Manager. One associated company, LeMoyne Explorations Ltd. prompted Watts to seek out what he had previously discovered. In 1956 the LeMoyne Ungava Mines were formed to tap the rich copper-nickel discovery. American Smelting and Refining later optioned the ground and after spending over one million dollars, suspended operations. Purchasing all the abandoned equipment from Asarco, Murray developed the Raglan Nickel Mine on the base metal deposit.



*Murray Watts in his later years.*

Continuing his prospecting for profitable minerals, he found large areas of asbestos outcroppings north of the base metal find. This discovery yielded a twenty-million-ton deposit of asbestos ore, forming the Asbestos Hill Mines.

Although his involvement with the two Ungava properties was sufficient to maintain his active lifestyle, he felt a yearning to continue to seek out new potential ground. In 1961 he became President of British Ungava Explorations Ltd., which was financed by an association of several mining companies. These included the giant Anglo-American Mining Company, Consolidated Mining and Smelting, Falconbridge Nickel, Madsen Red Lake, Advance Red Lake, Asbestos Corporation, and Thayer Lindsay of the Ventures-Falconbridge company.

In the summer of 1962, Murray Watts went on to discover four deposits of high-grade iron lying six hundred miles north of Frobisher Bay. In that same year, he organized the engineering division of Murray Mining. A further expansion for mineral exploration in Canada brought the formation of the international geological and mining consulting firm Watts, Griffis, and McOuat Limited with co-founders Arthur Thomas Griffis and Jack McOuat.

For the next twenty years, Murray Watts was involved with the Keely Frontier at Silver Centre. In later years, his mining attention shifted to the west, developing the large fluorspar and tin deposits in Lost River, Alaska. At this time, Murray Watts unfortunately fell into financial despair, leaving his Willowdale home to come back to Cobalt and take up residence at Gillies Lake. From his new base in Coleman Township, Murray continued to investigate and promote many new properties.

On October 8, 1982, while returning from a business trip in Toronto, he was fatally killed in an automobile accident. He was seventy-three years of age. Murray and Marjorie had four sons and two daughters.

For his lifetime contributions to the mining industry, Murray Watts received many notable awards including the Massey Medal from the Canadian Geographical Society, a "Who's Who" in Canadian Mining and Exploration, an inductee to the Haileybury School of Mines Alumni Association Hall of Fame, a 1989 inductee to the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame and lastly, a 1981 recipient of the Order of Canada.



**The 2024 Board of the Cobalt Historical Society**

At our March 4, 2024 Annual General Meeting, each of the current members renewed their intention to remain on the Board.

- Maggie Wilson - Chair
- Sarah Johnston - Secretary and Research
- Reg Holdsworth - Treasurer and Trail
- Reiner Mielke - Trail Manager
- Brian Dobbs - Newsletter editor and webmaster
- Dwight Brydges - Restoration
- Deborah Ranchuk - Member

**Municipal Liaisons**

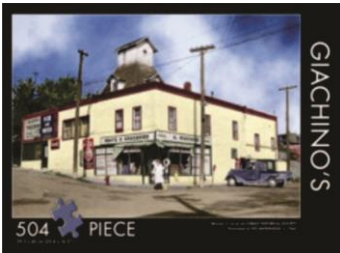
- Pat Anderson for the Town of Cobalt
- Marilyn Lubbock for Coleman Township

**Don't forget to visit our website!**

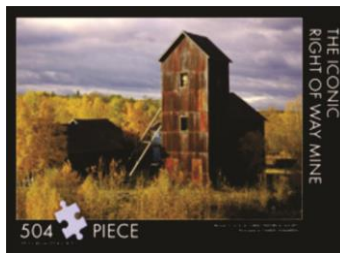
[cobalthistoricalsociety.ca](http://cobalthistoricalsociety.ca)



**Help Support our Fundraising Efforts - Cobalt Puzzles**



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



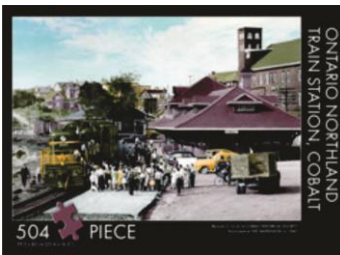
*The Iconic Right of Way Mine Photo by Charles Dumaresq.*



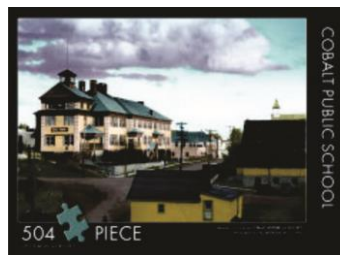
*Right of Way Mine Reflections Photo by Sue Nielsen.*



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



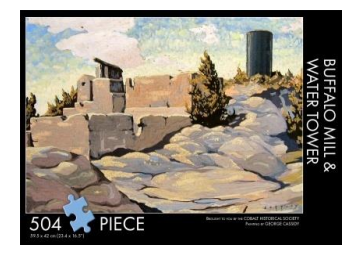
*Ontario Northland Railway Station Cobalt 1945.*



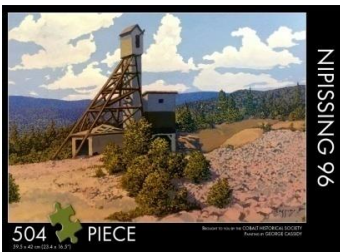
*Cobalt Public School Photo circa 1955.*



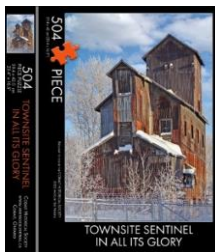
*Silver Miller Mine Photograph circa 1950*



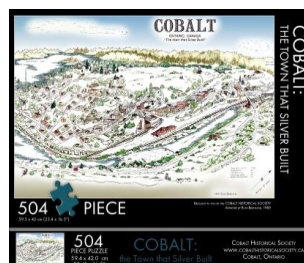
*Buffalo Mine & Water Tower George Cassidy Print*



*Nipissing 96 George Cassidy Print*



*Townsite Mine*



*Cobalt Map by Ruth Bernache*



*Hometown Hootenanny*

All Puzzles \$30. Contact White Mountain Publications at 705-679-5555 or their website at [www.wmpub.ca](http://www.wmpub.ca) for further details.