

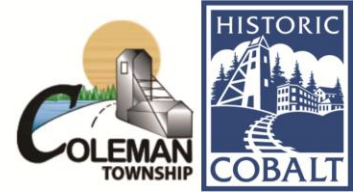


# THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society

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

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## The Phil Jones Silver Collection



*Frank Mosure organized this exhibit of Nipissing Mines mineral specimens for the T&NO, held in 1906. He claimed that the Nipissing Mines collection of silver ore was a bigger attraction than anything previous.*

material from the Cobalt and Coleman Township mines. This includes, of course, the Cobalt Mining Museum and the Haileybury Heritage Museum (HHM). And for that, we can thank detectorist Phil Jones for a most generous donation to both these facilities in the early 2000s.

While sorting through the specimens no longer on display at HHM, we discovered a letter written by him in 2003. Curious to know more about him, we chatted with his daughter, Patti Penny. What follows is his story as told by Phil and Patti.

### **Phil Jones 1926 – 2020**

“Phil was born in Birmingham, England, and served in the army from 1943 to 1945, both in Europe and as a guard at Buckingham Palace. He emigrated to Canada in 1952 and eventually settled in Peterborough with his wife June and their three daughters.

Ever since silver was discovered here in 1903, people have been collecting specimens, one way or another. Mine owners made sure to have a nugget or two to impress their visitors. Especially at the beginning, when investors were skeptical about the silver strike.

Today, even if you don't consider yourself a “rockhound” but you have ties to the area, you probably have a specimen of silver on the windowsill or on the bookshelf. For the mineral collectors among us, it is safe to say that most privately held collections globally, large or small, have at least one silver specimen from Cobalt.

From day one of the silver strike, those with an academic interest acquired specimens for their geology departments and museum exhibits. To this day, every major mineral collection in the world has

“Following a lengthy career at Canadian General Electric, his job was made redundant, and he elected to take an early retirement at age 56. Now a widower, he had time to fill and although already an avid golfer, he wanted to find another outdoor hobby.

“On a whim, he purchased a metal detector with the intent of combing parks and lakeshores for lost items. That led to an interest in the minerals in the Bancroft area and then to North Bay.”

Phil continues, “In 1983, I was at Temagami, having visited the Sherman Mine and the old Kanichee mine, when I met a collector who asked if I was headed for Cobalt. I wasn’t planning to go to, but I did and was so impressed with what I saw and the way I felt, that I had to come back.”

Let’s pause here for a moment. Phil’s reaction to the people, the landscape, and the way he felt about it is the same as many detectorists, and that is what draws them back at least once a year. For them, finding silver would be nice, but not the primary reason. It is the beauty, the natural ruggedness, and the history of the place that compels them.



*Phil Jones at the Haileybury Museum in the early 2000s. Behind him is a display case of silver ore specimens he donated.*



*A small portion of the Phil Jones collection at the Haileybury Museum.*

On average, Phil spent four weeks of the year in the area, “collecting, meeting people, identifying minerals and odds and sods of abandoned mining equipment, and generally absorbing the feel of the history. Although there are superior specimens of Cobalt area minerals in other collections, I enjoy having found every specimen in my collection, since I would get no satisfaction in buying, selling, or trading.”

Patti recalled that he spent the next twenty-five years building his collection. “His contacts at the School of Mines in Haileybury were supportive and helpful and became his friends along the way. He donated a number of samples to the school and also gave a small bursary to a student in the program.”

Phil explained why he chose to donate a good portion of his collection to the local museums. “With so many pieces in my collection, and insufficient room to display it all, I want it to be displayed wherever other people can see examples of the silver deposits of not just the Cobalt area but also specific mines. With Cobalt’s centenary having been recognized in 2003 and the Cobalt and Haileybury Museums being interested in displaying some of my collection, hopefully, the displays will prove to be interesting and educational to the visitors.”

From Cobalt, prospectors moved on and were successful in Bucke, South Lorraine, and Gowganda, before heading north and finding the tremendously rich gold and base metal areas. The fact that the discovery of silver at Cobalt opened up mining in Northern Ontario cannot be emphasized enough. It is Cobalt’s legacy, in as much as profit from silver mining provided the money and manpower to finance the opening of many of the gold mines.”

Phil's physical health forced him to give up the hobby when he was in his early 80's, but he continued to work on his existing collection, and he always cherished those years when he was able to search for the perfect specimens. His daughters have spread his ashes in several places along the Heritage Silver Trail in recognition of his love for rockhounding.



## Cobalt Silver Camp Historical Trivia



Test your knowledge of the history of the Cobalt Silver Camp.  
Answers can be found on the back page of the newsletter.

1. Local lore tells of Fred Larose's original silver discovery when he threw his blacksmith's hammer at what pestering animal?
 

|          |         |        |         |
|----------|---------|--------|---------|
| a) Skunk | b) Wolf | c) Fox | d) Bear |
|----------|---------|--------|---------|
2. In what year did the largest Cobalt Miner's Labour Strike occur?
 

|         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| a) 1917 | b) 1919 | c) 1921 | d) 1923 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
3. Which mine/mining company in the Cobalt Silver Camp was the largest producer?
 

|              |             |            |              |
|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| a) Nipissing | b) Coniagas | c) Buffalo | d) Tretheway |
|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
4. Lang Street in Cobalt was originally called what?
 


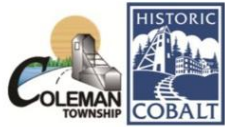
|                |                |                  |                    |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| a) Cobalt Road | b) Main Street | c) Larose Street | d) Haileybury Road |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|
5. Who was the founding President of the Cobalt Historical Society?
 

|                   |                   |                |                 |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| a) Vivian Hylands | b) Paul Hermiston | c) Jack Church | d) Merv Lavigne |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|

## Membership Renewal 2025

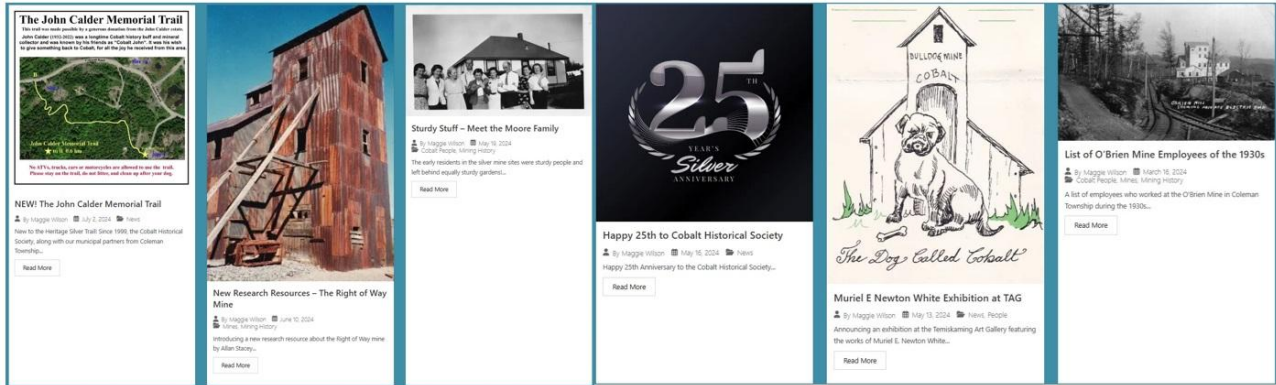
It's that time of year again when we reach out to all our existing (and hopefully new) members with a reminder of the annual membership renewal. It is with your continued support to the Cobalt Historical Society that we can provide the many components of our work including the Heritage Silver Trail, 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 [mail@cobalthistoricalsociety.ca](mailto:mail@cobalthistoricalsociety.ca). You may also go to our website and fill in the online membership.

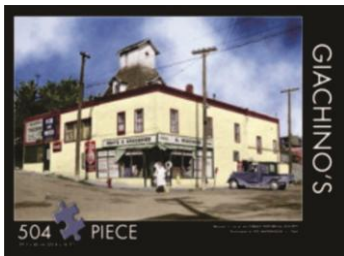
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|   | <p><b>Cobalt Historical Society</b><br/>         P.O. Box 309, Cobalt, Ontario P0J 1C0<br/> <a href="http://cobalthistoricalsociety.ca">cobalthistoricalsociety.ca</a><br/> <b>Membership Form</b></p> |  |
| Name: .....  |  |   |
| Street Address: ..... 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:mail@cobalthistoricalsociety.ca">mail@cobalthistoricalsociety.ca</a></b>                                       |  |   |
| <b>Annual Dues:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Little Silver Vein ( <u>One</u> Year Household Membership ) \$20.00<br><input type="checkbox"/> The Glory Hole ( <u>One</u> Year Corporate Membership ) \$50.00 |  |   |
| <b>Donation:</b> <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.                          |

## Something New on Our Website – “More to the Story” BLOGS!

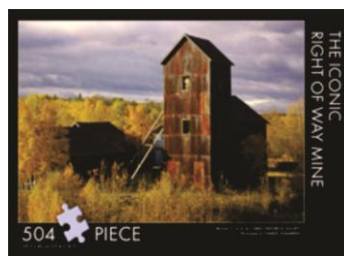
“More to the Story”, a blog section, is available on our website. Check it out! We hope you enjoy reading these fascinating articles and look forward to your comments. <https://cobalthistoricalsociety.ca/blog-posts/>



## Help Support our Fundraising Efforts - Cobalt Puzzles



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



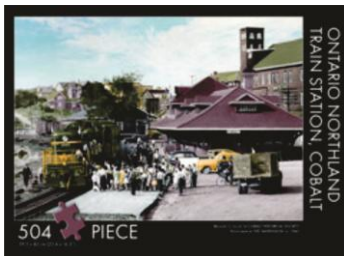
**The Iconic Right of Way Mine** Photo by Charles Dumaresq.



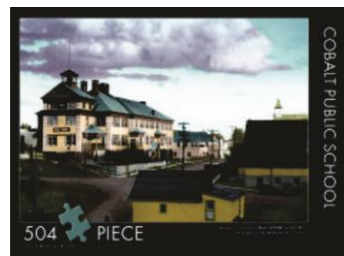
**Right of Way Mine Reflections** Photo by Sue Nielsen.



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



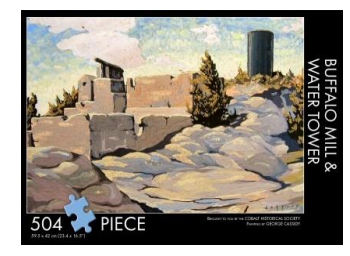
**Ontario Northland Railway Station Cobalt 1945.**



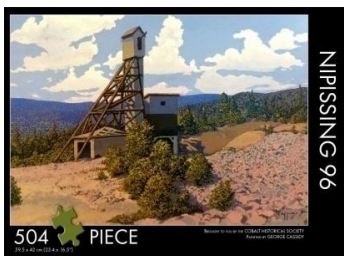
**Cobalt Public School** Photo circa 1955.



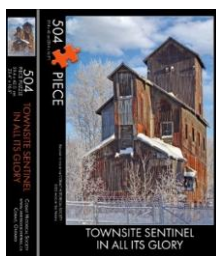
**Silver Miller Mine** Photograph circa 1950



**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.

### Answers to Cobalt Silver Camp Trivia Questions

1. c) Fox      2. b) 1919      3. a) Nipissing      4. d) Haileybury Road      5. d) Merv Lavigne