



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society

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

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Joseph Tucker in Uniform.

Joseph William Tucker 1923 – 1944

Almost a year ago, the Cobalt Historical Society received this message from Ian McNeish of Scotland:

I am trying to locate a family from Cobalt by the name of Tucker.

In 1944, a young airman from the Canadian Air Force was killed when on a training flight in the hills near Stirling, Scotland. His name was Tucker, and his hometown was Cobalt. He was the bomb aimer. I am in possession of the aiming device handle.

My quest is to find the family and send that item to them. My question: Would your organisation be able to help me locate the Tucker family?

Within a short while, we were able to fulfill the request thanks to Chris Oslund. He knew the Tucker family, including Flight Officer J W Tucker's nephew and namesake Joe.

Chris was invited to speak at the Cobalt Legion Branch 44 Remembrance Day Banquet. He spoke about Joseph William Tucker and granted us permission to share his talk with our members.

Tonight, I would like to share the story of a son of Cobalt, who enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force at the age of 19, and the circumstances that led to a special ceremony held at CFB Trenton at the end of June this year to honour his sacrifice.

It all started almost 30 years ago. At the time, I was working at the Haileybury Heritage Museum, which focuses on the Great Fire of 1922. I was contacted by Vivian Hylands. She was eager to connect me with a survivor of the Great Fire who had some artifacts she wanted to donate. Viv provided me with a phone number for Viola Tucker, who lived in Ottawa and was a small child in 1922 when her parents' home was destroyed. I took a trip down to Ottawa to visit with

Vi and retrieve the artifacts that are now on display at the Museum. I quickly formed a bond with Vi and had several visits with her and her brother Bernard over the years.

Following the Great Fire of 1922, George and Beatrice Tucker relocated from Haileybury and took up residence on Earle Street in Cobalt. It was here that Vi and her siblings – Elwyn, Joseph, Margaret, and Bernard grew up.

Joseph William Tucker was born on Valentine's Day in 1923 in Cobalt. He spent his formative years in the bustling Silver Town, where he attended both elementary and secondary school. By all accounts, he was stubborn, feisty, and a bit of a class clown. One story his nephew shared was a time Joe was horsing around in class and poked fun at the teacher for his bald head. The teacher said stoically, "Mr. Tucker, hair does not grow on brains" to which Joe quickly quipped back - "Well it doesn't grow on concrete either!"

Prior to his enlistment, Joe attended the Haileybury School of Mines. One of his classmates was Bill Lendrum, who shared the following story with Joe's family:

“Joe Tucker and Joe Sweet were quite a pair, and I can remember several episodes where the ‘Terrible Twosome’ caused a bit of hilarity among their fellow students, if not necessarily their teachers. One episode sticks out. On a field trip to an area outside North Cobalt, we were using Brunton compasses, which were rather expensive. We were warned to be very careful with them. All of a sudden, there was the sound of breaking glass along with some shouts of “Oh No!” indicating that an accident had befallen the precious Bruntons. Our teacher, Dan Atchison, was quite perturbed of course, and was only marginally happier when, laughing, the two Joes produced the undamaged compass and some shards of a bottle they had smashed on a rock”.

Joe enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1942 at the age of 19. Sadly, he never returned to his hometown of Cobalt.

Joe underwent intense training at CFB Trenton prior to his deployment to Europe to serve as part of the RCAF Bomber Command. The sheer danger involved in training was intensified due to the immense pressure that Commonwealth air operations were under to replace lost crews. The Bomber Command statistics are actually quite shocking – 51% of aircrew were killed during operations; 12% were killed or wounded in accidents; and 13% shot down to either be imprisoned or try and evade capture in Europe. This only leaves 24% who would survive their missions physically unscathed.

On August 30, 1944, Joe Tucker was on a training exercise – a daylight cross-country flight with three other crews – two British and another Canadian. Their flight on board the Whitley AD712 Bomber had been delayed due to poor weather, and after flying in loose formation with the other crews for an hour or so, they ran into an electrical storm.



Joseph Tucker Enlistment Photo.



Margaret and Bernie Tucker at Cobalt Train Station in July 1945.

The following account was passed along by Flight Sergeant Derek Hemingray, a wireless operator with the Royal Air Force who was with one of the British crews on the day Joe and his crew lost their lives:

“Our aircraft began to ice up along the leading edge of the wings, with huge chunks intermittently flying off. Blue sparks danced along the edge and swirled around the props. It was a bit of a frightening do. We pressed on. As I looked out, I could see the other aircraft as we broke through clouds now and again. I observed two of them, and then just one below to port. Seeing that aircraft break cloud once more, it just exploded.

“I switched on the intercom and said to 'Colli', our skipper, "Did you see that?" He calmly replied, "Yes, log it". I'm afraid I wasn't of quite the same disposition, and neither were the rest of us.

“We didn't know at the time who it was. After a while, base started calling us on a collective call sign, asking us to report our positions. Due to the electrical storm, we were unable to transmit. However, later they called us individually, and then we knew it had been AD712.

“We carried on after the incident and landed back at base.

“Returning to the billet, we walked in. Everything was left as it was before we had taken off. Beds unmade and all of their belongings laid about. Normally, the ‘committee of adjustment’, as they were called, would remove any trace.

“One night, I found myself, for some reason, returning to the billet alone. Walking up the narrow road between the pine woods, I arrived at the hut door and suddenly became aware of this fact. I could not go in. I could just imagine them all sitting there, all down the one side as they had been. I sat outside and waited until the rest arrived.”

Joe's youngest brother, Bernard, recounted the day his parents received word that Joe would not be returning. Young high school students in Cobalt had been enlisted to inform family members. They would go down to the Cobalt Train Station on their bicycles to collect the telegrams that would be delivered to the mothers, fathers, spouses, and families of those who had lost their lives to preserve our freedom. On a late August morning in 1944, one of Bernard's young schoolmates visited the Tucker home.



The Tucker Family at the Ceremony for Joseph Tucker. Held at the National Air Force Museum of Canada at CFB Trenton.

Flight Officer Joseph William Tucker's Whitley Bomber went down near Stirling, Scotland. He is buried in the Cadder Cemetery in Bishopbriggs, East Dunbartonshire, Scotland, and was only 21 years old when he perished along with his five crewmates on August 30, 1944.

[More recently,] the Whitley Bomber that Joe and his fellow crewmen were flying was excavated by the Dundonald Aviation Museum. They were able to recover significant pieces of the aircraft, including the handle that Joe would have used as the bomb aimer. Retired police officer Ian McNeish started the search to find descendants. An enquiry to the Cobalt Historical Society led to a Facebook Post asking if anyone knew of the Tucker family from Cobalt. I immediately contacted Maggie Wilson to inform her that I was familiar with the family and forwarded her the contact information for Bernard Tucker's son, Joe, who resided in Washington, D.C.

On June 27, 2025 [my wife] Vicki and I were honoured to be invited by the Tucker family to attend a special ceremony at the National Air Force Museum of Canada situated on CFB Trenton. Joe had travelled from Washington, DC, and was joined by his brother George from Vermont, and Margaret [Tucker's] son, Wayne Shepherd, and his family, who attended from Kincardine, Ontario.



Joseph Tucker Memorial at the National Air Force Museum of Canada at CFB Trenton.



WW2 Bomber at the National Air Force Museum of Canada at CFB Trenton.

At the ceremony, Brigadier-General Ryan Deming presented the Tucker Family with the Bomb Aimer's handle that had been recovered from the crash site. Commander of 8 Wing, Colonel Andy Bowser stated: "Today, we remember the brave legacy of Flying Officer Joseph William Tucker. His courage, dedication, and sacrifice in the skies above a world at war laid the foundation for the peace and freedom we all cherish today. May his legacy continue to inspire all 8 Wing members to serve with the same unwavering commitment and bravery. We will remember him".

It was a moving and fitting ceremony for a son of Cobalt who paid the supreme sacrifice.

In 1945, Canada's Minister of National Defence for Air Colin Gibson wrote in his foreword to the second volume of The Royal Canadian Air Force Overseas—the remarkable real-time history of Canadian fighter and bomber operations: "Good tuition alone cannot make a hero. The essential quality of heroism lies within our own Canadian boys who, having acquired the necessary skill, went far from home to demonstrate to friend and foe alike that a peace-loving Canadian, fighting in good cause, is a formidable antagonist".

World War II Comes Home

On Saturday morning
 from August garden
 sweet succulent corn
 ripe for shucking.
 From the railway station
 a telegram boy on his bicycle,
 this time it's our house he measures.
 His nose impels the screen door
 in the kitchen the message explodes -
 metal and flames
 shriek across the heavens,
 bring down the parlour blinds.
 Neighbours come by
 bless the memory of this lad
 help the smitten behind wet handkerchiefs
 find some kernel they can accept.
 Each time I take up this verse
 another plane goes down.

*Chris ended his talk by reading the poem
 "World War II Comes Home" written by
 Bernard Tucker.*

St. James Anglican Church Needs Your Help!

ST. JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH
 COBALT, ON

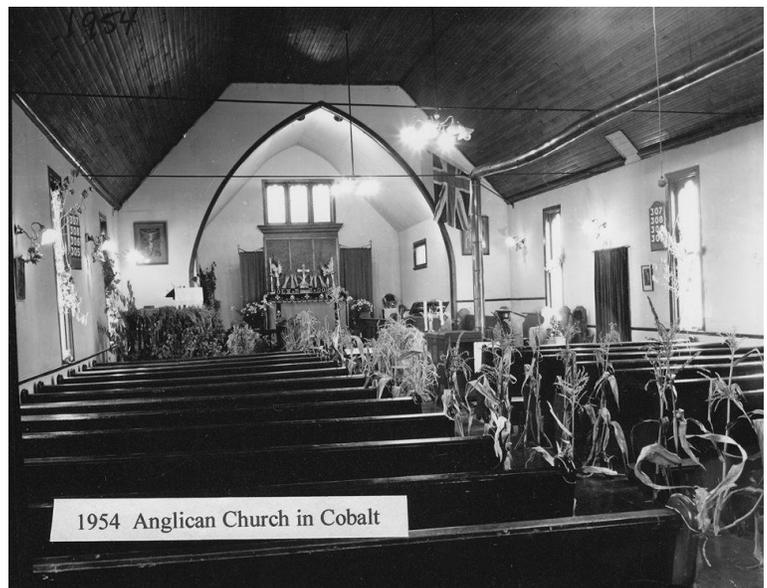
Solid on the Rock!

We believe in miracles—and in community. Our church needs urgent repairs, and we're asking for your support in this time of need.

Be part of the blessing. Donate to St. James Anglican Church today.

To donate, please contact our treasurer, Tina Gagnon, at stjamescobalt.90@gmail.com

GOAL \$146,000
 \$10,950.00
 \$7,800.00
 \$36,500.00
 \$8,400.00
 DONATIONS TO DATE



We'd like to draw your attention to a fundraising campaign underway for St James Anglican Church. We spoke with Tina Gagnon. The building "is in need of some serious TLC that must be completed before we can use the nave section of the church which is where we hold our services." That TLC has a price tag of at least \$146,000.00 The congregation is doing what they always do - working together to meet their goals by rolling up their sleeves and pitching in to bake pies, hold raffles and yard sales, and write grants.

The poster shown here is from mid-October when the donations were just under \$10,000 - fortunately, the number is growing, but the congregation could still use anything you might be able to contribute.

Contact Tina Gagnon by email stjamescobalt.90@gmail.com or write St James Anglican Church, 49 Prospect Ave, Cobalt, ON P0J 1C0

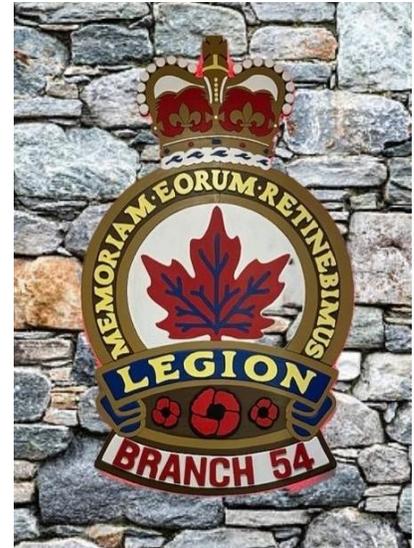
Haileybury Legion Branch 54 - 100th Anniversary

Looking for Descendants

Several of the CHS board members also volunteer with the Haileybury Heritage Museum. It's through their work that we learned about an upcoming event next year. Branch 54 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Haileybury is celebrating its 100th anniversary July 14 - 19, 2026. Everyone is invited, especially descendants of the 14 founding members.

They are: William Baxter, Adam Keddie Sr and Adam Keddie Jr, Alexander Bowman, Michael Bouzan, Angus McAulay, George Cole, Frederick McLeod, W Cooper, C E Fleming, Herb Poppleton, James Reavell, John B Stirrup.

As you can imagine, locating the grandchildren or great-grandchildren is a challenge, since second and third generation kin can live anywhere in the world. If you wish to take part in next year's celebrations, especially if you are related, please contact the organizers by email rclegion54@yahoo.ca



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. Coleman Township was named after what?
a) a politician b) a geologist c) a surveyor d) a provincial magistrate
2. The former Fraser Hotel in Cobalt was once also home to what?
a) the Royal Exchange Building b) the Classic Theatre c) the Opera House d) the Y.M.C.A.
3. Cobalt's 'Right-of-Way' mine got its name from a term found in what industry?
a) Agriculture b) Fishing c) Lumber d) Railway
4. The Cobalt Municipal Water Act, which protects the town's local water supply, was legislated in what year?
a) 1914 b) 1917 c) 1921 d) 1925
5. What year did the 'Silver Lanes' bowling alley burn in downtown Cobalt?
a) 1982 b) 1983 c) 1984 d) 1985



HGTV Hometown Takeover - Cobalt Edition

You may be familiar with a TV reality series on HGTV called Hometown Takeover. According to the network, *Hometown Takeover* is an HGTV series where renovation experts lead a major project to revitalize an entire small town. The show focuses on renovating public spaces, businesses, and homes belonging to local "changemakers" to bring hope and a fresh start to the community. A new Canadian version, *Home Town Takeover Canada*, will launch in 2026/2027, expanding on the US concept with a Canadian town.

Cobalt is a town with an outsized history — known across Canada as the birthplace of hard-rock mining and a cradle of northern resilience. Its striking streetscapes, heritage buildings, and proud community spirit make it, we believe, a natural contender for the transformative spotlight that Hometown Takeover shines on deserving communities.

“Cobalt’s story is the story of the North — grit, perseverance, and community,” said Mac Armstrong, Curator of the Cobalt Mining Museum. “The museum has taken great pride in preserving our mining heritage, but to thrive, we need to have big dreams for the future. This opportunity would help us begin to bridge our legacy with a vibrant, sustainable new chapter.”

The application highlights Cobalt's unique blend of history and potential — from its century-old mining headframes and colourful downtown façades to its passionate network of volunteers and heritage advocates. Local residents, businesses, and community groups have rallied behind the bid, showcasing the town's readiness for a revival that honours its past while creating new opportunities for tourism, housing, and community life.

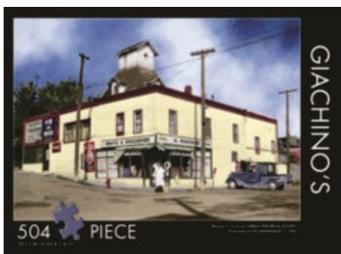
Maggie Wilson, Chair of the Cobalt Historical Society, emphasized the community's enthusiasm: "There's a special kind of magic here — you can feel it in the stories, in the buildings, and in the people. Hometown Takeover could help us showcase that magic to the world while restoring some of our most cherished spaces for future generations."

If selected, the Hometown Takeover team would visit Cobalt to collaborate with residents, tradespeople, and community leaders to breathe new life into local landmarks, homes, and gathering places — ensuring the town's proud history continues to shine for another hundred years.

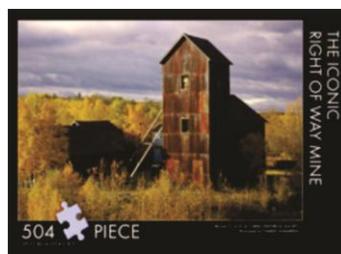
Cobalt's submission was spearheaded by a grassroots committee of residents and organizations, supported by local champions committed to seeing the town thrive once again. The application deadline was November 1st.

Now we wait. Wish us luck!

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*



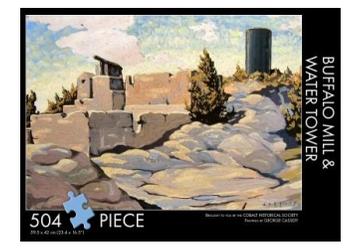
*Ontario Northland Railway
Station Cobalt 1945.*



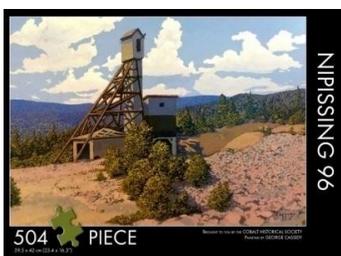
*Cobalt Public School
Photo circa 1955.*



*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 for further details.

Answers to Cobalt Silver Camp Trivia Questions

1. b) a geologist 2. a) Royal Exchange Building 3. d) Railway 4. b) 1917 5. c) 1984