



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society

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

Vol. 35 No. 1 January 2026



Hedley Vicars Short Travels North

Earlier this year, we received a photo album from the estate of Joyce Farlow (nee Short). She passed away in 2019. Joyce's father was Hedley Vicars Short of Toronto. The pictures in the album document his travels in the Temagami and Cobalt areas.

These remarkable photos capture familiar scenes, but they are all new to us.

But who was he? And what brought him to Cobalt?

Unfortunately, the story behind the souvenir photos was not passed along to his descendants. So, we wondered - was he involved in mining, as an investor, or director of a company? Did he have family in the North? Was Short Street named for him?

We found nothing to support those ideas.

Why DID people come to Cobalt?

Broadly speaking, people came here to take advantage of the opportunities on the new frontier: to find work in either mining or townsite development.

A substantial number came only to visit. Investors, journalists, and tourists travelled to see for themselves what the hype was all about. Perhaps the photos had answers.

- One or two notations helped identify places and at least one person.
- Many, MANY photos were of canoes, camping, rocks, water, and cascades.
- One picture was taken at the "end of steel" just south of Temagami in July 1904.
- The Temagami Inn is shown, with 1905 above the main entrance.
- The Open Call Mining Exchange in Cobalt Square means the date is summer 1906.
- The visitors are dressed casually in sporting outfits, or, in more than one case, NOT AT ALL!



Hedley Vicars Short

The Thirteen Club was founded in New York, initially to address the rise of superstitions, including the fear of Friday the 13th, black cats, and spilled salt, among others.

Membership was limited to thirteen, meetings were held on the 13th, and all manner of good fun was had at the expense of Friggatriskaidekaphobes.

The Thirteen Club

Then, we scoured the digital news and genealogical archives for more information. Here, we got a glimpse into Hedley V Short's life in Toronto.

In 1904, when the T&NO construction crews reached Temagami, Short was a 32-year-old bachelor who worked at a hardware store in Toronto.

He was also a member of The Thirteen Club and had been for a decade. His brother, William Bailey, was a member. So was his brother-in-law, James Edward Maybee, who was a canoeist, photographer, and outdoors enthusiast.

At an anniversary meeting years later, *The Globe and Mail* wrote, "One thousand meetings ago, a group of young men decided to form a club to study art, literature and music, to improve their public speaking and to break down superstitions of the day." Short, who had been with the group for over fifty years, said, "The club is really to train members to be comfortable when they are on their feet speaking."

The Thirteen club members adopted an attitude of "the survival of the fittest", both physically and intellectually. To exercise their wit, they designated someone as "Critic" for each session. The first to be assigned this role was Arthur Brown Willmott, cousin to the group's founder, Walter Willmott.

A B Willmott

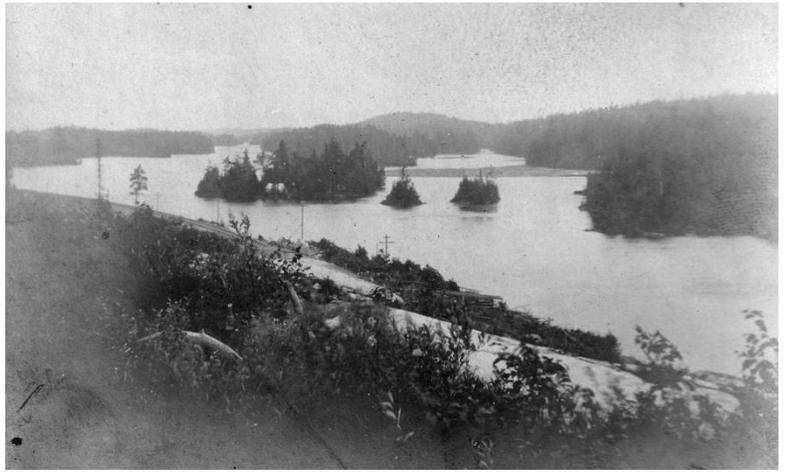
We searched the news archives for every instance of the "Thirteen Club." One story from 1898 held a clue. It described a special meeting where "Critic" Arthur Brown Willmott, *a geology professor* at McMaster, gave a talk about his trip to Rainy River with *Professor A P Coleman*. (Who, many of our members know, was also a geologist and our Township's namesake!)

After his professorship at McMaster in 1900, Willmott spent his summer vacations in Northern Ontario working for the Ontario Bureau of Mines. Among his contributions to mining was the exploration and mapping of Temagami's Northeast Arm Iron Range in 1905.

Let's recap

We are at the turn of the 20th century. We have a very close-knit group of moderately well-off, educated, fun-loving men who preferred science to myth, and who explored opportunities to improve themselves professionally and intellectually.

Meanwhile, Northern Ontario was opening up, and colonization roads were advancing into the boreal forests. New opportunities and adventure beckoned. The kind of adventure that appealed to men like Hedley and William Short, the Willmott cousins, and the rest of their club-mates who followed the "survival of the fittest" principle. The kind of adventure that was promoted by the railroad companies and extensively and repeatedly featured in their marketing brochures and print ads in major Toronto newspapers.



Temagami End of Steel. ca July 1904



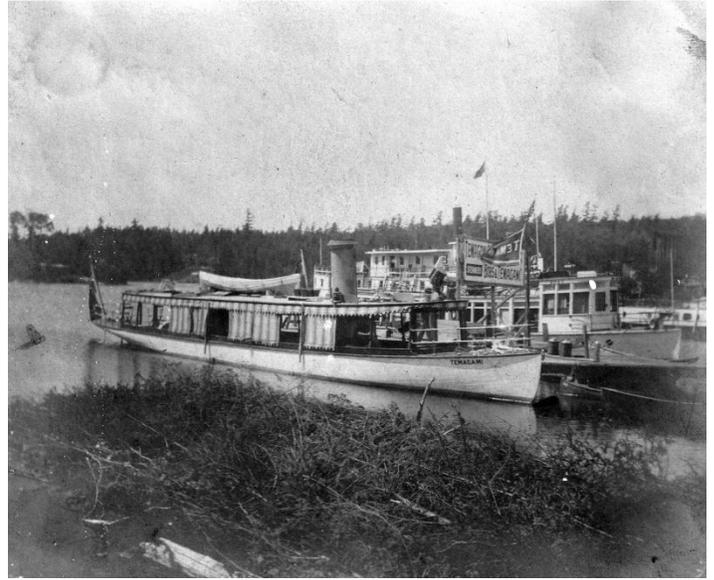
Silver at Prospect from Cobalt St., early 1906



Cobalt Square. Imperial Bank and Open Call Exchange. ca 1906



Bear Island First Nations Church.



Temagami Dock Steamers.



Three First Nations Men.



First Nations Woman and Baby. Probably Bear Island.

The kind of adventure that would be even more appealing with a knowledgeable professional like Willmott in charge of the outing.

Temagami was (and still is!) known as THE nature-lovers' adventure destination. A trip to Temagami, now that the railroad was through, would tick all the boxes for the members of The Thirteen Club.

Did Short and his friends answer the call to the hinterland? Looking at the photos, it appears they did.

Exactly when, for what purpose, how many of Short's friends joined him, and whether AB Willmott was involved is unknown.

Next question: Did they travel north more than once?

More speculation - Cobalt 1906

The photo of the end of steel at Temagami in 1904 provides the earliest date in the north. However, Hedley and his friends were also present in Cobalt in 1906.

Possibly, this visit was an opportunity to combine work with pleasure. That is, investigate business opportunities in the newly opened Northland while marveling at the silver rush.

We suggest this because a few years later, Hedley, along with brother Frank Short, incorporated H V Short Hardware, Ltd. in Toronto. They would manufacture and deal in hardware supplies, builders', plumbers', and machinists' supplies, and so on. This endeavour was, you should excuse the pun, short-lived. The enterprise was bankrupt in 1922.

More photos

No matter what drew Hedley Vicars Short north, and no matter how often he visited, we are very glad he did, and that he compiled a souvenir album of those trips. One that has landed in our care.

If you'd like to see other photos from the album, visit our Historical Photos page and scroll to the bottom of the gallery. Enjoy!

<https://cobalthistoricalsociety.ca/historical-photos/>

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.



Empire Lumber Mill Latchford from Tracks. Montreal River on Left.



3 Men at the Foot of Waterfalls.

1. How many copies of Willet Green Miller's original November 1904 Cobalt Geology Report were first printed?
a) 100 b) 1,000 c) 6,000 d) 100,000
2. William Henry Drummond, famed poet of the Cobalt Camp, was also a what?
a) Stock Broker b) Railway Engineer c) Teacher d) Physician
3. In what year did the highest number of mining fatalities occur in the Cobalt Silver Camp?
a) 1908 b) 1910 c) 1912 d) 1914
4. The most recent site added to the Heritage Silver Trail is named what?
a) Colonial Mine Site b) John Calder Memorial Trail c) Jack Koza Park d) Cart Lake Tailings
5. In early Cobalt, how much was a typical fine for operating a gambling house?
a) \$15 b) \$25 c) \$35 d) \$45

Membership Renewal 2026

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 of the Cobalt Historical Society that we are able to provide the various components of our work, including the Heritage Silver Trail, newsletters, research, and all things related to the history of 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

You can also visit our website and complete the online membership form.

	Cobalt Historical Society P.O. Box 309, Cobalt, Ontario P0J 1C0 cobalthistoricalsociety.ca 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 mail@cobalthistoricalsociety.ca		
Annual Dues: <input type="checkbox"/> Little Silver Vein (<u>One</u> Year Household Membership) \$20.00		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Glory Hole (<u>One</u> Year Corporate Membership) \$50.00		
Donation: <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to make the following <u>donation</u> \$		
<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.		

Don't forget to visit our website!

cobalthistoricalsociety.ca

Drop us an email.

We'd Love to Hear from You!



Meet The Board of the Cobalt Historical Society



Maggie Wilson

President



Deborah Ranchuk

Director



Reiner Mielke

Trail Manager



Dwight Brydges

Historical Restoration



Reg Holdsworth

Treasurer
and Asst. Trail Manager



Sarah Johnston

Secretary – Research



Brian Dobbs

Newsletter/Website



Pat Anderson

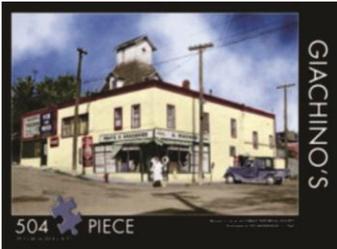
Cobalt Council Rep.



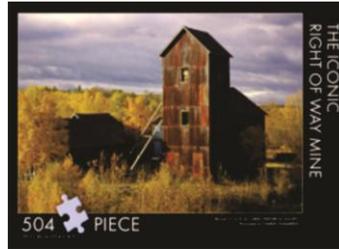
Marilyn Lubbock

Coleman Twp. Council Rep.

Help Support our Fundraising Efforts - Cobalt Puzzles



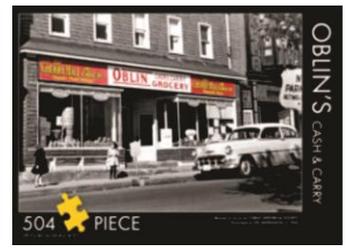
Giachino's Coniagas Shaft House #4 circa 1945 as a grocery store.



*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.



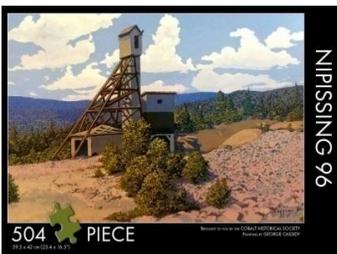
*Cobalt Public School
Photo circa 1955.*



*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 the website at www.wmpub.ca for details.

Answers to Cobalt Silver Camp Trivia Questions

1. c) 6,000 2. d) Physician 3. a) 1908 4. b) John Calder Memorial Trail 5. d) \$45