



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society



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A short while ago the Cobalt Historical Society received a copy of a poem entitled "A Northern Roundelay" from Mr. Noel Ramey formerly of Cobalt and currently residing in the community of New Liskeard. It had been composed sometime in the late 1920s or 30s by Captain William Haywood, formerly a British Naval Captain then a clerk in the Cobalt Customs and Excise Office. Noel's father, Mr. Harry Ramey, 1892-1971 (a WWI Veteran wounded at the Battle of Passchendaele) was also a Customs Officer and a friend of Cap'n Haywood. Noel recalls that the two friends used to hunt for partridges down at Hound Chutes. Cap'n Haywood and Mrs. Haywood lived in their home on the Cobalt Lake Mining Property on the farther south shore of Cobalt Lake, Township of Coleman, just across the road and down the hill from the cedar-shake home of Charlie Dean, former accountant for the McKinley-Darragh Mine. How close together everything was in the Cobalt Mining Camp.

A Northern Roundelay

Up North a withered bedlam broods: on seven silent hills,
That once were rife with lusty life, and roaring, grinding, mills:
Her silver ravished, mines closed down, and nothing left today
But rotting timbers in old stopes, and waste dumps bluish grey
And every hillside seamed and torn, with mould'ring buildings round
To mark man's utter disregard, once silver has been found.

The distant thrum, like muffled drum, can barely yet be heard;
But tramping feet, with rhythmic beat, grow louder, since the word –
That magic word, that strong men stirred, and soon it drove them forth;
The whispered word, the whole world heard.
There's silver in the north.

The tramp grew louder day by day, thundering in our ears;
An army tramped along the trails – those hardy pioneers.
The ever hopeful prospectors, found always in the van,
Of any movement that can call to free, unfettered man.

They tracked the northern solitudes, by river, lake, and trail,
On northward, ever northward bent, through snow, through rain and hail;
For miles and miles, through wooden aisles – a virgin forest church –
'Neath wond'rous lacey tracery, of graceful silver birch.

Down lanes of tender shimm'ring green, the aspen's lucent light,
And brooding over all, the somber pines upon the height,
The chatt'ring chipmunks in the trees, the blue jay's raucous call,
The busy little chickadees, fell silent one and all.

As louder grew, that sound so new, the tramp of feet that hike:
All heading for the lake where Fred LaRose had made his strike.
And now the railroad came along, and like a rolling tide,
The silver-seeking Argonauts, poured in from far and wide.

And then the peace was rudely shattered,
Nature crouched in fright.
Before the million bellowing sounds of rack-rock dynamite.
The news flew quickly round the world, it spewed its good men forth,
And so was founded Cobalt, Gracious Mother of the North.

Among those hardy pioneers, that Cobalt brought to light,
McMartins, Timmins, Dunlap, Trethewey, Hargreaves, Wright;
McKinley, Lawson, Foster, Burr Cartwright and Colonel Hay;
Poetic Drummond, Jacobs with new faces every day.

Professor Miller, sponsor, he, of Cobalt's honored name;
(To God-who there the silver put-must be ascribed her frame)
And some were vet'rans of far trails, beneath an alien sky;
And some were green as new green grass – the same as you or I.

Mother Cobalt broods:
Since those far days, of virile ways; I now look proudly forth,
And see my famous children scattered through the Golden North.
There's Porcupine, and Kirkland Lake, Gowganda or Val d'Or
With lusty, gusty Timmins' site, Noranda, Red Lake's shore
All troubled with youth's growing pains
Old Cobalt sighs with pride;
"Well, though my days is ended, I've my children by me side."

Where are the seven hills about which Cap n' Haywood writes?

Two were in the Town of Cobalt; one is the hill along which Lang Street runs. I have not been able to find a specific name for this hill. The other is Cobalt Hill where Cobalt Street climbs to the former Cobalt High School. Five are in the Township of Coleman. Named after the mines and mills that were built upon them they are - The Nipissing Hill east across Cobalt Lake from the railway station; The McKinley-Darragh south of Cobalt Lake now with its mill's ruins on the Heritage Silver Trail; The Buffalo, east of Town now with the radio towers, at one time with the Town's green water tank and ruins of The Buffalo Mill; The Coniagas and the Trethewey with their mills, one beyond the present arena, and further the Trethewey leading up from Sass Lake; and finally The Colonial past the Nipissing.

What do we know about the pioneers mentioned?

Fred LaRose – was a blacksmith working under contract for the T&NO Railway; while at the north end of Cobalt Lake he supposedly threw a hammer at a fox and upon retrieving his hammer discovered silver ore.

John and Duncan McMartin – contractors for the T&NO Railway went into partnership with their employee Fred LaRose after LaRose staked his silver claim. Eventually they developed the LaRose Silver Mine.

Noah and Henry Timmins – Noah was a merchant in Mattawa when he and his brother purchased Fred LaRose's silver claims and profited from the LaRose Mine. They are more known for developing the Hollinger Gold Mines in what is known as the Porcupine Camp.

David Dunlap – a lawyer in Mattawa, a partner in the LaRose Mine and the Hollinger; the Dunlap Observatory in Toronto is named after him.

William Trethewey – he sold his stock in his New Ontario Mine, west of Cobalt, for \$600,000 in 1906 to Col. Alexander Hay. The Cobalt Public Library has a copy of "Go Ahead or Go Home; the Trethewey Story" by Daphne Sleight published by Vicarro, Abbotsford, B.C., 1994.

Edward Hargreaves – lived in Haileybury working in Cobalt as a house painter as the town rapidly developed. His brother-in-law William Wright joined him in this business. With their grubstake, the two went north to found the Wright-Hargreaves Mine in Kirkland Lake.

William (Bill) H. Wright – after joining Edward Hargreaves and developing the Wright-Hargreaves Mine, he eventually became owner of "The Toronto Globe and Mail Newspaper".

J.H. McKinley – a cross-tie contractor working for T&NO Railway, who with his partner E. Darragh sent samples of thin plates of metal from the southeast shore of Long Lake now Cobalt Lake, to a lab at McGill University. Thus was developed the McKinley-Darragh Mine and Mill.

H.S. Lawson – connected to the syndicate that purchased the Silver Sidewalk claim at Giroux Lake. The shafthouse of the Lawson Mine is very picturesque, now in poor shape but held in private ownership so the CHS is unable to stabilize the structure.

Clement Foster – a mining engineer having graduated from Michigan College, he arrived in the Cobalt Mining Camp in 1904 to prospect around Glen Lake and founded the Foster Mine in 1905. He remained in the camp and bought up commercial property in the area.

Burr Cartwright – developed the Temiskaming Mine east of Brady Lake.

Colonel Alexander Marshall Hay – in the Camp in 1904 as a mining developer and a friend of Wm. Trethewey whom he bought out and, with John Bickell became co-owner of Trethewey Silver Cobalt Mines.

Dr. William Henry Drummond – medical doctor, poet and manager of the Drummond Mine. He died as a result of helping Cobalters in the small pox epidemic in 1907. As a poet he popularized Habitant poetry. The Drummond Poetry Festival was started by Jim Dunning and is now continued by David Brydges as The Spring Pulse Poetry Festival.

J.A. Jacobs – from Montreal, was a shareholder in Kerr Lake Mines. He sold a majority interest for several million dollars to Lewisohn in New York, one of the few “big-company” investments in the Cobalt Mining Camp.

Dr. Willett Green Miller – professor of geology at Queen’s University and promoter of the Cobalt Mining Camp. See the plaque in his honour at the Willett Green Miller Memorial Site across from the Cobalt Community Hall.

The material for this listing is primarily from Peter Fancy’s *Temiskaming Treasure Trails*, Volumes 3 & 4, published by the Highway Book Shop, Cobalt.

The phrase “Golden North” was capitalized because the names with the exception of Gowganda with its silver ore, were the sites of the gold mines.

The following books at the Library tell their stories:

Barnes, Michael. “Fortunes In The Ground: Cobalt, Porcupine and Kirkland Lake”, Boston Mills, 1986.

Hoffman, Arnold. “Free Gold, the Story of Canadian Mining”, McLean Hunter, Toronto, 1947, 1982, 1988.

Newman, Denis and Syd Belisle. “Drawings of the Porcupine Camp”, HighGrader, Timmins, 2009.

Pain, S.A. “The Way North,” Ryerson, Toronto, 1964.

Wetjen, Andre and L.H.T. Irvine. “The Kirkland Lake Story”, Highway Book Shop Cobalt, 1988.

CORRECTION

In the March Issue of the Newsletter, the statement was made that at the time of the 1976 fire, the garage at the corner of Earl and Lang Street, was owned by Jack Mathews. That is incorrect. At the time of the fire, it was owned by Jim Gabbani. My thanks to Vincent Gabbani for alerting me to this fact.

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