Education – Primary & Secondary

Education in the Early Days

The first recorded schoolhouse in Cobourg was in a stable at the very centre of town, King and Division Sts. The plaque there notes that the school was in operation as early as 1810.
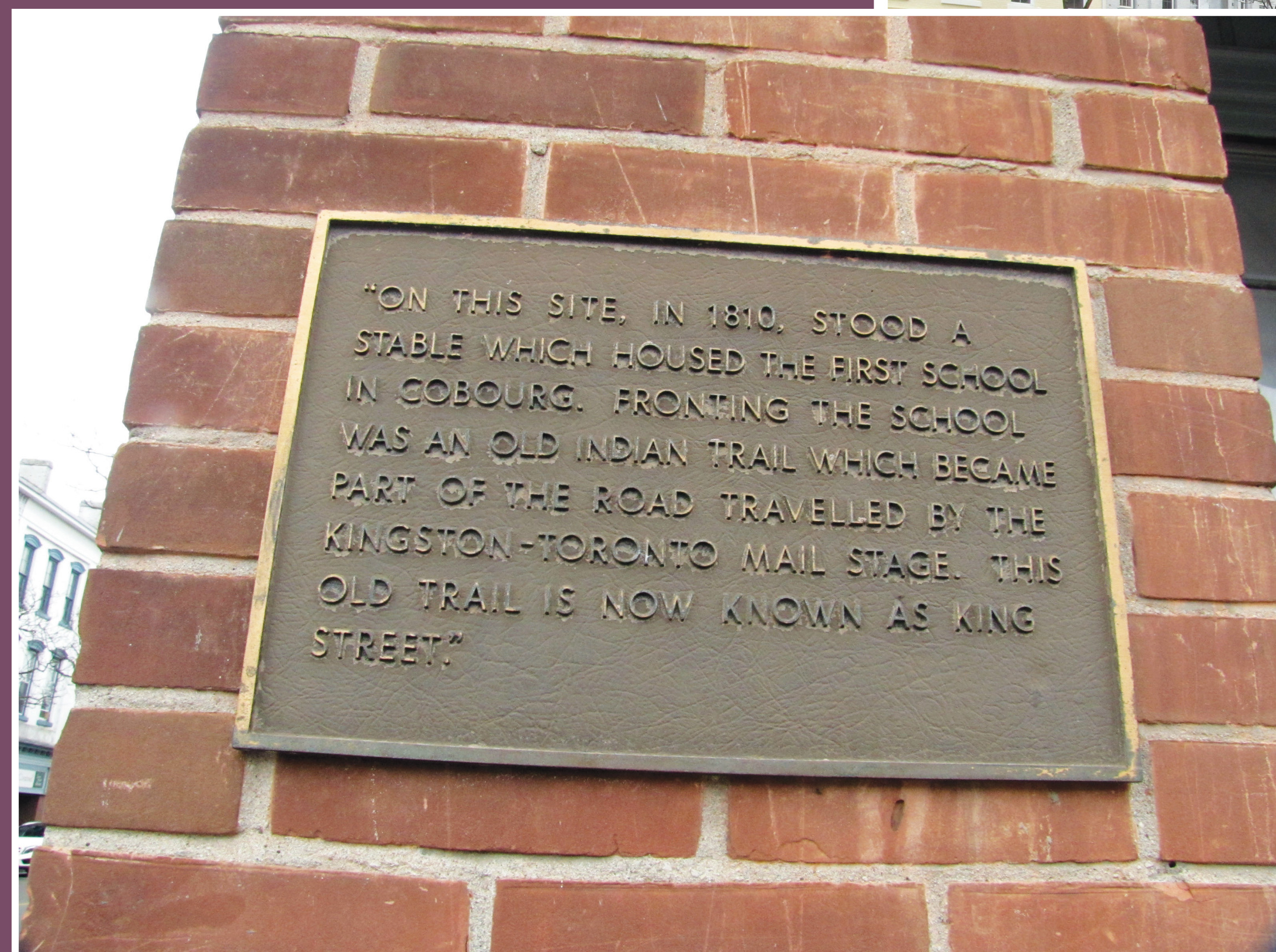
In 1816 the Parliament of Upper Canada made the first provision for Public Education by appropriating $6,000 to aid in paying teachers and buying school books. But it was many years before the inhabitants generally could afford to pay the fees charged to give their children **even the meagre advantages of the Grammar School system**, the only system then authorized by the Legislature.

The wealthier people of our District sent their children, both boys and girls, to private seminaries in Toronto while those who were of moderate circumstances, patronized the private schools which sprang up in the pioneer settlements. The rest of the population scraped by on **a system that relied on American textbooks and poorly paid teachers.**
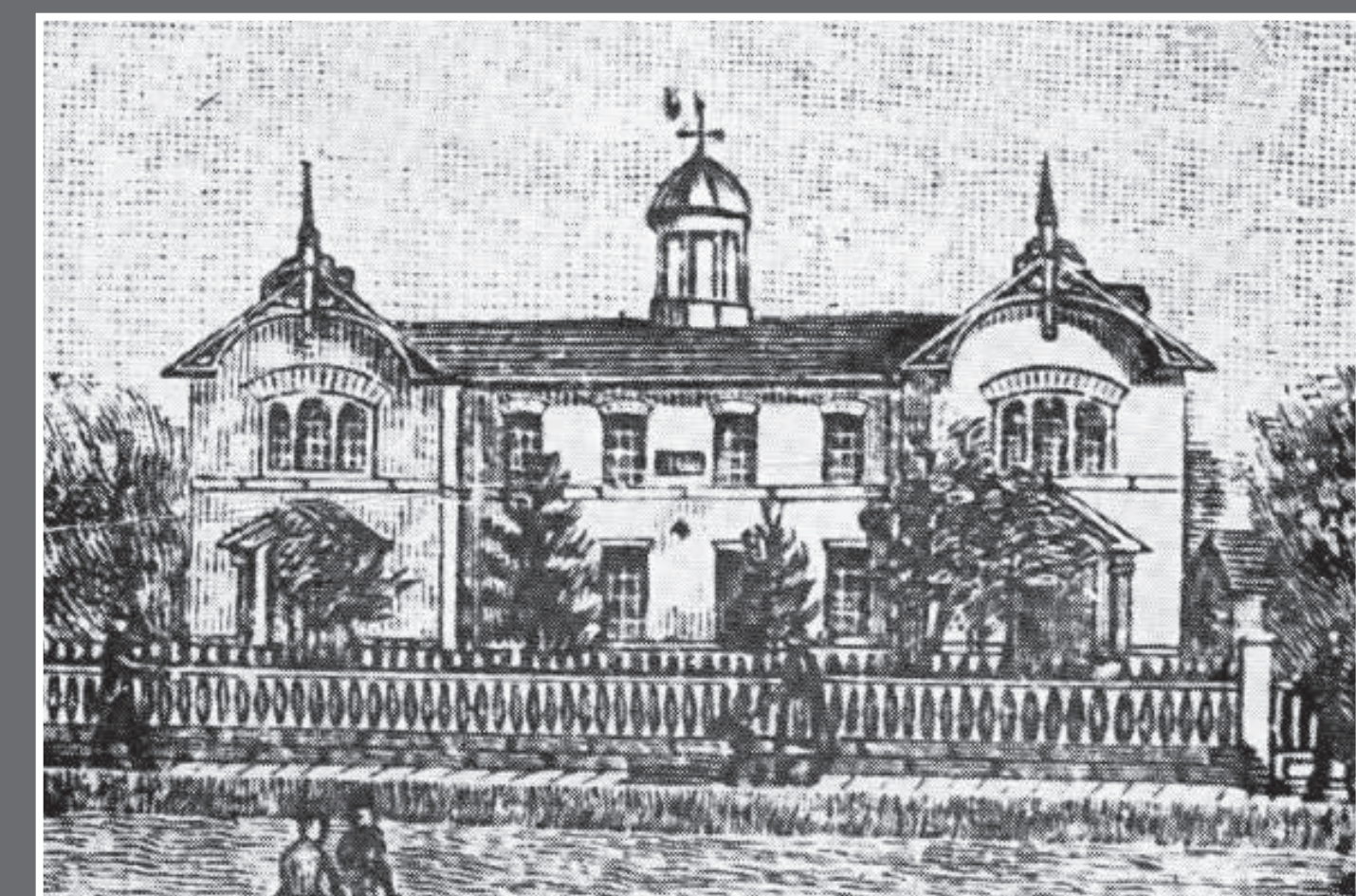
Cobourg had its share of private schools including one operated by a Mr. McLaren, before 1832, in a frame house on Albert Street. Strap in hand, Mr. McLaren encouraged his students so often with *"Now pull ahead boys! Pull ahead!"* that **he became known as "Old Pullahead".**

Perhaps the most important early school in Cobourg was the Parochial School founded by the Anglican Church authorities. It was a large barn-like building which stood midway between King and Queen Sts., opposite the church rectory. This school was opened before 1830. In the 1840s it became the Newcastle District Grammar School, then the Cobourg Grammar School, and in **1872 the Cobourg Collegiate Institute.**

As Cobourg increased in population and influence it **became an educational center for the elite**, having one of only 13 Provincial Grammar Schools (for higher education) and its own university, Victoria College.   In the early 1840s there were also two ladies' schools run by the wives of two Victoria College professors.

"ON THIS SITE, IN 1810, STOOD A STABLE WHICH HOUSED THE FIRST SCHOOL IN COBOURG. FRONTING THE SCHOOL WAS AN OLD INDIAN TRAIL WHICH BECAME PART OF THE ROAD TRAVELLED BY THE KINGSTON-TORONTO MAIL STAGE. THIS OLD TRAIL IS NOW KNOWN AS KING STREET."

First School Plaque

Cobourg Grammar School

COBOURG MUSEUM
FOUNDATION