

# THE COBOURG & PETERBOROUGH RAILWAY

## GETTING STARTED

The stockholders of the C&PRC lost little time in forming a Board of Directors. Ira Spalding was hired as Chief Engineer and they immediately sought a contractor to oversee their endeavour.

In mid January 1853, the Directors chose Zimmerman and Balch as General Contractors and awarded them a contract for £151,000. The contract stated that within eighteen months the road would be complete and in running order through the entire distance, with the necessary depots, watering stations and sheds in place and a full complement of cars and locomotives.

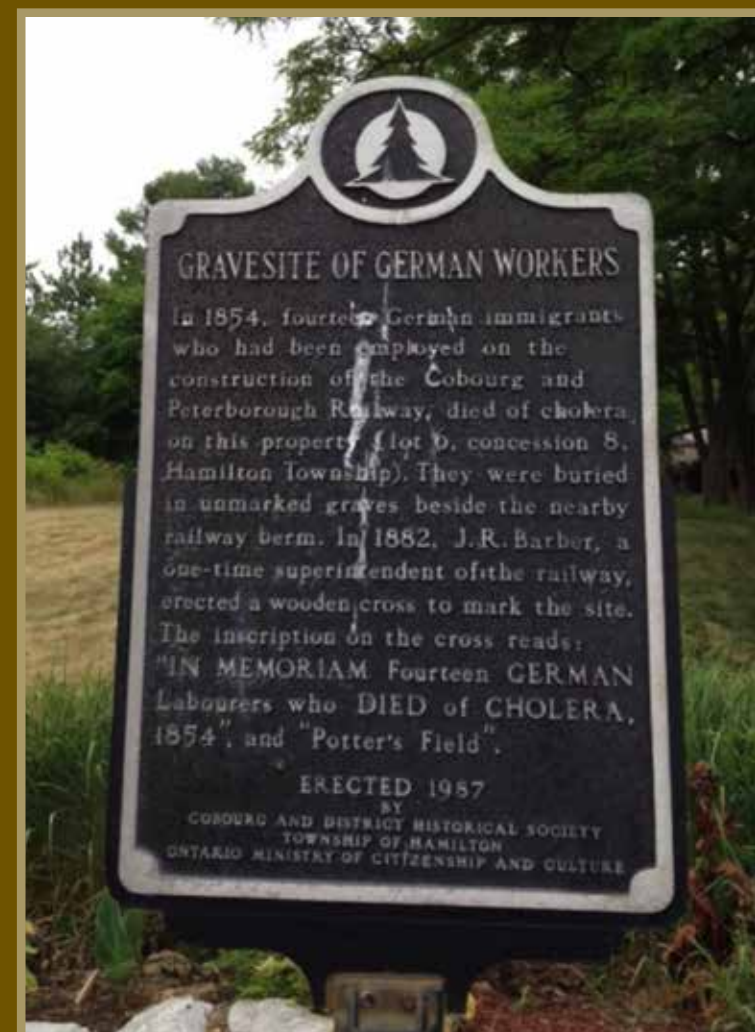
Major disappointments were on the horizon. (It soon became apparent that Spaulding, the Chief Engineer, was a confidante of Zimmerman and used his position to increase the cost of the railway, to the contractor's advantage, to over £200,000 (\$1,000,000).) Nevertheless, optimism prevailed in early 1853. On February 7, Mrs. Mackechnie, the Mayor's wife, employing a silver spade, turned the first sod of the railway at the top of Railway Street (Spring Street). According to a local poet of the day:

*The thing is did!  
The pickaxe has been stuck  
By lovely woman in the frozen muck!  
A flash of glory played around her spade:  
O, Lord-a-massy! What a hole she made!  
A speech! A speech! was echoed from the crowd,  
And "Lord" George Boswell\* took the floor and bowed.*

(\*a Director of the C&PR.)

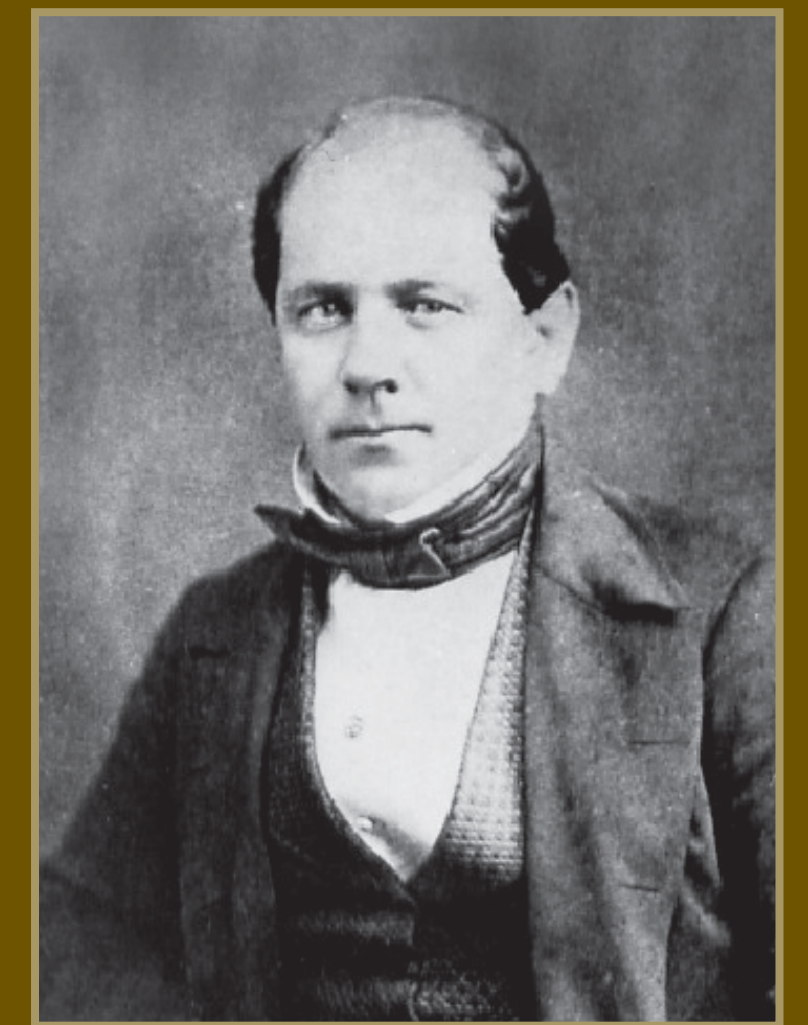
Apparently that was the extent of the railway effort for the day. A torchlight parade and a feast for invited guests followed the event.

The next day labourers commenced the work in earnest. The line was brushed and cleared, the berm was graded using teams of men and horses with slush scrapers. Hundreds of labourers worked on all manner of tasks necessary to the construction of a rail line. Hundreds more were hired to work at Harwood on the pilings and cribbing for the bridging of Rice Lake.

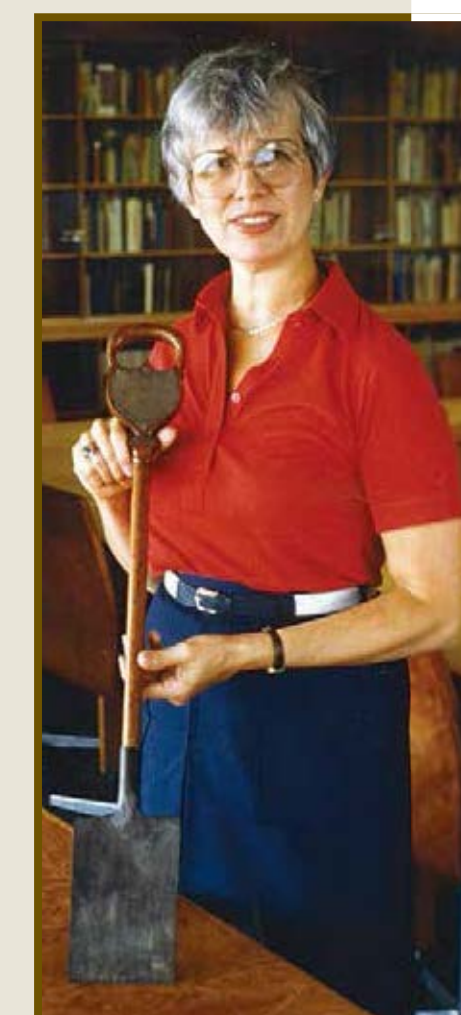


To commemorate the deaths of 14 immigrant German railway labourers due to Cholera, a roadside plaque was erected in 1987 by the Cobourg & District Historical Society.

## SAM ZIMMERMAN - THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB?



Samuel Zimmerman Credit: CobourgHistory.ca



Credit: Ray Corley photograph, Sept. 1, 1983, Bata Library, Trent University

Credit: Cobourg Public Library

