

To the Editor
Cobourg Daily Star.

HISTORY - What is history ? A good dictionary defines the word with much detail. During a speech delivered in the Canadian House of Commons last June on the subject of archives, one member said : "History is a story created out of the evidence that has survived." Speaking to the same subject, another member said : "If a people is not aware of its past, it has no identity. It suffers from amnesia. It does not know its strengths and cannot build on its experiences. It cannot leap forward because it lacks the starting block of history." These are interesting observations from members of parliament . Thomas Carlyle wrote : " What is all knowledge too but recorded experience and a product of history." History does have value and actually it is part of our human needs.

LOCAL HISTORY - As a boy, we had in our Cobourg home a small volume of "Historical Reminiscences of the Town" written by Daniel McAllister and published in the year 1903. Unfortunately, Mr. McAllister was killed in a buggy accident just before his writings were published. He had grown up in Cobourg and had witnessed the development of the town from its incorporation. For nearly two decades he was editor and publisher of the Cobourg Sentinel newspaper. His local experiences bestowed something of an intangible nature in his personality. In his later years , he set down in writing this publication of his reminiscences, as an eye witness to the town's growth. McAllister found the town a very happy place in which to live. He left for us a valuable historical presentation.

The early issues of the Cobourg Star newspaper, edited and published by R.D.Chatterton, give us much detail of the early town. The newspapers of the past are a most important source for historical information. Locally, some editors were very adept in the gathering and publishing little details that

may not have been considered important at the time, but to the historian in later years were very important. During the first half of the present century, Idell Rogers, of the Cobourg World staff and editor-owner Frank Lapp gave local history a prominent place in their weekly publication. Later, Foster M. Russell, editor and owner of the Sentinel-Star left an outstanding historical record in his weekly newspaper. As a youth, Edwin Clarence Guillet spent many hours reading and collecting notes from the old tomes of the Cobourg Star and the Sentinel Star which were stored in the basement of the Sentinel-Star building on ~~Centre~~ Division Street.. Unfortunately this valuable record was destroyed by floods in 1932. Guillet went on to be an eminent scholar and his Cobourg writings add to our lore. Picture publications by A.J.Gould around 1910, the publication in 1948 by the Business and Professional Women's Club, several local church histories, recently, "Cobourg: Early Days and Modern Times" by the Cobourg Book Committee of 1981, and a few other writings, all give us access to much of Cobourg's storied past.

At the turn of the century, Cobourg's Mayor, E.C.S.Huycke, organized and chaired a local historical society which flourished for a few years. Our 1986 Mayor, Angus V. Read, has served as President of the Cobourg and District Historical Society, a very active organization formed in recent years. At least two town Mayors have been busy and vitally interested in promoting local history.

The present generation of town folk are very much interested in and conscious of local history. Of late there has been an increasing attention to the subject of genealogy or family history. More and more people are looking to their roots, their ancestors and as to where they formerly lived. There has been much interest in maintaining and restoring older buildings, the gathering of artifacts and the establishment of museums. Public libraries are expanding their historical record departments, and researchers are using

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these facilities quite frequently. Local history in this area is very much alive and well.

Citizens take interest and have been reading the various historical books and records that past writers have made available. Some of the former historians did not have access to certain old records that are now procurable, with the result new and revised historical facts are coming to the fore.

Last year the writer produced his book, "EARLY COBOURG" which contained information on early settlement and local government. This year, a second book, "COBOURG 1914-1919" gives a very special account of the magnificent way Cobourg people supported the World War One effort and how that generation lived through those trying times.

Cobourg's Sesquicentennial of the town's incorporation is fast approaching in 1987. It appears that the citizens are well informed on their local history, a story with which they can identify their past, a story that will give them a good reason for a grand celebration in 1987, and an incentive to build a bigger and better future.

Percy L. Climo

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Colborne, Ontario,
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