

Students unearth important local history

By Ben Burd

Special to The Chronicle

Cramahe Township was raided August 31, 1814, part of the War of 1812. Information has unearthed during research of a Cobourg Museum project.

During a search of artifacts in the National Archives, Ottawa, researchers came across a document that describes the raid.

A letter written by Lt. Col. Peters of the 1st Regiment of the Northumberland Militia to a Lt. Col. Nathaniel Coffin, the Deputy Adjutant General in Kingston, tells the tale of seven men in a boat that came from the "American shore". The letter described the episode, "They landed in Cramahe in the District of Newcastle and destroyed 30 barrels of flour which was contracted by a man of the name of John McGraw for the use of the government. That about 12 o'clock at night the same party came to my house and took Twenty stands of English Musquites, Cartridges Boxes and Bayonets for the same with None Round of Musquite Ball Cartridges, one Fusil and Two Swords."

The letter was part of a collection of papers in the "Northumberland File" in the National Archives. It was uncovered by students of Cobourg District Collegiate Institute West who have been working under the guidance of teacher Chris Robins.

The secondary school students have been studying practical research by looking for anything to do with Cobourg's current

"Barracks Project". The Cobourg Museum Foundation plans to restore a Cobourg building believed to be a military store house used during the War of 1812.

"These students got really excited to discover that not only were there documents from that time but also those documents spoke about areas of the county they knew," CDCI West history teacher Chris Robins says.

Colin Caldwell, a Cobourg historian, had been researching the period 1790 to 1841 for many years. He is excited about the student's document find, taking it as confirmation of what he has suspected for years.

"The Americans, under Admiral Chauncy, had 10 gunboats that cruised Lake Ontario in the years of the war," Mr. Caldwell says. "These gunboats preyed upon the British vessels transporting goods between Toronto and Kingston. Raiding parties were put ashore (on Canadian soil) all along the coast at the time."

Attesting to the authenticity of the found document, Mr. Caldwell says, "I see no reason not to believe it. It's a great letter and a great find. I love it!"

Text of the September 1, 1814 letter unearthed by CDCI West students at the National Archives, Ottawa:

Cramahe, 1st September 1814
Sirs
I beg leave to inform you for

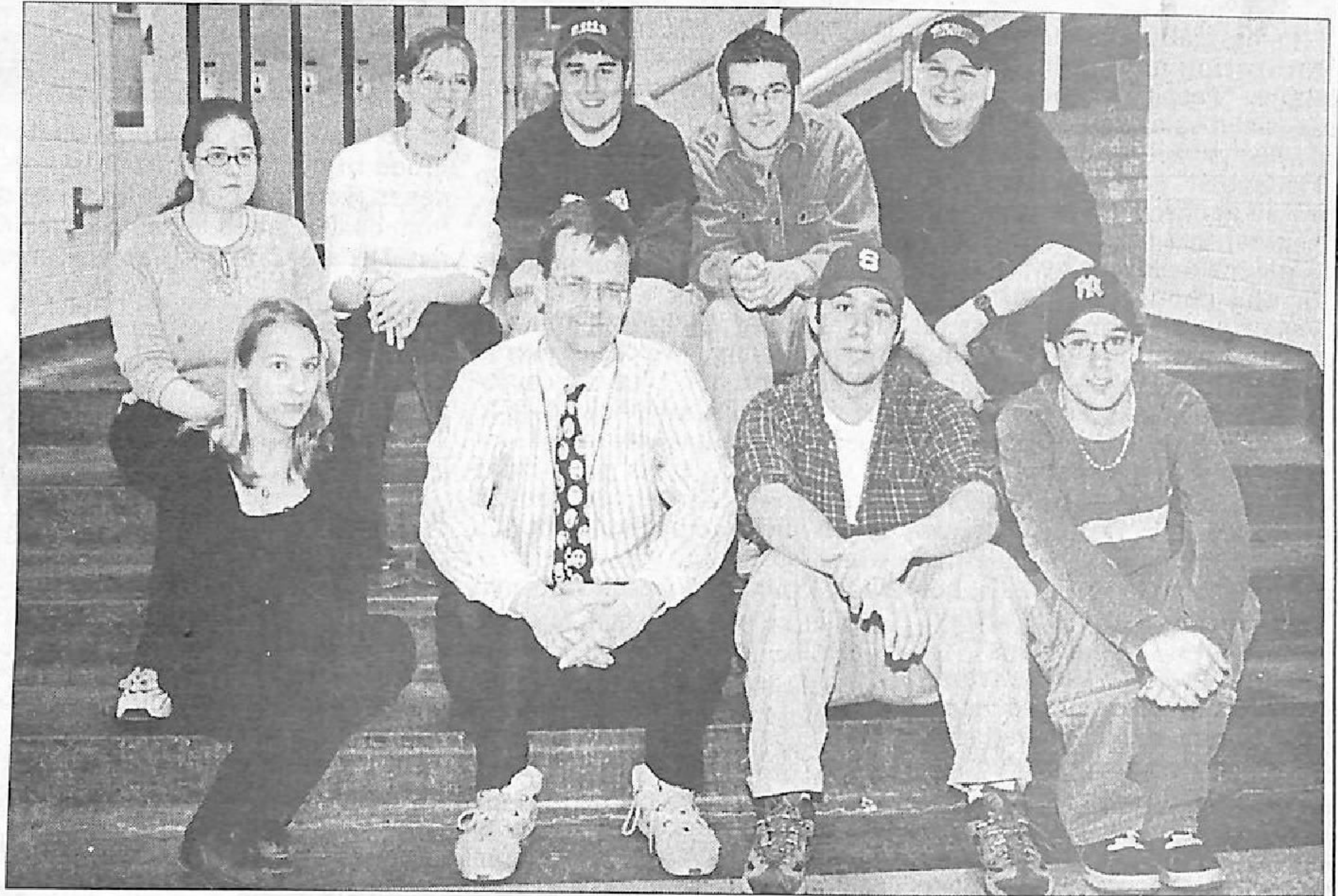


PHOTO BY PETE FISHER

C.D.C.I. West teacher Chris Robins (bottom, second from left) sits with some of the students who researched and uncovered new local historical information.

His Honer the Presidents information that last night a boat from the American shore, landed in Cramahe in the District of Newcastle and destroyed Thirty Barrels of Flour which was contracted for by a man of the name John McGraw for the use of Government. That about 12 O'clock at night the same party came to

my house, took Twenty stands of English Musquites, Cartridges Boxes and Bayonets for the same, with Nine Rounds of Musquite Ball Cartridges, one Fusil and Two Swords. When they left the shore they sterred directly into the Lake in a verry light running Boat like a Gig. The Boat contained Seven Men.

I have the honor to be
Sirs
Your most Obedient
Humble Servant
M. Peters Lt. Col.
1st Reg't North. Militia

L. Colonel Nathaniel Coffin
Deputy Adjutant General
Militia

COL BORDE

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