



# THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society



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*Classic Theatre then and as it stands now in 2016.  
(2016 Photo D. Ranchuk)*

## The Classic Theatre, A Brief History

**1926** -The Kiwanis Club of Cobalt rebuilt a new theatre on the site of the former burned-out *Grand* and *Lyric Theatre*. Ralph Taylor, owner of *George Taylor Hardware Store* next door, gave the Club a ninety-nine year lease to use the Hardware's walls as a sidewall to the Theatre. The Club decided rather than operating the Theatre with a complicated leasing arrangement with Anthony Giachino who operated the other silent movie theatre in Town to sell the Theatre outright to the *Premier Operating Co.* of Toronto owned by J.J. and Jule Allen.

**1928** -The *Empire* chain of talking-picture theatres in Timmins thought about a talking-picture theatre in New Liskeard and that worried the Allen Brothers who were still showing silent movies at the *Classic*.

The *Empire Theatre* was built in New Liskeard and is still operating today.

**1930** - Sound equipment was installed and the advertising stated that "talking, singing and dancing" movies were shown. Two shows each weeknight at 7:00 and 9:00 with continuous running from 2:30 Saturday to

11:00 at night. Adult tickets were 50 cents plus a five-cent tax while children were 25 cents and no tax. The Saturday matinee (afternoon show) was ten cents less.

**1936** - This is what the Theatre was showing on Christmas day -*The Captain's Kid* with May Robson, Sybil Jason and Guy Kibbee with the added attraction as Mary Astor in *Lady From Nowhere*. The final show started at 9:00 and the last bus to Haileybury left the Theatre at midnight.

**1937** - Haileybury was without an active movie theatre but advertising placed there stated that the *Classic* was screening Don Ameche and Ann Southern in *Fifty Roads to Town* with the added attraction of *Let's Get Married* with Ida Lupino, Walter Connolly and Ralph Bellamy.

**1939** - The Allen Brothers agreed to help out the Town of Haileybury from a tax bind by agreeing to remodel and open the old *Broadway Theatre*. It was felt that the amount of theatre business that the *Classic* would lose would barely affect the taxes paid to Cobalt. The projectionist worked Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday in Cobalt; Monday, Wednesday and Friday in Haileybury.

This was the year of the following famous movies:

“*Gone With The Wind*” - Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh

“*The Wizard of Oz*” - Judy Garland

“*Wuthering Heights*” - Laurence Olivier

“*Beau Geste*” - Gary Cooper

“*Gunga Din*” - Cary Grant

“*Ninotchka*” - Greta Garbo

“*At The Circus*” - The Marx Brothers

“*Dark Victory*” - Bette Davis

**1940** - In July, fund-raising efforts for war-saving stamps towards paying for World War II, saw local musicians and performers on the various movie house stages and the Cobalt audience contributed \$550.

**1940s - 1950s** – Besides movies, the stage at the *Classic Theatre* was used for performances of The Haydn Concerts of the twenty-piece classical orchestra of Eric Smith, violin teacher and conductor.

The Cobalt United Church’s *Silver Leaf* group arranged for the performances of visiting soloists and small groups of musicians.

The *Ca Bo Gi Club* (Catholic Boys and Girls) performed plays.

The Cobalt High School Commencement Exercises were held at the Theatre.

**1960** - *Classic Theatre* closed for three years.

**1962** - *Cobalt Assets Limited* formed by a group of local businessmen in 1961, leased the *Classic Theatre* from Jules Allen of *Theatre Holding Company* and it reopened in October 1962. The members of the corporation took turns as ushers, doormen and ticket sellers. Renovations were made to the stage and washrooms were added. Some of the original 498 seats were removed for this project. Then live bands were engaged to play the popular music of the day- rock and roll, country and folk. Benefit concerts were performed to raise money for victims of local fires.

**1972** - *Classic Theatre* showed its last movie until 1994.

**1973** - *Classic Theatre* was sold to local businessmen Cecil Cameron, Jack Matthews and Arnold Todd. The building was closed but the taxes were paid and the roof was replaced. Attempts were made to interest businesses to locate in the building but to no avail.

*Classic Theatre* building was then owned by the Town of Cobalt.

**1993** - *Classic Theatre* renovated under the supervision of theatre designers Richard and Claire Smerdon.

**1994** - *Classic Theatre* opened as theatre for live performances on June 4, 1994, and has been going strong ever since then.

## Bibliography

Fancy, Peter. *Temiskaming Treasure Trails 1934 -1945*. Highway Book Shop, Cobalt, 1995.

Paul Penna Public Library. Clipping Service 1960 - 1970. Cobalt.



## THE WATCH ON THE MAAS

WINTER 1944 – 1945

By GEORGE L. CASSIDY



Limited Edition (100)

Archival Giclee Reproduction Prints

\$75.00 each

Bunker Military Museum

(Charitable Receipt upon request)



## Interview with Rick Damiani June 11, 2016

In 1987, Rick Damiani was foreman for Laurel Birch Trucking that had the contract to remove the compressed- air pipeline that originated at Ragged Chutes on the Montreal River. Installed in 1910 to deliver compressed air to the mines in Cobalt and Coleman, the pipes were 24 inches in diameter and 42 feet long. All the pipes were removed with the exception of 1,600 feet donated to the Cobalt Mining Museum. These pipes lay half-a-mile below Silverfields Mine along Cart Lake.

Eight miles of piping were sold to *Pipe and Pilings Canada* in Montreal. The pipes were hauled on factory

trailers with log trailers attached. The job took all summer with a crew of 20 local guys. Using impact guns to loosen the bolts nearly 99% of the piping was dismantled in that fashion because creosote had been used in the maintenance of the joints of the pipes. Every quarter of a mile the pipes rested on concrete blocks six feet square while for every half mile there were slip joints connecting the pipes.

Examples of the compressed-air pipeline may be seen at the Jake Koza Park Site of the Historical Silver Trail off Lang Street.

## We Will Need Your Help

The Cobalt Historical Society maintains the Heritage Silver Trail. The Right-of-Way mine is in need of a new tin roof to maintain the building's integrity. Estimates for this work have been done and it will need approximately \$30,000 to accomplish the work. We anticipate the work will be done before the coming winter. Applications have been made, and to gain matching funds from government agencies we will need to raise approximately \$12,500. Tax deductible receipts are available for contributions to this project.

We hope we can count on your support.

## A Recent Visitor

Opening the book store in the Coniagas Shaft House #4 has been a real experience, both in terms of dealing with the physical aspects of the building and the people who live here as well as those that come to visit.

While waiting the last eight minutes for the coming bus, a person came up and asked if this was indeed the Coniagas Shaft House. I said it was. He wanted to confirm that this was the same Shaft House where a Mr. Giachino had his grocery store. Certainly is, I replied. He then told me that a Mr. Giachino was in Ottawa and was curious as how things are now in his old hometown. This young gentleman said he was related to Mr. Giachino (either a grandson or nephew) and he was taking pictures to show him. He had already taken pictures of the outside of the building, and even though the store was closed, asked if he could possibly take some pictures inside.



*Coniagas Shaft House #4 , (circa 1950s) and now.*

## Cobalt News

As announced in the last Newsletter, Ann Fraboni's retirement meant that a new curator had to be found for the *Cobalt Mining Museum*. We welcome **William Hamilton** to the position. His enthusiasm and ready smile are already appreciated. His diligence and knowledge are already at work in keeping the Museum safe and secure.

On Sunday July 3rd, 2016 he discovered that some railway signal explosives on display contained live explosive. Rather than risk anyone, William and the Board conferred, then called in the OPP who then called in the Bomb Squad from North Bay to properly disarm the devices. It's always exciting when history comes to life.

I opened the door and in he came clicking away quickly. Showed him where the shaft had now been filled in (Oct. 2016). He said that Mr. Giachino was going to be so happy that this was a book store now. He asked if I knew anything about Mr. Giachino.

The majority of people coming to visit this old haunt remember it fondly as a grocery store. I told him that Cobalters still hold him in high regard, that I had heard wonderful things about him and what he did in this town. Told him that Cobalt still loves him and to make sure that he tells Mr. Giachino he is still remembered and greatly missed.

So, on behalf of you all, I made sure we sent back Cobalt's best wishes. Just wish I had gotten the young man's name. But we'll get better at this as we have more practice and more than eight minutes.

*Deborah Ranchuk, 50 Silver Street, Cobalt.*

