

COBOURG 1837

CELEBRATING 175 YEARS SINCE INCORPORATION



THE LOSS OF SPEEDY

The loss of HMS Speedy in 1804 with all 29 aboard led to the decision to build the District Court House in Amherst. The Speedy was carrying a prisoner, lawyers and a judge from York to Presqu'isle for a murder trial when tragedy struck. The wreck is still being researched.

Photo courtesy of TBD

STEPS ON THE ROAD TO COBOURG'S INCORPORATION

- 1795** **Surveying of Hamilton Township** is begun in preparation for the settlement working its way westward along the shores of Lake Ontario
- 1798** **First official list of settlers** in what became Cobourg. Among them are:
- Eliud Nickerson:** Cleared land and settled near present day King & Division
- Elias Jones:** Built a cabin, later a store, at mouth of to day's Cobourg Creek
- (An earlier list of settlers was said to indicate "fraud, duplicity and unprincipled selfishness" on the part of those responsible for assigning the surveyed lots!)
- 1808** **Courthouse for Newcastle District** located at Amherst (Burnham & Elgin Sts.)
- 1819** **The area is renamed "Cobourg"**
- 1820-30** **Rapid growth takes place** including such newcomers as F.S.Clench, Henry Ruttan, George Strange Bolton
- 1830** **Cobourg Harbour** is begun and east pier built
- 1832** **Cobourg becomes a "Police Village"**

IN 1832 COBOURG BECAME A "POLICE VILLAGE". WHAT DID THAT INVOLVE?

It was simply a matter of declaring to the government that a group of settlers had met and voted to:

- agree on a set of by-laws, restricted to a certain section of a township,
- and enforce its own regulations for civic behaviour.

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BECOMING INCORPORATED WAS A LOT MORE COMPLICATED

Cobourg had scarcely become a Police Village when more elaborate plans emerged. According to local historian Percy Climo,

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN SEEKING INCORPORATION GOES LIKE THIS:

- 1832 Dec. 28**, the first "official" discussion of Incorporation, including the annexing of the Village of Amherst.
- 1834 Feb. 15**, resolutions are passed in detail petitioning the Legislature for Incorporation. The Village of Amherst not included.
- Feb. 17**, another group of citizens gathers to **strongly oppose rushing Incorporation.**
- 1835 Jan. 7**, residents of both Cobourg and Amherst support a **petition for the two villages to be incorporated.**
- Mar. 11**, the *Cobourg Elective Police Bill* receives first reading in the House.
- 1836 Feb.**, George Ham and 80 others petition the Legislature against Incorporation. Ebenezer Perry and 40 others petition the Legislature for Incorporation. *Bill receives second reading.*
- Mar.**, the Cobourg Incorporation *Bill* is read a third time.
- Dec. 2**, another meeting petitions both Houses of the Legislature pass the Bill.
- 1837 Mar. 4**, **The Act to Establish a Police in the Town of Cobourg, and to Define the Limits of the said Town is passed.**
- July 1**, the **First Cobourg By-Laws become effective.**
- 1839 Mar. 18**, George Ham and 206 others of the Town of Cobourg petition the Legislature, "*praying that the Act incorporating the said Town be repealed*". No action taken!

BECOMING INCORPORATED DIDN'T SEEM SO VERY IMPORTANT AT THE TIME.

A number of other significant events attracted the attention of the residents of the "Police Village" of Cobourg in 1837.

- the death of his Majesty, King William IV,
- the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne,
- the deadly rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada at the end of the year.