

PROMINENT FAMILIES OF THE PERIOD

ROBERT HENRY 1778-1859

Fur trader to banker: "I'm much inclined to leave this rascally Country forever."



HOW HE GOT HERE:

Robert worked for the Company for some years north of Lake Superior. Shortly after retiring in 1817 he was induced by his friends, the Bethunes, to move to Cobourg where he soon married widow Christy Bethune Farrand, sister of James Grey, Angus, Donald and Alexander Bethune (who became Rector of St. Peter's, Cobourg and then Anglican Bishop of Toronto).

WHO HE WAS:

Robert Henry, the son of merchant-trader Robert Henry, was born in Albany, New York, but his family moved to Montreal following the American Revolution. Many of his relatives, including his uncle, explorer Alexander Henry, were involved in the fur trade.



Young Robert himself **joined the famous North West Company.**

For some years he worked for the Company north of Lake Superior and was involved in conflicts with the Hudson's Bay Company.

*North West Company Coat of Arms
(Courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada)*

WHAT HE DID HERE:

1818 - Robert built a large grist mill at King St. West and Tremaine with his partner and brother-in-law James Gray Bethune.

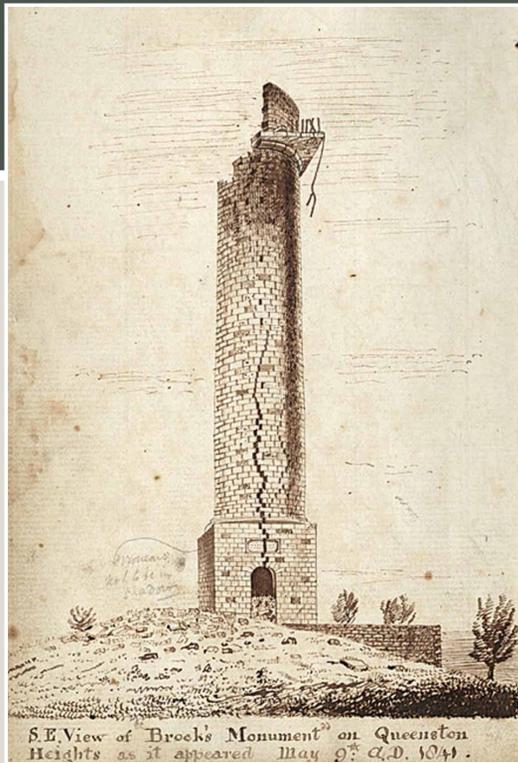
1831 - he sold his 203 acres, including the mill, to George Ham for 6,000 pounds.

1832 - he began operating the only bank in Cobourg and thus became the prime target of the notorious "**Cobourg Conspiracy**"

1833 - he bought property at the corner of King and Church Streets opposite St. Peter's Church. It was long considered the oldest house in Cobourg.

He was also active in the life of Cobourg as:

- treasurer of the Cobourg Railway Company,
- treasurer of the Cobourg Board of Police,
- first warden of St. Peter's Church and
- a justice of the peace.



One of the leaders of the 'Cobourg Conspiracy' against Robert Henry's bank was Benjamin Lett, a notorious "Patriot". Lett left mayhem in his wake and a reputation for both avoiding and escaping capture. Whether involved or not, he was justifiably accused of the bombing of Brock's Monument in 1840.

HIS FAMILY:

Christy Bethune Farrand was Henry's second wife. His first had been a cousin of the Bethunes. Christy and Robert had two daughters both of whom married influential men in the community.

- Cecilia married Robert Henry Throop, son of Benjamin Throop, one of Cobourg's earliest settlers.
- Julia Christy married John Sinclair Wallace, great-grandson of the Earl of Caithness. John Sinclair came to Cobourg in 1843 with his father Captain Patrick Wallace and his cousins, the Mackechnies, establishing a number of early important industries.

"Squire Henry", as he was locally known, recounted stories of his adventures in the fur trade. [He] ...*"endured all sorts of hardships. One winter when provisions fell short he and his companions were obliged to cut up their leather aprons and shoes to keep starvation off."* After that he is said to have declared, *"I'm much inclined to leave this rascally Country forever."* Fortunately for Cobourg, he did not.

WHAT ELSE:

Mrs. Frances Stewart, author of *Our Forest Home*, wrote:

"Mr. Henry is most entertaining and friendly showing much kindness in many ways. About Mrs. Henry she says, [She] is pleasing and improves very much on acquaintance and seems greatly attached to her husband who is much older. Her mother Mrs. Bethune, who lives opposite the Henrys in a little cottage, was a fine, merry old lady."



The Henry house - a one storey long low Regency Cottage at King and Church St. E., probably built in 1833. A second floor was added c1850. The house was destroyed by fire c1994.