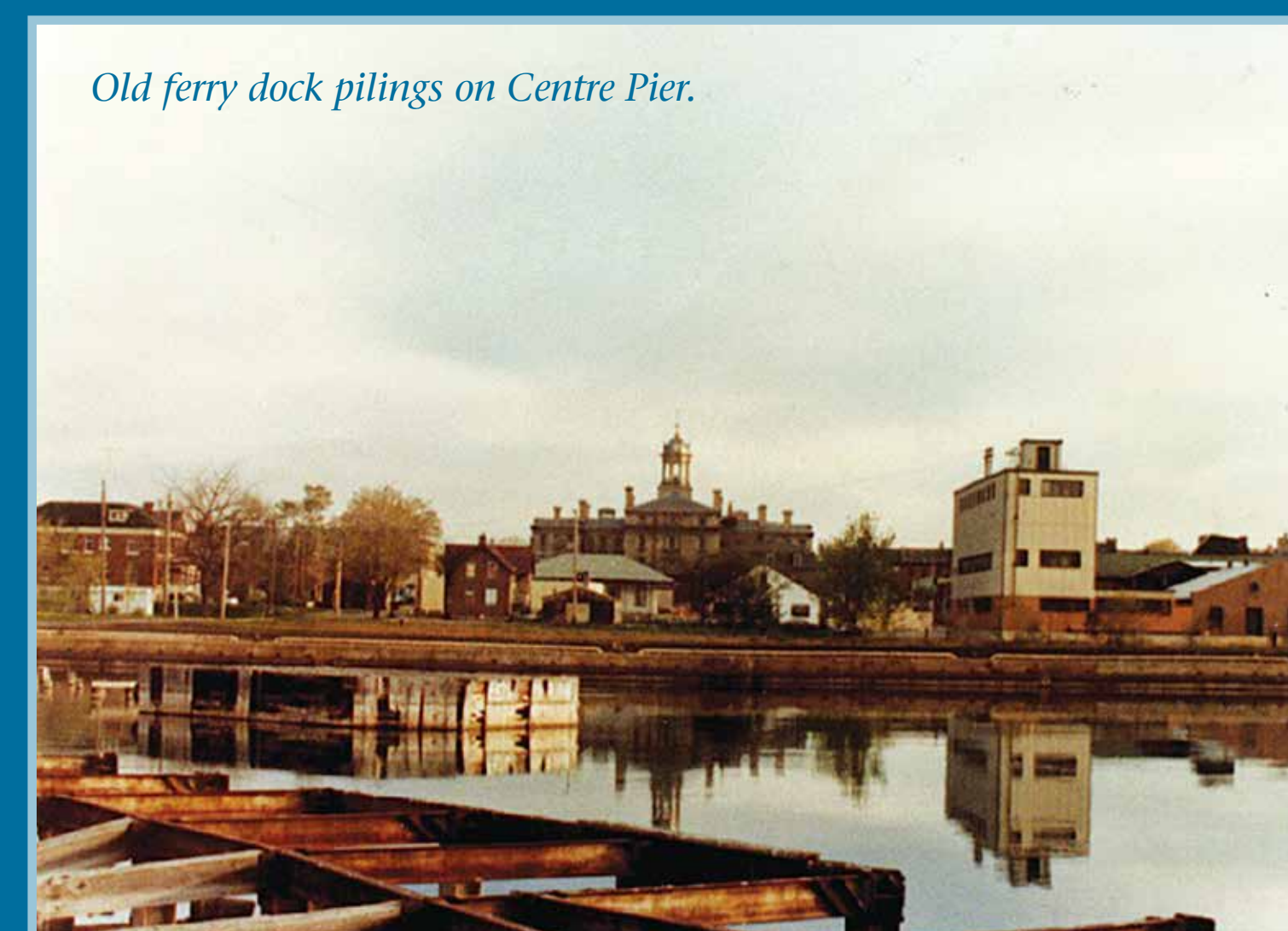


THE HISTORY OF COBOURG HARBOUR

THE RENAISSANCE

In the 1950s and 60s commercial activity in the Cobourg harbour was booming. Most of the activity was from trains and deep sea freighters. Oil tank farms belonging to Shell, Sunoco and Imperial Oil were located between Third and Hibernia Streets. Oilers docked along the west side of the Centre Pier and pumped their oil and gasoline through pipelines along the pier to the tank farm. Tanker cars travelled up Spring Street by railway heading to Peterborough and other destinations on the CN/CP rail lines.

General Wire and Cable had a manufacturing facility on Factory Creek at William Street. The company imported steel from Germany which was unloaded off deep sea freighters on the East Pier. Coal carriers unloaded coal on the north wall creating huge coal piles. The north wall also had CNR freight sheds – truly an industrial scene!



Old ferry dock pilings on Centre Pier.

Rick Stinson, the Town's Municipal Clerk until 2007, fondly remembers the noise and power of trains that travelled up and down Spring Street in 1976. Cobourg Council and municipal staff had been relocated to today's Cobourg Police Station during Victoria Hall's major restoration. A crossing guard at the corner of Spring and King Streets would halt traffic at the

intersection to let trains through. *"When those trains used to shunt and come down Spring Street, I remember the walls shaking and you couldn't talk to anyone because it was so loud"*, recalls Stinson.

Perolin-Bird-Archer Company located its industrial water treatment plant just north of the harbour between Third and Division Streets. It eventually became Diversey Water Treatment Technologies. The little railway activity which did occur after the late 1970s was for this plant.

Although the waterfront was very much an industrial area, many people have fond memories of climbing or biking up the coal piles and becoming totally black with coal dust. The old ferry pilings on the east side of the Centre Pier were at least twenty feet high and were a favourite platform for jumping into the harbour. The coal piles disappeared in the mid 1970s. Mayor Mac Lees did the honours as grass sod replaced the coal.



Cobourg Harbour in the 1950s.
(Credit: Peterborough Post Card Co. c66091)

It was not until the 1980s that a vision began to develop for the waterfront, particularly between Third and Division Streets. It was the Department of Oceans and Fisheries which suggested that Cobourg consider changing its harbour designation to a small-craft harbour, and in mid 1981 that designation was received.

Over the next ten years major upgrades took place including the construction of six new docks and a fine new building for the Marina offices. This building was completed in 1991 and quickly gained a reputation from boaters as being the cleanest and most modern facility on the lake.



Cribwork of the old ferry slip serves as the marina in the 1960s/70s.



THE HISTORY OF COBOURG HARBOUR

THE RENAISSANCE CONT.

In 1991, two of the remaining oil tanks closest to the shore were removed by massive cranes and loaded on a barge to be scrapped. There were still two tanks left further inshore, but this did not deter the dawn of the “Hoffman Years” and the area's first condominium development.



Developer James Hoffman was a visionary and had concepts of urban planning that were ahead of his time. He stated that *“Cobourg today is literally returning to its waterfront for renewed economic stimulus, but now in the form of residential and commercial development and the emerging tourism industry.”* He further remarked that *“remediating the lands which contained*

petroleum, hydrocarbons and heavy metals was surprisingly the least difficult thing to do. Land acquisition, meeting with area stakeholders, public disclosures and education regarding the environmental conditions of the land, and gaining financial support were more difficult challenges.”

The developer's estimated clean up costs were \$2 million and Cobourg spent an additional \$3 million over three years from 1995 to 1998 on roads and changing north-south links. The fact that Hoffman developed the residential area in phases probably explains why there is no consistency in condo design.

The Diversey Water Technologies Plant was in the process of closing its doors when Mayor Joan Chalovich and her Council entered into negotiations with the company to purchase the land. In 2001 the Town finalized the purchase for \$2 but the remediation of the site carried a \$1.5 million price tag. The cleaned up area is now home to the Rotary Harbourfront Park.



Rotary Harbourfront Park



Boats in Cobourg Harbour, c2008
(Credit: Bobcatnorth, Flickr.com)

The transformation of the harbour and waterfront was now almost complete with a beautiful setting and a mix of residential and commercial development as originally envisioned.

In September 2006 it provided the backdrop for the launch of the *Spirit of Canada*, a single-handed ocean racer built in Cobourg by Derek Hatfield. Hatfield and the *Spirit of Canada* placed third in the 2010-2011 version of the prestigious *VELUX 5 Oceans Race*.



Skipper Derek Hatfield onboard his yacht, Spirit of Canada preparing for the VELUX 5 OCEANS around the world race.