

# The COBBOLD Family History Trust

14 Moorfields, Moorhaven, Ivybridge  
Devon, PL21 0XQ, UK

Tel: + 44 (0) 1752 894498

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL  
Ivry, Lady Freyberg

www.cobboldfht.com  
anthony@cobboldfht.com

## THE HAILEYBURY FIRE. OCTOBER 4<sup>th</sup> 1922

Dec 2010

The town of Haileybury (named after the eponymous public school) in Ontario, Canada was founded by Charles Cobbold Farr (1851-1914) in 1904. As a young man he suffered many struggles and privations in Canada's cold wild country, some of them while working for the Hudson Bay Co., before settling on the western shore of Lake Temiskaming. It is a big story, too long to tell here, which includes all the drama of both achievement and tragedy.



This picture, sent to the Trust recently by CCF's great granddaughter depicts a statue in Haileybury to commemorate the fire on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1922 when the townsfolk had to immerse themselves in the lake to escape the flames.

Haileybury had previously been ravaged by fire in 1906 but re-built itself and was prospering on the proceeds of the silver mines at Cobalt. (Canadian law forbade the sale of alcohol within 5 miles of a mine and Haileybury was just outside the limit so that was where the hotels, offices, homes and bars needed to be). The population was growing and CCF had called on his first cousin Paul Alexander Cobbold (1862-1922) to come out to be his Town / Court Clerk. Paul had married CCF's sister in law, Clara Delphina Probyn (1866-1922) and Haileybury had been chosen as the judicial seat.

All was about to change. When CCF died in 1914 it was said that 'in a way, part of the town died with him.' His zeal and energy for his town would never be surpassed. Haileybury's young men went off to war with the Ninety-Seventh Regiment but not all of them returned. Silver production had peaked, some mines had closed and men been laid off. Many departed for jobs elsewhere. On Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> 1922, another blow came.

Dan Merkly, the former fire chief recalled that the fire, driven by a strong wind, came in through the bush at the west of the town. "We held it at the tracks (rail) for a long time but then the rising wind whipped it through the business section." It veered around to the north and fanned the fire right through to the south end of the town. A change of direction brought the flames racing back to cut another swathe through the town. The whole south end of the town was destroyed, many had lost everything and eleven residents perished.

Paul's wife died trying to save her 90 year old uncle but she was overcome by smoke. Paul went back into the house and eventually saved the uncle but was dreadfully burned. He lived, but only to die of his burns 3 months later in Hospital. One of his wife's daughters by a previous marriage, Ruth Berry (1862-1922) was severely burned too. A chapter of Haileybury's history closed abruptly.

The sculpture is a sombre reminder of our family's two lives tragically lost.



Looking south to the lake. Note the relief tents



Even the fire engine perished.



Public School pupils were sent home early. It was just as well for the school was gutted.



Haileybury dock after the 1922 fire.