

THE NEWSLETTER



The PROBUS Club of Simcoe & District
Meets second Tuesday of each month at St. James United Church hall

Christmas lunch

Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2018.
Hi-Way Restaurant, 63 Queensway West, Simcoe.
11:30 a.m., socializing; noon lunch.
Members and guests welcome!

Review of Nov. 13, 2018, meeting:

President **Murray Uren** called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. **Brian Cook** led us in our national anthem.

PROBUS business:

Christmas lunch: **President Murray** gave details about our Christmas lunch. We will dine

in the back room of the Hi-Way Restaurant. The Hi-Way will offer its full menu, including specials, and drinks from the bar. Everyone will order individual meals. Bills will automatically include a 15 per cent gratuity.

Spouses and guests are welcome.

Wellness: Gerald Sheppard reported that Gus Takacs hopes to return to our

meetings soon.

Program: **Dan Pearson** has speakers lined up for January and February.

Special events: **Dick Pearson** is seeking ideas for outings in 2019.

Treasurer: **Dave Montross** reported 29 members have paid their \$45 dues for

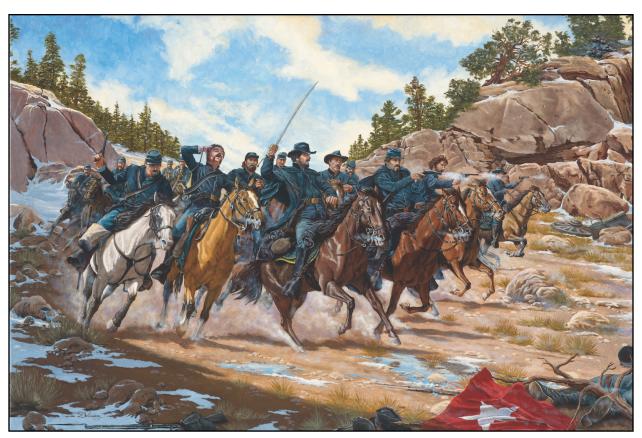
2018-19. A few members have yet to pay. We are in good financial shape. Dave read a thank-you letter from the family of **Jay McKiee**. Our club made a donation to St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in memory of Jay, who

passed away on Oct. 8.

House: Rick Middaugh reported all is well.

Newsletter: **David Judd** praised **Jay McKiee** as a fine businessman.

Who-Am-I: **Bernd Mueller** has volunteered to be a Who-Am-I speaker.



Union cavalry in action in New Mexico at Apache Canyon during the battle of Glorieta Pass.

Guest speaker: Mike McDonnell

A little known chapter of the American Civil War took place among the Wild West deserts and mesas of New Mexico. Historian **Mike McDonnell** described how New Mexico, then on the western frontier of American settlement, played a small but interesting role in the War Between the States, 1861-65.

Mike is a retired police officer and Civil War buff. He told us the war in New Mexico was "kind of a mess," involving untrained soldiers led by incompetent commanders.

The Spanish explored the area in the 1540s and established its capital of Santa Fe. The United States Army established a series of forts following the Mexican War of 1846-48. Although New Mexico was not suitable for slavery, it did have some slaves and many Southern sympathizers who supported the Confederacy.

In 1861, 350 Texas Mounted Volunteers invaded and declared a Confederate territory in southern New Mexico. The following year heavy-drinking Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley led 2,600 Confederate troops in a half-baked



Mike McDonnell

plan to capture Santa Fe, then move north to take Colorado and on west to California.

Sibley's men clashed with Union forces at the Battle of Valverde. In March 1862, the Confederates were forced to retreat back south after losing their supplies at the Battle of Glorieta Pass. Union reinforcements arrived from California that summer. The Union established new territories in New Mexico and Arizona in 1863.

Mike said New Mexico is a great place to visit. Santa Fe features historic buildings and many art galleries. The deserts and mountains attract hikers, artists and photographers.

Dan Pearson introduced Mike and **David Judd** thanked him.

Remembering Armistice Day 1918:

Private Harold F. Diver of Simcoe is among the thousands of Canadians who were killed in the First World War but have no grave. He was among more than 250 men and one woman from Norfolk who died in the service of Canada.

Pte. Diver was 18 when he enlisted in the 133rd Battalion (Norfolk's Own) in August 1915. His occupation was listed as machinist. Overseas Pte. Diver was transferred to a machine gun unit from British Columbia. He died at age 20 on Aug. 15, 1917, at Hill 70 after a German shell landed in his trench. More than 2,100 Canadians died at Hill 70. The bodies of 1,300 of these soldiers, including Pte. Diver, were never found. Pte. Diver's name is listed on the Vimy Memorial.



Pte. Harold F. Diver

His father, **Frederick Diver**, also enlisted. He served at the front for 15 months. He suffered shell shock and was transferred to a job in a payroll office in England.

Canadian forensic experts recently thought Pte. Diver's remains had been uncovered in France. Unfortunately, a DNA test of a relative in Sault Ste. Marie found the remains did not belong to Pte. Diver.

David Judd told the Diver family's story. They had lived at 100 Stanley St. in the house immediately west of our PROBUS meeting room at St. James Church.

David also read the Simcoe Reformer's account of how Simcoe celebrated the end of the First World War on Nov. 11, 1918. The story began:

"Twenty-four hours was not long enough for the jubilant people of this town to celebrate the signing by the Germans of the armistice. Getting up at four, putting in the morning and afternoon on the streets, rejoicing with everybody who came along, and then having another go in the evening, when the fire burned high, and the light fantastic was tripped in the Armories, was not enough for many. Midnight passed, and even then for an hour or two more, merry-makers were stretching out this great day to the utmost, and were reluctant to lose themselves in sleep as long as it could be staved off."

The Anglican Church bell woke the town to the news of the armistice at 4 a.m. At midmorning Mayor Sihler declared a holiday and the stores closed. There was a parade in the afternoon, followed by a thanksgiving service in the Armories.

In the evening, there was a bonfire and the burning of an effigy of the Kaiser. A dance at the Armories kept the fun going until after 11 o'clock. The Walsh band paid a visit to Simcoe at about 12:30 a.m., attracting a crowd for a last dance or two on the pavement.