

On the Main Street

Oct. 16/69

with Ford Moynes

“The winding Scugog River was well named,” remarked Joe Hennessey, the St. Paul Street historian, a few days ago. “To old timers who used to paddle from Lindsay to Sturgeon Lake, seven miles, and think nothing of the effort, said the Scugog had more twists and bends than those found in an old fashioned cork screw and the latter item was an important tool years ago—but the river was beautiful in the days when cat tails and bulrushes weer tall and the wild flowers beautiful.”

It was apparently a picture no artist could paint to stand at the north end of St. Paul Street and watch the long string of canoes returning in the twilight from Sturgeon Lake. As many as 25 and 50 canoes could be spotted along the twisting Scugog and the paddlers were expert, having learned the art from their forebears who had copied the Indians in handling the tricky canoe. This was before the noise of the put-put motor boats arrived to make boating easy and also to scare the fish away.

Our readers have often seen the name of Jesse Perin in print as the man who built canoes in a factory on Kent Street East. Later on at this this same location, Sam Botting turned out canoes and followed his craftsmanship by making motor boats.

In the late 40s, Stan and Victor Henry built the cement block building on Bond Street in the East Ward, west of Lindsay Street North — the present home of the Emerson Paper Box plant. Here these brothers, along with Sam Botting, turned out the "Henry" boat, as well as other fine craft.

Expert canoeists included Alex. Ross who was a government builder of locks and dams. This gentleman, it is stated, was in charge of building what is known as the 'Cut' at the mouth of the River at Sturgeon Lake. It is also stated that he had a hand in building the present Academy Theatre. Dr. Jack Ross, Kent Street West, is a son of the aforesaid Alex. Ross.

In the height of the boating season, many a canoe was homemade but one of the best builders was Harry Bryans, a man who was an avid fisherman and one who gave up the sport when he remarked to a friend: "The coming of the motor boat and its easy method of transportation and the noise it made, spelled the doom of fishing from a canoe just for the love of the sport."

The above were the days when business men like Alex. Fisher left his store at the corner of William and Peel Streets; when C. Pilkey quit work at the bale shop, when Billy Waite dropped his railway ticket sales; when Tommy Massaw laid down his tools and Sandy Flack honed his trusty razor and everybody

seemed to go boating and fishing, and Joe Hennessey and other young fellows paddled the seven miles to Sturgeon Lake in an hour and loved the sport.

Definitely they were the good old days when it was good to breath in nature's ozone with never a thought of pollution; the days when the 'boss' closed the store early and went fishing with the delivery boy; the days when it was good to get a whiff of good unadulterated barley corn and the days when it was a common practice to hook on to a 'Muskie' and really enjoy a fresh fish dinner and end a busy day with a real good night of sleep while cool breezes gently swayed the pines. Ho hum. goodnight, pleasant dreams of yesterdays.