



GRAND RIVER HERITAGE MINES SOCIETY NEWSLETTER January 1994

When we review all our accomplishments since we organized in August, 1993, we are pleased with and proud of our members, and congratulate them on their teamwork. Briefly, we have made contacts with professionals who are willing to assist us, local people who can give us historical information and provide pictures and artifacts, other associations who have common interests, and libraries and museums where we can do more research. Besides attending a few public meetings, we have had several successful field trips, three in the Paris area and one in the Caledonia-York- Cayuga area. Every week we find more people who are interested in becoming working members, including contacts in various universities. Here is a report on the last field trip for 1993, submitted by Ilse Kraemer.

For weeks all the members of the Grand River Heritage Mines Society were excited about the last walk of the year - THE MYSTERY TRIP TO DISCOVER THE UNKNOWN. But when the day finally came, it rained and rained and rained. Some hardy souls made it anyway. Kathy, Robin, Aerron, 3 guests, Ilse and Sanko. We intended to find the gypsum mine with the oak doors. Due to the slippery condition of the embankment we could not climb down. We found a few old mill races. Robin and Sanko discovered the oldest trunk line of Bell Telephone going to Western Ontario crossing the Grand River. The old Bell Telephone sign was still there. From there we explored some very old foundations of the gypsum and other mills and a cave-like rock overhang large enough for 20 people to stand under. Other discoveries were a previously unknown miniature train track and strange geological rock formations. After lunch we visited the Blue Lake area to rediscover the historical remains of the marl beds and the Portland cement plant that operated between 1903 and 1917. We found the ghost settlement where the workers and their families had lived, all overgrown and forgotten. Amazingly a lot of the old plant foundation was visible. It should be recorded, photographed and researched. In front of the old foundation there remains part of the original train track. We all appreciated the permission of Mr. and Mrs. Clemons, property owners, to let us roam over their land. We crossed the bridge over Blue Lake to the other side. Here we found a swampy wetland with rare plants such as bush cinquefoil. Since it had never stopped raining and everyone was soaked to the skin, we had to cut our trip short. Never will we forget the beauty and tranquility of this place where time really stands still. A lot more needs to be explored and we would like to repeat this trip in early spring to give all members the opportunity to enjoy this mysterious area.

Our plans for 1994 are being formulated, and since this is a working organization, we want all members to participate in the planning process. Your January meeting for all members, therefore, will be a planning meeting. We will not have a guest speaker. It will be held on Saturday, January 29th at the Brantwood Residential Development Centre, 25 Bell Lane Brantford, In-Service room, at 10 a.m. Come prepared to offer suggestions and ideas, and please offer us assistance in carrying out our various projects. Your steering committee has been working hard to come up with ideas and plans. We need help in many areas: providing secretarial skills, making professional contacts, interviewing oldsters, raising funds, teaching research or field work skills, writing newsletter articles, creating displays and models (already we have made contacts to set up booths at shows). We need committees to share in collecting and recording information, etc. We have a big task ahead of us if we are to meet all our goals. PLEASE LET US KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP!

Our February meeting will be held at Brantwood Residential Development Centre on Saturday, February 26 at 10 a.m. The guest speaker will be Bern Feenstra, Resident Geologist for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in the London, Ont. office. He will give us an armchair field trip of the gypsum mines along the Grand. Come along and bring your friends.

We have made contact with the local Lapidary Society and have found we have many common interests. We have been invited to attend their January meeting on Friday, January 21st at 7:30 p.m., at the Woodman Park Community centre, 491 Grey St., where guest speaker will be Peter Russell, curator for the Earth Sciences Dept., University of Waterloo. On Friday, February 18th, we have been invited to make a presentation to explain all about our group and give a little history of the gypsum mines along the Grand. All of our members are asked to attend. *Keep your membership current in order to continue to receive these bulletins! Thanks for your support.*

Happy New Year