



GRAND RIVER HERITAGE MINES SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April-May-June 1997

UPDATE FROM ILSE AND JEAN

We are into Spring again! Hurrah! The sun passed through the vernal equinox at exactly 8:55 a.m. March 20th. And today it is raining, not snowing. It is the time of the year for maple syrup lovers. The tundra swans have been back for two weeks now, as well as other northern waterfowl. They all rest in the lakes, ponds and flooded fields on their way to the far north. It is also the time to think of hikes and field trips.

Our Society had its first display of 1997 at Dunnville's **Heritage Day** in February. It was successful and very well visited, and it was fun! When we were relieved in the afternoon by Barbara Topp and Harry Frishette, we had an opportunity to visit the other displays. We had several visitors who gave us information on the mines, which we will check out in the spring. We also had a good visit with Alf and Eileen Peart.

The booth next to us was set up by the Norfolk group of the American Chestnut Council. They gave Ilse a lot of information about Carolinian trees and locations, and she started to check these locations out in the winter. One was a stand of sweet gum trees which has a very strange fruit that hangs on the trees over the winter.

Jean had a good visit at the table across from us, with Cheryl MacDonald, a professional historical writer. Cheryl operates Heronwood Enterprises and sells Haldimand-Norfolk heritage books, including her own. She gave Jean some good advice about publishing our book, when we get to that stage.

Publication of our **booklet** on Five Oaks history has been delayed, owing to flu, colds and family emergencies. The delay was fortuitous, however, because Ilse made contact with an old Indian lady descended from the Indian family that lived in the 1700's in a settlement where Five Oaks now exists. Up to now we had very little information. The story was never written down, but told by the elders from generation to generation. This lady had all the names and dates of her forefathers. She also mentioned that there was another settlement at Apps Mill with a cemetery. Ilse believes she found the location of the settlement. After a few months involving several interviews and work sessions, Ilse is ready to compile the story to make our booklet complete.

Mike O'Byrne has been busy writing letters to people with mining connections in order to get some old **mining tools** together for our displays. He is also preparing a model of a mine and mill for display at shows, etc., and he is also building us a display stand.

Recently, Jean, Ilse and Cathy went to the office of the **Ministry of Northern Development and Mines** in London, which will be closed by October. We decided that we should obtain more information from the files before their files and library are distributed elsewhere. The Resident Geologist, Bern Feenstra, gave us access to his files, and we spent from morning until late afternoon writing out notes and photocopying maps, etc. Once we have it compiled, we will share some of it with you in the newsletter. Ilse was thrilled to find a lot of information on the **Edwards Mine (Cayuga Mine)**, which she had been looking for for ages. She recently talked with a man who worked in this mine in 1948, and he will write down for us the memories of his experiences to add to the facts that she found.

Cathy took notes mostly on Lythmore Mine # 2, and Jean took notes on the Paris Plaster Mines and production of all the Southern Ontario Gypsum mines. We also obtained copies of several useful maps. Whenever we go to the London office, we are always cordially received by the staff. The Secretary, Patricia Smith, makes us feel right at home, offering us tea, and copying what we needed. Thank you, Pat and Bern.

MINING LORE by Mike O'Byrne

In his on-going saga of personal mining adventures, Mike relates to us his dangerous experience working at a copper mine at Burchell Lake, now a ghost town, near Thunder Bay.

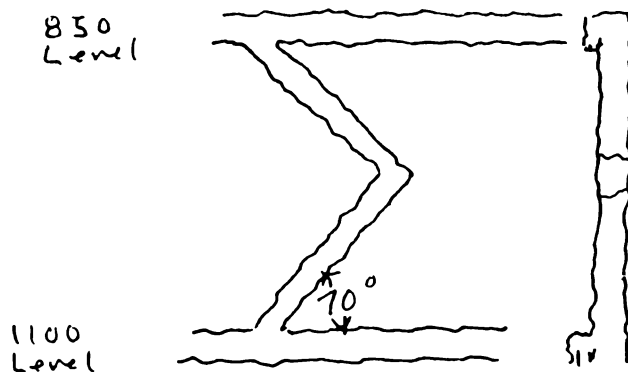
RAISING

A **raise** is a mine working driven at an angle upwards, usually between two mine levels to permit access to a production area, to improve ventilation or to function as a manway, orepass, etc. With the possible exception of shaft sinking, driving a raise is one of the most dangerous, physically demanding and nastiest jobs underground. It can, however, be quite lucrative.

The raise I worked on was being driven between the mine's 1100 foot level and 850 foot level. The opening was approximately 6 feet by 7 feet and was driven at an angle of 70 degrees to a point midway between the two levels, at which point it doubled over on itself until it hopefully hit a predetermined location on the 850 foot level.

Mine surveyors established the starting point of the raise on the 1100 foot level and outlined where the first round of holes were to be drilled. The crew of two miners then assembled their equipment consisting of two pneumatic raise type rock drills, a set of drill steels of varying length and a set of rock bits. The drilling machines would be connected up to nearby compressed air and water lines, and a round of holes drilled.

A round would consist of perhaps 28 holes drilled to a depth of 8 feet. The centre hole was bigger in diameter than the balance of the holes and was not charged with explosives. The pattern of the balance of the holes was such that delineated that area required to yield at least a 6 foot by 7 foot excavation. The holes closest to the centre hole were drilled at an angle to create a sort of truncated cone. The drilled holes were then blown out with compressed air, and with the exception of the centre hole charged with dynamite, fused, tamped, and filled with clay/chalk packing. The length of fuse sticking out of each hole was wired sequentially such that the holes closest to the empty centre hole would explode first, towards the void created by the empty centre hole and the rest of the charges would similarly break sequentially towards the centre, the perimeter hole being the last to let go.



At the time designated by the company for blasting to commence, always at the end of a shift, the round was detonated and my partner and I would count the number of explosions to confirm that all of the shots had fired.

The following day we would climb up the pile of broken muck (rock) produced by the blast, scale down any loose pieces of rock that had not fallen and check out the newly exposed rock face. The drills would again be set up and a second round drilled and blasted. Eventually the entrance to the raise would become plugged up with broken muck so that a crew on the night shift would be assigned the task of removing some of the broken material so that the opening could be accessed.

Due to the fact that we were proficient and well-paid, the raise was advancing upward at an approximate angle of 70 degrees at about 7 feet per shift. When perhaps 4 rounds had been drilled and blasted, the surveyors would survey the working. Grade chains consisting of two different lengths of sash chain with two-inch washers

on the end would be hung on two survey points. One of us would sight through the two washers and my partner would mark up the centre line on the rock face where the centre hole was to be drilled.

Due to the extreme grade of the raise, it soon became necessary to install ladders on the footwall side in order to get close enough to the face to work. At a point approximately where our work staging was to be built a hole would be drilled into the footwall and a stout steel hooked pin would be driven in and wedged into the hole. The rung of a steel ladder about ten feet long was then hung on the pin securing the ladder.

Working off the temporary ladder, we built a staging using a couple of telescoping steel poles like floor jacks, and wood timbers wedged into the walls. Planks were then laid on the supports to create a working platform. The next round would be drilled and charged. Prior to blasting, the drills would be hung below the staging, and the staging removed and its components stashed on top of the drills to protect them. The round would be fired at the designated time when everyone was clear of the area.

As this saga unfolds it becomes quickly apparent that eventually one is a hell of a way up and the work becomes increasingly hazardous. One now has a greater distance to fall; any falling rock that hits you is going to hurt you. Furthermore it is a lot more strenuous inasmuch as you have to climb up a greater distance carrying planks, dynamite, etc.

Eventually the raise would be partially timbered by stout wooden poles wedged against the walls and permanent wooden ladders would be installed. The timbering had to be kept some distance from the face to avoid being damaged by the succession of blasts.

This aspect of mining is dangerous, physically demanding and damned uncomfortable. When drilling essentially overhead one is constantly exposed to water being pumped through the hollow steel drill to keep the rock dust down. With two pneumatic rock drills operating simultaneously in such a confined space, it is impossible to be heard over the roar of the machines and the hissing of escaped compressed air. From my limited perspective, it is as close to Hell as one can come to.

To the shock of some, the raise broke through at the 850 foot level where it was supposed to. My large bonus pay was fairly earned and outrageously spent.

COMING EVENTS

Field Research begins in May, or before if weather permits. Some of our suggested trips are as follows:

1. Already this year, Ilse and Sanko have visited the **OLDS MINE**, and found many more collapses. We should visit there again this year.
2. We must go back and complete our research on the **HOLSTEIN MINE**, and photograph it.
3. Wet weather delayed our completion of the **COOK FAMILY CAIRN** in the fall. As soon as the turf dries up, we will organize a work party to complete it.
4. Last fall, Barbara, Jean and Ilse investigated the **MERRITT MINE** and took photographs. Betsy McBurney, one of our members, invited us to have a meeting at her house. She is the owner of the old Gypsum Mines schoolhouse. She will invite people who live on the Merritt and Glenny Mine properties to come and relate to us what they know and show us around.

Meetings and Shows

1. We are planning a **MEETING/SOCIAL** to set dates, brainstorm, and compare notes. The meeting is tentatively set at the home of Jean and Allan Farquharson, 823 Powerline Road (east off Rest Acres Road), Paris, on April 19 at 10:00 a.m. Bring a bag lunch. Wear your walking boots and clothes and we will have a short hike after lunch, weather permitting.

2. Last but not least! April is coming up fast! We are preparing our annual display at the **GEO-RAMA**, the Brant Lapidary Show on April 5th (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and 6 (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) at the Paris Fairgrounds. The theme this year is dinosaurs. Peter Russell from the U. of Waterloo will set up the dinosaur display. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Jean, Ilse and Mike are preparing the display, and will set it up and remove it. Cathy, Paul, Gloria, and Harry have already offered to help. We would appreciate a few more volunteers to man the booth to give us a chance to stretch our legs. We must know in time who is coming so that we can arrange for free passes into the fairground. Please contact Jean or Ilse if you can help.

REMINDER: Those who haven't yet paid their **MEMBERSHIP FEES** will be cut off the mailing list for the newsletter after this issue. Please pay if you haven't already. Our fees won't break the bank!

NOTE: A very interesting book is available - **HEROES OF THE DARK**. It is an interesting collection about miners, mines recipes, poems, anecdotes, mining methods, and the story of Klondike Kate. If you wish to purchase a copy, send \$11.95 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling to Ed Andre, Box 5596, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5H4

RECIPE CONTEST

WIN A FABULOUS PRIZE FOR YOUR MINING CAMP RECIPES

We would like to publish some interesting **mining camp recipes** to raise funds for our society. Help us by submitting your entries to **Mike O'Byrne, 676 Mount Pleasant Rd., Mount Pleasant, On N0E 1K0**. Here is a sample recipe for you:

O'BYRNE'S BANNOCK

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.

Grease lightly a heavy cast-iron frypan or baking sheet.

Sift or blend together 2 3/4 cup all-purpose flour

 1/2 tsp. salt

 2 tsp. baking powder

With a pastry blender or two knives, cut in finely. 3 T shortening

Stir in gradually 2/3 cup of water.

Stir with a fork to make a soft, slightly sticky dough.

Turn dough out on a lightly floured surface and knead gently 8 to 10 times.

Roll out or pat 1/2" thick or flatten dough to fit frypan.

Cook in frypan on hot ashes over open fire (turn bannock to brown both sides) or on baking sheet in 450 degree F. oven for 12 to 15 minutes, or until light golden brown. Cut and serve hot with butter.

SEND YOUR RECIPES IN TO MIKE NOW! WIN A PRIZE!

This newsletter is edited by Jean Farquharson. Submissions are welcome. We are not responsible for errors. We are looking for more info. about the mining industry. Please send correspondence to : R.R. # 3, Paris, ON N3L 3E3. Phone 519/442-2156, FAX 442-2373