

# GRAND RIVER HERITAGE MINES SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October-November-December 1997

## REPORT ON SUMMER ACTIVITIES, by Jean and Ilse

Since we mailed the last newsletter ahead of time, it seems a long time since we last reported to you. As always, it was a very busy summer, filled with work.

On June 15th **Betsy McBurney** kindly hosted a meeting at her home at Gypsum Mines. The purpose of the meeting was to get the local people together to tell us about the mines on their property, and perhaps stories of these mines that they could recall. Nearly everyone in the area either had a mine or their forefathers worked in one. To our disappointment, not too many came. Luckily Betsy had talked to them on the phone and could report back to us. She told us about the sisters who lived in the house that had the Post Office. Men in the area used to steal "weenies" from the mine and use them to catch fish -- dynamite which they lit and threw into the pond. Mary Nelles has many histories of families in the area, and she told us that many came from Durham where they had previous mining experience.

Finally **Mr. Windecker** arrived and told us a fascinating story about gypsum mining in the Cayuga area. He told us that a mine shaft was right behind the house of the Van Hugos. It may have been one of the openings to the **Merritt mine**. A house was built for the boss from U.S., Mr. Edward Dodd. The company sold house and lot when the mine closed. The workers were told that they could remain in their houses as long as they liked, but they couldn't sell them and no one else could move in. Until about ten years ago many of the old miners' houses were still standing along the river, but kids torched one after another. Since this area was so extensively mined, a lot of sinkholes are found all over. One day Mr. Windecker's father was walking to the P.O. to pick up the mail and he didn't notice that a cave-in had occurred. He fell in.

There was a **Windecker mine** away from the river, but because of its inland location with no railway or boat transportation, the mine had to close. At the **Sutor estate** was a mine, but they mined clay for the manufacture of bricks. At the Fisher property on Fox Road, right next to the **Anthony mine**, were different mines belonging to the **New England Company**. He said that transportation closed the mining in the area; after barges were no longer used, they used to hand load wagons and unload them at Cayuga. It was difficult, expensive and non-competitive. Donkeys were used to transport the gypsum, and later, when the mines were closed, the donkeys were let loose to roam around and fend for themselves. They did a lot of damage in the area, especially in the farm fields. It was an enjoyable meeting and we all thank Betsy for her hospitality and the delicious food and drinks.

On the way home, some of us dropped in at the Cayuga Museum to see an exhibit of the late **Thomas Kenyon's** paintings. Many of these paintings depict local scenes and characters such as **Alf Peart**.

On July 20th, our Society was invited to set up a display at the **Cayuga Museum** and be available to talk to visitors. We had a large number of visitors, and many of them had information for us. It always amazes us how many stories about the old gypsum mines are remembered by local people.

On August 2nd to 4th we took part in the annual **Golden Horseshoe Steam Show** at Caledonia. Since we changed our display for this show, we had a lot of work in the weeks prior to this. This year only Mike O'Byrne, Ilse and Jean were available. Mike helped us set up and stayed with us for two days. We could not have done it without your help, Mike, and we thank you very much. We used Mike's mine model which drew a lot of attention. Mike also had on display an old mining helmet, battery and belt to hook the battery onto, which he has donated to the Mines Society. Thank you, Mike, for the donation; we hope they will end up in a future mining museum. The Steam Show was a great success. Many local people came forward with information, nearly overwhelming us at times. We met the owner of the old Carson or Garland gypsum mine, and he invited us to come out to have a look at it, but not much is left to see.

# THE WINNER of our MINERS' COOKBOOK CONTEST

*Cathy McArthur.*

Congratulations, Cathy.

You have won a pendant made of pink gypsum and set in silver or gold, your choice.

## FIELD TRIPS AND RESEARCH

By Jean and Ilse

Owing to the bad weather this summer, we had no field trips. The wet weather in spring produced a bumper crop of weeds so high and healthy that it was nearly impossible to get through. It also produced swarms of biting insects, which, combined with the hot humid weather this summer, made hiking very undesirable. However, we are looking forward to starting our outdoor meetings again in October.

One of our members, Seraphine DaSilva, when working at one of the farms south of Cayuga, reported that he found a lot of gypsum and round sinkholes in the fields. One afternoon, Ilse drove out to visit him. She was very surprised to see many collapses and the outlines of the old tunnels all over the fields. She saw two mine shafts and a heap of gypsum where the crushing machine had been located. Even the foundation of the old barn was built with old cement or the forerunner of cement. There were large chunks of calcined gypsum throughout it. The double mine shaft was interesting, with one tunnel running north and the other south. The owner told Ilse she could come back to take pictures once the crop is in. It will be a while since it is soybeans.

Later at home Ilse looked up the lot and Concession number, and was surprised that it was the **Glenny mine**, one of the longest operating mines in the area. We began to research more of our files.

Mary Nelles gave us some background material on the Glenny family. One of the earliest families in North Cayuga Township was that of Robert Glenny and Margaret McClung who settled along the Grand River on the western part of Lot 3, Jones Tract. Robert (born February 21, 1845, died 1914-15) was involved with gypsum mined on the farm in the late 1800's and perhaps early 1900's. His son John Robert (Jack), 1876-1952 farmed on Lot 1, Huff Tract, North Cayuga Township. Gypsum was mined on his farm in the late 1800's.

The history of the Glenny mine is closely tied to that of the Merritt. There are many government reports on the Glenny Mine. **Gypsum in Ontario**, by George E. Cole, contained in the **34th Annual Report of the Department of Mines, Part II, 1925**, indicates that it was located at Lot 3, Jones Tract, N. Cayuga Township. It operated from 1874 to 1892, averaged 1000 tons per year, took up an area of 106 acres, and from 1874-1880, was owned and operated by Mr. Glenny.

G.R. Guillet, in **Gypsum in Ontario**, (Department of Mines, 1964), writes:

*The Glenny mine, located on the south side [actually it was the north side] of the Grand River in Lot 3 of the Jones Tract, North Cayuga Township, it was opened by Robert Glenny in 1874, but may have been operated on a small scale as early as 1850. It was operated by the Grand River Plaster Company from 1880 to 1892, and was re-opened by the Imperial Plaster Company in 1902. It was purchased by the Toronto Plaster Company in 1911, but appears to have been closed shortly thereafter. A grinding mill was built in 1878 and a calcining plant in 1886. The four-foot gypsum bed, located at a depth of 42 feet, was reached by a 300-foot inclined tunnel.*

The **Report of the Royal Commission on Mineral Resources of Ontario**, printed by Order of the Legislative Assembly, 1890, quotes **Robert Glenny**. Here are some excerpts:

*I have been engaged in mining plaster for twelve years. Within the last four years I have been engaged in the manufacture of the plaster. Our works and mine are about four miles from Cayuga. I think it must have been about forty years since that mine was first opened [1850]. The bed of gypsum is about four feet thick, or perhaps a little more.*

*The Grand River Plaster Works have two mines here, the lower being the Merritt mine; the upper we mine till I sold out to them. The Merritt mine is worked on a level drift without any incline; the Glenny is on an incline of 1 in 10 for about 100 yards. The gypsum at the Glenny is about 42 or 43 feet from the surface;*

*at the Merritt it is not so much. The roof is supported with timber, and the whole face is taken as we go; sometimes we leave a pillar.*

*I think the production is upon the decrease. In the last four years about 1500 tons a year have been taken out and disposed of. The Glenny mine was opened about ten years ago, and it was the only one shipping from here then. I understand that many years ago, before the discovery of gypsum in the States, thousands of tons were exported from here.*

*We started calcining and the systematic manufacture of stucco last year; before that some had been done on a small scale. We have one kettle, with a capacity of about 40 barrels, a crusher and a disintegrator, besides a set of stones. The weight of the barrel is about 250 pounds. Our intention is to have it set about the same as the New Brunswick plaster. What we have manufactured has been as white as that made in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and it is finer ground.*

*Our land plaster is sold in bulk, barrels and bags. It goes as far as Brockville to the east and Windsor to the west. I do not know the cause, but think the demand for land plaster is rather upon the decrease. I have been over a good deal of Ontario, and never heard it said that it was not a good fertilizer. It is used sometimes in stables to fix liquid manure. I know of land plaster being imported from Oswego only. It is grey, and I do not think it is as good as ours.*

*The number of men employed during the last three years ranges from 3 to 20. For the last year from the middle of June to October we did not employ any at all, but for the rest of the year we had about 10 men, two of whom are skilled men and the rest laborers. The engineer gets about \$1.55 a day, the laboring men get about \$1.25 and the calciner over \$2....*

*We take out the gypsum by blasting with powder, and it is a poor shot that would not fetch a ton. I understand that \$50,000 is the capital of our company....If the Welland Canal feeder that comes up to the works were made deeper, or a lock put in at Dunnville, it would do a great deal to develop the business. As it now is, it costs too much to get to Lake Erie.*

George Cole, previously cited, states that the Imperial Plaster Co. set up on Lot 3, Jones Tract, the same property as the Glenny and Excelsior mines, from 1902-1910. They erected a calcining plant in Toronto with one ten-ton kettle. An article in the Hagersville Press, March 8, 1906, relates that Mr. C.S. Richards, manager of the Imperial Plaster Company, Toronto, was busily engaged installing a large stone crusher and 36 H.P. gas engine at Gypsum Mines. The company was planning to haul the ore by barge to Cayuga, to a pier to be constructed on Indian Street. The ore would be dumped automatically into tramcars and then railway cars without being shovelled once. A \$50,000 gypsum plant was to be built in Cayuga.

In 1911, the property was taken over by the Toronto Plaster Co. L.H. Cole, in **Gypsum in Canada** (Canada Department of Mines, 1913) reports on the Toronto Plaster Co. as follows:

*The Toronto Plaster Company, Ltd., was organized in September, 1911, to take over and operate the mine and mill of the Imperial Plaster Company, located at Cayuga and Toronto respectively. Work had not been commenced when visited in the autumn, but preparations were under way to begin operations as soon as possible.*

*The mine is situated about 3 miles to the southeast of the town of Cayuga, and embraces probably the property which was operated before by the Glenny and Excelsior mines. When visited nothing could be seen, as the tunnel was fastened up. Several tons of a good white plaster were piled at the mouth of the tunnel ready for shipment.*

*The mill of this company, located in Toronto (King St. W.) will, when in operation manufacture only plaster of Paris. The plant consists of the following:--*

*1-175 H.P. Corliss engine.*

*1-175 H.P. boiler*

*1-10 ton kettle plant complete (Butterworth and Lowe)*

*Sturtevant grinders*

*Permission could not be obtained to see through this plant, so further details are lacking.*

*The Company is now prospecting with a drill in the vicinity of Cayuga, in an endeavour to locate further*

*beds of gypsum of a quality sufficiently pure for the best grades of plaster of Paris.*

Today nothing is left of any of the buildings at Gypsum Mines only heaps of gypsum where the crusher and calcining buildings once stood. The mine tunnels have begun to collapse and are clearly visible. To the untrained eye, they look like shallow ravines, going every which way. In between deep round collapses, the land is certainly unstable and could be dangerous to man and livestock.

## FIELD TRIPS PLANNED

Beginning Sunday, October 10th, we will meet on Powerline Road on the east side of the Grand River (Westcast), opposite Jean and Al's home, at 10 a.m. Bring a camera. WE will meet every Sunday at the same place until weather conditions get too bad. We will go to a different place each time.

*Nov 29/11*

**CHRISTMAS PARTY POTLUCK SUPPER** - On Saturday, ~~December 1st~~, at Kraemers' place, 23 KingsHill Lane, Brantford., at 6 p.m.

## MEMBERSHIP OF GRAND RIVER HERITAGE MINES SOCIETY

As promised, we are publishing a list of our membership, excluding those who informed us that they did not want their names published.

Bemrose, Fred and Jean	6 Horace Drive, Paris N3L 2P5	519-442-3282
Boulaine, Paul and Gloria	48 Palmerston Ave, Brantford N3T 4L3	519-759-4013
Cassar, Mary	Sundial House, 1 Hickory Hollow, RR 1, ST. George N0E 1N0	519-448-3875
Clark, Joe	436 Old Mill Rd., Delhi, N4B 2X7	905-582-0981
Campbell, Roger	103 Silver St., Paris N3L 1V2	519-442-6542
✕ DaSilva, Seraphine R.	1623 Regional Rd. 9, Caledonia N3W 2E3	905-765-8755 Fax 765-8765
Derrick, Norm	16 Broadway St., Paris N3L 2S2	905-442-6913
Farquharson, Jean and Allan	823 Powerline Rd., RR 3, Paris N3L 3E3	519-442-2156 Fax 442-2373
↓ Frishette, Harry	167 Sherman St., Simcoe N3Y 2T2	905-426-0790
Huggett, Dr. Bill and Lille	1577 Elite Rd, Mississauga L5J 3B3	905-822-4558
Jamnik, Dr. Irmgard	Apt 201, 87 St. George St., Brantford N3R 1V5	519-752-6072
Kraemer, Ilse and Sanko	23 KingsHill Lane, Brantford N3T 6A3	519-756-6634
McClenaghan, Theresa	123 Hillside Ave, Paris N3L 3L4	519-442-1689
McBurney, Betsy & Family	RR 1, Cayuga N0A 1E0	905-772-3296
Nelles, Mary	Unit 4, 1 Peebles St., Caledonia N3W 1J6	905-765-2404
Nielsen, Peter	61 Clarke St., Woodstock N4S 7M4	519-537-8210
O'Byrne, Mike	676 Mt Pleasant Rd., Mount Pleasant N0E 1K0	519-484-2795
Parker, Bud	28-279 Sandowne Dr., Waterloo N2K 2C1	519-888-0169
Parkhill, Howard & Gwen	252 MileHill Rd., Paris N3L 3E3	519-442-3514
✓ Peart, Alf and Eileen	RR 3, Caledonia N0A 1A0	905-765-2142
✓ Pringle, Estelle	148 Cleary Ave, Dunnville N1A 1A3	905-774-6148
Quinsey, John	2678 Homelands Dr., Mississauga L5K 1H8	905-822-3932
Topp, Barbara & Family	RR 5, Dunnville N1A 2W4	905-774-4521

**This newsletter is edited by Jean Farquharson. Submissions are welcome. We are not responsible for errors. We are looking for more information about the mining industry in S. Ont. Please send correspondence to: Jean Farquharson, RR 3, Paris, On N3L 3E3. Phone 519-442-2156, FAX 442-2373.**