



THE BEND

REFLECTIONS

Aug 81

OF

Walkerton's Past

BY

The Cordwainer

When Thomas Adair and Kenneth Kemp stood on the clay banks north of Walkerton (where Valleyside Development is now) and looked across the valley at the future site of Walkerton, they were directly above the area that later became Walkerton's famous park of the early 1900's. Right up until some time in 1940, this was the one and only picnic and swimming park in Walkerton, and was a busy summer place (except for the headgates).

Every spring, the town men placed two change sheds by the water's edge and placed the cookhouse under the huge elm trees. Then rope swings were hung from the high elm tree branches. The tap water was then turned on, to flow from the town supply for picnickers. The grass was mowed, the ball diamond, as such, levelled and spring was here.

For the next few months, the hills rang with the sounds of summer fun. A stout wire was strung across the river as a hand-hold, so swimmers could wade the shallows and climb and slide the slippery clay banks to land in the deep hole on the north side of the river. The more daring climbed higher to where the sand swallows nested by the hundreds.

It was "the" spot for church picnics, factory picnics, family reunions, or just a day in the sun. On a nice week-end, it was really crowded. Come fall, the buildings were moved from the flood plain, the water turned off and the swings taken down. Winter was coming.

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SWIMMING HOLES

Long before the days of swimming pools, the kids lived in the water during the hot months, just as much as they do today. No doubt they swam and played under more dangerous conditions than presently, but maybe that added to the fun.

Probably the most popular swimming hole in Walkerton in the 1930's was at the "head-gates." This spot was situated just below the gates that controlled the waters that ran into the mill race above the Truax factory.

On a hot summer day, dozens of kids gathered here. The boys changed their clothes while hiding under the boughs of a large Willow tree, and the girls came with suits already on under their clothes.

It was wonderful, — swim-

ming under the gates, — jumping off the cross beam or diving from the top. The more advanced swimmers made the quarter mile swim to the footbridge by the factory. Another set of gates at the head of the power dam raceway, made a similar swimming hole for the kids at the south end of town.

A less crowded but popular swimming hole for kids of the west ward was along the breakwater behind where Walkerton Motor Sales is now. Many of the braver souls would climb the girders on the west end bridge and then dive in, to swim to the breakwater.

And the "bend" must be mentioned, — that ever popular swimming and family picnic park at the north end of Jackson Street.

The staff consists of 4 full-time and 4 part-time employees under the capable leadership of Mr. Bill Desmond, who has worked many long hours during the months previous to the admittance of the first resident last spring, preparing programs and with the varied aspects of administration.

This capable staff is on duty 24 hours a day, working with the residents during their transition into communal living.

Mrs. Marion Tait, president of the Walkerton Retarded Association for the Mentally Retarded deserves the ultimate credit for her initiative and guidance in the creation and success of Schumacher House. To assist human resources to operate at full potential is the answer to many of today's problems.

The Kinsmen and Kinettes of Walkerton have also worked very hard in the renovations and preparations of Schumacher House. Assistance was also received in the form of a cash donation from the students of Mildmay Public School.

To those who have helped in any way with the promotion and success of Schumacher House, thank you all.

And to you the public, thank you for your enthusiastic support and your welcome to the new residents that was witnessed on Wednesday evening.

Two Hundred At The Official Opening Of Schumacher House

Wednesday evening, October 19th saw the official opening of Schumacher House, a residence for the trainable handicapped in Walkerton.

More than 200 people toured the home between 7:00 and 9:00 p.m., talking with the residents while enjoying coffee, squares and cookies.

The Walkerton Association for the Mentally Retarded were very pleased to see the interest of so many people in this area shown by the turn-out. The residents themselves were totally responsible for the successful evening, greeting the visitors at the door, providing guided tours of the house, and serving a delicious lunch.

The main objective of the program at Schumacher House is to help the trainable handicapped to become assimilated in community living and work, and to help the residents become confident, capable citizens, contributing to society, while enjoying the freedom and benefits it can give.

The term trainable handicapped is used to clarify the possible misconception that Schumacher House includes only the mentally handicapped. Others with physical or learning disabilities are also considered.

The visitors of Wednesday evening, Oct. 19th, would certainly testify that Schumacher House is not an institution, but

a real home, with a warm family atmosphere, very conducive to the personal and social development of the residents.

The home contains about 2500 square feet of living space, including five bedrooms, three baths, a large kitchen, living room and dining room and laundry facilities.

The exterior is now being refurbished and the grounds landscaped to the point that before long, the home will no doubt be one of the area's most beautiful homes.

The residents of the adult training home must be employed in the community. At the present, the Adult Rehabilitation Centre serves as the main employer.