

The Trent Valley Fur Farm

better known as

The Rat Farm

About 1931 Mr. W. B. Powers had viewed the swamp land in Mud Cat Lane with the idea that a gold mine awaited anyone who would undertake to develop it as a fur farm. To him the whole situation and conditions ~~were~~ were ideal for the raising of muskrats. So completely obsessed was he with the idea of such a venture that he "talked it up" to his friends and acquaintances - especially to those possessing funds that needed to be invested.

It is recalled that "one lady drove down from Toronto in a swell big car and demanded to be shown where the proposed fur farm was to be. When she had seen it she was so impressed that when she went back to the city she put \$5000 into the business".

Eventually a Joint Stock Company was formed and land from Lots No. 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 was purchased involving about 375 acres and then work commenced to prepare this property for this business enterprise.

A high tight mesh fence was erected to surround the area. It had to be so erected that a portion of the fence was below the surface to prevent the muskrats from digging their way out.

When this part of the work was done thoughts turned to a place for a maintenance man to live and a small house was put up for him. Mr. Charlie Burd was employed for this job. The work would involve trapping the rats and skinning them and keeping the fence in repair.

In the year 1948 things had slumped to such a state that Mr. Alyea of Trenton - brother-in-law of the founder of the Rat Farm was informed that the whole venture had been a failure and that the "Farm" was being sold for taxes. Mr. Alyea was asked to pay the taxes. Mr. Powers claimed that he and his associates stood to lose over \$50,000 with Mr. Powers himself being the man who had made the major investment.

Probably the depression years and poor management and possibly poaching had something to do with the failure. At any rate the brother-in-law, after paying back taxes, government charges, lawyers fees to search titles, sold the property in 1952 to Mr. John McDonnell. He, also, proved to be a poor purchaser for according to Mr. Alyea he failed to pay principal, interest or taxes so the mortgage had to be foreclosed.

In 1966 the property was again sold to the Moira River Conservation Authority.

To Mr. Alyea's knowledge the shareholders were not re-imbursed and thus ends the story of Thurlow's Rat Farm.