

HISTORY OF KEARNEY (cont'd)

Roads were still very rough, and journeys of many hours were required to reach destinations. Locations were seldom inspected before settlers arrived. I was told of a group of three men who settled near Ravensworth, agreeing when still some distance away, who should have the different lots still open for location.

There were very few horses, mainly oxen. Many of the roads or trails were not wide enough for two beasts to walk side by side. Streams were crossed by fording, as bridges were few. The first comers crossed the Magnetawan on a log, near where the present bridge is, at Ayers Dam.

The bridge at Kearney is the third. The first one was built in the early nineties, the second one was built high so boats with a smoke stack could pass underneath. The present bridge was built in 1908, the year we became a Town. The first covering was of concrete with not very heavy mesh wire for support. The many heavy loads in the last years weakened the top, and the present covering was put on in 1952. With the advent of the automobile people kept asking for better roads, and these have been steadily improved. The Emsdale road was given a hard surface in 1954, quite a change from the trails the first venturesome people used.

Industries at Kearney have always been forest products. The first at Kearney was a shingle mill operated by John Lahay, at a spot just about where Bob Anderson's cottage stands. After the railroad came, McGills built and operated a chair factory. In fact the first load of freight to come into Kearney was the machinery for this factory. Built in 1896, this was destroyed by fire in 1907. There was a small saw mill operated in conjunction with the chair factory, and it was operated by either Munn or Tom McGill for a few years after the factory was destroyed.

Before that Flatt and Bradley had operated at Sand Lake, driving their logs to the Bay. There was also a lumber company, whose name I cannot locate, that cut logs around Sand Lake. The jobber in charge was Mr. Ed Cook. These logs were cut and hauled to the river or lake, and in the spring driven to Katrine. It is a recorded fact that Mr. Cook received \$5.00 per thousand feet for logs delivered at the mill.

Later the Booth Lumber Company drew square timber over the height of land from the Pine River, and drove their cut down the Magnetawan to Georgian Bay. Shortreeds took over the site of the chair factory after the fire, and operated until the early thirties. Brennans moved their mill from Rainy Lake in Algonquin Park to Kearney in 1912, and for several years cut pine on the upper reaches of the Magnetawan, and drove them to Kearney. This mill was again moved to Searchmount in 1918. In the early twenties the Shane brothers from Eganville built several kilns, and for a number of years produced charcoal on the site of the old Brennan mill. In 1939 Peter Thompson and Sons bought the old Shortreed mill, and operating on limits north and east of Kearney have been one of the larger producers of hardwood lumber. Merrit Brothers of Grimsby obtained cutting rights on part of the old Brennan limit, and hauled logs by truck from north