

# Tributes to the Lovely Townships of Grey and Bruce

A Series delivered over C F O S by Kris Morris of Victoria and Grey Trust

## AMABEL TOWNSHIP

What makes Amabel Township foremost among the colourful Townships of Grey and Bruce? It is because of its unique place names? Its fascinating folk lore? Its combination of farm and resort areas or just because it is jumping off place for the entire Bruce Peninsula. Probably it is a combination of all these that leads us today to begin our exploration of the Amabel Township.

The Township with a wonderful past and a promising future. Let's take a tour of this delightful Township. We can start at the Village of Allenford where we find ourselves 750 feet above sea level and climbing rapidly. Allenford, as settlements go in these parts, is among the oldest. It is a charming place over a century old but what a shame it has lost its Indian name as has so many of our early towns and villages throughout the Twin Counties. Who today knows this peaceful Amabel community was once called "Driftwood Crossing", after the annual currents that was broken branches and uprooted trunks clog the usually peaceful stream that runs through the area.

Let's move on into our Township, past green and rolling farms into Park Head and the tracks of the Canadian National Railway. Here we see a cluster of homes and lo and behold a library. This is of some historical importance. After all, over a decade before Amabel became a separate Township in 1870 this quaint village was close to the home of the first white settler on the Peninsula lands that had recently been conveyed to the Crown by the Saugeen Indians.

Let's go a few miles on north and find the bustling Village of Hepworth. This is a main intersection where we, as travellers, have to make a decision, westward

we would slide down on to the sandy beaches of Lake Huron - northward we can go on up and up to the main trunk of the Bruce Peninsula. But why not stay here first and let's find out how Hepworth got its name. A good English name. But, as it seems, it is a case of one letter too many. It turns out that in the early days of its settlement, a local minister who was asked to bestow a name upon a new community, thought of the founder of his Church, John Wesley and his birthplace, Epworth. His fellow villagers, ignorant of the Methodist history accepted the name as they heard it pronounced and Hepworth it is today.

But this is not the end of the charms of this Ontario village. Deep down under the community's collective foundations runs a hidden river. Residents of the Village will tell us that late at night on a warm summers eve, they sleep the best of all the people in Ontario, lulled into dreams by their very own special deep flowing, but never seen stream. No wonder so many prefer this place with its one letter too many and its friendly people.

How about heading west? It's getting late and maybe we can watch the most glorious sight to be seen in this the lovely County of Bruce. As we drive away from Hepworth into the ever flattening farmland across the Sauble River, we hurry for the sun is beginning to set and we want to find a place for the night among the many fine motels and resorts that grace the summer wonderland that is Sauble Beach.

Now, out of our lodgings and onto the Beach. Miles of white sand and swooping sea gulls are to be seen as we watch the sun set over Lake Huron. A glory of red and pink that slowly diminishes as we walk along the quiet beaches of Sauble. Surely there are no finer

beaches anywhere in the world.

Next day we leave by way of the sand dunes as we head out north. The dunes of Sauble. For naturalists they mean wild flowers, rare orchids, lady slippers, unusual birds and waterfowl. A quick visit to the park at the Falls of the Sauble River renews our old acquaintances with the loveliest cascade on this side of the Peninsula. We see green crashing water descending the rocks of the Falls and in the chasm below pick out familiar ferns and flowers. How uncrowded and natural this lovely glen seems.

Continuing north we mark off the great number of inland lakes of Amabel Township. They are five great ones - Chesley, Meriville, Gould, Spry and

Boat and so many smaller ones. But these are not merely landlocked bodies of water. Once they were vital links between Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. Once Indians and then the Fur Traders used them as an escape route between those two great stormy waterways so they could portage to safety instead of going all the way north and around the tip of the treacherous peninsula. Boat Lake you saved many a voyageur from a long and dangerous voyage - bless you.

Now north again and we skirt the busy town of Wiarton. We will save that attractive haven for the tourists for another day. Let's go on up to Oliphant - what a harmonious name. Little do we know that this small costal hamlet, named after Laurence Oliphant,

who in 1854 secured the Bruce Peninsula from the Indians, was once marked out as a major city. Opposite are the fishing islands rich in folklore and one rich in the fishing industry. But Oliphant never became a major metropolis as the founders had hoped for. Today it is the cove of the Peninsula. A retreat for summer cottagers, year round residents, artists and nature lovers.

We have not seen all of Amabel Township, There are many enjoyable days ahead to explore this loveliest of Townships, to fish at sparkling trout streams, walk on silver beaches and ponder wonderful history. But, we know, that Amabel is a place that will draw us back again and again.