

Scenic Area Once Bustling Community

by DAN O'REILLY
Sunday drivers, weekend tourists and nature lovers who flock to the forks of the Credit area every weekend may not know that at one time this village was a bustling industrial centre.

Ralph Beaumont, 21, a third year archeology student at the University of Toronto has written a knapsack history of this region. It is entitled: *Cataract and the Forks of the Credit, A Pictorial History*.

Mr. Beaumont has just published the book and within the last two weeks more than 500 copies have been sold.

It is on sale at stores and other businesses in the area, and the buyers are both long time residents and city people out for a weekend drive. While long time inhabitants will be familiar with the history, the book may be a bit of a shock to people who are weekend visitors.

PLEASANT SURPRISE
Actually the shock may be more of a pleasant surprise. Besides being a concise history of the Cataract and the Forks of the Credit, the pamphlet could be considered an illustration of how nature was able to overcome the carelessness of man.

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About the turn of the century the site of a large industrial complex which included mills, quarries, railroads, a bottling works and one of the first-if not the first-electric power generating stations in Ontario.

Rumors of gold first attracted settlers to the region, but it was the large quantities of limestone, sandstone and freestone which led to the creation of a series of quarries in the 1880's.

In his book Mr. Beaumont says 800 men were employed by the quarries. In 1886 the Ontario Parliament building was built with stonework from the Forks.

PHOTO SERIES
A series of pictures showing the scars of the quarry work are presented in the booklet. Today nature has almost completely healed the region which is covered by trees and bush.

As Mr. Beaumont says the industrial activity has disappeared—all of this is gone, yet

the crumbling remains are often discovered by enterprising hikers on treks through the area.

One of the crumbling remains the author mentions is a limekiln located near the Bruce Trail. A large chimney and a rockwall stand no more than 50 feet from the CPT track which winds its way through the valley. However trees and bush completely hide the structure.

Besides presenting a short history on the quarries the author touches on the area's other industries.

ELECTRIC COMPANY
One of the most interesting chapters deals with John Deagle and the Cataract Electric Company.

Deagle built an electric power house at the Cataract in 1899 and supplied electricity to Erin and Orangeville for a number of years.

A long news account of Mr. Beaumont's book would only deter the reader. The best advice is to purchase the booklet.

As the author says himself, the booklet is not "a voluminous blow-by-blow account of the Credit Valley's history—it is a leisurely tale of two sleepy villages nestled

within the valley, their rise to prominence at the turn of the century, and the gradual decline that all similar rural settlements have experienced over the past fifty years."

Why and how did Mr. Beaumont write the book? Well for one thing, he's an armchair author. "I've been hitchhiking and exploring this area since I was 14," he said.

When he was in his teens he discovered the lime kiln mentioned earlier in this story.

BECAME FASCINATED
At first he began compiling research for a man who is writing a history of the Credit Valley Railway. "But I became fascinated with the history of this area," he explained.

He started working on the pamphlet about a year ago—spending all his spare time with research. While some of his material came from archives and municipal records, most of his information came from old timers in the area. "I'd simply go up and talk to them," he said.

The author is very modest about his achievement—he says he has written longer essays at University.

If you're interested in the

Forks area, buy the book, read it and then go looking for the spots the author describes, then re-read the book to discover all the places you missed.

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