



# GRAND RIVER HERITAGE MINES SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

August/ September/ October, 1994

## OUR MYSTERY TRIP, by Mary Cassar

On Saturday, May 21st, society members parked their cars on East River Road and set off on our long-awaited hike into the unknown. Sanko, attired in sturdy hiking boots, with binoculars ready, and full of energy, led the way past the Green Lane gypsum site, down a very steep embankment of dolomitic shale, to the Grand River. We were in the proximity of the area where we completed our trek last fall.

Sanko told me that Green Lane received its name when gypsum fell off the carts in the early 1800's, making the grass lush and green due to its fertilizing qualities. We walked in a northeast direction along the shoreline. Enroute to the mine with the oak door, we found an outcrop of cauliflower calcite. My beautiful sample sits in my mini-museum at home. Bill Simon, one of the hiking leaders, told me that such cauliflower calcite turns purple under fluorescent light. We discovered outcrops of dolostone, white gypsum and selenite. On the other side of the river, we could see a square cut in the river embankment. This could have been for a barge to pick up gypsum, but we have no recorded proof. Many pioneers never bothered to write anything down, and other old records could have been destroyed in the great Paris fire.

Gushing springs, singing toads, and birds - what a beautiful place! We saw an old sinkhole, tufa outcrops, and a long trench with the talus piled up along it. On the west side, we could see Charlie Lander's house and the three mine tunnels. We continued along an old road, or was it a train track? Again, no records available? This is real industrial archeology!

The open gypsum mine trench continued and actually became deeper and more narrow. Was this too an unregistered mine or what? There was a huge man-made hill, dolostone mostly, with old trees growing on it; a cedar and deciduous tree had grown up entwined around each other. And more talus heaps! We wonder if a title search would yield more evidence about this mystery land. Dan Jamieson, a devoted naturalist from Six Nations, pointed out many medicine plants.

Now we had reached the area of the mine with the oak doors. It had collapsed, some timber still sticking out of the cave-in, with a deep sinkhole nearby - very dangerous. It is said the main mine tunnel went under Dr. McAlpine's home. When the railway was built, they encountered cave-ins all the time, but had no idea it was from an old mine tunnel.

We looked over to the west side, at Madden's old farm where there were very suspicious looking foundations - another mine? We found where the first telephone cable crossed the river right there, with the sign still on it. What a walk back into history! An old cattle tunnel, now filled in was pointed out to us by Bill. We walked back to the cars for lunch. In the afternoon Bill Simonp took over. He guided us over the land that belonged once to his grandparents and told wonderful stories about old railway crossings and stops for the Blue Lake/Ancaster Lines. We saw old ruins of the steam power house used for the railway. Close by we discovered a cave with a huge roof overhang, enough to shelter twenty people. There was a rare rock formation with some conglomerate and stalactites and stalagmites - not nearly expected in this area.

This was a rough hike, but now we were due for a lesson in geology from member Joe Clark. Done we slithered the steep embankment to the water's edge. Lumps of blue clay and chunks of silt were collected. Joe explained that compacted silt will not shine when rubbed, but clay will. In the silt we noticed dark and light layers, representing summer and winter deposits. I took the compacted silt rock home with me, hoping to be able to carve something out of it. After this hike we were all tired, but agreed that we had a wonderful and informative time together.

# WHAT WE DID THIS SPRING

by Ilse Kraemer

This has been a busy spring for the G.R.H.M.S. and even more so for the outdoor research group. Besides exhibits in Waterloo University, Springtime in Paris and the Paris Historical Show, more displays are yet to come. Jean is working to set up a 3 month display in the Edinburgh Square Heritage and Cultural Centre Caledonia. I am working on a display for the annual Steam Show in Caledonia. We appreciate the help given by some of our members, and could use more!

**MINES, MINES AND MORE MINES!** This seems to be our theme. Sanko and I did a lot of research around the Cayuga mine, and were very successful. Our trip on the 23rd of July will be to this area, including a look at the rare Carolinian plants and trees around the mine. Much older mines around the Cayuga Mine are waiting to be explored.

It was planned to do a lot of archaeological research on the remains of the old corduroy road near the Cleator mine, but with all the heavy rains this spring, the water level was much too high to get even close to it, so we had to be satisfied with videos and photos. A few weeks later the research group discovered there were more mines and old roads south of Whiteman's Creek.

The trip to Brantford's Northwest, near the T.C.G. gravel pits, was a success. We investigated gypsum deposits south of Powerline Road, and found collapsed airshafts, tunnels and a lot of tufa formations. South of the 403, we reinvestigated the disappearing stream. A crystal clear, heavy flowing stream forms a large sort of whirlpool which disappears into the ground. I found two more disappearing streams in this area, and believe there are more to be found. With the Salina formation underlying this area, we encounter the so-called "Swiss cheese" or karst phenomena, where small and large caves are formed underground by erosion of the gypsum beds.

I was asked to join the Cainsville Landslide Committee, representing the G.R.H.M.S. The mines society started to investigate this area - natural history, geology, history.

On June 26th, we met at Blue Lake with 15 divers from the Bell Dive scuba divers. Mike, the leader of this group, told us what they found underwater. They took several underwater photos. They found a cache of old wine bottles, a full length of train track around and across the lake, all submerged in deep water. The water depth extends to about 45 feet deep. At one spot, they found what appears to be a shaft or tunnel, which we had heard rumours about.

From 1903 to 1916, Blue Lake had a modern plant erected nearby where Portland cement was manufactured from the marl found in the bottom of the lake. One may still find the remains of the large plant, laboratory, workers' cottages, silos and a crisscross of rails. Today one needs a lot of imagination to visualize this.

What is marl? A natural cement, so fine grained that it is used for cosmetics. A small plant, stonewort or Characeae, which grows in the water, actually produces marl out of the limestone found at the bottom of the lake - a somewhat complicated process. It is still being produced and has a depth of about five feet.

At the right side of the laneway to Clemons home, we saw a very tall plant in bloom. Since none of us had never seen it before, we took pictures of it and videotaped it. We were lucky that Gwen Parkhill, an accomplished colour photographer, was with us. She set up her equipment to catch this plant on film. Professor Larry Lamb confirmed the rarity of this triannual flower. Irmgard, one of our members, found the name, Green Gentian or Swertia Carolinensis. Only a few people are privileged to see this flower blooming, said Prof. Lamb. More research in this area will be arranged.

Nearly every Saturday or Sunday alternating, the field research group will meet at 23 King's Hill Lane. The monthly or bi-monthly outings for the other members will be :

**July 23 - a trip to the Cayuga Mine. Meet at Ilse's.**

**August 28th**

**September 24th**

**October 30th**

**November ?, if weather allows.**

Many exciting places have to be explored. Kathy will ask members where they want to go and when. She prepared a list of all these places. Also the divers want to do more diving for us.

We now have business cards. Ask if you are interested. They are 5 cents a piece.