



GRAND RIVER HERITAGE MINES SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April, May, June 2000

Tid Bits, by Jean Farquharson

By the time you receive this newsletter, the Brantford Lapidary and Mineral Society's 28th **Annual Gem and Mineral Show** will probably be over (Sat., April 1 and Sun. April 2 at Paris Fairgrounds).

As usual, we were invited to present a display.

This year we have highlighted material on the Holstein Mine (Caledonia) and the Cayuga/Edwards mine. Ilse again has a display of her Indian artifacts and Cathy has brought her Manitoulin fossils, petrified dinosaur bones and gypsum samples.

Thank you to all who volunteered displays and/or their time at our booth.

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Ilse Kraemer, Mike O'Byrne, Al and I attended the **Grand River Watershed 3rd Annual Heritage Day Workshop and Celebration** on February 21st at the Cambridge Arts Theatre. It was organized by the Heritage Working Group of the Grand Strategy and sponsored by the City of Cambridge and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Networking is an important part of this workshop, and we made some good contacts regarding the sandstone/limestone mines along the Grand River at Blair. We also met some of the guest speakers. Dr. Garry Warrick,

professor at Wilfred Laurier University, Brantford campus gave a stimulating talk about the History of Archaeology in the Grand River Watershed and its conservation and protection by various communities along the river. He is very interested in our society.

Paul General of the Six Nations Reserve spoke on a history of the area from The Six Nations Perspective.

Mark Conway, an urban planner, outlined the Galt City Centre River Integration Project. He had several innovative ideas about creating a conceptual master plan that can be adapted to other communities.

When we divided into groups, we discussed ideas we had heard from others attending that could be implemented in our own communities, and shared local plans that we felt were worth telling about. We also discussed various ways we can establish linkages up and down the river.

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My husband Al and I attended the March meeting of the **York Grand River Historical Society**- an Irish Night. Their project on posting signs along the trail which is being developed along the lock and canal system was being finalized, and the designs and wording of the signs was discussed. Fred Thompson has done much of the work, and should be congratulated. Perhaps we should work with them to provide signs to indicate where some of the mines were located.

On March 23rd, I attended Brantford Collegiate's **Geography Fair** with a display showing a history of the gypsum mines in the Grand River Watershed from 1822 to the present.

Most of the displays were prepared by OAC students and the fair was organized and run by two students. Their teachers stood by and evaluated them. It was a valuable learning experience for those who participated. All day, students from other geography classes came in and examined the displays, asked questions, and filled in forms. We may be invited back next year.

Contributions

Our contributors this month are our old faithfuls - Ilse and Mike. Remember, folks, if you have a contribution, however short, please submit it to your editor. We always appreciate your participation.

Coming Events

The first **field trip** of the year will be held on **April 29th at 10 a.m. at Peter Piovaty's** property on Mile Hill. We will continue to examine the area - ran out of time last fall. Meet at Parkhill's on Mile Hill. To assure being included, call Ilse at 519-756-6634.

New Members:

We welcome some new members to our organization - Daryl Coulson, Lou Knechtel and family and Don Knechtel.

SHOW AND TELL! Now is your chance to participate in our exciting program!

Our **annual meeting** open to the public takes place on **April 15th**, at the (1 p.m.) Enniskellen Lodge Building in York. The building is located on the east (left) side of Highway 54 slightly south of the hall where the York Grand River Historical Society hold their meetings. There will be an **election of officers, adoption of the Constitution and a program**. We will discuss field trips at this meeting. The program will be **Show and Tell**. Members and guests are asked to talk about some aspect of mining or milling gypsum along the Grand River. Some of our members live on or near places where mining took place, or had ancestors involved somehow, or just found some interesting story, object, picture, etc. Please come and share with us.

The Shifting, Whispering White Gypsum Dunes of New Mexico, by Ilse Kraemer

This article was compiled from many sources - the internet, newspaper articles and tourist information.

White Sands National Monument in the Tularosa Basin in the northern Chihuahuan Desert in New Mexico. One part is occupied by the National Defense Department and used as a missile range testing ground. Before World War II this land was used for the grazing of cattle and

goats. Prospectors hunted for a variety of minerals in the mountain ranges. Some small scale mining was carried out. Earlier, as the Spanish colonized the area, immigrants collected salt in the Tularosa Basin lake beds. Before the Spaniards, native Americans roamed the basin and the mountains.

Today it is protected under the National Parks system. White Sands is one of the world's great natural wonders. Nowhere else in the world exist white glistening dunes of gypsum. These great wave-like dunes of gypsum sands engulf 275 square miles of desert. The white dunes are in a constant state of change - growing, cresting, slumping. Slowly but relentlessly the sands driven by strong ever-blowing winds cover everything in its path.

This is a waterless beach which was formed by gypsum or hydrated calcium deposited at the bottom of a shallow lake about 250 million years ago.

Normally rivers would carry dissolved gypsum into the sea. But here no rivers drain the Tularosa Basin. The water and gypsum are trapped deep within the basin. As the water steadily evaporates, the dissolved gypsum is deposited on the surface. Here the forces of nature take over and convert the gypsum into sand grain size white gypsum particles.

Dunes are formed of different sizes and shapes. The relentless wind is driving the white sand everywhere. Everything in its path is covered.

But amazingly plants and animals can survive in this harsh climate. Small

animals have evolved a white colour that camouflages them in the white sand.

One can see animal tracks, such as foxes, rabbits, and coyotes. During the day they sleep deep underground in their cool dens. Only in the evening, when it is cooler, will they come out.

Even some plants have adapted to this condition of dryness and extreme heat. The yucca is one of them. But even these plants have to struggle by growing fast in order not to be buried by the sands.

White Sands is visited by at least 100,000 people a year. There is a 12 km. Scenic drive leading into the heart of the dune field. For hikers, there is a 1.6 km. Self-guided tour.

I know now where I would like to go next winter!

Mining Lore, by Mike O'Byrne

The saga of the Silver Islet Mine is quite remarkable. The massive silver deposit for which the mine achieved fame outcropped on an island. The island was about 80 feet in diameter and was about a mile off Thunder Cape (not far from Thunder Bay, Ontario). The island at its highest was about 10 feet above the level of Lake Superior.

The mine was noteworthy for several reasons. The island mine site was so small that the area of the island had to be increased to accommodate the mining plant. Massive timber cribbings were built such

that the area of the island was increased by tenfold, sufficiently large to accommodate a head frame, engine house, dormitories, and a further ten or so large buildings. In spite of the massive construction of the timber cribbing, it frequently had to be replaced as a result of the ferocious storms hatched by Lake Superior.

The mining plant was fueled by coal, shipped in by boat, and it was crucial that there were sufficient stockpiles of coal on hand particularly during the transitions between freeze-up and the breakup of ice on Lake Superior; otherwise steam could not be produced, pumping would cease and the mine would flood, which it did on a few occasions.

In addition to producing silver, the mine produced combustible gas, very unusual for a hardrock mine. Miners working 360 feet below the lake bored into a crevice through which water commenced flowing.

One of the miners equipped with a carbide lamp investigated the crevice more closely and was taken aback when a 40 foot jet of flame shot down the drift.

One of the partners in the promotion of the mine, Captain Frue later achieved fame with his invention of the Frue Concentrator.

The first ore body mined was shaped like an irregular pear and yielded over \$2,000,000.00.

The second and bonanza deposit was shaped like an inverted cone with a base about fifty feet wide and bottoming out at about 1,200 feet below. The deposit varied in width from 5 to 10 feet.

A winze (internal shaft) in the middle of the deposit was sunk through 60 feet of solid native silver. Up until 1872 the ore produced from the mine averaged \$1,322.44 per ton.



REMINDER

Annual fees were due in January
If you have forgotten, please
RENEW NOW before you forget.

This newsletter is edited by Jean Farquharson. We are not responsible for errors. We are looking for more information about the mining industry in Southern Ontario. Submissions are welcome. Please send correspondence to Jean Farquharson, RR #3, Paris ON N3L 3E3. Phone 519-442-2156. Fax 519-442-2373. Membership requests, contact Ilse Kraemer, 23 Kingshill Lane, Brantford ON N3T 6A3. Phone 519-756-6634.