

THE WALKING QUESTION MARK

Newsletter of the Grand River Heritage Mines Society

Always Digging For Answers

May-June-July-August 2004

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IN THIS ISSUE

Coming Events P. 1
Annual Reports P. 2
From Your President
Bits and Pieces P. 3

From Your Editor

Report on:

York Grand River
Historical Society

Articles

**Prehistoric mining in the
Canadian Rockies,**

by Mary Cassar **P.4**

Speculators Along the Grand

by Jean Farquharson **P.5**

COMING EVENTS: Mark your calendar!

**Grand River Heritage
Mines Society Annual
Meeting - Saturday,
April 17, 2004, 2 p.m. at
Edinburgh Square,
Caledonia. Election.
Guest Speaker: Cheryl
MacDonald, historian and
author, will speak about
the Gypsum Industry in
Haldimand County.**

Don't Forget: Pay Dues!

Don't Miss This! Mike O'Byrne, in his inimitable style, will speak at the Brant Historical Society meeting on May 19 at 8:00 p.m., at 57 Charlotte St., Brantford, on the gypsum mines. Guests are welcome.



So far, most of this year's projects are jointly planned with York GRHS:

Join us at a joint meeting with York Grand River Historical Society, April 20 at the Parish Hall in York, 7:30 p.m., Bruce Hill will speak on *Shipping on the Grand River, Part 2*. He is asking people to bring any information on ships and goods that passed through the canal system. Bruce wrote his thesis on the Grand River Navigation Company. He will be giving a tour down the Grand to participants at the Canal Conference at St.Catharines in early June. YGRHS's markers will be installed along the river.

On May 18th York GRHS have invited us to come and hear two surveyors, Tony Roberts & Des Rasch, talk about *Augustus Jones*. This will be at 7:30 at the Parish Hall in York. [Note: Our feature article is on Augustus Jones.]

The York Grand River Historical Society has invited all Mines Society members to participate Saturday, June 12, at 1 p.m. in their Railway Day at the Grand Trunk Station in Caledonia. It begins with a pot-luck lunch, followed by Show and Tell, and then by tours. Richard Chrysler has offered to take small groups through his basement where he has set up a model train display of the TH&B line. He gave a wonderful slide presentation in February. We may have some other tours. Bring any information you have on the early railroads to show and talk about. Sign up now. To register, phone Rae Tomlinson at 905-692-3812.

The Golden Horseshoe Steam Show on Civic Holiday weekend, July 31, Aug. 1- 2. York Grand River Historical Society has again invited us and the Grand River Trails Association to share their building with a display. Volunteers are needed. Contact any member of the new executive.

From Your President

2004 saw a maturation in this eleventh year of the Society. To date, we have located and catalogued the majority of mines in the Grand River Valley, with only a few to check out. This means that our hikes - a long-time tradition - will become opportunities to re-visit familiar places - such as the two of Barker's Bush and Cavan's flats areas near Paris which hikemaster Cathy MacArthur led this past year.

The launch of our first book, *Hérons and Cobblestones*, last spring proves that members work well in documenting the natural, archaeological, historical and industrial heritage of an area. This book is a fundraiser for our next one, which will describe all of the known gypsum mines and businesses within the Grand River watershed.

Secretary Mike O'Byrne continues to work with the County of Brant Heritage Committee to establish our first significant public monument to gypsum mining - a plaque and an old mining cart to go near the site of Ontario's first gypsum mine, near the forks of the Nith and Grand Rivers in what is now downtown Paris. The mining car was a donation from the Canadian Gypsum Company near Hagersville.

New alliances keep forming with other groups committed to preserving the human and natural heritage of the watershed; we continue to liaise well with the York Grand River Historical Society, the Ontario Historical Society, Paris Museum and Historical Society, Brant Museum and Archives and Princeton Historical Society. During the summer, the heritage groups of Brant united to form the Brant Heritage Association, whose unity among other things includes mutually lobbying the county for continued heritage funding, formulating a common heritage policy for the County of Brant, as well as sharing our experiences with each other. This movement is pretty critical - municipalities elsewhere in Ontario tend to slash their heritage funding as their first cost-cutting measures - even though such funding usually constitutes less than one percent of their budgets.

To date we received almost \$500 in funding from the County through this group (see Al's treasurer's report for details on our other grant, which we independently applied for from the Ministry of Culture.) I sit on the BHA's executive as recording secretary, with Bob Hasler (Paris Historical Society) as President, Bob Glass (Brant Historical Society) as Vice President, and Heather Russell (South Dumfries Historical Society) as Treasurer.

We've had public meetings and speaking engagements throughout the year, with many of them involving co-founder Jean. These include a shared meeting at the Princeton Museum, where there was a talk on the Drumbo Mines and on modern mines rescue techniques; Jean's talk on the industrial heritage of gypsum mining at the annual Grand River Conservation Authority annual Heritage Day workshop, held this year in Paris; Jean spoke to students at Wilfrid Laurier University, Brant Campus, and to a the Kiwanis Club in Paris, among other locations. In May, Mike O'Byrne will describe the history of local gypsum mining at the Brant Historical Society meeting.

We also participated in the launch of the new video about the history of Brant County by enterprising youth who run Pixel Dust Studios - the same group which received funding from the Trillium Foundation to do similar video histories of the Counties of Haldimand and Norfolk. It was launched at the Sanderson Centre in Brantford on January 31st, with about a dozen history and heritage groups from Brant and the Six Nations setting up displays.

Our displays continue to attract attention, not only at the above-mentioned events, but others such as the Paris Cobblestone Festival, the Caledonia Steam Show, and the Council Chambers in Paris.

We've even entered cyberspace with the following website for those with access to the internet, at: http://ca.geocities.com/gr_heritage_mines_society. The site includes maps, photos, history, information about the society and links.

We have concerns about the failure of people to renew their \$5 membership fees – only about one dozen to date – although this could be because people often wait until the annual general meeting to pay up. If so, be sure to see membership secretary Ilse Kraemer at the start of this year's meeting, which is on April 17th at 2 p.m. at the museum in Edinburgh Square, Caledonia.

In addition to listening to popular Haldimand historian Cheryl MacDonald share her discoveries about gypsum mining in her native county, we hope to have a serious visioning session on April 17th. That is: What do you like about the Society? What do you dislike? Where do you want to see your membership money go? How would you like to become involved with future activities, whether they be hikes, the quarterly newsletter, perhaps in future publications and exhibits? What changes in direction do you desire? Looking forward toward seeing you on April 17, I remain, yours truly, Diane Baltaz, President

Bits and Pieces From your Editor

We have just completed our eleventh year. Your President has covered the major events of the past year in her report. What the Society does in the future depends upon **all of us, not just a few of us**. Diane has stated that we will be looking at our annual meeting at the future of the Society and asking **what people want**. This also involves **what people want to contribute**. It means **involvement and dedication**. If it is left to a few, then the Society may fail.

We have accomplished a lot over the years. Personally I have found these eleven years a learning experience and a lot of hard work. But I have found that what you get out of something depends upon how much effort you put into it. I have learned a lot of history. I found it has been a challenge to learn the many computer skills - word processing, scanning, accessing the internet, - to prepare a newsletter, our book, the website, and a talk using PowerPoint. Some of them were not my favorite things to do and were challenging. Sometimes the efforts were appreciated by members; sometimes not.

Now it is someone else's turn. I would like to step down as newsletter editor after 11 years. I wish to devote my time to compiling into print the history of gypsum we have collected over the years. I am willing to continue editing the newsletter for 2004, and after will contribute articles. I am willing to train someone to take over the process. I am willing to also do some of the work required to keep the Mines Society functioning, but will not devote as much time to these things as previously - only those tasks that will help us accomplish this basic goal of our organization - of preserving a history of the gypsum mines and mills and the people involved, and passing this on to future generations. To accomplish our goals, we also need to continue our fund-raising and obtaining grants for our projects.

If GRHMS is to succeed, we need new blood in the society, a broader distribution of tasks among members, and an organized approach. Especially, I feel we need more active members in Haldimand

County to mark some of the gypsum mine and mill sites with historical plaques, and to record their fascinating history in booklet or a book form.. We need to strengthen our links with other historical societies we can work with to accomplish our goals. If every member will go out and recruit some new energetic members, we can accomplish these aims. As a founding member, I believe this should and can be done.

York Grand River Historical Society is also going through some growing pains right now. Members must decide whether to get involved with the financial commitment of leasing part of the Enniskillen Lodge and restoring it, or to continue renting space and bringing in guest speakers, dedicating plaques, and possibly publishing some of the local history. This is for members to decide on Tuesday, April 20th in the Parish Hall, York. Those of us who are members should be sure to attend. Their membership has been growing owing to Rae Tomlinson's enthusiastic leadership.

Your newsletter editor and Past President, Jean Farquharson.

Prehistoric Mining in the Canadian Rockies

by Mary Cassar

Recently my cat Benny and I were enjoying a cup of tea and an Equinox article about chert. On one of our hikes several years ago, one of our Mines Society members found such a piece, but this chert about which I write was mined 8,000 years ago. Small band of native people climbed to a high, windswept ridge above Alberta's Crowsnest Valley and confronted a limestone crust, a yard deep in places, blanketing the sought-after chert.

The early stone workers were persistent in getting this flint-like material to make tools. They pounded and pried the limestone loose with billets, antler wedges, and hand-sized hammerstones. Their hard work was rewarded by beds of maroon, pink, amber, yellow, green, gray, brown and translucent white chert. But uncovering the prize was the easy part. Chert is harder than steel and modern day archaeologists can scarcely break off samples with a geologist's hammer. What's so amazing, then is that these early stone workers, who laboured 3,000 years before Neolithic Britons built Stonehenge, quarried thousands of pounds of chert before the mine was abandoned a thousand years ago. On one part of the ridge, a ledge 20 feet deep was carved out of bedrock over the years. The discarded limestone now lies in orderly piles at the foot of the ledge, near Turtle Mountain, much like the slag heaps of a modern mine.

Further exploration with an archaeological consulting firm culminated in a dig of a series of small test pits in an adjoining gully. Much to the archaeologist's delight, assortments of fire-broken rock were found – evidence that the prehistoric miners were not only quarrying chert but also treating it with heat to make it sharper and harder still. Siltstone of excellent quality and black chert abound in the river gravels in the nearby valley but obviously these miners of old were die-hard perfectionists!

Next time, stay tuned for the adventures of prehistoric miners in the Kootenays and the Top of the World.

SPECULATORS ALONG THE GRAND

By Jean Farquharson

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” When Ontario was being opened up to early settlers, some who had investment money or were trained in such skills as the law or surveying, were presented with situations and political contacts which enabled them to acquire large tracts of land. They profited by selling lots off these properties to incoming settlers struggling to survive. While carrying on these transactions, some were greedy and took advantage of others to build their own family wealth and estates, no matter what the consequences; some were just trying to survive in difficult circumstances; some, although good businessmen, were humane and were dedicated to bringing in settlers and helping them to get started in their new communities in Upper Canada which was quickly growing out of the wilderness. One of the more dedicated developers was Hiram Capron, who had a dream to open up the village he named Paris. Fortunate in his investments, he spent some of his own money to build roads and bridges, and helped out the settlers in hard times when they could not make their payments. Other speculators who were only out to make a fortune for themselves and their families, felt no obligation to the struggling pioneers, and some even foreclosed on them. Times and people have not changed much, have they?

Several speculators were involved in the development of the gypsum industry. Their stories will give you some of the flavour of the times.

Augustus Jones

One important figure in the early development of the province was Augustus Jones who was born of Welsh descent about 1764 in Dutchess County, New York. His grandfather had emigrated to America prior to the American Revolution and settled on the Hudson River. Augustus studied to be a land surveyor and when qualified came to Lord Dorchester, Governor General of Canada, with a recommendation from Mr. Colden, son of the Governor of New York State. The Jones family came to Upper Canada after the American Revolution. Augustus came first in 1784 to select lands, after which came his father and brother Stephen. Jones settled on a 300 acre allotment on Lake Ontario west of Stoney Creek.

With the influx of settlers, townships had to be surveyed as settlers moved in. Jones served as a chain bearer on surveys made along the Niagara frontier. He may have assisted military officers in carrying on surveys along the Niagara frontier before 1788. Augustus was a captain in the West Lincoln Regiment and an influential man throughout the whole District of Nassau. He came into the confidence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, who was making great efforts to open up the province by building roads and encouraging immigration, and he became Simcoe's right hand man as the Deputy Land Surveyor of Upper Canada in 1791. Jones kept notes of all lands and resources while he surveyed. He had a keen eye for anything that might bring wealth to him and his friends.

In 1793, he was ordered by the Lieutenant Governor Simcoe to survey from Burlington Bay to the Thames River for a military highway to be built as far as what became London, which Simcoe decided was going to be the capital of Upper Canada instead of Newark. He later changed his mind again and selected York, and Jones surveyed the townsite.

Toward the end of March, 1793, Jones set up his theodolite at King's Landing and headed west. Donald Smith, in his book, *At the Forks of the Grand*, recounts the story:

"Then in a straight line, through the melting snows of forest, swamps and oak-dotted plains, and over the rolling hills and thawing streams, he and his four men slowly forced their way. Steadily they pressed on, averaging a little less than three miles a day, and leaving behind them a double line of blazed trees. When twilight came, they would make a small shelter and build before it a roaring fire; and having eaten their supper, would try to drive the damp chill from their legs and feet.

"On the morning of April 5th, they broke out of the forest and looked down upon the valley of the Grand, probably at the point a little south of the present high level bridge. The snow was melting and the river was in flood, and it flowed heavily along between the high and wooded banks with many soft murmurings and splashes.

"Jones used his theodolite to pick out a birch tree on the far shore as a mark for the continuation of the survey, and then he and his men descended the steep bank. When he saw that the river could not be forded, he sent two of his men downstream in a vain search for a better place to cross: and directed the others in the building of a raft.

"On the following morning, they loaded their equipment onto the raft and pushed away from the shore. The current carried them downstream, but they safely poled their way across the perilous waters.

"Before continuing on his way Jones explored the land around the Forks. On the hill overlooking the mouth of the Nith, he noted some deposits of gypsum, and the points at which the rivers could be dammed for water power... Before leaving the Forks, he made the following comments in his field note-book:

The land descends a little on the top of the bank of the Grand River, hence descends a steep bank to the river. The distance across the river, taken from the high ground, is 10 chains 80 links across to the white birch tree on the bank. This line crosses about 30 chains below the forks. Narrow flats up the river on the right shore – back of which is high dry plains – up near the forks the shores rise high, where appears to be a great quantity of Plaster of Paris – began at the bank of the river as of birch tree – dry land, small oaks.

"Then he and his men continued on their way up the steep hill towards the present reservoir and on toward the Thames. Their voices died away: and in the silence the rivers murmured as before. But the blaze-marks on the trees remained, gleaming bright in the dark forest."

By 1794, Dundas Street or the Governor's Road, as it was called had been carved out as far as the Grand. Jean Waldie reported in *Brant County: The Story of Its People*:

"In 1795 he [Jones] was instructed to survey Ancaster, Thorold, Grantham, Beverly, Southwold, Whitby, York, Scarborough, Pickering, Capt. Brant's land and Lake Simcoe. In 1798, his assignment covered Burford, Lake Shore Road, Humber to Head Lake, Grand River, Uxbridge, Gwillimbury and Yonge Street lots for French immigrants, and in 1799, to examine settlements in Hope and Haldimand and survey Humber mill reserve, Yarmouth Gore, Newark and Stamford."

Jones helped to survey the Six Nation lands along the Grand River and explored the Grand and Thames Rivers. When he surveyed Dundas Street, the Six Nations Indians still held most of the land along the Grand which had been given to them by Gov. Haldimand for their loyalty to the British. But Joseph Brant, their chief, felt that it was to the best interests of his people to sell off some of the lands to settlers who would come in and become model farmers for his people to emulate. The money from the sales would be invested in annuities to support his people. He sold off large blocks and pieces, some of these sales without the approval of the Six Nations Council. Because the lands could not legally be sold, Brant granted leases without consulting the Six Nations Council. Large blocks were sold off to speculators and eventually surveyed into townships and sold off to the many settlers coming in.

In 1834, Augustus Jones surveyed North Cayuga Township, Haldimand County, and, instead of payment in money, took land from the government. The Jones Tract is located on both sides of the river. His friendship with Joseph Brant allowed him to acquire much land. Much of the land on the east side of the river was mined for gypsum, including the village of Gypsum Mines, after it was sold

by Jones to the New England Co., Teasdale, Glennie, Thompson, Anthany and Merritt.

He probably felt the government owed him the land grants because he was not well paid for his surveying. According to *The History of Haldimand County*, "He received 64 pounds, 17 shillings, for surveying the shore of Lake Ontario, running the front line of a row of townships from the mouth of the Trent River to Toronto, July 1 to September 17, 1791. That was 79 days and as well the party had to be kept in working order with axe men, chain bearers, and provision transports, and also the men were expected to keep records, journals, field books, etc., which necessitated working in the evenings as well as by day. In a letter to the Land Board, Nov. 1790, he complains of not receiving compensation since November, 1789."

In 1804, as he made only 2 shillings 4 pence a day as a surveyor, Jones asked Joseph Brant for a land grant to help support his family because he had married Tubbe-nah-nee-quay, the daughter of an Iroquois chief, and had several children to support. The 1200 acre strip Brant granted extended six miles eastward from the Grand. The agreement reads in part:

...and whereas the said Augustus Jones has from time to time heretofore rendered services to the said Six Nations Indians and for their benefit and advantage has expended of his own property, and having been long connected with them by marriage with the daughter of one of our principal chiefs by whom he has several children, for all of whom we wish to provide; the Six Nations Indians by the said Joseph Brant ...have granted, demised and leased and let unto him...all that certain tract or parcel of lands...and assigns from the day of the date of these presents for and during the full end and term of Nine Hundred Years...Yielding and paying therefore yearly and every year on the first day of January unto the Six Nations or their agent, for the time being, one Pepper Corn, if same shall be lawfully demanded...

When the Council discovered this transaction after Brant's death, they were dismayed, but their protests had no effect. Jones later sold the part of the property that is now in the town of Paris to Hiram Capron, founder of the Town.

Jones lived for many years at Stoney Creek, but in 1818 moved to his property called Cold Springs east of Paris. Jean Waldie reports that family tradition tells that he lived "in state" at Cold Springs, "keeping his servants, his carriage, his coachman and his valet." Jones had nine children. The boys were: John (who studied surveying with his father); Henry; Joseph; Peter; Augustus Jr. who acted as his father's assistant and thus acquired a knowledge of surveying; Mary, Katherine, Lucretia, and Sarah or Sally. His son, Peter Jones, used to follow the road from Cold Springs to Davisville, where he was converted to Christianity. Davisville was a village set up by Chief Davis, who was very religious. He started a church and a school there. Peter became a Wesleyan Methodist preacher and missionary who was famed for his translations into Ojibway. He lived with his English wife, Elizabeth Field, in a beautiful house, Echo Villa, at Cainsville, east of Brantford. He was well known in Hagersville in the early days. His son, Dr. Peter Jones, Augustus' grandson, practised medicine in Hagersville.

According to local historians, Augustus tried to build a mill at Cold Springs but there was not enough water power to make it functional. He eventually went bankrupt before he died. The family are buried in a plot in Brantford.

Benjamin Canby

One of Augustus Jones' friends in the Niagara area was Benjamin Canby. Canby was a tanner by trade, and originally from Philadelphia. He did business for some time at Queenston. In 1805, he leased from Joseph Brant a 600-acre strip that now lay within the present boundaries of Paris lying between Dundas Street and a line running east and west through the Forks, and that included "the plaster bed at the Forks of the Grand River, formerly leased by Captain Joseph Brant as agent of the Six Nations Indians, for the

term of 99 years, and subsequently leased by said Brant to one Benjamin Canby." Canby subsequently sold the lease of the gypsum beds to George Hamilton, founder of the City of Hamilton. The first settlers in Paris, the Holme family, Christopher and William, bought Canby's 600 acre strip of land and settled there. They leased the plaster beds from George Hamilton and sold land plaster as a fertilizer to the early settlers of the area.

The former seems to be the only fling Canby had investing in the plaster beds, although there was much activity in plaster in Haldimand County. Canby was described in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Counties Haldimand and Norfolk*, as "thrifty, energetic and far-seeing, and although a Quaker, not overly scrupulous in his dealings." About 1810, he arranged with Captain John Dochstader to purchase 19,500 acres in what became the Township of Canborough for \$20,000, to be secured by a mortgage on the property. Dochstader had been given the property by Joseph Brant in 1784. Brant surrendered the land to the government, and a patent was issued in Canby's favour, of which, "in some irregular manner, he managed to get possession, and refused to execute the mortgage as agreed upon, or to pay the money." Dochstader had arranged this deal to support his Indian children, but apparently they never received a penny from Canby for the 19,500 acres of land.

Many of the settlers of Canborough Township were Americans who came with Canby just before the War of 1812. "Canby's anxiety to keep all the land in his own hands seriously retarded the improvement of that township." However, he laid out Canborough Village on the Talbot Road and named Canborough Township after himself. He opened up Darling Road, named after his nephew. Many roads crossed at Canborough village and three railways crossed the township. The first mill was built there by three brothers named Smith. Before they built the mill in Canborough, settlers had the choice of carrying their grain to the closest mill many miles away at Niagara or grinding their own corn in a primitive way. Canby bought the mill from them in trade for land. By the 1870's Canborough Village had a population of about 100 people. A relative, William Fitch, was one of Canby's heirs, and carried on a large business, a mill and a store, at the village for many years. Today, it is a small name on the map where many roads meet.

Sources

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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. **The deadline for the next newsletter is August 30th, 2004.**

Please send correspondence to Jean Farquharson, RR # 3, Paris On N3L 3E3. Phone 519/442-2156 Fax 519/442-2373. E-mail: <allanf@golden.net>. For membership inquiries, contact Ilse Kraemer, 23 KingsHill Lane, Brantford ON N3T 6A3. Phone/Fax 519/756-6634.
