

September 4, 2012
Revised October 15, 2012

Anne Collins
Planning & Information Management Supervisor, Parry Sound District
Ministry of Natural Resources
1350 High Falls Road
Bracebridge, ON P1L 1W9
Telephone: 705 646-5553
E-mail: Anne.Collins@ontario.ca

Dear Ms. Collins:

Re: Portage at Proposed Hydro-electric Generating Station at the Bala Falls

Summary

This letter details some of the historical evidence that a historical and traditional portage has existed, as it does now, along the south side of the north channel and north falls in Bala. This is from both of the following:

- First-hand accounts in the published books of the history of Bala.
- Nearby YMCA Camp Pine Crest which is primarily a canoe tripping camp, as they have been using the Bala portage every summer for over 100 years for their regular canoe trips for their children summer campers.

Furthermore, this letter shows that the current location of the portage, south of the north falls, would have always been the location, as it is the flattest, shortest, least rocky, and most direct route between the Moon River and Lake Muskoka (Bala Bay).

That is, the current location of the portage is the historical location, and this portage has been in continuous use for more than 100 years – since before the Crown owned this land.

The Ontario Public Lands Act requires that land owners ensure that portages on their land not be obstructed. As the Crown is the owner of this land, the Crown is obligated to ensure that this portage is not obstructed. As the generating station proposed in May 2012 would obstruct this portage, this proposed generating station cannot be allowed to proceed. Note that:

- 1) The Public Lands Act does not allow for the obligation to continue to provide a portage to be transferred to other nearby land owners.
- 2) This obligation to continue to provide a portage applies to any future owners of this land, regardless of how this land may be disposed of.

Further detail is provided below.

Detail – Historical Evidence

Thank you for your letter of August 23, 2012, I would like to respond concerning the evidence of a historical portage south of the north falls.

- 1) I believe there are a total of three books written specifically about the history of Bala, and I have reviewed them all for references to the portage between Lake Muskoka (Bala Bay) and the Moon River, as summarized below.

Note that all three of these books were referenced in the proponent's 2009 environmental screening report Appendix C8 entitled "*Heritage Impact Assessment*". Copies of the pages referenced below are included as an Appendix to this letter.

- a) *Early History of Bala*, by Frederick William Sutton, published soon after the author's death in 1967. The author was born in 1884 near Bala, and moved to Bala in 1899, his information of this period is therefore first-hand.
 - On page 7 is an anecdote that shows the locals were in close communication with the native people. For example, the locals would clearly know where the native people would portage.
 - On page 12 it is noted that M. S. "Sam" Hurling owned the boat livery and this was adjacent to the boat portage. And this building needed to be moved when the rail line through Bala was built.
 - On page 16 is a photograph of Sam Hurling's boat livery, this is clearly the current Purk's Place in its current location, beside the rail line. Note also that as the highway bypass had not yet been built, the land to the right of the boat livery is quite level – that is, it is a far more desirable path for a portage than the north side of the north falls at which the rocks rise substantially above the water level.

That is, this book provides a first-hand account that the portage was on the south side of the north channel and north falls, and that the portage was there before the rail line was built. And there is only one portage, so the same portage would have been used by the native people.

- b) *Bala, an Early Settlement in Muskoka*, by Bob Petry. The author was born in 1921 and when the book was published in 1998 he had been in Bala every summer of his 77 years except for four. His first visits were to his Grandfather's cottage in Bala, which was built in 1898, so he would have both first-hand knowledge, and knowledge directly from his Grandfather.
 - On page 46 it is clearly established that:
 - The boat livery is on the island between the two falls (that is, the south side of the north falls).
 - "*From Bala's beginning, this was the location of the main portage from Lake Muskoka around the falls, to the river below.*"
 - That the railway was completed through Bala in 1907, and that the boat livery was at the main portage and that it had to be moved closer to the north falls (that is, slightly downstream along the north channel) due to the construction of the railway.
 - That the boat livery was owned by Sam Hurling (since 1905 or earlier), then John Hamill (beginning in 1907), then George Adams (beginning in 1920), then Mack Cunningham (beginning about 1939).

- On page 47:
 - It is stated that after Mack Cunningham's ownership, the boat livery is called Purk's Place, and the accompanying photograph confirms:
 - This is now called Purk's Place, which is on the south side of the north channel.
 - They have many canoes.
 - A business card shows that "Mrs. M. S. Hurling" is the proprietor of the "Portage Boat House" and that they rent boats by the hour, day, and week.
- On page 49 it is confirmed that "The portage ... was adjacent to the North Falls".
- On page 50 is a photograph taken from beside the current Purk's Place docks. It shows:
 - The bridge over the north channel before the highway was widened, and Carr's Arcadian Ice Cream Parlour is past the road bridge, on the north side of the north channel (while the first floor was built in 1910, the second floor was built sometime after 1916 and before 1924 and the entire building demolished as part of the highway bypass construction and road widening after 1954).
 - In the foreground (along with a canoe) is shown the perfect portage landing of gently-sloped dirt shoreline with no rocks, which is still there today.
- At the bottom of page 99 is a photograph that shows that even when the Bala No. 2 power station was south of the north falls (from 1924 to 1972), there was room on both the south and the north side of it for the portage to continue to be used.

That is, the portage was always on the south side of the north falls, as it is today.

- c) *Bala, The Way It Was*, by Bunty and Lorne Jewitt, published in 2005. The book notes that at Bala's 125th birthday in 1993, the authors "*were awarded certificates naming them as being Bala's historians.*" They and their ancestors have been in Bala since before 1905, so the information in this book is authoritative.
- Page 3 notes that the south falls were created through blasting, sometime before 1873.
 - Page 4 notes construction of the railway line through Bala began in 1906 and was completed in 1907. It also notes that the highway bypass was completed in 1965.
 - Page 28 notes "*... built their own church on the portage below the South Falls in Bala, calling their Presbyterian Church, the Burgess Memorial Church.*" The Burgess Memorial Church building (it is no longer a church) is opposite Purk's Place, on the south side of Bala Falls road. That is, it is south of the north falls on Burgess Island.
 - Page 89 confirms that the boat livery was between the north and south falls.
 - The photograph at the top of page 180 is taken south of the north falls, at the Moon River end of the portage. It would have been taken before 1924, as the Bala No. 2 generating station is not there, and the highway bypass is not there. This photograph therefore confirms it was common to launch canoes south of the north falls, and that the portage route to Bala Bay was not steep.

That is, all of the three historical books about Bala confirm the portage has always been on the land south of the north falls, and that it has been in continuous use as a portage

since before the Crown owned the land (the land was conveyed to the Crown on April 26, 1929, from the private company Bala Electric Light and Power Company, Limited).

- 2) Camp Pine Crest is a YMCA children's summer camp located in Torrance, which is a few kilometres from Bala. In the words of their Director, they are "*primarily a canoe tripping camp*".
 - a) For over 100 years, they have regularly used the portage at Bala to reach or return from Honey Harbour on Georgian Bay and all other locations to the west.
 - b) Their camp sessions are typically one to four weeks in duration, so every summer their weekly canoe trips expose a great many children to canoeing and show them first-hand the historic importance of this form of travel and transport. Canoes and portaging are classic Canadian heritage, and denying this, or changing the portage to be along a paved asphalt road, past clothing stores, and through a busy parking lot (as the proponent has suggested) would quite lose the experience of portaging.
 - c) The Director knows that other children's summer camps in the area, including Camp Wenonah and Camp Crossroads also regularly use the Bala portage.

Detail – Land Use

- 3) In addition to the above historical evidence that the portage has always been to the south of the north falls, a hundred years ago the portage would have been important, as it is today.
 - a) The map shown in Figure 1 below is dated February 26, 1929. An enlargement of the area of interest is in Figure 2, and this shows:
 - That the entire east end of Portage Island was used by the C. P. Railway Summer Train Station. People would arrive by train, and either continue to travel by car, or go down from the train platform to the Town Docks on Bala Bay to continue to travel by steamer or other boat.
 - The Bala No. 2 generating station is shown on the Crown land south of the north falls (it had been built five years earlier), clearly there is enough room for the portage to continue to be used as there is adequate room both to the north and south of the generating station (which was there from 1924 to 1972).
 - b) Figure 3 is a photograph looking north along the railway line. Vehicles on the left would pick people up from the train, or people would walk down the ramp to the right to the Town Docks.
 - c) Figure 4 is a photograph looking north across Bala Bay at the Summer Train Station, showing the ramp down to the Town Docks and a steamer docked there. In contrast to the busyness of vehicles, trains, and steamers occupying the east end of Portage Island, in the foreground at the left shows Divers Point, undeveloped as it is today.

That is, the portage would have continued to be on the south side of the north falls, as the land use on Portage Island (vehicles, trains, and ships docking) would not have been compatible with portaging. The area around the portage was relatively undeveloped so there would have been no reason to relocate the portage to Portage Island any time during the last 100 years.

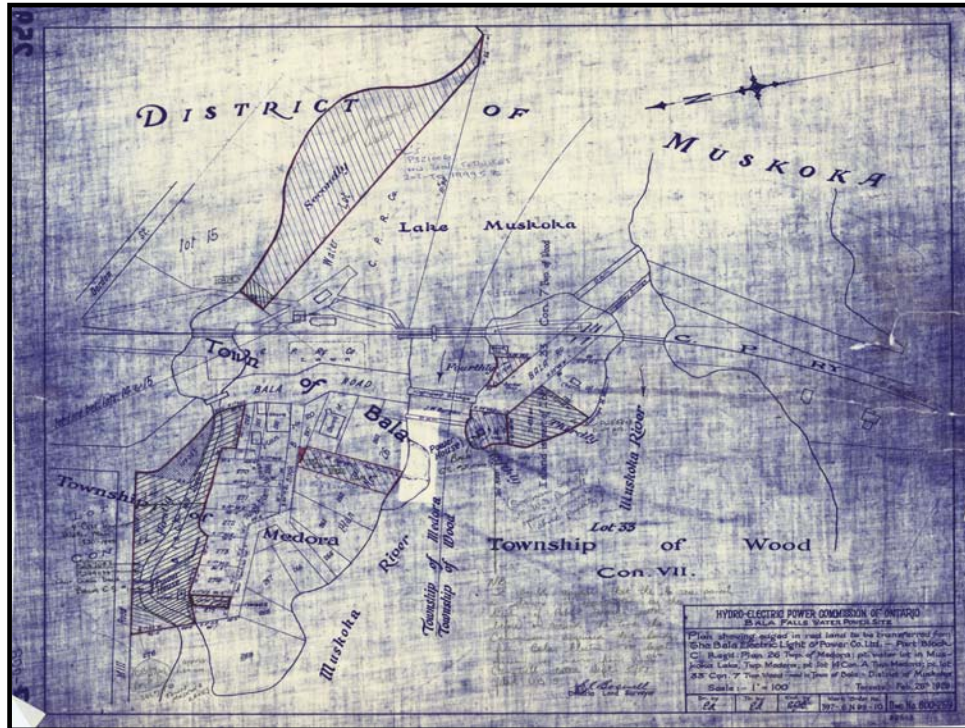


Figure 1 – Map dated February 26, 1929 when land and the generating stations owned by the Bala Electric Light & Power Co. Ltd. was transferred to the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario (north is to the left).

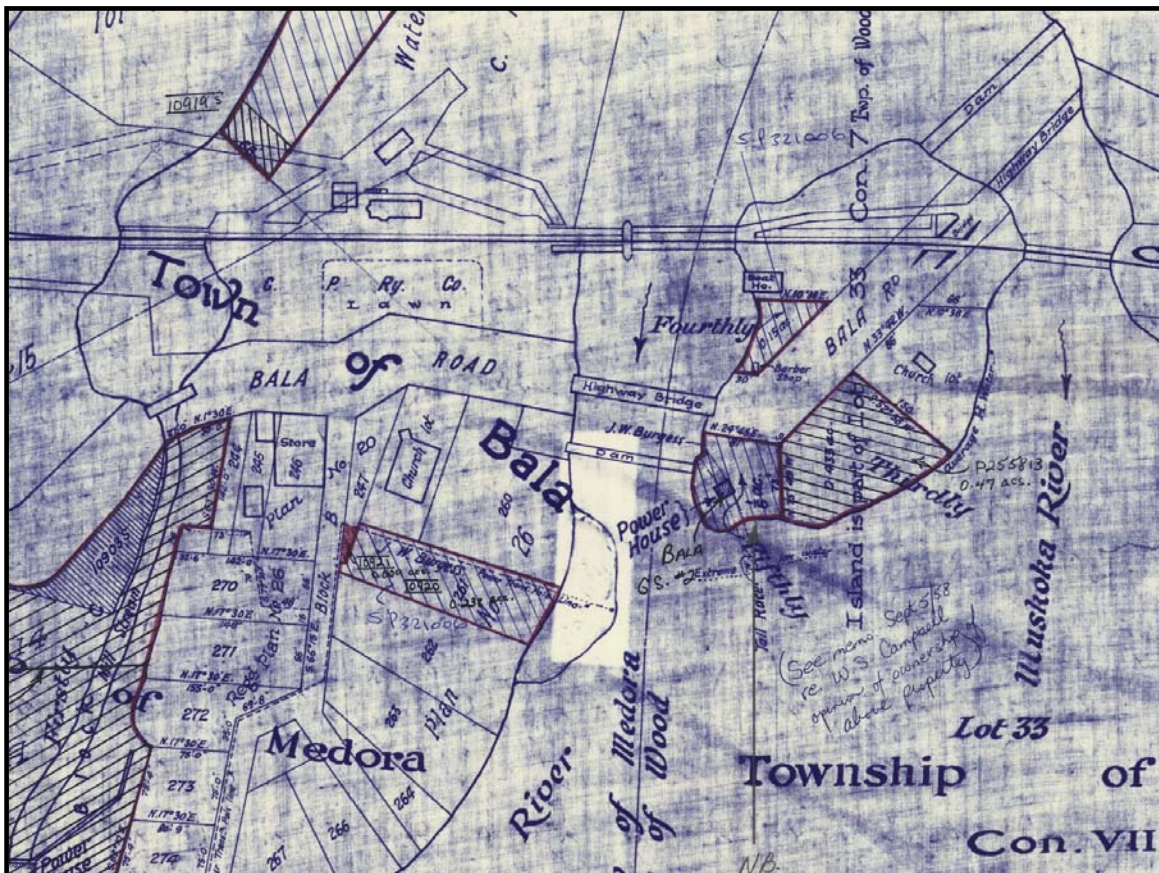


Figure 2 – Enlargement of centre of above map, showing the current “Don’s Bakery Parking Lot” (the east end of Portage Island) marked as “C. P. Ry. Co. Lawn”, and the ramp down to the Town Docks on the Bala Bay side above it.



Figure 3 – Bala Summer Train Station, Town Docks are down the ramp to the right, the current “Don’s Bakery Parking Lot” is to the left. From Archives of Ontario, taken by John Boyd in 1916.



Figure 4 – Bala Bay, taken from the south dam. Divers Point is to the left, and past it across the north channel is the Bala Summer Train Station. Town Docks are to the right of that, with a steamer docked. From Archives of Ontario, taken by John Boyd in 1916.

Detail – Terrain

4) The following comments relate to the lines drawn on Figure 5, which is a recent aerial photograph of the Bala north falls and surrounding area.

a) The current portage route is the line adjacent to “1”, which:

- Is the shortest route.
- Does not require travelling along roads or adjacent to cars.
- Minimizes the need to walk on paved or rocky surfaces.
- Has portage points that are at gently-sloped dirt shorelines with no rocks.

In summary, this is the most desirable route, and the one that would be naturally chosen, especially given that before the highways and bridges were constructed or improved, this route would have been even flatter.

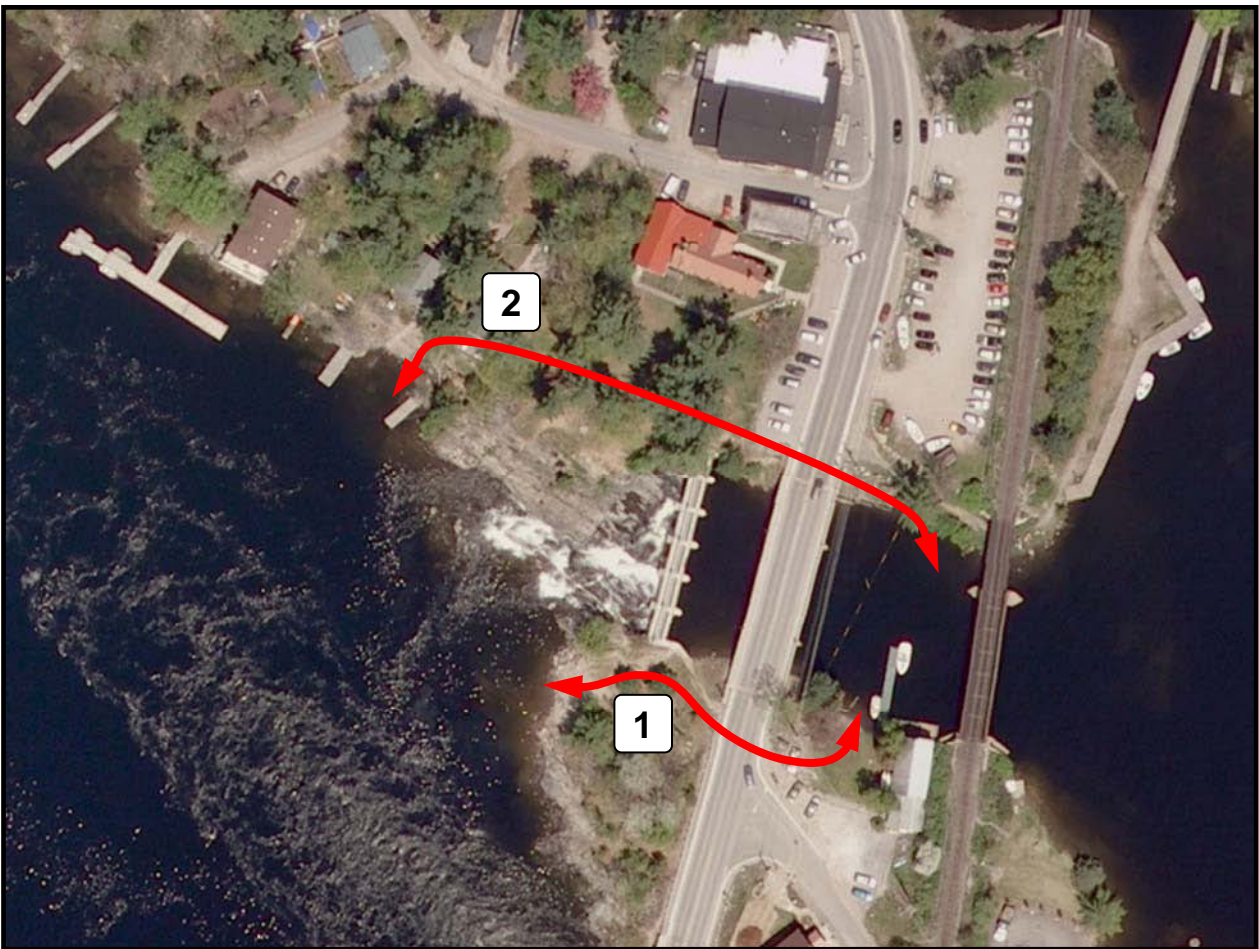


Figure 5 – Recent aerial photograph showing current portage path (1) and the route to the north of the north falls which would not have been a portage (2).

b) Some have asked if the portage could have been on what is now called Portage Island, such as along the path adjacent to “2”, which would have all been undeveloped land a long time ago. This route would have been:

- Much longer, as it would need to go north of the steep and rocky area north of the north falls (since portaging involves carrying heavy packs and canoes, and the footing would always have been difficult in this rocky area).

- Undesirable, as it would require climbing over the high rocky area north of the north falls.
- Difficult, as the shoreline along the north shore of the Moon River is primarily rock and steep, which damages canoes and is difficult for launching / loading canoes.

That is, the logical place for a portage would always have been where it is today; south of the north falls, and specifically not on the north side of the north falls.

Detail – Origin of the name “Portage Island”

- 5) Given it is clear the portage was south of the north falls, some wonder why Portage Island (which is on the north side of the north falls) is so named.
- a) The south channel was created by settlers blasting out rock before 1873, to increase the flow to the Moon River to reduce spring flooding of Lake Muskoka.
 - b) The watershed upstream of Bala is over 5,000 km² and extends more than 100 km east of Bala to the current Algonquin Park, so boat travel through Bala would have been extremely important, as it would be the only practical way to get people and goods from this huge area out to the Moon River, Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, and the Great Lakes.
 - c) Therefore, the portage at Bala would have been the most important feature in the area, and a natural name for the island closest to this vitally-important portage would be Portage Island.
 - Similarly, many towns and cities have a Church Street – not because the Church is a street, but because that street is the closest to the Church. So Portage Island in Bala was never the portage, it is simply the closest island to the portage.

Therefore, it is more likely that Portage Island is so named as it was the closest island to the portage, not because it was the portage.

Conclusion

It is clear that the current portage path south of the north falls is the historical path, both due to published historical evidence, and because it is the logical path given the terrain before the highway was built.

This letter shows that when the land south of the Bala north falls was conveyed to the province on April 26, 1929 the portage already existed on said land. Section 65 (4) of the Ontario Public Lands Act requires that portages not be obstructed.

As the owner of said land, it is therefore an obligation of the Crown to ensure that this portage not be obstructed.

The proponent for a proposed hydro-electric generating station at the Bala falls has presented a new proposal, dated May 2012, which would completely obstruct said portage. This new proposal must therefore not be allowed to proceed.

We therefore request that the Ministry of Natural Resources:

- 1) Inform the proponent that their new proposal is unacceptable as it would obstruct said portage.
- 2) Ensure that any future use or development of said land, regardless of the ownership of said land, not obstruct said portage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mitchell Shnier".

Mitchell Shnier, on behalf of SaveTheBalaFalls.com

Cc: A. Garcia-Wright, Director, Environmental Assessment Branch, Ministry of the Environment, Agatha.GarciaWright@ontario.ca

EARLY
HISTORY
of
BALA



by

Frederick William Sutton



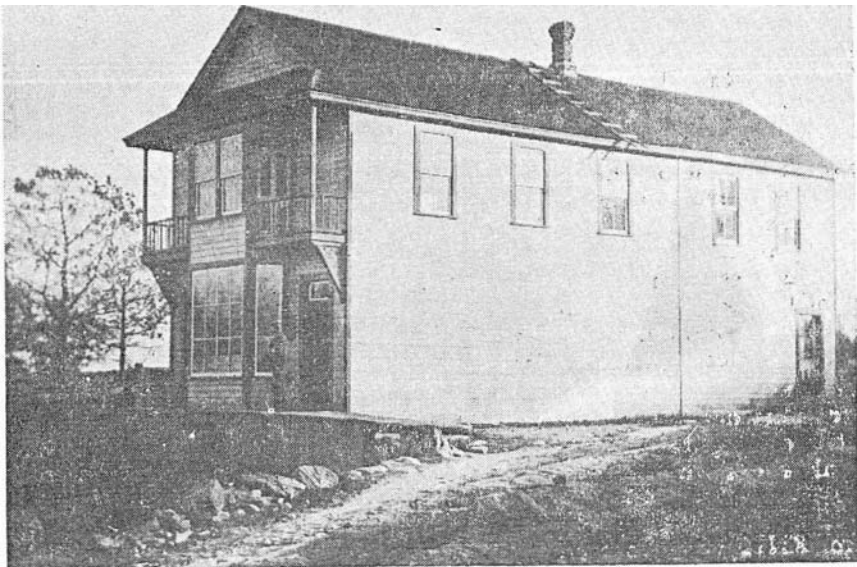
THE AUTHOR

Frederick William Sutton

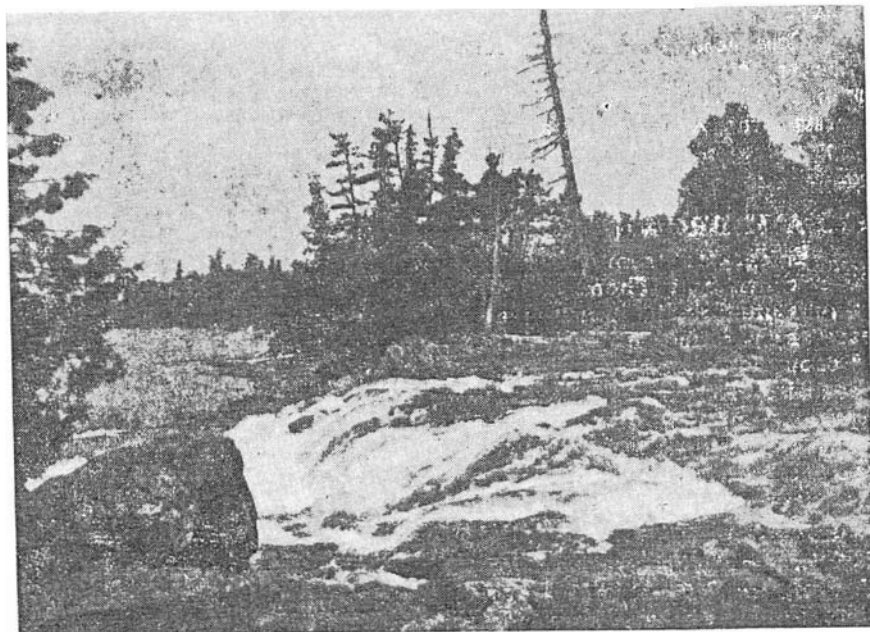
EARLY
HISTORY
of
BALA

\$2.00 PER COPY

Herald-Gazette Press
BRACEBRIDGE, MUSKOKA, ONTARIO



THOMAS W. BURGESS' ORIGINAL STORE



AN EARLY PHOTOGRAPH OF BALAFALLS"

vided a fair wind, the raft was abandoned and Dad rowed home half frozen to find Mother crouched in a window where she had waited for hours.

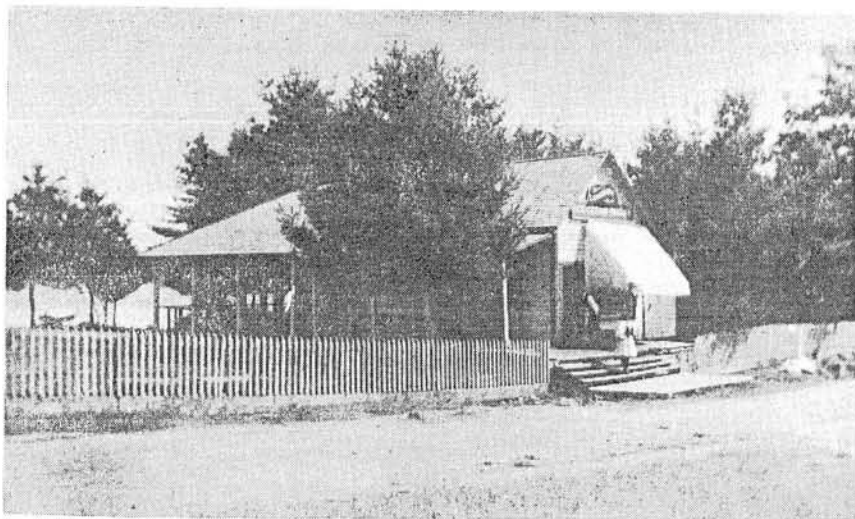
Pioneering was hard on men but harder still on women left so much alone in the bush. Early reading had filled their minds with dread of wild animals and wilder Indians. I can imagine my Mother's perturbation when, while alone, an Indian called and asked for the Boss. Mother of course said, he will soon be in; the man seated himself just inside and said he would wait. Hours after, when Dad returned, it transpired the Indian wanted to borrow a gun. What a quandary! Not wishing to make a bad start by offending a native, the gun was lent and the folks went to bed thinking they had seen the last of their gun. Morning came and lo! the gun and a hind quarter of venison were hanging in the porch. A life long champion for the Red Man was won.

Our family moved into Bala in 1899 and opened a General Store. Communication was through the mail only and was decidedly slow. By December 1901, Dad started subscriptions and let contracts for the first telephone line to connect with a line operated by the Great North-western Telegraph Co. from Bracebridge to Port Sandfield. Telephones were used mainly for the transmission of telegrams, substantially aiding our business people.

From 1886 until his death, Dad was a faithful correspondent to Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Orillia weekly papers. My scrapbook contains thousands of clippings from his pen, much of it in the form of verse under the nom-de-plume "Muskoka Bard." To show that his work was appreciated, I am tempted to quote an obituary that appeared in the Orillia Times of August 30th, 1917, written by the Editor:

"Word was received in Town on Friday that Mr. E. B. Sutton, of Bala, had died that morning, after a long illness in the sixty-third year of his age. Deceased was well known in the Musk-oka District and was a highly respected citizen of Bala where he had been engaged in business for a number of years, though living retired of late.

"Ephraim Browning Sutton was born in Leeds, Yorkshire, England, November 8th, 1854, he spent his boyhood day in Tuggles Hill, Chaford, Gloucestershire, and in the City of London. After leaving school he worked for the well-known publishing firm of Riventon and Sons, London, and here he was often brought in contact with the author he most admired, the late Charles Dickens. Later he entered railway life and was in the service of the Midland and Great Western Railways until he moved to Canada in 1882. He served in different capacities up to Station Agent in Penrith and Carlisle, in Cumberland, Swansea in South Wales and Leicester in the Midlands. In 1872 he married Mrs. Rose Anna Grey. Four children were born to them, three in England and one in Canada. The three children born in the old land fell victims to the filthy vaccination system of that time. The



WALTER LANGDON'S ICE CREAM PARLOUR AND PAVILION
FOR DANCING—LATER THE SITE OF DUNN'S PAVILION

From a photograph taken in 1911

HURLING FAMILY. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hurling, Lot 39, Con. 7, Wood, 1885. Mr. Hurling had a family of three children, son Lorne and daughters Susan (Mrs. Fred Huggett) and Mrs. A. Benness. Possessing a green thumb, he operated a market garden successfully for many years. I believe he was at one time gardener for Prof. Goldwin Smith at the "Grange", Toronto.

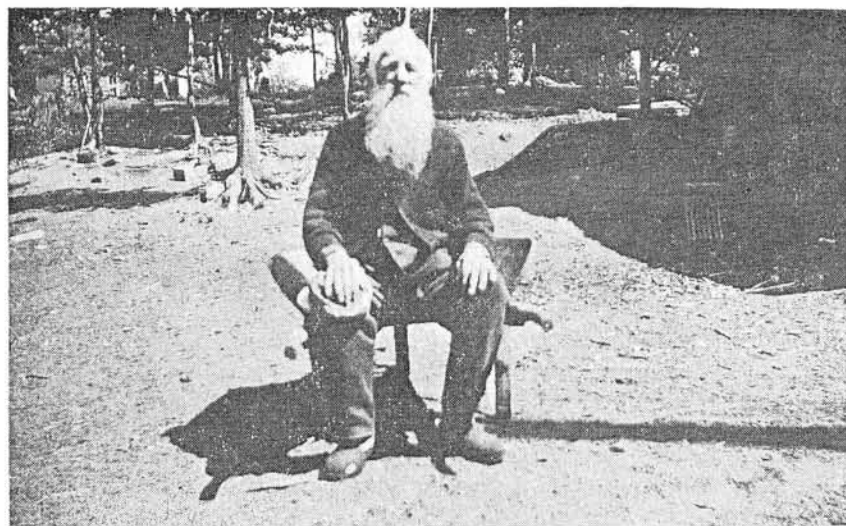
M. S. "Sam" Hurling, a nephew of H. Hurling, had a boat livery and Ice Cream Parlour on Bala Portage—it being in direct line of the Canadian Pacific Railway had to be moved. Sam married about this time and moved his business and residence to a large lot which is now known as Dunn's Pavilion. The property was later sold to Mr. and Mrs. Walter Langdon. Dances were held on an open dance floor in a beautiful grove of pine trees decorated with Chinese Lanterns—it made a pretty sight. The large Dunn Pavilion swept all this away.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas WILSON. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wilson came to Canada from Halifax, Yorkshire, England and

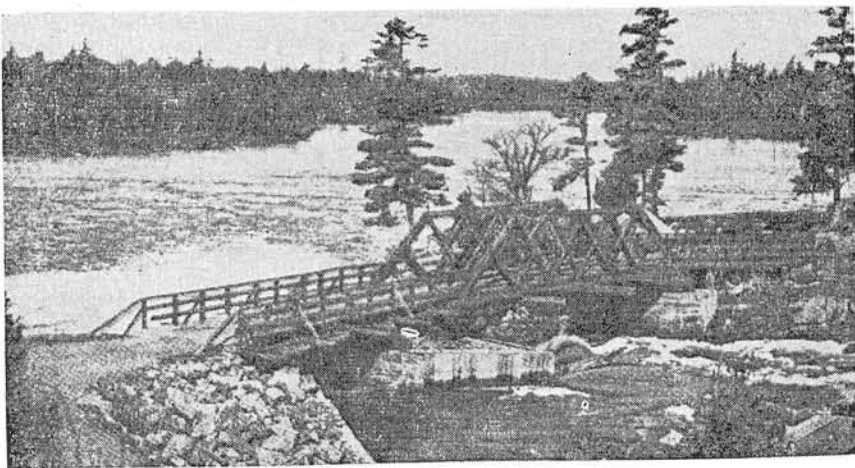
lived for a time with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Eli Wilson, on Lot 16, Con. "F", Medora, then purchasing the farm of Arthur Gaunt, Lots 11 and 12, Con. "D", Medora, now within the Town of Bala. He had two sons and one daughter, James, Harry and Ruth. Harry married Miss Mary Shanks, a niece of Mr. Thomas Currie—two sons John and Roy and a daughter Edna live on and operate the farm at this time.

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred WALDEN, Lots 12 and 13, Con. "C", Medora, originally from England. Mr. Walden, by profession a core maker at the Gurney Foundry, acquired three hundred acres of brush and purchased sawmill machinery but the cards seemed to be stacked against him. First a gun burst taking off part of one hand; the mill was never erected. Discouraged he finally gave up. Mr. William Knifton was the first owner of the above lots until they were purchased by Alfred Jackson to secure a more direct road to Bala, later selling them to Mr. Walden.

Mr. and Mrs. Edwin P. HUGGETT, also from England, Settling on Lots 10, Con. "E" and "F", had two sons and two daughters, Edward and Fred J., daughters Annie (Mrs. Geo. White) and Rose, Mrs. Sam Burgess.



MR. EDWIN HUGGETT



BRIDGE AT BALA FALLS
As it appeared in 1905



BOAT LIVERY, ESTABLISHED BY SAM HURLING, OPERATED
LATER BY JOHN HAMILL, AND FOR MANY YEARS
BY GEORGE ADAMS

INCORPORATION OF TOWN OF BALA — 1914

The people of Bala settlement were pretty well satisfied under Township Council rule, Mr. Burgess, Sr., being Reeve for a number of years and Mr. H. C. Guy holding the office of Clerk-Treasurer of Medora and Wood, there was little cause for complaint. Population began to concentrate at this point and in 1914, 46 years after the settlement was founded, Bala was incorporated a Town, the only community in Muskoka to reach the status of a Town without first serving a Municipal apprenticeship as a Village.

It was only fitting that a son of the founder, Dr. A. M. Burgess, should become its first Mayor.

The first members of Council, June 1st, 1914, were: J. A. Campbell, John Hamill, Alfred Jackson, O. McDivitt, Herman Weismiller and Thomas Wilson. W. J. Hobbs, Clerk-Treasurer. Mr. Hobbs died that same year and Fred W. Sutton became Clerk-Treasurer. The first Council sat three years. Successive Mayors were as follows: O. McDivitt, 1917-18; J. W. Burgess, 1919; O. McDivitt, 1920; O. A. McNeil, 1921; Thos. Burgess, Jr., 1922; O. McDivitt, 1923-24-25; J. W. Orchard, 1926-27-28-29-30-31; S. M. Jackson, 1932-33-34-35; J. W. Orchard, 1936; S. M. Jackson, 1937; J. W. Orchard, 1938 to 1945; John Orchard, 1946-47-48; Harold Wilson, 1949-50; Bruce Burgess, 1951. 1952 "The Black Year" of the Waterworks dispute. Three nominations failed to elect a Mayor—a Council sat illegally—the majority taking active part in a law suit against the Town. Town Clerk Fred W. Sutton resigned in protest. Stewart Jackson 1953-54-55-56-57-58-59; Walter Templeton, 1960-61; Williams Rogers, 1962-63; Walter Templeton, 1964-65-66-67.

BALA

BY BOB PETRY



AN EARLY SETTLEMENT IN
MUSKOKA

Copyright 1998 by Robert Petry

Production by Lynx Images Inc.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Petry, Robert F., 1921-
Bala

Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-9684159-0-3

1. Bala (Ont.) - History 2. Bala (Ont.) - History - Pictorial works.
I. Title.

FC3099.B328P47 1998
F1059.5.B34P47 1998

971.3'16

C98-931978-4

BOAT LIVERY

On the island between the two falls, stands a boat livery that has had a long and fascinating history.

From Bala's beginning, this was the location of the main portage from Lake Muskoka around the falls, to the river below. Sometime before the arrival of the railway in 1907, Sam Hurling established the boat livery at the main portage. It was located on the planned right of way of the CPR so had to be moved closer to the falls.

At this time he sold out to John Hamill. In about 1920 or shortly thereafter, the boat livery was taken over by the legendary George Adams. He was a huge man, with a reputation for his ability to drink a bottle of whisky straight out of the bottle. Under his floating dock he had a school of pet bass that would eat dew worms out of his hand. Most of the bass disappeared when some unscrupulous character caught them with hook and line.



The back of this photo indicates that it is the boat livery of Sam Hurling in 1905.

The bane of George's life was the repairing of his Peterborough canoes that were damaged on canoe trips and in the regatta. The charge for a day at the regatta was \$1.00, and \$5.00 to repair any damage sustained.

At about the beginning of the second world war, the boat livery was taken over by Mack Cunningham. At that time, he sold George Adam's old Peterborough canoes for \$25.00. He then proceeded to build his own fleet of canvas covered Cedar canoes which were of exceptional handcrafted quality. It was Mack Cunningham's ingenuity that planned and built the dance hall for Gerry Dunn in 1942.



This boat livery on the island was originally owned by Sam Hurling, by John Hamill, by George Adams and lastly by Mack Cunningham. It is now Purk's Place.

MRS. M. S. HURLING, Prop.

Portage Boat House

By the Week \$3.50. By the Day, 75 cents.
By the Hour, 20 cents.

Ice Cream Soda
Candies
Iced Drinks

Bala.
Muskoka



BOATS AND CANOES

By the Hour, 50c.
By the Day, . 75c.
By the Week, \$3.50

For Hire

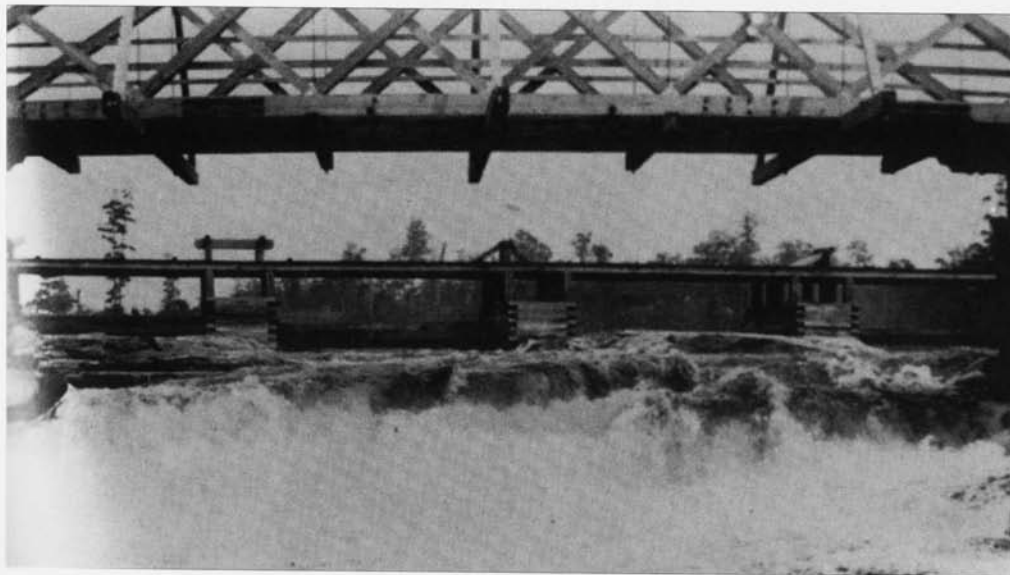
Camping Outfits
Supplied

GUIDES FURNISHED ON SHORT NOTICE

J. HAMMILL, Prop. : BALA, Muskoka

NORTH FALLS

This has always been a centre of activity; Bala Electric Light & Power Company, Carr's Arcadian Ice Cream Parlour, Boat Livery, and the main exit for logs from the bay to the Moon River. The portage for the explorers and the modern day voyageurs was adjacent to the North Falls. These photos were all taken in the 1880's, after the dams were installed. The north dam was installed in 1873 to raise the water six to eight feet. This extra water improved the navigation on the bay. This was not sufficient so a second dam was installed at South Falls. These dams created three islands out of one in Torrance Bay. It is interesting to note the log boom that completely closes off the river.





CARR'S ARCADIAN ICE CREAM PARLOUR

Mr. William Carr, moved into Bala from his parents' farm near Glen Orchard. He was employed at the Burgess store as a baker and he married Catherine Burgess. In September of 1916, Catherine acquired from the Burgess Estate, a parcel of land overlooking the falls on the left side of the road, across the North Bridge. On this property they built the Arcadian Ice Cream Parlour. This was a substantial size building. The second floor was an ideal place for the young people of the 1920's and 1930's, to dance in the afternoon, after calling at the post office. Carr's was an institution before Gerry Dunn's. This lovely old building was demolished when the new bridge was built across the North Falls in the 1960's.

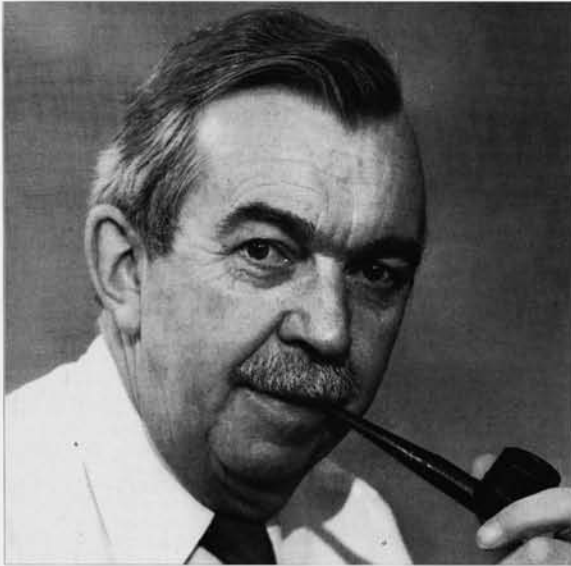


BALA FROM THE MOON RIVER

Upper picture: Frank Tooke's boat house with his boats, his home and that of George Clements, the town constable.

Lower picture: Shows Carr's ice cream parlour and dance hall, the old dam at north falls and the #2 generating station of the Bala Electric Light and Power Company.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert (Bob) Petry was born in Toronto on May 18th, 1921. He was educated at Whitney Public School, North Toronto Collegiate, and Northern Vocational. He worked for six months for an insurance company in Toronto before joining the Navy on July 12th, 1940. Following five years in the Navy he returned to the company until 1952, when he and his wife moved to Bracebridge. They operated a general insurance agency until retirement in 1986. Bob's first trip to Bala on July 1st, 1921, was with his mother, to her father's cottage near the Windsor Hotel. The cottage was the fourth one along the shoreline, having been built in 1898. The author has been absent from Bala only four summers in his lifetime. In 1950, Bob and his wife Betty built their own cottage near the entrance to Dark Lake. Now the author's grandchildren, the fifth generation of Dr. Abraham's family, are still on Bala Bay.

Bob competed in the Bala Regatta from about 1929 until 1940. On his return from the Navy he competed in the aquatic events, and was chairman of the outboard racing committee. His participation in the aquatic association regatta came to an end in 1952 when he moved to Bracebridge and went to work in his own business with no holidays.

Bob and his wife Betty still live in Bracebridge, enjoying fishing, golf, skiing, curling, and their cottage at Bala.

BALA



The Way It Was

By Buntz and Lorne Jewitt

Bala - The Way it Was[©]

**Published by Lorne & Bunty Jewitt, July 2005
Notice of Copyright**

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electrical, mechanical or photo copying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission from the authors.

ISBN -0-9736269-0-9

First Edition Printing - 2005



Bala Falls and Bridges North and South

Bala is situated on an island called Portage Island, which has two sets of Falls at the south end and a bridge. At the north end, a bridge crosses the Mill stream.

South Falls

(as they are known today)

In 1905, a wooden road Bridge and Dam were constructed at the Falls at what we call South Falls today.

When the C.P.R. railway came to Bala in 1907, it went right where this original bridge was and another larger wooden bridge had to be built.

We have a postcard which came from Jack Kendall whose grandfather was a Minister in the early days at the Gibson Reserve, which is now called Wahta Mohawk Territory. Jack Kendall had insisted all along that the **Bala South Falls** were known as '**Baby Falls**', in 1908. We have not come across this name in any of the researching we have done and we wonder if this name 'Baby Falls' was the original name for the South Falls before the Falls were widened, changing the name to '**Cut Falls**' and eventually later still to '**South Falls**'.

The date 1908 does not add up to the C.P.R. history of the Falls and we wonder if the date should perhaps be a few years earlier. - ie - 1902, 1903 or maybe 1904?

Some time before 1873, the South Falls area as we know it today (perhaps known as Baby Falls in those days), was blasted out and made much wider, and the Falls were re-named "Cut Falls", with a wooden road bridge built over the Falls to enable people and horses to gain access to Bala.

When Thomas Burgess Sr. stood at the South Falls and was looking down the Moon River, he is purported to have said, 'All those Pines are mine'. The White Pines were the reason he had chosen the Bala area to settle in as he could foresee the lucrative potential which all those trees had to offer where lumbering was concerned.

In 1873, Mr. Cockburn, an early Steamship owner, asked the Government to put Dams at Bala to control the water level and raise Lake Muskoka's level, so that this would prevent his Steamships from going aground on the rocks or sandbars on the Muskoka Lakes.



South Falls

The Dam at the South Falls was built in 1873, made with wooden cribs. These were replaced by concrete piers when the C.P.R. railway was being built in 1905/1906/1907.

We have a photo taken before 1890, looking from the falls area and it shows the end of Hurling's Point, with a white blob which has to be Henry Hurling's farmhouse. He came to Bala in 1888.

In 1915, a permanent concrete and steel bigger bridge and Dam were constructed over the widened South Falls.

In 1920, neither the Trinity Anglican nor Burgess Memorial Churches had been built yet and there was just a grassy embankment at the site of these two soon to be built churches.

When the railway tracks were first laid, there was an 11 foot grade up from the bridge and over the level crossing over the tracks. In the winter, this was very dangerous and so in 1911, an underpass or subway under the railway tracks was built from the South bridge under the C.P.R. tracks.

The highway had to be re-routed to go parallel to the C.P.R. Railway tracks and the present slanting bridge and road approach over the South Falls was built on the Moon River side of the railway and was opened on July 27, 1965.

To make room for the bridge, Carr's Arcadia had to be demolished.

North Falls

In 1873, the Government Dam was built at the North Falls, to control the flow of water over the North Falls, to raise the water level on Lake Muskoka and to aid navigation of the Lake Steamboats .

The Dam was built of logs and cribs filled with rocks. In 1958, it was replaced with the present concrete Dam and abutments.

The original road bridge across the North Falls was built in 1896,(before the C.P.R. were working on the railway in 1906 and was completed in 1907) and the Bala Presbyterian Church was built in 1893.

Katherine (Burgess) Carr (born in 1867), when she was a little girl, was sent out to get fish for the family dinner and all she had to do was to drag a bushel basket through the water below the North Falls and she carried their dinner back home.

In 1981, the last Dayliner Train went through Bala. Lorne almost photographed it, but he did not know this at that time and he wanted to photograph the North Falls, alone. He could have kicked himself later, when he found out that the train he had waited to pass was the last Dayliner passenger train to go through Bala!!



North Falls

River to Lake Muskoka in the lumbering days, at the North Falls.

We have photographs of the first train coming into Bala, and unfortunately, missed photographing the last one going through Bala heading south. What a bitter pill to swallow when he found out the missed golden historical opportunity!!

We also have photos of the Jack Ladder and equipment for raising the logs from the Moon

In 1998 the little park by the North Falls which is so widely used by picnickers and the White Pine trees are now growing on the site where Carr's Arcadia used to be .

Bala United Church



Bala United Church

In 1925, the majority of the congregation of the Presbyterian Church voted to unite with the Congregational and Methodist Churches under the name Bala United Church.

There was a strong minority who withdrew from the Presbyterian Church and later built their own church on the portage below the South Falls in Bala, calling their Presbyterian Church, the Burgess Memorial Church.

The remainder of the congregation became the congregation of the Bala United Church. The church bell was rung for Services as well as to summon people to fight fires. Russell Cope sometimes used to ring the bell for fires.

The Bala United Church completely burned on March 25, 1934 at 1.00 p.m.

The newspaper described the fire:

"An overheated furnace is believed to have caused the fire which razed the United Church of Bala, Muskoka, late last Sunday afternoon. Pedestrians noticed smoke coming out of the edifice about 1.00 p.m., and gave the alarm which brought the Bala Fire Brigade, but the fire had gained such headway it was destroyed. Efforts were concentrated successfully on adjoining buildings. The Church and organ was insured for \$5,500.00, but the total fire damage came to \$10,000. That same night, Evening Service was held at the home of E.L. Jackson, one of the Elders".

In 1934, the new frame construction church was built on the same site of the previous church, prior to the fire.

The corner stone was laid on October 15, 1934, by Bala's oldest pioneer associated with the church, Thomas Wilson, then aged eighty-two.

In 1935, the new church added a buff coloured brick veneer and was dedicated with daily church services during the week from May 12 until May 19.

The brick work was done by Alfred Radcliffe. When the church burned down, the bell was cracked

The Samuel Hurling Family



Sam Hurling (seated) and Mrs. Hurling in black dress. The other 3 women are sisters of Mrs. Hurling.

Samuel ('Sam') Hurling was a nephew of **Henry Hurling**. Samuel ('Sam') Hurling owned and operated an ice cream parlour, a boat livery where he rented out boats on Bala Bay, between the North and South Falls and also an ice house on the waterfront on Lake Muskoka.

When the C.P.R. was being built in 1906, his building was in direct line of where the tracks were to be laid, so he moved his business and residence to the large lot, more commonly known in later years as where Gerry Dunn's Dance Hall was located.

Sam held dances on an open dance floor in a beautiful grove of Pine trees, decorated with Chinese lanterns. It made a pretty sight. This property was later sold to Mr and Mrs Walter Langdon.

Later, Gerry Dunn built his dance hall on this site.



Transportation



People and canoes below Bala Falls

In the early days, transportation in Muskoka was by horseback riding through the bush or by canoe on the rivers and lakes. As more pioneers began to settle on their new lands, primitive roads were built. Some of them were log roads (logs laid side by side), especially good in wet or marshy areas.

It wasn't long before horse-drawn buggies were using these roads, as well as horse drawn wagons used by grocery and supply stores and the Post Office. The pioneers were no longer isolated.

Next came the 'Puff 'n' Billies' steam trains which opened up Canada, bringing supplies and people, especially in Muskoka, to build hotels and tourist guest houses. By now, the flood gates of tourists were wide open as people found out that Muskoka was 'The' place to go for summer holidays, fishing and hunting. Tourists came from all over Canada, the U.S.A., Great Britain and even Germany. These people enjoyed the rest, relaxation, good food, good drink and enjoyable things to do each day, with the result that these same people returned year after year to the same location.



Mrs McDivitt on left, Mrs McAllister on right. Horse 'Kitty'. 'New Windsor Hotel' in background

About The Authors



Lorne, a watercolour artist and wood carver, first came to Bala at the age of six weeks.

He and Bunty were married fifty-seven years ago and their grand children are the fifth generation to enjoy their summers on the same property which has been in the family for over a hundred years.

Lorne and Bunty have lived permanently at their Bala cottage/home for the past thirty-four years and have a deep love for Bala. They have done a lot of travelling - but have never found anywhere that could compare with Muskoka.

Their roots and those of their family are very deeply rooted in Bala. At Bala's 125th anniversary on June 13, 1993, they were awarded certificates naming them as being Bala's historians. They both feel deeply honoured.

This book has truly been a labour of love.

