

"From the files of Bernice Merkley, Township clerk"

The Herald Gazette Thursday July 28 1960 pg. 10

Housey's Rapids Bridge Opened by Hon. Dr. Dymond

The weather could not have been more pleasant for the great occasion at Housey's Rapids on Saturday afternoon when over 400 Township of Ryde residents, visitors from nearby parts of Muskoka and summer residents from the area gathered for the official opening of the new bridge connecting both parts of the community.

The guest of honor, who cut red, white and blue ribbons to open the bridge, was Honorable Matthew B. Dymond, M.D. Minister of Health and member for the nearby riding of Ontario County.

The new bridge crosses the narrows between Kahshe Lake and Bass Lake. Gartersnake Creek empties into Bass Lake, and Kahshe River flows out of Kahshe Lake and no map seems to give a name officially to the waterway crossed by the new bridge, but we have understood it to be Kahshe River.

The townships new bridge is a concrete and steel structure, constructed at a cost of \$56,000. On such bridges the Ontario Department of Highways pays 80% of the cost. The old bridge was wrecked when a heavy transport went through it and the Township was able to obtain from an insurance company on behalf of the transport firm a settlement which will pay the municipality \$5,000.

Since the old bridge was rendered unusable for motor traffic, in the fall of 1958, it has been necessary to drive 12 miles around the roads through Barkway to get from one part of Housey's Rapids to the other. It has been hoped that the bridge would have been ready last fall, but the steel strike intervened. The work on the bridge was completed only a few days before Saturday's ceremony.

The Kahshe Lake Cottagers Association co-operated in Saturday's program by arranging a parade of boats, and about two dozen decorated craft made their way from the lake up the river and under the bridge. The boats were splendidly decorated and the boaters were in costume and later joined the crowd on the bridge for the program.

The bridge itself was gaily decorated with a dozen large flags on staffs along the white cement sides of the structure.

Reeve Russell Ruttan presided and welcomed the visitors. He expressed the pride of the people of Ryde in the fine new bridge, and suggested that the next step was to improve the road up to the standard of the bridge.

Mr. Ruttan called upon Rev. Percy Mainprize, Free Methodist minister of Housey's Rapids to speak and to offer prayer.

In his remarks, Mr. Mainprize spoke of the loss of the old bridge as a way in which a great improvement could be made. He stressed the importance of building well for those to follow in later years, and read the appropriate poem, "An old man came at the close of the day", which tells of a man building a bridge less for his own benefit than for the young man who followed in his path.

Reeve Ruttan invited a number of visitors to speak. Leslie A. Boucher, District Municipal Roads Engineer, who had advised the Township Council on procedures, said that in this case he had not much to do as sometimes, since the bridge had been built under contract, and he congratulated all concerned on the good construction and fine appearance of the bridge.

Gordon Aiken, MP for Parry Sound Muskoka, said that the construction of the bridge was a joint Township and Provincial undertaking, and the Federal Government had no share in the work, but it was a pleasure to be able to join in the celebration at Housey's Rapids and to wish all success to the people of Ryde Township.

Judge Douglas C. Thomas said his association with the bridge might be only if two cars collided on the structure and litigation arose which might come before him. But it was a privilege to be able to congratulate the people of Ryde on this undertaking and to wish them well.

One of the addresses of the day was given by Bob Boyer, M.P.P. Muskoka, who thanked the Reeve and Council for arranging the afternoon's program to celebrate the restoration in a more adequate form of the Housey's Rapids Bridge. Sometimes what seems a calamity is also an opportunity, and though Ryde citizens were shocked to learn of the damage to the bridge which robbed them of a motor thoroughfare from one side of the community to the other, there was no one who would willingly exchange the new bridge for the old one, he suggested. He paid tribute to the Reeve and Council, the Township officials. Mr. Boucher, the contractors and workmen and all concerned in the new bridge. There was justice in the arrangement for the payment of the Township's share over a period of years, since this would give opportunity to those using the bridge in the future to share in the financing. But the Council in another direction, had taken exemplary action in paying their share of the capital cost of the Muskoka Home for the Aged in cash, thereby saving money in interest.

Mr. Boyer reviewed some of the history of the Township. It would appear that there had been a means of crossing the river at Housey's Rapids since the earliest time of settlement, when James Housey arrived as the first settler and gave his name to the place. An old map, made in the late 1870's soon after the first pioneer families arrived, showed a road north from Housey's Rapids through Barkway, Uffington and Muskoka Falls to Bracebridge, while another crossed the river at Housey's Rapids and proceeded west

along the north side of Kahshe Lake, to the Muskoka Road (now Highway 11). But that is a very rough though picturesque section of the District; the pioneers must have accepted small mercies if they used it to any great extent and as a result this road was abandoned in favor of roads built later, north from Housey's Rapids, and the Doe Lake Road. Settlers in the Township in the late 1870's appear to have included the families of James Housey, Josephus Long, Robert Benn, Allan and Robert Brass, Charles and Thomas Brooks, and Mr. and Mrs. Wyle [parents of the first white child born in Ryde] William and George Lowe, Ira Davey, William and James Allan, William Merkle, Herman Bush, James Plewis, George and Felix Lidgold, James Redmayne, Jacob Rebman, Fred Seehaver, Charles, William and Walter Tingey, Philip Brace and others. Many of these families are still represented by their descendants in the Township. At first Ryde was part of a larger municipality with Draper, Macaulay and Oakley Townships, but it separated in 1887, [I don't believe Macaulay was one of those CF] and has since managed its own municipal affairs. The first Reeve was Moses McLellan, followed by A. Fletcher, William Lowe, James Allan, Louis Norman, P.H. Brace, J. E. Taverner, James Lowe, H.H.Hill, Wm Ketching, J. E. Clement, Robert Benzinger, Leslie Plewis, Osborne Bush and Russell Ruttan. Clerks have been F. Taylor, W. Tingey, Wm Lowe, A. Fletcher, Walter Tingey, P.H. Brace, A. F. Ruttan, M. L. McWade, B.D.Smith, Fred Pilger and Mrs. Bernice Merkle.

In introducing the guest of honor, Honorable Dr. Dymond Mr. Boyer spoke of his coming to Canada from Scotland, putting himself through university to become a medical doctor, his service overseas and his community work, before he entered the Provincial Parliament and later became a Cabinet minister. He said he would take the opportunity, here among Muskoka people to thank Dr. Dymond for the great part he had taken in making arrangements for the establishment of the Ontario Hospital, Gravenhurst Unit, in the buildings which were no longer required as a T.B.Sanitarium at the Muskoka Hospital property. He believed all Muskoka people would wish to thank him for his interest in this important project.

In beginning his address the Minister of Health said he had been privileged to open new hospitals and new schools and other institutions, but it was a new experience to open a bridge. he wished first to say that the Muskoka member had an important part in the arrangements to establish the Ontario Hospital unit at Gravenhurst having consulted him and his Department since the time it began to be evident that the days of the former sanitarium were numbered. He knew that in the same manner, Mr. Boyer had made representations concerning the renewal of the bridge at Housey's Rapids for he had been talking with some of the Councillors from Ryde at the Ramona Fall Fair in 1958, soon after the bridge was damaged, and he knew of what was being done very soon after the accident happened.

A bridge was symbolic of the means of travel, but it meant the uniting of people who were on different sides of a difficult crossing or a chasm. In the world of today there is a great need for bridges of understanding between separated points of view. The lack of bridges of this kind has created a situation which has resulted in Canada having to spend

vast sums on weapons of warfare, money which otherwise could be devoted to peaceful development, especially to the construction of roads, bridges, schools and hospitals. It should be the objective of everyone to try to create better understanding and to remove old prejudices which stand in the way of peace, progress and a fuller life.

He pointed out that the money required for defense came only from the taxes of all Canadians, just as did the money in Ontario for new developments like bridges, roads, schools and many other needed things. There is no bottomless barrel at Queen's Park from which money can be taken for these requirements, any more than Ottawa has unlimited sums of money. In due course there will be other development in Muskoka as elsewhere and he was proud of being a member of the government which was determined to share in an adequate fashion in aiding municipalities to carry out needed programs.

Dr. Dymond paid tribute to the Township of Ryde for their progressive attitude in constructing so excellent a bridge. He said he particularly wanted to mention their part in paying their share in cash for the new Muskoka Home for the Aged. While the amount would not be among the larger amounts paid by municipalities, in proportion it would be just as great for the people of Ryde as for any in Muskoka.

The minister said he was pleased to see the people of the Township and nearby places and the summer residents meeting together to show their interest in this undertaking.

At the end of his address Dr. Dymond and those who had taken part in the program with him, stepped down from the platform and the Minister cut the ribbon which crossed the structure.

The thanks to the minister were expressed eloquently by C. H. Gibb, representing the Kahshe Lake Cottagers Association. He paid tribute to Dr. Dymond for his great work as Minister of Health with all its responsibilities including greater security for hospital care. He had been much impressed with Dr. Dymond's reference to the symbolism of a bridge, and he himself felt that a bridge had many features of a road, but was not strictly a road, and had many features of a ship though not a ship, but this combination gave a bridge the unique character which Honorable Dr. Dymond had so fittingly described

An earlier article suggests a previous bridge had collapsed in 1931

June 25 1931 Bracebridge "A bridge over the river at Housey's Rapids collapsed, the centre span of 100 feet falling into the water. Fortunately no one was on it at the time. The bridge was only 12 years old but the timbers were rotten."