YOUR SIMCOE COUNTY

Mountain scenery in south Nottawasaga Twp.

By BRIAN BAKER

GLEN HURON: Somewhat off the beaten track, but well worth visiting, is the delightfully scenic Blue Mountain area of south Nottawasaga Township where places like Creemore, Banda, Avening, Cashtown, Dunedin, Lavender, Maple Valley, Glen Huron, and Cashtown nestle in sheltered glens and woodsy valleys.

In October when the colored leaves were still at their best, we officially started our trip at Glencairn, well named because of its situation in the valley of the Mad River and Walkers Creek divided by a curious hogback hill.

Brick, frame and stucco houses, the 1900 Christian Church complete with horse and buggy driving shed, the water level gauge station on the Mad River, and the river itself spending the last of its energy after dropping hundreds of feet down from the top of the mountains, added interest. We were especially attracted by Stevens and Co.'s Groceries, Drygoods hardware, fuel, gas and oil business, established in 1840.

County Road 13 led on towards the headlands of the Niagara Escarpment, famed for its Bruce Trails walking routes, which loomed ahead to the west across the Mad River Valley.

We found Banda a tiny crossroads community. It was so named by the first postmaster, John Clemenger, in the 1860s, who looking for a name for the new post office, went to the school and looked over the maps until he spotted the Banda Islands and Banda Sea near the South Sea Islands.

One road to the west climbed into the foothills a couple of miles before dead ending. A sign read: "Welcome to the Hills of Mulmur, settled since 1824."

We turned north, past Banda Anglican Christ Church with its louvered belfry, shingled steeple, half timbering, and its cemetery containing ancient marble tombstones surrounded by black wrought iron fencing.

Avening is a very attractive village on the Mad River, featuring a 100-acre provincial park. Gone are the railroad tracks which helped open up the area. Gone too are the flour and saw mills which, powered by the Mad, formed the nucleus for the community in the early 1860s (the Thornbury Mills).

TO CREEMORE

Side-tracking into Creemore by 42-west we were rewarded by seeing little shingle covered driving sheds, buildings with wooden brick false-fronts, the old hotel, balconies fenced with wrought iron, noting the post office and library.

Some of the most decorative brickwork is to be noted above the Home Hardware store.

A short run south across the iron frame bridge over the rushing Mad took us up the 5th Line right up onto the mountain above Bob Walker's sheep farm where we could look far out across the great Creemore Valley to Barrie, Orillia and towards Muskoka. You need good brakes here!

Now following County Road 9 we traveled west from Creemore up the Noisy River Valley where the river jostled the road back and forth as each vied for space in the narrow valley hemmed in by steep hills clothed in gorgeously colored maple and evergreen woods.

As in some Scottish glen, Dunedin snuggles between maple-covered hills that rise around it on every side, making the most sheltered village in the area.

Dunedin general store dating back a century and a quarter, with its boardwalk, still retains its pioneer-age charm. Unusual is the Presbyterian church with its quaintly pointed steeple. Here was the site of the first grist mill in Nottawasaga Township.

A recovered millstone is bound with iron and contains mill-grit stone sectionalized for easy transport from France. The village was first called Bowerman's Hollow after the first mill owner.

Past great clay banks eroded like miniature badlands, the 9th line took us south up a step hill in one great sweep to Lavender and the table lands marking the top of the escarpment.

On the way we noted a board fence along the west side; a mile long and very old. Was it a snow fence!

At Lavender, marked by its turn-of-the century houses sporting lavish brickwork, and ancient church and picturesque driving sheds, we turned west up the Nottawasaga-Mulmur townline, past neat squared-fieldstone houses of years gone by, to the pull-off near the dead end to see one of the highlights of our trip, Lavender Falls on the Noisy River.

We trod a long maple-shaded glade carpeted with gold and orange leaves until we came to the edge of a deep, rocky ravine booby-trapped with springs and ankle-deep mud. A young couple who had just come back up from the falls suggested that our footwear, was not very appropriate for making the tricky descent. But clambering down slippery rocks and over tangles of fallen trees and roots, hanging onto branches where necessary, we finally came out at the edge of the river.

MINIATURE NIAGARA

It was well worth while. As we stepped gingerly up the river from one stepping stone to the next we approached the fairyland falls, falling in a delicate veil some 35 feet over the central part of a lovely horseshoe of limestone 90 feet across, like a miniature Niagara.

In fact, this is the same dolomite formation over which Niagara itself falls.

Falling at the rate of about 60,000 gallons an hour, the ground shook beneath the falls as we came up behind the falls where liverworts and algaes keep the rock a soft green color.

All around the perimeter of the falls and along the face of the gorge not occupied by the falls, crystal clear water descended in sparkling trickles and drips. Spray dampened our faces.

In flood time it is said this falls can be heard two miles away. For a while we listened to the refreshing splash of water and the gurgle of rocky riffles downsteam, then faced the long climb back to the road.

As we turned back through Dunedin to Singhampton the countryside seen from the hilltops took on a New England look with villages, churches, stone and frame barns and farm houses hiding in the hollows and between the woods, and the winding roads.

In Glen Huron, affectionately known by local residents as "The Glen," we noted the tiny white frame Anglican Church, the post office, the late Archie Curran's fine Massey-Sawyer steam traction engine, and operated by Frank Hamilton, one of the last water-powered grist mills in Ontario.

"The mill was originally built here by my grandfather, James Hamilton, in 1874," said Mr. Hamilton, who showed us two fine iron trade axes found and plowed up on the Hamilton properties back in the horse-plow days.

"This is old Petun Indian country and the trade (French) axes date back to before 1650. When we were kids we used to go up on the hill and find all kinds of Indian clay smoking pipes, which we used to smoke when the grown-ups weren't around.

"We found all sorts of Indian relics and gave it away to tourists. What we would give to have some of them now."

BEST VIEW

Mr. Hamilton gave us directions to visit an overlook famed Canadian author Gregory Clark described as the best view in southern Ontario.

We climbed north, back out of The Glen, then turned west to Devil's Glen Provincial Park.

To the scolding of blue jays and the chatter of squirrels we descended down seemingly endless steps and paths through the dappled sunlight coming through the heavy cedar groves and deciduous woods into the very bottom of Devil's Glen and the Mad River.

We found rare ferns, crab apples, silver birch, a tiny waterfall coming down a hanging valley and under a rustic pole bridge. We stood on rocks in the middle of the river where it comes together as a "Y", bubbling and gurgling refreshingly as it impatiently bumped and swirled over and around the rocks on its headlong flight down the glen.

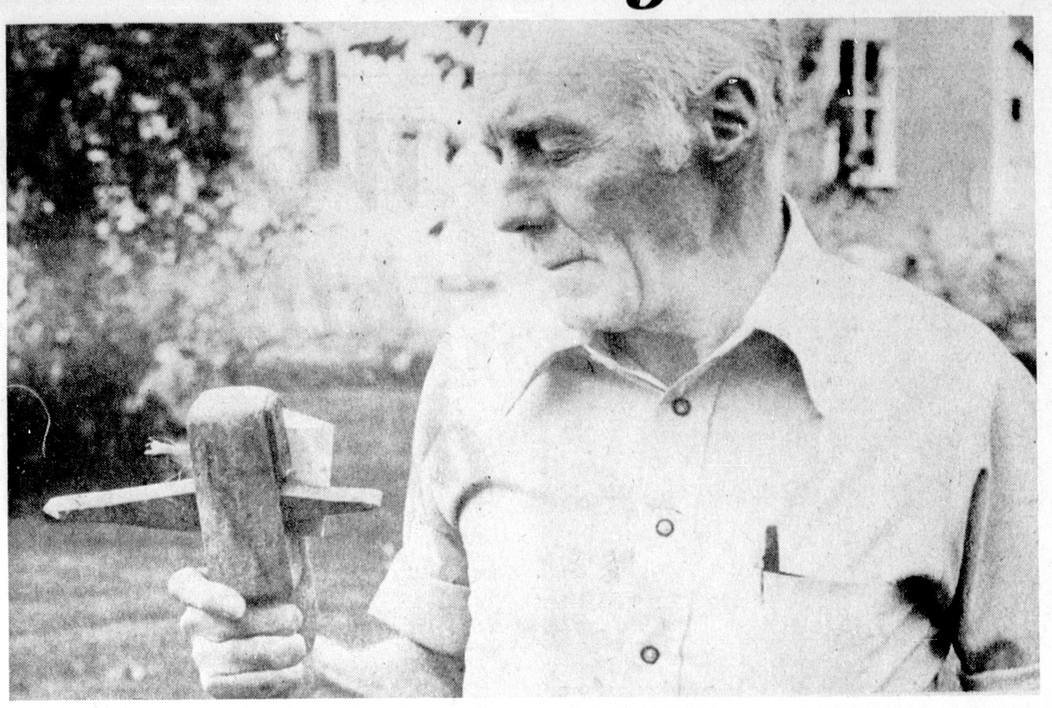
Back on Highway 24, we drove west two miles to Millroad South, down what looks like a farm lane, and across the upper end of the Devil's Glen and Mad River.

At this point a single wall of stone and timber precariously stands four storeys high, windows blank, all that remains of a once thriving grist and flour mill. Sideroad 18 took us east. We then looked at the north face of Devil's Glen which presented itself as a sheer cliff of gleaming white dolomite like a great castle wall thousands of feet long and up to a hundred feet deep.

We cut south, then east again on Sideroad 15-16, through a one-lane-wide tunnel of trees, coming out onto a pull-off at the top of a sheer cliff at the scenic outlook.

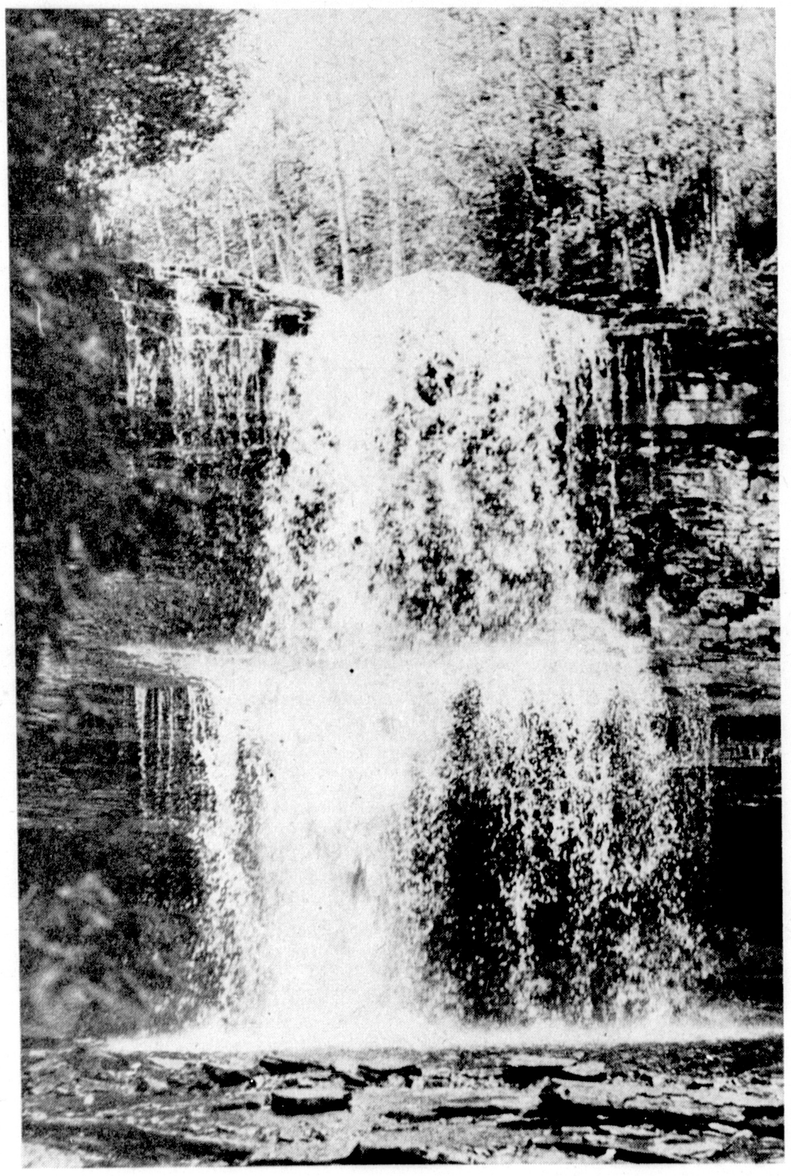
From here we could look down on the Hamilton millpond, Glen Huron, across to Barrie, Base Borden towards Toronto, Orillia, Georgian Bay, Collingwood and the elevators, and the great curve of Wasaga Beach. It was breathtaking. Mind you, put your brakes on, there is nothing to stop your car from going over the edge of the cliff, and don't stand too close!

After we came on down the road to Concession 9, twisting around one-lane "S" bends, backing up to let another car pass, dodging rocks, hitting the bottom of the car on the uneven roadbed, and looking straight down into tree tops, we realized that it was no idle remark when Frank Hamilton said: "Don't try this route in the spring!"



FRANK HAMILTON, Glen Huron, treasures this pick-like tool used by his grandfather to dress or re-grove the two huge millstones in the old water-powered grist and flour mill built by him in 1874. Mr. Hamilton still operates a water-powered grist mill on the same site. (Baker Photo)

PHOTOGRAPHERS from throughout Simcoe County and Southern Ontario visit Devil's Glen Provincial Park, on the Bruce Trail, to capture on film some of Eastern Canada's most pretty semi-mountain scenery and woodlands. (Baker Photo)



AT LAVENDER west of Creemore may be seen this lovely double waterfall known as Lavender Falls, set deep in the woods of a wildlife sanctuary. (Baker Photo)

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Aurora Aurora Conference Centre R.R. #2, St. John's Sideroad West	Wednesday Jan. 12 or 19 7:30 pm	To be Announced
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ODDITIES IN THE NEWS

Nobody tangles with Daisie — the robbery try failed

GALVESTON, Ind. (AP) — Nobody tangles with 92-year-old Daisie Goldsberry and gets way with it. Two teen-agers from this tiny northern Indiana community learned that lesson last Friday night.

State police said the youths broke into Mrs. Goldsberry's home, grabbed her butcher knife and demanded money.

Mrs. Goldsberry picked up a coal stove poker and held off the would-be robbers for almost an hour, police said.

One of the youths left and was picked up by police later. The other was arrested at the scene. No money was taken.

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho (AP) — The pooch is a poodle, says a Kooteenai county magistrate, but the dog's allergic owner disagrees and says she'll appeal the verdict.

Joan Hodgeboom, 33, of Coeur d'Alene, said she bought Huggy Bear, a white puppy, because she had been told poodles might not bring on the asthma attacks she usually has around other dogs.

"But was I really upset when I found out I didn't have a poodle."

Mrs. Hodgeboom, seeking her $50 back in court, told Magistrate Lennis McLeod on Friday that a veterinarian verified her suspicions.

Jane Burgess, who sold Mrs. Hodgebloom the dog, said Huggy Bear was a purebred poodle.

McLeod said he ruled in favor of Mrs. Burgess because Mrs. Hodgeboom had not presented any evidence.

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — When pupils are suspended from school in Savannah, sometimes they're sent to the alligators.

The department of education says some students even volunteer to go to the alligators, which are part of an alternative education program for suspended pupils at the Oatland Island Education Centre.

Students can serve as tour guides on the island's nature trails for nearly 30,000 annual visitors, or they may work with the island's alligators, bobcats, bears, wolves and deer which are kept in natural enclosures.

A department spokesman said assignment to the island provides "learning experiences combined with immediate practical application of the knowledge, particularly in math, science and language arts."

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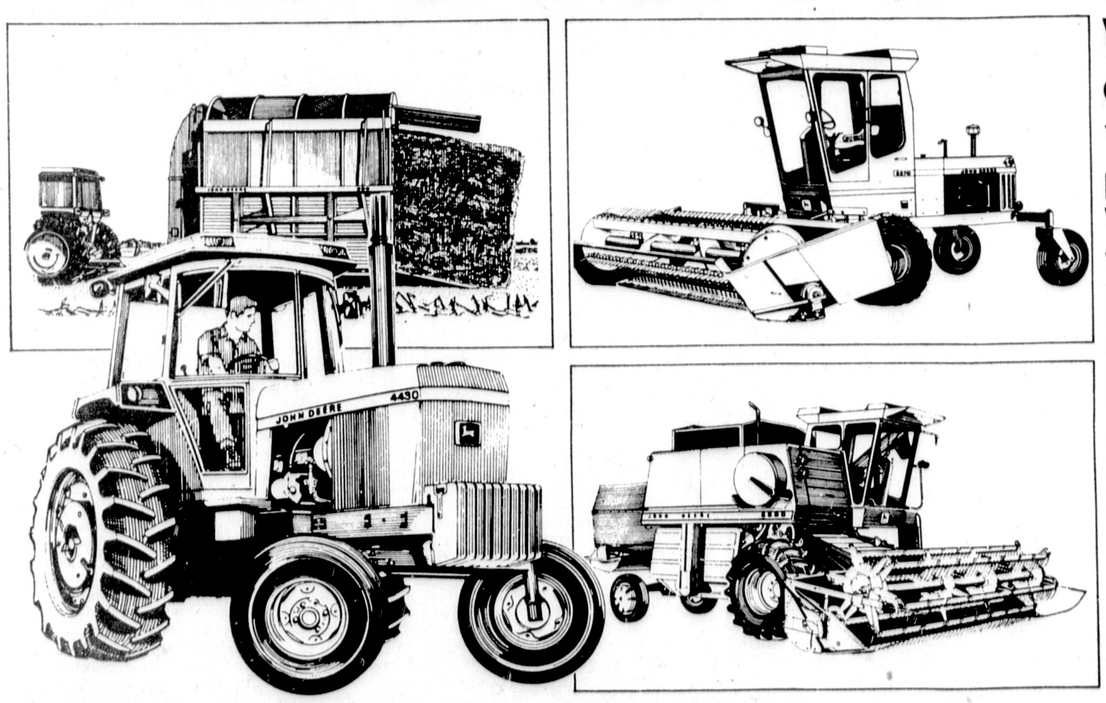

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