



BEAVER TALES

The Newsletter of The Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club

WINTER 2017



**Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY**

www.bruce-trail.org

Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club, Box 3251, Meaford, Ontario N4L 1A5 / www.beavervalleybruce-trail.org

The Falling Water Trail: A Story of Trail Development

by Jack Morgan, with assistance from
Ross McLean and David Port

We are pleased to print this excerpt from an upcoming history of the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club over the past 50 years, a project being coordinated by Past President Fred Young.

Many years ago, when the Bruce Trail and all of us were quite a bit younger, the Trail powers-that-be established an ideal route for the Trail. They called it the Optimum Route (OR) and they put it in capital letters. Where the Trail actually followed the Optimum Route everyone was happy. Where it didn't, Trail builders dreamed of the day that it would.

In the Beaver Valley section, that dreaming focused on the Optimum Route visible on old maps extending as a ghostly image south from where the existing Trail on the Euphrasia/Artemesia Townline crossed Grey Road 13 south of Kimberley. From there the OR went south to Eugenia Falls, continued on to Hoggs Falls, and down to the East Back Line just north of Flesherton and then up the west side of the Boyne/Beaver River system to meet the existing Trail again at the Beaver Valley Ski Club. That part of the Optimum Route, some 30 km of Trail, had never been developed.

For me, the development of that section of Trail, what eventually came to be called the Falling Water Trail, began with a phone call from Jackie Winters, Executive Director of the Bruce Trail Association at the time. It was early in the new millennium and the news she had to impart seemed a harbinger of the new era. The Ministry of Natural Resources had recently purchased some important acreage in the vicinity of Hoggs Falls near Flesherton, high up on the Boyne River. My ears perked up because I knew that the Hoggs Falls property was critical to our returning to that long-thwarted dream of realizing the Bruce Trail's full extent in the Beaver Valley. Just maybe this news was giving us the chance to do that.

Although some preliminary investigation had been done over the years and attempts made to develop this most southerly part of the Beaver Valley Club section, it was in



*Full Supermoon (also a "Beaver Moon") over the Escarpment,
November 13, 2016.*

the fall of 2004 that new and determined attention was given to scouting and building the new Trail. The early work would focus on the east side of the river system and the newly acquired MNR property at Hoggs Falls would receive most of the attention.

In cooperation with a Municipality of Grey Highlands Economic Development and Tourism Committee, the Club decided first to create two side trails using as their base the Falls themselves. That first effort resulted fairly quickly in the creation of the Hoggs Falls Lower and Upper Side Trails which were then 1.6 and 4 km respectively. As it turned out, all of these early Trail development efforts involved creating what were (until the official opening of the whole FWT some years later) all side trails. The main Trail continued to cross the Valley at the latitude of the Beaver Valley Ski Club until 2008.

Confirming the focus on lands already in the public domain and with the early success of the Hoggs Falls side trails in mind, the Club worked to establish two more side trails south and north of the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority land at Eugenia Falls, those trails about 1.6 and 6 km, respectively. At the same time, the Club was acquiring the private landowner handshake agreements necessary to connect the new Eugenia Falls side trails with the earlier ones at Hoggs Falls. The first such agreement, and so the first to take the new Trail out of

continued on page 4

the MNR Hoggs Falls property, was with the owners of a lovely 200-acre property immediately to the east of the MNR tract. This access was critical to the nascent development of the Trail and it gave volunteers the encouragement they needed at that point to keep going.

An extension of this early work on the east side of the Valley was to reach north to try to connect the new Eugenia Falls side trails to BTA-owned land some distance north of Eugenia. Several years earlier, the BTA, in anticipation of at some time realizing the full extent of the Optimum Route in the area and after a successful fundraising campaign, had speculatively purchased two parcels of land, the Gutzmer and Wiese properties, situated immediately south of the Ontario Power Generation flumes where they crossed Grey Road 13.

The organization was also actively pursuing two important Optimum Route properties that bracketed the Gutzmer and Wiese properties: the Krysac/Wilson property, immediately north of the OPG flumes, and the White/Campbell property, just south of Campbell's Hill Road. With the acquisition of these properties, and having received official Municipality of Grey Highlands permission to use a number of unopened road allowances, plus having acquired more handshake agreements in the vicinity of Eugenia, the Club now had the necessary permissions in place to push farther north.

Using work parties of both local volunteers and "flying" crews brought in from other clubs to assist, by the autumn of 2006 the Club had built and connected all of the east side trails. This now single, linked side trail ran from Hoggs Falls to Eugenia Falls and on north to the OPG flumes and beyond those, almost to the Artemesia-Euphrasia Townline and the existing main Trail.

This meant that by the end of 2006 the Club could shift its attention to the other side of the Valley. The next two years saw the Club concentrating on the westerly second half of the new Trail – from Hoggs Falls south to the East Back Line, across the Boyne River bridge and north up the west side of the Valley to the existing main Trail at the Beaver Valley Ski Club. Early work on the west side was made easier by the fact that the land from the East Back Line to within one property of Johnston's Side Road was part of that tract that had been purchased a few years earlier by the Ministry of Natural Resources, whose mandate then supported the Trail.

There were other supportive landowners as well. The first response we received to a letter sent out to all the landowners on the proposed route was from an enthusiastic supporter with property just south of Graham's Hill Road, who said that she was really excited at the prospect of having the Bruce Trail on her property and of course we could use her land.

continued from page 4

The handshake agreements didn't all come that easily. After many unsuccessful attempts to get a particular landowner's agreement, Chris Walker, the BTC's Trail Director, and I finally obtained the agreement by knocking on his door one more time. This time we caught him in mid-shower. He came to the door soaking wet, wrapped in a towel. With a little dog barking at us from behind the landowner's legs and a huge domestic goose hissing and eyeing us menacingly from behind, we prepared to conduct our negotiations through the open door. He looked at us and said over the din, "You again! What does it take to get rid of you?" I said, "A handshake." He said, "Anything!" and holding the towel with one hand, stuck out his other and we shook. As we walked away with our success, Chris turned to me and said, "Obviously it's an important part of the negotiations process to catch your landowner in a state of *déshabillé*."

Trail routing on the west side was also helped by the organization's purchase in those years of three critically-placed properties, all of them directly on the Optimum Route. One was the Harshman property, immediately north of Graham's Hill Road. That purchase also came with the donation by the family of a small property with a resurgent spring on it that was named Jordan's Springs, in honour of the family patriarch. Other purchases that followed soon after were the Fawcett farm just north of Johnston's SR and subsequently the Mills/Pollock property immediately south of Johnston's SR.

Challenges to trail mapping and building abounded on the west side, as they had on the east. Particularly difficult were the steep forested lands at the southernmost extent of the section and on the steep, stream-laced terrain to the north, south of County Road 30 at Bowles Hill, as well as the boulder-strewn talus slope south of Graham's Hill Road. Fortunately, later in the process we were able to reroute that part of the trail and avoid the talus by acquiring another landowner's handshake agreement.

As we had on the east side of the project, on the west side we were able for the most part to avoid putting the Trail on travelled roads. Much of it was routed through forest and along the edges of cultivated fields and through reverting meadows and orchards. The west side portion of the Trail was marked particularly by the crossing of many seeps and streams and small plunging waterfalls, always beautiful, but challenging to trail mappers and builders.

By June of 2008, work on both sides of the Falling Water Trail was almost complete. The final gap at its northeastern extent was closed that summer and the Trail was officially opened on Labour Day weekend 2008. The new Trail added 27.8 km to the overall length of the Bruce Trail and extended the length of the Beaver Valley Club section to almost 114 km. With the Valley Crossover Side Trail joining its two ends, the extension formed a formidable 30.4 km loop, which every two years



dedicated hikers still hike in one day in order to earn the Falling Water Trail badge.

The new Trail extension took about five years to plan and build. In the process, volunteers acquired the support and cooperation of the Municipality of Grey Highlands, the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Power Generation, the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy and the Beaver Valley Ski Club. Volunteers also acquired twelve handshake agreements from private landowners, giving permission to route the Trail across their properties.

Adding to the success of the new Trail was the effort by local volunteers and staff personnel from the Bruce Trail Conservancy's head office to acquire properties on the Falling Water Trail's Optimum Route and so add to the upper Valley's conservation corridor. This was accomplished, of course, with the assistance of our funding partners and hundreds of private donors. To date, nine properties on the route of the Falling Water Trail have been secured through purchase or donation, and the acquisition of others is presently being explored. Some of the newly acquired properties are mentioned by name in the text.

We built a lot of structures. We built stiles over fences; boardwalks through wetlands, notably in the Hoggs Falls area; steps where the going was steep, notably in places high on the western side of the valley and up the "kame" on the eastern side; many bridges over smaller streams up and down the Valley, including what was originally a non-bridge, jokingly called an "Irish Bridge", over Rock Mills Creek. After enough complaints from hikers about high water, wet feet and worse, the Club recently built 30 metres of wooden bridge across the three branches of the creek, with the considerable assistance of the Canadian Army's 32 Combat Engineers Regiment. The problem of how to safely cross the Beaver River above Eugenia Falls was solved when the Municipality of Grey Highlands helpfully reconstructed a foot bridge across the river just west of Grey Road 13.

continued on page 6

The number of person-hours invested in the project is hard to know for sure, but must run into the thousands, with dozens of volunteers involved at one time or another in one task or another – from raising money or donating it, to contacting landowners, negotiating handshake and purchase agreements with institutions and landowners, to reconnoitering terrain and plotting trail routes, to flagging, chain sawing, lopping, trimming, raking, to bridge-, boardwalk-, step- and stile-building and blaze-painting. There were dozens of smaller work parties over the development years, but there were four main ones, all later in the fall when the weather was cooler and the insects absent, the first one in November of 2004 “as snow approached” and the others in the month of October in 2005, 2006 and 2007. As an example, the main 2007 work party, held on the weekend of October 13-14, involved eight work crews and 38 volunteers, both local and “from away”.

It was fairly late in the process that Trail builders were inspired to suggest a change in the name of this work-in-progress, to this point variously called the Eugenia extension, the Hoggs Falls extension, or the Upper Beaver Valley extension. They now suggested it be called “The Falling Water Trail”. They had noticed that the steep upper Valley vastness was graced generously with moving water – gentle seeps, trickling rivulets, karst resurgences, small but spectacular cascading waterfalls that pitch over the steep western scarp face, the two signature waterfalls of the upper Valley, Hoggs and Eugenia Falls and, of course, the rivers themselves – the Boyne and the Beaver – the confluence of which lies between the eastern and western arms of the main Trail in the upper Valley. One was never far from the sight or the sound of falling water.

The new section of Trail gave access to a heretofore little known part of the Beaver Valley. In addition to falling water, the Trail abounded in features for hikers. To mention only a few, there were high lookouts above Eugenia Falls; a large till cone, a “kame”, created by the plunge pool of an ancient in-glacial waterfall; an overlook of Cuckoo Valley with its views north down the Beaver Valley to the high eastern ridges of the Escarpment; a still-visible pioneer cart track that traverses up one side of the Valley; deep climax forests; a small old-growth forest; large karst sink holes; rocky hogback spines; the precipitous edges of both secondary and main Escarpment often with long views north, south and across as well as down; remnants of long-ago attempts to tame the power of the river for hydro-electric purposes, as well as the penstocks of ongoing hydro-electric generation from the waters backed up in Lake Eugenia; deep vertical Escarpment crevices; and on the list could go.

In 2008, when the full length of the FWT was completed, the blue blazes of the temporary side trails painted white and 27.8 km of main Trail added to the Bruce Trail Reference Guide, hikers and the general public had gained in the Beaver Valley a Trail to rival in beauty, variety and challenge anything to be found from Queenston to Tobermory. The upper Beaver Valley dream had been realized.