

BRUCE BEACH HISTORY - 2005

Andrew G. Wilson Sr. – Bruce Beach Historian from 1986 to 2004

Last summer Andy Wilson invited me to his cottage (#7a) for cocktails and the transfer of Dr. MacKenzie's megaphone. It is now hanging over the front door in my cottage (#34) just as the task of preparing my first historical note has been hanging over me. Dr. Andrew Wilson Sr.'s contributions as the Bruce Beach Historian since 1986 are the topic of my inaugural presentation. In addition to honouring Andy, my intent is to show how his notes reveal a continuity of issues throughout our history. Two themes emerge. One is respect for the physical setting of Bruce Beach. The other is admiration for the people who have inhabited this environment, both Bruce Beachers and the neighbouring farmers.

For his first historical surveys, Andy relied heavily on a *Souvenir History of Bruce Beach* by Rev. W.A. Bradley, the first Bruce Beach historian. Andy summarized information from Bradley's interesting account on the 1910 formation of the Bruce Beach Campers Association and reprinted the earliest, extant Constitution of the Bruce Beach Association. Interestingly, except for the "care of stables and outhouses" our "Purposes" remain the same as those listed in 1915. We continue to be concerned with new buildings on the beach, garbage disposal, year round protection of our properties, good relations with permanent residents, preservation of a quiet life, promotion of health and recreation, and church services. In 1987, Andy outlined early responses to "property – rights and responsibilities". He recounted a concern of Bruce Beachers in the 1930s and 40s to take responsibility for maintaining the beauty of this special place themselves. Discussions with officials on issues such as sanitation, roads and incorporation formed the basis for Andy's 1988 article. In these notes, the reader senses Andy's great appreciation for the efforts of our forebearers to preserve the local setting, even individual trees. Andy appended a list of the Past Presidents to his first submission and, likewise, a list of Presidents since 1985 follows this one.

Andy emphasized the environment in the following two years when he wrote about the oscillations in lake levels as a natural and recurring phenomenon, and urged care with bonfires to avoid harm to bare feet and cottages, both while the fires are being enjoyed and when they are extinguished. This is still important. He also correctly predicted that our becoming landowners, as opposed to squatting like Bob McCosh Sr.'s "White Indians" or leasing as was done for more than a generation, would greatly increase the monetary value of our lots and change ownership patterns. We have witnessed both these things since 1980 when individuals could buy beach property. While affording greater security, this privatization has resulted in increased alterations to the natural environment with more gardening and with barriers being planted or constructed along property lines. The old path immediately behind the cottages that followed the route of the even older Goderich Road has disappeared. Ownership has fostered more renovations, grander cottages, and increasing year-round occupations. The original "White Indians" were not wealthy people nor were the numerous Reverends who soon joined them. The inflated values of their original lots could force some of their descendents to sell the family cottage. Countering these threats to our interconnectness are the jointly owned grove properties behind the cottages and our tradition of working, playing sports, and socializing together.

Andy praised not only our ancestors but also living “movers and shakers”. In 1991, he paid tribute to Carole Apsey (#157) for her *Historical Analysis: Bruce Beach – A Glance Back*. He also congratulated Mary Anne Maxwell Reid (# 28), who with her pleasant personality and clever mind was able to devise a cottage numbering and road naming system for the beach to comply with township regulations. In 1992, Andy lauded the generous spirit of the Clark-Huff family. Their ball diamond has been the setting for such good sport. Remembering George Fallis (#10a), as catcher, complaining about Sid Huff’s (#51) calls, as umpire, raises a smile as does thinking of my father, Bill Stewart (#34) still playing when others had to run the bases for him. Similarly, after writing about the 1994 Centennial activities (1993 and 1994), water controversies (1995), and the quiet summer of 1995 (1996), Andy informed us about Eugene Schweitzer’s (#14a) induction into Canada’s Aviation Hall of Fame as well as his contributions to the beach (1997). Clearly, generosity has been an attribute of Bruce Beachers throughout our history.

Over the next six years, Andy’s vignettes included various activities and environmental issues, such as the first tennis courts (1998) and the role of religion and the clergy on the beach (2000). In 1999, he combined his themes in his comments on the formation and the value of the Bruce Beach Association in protecting our environment and in supporting social activities. In 2001, low water levels resulted in exposed rocks and Andy gave us the names and locations of Gourlay’s rock and McKerroll’s rock. Are there more almost forgotten names of places or things that we should record in the Yearbook? In 2003, Andy explained seiches.

Last year, Andy returned to Dr. Bradley and his recording of the early history of Bruce Beach. I echo Andy’s praise of Dr. Bradley. Thanks are also due to Andy for his interesting Yearbook entries, and particularly, for his emphasizing the importance of protecting our environment and the social aspects of our cottage culture. Many thanks, Andy.

Bruce Beach Cottagers Association Presidents Since 1985

1986-1987	John Kennedy, No. 8
1988-1989	Don Moffatt, No. 102
1990-1991	MaryAnne Reid, No. 28
1992-1993	Burt Matthews, No. 33
1994-1995	Dick Huff, No. 51
1996-1997	Ann Lichtenberg, No. 171
1998-1999	Pat McFarlane, No. 16a or 148 Gordon St.
2000-2001	Ross Klopp, No. 35
2002-2003	Don Cass, No. 18
2004-2005	Bob Cunningham, No. 109

In 1986, Andy noted that there had been only one female president since 1910. As you can see, things have improved somewhat with three female presidents between 1986 and now.

*Frances L. Stewart,
Bruce Beach Historian*