



# Interoffice Memorandum

**GEORGINA**

**The Clerks Division**

**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Aneeta Mohammed, Committee Services Coordinator  
**Cc:** Rachel Dillabough, Town Clerk  
**Date:** August 11, 2021  
**Re:** RESOLUTION NO. GHAC-2021-0023

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On May 19, 2021 the Heritage Advisory Committee (GHAC) adopted the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION NO. GHAC-2021-0023**

Moved By: Allan Morton

Seconded By: Denise Roy

That the Jackson's Point Marine Railway be designated as a historical site - a heritage report is forthcoming.

**Carried**

Please note that Resolution No. GHAC-2021-0023 is provided from an un-adopted version of minutes.

In their deliberations, the Committee considered the findings of Scott Williamson, Director of the Lake Simcoe Marine Heritage Society in his 1999 report, "Historical Study of the Submerged Marine Railway in Lake Simcoe at Jackson's Point", included for your reference as "Attachment 1".

Also included as "Attachment 2", and commencing on page 17 herein is an article appearing in Georgina Historical Society's Newsletter No. 2, Volume 4, dated February, 2021. The article, titled "An Interesting Historic Structure: Jackson's Point Marine Railway goes on display!" provides a description of, and some background into the railway, as described by Paul Brady, Director.

Please note that while the above resolution indicates that a heritage report is forthcoming, the following reports are being submitted in its stead. Should Council wish to refer this matter to the appropriate staff, a detailed evaluation report will be presented to Council at a later date.

**Historical Study of the Submerged Marine Railway  
in Lake Simcoe at Jackson's Point**

**by Scott Williamson**

**Fifth edition**

**August, 1999**

**Mandate:**

To determine when the structure was built, by whom and for what purpose.

To assess its historical and cultural value.

**Conclusions:**

The structure is in fact a marine railway, used to lift ships in and out of the lake so that they might be repaired or stored for the winter. It could also have been used to launch new ships, such as the steamship SUTTON BELLE, which was most likely built on the site in 1880.

While technically not a "drydock," it was usually referred to as such in the historical record, and for a time by its owners. That colloquial nomenclature remains associated with the site to this day, as many long time residents still refer to it as the "drydock for the Enterprise."

It is a completely intact section with rails and carriage stops, measuring approximately two hundred feet long, by twenty four feet wide.

It could date from as early as 1832 when the owner of the property at that time, *James O'Brien Bouchier*, was also a part owner of the steamship SIMCOE.

Partners *Levi Miller* and *John M. McDonald* owned the property its on, and at least two steamships, the ENTERPRISE and the R. KENDRICK between 1867 and 1900.

Partners *Levi Miller* and and *Donald W. McDonald* operated *The Lake Simcoe Transportation and Dry Dock Company* on the site during that time. They could have built the structure as part of that business, or simply taken over the use of it after legally acquiring the site in 1877.

It is the only nineteenth century marine railway on Lake Simcoe.

It provides a unique link between the land-based history of the area, and the thriving nineteenth century Lake Simcoe steam-shipping industry, and has untapped potential as a tourist attraction.

**Recommendations:**

The Marine Railway is a significant historical artifact and should be preserved and protected.

An interpretive plaque should be erected on the site describing the structure and its function, and explaining the colourful history of the area as a centre of commerce and tourism in the steam era.

It should be promoted as an attraction for sport SCUBA divers, in conjunction with the nearby wreck of the steamship ENTERPRISE.

The recently discovered wreck of the ENTERPRISE has attracted national attention, due to its connection to Stephen Leacock, and the Stephen Leacock Museum National Historic Site.

As the home port and "dry dock" for that ship and others, the Jackson's Point Marine Railway is a natural complement to that site, as well as the nearby St. George's Church at Sibbald Point, final resting place of Mr. Leacock, Canada's most renowned and beloved humourist.

The sport of SCUBA diving represents a great business opportunity that the Town of Georgina and its tourism industry should take advantage of. With society's trends toward eco-tourism and more environmentally friendly leisure activities, SCUBA diving is rapidly growing in popularity, and the value of sites like this is becoming more apparent.

Other existing dive sites nearby should be similarly promoted, and new ones could be created in the form of artificial reefs, as has been done elsewhere in Lake Simcoe, across Canada, and throughout the world. They would be a great tourist attraction and provide badly needed habitat for the struggling fish species of Lake Simcoe.

**Findings:**

- 1818 - February 4, Patent grants the site to Captain William Bouchier, R.N.  
*(Sutton Public Library, vertical file: Georgina Local History)*
- 1821 - William Bouchier transfers ownership to his brother, James O'Brien Bouchier, midshipman, R.N. *(Sutton Public Library, vertical file: Georgina Local History)*
- 1832 - The site becomes a calling port for steamships as the first one on the lake, THE SIR JOHN COLBORNE, makes regular stops there.  
*(Steamboating on the Trent-Severn by Richard Tatley, p.30)*
- 1832 - Steamer arrived at Jackson's Point.  
*(Diary of Captain William Johnson, Georgina Historical Society Archives)*
- 1832 - James O'Brien Bouchier, owner of the property, becomes a shareholder in the steamer SIMCOE. *(Georgina, History of a Township, p.3)*
- 1846 - The steamboat BEAVER stops at Jackson's Point.  
*(Smith's Canadian Gazetteer, 1846)*
- 1853 - James O'Brien Bouchier arranges for cargoes to be sent to Bradford on the steamship SULTANA. *(Georgina, History of a Township, p.5)*
- 1856 - Levi Miller, lumberman, emigrates from New York State, U.S.A.  
Takes up residence in Roche's Point. *(Georgina Historical Society Archives)*
- 1864 - Steamer EMILY MAY was calling at Jackson's Point. - Lindsay Canadian Post  
*(Historical files, Richard Tatley, Gravenhurst, Ont.)*
- 186? - Steam tug CONQUEROR imported to Lake Simcoe after 1860 (like the R. KENDRICK). Was said to have been commanded by Captain Alex, "Curly Alec" McDonald. - Capt. Lachlan Johnston, 1911  
*(Historical files, Richard Tatley, Gravenhurst, Ont.)*

Findings (Cont'd.):

1867 - July 22, Levi Miller and John McDonald purchase the site from Richard H. Kirkpatrick of Goderich, who acquired it as a result of a suit between Clifton Jackson and James O'Brien Bouchier. Described as: 150 acres composed of broken lots one and two in the ninth concession, and lot two in the eighth concession, Township of Georgina.

Consideration: Two thousand, two hundred and fifty dollars.

*(York County Land Registry Office, Inst. # 4532 Georgina)*

1869 - September 20, Levi Miller sells his entire share in the property to John McDonald.

Consideration: Two thousand, six hundred and fifty dollars.

*(York County Land Registry Office, Inst. # 133 Georgina)*

1869 - September 23, John McDonald mortgages the property to Alexander Thomson of Scott Township in the amount of one thousand and two hundred dollars.

*(York County Land Registry Office, Inst. # 116 Georgina)*

1877 - Levi Miller is granted a waterlot on the site by the Crown.

*(Crown Lands Dept. reference # 41931, sale #38462)*

1880 - SUTTON BELLE Screw steamer built at Sutton, Ont. by Charles Goodyer of same.

Owners: Charles Goodyer, William Smith Ramsay (lumberman) and John Bouchier (lumberman), all of Sutton. *(Public Archives of Canada Vol. 239 (Toronto), p. 58)*

1880 - SUTTON BELLE inspected at Jackson's Point. Vessel a screw passenger and tug. Plies, Sutton to shores of Lake Simcoe.

*(Department of Marine and Fisheries, Report 1880 p. 76)*

1886 - Steamer R. KENDRICK caught fire at Miller's Wharf. By great effort all the lower portion saved and the tug was at once run up on the dry dock at Jackson's Point to be rebuilt. *(Newmarket Era, November 5, 1886)*

**Findings (Cont'd.):**

1887 - QUEEN OF THE ISLES, now overhauled and repainted at Jackson's Point.

*(Orillia Daily Times, May 12, 1887)*

1888 - Steamer QUEEN OF THE ISLES, under Captain Johnston, is to be drydocked at Jackson's Point, and will apparently get a new engine.

*(Orillia Daily Times, Sept. 27, 1888)*

1890 - Mr. McPherson has sold the ENTERPRISE to Mr. Levi Miller of Keswick.

He will rebuild her next winter. *(Orillia Daily Times, June 26, 1890)*

1890 - Mr. W.S. Ramsay of Jackson's Point, and Mr. Levi Miller of Roache's Point purchased the steamer ENTERPRISE on Wednesday last from Mr. Jas Macpherson, of Rama.

*(Barrie Northern Advance, July 3, 1890, p.2)*

1890 - Mr. Levi has purchased the Str. ENTERPRISE and contemplates improvements to make her a first class steamer. Mr. W.E. Sheppard will be the general manager.

- *Sutton Herald* *(Barrie Examiner, July 3, 1890)*

1890 - The steamer ENTERPRISE is now at Jackson's Point where she will be laid up during the winter. She will be placed on the dry dock and thoroughly overhauled.

*(Barrie Examiner, October 2, 1890)*

1891 - *Sutton* - The boats here are fast approaching completion. The ENTERPRISE, now on the dry dock, is expected to be launched tomorrow. The CAMILLA is to go on the dock immediately after the ENTERPRISE leaves it... The R. KENDRICK has also a new boiler and improved engine. She will be ready in a few days. Mr. Ramsay, the owner... Jackson's Pt. is a busy place at present. *(Newmarket Era, May 1, 1891)*

Findings (Cont'd.):

- 1891 - The ENTERPRISE came into port last Wednesday afternoon... She has been greatly improved since last summer. She has been supplied with a new propelling apparatus... She has been repainted throughout. *(Barrie Northern Advance, May 21, 1891)*
- 1891 - The steamer KENDRICK has been placed in Jackson's Point dry dock, to replace a broken screw with a new one, and to be repainted.  
*(Barrie Northern Advance, May 21, 1891)*
- 1891 - Steamship R. KENDRICK is licensed to carry 40 passengers on Lake Simcoe.  
*(Department of Marine and Fisheries, Report 1891, p.78)*
- 1892 - May 1, Registry of R. KENDRICK is transferred from Brockville to Toronto.  
Owner: Levi Miller *(National Archives of Canada, RG-42, C3192, Vol.453)*
- 1894 - Next Monday... the ENTERPRISE will reach port. She will be under the command of Captain McDonald, the owner... *(Northern Advance, June 6, 1894)*
- 1895 - The steamer KENDRICK broke down at Beaverton Tuesday morning. Her owner Levi Miller of Sutton was on her... *(Orillia Times, August 8, 1895)*
- 1896 - R. KENDRICK a freighter on Lake Simcoe.  
*(Department of Marine and Fisheries, Report 1896)*
- 1896 - ENTERPRISE purchased by D.W. McDonald for Five hundred dollars.  
*(Historical files, Richard Tatley, Gravenhurst, Ont.)*
- 1896 - The ENTERPRISE is being repainted and refitted and will be here on Saturday with an excursion from Jackson's Point. *(Barrie Examiner, June 18, 1896)*
- 1896 - For five years I have endeavored to cater to your convenience and comfort and... the best interests of my boat the ENTERPRISE. - D.W. McDonald  
*(Barrie Examiner, July 2, 1896)*

Findings (Cont'd.):

- 1897 - S.S. ENTERPRISE, now lying at Jackson's Point, Lake Simcoe is advertised to be sold by public auction on April 17, 1897.  
(*Barrie Northern Advance, April 8, 1897*)
- 1898 - Jackson's Point Hotel and Cottages, owned by D.W. McDonald, situated on the property. (*Canadian Summer Resort Guide, Frederick Smily, Toronto. fifth edition*)
- 1898 - (estimated) *Advertisement*: - D.W. McDonald, Lumber and Shingles, Lake Simcoe Navigation and Drydock Company, Summer Cottages to Let, etc. L. Miller, Manager; D.W. McDonald, Sec. Treasurer. (*Village of Sutton Chronicles, p.53*)
- 1898 - Steamer ENTERPRISE arrives in Barrie to begin the season. Every part of the steamer has been thoroughly overhauled. Crew: Captain, Alex McDonald; mate, Captain Marsh; steward, G.E. Bingham; engineer, Silas Soules; fireman, James Sedore; deckhand, William Foote. W.E. Sheppard is excursion manager. Captain Marsh, the present owner... (*Barrie Northern Advance, June 16, 1898*)  
McDonald, Sedore and Sheppard were residents of Sutton/Jackson's Point.  
(*Sutton Public Library, vertical file: Georgina Local History*)
- 1899 - ENTERPRISE was purchased by George Francis Marsh. Accordingly, he gave the Enterprise a thorough refit at Jackson's Point...  
(*Steamboating on the Trent-Severn by Richard Tatley, p. 148*)
- 1899 - ENTERPRISE being refitted at Sutton. (*Orillia Times, May 18, 1899*)
- 1899 - The ENTERPRISE is not being lengthened but is being refitted throughout. Describes extensive modifications. (*Newmarket Era, May 26, 1899*)
- 1900 - February 20, The registry of the R. KENDRICK was closed. Owner reports vessel broken up through ordinary wear and tear.  
(*Public Archives of Canada Vol. 453 (Toronto), p. 50*)

Findings (Cont'd.):

1901 - The steamer MYRTLE has been given her new owners a lot of trouble. She was placed on dry dock at Jackson's Point on Saturday for a thorough overhauling.

*(Barrie Examiner, July 25, 1901)*

1901 - The ISLAY met with misfortune last Friday evening... The VALDA towed the ISLAY to Barrie and the ENTERPRISE took her to Jackson's Point.

*(Barrie Northern Advance, August 8, 1901)*

1901 - The ISLAY met with a serious mishap on Friday, which has laid her up for this week.

The vessel was towed to Jackson's Point by the ENTERPRISE and put into dry-dock to tighten her propeller... *(Orillia Packet, August 8, 1901)*

1902 - Steamer ENTERPRISE, Alex McDonald, master, will commence her regular trips on Saturday June 28. *(Barrie Northern Advance, June 26, 1902)*

1902 - The Str. ENTERPRISE met with a mishap in the Holland River last Thursday... The boat is now on dry dock at Jackson's Point. *(Barrie Northern Advance, July 31, 1902)*

1902 - The steamer ENTERPRISE is in dry dock at Jackson's Point undergoing repairs to machinery. She was slightly damaged while coming down Holland River Thursday...

*(Barrie Examiner, July 31, 1902)*

1902 - The ENTERPRISE became disabled on her way down and was unable to take back her passengers... The steamer left here the same evening for Jackson's Point

for repairs. *(Bradford Witness and News, July 31, 1902)*

1902 - Steamer ENTERPRISE... will be taken to Jackson's Point where the machinery will be taken out of her. *(Barrie Northern Advance, August 21, 1902)*

1903 - The steamer ENTERPRISE was raised last week... the intention is to tow her to Jackson's Point and remove the machinery from her hull.

*(Northern Advance, August 27, 1903)*

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**Findings (Cont'd.):**

1903 - Steamer ENTERPRISE left for Jackson's Point on Monday... the machinery is to be removed. (*Barrie Northern Advance, September 3, 1903*)

1903 - The old ENTERPRISE made what probably her last trip on Monday steaming to Jackson's Point where her machinery is to be removed.  
(*Barrie Examiner, September 3, 1903*)

1903 - Mr. Donald McDonald sr., and his brother Alex...  
(*The Newmarket Era, Sept. 11, 1903, p.6*)

1903 - The Str. ENTERPRISE now lying at Jackson's Pt. is being stripped of her engines and all machinery. (*The Newmarket Era, Sept. 11, 1903, p.6*)

1903 - ENTERPRISE is now being dismantled at Jackson's Point.  
(*Barrie Northern Advance, October 1, 1903*)

1903 - Capt. MacInnes of Orillia states that the marine railway at Jackson's Point will probably be repaired immediately and the ISLAY will go into winter quarters there.  
(*Barrie Northern Advance, October 15, 1903*)

1903 - The MINOTA is high and dry on the marine railway at Jackson's Point and during the week will be moved over to make way for the ISLAY.  
(*Barrie Northern Advance, November 19, 1903*)

1977 - McDonald family owned headlands at Jackson's Point. Steamer drydocked near government wharf.  
(*George Burrows, Sutton, 1977, as told to Richard Tatley, Historical Files, R.Tatley*)

1978 - The ENTERPRISE...changed hands a number of times over the years, and was sometimes chartered for a season by free-lance captains. Her home port was usually Barrie but she frequently spent the winters drydocked at Jackson's Pt.  
(*Steamboating on the Trent-Severn by Richard Tatley, p.146, 147*)

Findings (Cont'd.):

1990 - When settling in a new land the pioneers brought with them their memories of the way of life they had left behind. The homes and buildings that they have left for us to enjoy are a tangible reminder of how well they succeeded. ...we must treasure and preserve for our own enjoyment and for the knowledge they can impart about a way of life gone forever. Future generations will thank us.

*(Nena Marsden, Georgina Historical Society. Georgina Advocate, Sutton Centennial Supplement, August 1, 1990)*

1998 - From the heritage point of view, shipwrecks are wonderful time capsules. Undisturbed and preserved in cold dark fresh water, their remains can stay remarkably preserved. Exposing a window into our past that has perfect clarity. But from the cultural tourism aspect, they are a gold mine. Cultural and sport diving is a growing industry and should be encouraged by Georgina. It is a politician's dream of a clean, light industry. Even the creation of artificial reefs is not necessarily a bad thing. It is a potential source of revenue that Georgina should consider.

*(Valerie Pring, Georgina This Month/The Sutton Sun, February, 1998)*



Scott Williamson Photos

Page 6, The Georgina Advocate, Friday, August 6, 1999

## Jackson's Pt.'s hidden treasure

A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to dive on the remains of the old marine railway under the water just off Jackson's Point.

Paul Harpley and I donned fins and snorkling gear and waded into the warm shallows at the foot of Malone St. where the government dock is located.

Almost immediately upon submerging, the massive, more than century old logs loomed about 15 feet below us. I'd known the structure was there having lost enough expensive lures on it, but I'd never been up close under water.

Having seen it, I can understand why divers are so enthusiastic about preserving it. For one thing, it's much larger than I thought, curving away for about 200 feet into the lake. It's teeming with fish that swim in, around and under the huge interlocking logs, and further on, lying fully visible on the bottom, is a massive wheel, likely from the marine rail carriage. Thanks to the zebra mussels (it's an ill wind, eh?), the water is now clear enough to see right to the bottom.

Paul sketched the wheel (below), which is about three feet in diameter and six inches thick, and noted the inscription 'Dominion Wheel and



### My opinion John Slykhuis

Paul who's also dived there, thinks the marine railway is a more attractive dive site.

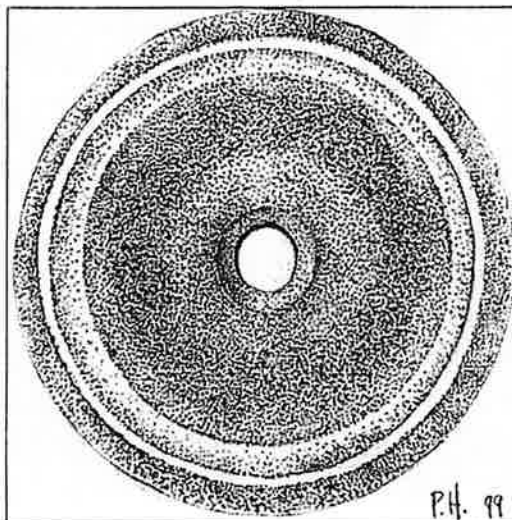
Hopefully the town will recognize the potential here and make this a millennium project. The shoreline area at the foot of Malone should be rehabilitated (it's now unsightly and rock-strewn - painful on bare feet) and the dive area itself delineated with a buoy line to keep watercraft away. A dive platform could also be constructed. Maybe there's grant money available for something like this.

I think it would also be a good idea to make that a 'no fishing' zone, restricting the anglers to using the area inside the breakwater. As it is, they're a messy bunch, leaving all kinds of garbage strewn over the breakwater.

The wreck of the old steamer Enterprise is out there at a still-secret location. It's time to have that site properly designated and protected as well, then open it up to divers.

With the new harbour, and this very attractive tourist attraction, Jackson's Point has a great opportunity here that shouldn't be passed up.

I invite anyone (especially members of council) to strap on the diving gear and have a look for themselves. No further convincing after that will be necessary.

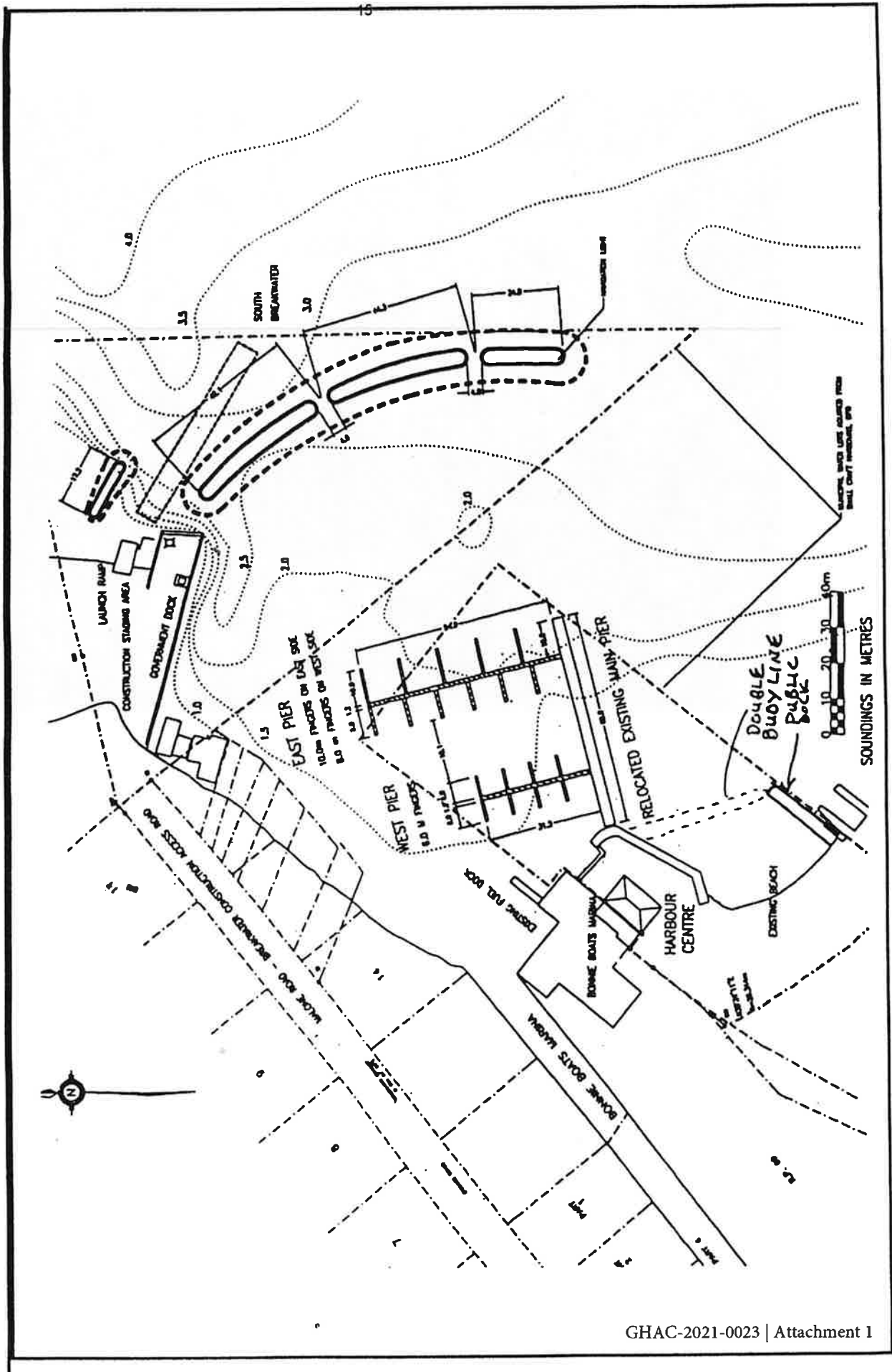


Foundary Toronto'.

Paul dove on it again a few days later and discovered someone had managed to turn the wheel over, revealing a different design. Thank goodness it's too heavy for someone to drag ashore - at least for now, which gives more weight to the argument that this entire underwater site should be designated a heritage site and preserved for future generations.

The new harbour breakwater offers shelter for divers who in the past had to dodge hotdogs on jetskis and motorboats pulling into the bay.

With the Toronto area having the largest number of divers in the country, this site has the potential to be a great tourist attraction. You only have to look at the thousands of divers who converge on Tobermory to view the wrecks there every year. Incidentally,



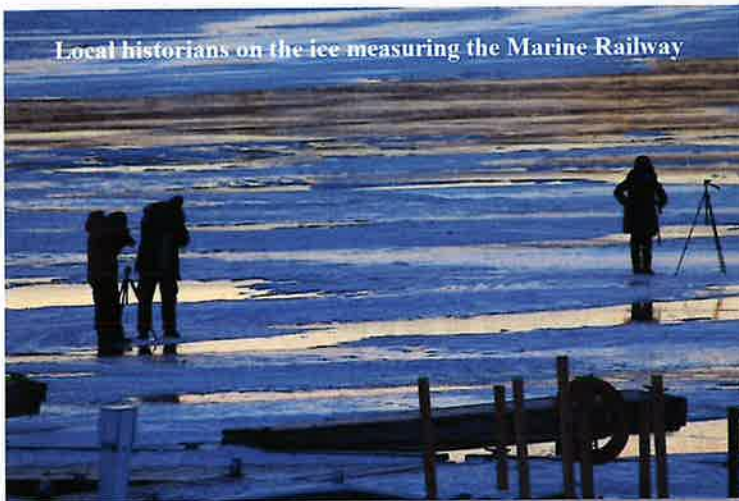


[georginahistoricalociety@outlook.com](mailto:georginahistoricalociety@outlook.com) or by contacting a member of the Board listed on the last page of this newsletter.

## **An Interesting Historic Structure: Jackson's Point Marine Railway goes on display!**

**By Paul Brady**

This past winter, a unique opportunity to glimpse the past was afforded us. With the warm fall and late freeze up of Lake Simcoe, the water around the historic Jackson's Point harbour stayed open later than usual. A normal winter has many freeze-thaw cycles in the



early winter, resulting in rough, milky ice around the shore. The early winter of the 2020-2021 season, however, was warmer than usual, resulting in open water around the break-walls. When it did get cold the ice froze beautifully and the result was what is known as black ice, a solid, crystal clear ice that affords exceptional clarity.

As luck would have it, some of this ice formed above a structure dating back to pioneer days on Lake Simcoe. This structure is just off shore at the end of the Malone Road wharf, lying directly on the lake bed. Normally this structure is hidden from view under the water, only to be seen from a boat or by divers. The water is maybe four feet deep here but extends at a gentle slope to at least two hundred feet from shore, and about to about fifteen feet deep. The part of the structure that ran up onto the land is gone, removed long ago to allow a conventional boat launch, also now gone, to be constructed.

The structure itself is an amazing artifact. It is about twenty feet wide, about two hundred feet long and three beams wide, joined about every ten feet by more beams. These beams are at least ten inches square. The outer beams have raised sides of smaller pieces of wood, creating a track about six inches wide. It is hard to see how the beams are attached.



So, what exactly do we have here? Often referred to as a dry dock, it is technically a marine railway, created to bring steam boats of over a century and a half ago out of the lake for repair or winter storage. It could possibly even date back to as early as the 1830's. It is not related in any way to the Lake Simcoe Junction Railway which accessed the other side of the harbour at the end of Bonnie Blvd. The marine railway was built by enterprising entrepreneurs, intent on capitalizing on the only safe, deep harbour on Lake Simcoe's south shore. This area was one of the earliest access points along the shore and indeed was, and continues to be, a safe shelter from the storms that create havoc on the lake. At that time a saw mill was located in the harbour creating lumber to be shipped south. Before the Lake Simcoe Junction Railway arrived in Jackson's Point in 1877, this lumber would have been directed to Belle Ewart with steam powered boats to be shipped by rail from there.

The steam boats worked on Lake Simcoe before roads, or even railways, were constructed. It is also surprising how big they were. The "Emily May", for instance, was about 150' long with a 22' beam. We know from newspaper reports of the day that this was a very busy facility, accommodating repairs on boats such as the "Enterprise", at one time owned by the same company that owned the marine railway, the "Lake Simcoe Transportation and Dry Dock Company". This must have been a busy depot as it is



possible that this marine railway/dry dock was the only one on Lake Simcoe. It was definitely the only one on the south shore, and almost certainly the last remaining one of this age and scale in Ontario.

The question is, how did it work? To get the boats out of the water, a carriage would need to be placed under the boat. Indeed, a cast iron wheel lay on the bottom for years until it mysteriously disappeared some time ago. How did they attach the carriage to the boat? The wheels of the carriage would have ridden in the tracks that we could see on the outer beams but how did they actually move the assembly? Did they use the sheer power of a team of horses or maybe a primitive engine of some sort? And once they got the boat out, how they put it back in? Lots of questions, but these were enterprising people and they obviously had these problems worked out.

The area where the marine railway is located lies wholly within the water lot associated with the Malone Road wharf, owned by the Town of Georgina. The marine railway has had the interest of local historians for years. The current break walls, constructed in the late nineteen nineties, straddle the structure. The original plan for the break wall would have destroyed this artifact but community involvement intervened to save it. It is currently on Georgina's Heritage List and a Heritage Designation is in the works, protecting it for

future generations to study. Hopefully our current Town Council will be the one to finally give it the protection it deserves.

This is the first time in my recollection that the marine railway has been so accessible. I am sure that black ice has formed above it before, but snow would have obscured it quickly. This year the snow stayed away for several weeks, and indeed the black ice created a wonderful skating opportunity that extended for about a kilometre along the south shore. It is interesting to think of such a seemingly fragile wooden artifact surviving under water for so many years, and that such an unusual set of weather conditions would let us appreciate its size and construction for such an extended period of time.

## Of Marine Railways, Patent Slips and Slipways:

### A Brief History

(Adapted and condensed by Bob Holden from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent\\_slip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent_slip) and other sources.)

The patent slip or marine railway is an inclined plane extending from shoreline into water, featuring a "cradle" onto which a ship is first floated, and a mechanism to haul the ship, attached to the cradle, out of the water onto a slip. Invented by a Scot, Thomas Morton in the early 19th century, it was as a cheaper alternative to dry docks for marine vessel repairs, in particular below the waterline. Larger modern marine railways can handle vessels of thousands of tons.

Patent slip at Arbroath Harbour,  
Scotland

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent\\_slip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent_slip)



The process of slipping a vessel is an inexpensive and straightforward way to take a large vessel out of water for inspection, repair, or storage. In tidal harbors and ports, it is normally necessary to wait for high tide. In many cases, it is possible to take the vessel out of the water on one tide, and to make repairs and return it to the water on the next tide.

The first step in use of a patent slip or marine railway system involves a "cradle" being lowered to the bottom of the inclined plane (the slip/slipway), at which point the vessel is moved into position directly above the cradle. The vessel is then be moored to the cradle with a number of ropes fore and aft to prevent the vessel from moving in any direction. Large marine railways and patent slips can handle vessels of 6,000 tons.

In the mid-19th century the Crandall family of Boston, Massachusetts (Crandall 1967) developed their own peculiar system commonly referred to as a 'marine railway' or 'railway dry dock'. They use live rollers instead of wheels and cradles built up aft to a wedge shape so that the line of the keel blocks is level. A smaller variant of this system may be seen in use all over our lake by cottagers to haul boats onto land or into boathouses for storage.



Evans Bay patent slipway, New Zealand

[www.nzhistory.net.nz](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz)

In addition, a patent slipway or marine railway can substitute for a traditional waterway lock in areas where the terrain is poorly suited to an installation of that kind. This would consist of a railway where two ends each access a body of water, with a dry high point in between. A working example still in use is the Big Chute Marine Railway in Ontario, Canada.

**The old Big Chute Marine Railway, showing the cradle and rail system**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent\\_slip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent_slip)



Invented by shipwright Thomas Morton in 1818,<sup>[1][2]</sup> the patent slipway offered an alternative to the expensive and time-consuming process of dry docking a ship to perform maintenance or repairs to its hull below waterline. The means and mechanisms over time became various, but always include a "cradle" onto which the ship is floated, and a mechanical mechanism for transferring the ship from water to land up an incline. The destination where work was performed was termed the slip.

The earliest patent slipways used teams of men or animals to haul small vessels in wheeled cradles up the slipway. Later blocks and pulleys and large winches linked to heavy hawsers or chains gave a much greater mechanical advantage allowing larger vessels to be hauled up into a slip. As technology improved, animal and human muscle was replaced; first by steam engines, then later with internal combustion or electrical motors allowing much larger vessels to be hauled up the slipways.

1 Prosser, R. B. "[\*Morton, Thomas \(1781–1832\), shipbuilder and inventor of a ship-building slip\*](#)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press.

2 Morton, Thomas & John Barclay (12 March 1824). "*Infringement of a patent: notes of a trial before the Jury Court at Edinburgh*". W. Reid & Son.

3 Stuart Cameron (2005) "*The Patent Slip*", *ClydeSite Magazine, Issue 5, Article 4* (23 March 2003), see [\[1\]](#), accessed 30 June 2014.

**Also consulted:** [https://coms.events/pianc-panama/data/full\\_papers/full\\_paper\\_176.pdf](https://coms.events/pianc-panama/data/full_papers/full_paper_176.pdf) and *Crandall Dry Dock Engineers Inc (1967) Railway Dry Docks*