

"From the files of Bernice Merkley, Township clerk"

Ryde's 104th Birthday Celebration Aug 20 1983

Gravenhurst Banner Aug 25 1983 Wanda Miller's column from information given by Bernice Merkley

Ryde was organized as a Township in 1879. It was first attached to the county of Victoria. The old township seal was still used in 1970 before the township became part of Gravenhurst. This was the original seal. Finances were always a problem, so why get something new when the old was still useful. The word "Victoria" on the seal was filed off and the seal read "Corporation of the Township of Ryde, County of..." and then there was a blank. It was Ryde's official seal and legal. The officials never did get one with the District of Muskoka on it.

Past Reeves of Ryde were Moses McLelland for 10 yrs. Wm Lowe served 11 yrs, but not all at one time, J. E. Taverner, H.H. Hill, J.E. Clement, Osborne Bush and Russell Ruttan.

Bernice (Mrs. Bert) Merkley was clerk from 1957 to 1970.

December 2nd 1961 was the date Ryde Township had a memorable election night. Candidates for Reeve were J. E. Clement and Russell Ruttan. When the ballots were counted, both candidates had 45 votes. A few days after Bernice took the votes before a judge for a recount. The result was the same. As Mr. Ruttan had been reeve the year before Bernice cast her vote in favor of him. Mr. Clement was very sportsmanlike about her vote and never held it against her.

This year Ryde residents were very pleased to have the main road paved to Barkway.

"In 1879 a bridge was built over the Kosheshebog River on Ryde Road. In 1959 [says 69 in the column] I was out delivering tax bills. That's how the residents received their tax bills. Most people paid when the bill was presented to them", said Bernice Merkley.

"When a truck and trailer loaded with lumber broke through the bridge the damage was so extensive a new bridge was required. "

"For a year most of Housey's Rapids traffic had to go by way of Barkway. The new bridge opened officially July 23 1960, Dr. Dymont, M.P.P. cut the ribbon. Gordon Aiken, M.P. Bob Boyer, M. P.P. and District Road Engineer Boucher were dignitaries at the ceremony, with Reeve Russell Ruttan and councillors.

Cottagers from Kahshe Lake decorated boats for a parade that passed under the bridge.

"In the mid 1870's a log schoolhouse was built on Lot 16, south-east corner of Concession 11, Ryde, which is now known as Barkway. The building served for about 25 yrs. In 1902 a building; which is now the W. I. Hall, was built, and in 1962 a new brick schoolhouse was built where the 104th birthday was held."

Bernice often wonders if the present school boards would be as conscientious about finances as they were then.

"The School board was having trouble getting enough money for curtains for the new schoolhouse," said Bernice, One enterprising soul sewed new material on the bottoms of the old curtains until such times as they would have enough tax money to buy new ones."