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The river is there. Enjoy it

The Albion-Bolton Historical Society (ABHS) has this year done three presentations on Hurricane Hazel to other local groups. We heard many hitherto unpublished personal stories of that terrifying night in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and in Caledon in particular, in October 1954. As a consequence, in 1959 the Provincial government passed legislation to create flood mitigation measures, mainly to endeavour to prevent such massive impact occurring again in the GTA.

One section, fortunately (we now know), was subsequently abandoned by the Davis government. It was to construct several enormous earthen dams and lakes along GTA rivers. One, at about 25 metres high, was to be just west of downtown Bolton at Glasgow Road. They were all to be modelled on those being built in the U.S.A. and territories by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, who subsequently appear to have built about 80.

People who recall that original intention envisioned great recreational possibilities as the subsequent lake was to be about eight kilometres long ? most of the way to Old Church Road. There would also have been a road over the top of the road connecting King Street West to Highway 50. However, we now know these earthen damns are beginning to fail in the U.S., and unfortunately a massive amount of construction has been allowed downstream. The one in Orville, California needs in excess of $100 million which the State is trying to borrow, and now we hear of the one failing in Puerto Rico. With thousands more now living in Bolton, may we be thankful for the change of plan.

Because of the large purchase of land intended for the dams, this area now enjoys some spectacular opportunities for recreation both here and all along the Humber. In the late 1990s, the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) formed the Humber River Task Force, consisting of members of the public, staff, representatives of other levels of government, and councillors. Eventually in the final report, the Task Force recommended the formation of local volunteer committees to work on special Humber-related projects. Of the four formed, Caledon got three; at Caledon East, Palgrave and Bolton.

The Bolton group sought members from local volunteer organizations and others for special projects. The first committee was made up with representatives of the ABHS, the Humber Heritage Trail Association, the Bolton and Area Horticulture Committee and the Police Advisory Committee. Other groups joined for special projects.

The result has been, with full support of local and regional councillors, staff, TRCA and Peel Region, a most attractive walking trail right from the Caledon-King Town Line to Duffy's Lane (and beyond) with walking bridges, heritage signs, children play areas, spots for picnics, ball games and other amenities. It includes, at the request of these groups, a safe passageway under Queen Street in the middle of Bolton (which, however, it is currently closed because of bridge upgrades and installation of a traffic signal).

Installation of the History of Bolton Display was delayed for a very long time due to work on going in the area, but it's now in place. The Founding of Bolton direction sign is now in place.

By far the biggest surprise for those volunteers working on the Bolton Humber is to constantly discover that many residents don't have the faintest idea that the river exists and don't realize that Bolton is only here because of the river. Our first mill in 1822 was George Bolton's Mill. His workers started our village on Mill Street.

This applies even to people who have lived here for years. Drivers from the Palgrave area don't realize they drive over it. Even patrons of local businesses don't always know the river is only meters away. Furthermore, why would Peel Region spend so much money improving and widening a bridge if it didn't have something to ?bridge??

We have a splendid trail and river valley, tailor made to enjoy. So let's do it.

Heather Broadbent,
Bolton