

# SPARROW LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2018



President – Sara Clipsham – 705-689-6180 – [saraclipsham@gmail.com](mailto:saraclipsham@gmail.com)  
Please see our website [sparrowlake.ca](http://sparrowlake.ca) for a complete list of executive and contacts.

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS



The markers of Fall are appearing, red and orange brighten the swamps, school buses hit the roads, and the Sparrow Lake Historical Society is holding our Fall meeting which means a fabulous Potluck Dinner and visits with fellow historians. Our meeting will be **September 29, 2018, potluck at 6:30**, with meeting and speaker to follow. We will again meet at the Severn Bridge Community Hall, 1035 Southwood Road in Severn Bridge.

Our presentation this year will be given by Ursel Soper on the Lehmann letters. Many of us have seen articles on the letters or maybe heard stories of the letters that Kathinka Lehmann, wife of Adelbert Lehmann exchanged with family back in Germany in 1863. These letters give us an insight into the hardship and reality of early life in the woods of Muskoka.

Unfortunately, the **September 9th** visit to Wasdell Falls power plant was **cancelled** due to work on the plant. We will keep you posted on that project. The Friends of the Washago Water Tower are holding a Heritage Day October 20th, 1-5 PM at the Community Centre in Washago. The SLHS is providing a table display. Contributions of articles or ideas for the table and/or time manning the table are most welcome. Please contact Sara, 705-689-6180. (Crafts and bake sale, plus luncheon at Ramona Hall 11:00, same day.)

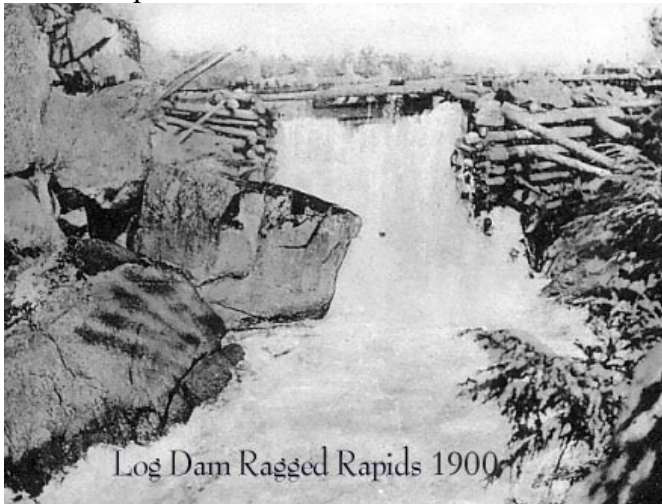
You may be aware that the blue swing bridge at Hamlet is being replaced this year. The road closures will begin this fall, with completion of the new bridge estimated to be June 2019. The fixed part of this historic bridge was built in 1905 and was first used a little downstream before becoming part of the “new” swing bridge in its present location in 1922. The replacement will be constructed to resemble the present style. Stay tuned to the Sparrow Lake Historical Society's newsletter for further stories of this landmark.

I hope many of you will be able to attend September 29th for a very interesting evening of Sparrow Lake history, good food, and good company. Everyone is welcome, membership is not required—only an interest in our history and its preservation. Bring a friend!

## A Brief History of Hydro Glen

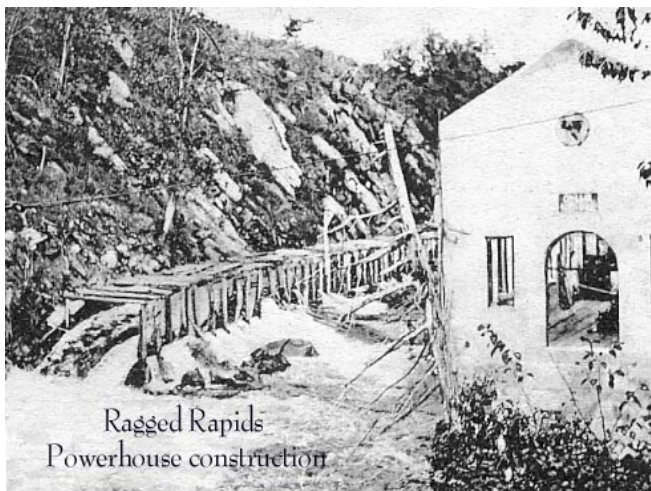
by Steve Stanton

Hydro Glen on the Severn River was the location of the first municipally owned hydraulic plant for the transmission of electricity in North America. In 1895, the world's largest hydroelectric power development of the time, the Edward Dean Adams Power Plant, was created at Niagara Falls, New York, and this new electrical technology was expanding rapidly. At the turn of the century, the mayor of Orillia and the entire Town Council travelled by snowshoe to a natural constriction in the Severn River at Ragged Rapids, the proposed site of the power dam.



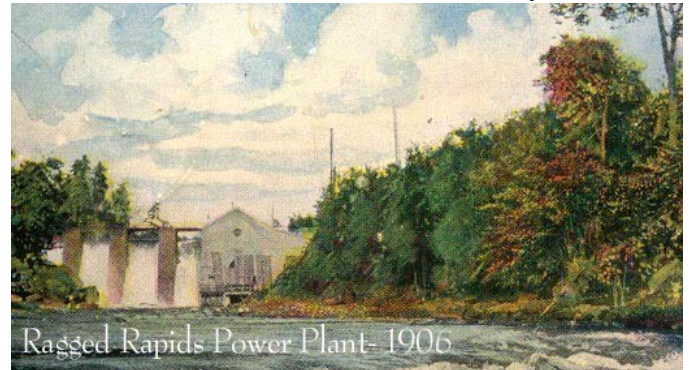
Log Dam Ragged Rapids 1900

The Orillia Water Light and Power Commission began work in 1901, and the worksite area became known as Hydro Glen. Supplies for the workers were brought down the river from Sparrow Lake to the quickly growing community, and many young men with boats were able to make a livelihood.

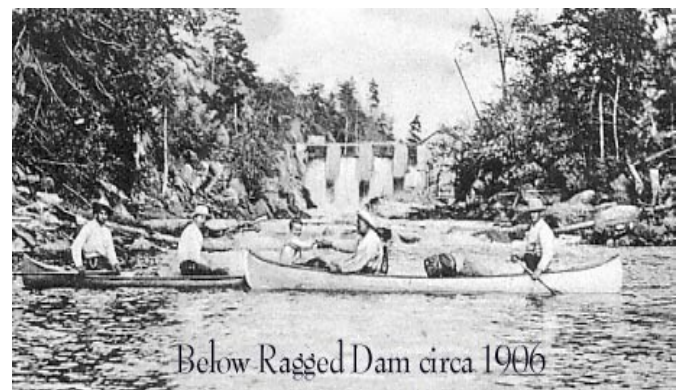


Ragged Rapids  
Powerhouse construction

The Ragged Rapids Power Plant was constructed at a reported cost of \$65,000, and the first electricity reached the town of Orillia 19 miles away in 1902.



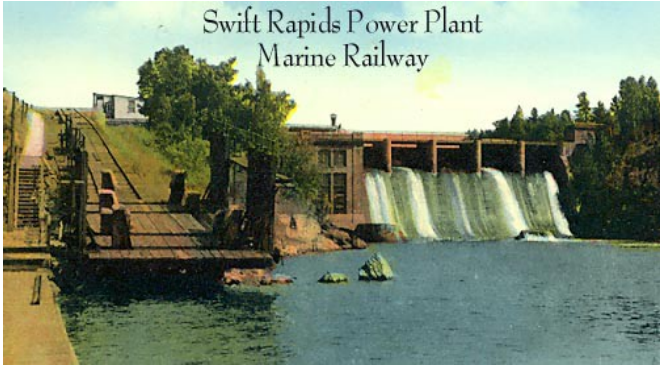
Ragged Rapids Power Plant- 1906



Below Ragged Dam circa 1906

In 1913, the Dominion Department of Railways and Canals, in conjunction with its plan to improve the Trent Waterways navigation system, suggested that Orillia's new power plant be transferred 1-1/2 miles downstream to the Swift Rapids in order to avoid the long and costly rock cutting that would be necessary to bypass the Ragged Rapids at Hydro Glen. The Orillia Water Light and Power Commission was persuaded by the offer of financing from the Dominion Government and the provision for future increased supplies of electricity. As a result of this agreement, the construction of the new dam and powerhouse at Swift Rapids began in 1913, and was briefly interrupted by the outbreak of the war in 1914. The Ragged Rapids Power Plant was demolished on Nov. 10, 1917. According to an article in *Industrial Magazine* in December 1917, a total of four tons of dynamite was used to blast more than a thousand yards of concrete into the air at Ragged Rapids, an operation of "more than usual magnitude" carried out by the Canadian Explosives Company.





The new power plant at Swift Rapids had a capacity of 6000 horsepower at a total cost of more than \$150,000. The marine railway opened up navigation for boats through the new Trent-Severn Waterway connecting Lake Ontario to Lake Huron.

With credit to International Hydropower Association, Orillia Power Corporation, Industrial Magazine, and SLHS archives.



Bruce Schulz, left, Clarence Armstrong and Steve McDonald, along with Fred Schulz not shown in photo, put in a good day's work doing volunteer repairs at the local cemetery where their ancestors are buried.

## Local News

### Volunteers At Kilworthy Cemetery

View Full Article by Mark Clairmont:  
<https://muskokatoday.com/2018/06/fixing-lutheran-cemetery-fence-labour-of-love/>

Link and Photos submitted by Betty Graham



The wording on the sign above the entrance to the cemetery on Kilworthy Road — spelled out in sticks of wood — reads: “Lutheran Cemetery. In God Is Our Trust. Erected in Loving Memory of the Pioneers of Morrison Township.”



**Sparrow Lake Historical Society Membership Renewal & Application Form**

**Please note: The year that your membership subscription is paid up to is shown on the envelope in bold letters next to your name.**

**For those email recipients who are not sure of their renewal status, please contact Karen McKenzie. [kswood@sympatico.ca](mailto:kswood@sympatico.ca)**

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**Single \$15.00 ----- Family \$25.00 -----**

**New ----- Renewal -----**

Also note that now there is a ten-year membership available for \$200.00 for a family or \$125.00 for a single membership.

**Ten Year Single ----- Family-----**

Please make cheque payable to – **Sparrow Lake Historical Society** – and mail to  
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