

# Bruce County Historical Notes



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## Bus and Boat Tours of Oliphant and the Fishing Islands

Enjoy a 90 minute guided boat tour of the Fishing Islands aboard Bruce Peninsula Boat Tours. Watch "The Fishing Chiefs", Episode 1 of "The Bruce" documentary at the Oliphant Women's Institute Community Hall. Bus Tour will include Oliphant & area, including the fen.  
**Meals included:** Lunch catered by Women's Institute and restaurant dinner.

**June 25, 2019 (Rain Date: June 27, 2019)**

**Tickets:**

\$120 (BCHS members) \$125 (non-members)  
Registrations accepted until June 13,  
or until coach is sold out.

**To register, call:**

Karen Ribey, 519-389-4405  
Dorne Fitzsimmons, 519-368-7186



The Bruce County  
Historical Society

[brucecountyhistory.on.ca](http://brucecountyhistory.on.ca)  
[facebook.com/BruceCountyHS](https://facebook.com/BruceCountyHS)

## President's Greetings

As President of the Bruce County Historical Society (BCHS), I bring you greetings. My report in the Yearbook last fall indicated that 2018 was my fourth year as President and that I would be stepping down; but indeed, it was only three years. I agreed to stay on one more year.

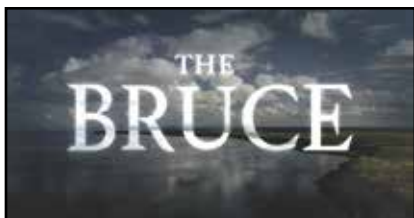
Last year at this time, we were preparing for the upcoming premiere of "The Bruce" in May and June, which was a great success with sold-out crowds. In August the stories of Bruce County were shared with hundreds of thousands of Ontarians on TVO. For those who missed it – TVO continues to stream the series online ([tvo.org/programs/the-bruce](http://tvo.org/programs/the-bruce)) and on the TV. DVD and Blu-rays are still available from numerous locations in Bruce County such as the Museum or our Treasurer, Dorne Fitzsimmons, email [dcf@bmts.com](mailto:dcf@bmts.com). The companion book "The Bruce" written by Robin Hilborn, is also available to purchase. The DVDs, Blu-rays and book have been so popular over the summer and fall that we had to do a second printing of the book.

If you've got a manuscript in relation to Bruce County history of a person or place, there's a publisher waiting to hear from you. The Bruce County Historical Society is looking for authors. We're organizing our publishing program and would love to see local authors step forward with proposals for books or articles.

We have a number of upcoming annual events, described in the next column. I hope that you will be able to take in some of these events.

As always we continue looking for new members of the BCHS. Please pass this on to your friends and family who have shown an interest in history. Thank you,

*Irene Howe*



## BCHS Events

### Bus Trip, June 25, 2019

This year's bus trip will feature a tour of the "Fishing Islands" and explore related themes as per the enactment in our 1<sup>st</sup> episode of "The Bruce."

### Author's Night, Aug.12, 2019

This "wine & cheese" event is held in partnership with the Bruce County Genealogical Society. Watch our Facebook page for more details.

### Heritage Farm & Steam Show, Aug. 16-18, 2019

BCHS will participate in the Bruce County Heritage Association's 26th annual Heritage Farm & Steam Show, south of Paisley.

### BCHS Annual Meeting, Oct. 26

Our annual meeting this year will be held in the Warton area.

## "The Bruce" by the Numbers

70 community leaders joined the May 2016 brainstorming session

50 research interviews conducted

33 historians and leaders interviewed on film

179 volunteers appeared in enactments

102 volunteers worked behind the scenes

40+ terabytes of film produced (including drone footage)

700 DVDs sold

100 free discs distributed to every Bruce County school, museum & library

462 books sold in five months, requiring a second printing

## 2018 Annual Meeting

The BCHS Annual General Meeting took place on October 27 in Formosa, with over 90 people in attendance. Following the business portion of the meeting, a German-themed dinner was served.

Following dinner and greetings from various dignitaries, student Chelby Morris, winner of the BCHS award at the Regional Heritage Fair held at Grey Roots Museum & Archives, gave an overview of her project “Endangered Species in Canada.” Attendees also spoke with Chelby at her display throughout the day. Local Historian Pat Kelly delivered an interesting presentation on German settlers in Bruce County, including a focus on Formosa’s “Church of the Immaculate Conception” connection to King Ludwig II of Bavaria.



*Speaker Pat Kelly;  
Student Chelby Morris*

*AGM Head Table*

*BCHS Annual Meeting*

*Photos by: Robin Hilborn*

## “The Bruce” Report to Bruce County Council

In its final formal presentation to County Council, “The Bruce” Documentary Steering Committee thanked Council for its support of the documentary project, the success of which exceeded all expectations. Part of the non-profit Ontario Visual Heritage Project, “The Bruce” was created in partnership with the Bruce County Historical Society, and in collaboration with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. Funding in the form of a two-year, \$139,100 Grow grant was received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2016, and from partners in the community.

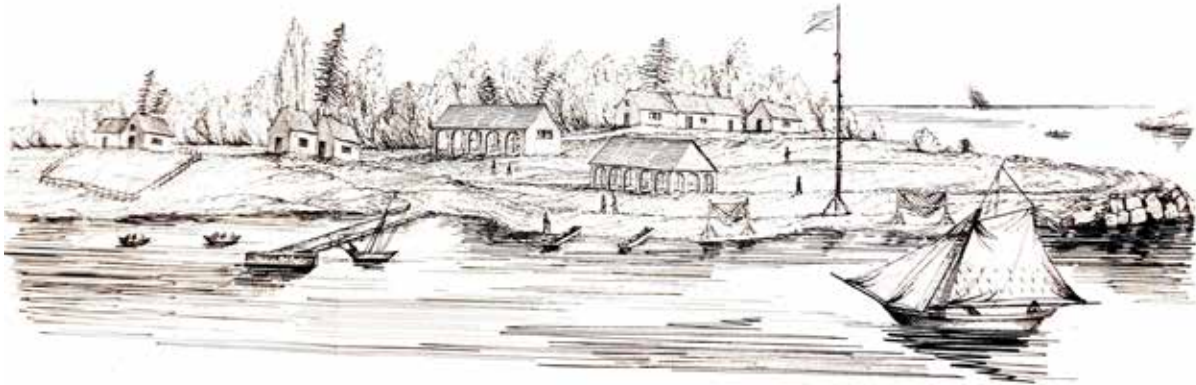
The response from people all over Ontario has been extremely positive, with hundreds of thousands of TVO viewers watching the first three showings, and many more later viewing the episodes online. A notable success of the project was the unique chance to provide a perspective of the events associated with the history of Bruce County from Saugeen Ojibway Nation and the Historic Saugeen Métis. They provided strong engagement from community leaders, elders, and story tellers, with First Nation roles played by First Nations people, and Métis roles played by Métis people.

For educators, a free course guide is available for download from the [thebrucemovie.ca](http://thebrucemovie.ca), providing support for the teaching of local history to future generations. The Documentary Steering Committee is now winding down. Footage and scripts will be provided to the Bruce County Historical Society who will work with the Bruce County Archives to ensure access for future researchers. Books and discs will continue to be available for purchase.



## The Historic Saugeen Métis in the Fishing Islands

By Jenna McGuire, Culture Keeper, Historic Saugeen Métis



This sketch of Main Station Island was included in an 1839 pamphlet on the Huron Fishing Company. Missionary James Evans visited the station in the previous year; he described preaching to the “principally French and half-breed workers.”

### Background

The Historic Saugeen Métis (HSM) trace their roots to Western Lake Superior and the Red River area, a key area of the Canadian Fur Trade. The intermarriage of European fur traders and First Nations women gave rise to a culture of people unique and distinct from their parent cultures, known as the Métis. Some HSM ancestors such as the Collins family were expert canoe builders and supplied canoes for the fur trade. Other ancestors, such as the Longes and Granvilles had multigenerational experience in the Great Lakes basin fur trade. Although much fur trade work was done in the canoe, post journals of the 1820s describe men traveling from the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) post at La Cloche to the HBC Outpost at Saugeen in Bateaux, small sailing craft. Life on the water, be it by canoe or sail, was intrinsic to the fur trading life. After the fur trade declined, the HSM naturally maintained the maritime lifestyle along the Lake Huron coast. They were sailors, guides, lighthouse keepers, coopers, boat builders and especially, fisherman. Fishing had already played a large part in traditional lifeways, the nomadic lifestyle of the fur trade and even life at the fur trade forts. An oral history related by Murray Morton frames this marine heritage: *“Before starting with the Scots, I must acknowledge that the marine history of Lake Huron and Southampton begins before the Scots arrived. There were many others that I heard about and knew, names such as Dobson, Jackson,*

*Bellmore, Longe, Granville and many others that were early settlers on the shore of Lake Huron. No name precedes Longe, according to my mother.”*(From John Weichel’s *Forgotten Times*)

### A Busy Area

When British military engineer Gother Mann surveyed the Lake Huron coast in 1788, he described the Peninsula as “exceedingly dangerous for boats or canoes to go round.” He included on his map of the lake the location of a “portage” to cross the Peninsula at its base, right next to a group of islands we now know as the Fishing Islands. Whether mariners hugged the coast and crossed at the island chain off what is now Tobermory or used this portage, the area no doubt saw a great deal of traffic for millennia by First Nations, then later by fur traders, explorers and others. Archeological evidence demonstrates ancient occupation by First Nations of both the portage and the islands, and artifacts like trade axes speak to the evolution of these transport and trade networks. “Indian Traders” are indicated at the mouth of the Saugeen River in 1822 during Henry Bayfield’s nautical survey, and Pierre Piché was noted to be trading in fur at Saugeen as early as 1818. As is related in an Albermarle Township history book: *“We have no idea how many French Fur Traders passed by Albermarle Township on trips between Kingston area and either Michilimackinac or Sault. Ste. Marie but the number was undoubtedly large.*

None of them however, appears to have left us any maps.” The Fishing Islands are part of a larger network of islands and coastal wetlands stretching north to Stokes Bay and are also close to the Sauble and Saugeen Rivers. The entire area from the mouth of the Saugeen to northern Stokes Bay represents an area of great ecological and cultural importance.

### **A Place of Both Refuge and Peril**

The Western coast of the Saugeen/Bruce Peninsula bears the brunt of the long fetch and open waters of Lake Huron. Coupled with that, there are few easily accessible harbours of refuge along the Lake Huron coast. The Fishing Islands provide an opportunity for shelter from heavy seas and winds. That being said, navigating the islands themselves is not without its challenges. There are a number of reefs, shoals and rocks, and the seas can be high. Several Métis have lost their lives sailing the waters in and around the Fishing Islands. Patsy McArthur discusses some of these tragedies in the Historic Saugeen and its Métis People: “Three from the community who died tragically in the vicinity of the Fishing Islands were Alexis Granville, age 14, while lifting a net, November 1883; Gabriel Granville Jr., age 25, struck by lightning on a schooner, 1895; and Gabrielle Granville Sr., age 66, knocked off a sailing vessel and drowned while on route to the Fishing Islands, 1903.”



Francois Gonneville  
(Photo: HSM Collection)

Another story tells how Métis captain Frank Granville and his crew aboard the schooner *Ontario* sheltered in the islands for three days during a storm. They ended up losing their stern anchor while in the islands, which was

found over fifty years later in the Red Bay area. When they finally were able to make a run to their home port at Saugeen, they were unable to make either the Chantry Island harbour or the river harbour and beached the schooner, crushing the bow. The stern anchor of the *Ontario* now sits on display at Pioneer Park, Southampton, and the schooner’s flag resides in the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre Collection.

### **Fishing Stations**

The Fishing Islands have hosted many “stations” for fishing, which usually featured buildings for processing the catch, overnight accommodation and docking facilities for vessels. The most famous of these is Main Station Island which featured a large and extensive operation replete with stone structures. However smaller family based stations also existed. The Longe’s had a fishing station they operated off the Jack Islands for at least half a century. The Bellmore family, also Métis, had a fishing station on Wildman’s Island, and Larry Bellmore knew Cummings (The Wildman) well, who had his home on that island.



Longe Fishing Station, Harry and Ester pictured  
(Photo: HSM Collection)

It was noted in a diary entry from 1838 that the workers at one of the larger company stations were primarily French and half-breed when missionary James Evans visited the Fishing Islands on his way to Lake Superior: “Embarked this morning for the Munnadoolin. Fair wind; made the Fishing Islands, 25 miles distant, about one o’clock. We were kindly received by Mr. McDonald, the Company’s Agent who urged us to preach; and the wind at the same time coming from the north, we were happy in embracing the opportunity at 4 o’clock. These people, principally French and half-breed, paid good attention to the word of

God, and we humbly trust it may prove the of God unto salvation.”

### Life in and Around the Islands

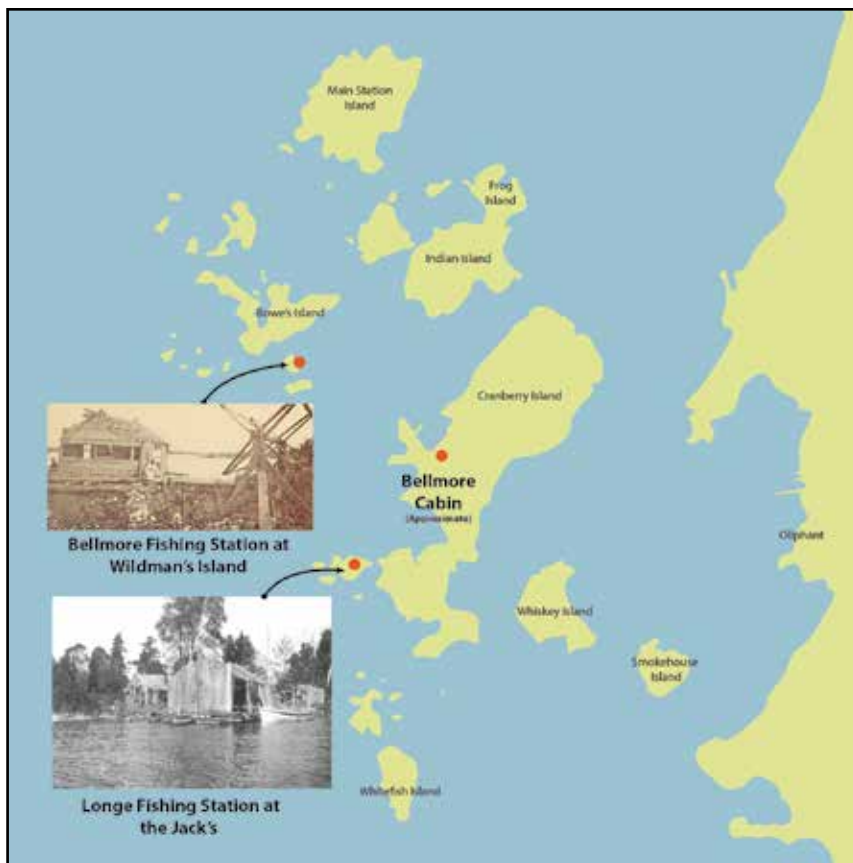
In Irene Monkman and Roy Fleming’s Oliphant and its Islands, they describe how old Joe Longe used to live out at the Jacks. It is worth noting that when his son Joseph Jr. died, he was said to have been living in an ancient log cabin at the mouth of the Sauble. This is likely the log cabin that is indicated on a map of the Sauble from 1856 (Ridout Schreiber Engineers).

The Bellmore family lived in the vicinity of the Fishing Islands, having their fishing station on Wildman’s Island. Again, Monkman & Fleming write: “Old Larry Bellmore fished these waters, too, and had his headquarters on the island that bears his name. He also built a little cabin on Cranberry Island near Fisher’s Bay. Larry’s sons, Frank, Larry and Joe, who lived at Southampton became familiar with the same grounds.” The Bellmores also worked as marine guides and builders: “Frank Bellmore who had the contract for the erection of buildings for the Snake Island Camp has just completed his work”, The Echo, June 11,

1913. Larry Bellmore also captained the lumber boats that went from Boat Lake out the Sauble.

When Sir Sanford Fleming surveyed the Fishing Islands in 1853, he speaks of encountering Frenchmen: “Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup>: Up at ½ past three. Had an Early Breakfast and started for Saugeen. Reid and Godfry in my boat. The two Frenchman who brought them up went up about 1 mile – disinterred the son of the old man who had drowned 4 years ago. He wants to put the remains in consecrated ground at Goderich.” This was most likely the Bellmore family.

Many HSM community members have been impacted by life in the Fishing Islands and have special memories of life and work in the islands. As related by Eva Granville Wyonch: “As a small child I spent several summers at the Fishing Islands where my father, Joseph Granville, was fishing for the Dorans. We left from Saugeen in Dad’s small boat that had both a sail and a small engine; and we always stopped overnight at the mouth of the Sauble River. There we slept on the boat and picked up supplies. Once at the Islands, we lived in a small fishing shack and slept on straw mattresses.”



### Locations of Métis Fishing Stations

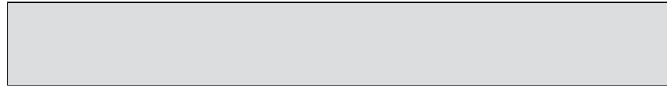
(Longe image and map: HSM Collection; Bellmore image: Courtesy of Bruce County Museum, A2016.001.084)

**Learn more about the Fishing Islands during the BCHS Bus Tour, June 25, 2019**

### Contribute to the Yearbook!

We love receiving articles of historical interest for the BCHS annual “Historical Notes, Yearbook Edition.”

Send your articles to yearbook editor Bill Stewart, [willstew@bmts.com](mailto:willstew@bmts.com)



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**Buy "The Bruce"**

"The Bruce" DVDs, Blu-rays, and books are available at:

- Readers Haven, Tobermory
- The Dandy Lion, Lion's Head
- Berford St. Book, Wiarton
- Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre, Southampton
- Holst Office Pro, Walkerton/Hanover
- Ginger Press, Owen Sound  
*(While quantities last)*

**Order "THE BRUCE": get the disc and the companion book**

**1. Choose format:**

- Video: DVD **\$25** \_\_\_\_\_ copies
- Video: Blu-ray **\$30** \_\_\_\_\_ copies
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For disc delivery by mail, add **\$5**. To the U.S., add **\$10**.

For book delivery by mail, add **\$17** for Ontario addresses. Outside Ontario, add **\$22**.

To mail one DVD with one book, use the postal rate for one book.

Postal rates are for one copy; contact Dorne for rates on multiple copies.

*Mail your cheque and this form to:* Dorne Fitzsimmons, Box 51, Tiverton ON N0G 2T0

\* The Society will advise of where to pick up your order.

Dorne Fitzsimmons will also take orders from members by email: [dcf@bmts.com](mailto:dcf@bmts.com).



## Archives Awareness Week

**The BCCHS is proud to sponsor Archives Awareness Week, April 2 - 6, 2019**

Admission to the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre's Research Room & Archives is FREE during Archives Awareness Week.

**Explore Your Archives!  
Friday, April 5, 10:30 a.m.  
Free Admission**

Join in this unique opportunity to view the secure area in which the documentary heritage of Bruce County is preserved! Archives staff will lead you on an exploration of "the Stacks," historic documents, and photographs, some of which are related to "The Bruce" documentary and book. You'll leave with a stronger connection to Bruce County's history and a great understanding of how it's preserved and accessed.

## 2019 Reunions

**Teeswater:** August 1-5, 2019  
([www.teeswaterreunion.com](http://www.teeswaterreunion.com))

**Tiverton:** June 27 - July 1, 2019  
(Tiverton Reunion 2019 on Facebook)

**Like the Bruce County Historical Society on Facebook for regular updates!**

## Memberships and Donations

A friendly reminder to check your membership status on the address label on this newsletter. If you see (2018) on the label, it's time to renew.

**Annual Memberships** \$20.00 each  
**Life Memberships** \$500.00 each

Please join or renew by submitting your membership fees or questions to:

**Joyce Osborne, Membership Secretary**  
Box 298, Ripley, ON N0G 2R0  
Email: [janlea@hurontel.on.ca](mailto:janlea@hurontel.on.ca)

For memberships mailed to the U.S., please pay in U.S. funds.

### DONATIONS

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Bruce County Historical Society  
c/o Dorne Fitzsimmons, Treasurer  
PO Box 51, Tiverton, ON N0G 2T0

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One advantage of an electronic newsletter is the colour images that may be enjoyed!



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