

LOCAL PEOPLE

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150-year-old pipeline to the past



PAUL WILSON'S STREETBEAT

It's been there 150 years, but most of us don't know about the Pipeline Trail.

Tomorrow morning at 10, rain or shine, Jarah West will try to change that. She will set out from the Tim Hortons at Ottawa and Dunsmore (yes, first in the land) with all who want to join her in a leisurely hike of this "wonderful urban window onto a hidden side of Hamilton."

The trail cuts diagonally across the east end to the old pumphouse on Woodward Avenue.

West is leading this walk on behalf of the Crown Point community planning team. She sees the day when families can set out along here for the waterfront, crossing the QEW on a \$14-million pedestrian bridge that's to open next year.

StreetBeat is taking an advance look. We've parked in behind the Dairy Queen at Main and Ottawa. The trail starts right here and runs some four kilometres, though we've heard it does vanish in places.

Seen on a Google satellite map, it looks like a straight cut across the landscape, but the trail does meander. We're walking past backyards and side fences and meeting up with alleys that converge at the

most interesting angles.

We're in the midst of the city, yet it's quiet here. We can hear the birds.

Where the trail intersects with Crosthwaite, Marie Smitheman is out talking to a neighbour. She's lived next to the pipeline for 37 years.

Long ago, she says, it was mostly a place to park cars. These days she uses it to get to the grocery store on Barton and the seniors' centre on Ottawa.

Trail lights went in a couple of years ago, and she says that fixed the problem of late-night loiterers.

Pushing northeast, we find a church on the Pipeline Trail at Palming. It's called Little Bethel. Minister Peter Giokas tells us the building started as Kensington Baptist but was picked up and rolled here in August 1914.

Trail hikers are welcome to stop in if they happen to pass by about 10:30 any Sunday morning. It's casual here, the minister says.

"Halfway through our service, we actually take a coffee break."

Now we're down at Barton, and the trail gets hard to find. In its path is the Coca-Cola plant, here since at least the '50s. (They have two machines in the front lobby, with factory-fresh Coke for 75 cents.)

The pipeline would be running right along the back fence of Mahony Park. Looking for signs of spring? Baseball sign-ups start here tomorrow.

We cut along Mahony Street, then onto Parkdale. Lots of dust and noise here, but we need to hike north a short stretch. Past the tracks, we take a right onto Morley.

We're hungry now. And here



CATHIE COWARD, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

The Pipeline Trail cuts across the east end and continues to the pumphouse, right, on Woodward.



amid the factories, the amazing Springer Meats deli. We go for the turkey sandwich, stacked outrageously high, for \$3.75.

And right across the street, the Salerno Cheese retail outlet. Hot meals here include chicken casse-

role.

Now properly stuffed, we proceed east on Morley, take a left on Brighton, a right on Brampton, a quick left onto Burgess.

At this corner, we can see the pipeline's path again, lined by tall

trees.

There's no asphalt trail, and near the end you will need to jog here and there to get out to Woodward.

But here it is, marked by that 15-storey Italian-style brick chimney, Hamilton's first pumphouse.

We hike onto the grounds and meet up with curator Mac Swackhammer.

He explains that in 1859 the pipeline starting carrying a million gallons of water a day from the lake. Huge steam engines pushed it about five kilometres — along the route we've just walked, then to a reservoir partway up the escarpment, by the Kenilworth Access.

It's some 70 years since the pumphouse was decommissioned, but it's still open to the public every afternoon but Monday.

Swackhammer lifts a hatch in the old wooden floor, and we descend the stairs. Here in the stonewalled depths is the original cast-iron made-in-Scotland pipe, 18-inch diameter, installed before Canada was born.

The curator explains that back then some wanted to save on all that pipework and just draw water from the harbour. But Thomas Keefer, one of the country's most noted engineers, called that foolhardy. "The city's going to grow, and they'll be putting garbage in the harbour," he said.

His foresight gave Hamilton clean water right away. And all these generations later, we can still be thankful for the swath he cut across town.

StreetBeat appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday. pwilson@thespec.com 905-526-3391

AROUND TOWN

For submissions to Around Town, a feature of Hamilton-area arts, entertainment, community and recreational events, e-mail information to gopeople@thespec.com three weeks before the event. Selected submissions will be published.

Colleen and Larry Russell joined the fun as The Hamilton Parrot Head Club held a concert/dance at Hamilton Place Studio Theatre. The theme was Tropical Shirt Phest; a little bit of summer in the middle of February. All proceeds went toward the local chapter of the Canadian Paraplegic Association.



PHOTOS BY KAZ NOVAK, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR



Rose and Ted Buckwalter from Pittsburgh and Judy Frances from Burlington.



Gloria Aitken, left, and Annette Leyenaar.



Bill Bellaver of the Caribbean Blue Band provided entertainment.

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