

Tales & Treasures Of Harborcreek Township

“BECAUSE IT’S THERE”

When adventurers are asked why they did something such as, climbed a mountain, bicycled across the country, crossed a lake, etc., they often reply, “Because it’s there.” This is not an explanation that I will accept! There is much more to it than that. After all that lake, as an example, is “there” for millions of other people who never even considered ‘crossing it.’ No, it takes a very special person to take up the challenge. It takes someone driven by the sheer challenge of accomplishment. Maybe it’s for no other reason than to prove something to themselves. Let’s look at this challenge of **crossing Lake Erie**. Here are some of the more well-known “adventures.”

1912 - Walter Lick, a boy from North East, tried to cross the frozen lake on ice skates. He made it to Long Point Ontario although he got little chance to use his skates as the surface was anything but a smooth ice rink. He was escorted to the mainland by dog sled.

Also in 1912, about a week after Walter’s crossing, Earl Sandt climbed into his Curtis Biplane, which sat on the ice of Presque Isle Bay, and took off for Long Point Canada. He made it and became the first to accomplish that feat, but on the return trip his engine failed and he crashed onto ice about five miles from the shore at Harborcreek. He walked to shore and took the trolley to Erie that night.

1963 – Gene Heuser stepped onto the ice at 8 AM on Saturday and headed for Canada. A little over 24 hours later he reached the lighthouse on Long Point where he was then escorted, this time by

Jeep, to the mainland by the Canadian Police.

1975 – Pat Budny became the first to **swim** across the lake from Canada to Erie.

1977 - This was “The Year of the Lake Walkers” – Many attempts were made that winter but few were successful. Brian Kinal and Robert Bliss were plucked off the frozen surface by helicopter as was Edward Shaw. Shaw was only six miles from Long Point when he was picked-up by Detroit-based Coast Guard helicopter. Wesley Schalamon from Cleveland made the crossing two times that winter, the first on foot and the second time on horseback. Ron Pirello and William Greulich were the only men from Erie to make a complete mainland-to-mainland crossing that year.

1989 – 2007 Swimmers Bob North, Harvey Snell, Halli Reid, Greg Sarback, Paula Jongerden, Sara McClure, and Sonia Pyle have all made the crossing. Katie Chriest made the crossing in a Kayak. Did I miss anyone?

A very harrowing crossing, this time across Put-in-Bay, was made in the early 1900s in a Model T Ford. Half way across the bay the ice started to crack under the car as it sped along. The driver stepped on the gas and raced toward the shore. He made it but only with the aid of some frantic prayer and maybe just some plain dumb luck!

Looking back over this list of folks that were driven by the sheer challenge of accomplishment, another thought comes to mind - maybe in some cases it just helps to be a **little crazy!**