

PROLOGUE

TO

HOW THE VILLAGE OF BINSKARTH RECEIVED THE NAME.

Binscarth is the name of an estate in the Orkney Islands comprising some 1400 acres. The name was given to the estate in the early 1800's by my grandfather the late Robert Scarth. His old home, built in 1855, on the estate, is presently known as Binscarth ~~House~~ and is so designated on the Orkney county maps. The estate itself was granted to the Scarth or Scaith family by King ~~Hakon~~ of Norway in 1379. It has been in the hands of the descendants of this family ever since. It is now owned by Col. R.A.A.A.S. Macrae, H.M. Lord Lieutenant of Orkney.

In the olden vernacular the preff 'bin' or 'binnie' meant ~~house~~ or home thus Bin-Scarth meant 'Home of Scarth'.

The names in the condensed version of the origin of Binscarth, (ie) Mr. W.B. Scarth, Mr. A. Bain and Mr G.L. Smellie are those of men all related to the Scarths of Binscarth in Orkney. In all probability G.L. Smellie was well acquainted with the home in the old land and the countryside round Binscarth in Manitoba would remind him of Orkney. The two are very similar. This would in all likelihood explain how the name came to his mind when conferring with the Postmaster General.

Mr G.L. Smellie was a brother of the late Parker Smellie of Russel and was a partner in Smellie Bros. Stores and Creameries of earlier days in Binscarth and Russell. My mother the late Mrs James Turnbull and her brother the late Mathew Scarth and the Smellies were cousins and the attached account of How The Village of Binscarth received the Name is a condensed version taken from a very detailed letter written *by G.L. Smellie* to my mother prior to 1937

Thomas R. Turnbull

" BINSARTH " Origin of Name.

The following is an excerpt from a letter to The Binscarth Express written in June 1964 by Robert Scarth of Isabella, Man. and now of Victoria B.C. His father, Mathew Scarth, to whom he makes reference, was the brother of Cecilia (Scarth) Turnbull- Mrs James N.R. Turnbull, my grandmother, to whom the letter "Origin of the name "Binscarth " was written by G.L. Smellie in 1931.

Robert Scarth, oldest surviving member of the pioneer family of that name, wrote this letter at a time when there was a certain amount of agitation in the district to have the name changed to an " Indianized " spelling of a Winnipeg Radio Station, C.K.Y. The prize for such a change was to be unlimited publicity and promotion by said station, and endless fame, prosperity and/or notoriety for the residents for all time thereafter. The change never came about; the major promoter of the scheme has long since disappeared from the scene, and Binscarth still manages to cling to it's hillside location and it's name.

" Robert O. Turnbull, March 1971."

Quoting Robert Scarth's letter:

" There seems to be some confusion as to the origin of the name, " Binscarth." I was fortunate enough to be able to visit the original Binscarth in 1959 and would like to pass on some information gathered at that time.

The name dates back to the early 1500's and was brought to Orkney by the Norse people. It's translation is "bin " meaning farm, and "scarth meaning cleft in the hill, thus Binscarth, "the farm in the cleft of the hill." The spelling changed many times over the years, finally settling to the present form. The people who lived on the farm came to be known by the location of their land- thus "Scarth." This is a fairly common custom in older lands. A man was quite often called after his home or occupation rather than by his name, and sometimes the surname was finally dropped or even forgotten in favor of the other.

The present farm "Binscarth " in Orkney is comprised of about 1400 acres and is owned, operated and occupied by Col. Robert Scarth O.B.E., H.M Lord Lieutenant of Orkney. I was reminded the other day, as I drove down the highway, of the similarity of the two locations. In Orkney, the beautiful farm in the cleft of the hills, and in Manitoba, the beautiful town in the valley.

How did the name come to Manitoba ? In 1882 two representatives of the Scottish Ontario Land Company, Mr Allie Bain and Mr W.B.Scarth, were sent to investigate the possibility of securing a tract of land near Fort Ellice for farm settlement, and were directed by Major C.A.Boulton to the Shell River Country, a name that covered a great area of land in the early days. Three townships were purchased and a farm established under the direction of Mr G.L.Smellie. The farm was known as The Colony Farm, and to this farm came my father, Mathew Scarth, in 1886.

It was necessary to establish a post office at the farm and after several suggestions, the name " Binscarth Farm " was approved by Ottawa, after the family home of the Scarths in Orkney. The name Binscarth was transferred to the town when the railroad came through in 1886.

You will see then that Binscarth dates back even farther than the family name Scarth and the town was certainly not named after an early settler named Ben Scarth as stated in a recent history of the area. The given name "Ben " is unknown anywhere in the family." Unquote.

(Signed) Robert Scarth, -

Isabella, Man. June 1964.

It will be seen that there is essential agreement on the origin of the name "Binscarth " although some difference of opinion as to how it was actually conferred, and perhaps some disagreement as to actual dates. It is possible that the name Binscarth suggested itself to Mr Smellie because of the fact that he and the Saarth men who came originally to Canada were cousins, and the name was quite a familiar one within the family.

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SETTLEMENT OF EARLY MANITOBA.

The Binscarth Colony Farm and how Binscarth got the name.

In 1870 when Manitoba was the newest Province in Canada what is now known as the Binscarth area was a stretch of prairie known mostly to Indians and buffalo. The Pelly Trail which the Red River carts of the fur traders followed from Fort Ellice to Fort Pelly, passed through the area and the trail was also used by the mail stage from Moosomin. The land was prairie with patches of scrub around the sloughs but "no trees big enough to make a broom handle," one early settler declared; except in the valleys of the creeks and the river ^{Assiniboine}. Some settlers came to the Silver Creek area in the '70,s. By 1881 there were a few settlers in the Binscarth area. The Fletcher family homesteaded on ^{Jas.} 3-19-28. They kept a stopping house for travellers and went to Moosomin by oxcart for supplies and mail. Two of their descendants live in Binscarth, Mrs Barrington and Mrs E.P.Clark.

The late Joe Allan told of seeing a herd of buffalo crossing the creek south of the present Binscarth in the autumn of 1879. They may have been the last herd in this area. Perhaps they knew civilization was coming.

Manitoba

In 1880, the Scottish Ontario Land Company was organized in Ontario. In 1881 they sent a Mr A.Bain and Mr W.B.Scarth to Manitoba to investigate the possibility of securing a tract of land for farm settlement. They were directed by Major C.A.Boulton to the Shell River country, a name that covered a great area of land in

Taken from excerpt from a diary of the late Lorne Fraser and a letter to G.H. Clarke from G.H. Amellie and written up by the late Lorne Fraser G.H.L.

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those days. They arranged for the purchase of three townships of land. In 1882 Mr. G. L. Smellie established The Binscarth Colony Farm. The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Mr. Smellie to Mrs. James Turnbull, the Mother of Norman Turnbull.

"Early in the fall of 1881 in my travels as Inspector for The North British Investment Company, I got as far as with Portage La Prairie and was so enamoured of the country and its possibilities that I applied for leave of absence from February to May 1882 to return to Manitoba, with the idea of making my fortune: as you know I made it -backwards. But that is by the way, and when I returned to Toronto I was asked to go back for that season at least, to establish some sort of headquarters for a colony of settlers that The Scottish Ontario Manitoba Land Company intended to place on a tract of land acquired from the Dominion Government for colonization purposes and "to get the Colony going." Having my all, which was very little, plus all I could borrow- which was a good deal to me- invested in Manitoba, the proposition suited me. So it came to pass that within a few days I purchase eight yoke of oxen within fifteen miles of Fergus, Ontario, though I had been told I would not find a yoke within fifty miles -shipped them in charge of Hugh Skeoch, and was off with Ken and Bob Hogg, Geodfrey Baker, Tommy Flett (I think Fred Baker)

joined-

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us later) and E.A.Marriot.

In Winnipeg we secured all kinds of outfit including farm vehicles, implements and provisions which we shipped to Brandon along with a couple of ponies and a cow we had picked up while waiting for Skeoch and the oxen. In Winnipeg everything was then put aboard the Assiniboine boat with Skeoch and the boys. Mr L.A.Bedford- afterwards superintendent at the Experimental Farm at Brandon - and I went on by train. to Portage La Prairie where we purchased a supply of flour and two more ponies (Topsie and Tipse). After waiting to see these aboard the boat we went on by train to Brandon for further purchases and joined the boat there for Fort Ellice where we disembarked at the ferry bag and baggage.

After two or three days of stiff work in hauling our outfit up the long hill and half a mile North to the so called farm of a settler named Warren, with whom we stored most of our goods, we started in the evening with four heavy wagon loads - each with two yoke of oxen - and all the livestock. In a few hours we found we had missed our trail and decided to camp for the night. In the morning we soon found our way and on reaching the South limits of our tract about noon that day I decided, at the top of Silver Creek hill, while waiting for the outfit, to camp in the valley, just where the Railway bridge was afterward built- till we could inspect the townships and select a site for our Headquarters. There we remained about three weeks during which we rode
over

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over the township every day from morning to night, and from North to South and East to West until one evening we came upon the site of the farm and that settled it for me. Next day we moved up our outfit and went to work.

I should have told you that Mr Bedford, who left me at this time, and whom I drove to "the Fourth Crossing" on the C.P.R. (now Moosomin); and I had really disembarked from the Assiniboine Boat at Beulah or Dayles Landing as it was then called as the Captain had informed us that though it was so near, we would not reach Fort Ellice until about noon the next day. It was then late in the evening but we took a pair of ponies and a buckboard off the boat and drove to Birtle that night. Next morning on calling at the Land Office we were ~~informed~~ astonished to find that the Government Lands in our townships- they had the even numbered sections and we the odd- had practically all been homesteaded through an oversight in Ottawa. In not notifying the Dominion Land Agency that they were reserved. That changed all our plans and a stock farm was decided on and instead of returning to my former employers in Toronto I consented to remain as Manager of the Colony.

Well, that season, 1882, we managed to break a considerable acreage and to erect what was called the farm house and a smaller one, as well as the log barn (the excavation for which I took out myself with a yoke of oxen). Most of the following winter I spent in Ontario buying cattle and horses etc.

As we had found it rather inconvenient going to Fort

Ellice

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Ellice with and for our mail - Russell was nearer but we had nothing to take us there, whereas we were continually coming and going through Fort Ellice to Moosomin - I was anxious to have a Post Office at the Farm and therefor paid a visit to Ottawa. An old friend introduced me to the then Postmaster General, Sir John Carling, who kindly produced a large map of Manitoba and asked me to locate for him the point at which I wanted the Post Office opened. I pointed to the South East $\frac{1}{2}$ of Section 35-T 19-R28-W within half a mile of the main trail-used as a mail route- from Fort Ellice to Fort Pelly. I was then asked what revenue might be expected and I took a chance on saying, "Oh \$50.00 " thinking that our own mail might reach nearly that amount. I was then and there appointed Postmaster at the magnificent emolument of \$10.00 per annum. I don't think the interview lasted more than five minutes, but when I was asked what name I wished to give the office, seeing that our Company was an Old Country one, I tried to think of an Old Country name and Binscarth came to me without any previous hint or suggestion and I boldly blurted it out and then wrote it down. Sir John then merely asked me to call on the Inspector at Winnipeg who would give instructions to "swear me in" and provide me with my P.O. equipment. I thanked him and said "Goodbye" That shows how easily a post office may be opened. Incidentally I might say it is not as easy to close one, for when I applied to

have

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have this done and although I forwarded with my application the written consent of nearly all the nearby settlers it could not be dealt with until the Inspector visited the district and I was personally out of pocket in keeping a man there for a month or two after I left.

May 15th 1883 I left Fergus , Ontario by special train consisting of eight or ten carloads, more than one hundred head of stock. Horses , high grade Shorthorn cattle with a few purebreds and a man to each car and came by way of Chicago, Minneapolis and Emerson to Moosomin -whence the stock was driven to the farm. We also had shipped from Minneapolis to Moosomin 300,000 feet of lumber and 300,000 shingles. That year we put in a crop, broke up more land and erected a large barn 60 by 300 feet and implement sheds, piggeries etc., and for the convenience of settlers as well as ourselves a combination store and hotel, (stopping place we called it) a Blacksmiths shop and a hall that could be used as a church or for other meetings of any kind. The Rev. John Hogg D.D. who was our first minister also arrived that ~~first~~ year with his family, and thus a sort of centre was established for our settlement and so we progressed till 1886 when the M.T.N.W. Railway reached the present Binscarth. We shipped our cattle that year to the St. Boniface Exhibition having the previous years been obliged to drive them to Moosomin and ship from there. In both these years we succeeded in capturing
the

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the Gold medal for our herd, having added to it substantially in 1886 by purchase from well known Ontario herds.

I have always thought that between the M.N.W. Railway and myself the attitude regarding the name to be given to Binscarth station was like that of the two Irishmen who wanted to fight, but one was scared and the other darent. Each waited for the other to open negotiations. No word was spoken till one day my friend Mr Baker, General Superintendant drove in for lunch. with a member of his Directors, as he frequently did, and during lunch this matter was the sole topic of conversation between them; it appeared to be a difficult problem for them to choose between the great number of names suggested but Binscarth was not one of them, and I said nothing, appearing quite disinterested ! After they had gone I wrote to Mr Baker referring to the conversation and asking if they had ever considered Binscarth. He replied they would be most happy to but the difficulty was that they wanted to establish a townsite with a Post Office, as the Government would not consent to two Post Offices Of the same name. Unless I would relinquish the name the thing was impossible. I wrote again that I would be quite agreeable to have the Binscarth Post Office and equipment transferred to the Station, provided the Government would at once replace it at the farm by a new Post Office and equipment, name Binscarth Farms.

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Farms, and so it was arranged. Having now centres for our settlement at Russell to the North, Binscarth to the South and Millwood to the West, it did not seem necessary to continue to have one at the Farm and the hotel, store and Blacksmith Shop were closed to the public and we carried on at the Farm purely as a farm for a few years, but I began to see there was no future there for me, and in 1890 I wrote my Directors in Glasgow asking them to release me. They replied that if I were determined, they would close up their farming operations provided I would remain with them till everything but the land could be disposed of. To this of course, I consented and so followed the "displeenishing" sale of 16th and 17th June 1891, when some of the happiest years of my life came to an end."

Mr Smellie did not state how he was familiar with the name Binscarth. It originated in Orkney. Here is an excerpt from a letter written by Robert Scarth, son of a Binscarth pioneer, Mathew Scarth. Quote:

"I was fortunate to be able to visit the original Binscarth in 1959 and would like to pass on some information gathered at that time. The dates back to the early 1500s and was brought to Orkney by the Norse. Its translation is "bin" meaning farm and scarth meaning "a cleft in the hills." The spelling may have changed over the years finally settling to its present form. The people who lived on the land

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"Mr Smellie ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ was a cousin of W.B. Scarth so both men~~x~~ were familiar with the Binscarth estate in Orkney. Mr Smellie did not give his reasons for choosing SE $\frac{1}{4}$ -35-19-28 as a farm site but there was plenty of water in the creek for stock, good wood in the valley for fuel and rumored railroad was expected to pass by that site.

The permanent staff at the farm included as well as Mr Smellie the manager, A.G.P Smellie, storekeeper, John D.Argo the Bookkeeper and Robert Whittaker, Blacksmith. From ten to twenty farm hands were employed. At one time the thrifty Scots housekeeper considered the men were using too much sugar. She scolded them but the sugar only disappeared faster. So next morning she took the sugar bowl and spoon and made the rounds of the table giving the men their choice. "You can have ane in yir parritch and ane in yir tea, or twa in yir parritch and nane in yir tea, or nane in yir parritch and twa in yir tea." History does'nt relate the results.

Some-

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Some of the carpenters who worked on the Colony buildings took up homesteads close by and spent their evenings putting up dwellings on their own homesteads. One of these "moonlighters" who was'nt familiar with badgers was walking to help a friend erect a barn one evening. He saw a badger digging a hole and unwisely caught it by the tail. The badger retaliated by tearing off the man's overalls. At that he was probably luckier than a young Scot who met a "bonnie beastie" in a field and tried to make friends with it. The "beastie" was black with white stripes. Nuff said.

There was no Doctor in the district in the early years of the Binscarth Farm. However a Mr Walker who homesteaded near Millwood had been a druggist in England. People went to him for medical advice and he was generally known as Dr to the pioneers Walker for miles around. He was a boon to the community for many years.

Names of some of the pioneers in the area before the railway came, were, to the East: Scarth, Turnbull, Waller, Inman, Clement, Diamond, Hall, Beatty, Hartley, Phizacklea, MacIntosh, Livingstone, McFarlane, Moffat, Cooper, Rice and Wallace. To the North: Thompson, Jollye, MacPherson, MacIntyre, Crerar. To the South: Baker, Wilcox, Fletcher, Allan, Matheson. To the West: Kelly, Plumb, Anderson, Mc Kenzie,

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Smithson, Cummings, Drought, Hogg, Allen, Walker, Storey,
Johnson, Baily.

In 1886 the long awaited railway, The Manitoba North Western Company, starting from Portage La Prairie came through this district on it's way West. The Railway built their stock yards on N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ 10-19-28 which was part of the homestead of Mr Angus Matheson. The station house was built partly on the road allowance between 10-19-28 and S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ 15 19-28 which was once the homestead of Mr Charles Thacker for whom Thacker St. is named. but it had become the property of the Scottish Ontario Loan Company before the railroad arrived. The Station was officially named Binscarth, the Post Office was transferred from the Colony Farm and Binscarth, Manitoba was on the map.

The first house built in Binscarth was the Station house. Although it has been remodelled and added to it is still the same building that served the people of 1886. The cottage now owned by Miss Lela Matheson and the home of Mr Angus Matheson, now owned by Miss Sadie Matheson, were built very soon after. The house now owned by Mr Tibbats was originally built as the Presbyterian Manse on the Colony Farm in 1883 and was moved into Binscarth in 1887. The Church was served by unmarried student ministers for some years, so the manse was used as a residence by Mr A.G.P. Smellie who moved in from the Colony Farm. The hall
from

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from the Colony Farm was moved to the now vacant lot between Robinsons and Wasslen's Store .It served as a school on weekdays and Church on Sundays for three denominations.

The first business man in the new Binscarth was Mr Robert Anderson. He moved in a small building from Silver Creek in 1886 and set up keeping store.It stood where the Arts and Crafts Shop now stands, later it became a Hardware Store and still later it was burned down.Mr Anderson built the cottage mentioned above and also built a livery barn further West, back of where Barrett's Garage now stands.

In 1887 A.P.W.Goldsmith built a General Store where the Royal Bank now stands. The store faced the station house and the Post Office was located in the back end of the store. The first Postmaster was Mr Goldsmith, a little later Mr. A.G.P.Smellie took over. He was succeeded by A.S.Crerar Thomas Fowler, J.H.Willis, A.J.Willis and R.R.Rannie, present Postmaster. During the years the Post Office was located in different parts of the town but the present Post Office building stands on the same ground as the original office in the back of Goldsmith's store.

During the first years after the Railway arrived Binscarth had one, occasionally two trains a week.If on time the train arrived about 10.30 p.m., went on to Saltcoats and returned East next day. Some of the early station agents were James Williams, James Bulgron, Robert Watson, George Burkholder.

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In the early days stopping houses and livery barns were good business. There were settlers coming in, others passing through in the search for land, travellers stopping off at Binscarth and being driven by team to other points, sometimes as far as Mossomin. Mr George Ladlaw built the Riley Stopping House on the site now occupied by the 580 Hotel. He also built a livery barn and both places were operated by James Fletcher for some years. James Reid and Fred MacPherson built the Royal Hotel on the site now occupied by the Murdock Block which is now Reichmuth's Hardware. The Royal Hotel was operated first by Fred MacPherson then Phizacklea Bros., Alex Allen, Mrs Watson, Jim Sproat and finally Robert Murdock. The old hotel was eventually moved in sections, two of which still stand; The Dominion Cafe - now D.Y. Billy's Cafe, and the residence of the late Maurice Murdock. The Murdock Block was built on the site of the old Royal Hotel and a new Royal Hotel was built on the site of The Riley Stopping house. The new Royal Hotel has changed hands many times and is now known as the 580 Hotel.

In 1888 the Winnipeg grain firm of Armitage and Roblin built a flat warehouse opposite the present station. A. S. Crerar was their grain buyer. All grain was handled in bags in those days and was usually hauled to town during the winter. It was cold hard work and those were the days when the Manitoba knot for grain bags developed. Grain was threshed at so much per bag and men were known by the size of their grain bags and the Scots had no monopoly on the large bags.

There

Geo. P. Method Teacher in Bunceort
History of Bunceort 1915-16

Mrs. Rice's Material for M. S. copy.

Editor Benscail Express & Foxwarren News:

During the past ten days I have received two letters from old residents of Benscail. One of ~~them~~^{whom} came to this part of the country in the early 1900's and pioneered in this immediate farming area known as the Benscail district. The other was born and raised and educated in Benscail, daughter of one of the original pioneers of Benscail. Both of these people express their surprise and disgust in ~~no~~ unmistakable terms at the proposed change of name to Bekawye. Unbelievable and unthinkable were terms used.

~~Whether we like it or not~~

When this country was first opened up, a name had to be given to every established Post Office. Most old timers round here know the origin of the name Benscail. However as the years pass, the surrounding agricultural district naturally takes on the same name as the post office. Thus we have Benscail district, Russell district, Foxwarren district and so on. It so happens that Benscail's farming district is known quite a bit fainter than even the ^{pioneer} Chamber of Commerce may suspect.

As ~~some~~^{one} who farms in this community

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I am
feel that as we are not going to be
allowed any vote as to its change of name
perhaps an opinion in print will be allowed.

Beware of Quacks bearing gifts is an old
saying and quite applicable to the present day.
When city slickers come to "Duck" towns bearing
such beneficial gifts as "building up business",
"helping the small merchant" etc etc, you can
rest assured that the best featured nest will
not be in rural C.H.Y. ~~It is~~

It is fine to dwell on all the privileges
and increased business that might accrue
from such a change. But has any thought been
given to the responsibilities that accrue. Many
of us have had the privilege of trespassers
from other districts and some not so
thoughtful ones from our own, cutting fences,
shooting at cattle and otherwise making
a nuisance of themselves during hunting seasons.

This could possibly be multiplied many
times with a duck town adjacent to
our land. Of course then as now no one
would be responsible. If all land were posted
as to hunting privileges that would not be considered
very hospitable by the Chamber of Commerce especially
eager to welcome tourists, hunters, and travelers
to Duck Town.

There are also other things besides hunting &

horseback riding to take into consideration. Any seasoned motor operator will tell you that it is not the clientele that throw their money round that are preferred guests. Quite often their premises are left in such a shambles that it costs far more than overnight rents to repair and no matter what you may think the customer is always right, and the owner must never forget to be courteous. But it is just the sort of clientele that high pressure advertising brings. Again who is going to be responsible. The weakness of many of our business tycoons in this day and age, is that they want all the extra financial returns with no extra responsibility. It would be reassuring to have some definite undertaking by the Chamber of Commerce on these matters. (Up to now and taking into consideration some of the reported incidents around Town this assurance has not been forthcoming).

From some twenty years in ~~public~~ serving the public in both public & private life I have observed that there are always three sides to every question. Your side, my side and the right side. To date and in my opinion the right side has been given very little thought. Yours &c.

Transposed to end
of letter

Laying my cards on the table.

In closing, any change of the Benicourt name to that of a trades station engaged in ^{dubious} a dressing no matter how that name is spelled out is an insult to the memory of old timers who pioneered this district.

Secondly it appears to have all the ear marks of the present day trend to "get rich quick" at the expense of visitors to this district and leaves all the disadvantages of its end result to the surrounding district whose residents have no vote in the matter.