

Mr. R. Berdusco

-by D.E. Pugh

Wawa was built by emigrants who wrestled a hardy livelihood from a scoured and often frigid land. Emigrants flocked six thousand miles from Greece and Italy to meet the challenge.

R. Berdusco was one of these men. Born in Italy in 1900, Mr. Berdusco learned English from American soldiers during the First World War. From his father's farm repair depot he gained his trade as a blacksmith. Such a background proved its worth in 1923, when Mr. Berdusco followed his brother to Canada. Like many emigrants before him, Mr. Berdusco obtained employment on the Welland Canal. Meeting a friend from Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Berdusco travelled North in 1925 looking for blacksmith work. Unable to locate employment in Sault Ste. Marie, he strummed a guitar for three months in a small Sault band. In the spring of 1926 Mr. Berdusco joined an expedition of eight men prospecting the Firesand region near Wawa. While he sharpened bits, the prospectors drilled and blasted surface veins only to find low grade ore.

In late 1926 Mr. Berdusco found employment with fifteen drillers, pumping the old Grace Mine of 1898 dry, and installing new mining equipment, hoists drills, compressors and the mill. This mine, and the Minto provided work until their closure in 1937. For two months he was employed by a construction company in North Bay, sharpening steel for drillers. He then obtained a job in Beardmore for Ingersoll Ram Co., installing compressors and furnaces. Returning to Wawa the Christmas of 1938, Mr. Berdusco took a job at the Jubilee Mine, where he worked until its collapse in 1939. From August 1939 until his retirement in 1965 Mr. Berdusco has been employed by the Algoma Ore Division, undertaking welding repairs to such equipment as areal tramways. Mr. Berdusco attributes his success to hard work and the desire to learn. The mines needed knowledgeable, versatile men. By working in small mines, Mr. Berdusco obtained an excellent knowledge of all aspects of mining from drilling to the ball mill. For men with such a broad knowledge there was always work.

Times were not always easy. In 1928 he told his boss that he wanted his own cook. Showing a picture of his future wife to the mine foreman, he received the approving comment, "not to waste any time." But returning to the mine with his wife posed the problem of accommodation. A hay shed was cleaned out and the walls chinked with oakum. Wall paper was hastily applied to the walls. To furnish the

house, Mr. Berdusco cleaned out furniture from an abandoned trapper's cabin. But for the slanting roof and mice, Mr. Berdusco had a home. Since that date, Mr. Berdusco has raised eight children, three girls and five boys, all of whom have received a higher education. He has the satisfaction today of watching his grandchildren grow in the town where he has lived forty-four years.

The labour such men as Mr. Berdusco represents a force which has transformed a virtually empty continent into one of the worlds' most prosperous nations. It is good that we should remember the achievements of those before us while facing the future.
