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Quick, Timely Reads
On the Waterfront

Bucky: The Creature from Cascade Creek

By David Frew
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Dr. David Frew, a prolific writer, author, and speaker grew up on Erie's lower west side as a proud "Bay Rat," joining neighborhood kids playing and marauding along the west bayfront. He has written for years about his beloved Presque Isle and his adventures on the Great Lakes. In this series, the JES Scholar-in-Residence takes note of life in and around the water.



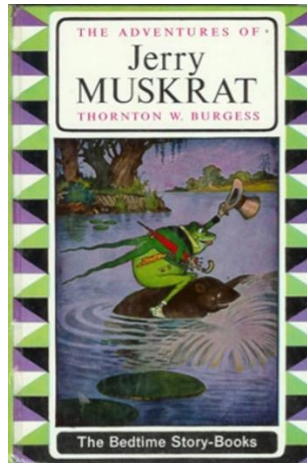
There is nothing quite as exciting for a kid of any age as finding a beaver lodge.

We spent many happy hours wandering along the wilds of Cascade Creek. From the bridge that spanned the creek at the south end of the western Cascade Dock to Presque Isle Bay the fast-running waterway split into two distinct forks. We often wandered along both forks, catching garter snakes, crayfish, and other critters that made the creek their home. But our favorite creature was the beaver who lived halfway between the bridge and the bay. We first saw him one evening as we were heading home from fishing at the creek's outlet to the bay. He was swimming toward us while balancing several large branches. We followed him up the creek from the bay until we spotted his lodge and wondered why we had not recognized it before. It was partially obscured by its position at a bend in the waterway close to trees and brush where it blended in.

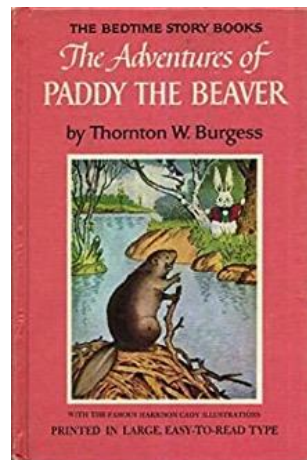
None of us wanted to admit it but we had learned about beavers and other aquatic critters when our parents introduced us to a book series by Thornton Burgess. Marketed as gentle children's bedtime reading, the Burgess books had opened a veritable universe of woodland and pond characters to our young minds. The star of the series was a muskrat, named Jerry. But he had a huge cast of supporting characters, including "Paddy the Beaver," a wise elder frog, a bunny, and more. Pond critters were perpetually working through conflicts in the Burgess stories, and in ways that reflected the positive value systems that our parents and teachers were trying to instill in us.

Barely hiding in the stories was an overly simplistic explanation of how pond animals lived and interacted. One lesson that we had all taken from the stories was how to tell the difference between Jerry the Muskrat and Paddy Beaver. Muskrats had skinny tails. And as much as we all resisted the temptation to quote from our early childhood bedtime stories, we recognized the Cascade Creek beaver by the size of his tail and by the distinct slapping sound that he made when we startled him, and he decided to submerge. We were "Big Jim" of Mutual of Omaha fame.

The first time that we saw him he was swimming into the creek from the bay while carrying several large sticks, he abandoned the sticks when he dove. Then after remaining, submerged for an astonishing length of time, his head popped to the surface, and he stared at us. He seemed really angry that we had disturbed his mission. So, we tried to be very still. After a few moments he swam back to his floating branches, gathered them up and continued into the creek.



While it was not exactly the kind of macho reading material that would help a Bay Rat seem tough, we had all read them.



One of Jerry Muskrat's regular pond associates was Paddy Beaver.

We named our new creek friend “Bucky,” instead of Paddy. We were way too “cool” to admit that we had read Thornton Burgess books, but we were totally familiar with America’s famous spokes-beaver, “Bucky.” Bucky Beaver dominated the commercial airways during the 1950s.



*“Brusha, brusha, brusha,
Here’s the new Ipana.”*

— The Ipana toothpaste jingle

While Ipana toothpaste had been a major brand sponsor on radio for decades and they had used Bucky Beaver sparingly as a spokes-animal, the popular new television ads that they launched during the 1950s were created by Disney Studios. Senior Mouseketeer Jimmy Dodd wrote and sang the catchy new advertising tune. The Ipana song was later touted as one of the best television jingles of all times.



Jimmie Dodd (1910 to 1964), the emcee of the Mickey Mouse Club, wrote the Bucky Beaver jingle.

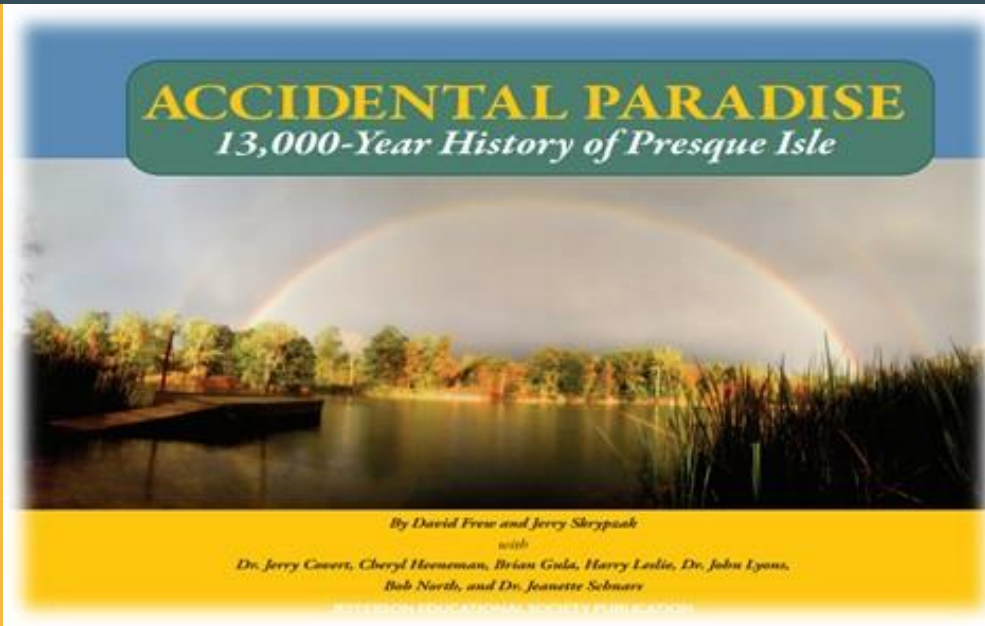
When my family returned to Erie in 1970, I took my children to see Cascade Creek, where they were delighted to see “Bucky” swimming about and tending to his lodge. Was it the same beaver who had been there during the 1950s? Just maybe. Beavers regularly live well into their 20s!

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Accidental Paradise
by Dr. David Frew and Jerry Skrypzak



The beautiful book on Presque Isle published by authors David Frew and Jerry Skrypzak – “**Accidental Paradise: 13,000-Year History of Presque Isle**” – is on sale at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center’s gift shop and through a special website, AccidentalParadise.com.

The book, priced at **\$35 plus tax and shipping**, can be ordered now through the website sponsored by the TREC Foundation, AccidentalParadise.com.

Presque Isle Gallery and Gifts on the main floor of TREC, located at **301 Peninsula Drive, Suite #2, Erie, PA 16505** will also handle sales **daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

For more information, send an email to aperino@TRECf.org.

To watch "Accidental Paradise: Stories Behind The Stories" click [here](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Historian and author David Frew, Ph.D., is a Scholar-in-Residence at the JES. An emeritus professor at Gannon University, he held a variety of administrative positions during a 33-year career. He is also emeritus director of the Erie County Historical Society/Hagen History Center and is president of his own management consulting business. Frew has written or co-written 35 books and more than 100 articles, cases, and papers.



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