



▲ Daughters Barbara Jennings and Gloria Hildebrandt cut the ribbon to open the new Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail.

# The Bruce Trail's Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail

By Gloria Hildebrandt Photos by Mike Davis

A Side Trail of the Bruce Trail has been named after my father, Charles Hildebrandt of Georgetown, and his friends are pleased while his family is honoured.

The naming of side trails is the prerogative of the Bruce Trail club responsible for the section of main trail where the side trail is located. This section of trail is supervised by the Toronto Bruce Trail Club.

“When a new side trail is created, it is an opportunity for the club to honour a special individual,” says David Tyson of Toronto, past president of the Toronto Bruce Trail Club and chair of the land management committee. “Some trails are named after a particular feature, such as the Black Creek Side Trail in Limehouse Conservation Area. To get a side trail named after a person, someone has to prepare a case and present it to the board of directors of the club involved. The decision on naming lies with the club.”

“Charles Hildebrandt had recently passed away,” says

Maureen Smith of Georgetown, the Toronto club’s director of landowner relations, “and it seemed fitting to give his name to a trail in view of his many years of volunteering with the Toronto Bruce Trail Club. I suggested the name. My regret is that we did not do it while he was alive.”

Maureen herself has had a Side Trail named after her, at Scotsdale Farm in Halton Hills.

## Bruce Trail Side Trails

Side Trails have been part of the Bruce Trail network of trails since before 1965, when they were shown in the first trail guide book.

“They provide access to special features and look-out points, offering hikers a chance to leave their transportation at one point and return via a





▲ Blue Side Trails of the Bruce Trail are sometimes named after volunteers who have made significant contributions.

◀ David Tyson and Maureen Smith of The Bruce Trail Conservancy at the opening of the Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail.

Some of the many people who regularly hiked in Charles Hildebrandt's global excursions. ▶



▲ The trail passes some outcroppings of the Niagara Escarpment.

different trail, providing a loop hike," says Maureen. "They also provide access to the main trail from parking areas."

All Side Trails are shown in the Bruce Trail Reference Guide, marked with dotted red lines instead of the solid line for the main trail. There is also information about the length and distance of the Side Trail loops. Any changes to trails are shown in the quarterly Bruce Trail magazine.

### Features of the Hildebrandt Trail

The Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail is on property owned by The Bruce Trail Conservancy in the Town of Halton Hills. It is a 650-metre stretch that goes from the dead end of 3rd Line south of 22nd Sideroad, to the Canada Goose Side Trail which connects to the main Bruce Trail. It is properly called an access trail, and has roadside parking on the 3rd Line.

This side trail is not as well travelled as others in the Bruce Trail system, so the blue blazes marking the way are useful in the rougher stretches. Yet at 3rd Line, the trail is a wide, obvious track through a mixed hardwood forest. There's a steep dip in the track that looks used by dirt bikes or mountain bikes, and the sharp drop is alarming, but this is not the way the trail goes. Keeping north avoids the dangerous dip and takes the proper trail.

There's a healthy patch of wild ginger that was clearly visible in October. The trail goes through a forest of various hardwood trees of all ages from young to fully mature. Fallen trees are allowed to remain, forming habitat for plants and animals until they decompose fully.

The Niagara Escarpment appears in a moderate way here, with many small moss-covered rocks but some large outcroppings of boulders and a few stretches of rock "fingers,"

those layers of rock that glaciers long ago pushed onto their sides. The narrow rocks and ridges make walking a challenge. Good supportive footwear is advised even for this short walk.

The trail follows a slight ridge to the north, which provides shelter from winds. Then it turns south and descends slightly over rocky ground until it reaches the Canada Goose Side Trail at 2.9 km from a parking lot on the 22nd Sideroad. This trail connects to the main, white Bruce Trail.

### Sign Unveiled

Maureen organized a ceremony to open the newly named trail on Oct. 14. Dave spoke about Charles' involvement with the Bruce Trail. Charles' two daughters unveiled the sign and then cut the green ribbon to formally open the trail.

Maureen provided a table of refreshments including apple cake made by her daughter, which was especially appreciated by a group of Charles' friends who hiked the



trail to the ceremony from the 22nd Sideroad.

There is some irony in this honour. After hiking the Bruce Trail for a few years, Charles became more interested in exploring natural wilderness around the world. He led groups on extended orienteering trips, which involve hiking through unmarked areas for a weekend to two weeks, carrying a tent, sleeping bag, clothes, stove, food and sometimes all your water, and following compass bearings to your destination.

He and his friends have bushwhacked in northern Ontario, hiked the Grand Canyon, the Sonora Desert, the Gila Wilderness, part of South Africa and crossed the Alps. He also led groups on weekend

snowshoe hikes, although they usually, not always, stayed overnight in cabins rather than tenting outdoors.

His skill with a compass in even the wildest terrain was so reliable that one of his hiker friends, Ron Ferguson, once joked “Tell me, Charles, was it your plan to come out at the front or back wheel of your car?”

So when Richard Longley of Toronto, another longtime friend of Charles, invited hikers to the Side Trail opening, he wrote “Please join in this celebration and memory of the life of Charles Hildebrandt (and in our prayers that the most off-trail person we ever knew, will forgive us for remembering him with a trail.)”

Charles would have liked that. **NEV**

## Bruce Trail Info

[www.bruce-trail.org](http://www.bruce-trail.org) 1-800-665-4453

The Bruce Trail Conservancy head office is in Raspberry House at Royal Botanical Gardens, Burlington.

All nine clubs have their own websites.

Toronto Bruce Trail Club: [www.torontobruce-trailclub.org](http://www.torontobruce-trailclub.org)