

# Steenburg Lake

## "SHORELINE NEWS"

Spring 1988

Steenburg Lake Community Assoc.

Historical Update by John Brett McGeachie : To 50 years at Bass (now Steenburg) Lake, dated Oct. 70.....Some research on people population at the lake seems to confirm Bob Powers Sr's claim to being the first white settler. He had been preceded by the itinerant lumbermen cutting virgin pine. Indian artifacts have been dug up on our property. When McLeod surveyed Limerick Twp. for settlement in 1862, he reported Bob as a squatter on the south shore, on part of the Moore property that later became the East Road development. While the Powers name does not appear on the current directory, since the death of Doris, Powers' blood lines include the following families: Alyea, Brett, Brooks, Dodds, Fitzgibbon, Flavelle, Fraser, Frey, Langman, Lloyd, McClung, McGeachie, Reil, Smith, and Weller. So like Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance", there are plenty of cousins, uncles and aunts in residence.

The first campers came from two main centers, Rochester and Toronto. Mary Ann, one of Bob Powers daughters, had lived in Rochester. She moved back to the lake with her third husband, one Norton. It wasn't long before she ordered him out of the house. She built a cottage for him on Hunter's Point, a long time deer watch. It became known as Norton's Point. But Norton soon abandoned it and returned to Rochester.

Mrs. Norton advertised in the Rochester papers for borders. A honeymoon couple, the Merrills, arrived and found her accommodations not matching their expectations. So she set up a tent for them on a small island she owned. They fell in love with the location, bought it, and built a small but beautiful cottage. It became known as the "Doll cottage" on Honeymoon Island. They summered there for 50 years, but on the day of their 50th wedding anniversary Mr. Merrill died of a massive heart attack. His widow took the body back to Rochester and never returned. She sold the cottage and contents to the first bidder.

The Lakeview Hotel opened in 1910. It was built and operated by Harry Fitzgibbon, a son-in-law of Mary Ann's. A hotel guest, Phillips from Rochester, introduced Kellog, a Rochester teacher, to the lake in 1922. The cottage he built is now owned by his grand-daughter Judie Hughes. Kellog was followed by teachers Johncox (cottage owned by his son today), and Rotmans. Carpenter was also a Rochester teacher. Frey, another son-in law of Mary Ann worked for Eastman Kodak in Rochester and Dewey and Merrill were also with that firm.

### Historical Update cont....

Transportation from Rochester was by ferry to Cobourg, the C.N.R. to Trenton Junction, then a transfer to the Trenton-Maynouth branch. Bert Weller, Mary Ann's son, who now operated the general store and Post Office at Steenburg Siding, provided the jitney service to the lake by wagon, and to the islands by gasoline launch.

The author Samuel T. Wood, of Bellville who published the book, "Rambles of A Canadian Naturalist" was familiar with the lake. A short story included in the book entitled "The Great Northern Diver", was reprinted in the Ontario school reader, used in the early part of this century. The story starts with: "Out of the night comes the weird, long call, or the demonical laugh, telling of the sleepless activity of the loon, or "The Great Northern Diver". The Woods family were friends of the Gummersons, parents of Mrs. Benard, and it was this contact that brought the latter family to the lake. The area was relatively pollen free so the Benards recommended it to Dr. Matheson, a Toronto dentist who suffered from hay fever. The Mathesons rented the Norton cottage from June 1st to October 1st for \$20, and later bought it. Ellen, their maid was the first black seen at the lake and American guests would not eat with her.

The Bruce Powers family made their annual migration on the north train, complete with dog in the baggage car. The dog got loose at one of the stations and when the loss was discovered, Bruce made them back the train up to retrieve it. Another time the train stopped while everyone, including the crew picked a few blueberries.

### Lake Water levels during 87.....

Meteorologists consider the summer season to encompass the months of May, June, July, and August. So these are the months that have to be considered for comparative data. Average total summer rainfall in the 1970's as reported by the weather office can be compared to records kept at the lake for subsequent years as follows:

1970's	- 10.4" Average
1981	- 11.93" plus 7.49" in Sept
1982	- 13.41" plus 5.41" in Sept.
1983	- 15.67" " 2.92" " "
1984	- 17.28" " 2.3" " "
1985	- ----- " 5.8 " " Jun, Jly, Aug 11.1"
1986	- 23.87" plus 9.65" in Sept
1987	- 9.90" plus 3.55" in Sept

An additional fact as reported by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture is that evaporation in the 4 summer months can account for a loss of as much as 36" in water levels. Periods of cloudy conditions naturally reduce this amount.

Last seasons water levels were still higher than those experienced in the 1920's under sunnier conditions. Consider a report of an expedition by 5 Americans who voyaged from Bass Lake to Salmon Lake via Bass Creek in 1865. The trip took 3 days and to get enough water to float their dugout canoes they had to dig a ditch from the lake to the creek.

Last year the planks at the culverts dried up sections of Bass Creek. When they were removed the creek filled to the lake level and all further flow stopped. This indicates that without additional 'head' from the lake the creek does not act as a drain. This suggests maintaining the planks increases high water levels and are ineffective in low water periods and is not cost effective. Further they restrict the propagating area for bait fish that game fish depend upon for food.

Headwater lakes such as this are more at risk from pollutants than those in chain waterways which get more flushing from the greater flow-through. Using an approximate lake volume and very rough measurements of Spring outflow in the creek a guesstimate would be that it takes over 30 years for a complete water change. Most water change is by evaporation which tends to concentrate residuals. Here again the planks are no help. Some of the figures used were: Surface area 684 acres, Average depth 19.4ft., for a volume of 13,270 acre feet.

#### Water Quality.....

An unpopular subject researched by a University of Toronto professor and reported in the Financial Post, May 29, 1971: "Outboard motors are extremely inefficient and pollute by discharging Hydrocarbons and Phenolic constituents and are a significant threat to waterways". Several of these compounds are considered to be carcinogenic. Tests for such elements are expensive and not normally carried out on small bodies of water. Water skiing is the single largest contributor.

#### Fishing Notes.....

The Rock Bass derby of 1987 is to be commended and should be continued as an annual event. It is a very effective way to improve the fishing. Too many of us toss back the Rockys because it is too much trouble to clean them or dispose of them, thus they proliferate. Spending money on stocking with the existing large population of Rock Bass is to throw money down the the drain.

#### Fishing Notes cont.....

A big hazard to the bass fishery is the Spring poachers. Every male bass caught while guarding a nest destroys several thousand fry, as the eggs, and/or fry are quickly eaten by trash fish. Wardens for the district are sparse, pretty thin and unless cottagers cooperate by immediately calling Bancroft when violators are observed, there is little chance the practice can be stopped. Belly aching about poor enforcement after the fact doesn't accomplish anything.

#### A word of caution - Raccoons.....

Raccoons are a southern animal that reached the north shore of Lake Ontario before this century. Herbie Moore (1891 - ) caught one at the lake when he was a boy and didn't know what it was. The next reference to 'coons' at the lake was by Brett in the 1920's. They have since spread to and across Northern Ontario. A biologist friend working in Alberta advises a few have now reached the Alberta border. They are a very efficient forager competing with bass for crayfish; bass, mink and otter for frogs, and destroy innumerable ground and hollow tree nesting birds' nests, eggs and young. Feeding these 'cute' animals improves their fecundity and helps to further unbalance this so-called balance of nature.

A new virulent strain of rabies has broken out in the 'coon' population in the New England states and is spreading rapidly in this direction. It is anticipated may reach Toronto in 1988. Feeding 'coons' should be discouraged not only for ecological reasons but because it could become a very dangerous practice.

Thanks to John Brett McGeachie for this input

Cottage renting was very popular during the 20's and Brett ended up with nine. Then renting waned during the Great Depression and the trend turned to the 'own your own' generation. Brett retired from active business for good.

Walter Brett Sr., Richards father, spent his entire fortune in the scientific study of birds. This earned him a niche in posterity as all his field notes and over 1000 specimens repose in the Royal Ontario Museum. In recognition of his work in Ornithology his name has been officially accepted for the lake in Tudor Township and will appear on the next issue of the topographical maps.

- July 1987 -

### Central Ontario Railroad (long gone)

In 1885 the three Mawson brothers, John, Mark, and Tom who had emigrated from Yorkshire, joined the brushing gang clearing the right-of-way to extend the Central Ontario Railway from Bannockburn to Coe Hill. With the arrival of the work gangs Sidamer Steenburg built a bunkhouse to board the workmen. When this section of the railway was completed in 1886 the mail was transferred from the Hastings Road stage coach to the railway and Steenburg opened a post office and general store in the vacant bunkhouse. Mark Mawson became section foreman of the work gang that maintained the tracks and road bed. Dave was Mark's son and in time also worked on the section crew for the C.O.R. and later for the C.N.R. when the National absorbed the original company.



Steenburg post office and general store Circa 1920 (old bunkhouse)

The RR was extended to Bancroft in 1907 and during its hayday there were two passenger trains a day, one south in the morning, and another north in the afternoon. With the construction of Hwy.#62, competition from private vehicles and a bus line killed the passenger service. From Toronto to St. Ola by train took 6 hours. As passenger service declined, a coach was added to a mixed freight train which made the trip up to 12 hours in duration.



train pulling into the St. Ola (Steenburg siding) station around 1925

Steenburg sold the store and post office to Camby, who sold to Weller, who in turn sold to Dave Mawson. Dave moved the business to its present location (Trudy's Place) when the highway was opened. The post office was closed and reopened as a summer post office at Carol Murphy's marina on Bass Lake without any change in name. When there were found to be some 30 Bass Lakes in Ontario the lake was renamed after the post office. It was rather a travesty as Steenburg was only involved in the bunkhouse for a short time and that family lived east of the railway and had nothing to do with the lake. (Camby was a son-in-law and Weller a son of Mary Ann Norton from an earlier marriage. Mary Ann was a daughter and Carol a great granddaughter of Bob Powers Sr.)

*Text and pictures by John Brett McGeachie - Feb. 1988*

**Bass Lake Community Association:** If you were missed by a canvasser for this year's membership dues of \$10.00, they may be mailed to: Anita Waddell, 5 Charles Tupper Dr., West Hill, Ont. M1C 2A8. You will be mailed an updated map of the lake and a listing of cottagers.

**SHORELINE NEWS;** This newsletter will be published as needed during the cottage season and distributed through Trudy's and the Marina. If you have any lake news that you would like included please contact Tom Hughes at #28 or phone 474 - 5753

# SLCA STEENBURG LAKE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

March 1988

## Hi Neighbors

Spring and cottage time is rolling around fast, and before you know it a canvasser will be knocking on your door looking for your membership fee of ten dollars (\$10.00).

In exchange you will receive a membership card, Lake Directory Map, and a valuable information sheet about our lake and surrounding area. Our thanks to Jack McGeachie and Tom Hughes for their interest and time in preparing the Shoreline News.

If anyone prefers to mail the membership fee, please forward to:

Anita Waddell  
5 Charles Tupper Dr.  
West Hill, Ontario  
M1C 2A8

Speaking to Ward Smith on environment, he feels there are no new secrets, or special insights into pollution problems that may be affecting our lake. Some suggestions by Ward are as follows:

Construct a floating notice board and anchor it at one of the present buoy locations. The board would become a communication link for cottagers (ie) lawn or dock sales, items for sales etc. People wanting to get together for birdwatching, edible plants of area, recycling of wastes. Conduct programs, classes, seminars and instruction.

Chatting with Wayne Hadley late in the fall he indicated nothing was new in the fishing issue of restocking. If there is any new developments Wayne will let us know at the annual meeting.

We have not contacted P.J. Marshall on the quality of our water as yet, we will do so early in the spring, so the information will be available for the next letter or meeting.

Marion Duggan would like you to keep in mind the Buffet dinner to be held Sunday, July 31, 1988. Ticket sales are limited, so first come first served.

**DOOR PRIZES - FOOD - MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS  
BY TICKET ONLY**

All us Winter folk thank the Old Hastings Snowriders Snowmobile Club, local residents and volunteers for the work and time spent on grooming this past season. We only wish we could send out the same thanks to Mother Nature.

March 1988

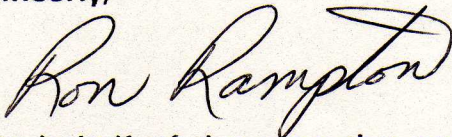
I spoke briefly with Arnold Birkett on Saturday, March 5, 1988. There has been no developments with the dump situation. He suggests the possibility of the council and the cottagers of Tudor & Cashel having a meeting. I agreed and will follow up on this as early as possible. I suggested that if no action is in sight the cottagers of Tudor & Cashel Townships may have to get someone to run for council in the next election to represent the cottagers. Not only because of the dump issue, but for any issue that may arise.

Many of you have already heard by now "Trudy's Place" has been sold. Trudy will still be living in the area, and hopes to see some of us throughout the summer. I'm sure everyone will join us in wishing Trudy "ALL THE BEST" in her next endeavour.

We would like to welcome the new owners Margaret & Robert Watson, wishing them good luck and success in their new business.

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Rampton".

On behalf of the executive committee,  
Ron Rampton  
President  
Steenburg Lake Community Association