

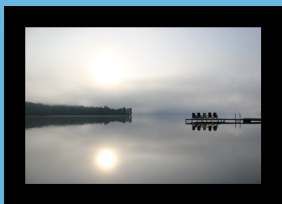
BBLA Newsletter

Spring 2022



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Chairman's Letter

Welcome to the Big Basswood Lake Association's Spring 2022 newsletter.

We sincerely hope that all of our members and their families are safe and well.

It sure is wonderful to see everyone back enjoying Basswood Lake again after two years of noticeably reduced activity due to the pandemic. I'm sure everyone shares my enthusiasm that the worst is behind us and we are all able to enjoy the lake again.

However, in spite of the restrictions of the pandemic emergency, the board has continued to work extremely hard on your behalf. I'm very pleased that we have welcomed 4 new members onto the board after last year's AGM:

- Bobby Swain
- Dave Bascomb
- George Craigie
- Matt Aho

All four of these gentlemen have jumped in and are participating actively, along with the existing board members on the important work of the lake association in the stewardship of Basswood Lake. We are still looking for new board members so if you are interested in joining the board, please let us know

I should note that according to the existing bylaws, even numbered years are board election years. A call for board nominations has been issued so if you are interested in joining us on the BBLA board, please let Jim Falconer (Board Nominations Chair) prior to the AGM. He can be reached at kjimf@rogers.com.

We held our spring board meeting on June 20th, conducted virtually via Zoom. We weren't forced to the Zoom platform this year by the pandemic lockdown restrictions but find it an effective way to let all board members participate, even if they are not physically present on the lake. Interestingly, we ended up continuing the meeting a week later just because of the sheer volume of material to be discussed – we are working hard on your behalf.

We are discussing a number of major topics that will each be covered in greater detail in this newsletter.

All of these topics and more will be covered at the AGM on July 17th from 10 to 12 AM. Thanks to the generosity of the new owners, the Provenzano family, the AGM will once again be held at Melwel Lodge – outdoors weather permitting. We held the meeting there last year and, I for one, loved being able to talk about important issues that impact our beautiful lake while sitting beside Melwel Bay on a beautiful Sunday morning.

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Membership

Membership Matters More Than Ever

Membership in the Big Basswood Lake Association provides several benefits, including a voice and a vote. Your opinions are valuable and your feedback is important and appreciated.

As the AGM quickly approaches, it is important to the Board that you share your ideas and help to elect new directors. Work is done throughout the year, monitoring developments and sharing news that is relevant to property owners on the lake. Member engagement and participation is vital to the ongoing success of the association.

As always, your annual membership in the Big Basswood Lake Association provides several benefits:

- > Attendance at events focused on
 - o Lake stewardship
 - o Area history
 - o Ongoing education
- > Participation at the Annual General Meeting
 - o Providing input on issues that affect property owners and the preservation of Basswood's pristine waters
 - o Electing directors to represent your interests
- .> Savings on your cottage insurance through FOCA

The annual membership fee has been held to \$25 per year for quite some time, ensuring affordability and value for your contribution. Friends and family who don't own property, but visit regularly, are also welcome to join as non-voting associate members for the same great price.

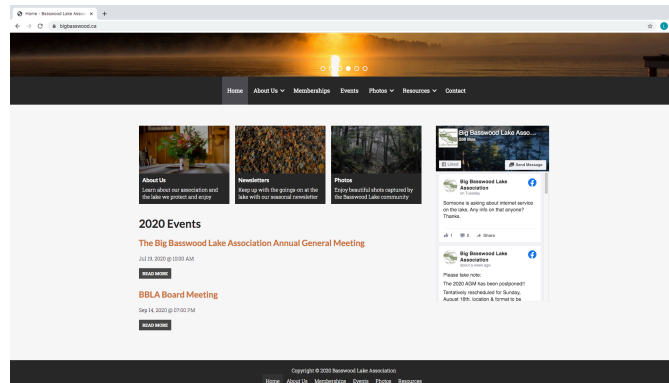
Payment options:

- > Use Paypal on our website: www.bigbasswood.ca/memberships
- > Send a cheque to Big Basswood Lake Association, P.O. Box 377
Thessalon, ON P0R 1L0
- > E-transfer from a Canadian bank account to our treasurer, Cynthia Wood,
at since48@gmail.com

Thank you for your ongoing support of the lake association's efforts. We encourage you to renew your membership and talk to friends and relatives who would also benefit from our activities.

- submitted by Joanne Falk

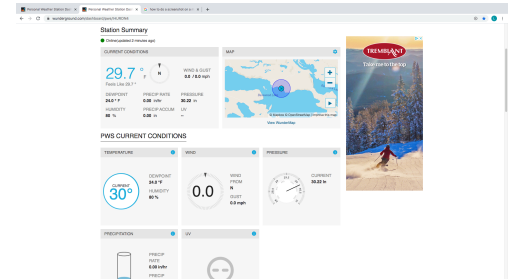
Lake Association Web Site



The winter and spring seasons have passed, and we have another opportunity to enjoy beautiful Big Basswood Lake. We are looking forward to the season ahead and opportunities to connect with friends and family.

Matt Aho, a new board member, has made some improvements / updates on the BBLA Website. Please take an opportunity to visit our updated and revised website. You will find:

- home page links which allow users to more easily access information
- additional photos
- an Updated historical section, thanks to the work of a Bobby Swain, a new board member
- previous news items and newsletters
- upcoming dates for meetings and socials
- a link to real time weather
- a link where membership fees can be paid – PayPal option is available. We encourage everyone to participate in BBLA membership. Your contribution is appreciated.



Thank you for your support of the BBLA. The board is working on your behalf to ensure that Big Basswood Lake is maintained and continues to be the beautiful, pristine lake that it is. We welcome suggestions and feedback from our association members.

Wishing you all a safe summer on the Lake!

Phil Conley

Mark These Dates for 2022

Spring Board Meeting	June 20, 2022
Annual General Meeting	July 17, 2022
Sowerby Heritage Evening	August 24, 2022
Fall Board Meeting	September 12, 2022

A New Canada Water Agency

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In our Fall/Winter Newsletter we provided a summary of the Federal Government's intent to establish a new Canada Water Agency intended to coordinate the oversight of freshwater management across the country. These management matters would include authorization of water use and distribution, inland fisheries, habitat, drinking water quality and wastewater systems.

The stated intent of the Feds, is to de-centralize this agency from Ottawa to a location elsewhere in Canada. The City of Sault Ste. Marie has recognized this opportunity and had formally developed a bid task force to work to convince the Government to select their city to locate the new agency. The bid group includes political, business, educational and First Nations appointees

<https://cwassm.ca/what-were-doing/>.

The Board Members of the BBLA consider the location of the agency in the Soo to be advantageous to our Lake interests in having the government staff responsible for coordination of freshwater management, residing and working so close our location. Larry Allcorn, BBLA Chairman, provided a letter of support last fall to the Soo taskforce and requested that they solicit our group for any additional support which we may be able to provide.

The Federal Government had budgeted 17.4 million dollars in the 2021 Budget to cover the establishment of the Canada Water Agency.

We are now well into 2022, so in late June we contacted the Federal Agency involved on the selection of the Agency site and they responded with the following announcement - "At this time there has been no formal decision on the head office location for the Canada Water Agency".

We have also contacted the Soo taskforce and confirmed our support for their initiative and offered again to provide any further assistance that they may deem useful to their goals.

The BBLA Board of Directors will continue to monitor and update the Membership on any new information.

Big Basswood Lake Association

Annual General Meeting
Sunday, July 17th, 2022 Melwel Lodge
10 AM

We will attempt to livestream meeting via Zoom
(stay tuned for an email with the link closer to meeting date)



Chairman's Letter

(continued from page 1)

This year, we also plan to partner again with the Sowerby Heritage Society and the North Shore Sentinel to sponsor one or two social evenings at the round sided barn. You may recall that we started these interesting presentations before the pandemic called a halt to all public gatherings. We are very pleased that these events are resuming due to hard work of Will Samis, Dave Ratz and others.

In closing, I'm sure you will see that there is a lot going on at the BBLA that impacts the ongoing stewardship and enjoyment of our beautiful lake. However, as our membership chairman, Joanne Falk notes in her submission, we still only enjoy participation from about half the property owners on the lake. We strongly believe that given the importance of the issues that we are addressing and the continued low cost to membership of \$25 that we should have a much higher percentage of membership. We encourage you to sign up if you haven't already done so and to ask your friends and neighbors on the lake to sign up as well.

I hope you have a great summer and I look forward to seeing you all around the lake.

Stay safe Larry

Chairman - Big Basswood Lake Association

Citizen Science on Big Basswood Lake

BBLA has been supporting and promoting Citizen Science initiatives on Big Basswood Lake for approximately 23 years. The Lake Partner Program has built a network of volunteers to sample water from over 550 lakes across Ontario. Testing includes phosphorus levels, calcium and water clarity. Volunteers over the years have consistently submitted water samples and secchi disk readings. This citizen science program represents the largest and longest standing one of this kind in North America. FOCA partners with the DESC. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks coordinates this program.

https://foca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/LPP-Long-Report_FINAL-REPORT.pdf

The Canadian Lake Loon Survey has been ongoing for 40 years. A volunteer group of loon watchers, organized by BBLA, has been following the loons on Big Basswood Lake since 2017. Tracking Common Loon breeding success involves observations that are made in June (to note loon pairs), July (to check if chicks have hatched), and August (to see if the chicks have fledged). Loon health is seen to be an overall indicator of ecosystem health.

<https://birdscanada.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CLLSsummary.pdf>

Finally BBLA has established an iNaturalist Big Basswood Lake Watershed Project. This platform provides an opportunity to identify, record and share information about the flora and fauna that you have spotted in and around Big Basswood Lake. It can create a network of nature observers and learners.

<https://www.bigbasswood.ca/resources/wildlife-habitat-inventory/>

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LAKE PARTNER SECCHI DATA
Note: pencil works best on this waterproof paper

BASSWOOD LAKE
East basin, deep spot

STN 246 Lake Max Depth (m) 73
Site ID 1 Site Depth (m) 73

Watch the Secchi disk in the water. Is the colour:
Green or Yellow ☒ OR Brown or Orange ☐

Date (dd-mm)	Time (24 hr)	Secchi Depth (m)	Secchi Disk Hits Bottom? (✓)	Comments (examples: water temperature °C, pollen, weather conditions)
30-May	12:00pm	11.0	No	pollen, calm, 20°C
29-June	11:30pm	11.0	No	19°C, calm
07-Aug	12:30pm	11.5	No	26°C humid
09-Sep	10:00am	12.0	No	18°C, clear
10-Oct	11:15am	11.5	No	19°C, calm

Keep this sheet to record Secchi depths from May through October. Please mail this sheet to Dorset in November using the provided postage paid envelope.
Email: lakepartner@ontario.ca

2022 Ice Dates

Ice on: January 15, 2022

Ice off: April 28, 2022

Explore Local Map

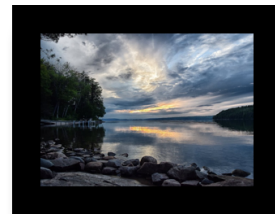
Discover Your Sense of Place

The Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition has published an excellent map which outlines 10 "Points of Departure" for exploring Central Algoma by Cycling, Hiking, Snowshoeing, Birding or Paddling.

Hard copies of these maps will be distributed from the lake association's table at the Saturday morning Sowerby market or can be obtained by contacting the CAFC directly at:

www.centralalgomafreshwatercoalition.ca

Mike Hunting Lake Stewardship Award



We are pleased to announce the re-launch of the Mike Hunting Lake Stewardship Award Program.

The intent of the program is to honour those who demonstrate leadership and/or make notable contributions - past or present - to the enhancement of the Big Basswood Lake experience. This prestigious award is named in memory of our friend and a past president of the Big Basswood Lake Association, Mike Hunting.

Notable contributions may include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- participation in citizen science relating to the Lake by participation and/or collaboration in scientific research - this may include meaningful contributions to data collection and monitoring programs
- initiatives which assist in the maintenance or improvement of the water quality of Big Basswood Lake waters
- socially constructive initiatives which invite participation from the Lake community at large and improve the Membership's enjoyment of the Lake
- educational initiatives which may enhance knowledge of the lake and/or the surrounding natural environment
- programs to preserve or improve the natural or modified shorelines and surrounding areas - including mitigation of risk from invasive species
- development and implementation of participation sports events which would invite the involvement of the Lake community
- public safety initiatives which may contribute to improving the safety of the Membership on and around the Lake
- any other initiative which may enhance the spirit and/or promote the solidarity of the Big Basswood Lake community

We invite nominations for the Mike Hunting Lake Stewardship Award by email to Larry Allcorn at lallcorn@bell.net

Nominations should include a description of the initiative and a short summary of the outstanding contribution. Nominations for the inaugural 2023 award should be received by December 31, 2022.

Nominations will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and follow-up information or details may be requested. The Board's goal will be to present the inaugural Award at the 2023 AGM of the Big Basswood Lake Association.

Thank you for your interest and support in continuing to work to enhance the Big Basswood Lake Experience.

2022 Loon Survey

Citizen Scientists at Basswood Lake

Loons on Basswood Lake and Volunteer Loon Watchers

Loon sightings for the summer of 2020 and 2021 were “hit and miss” as many of the participants were not able to get to their cottages due to the pandemic. An official Canadian Lakes Loon Survey was not submitted to Bird Studies Canada this year. However, In the three previous years before 2020, volunteers from all areas of the lakes contributed data to the surveys designed and recorded at Bird Studies Canada. They reported loons sighted from May through August. This represented categories such as:



1. Number of days surveyed in May – for example
2. Maximum number of adult loons
3. Maximum number of mated pairs
4. Maximum number of young
5. Maximum number of Large Young in August
6. Number of nests observed and number of eggs present

Here is a link to the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey:

[Canadian Lakes Loon Survey | Birds Canada | Oiseaux Canada](#)

There is lots of information on recording data information. And lots of tips and information on observing and getting to know loon behavior.

In the meantime, we have reached out to the Kensington Conservancy, located in Desbarats, to co-ordinate opportunities to be involved in citizen science. Please see Marilyn Kellums update on this initiative elsewhere in the newsletter.

For more information contact Leigh Olmstead (Photo Credit Jill Glaser)

Big Basswood Water Levels/ Harris Creek Dam Replacement

As reported in the last several newsletters, we received a copy of the dam operating plan from the MNRF for Basswood Lake. This plan outlines the targeted operating levels for the lake that the MNRF normally works toward and how those levels were determined.

It outlines the following key considerations for determining the best target levels for the lake:

- A stabilized lake level for Lake Trout fall spawning in October/November
- Adequate water being supplied to Bright Lake from the end of April to the first week of June to support Walleye spring time spawning
- Water levels stabilized for the summer by early June to support shore infrastructure for the seasonal and full time residents of Basswood Lake

It is unclear if this plan is being strictly adhered to at this time. Because we had a fair amount of snow over the winter followed by a very wet spring, the water levels in the lake remain high for this time of the year. The gates were opened up early in the spring for many weeks followed by a complete shutdown. At this time the water level is still several inches over the wingwall so spillage continues to flow down Harris Creek. We are hopeful that the gates stayed closed for the rest of the summer to maintain water levels.

The MNRF reports that the dam replacement project has been delayed by other priorities for at least another year. We don't see this as a major issue right now because the temporary repairs that were done to the concrete of the wing walls is holding well.

The next steps would be to have engineering drawings completed and a public consultation on the plans. Work would begin a year later. So we can assume that it will be at least another two years for work to begin (with high likelihood of further delays)

If you have questions on lake levels and the operating plans, please contact me and we will get the response from the MNRF. We encourage lake residents to contact the lake association first if they have questions – we may already know the answer or can get it quickly from the MNRF.



Thessalon First Nations Boundary Land Claim

In the fall newsletter and at last year's AGM, we informed the membership that the negotiation around the Thessalon First Nations boundary claim had been paused and that the matter had returned to the courts.

You will recall that boundary claim centers around the interpretation of the boundary of the TFN reserve lands as defined in the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850. Specifically, the issue has to do with the definition of the actual boundaries due to confusion in the units of measure. The First Nation understood leagues as the boundary unit of measure while the treaty used miles – a factor of 3 difference.

We were informed last year that the issue that is being reviewed in the courts is that the First Nations is seeking a "Declaration of Aboriginal Title" from the courts to provide some clarity in further negotiations. Whether or not this will be ultimately ruled on is unknown at this time.

The Canadian Encyclopedia defines aboriginal title as:

"Aboriginal title is an inherent right, recognized in common law, that originates in Indigenous peoples' occupation, use and control of ancestral lands prior to colonization. Aboriginal title is not a right granted by the government; rather, it is a property right that the Crown first recognized in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It has been subsequently recognized and defined by several Supreme Court of Canada decisions."

A recent follow up (June/2022) with Jane Thomas confirms that nothing has changed and that the matter is still in the courts with no next steps scheduled.

We asked her to reconfirm that private lands would not be affected in this negotiation and she provided the following guidance:

Ontario does not expropriate private lands in settling a land claim. Private property could be included in a land claim settlement if an owner is willing to sell the land and Ontario chooses to purchase it. (See [The land claim negotiation process | ontario.ca](#))

We will provide further updates as more information becomes available from Jane. If you have questions for her, she can be reached at:

jane.e.thomas@ontario.ca

Big Basswood is iNaturalizing

This summer's AGM demonstrated a strong interest in being able to observe and compare notes about what is happening on and around the lake. Because of this interest, a few of us met with Carter Dorscht, Executive Director of The Kensington Conservancy and citizen science advocate, to explore how we could do this. As a result of this meeting the BBLA has partnered with The Kensington Conservancy, a local land trust, to track flora and fauna within the Big Basswood Lake Watershed area using iNaturalist. This will create a baseline inventory of what species are present within the watershed and can help guide future conservation initiatives.

To participate, sign up for an iNaturalist account by downloading the app on your mobile device or visit the desktop website. Then go outside, take photos of any plant, insect, mushroom, or animal that you see and upload it. iNaturalist has great recognition software to even suggest identifications if you aren't sure what you are photographing!



The boundaries of the Big Basswood Lake Watershed showing the iNaturalist observations that have already been submitted to the project.

iNaturalist observations can be submitted from wherever you are, so even if you are not currently within the watershed, you can start iNaturalizing! The project and the observations collected within it can be viewed at inaturalist.ca/projects/big-basswood-lake-watershed. If you have any issues getting started or would like more information, you can contact The Kensington Conservancy at info@kensingtonconservancy.org or 705-782-2200. Also, the BBLA would be interested in your feedback on this initiative.

We at BBLA would like to thank Carter and The Kensington Conservancy for sharing their expertise. Nature connects us all.

Sandbar

In recent years, one of the issues that has arisen on Big Basswood Lake is in relation to what is commonly referred to as “the Sandbar”.

Just about every day in the summer has seen a gathering of boats and people at the Sandbar, particularly on weekends. At times, the crowds have gotten quite large and this activity is not confined to the sandbar - we have had reports of gatherings in other areas of the lake.

A sampling of the issues that have arisen are:

1. Garbage in the water (fruit cores, beer cans, papers and diapers being recent examples)
2. Trespassing on private property adjacent to the Sandbar (this includes people going ashore to defecate)
3. Excessive noise from music and people yelling/partying
4. Careless and dangerous operation of PWCs in and around other watercraft and swimmers
5. Domestic disturbances accompanied by profane language
6. People bathing and shampooing in the water

The above is in no way meant to indict all of the folks who gather at the Sandbar, however these are real occurrences that have been witnessed by cottagers in and around the area.

We all know that none of us “own the water”. However, along with our ability to freely travel on and around Big Basswood Lake, comes the responsibility to ensure that all of us are being respectful of our neighbours, fellow cottagers and the lake itself. We should all make an effort to ensure that we are not imposing ourselves on others, interfering with the ability of cottagers to enjoy their own property and being respectful of others right to privacy. Let common sense guide us with an awareness at all times of what would be considered to be reasonable behaviour.

Survey of Members

In an effort to determine the important issues and demographics of our lake community we are considering the development of a short survey to distribute to members of the Big Basswood Lake Association. This valuable information could help provide direction to the BBLA Directors in moving forward with initiatives which benefit the majority of members.

These initiatives might include lobbying Municipal and Provincial authorities on specific issues, development of a Lake Etiquette Guide, or any other item which the survey may identify as being of a high priority among our group.

The initial Survey would be forwarded by email during the upcoming 2022 Summer months and would be anonymous. The data gleaned would be circulated to the Membership in the Fall/ Winter newsletter.

We will be conducting a show of hands during the 2022 AGM to determine if the Membership has interest in developing this Survey.

Sowerby Heritage Events

Mark the Date – August 24th

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You may remember that PC (pre covid), the lake association sponsored a number of “Heritage Events” in partnership with the Sowerby Heritage Society and the North Shore Sentinel. These were very well received at that time and we have missed being able to gather with other members of the Huron Shores community for these interesting evenings.

We are pleased to announce that these evenings will resume in August of this year. The first event will be held on August 24th at the 12 sided barn in Sowerby. We will once again feature Vernon Bailey with his well received “Call of the Wild” program. Vernon us that he has included some new and updated material in the show.

There will be a pass the hat charity offering with donations being directed to the North Shore Health Network auxiliary – Thessalon site .

We look forward to joining again with the Sentinel and the Heritage Society to sponsor these events



A reminder to all of our members that a membership in the Big Basswood Lake Association includes a membership in the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association.

The association is currently some 500+ members strong representing over 50,000 waterfront land owners in the province. They provide us with a number of valuable services:

1. Ongoing participation in their lake partner program. We submit our lake test results for clarity and phosphorous levels to the lake partner data base every year. This data base continues to show Basswood as one of the clearest lakes in Ontario
2. FOCA holds a spring and a fall meeting every year, both of which usually feature valuable information. The spring meeting was held virtually on February 26th and was attended by Larry Allcorn on behalf of the Big Basswood Lake Association. Note that any of our members are free to attend these events. The spring event, in addition to the regular AGM, featured presentations on voter enumeration and property assessments by MPAC and also a very interesting presentation on infestation of gypsy moths in Ontario and the regional impact on defoliation.
3. Also, the FOCA web site contains a large amount of valuable information on lake stewardship and the ongoing initiatives that FOCA is working on. Please visit the website at <http://www.foca.on.ca/> for more information

We encourage our members to take advantage of this powerful tool as there is a lot of excellent information and reference material to be found there.

4. A valuable lobbying resource that can speak effectively on behalf of the 500 member associations.
5. FOCA also offers ongoing discounts on a number of products and services. These are also listed in the website above.

History Corner

As we mentioned in the Chairman's letter, the Big Basswood Lake Association is extremely fortunate to have 4 new board members who have volunteered to serve on our board.

One of these board members, Bobby Swain, is very interested in local history and has spent a lot of time transcribing stories about that history. Reprinted below is an example of one of his stories. If you are interested in more information about local history, we encourage a visit to his website:

www.basswoodlake.ca

Following is a reprint of one of these stories for your interest:

The following article is extracted from the June 1909 - May 1910 edition of Rod and Gun in Canada Magazine - Volume XI, Page 328 (https://archive.org/stream/rodandguncanada1909/rodandguncanada1909_djvu.txt).

Preface by Basswood Lake Outfitters:

As noted in the history article posted in the previous BBLA Newsletter, the Canadian Camp Clubhouse on the northwest shore of Big Basswood Lake, was a very popular destination in the early 1900's. This facility was both a direct tourist destination as is the case in this article, and it was the end terminus of the then famous Mississauga River journey, which started at the CPR mainline stations of Bisco or Winnebago. The canoe adventure was probably one of the most prestigious routes for adventurers in the days of railway travel which was before the popularization of motor car touring which flourished in the decade following this Big Basswood Lake tale.

The Canadian Camp was a "social" group formed in New York City in 1902 and from obtainable records, it appears that the organization's offshoot adventurer's Club took over management and upgrading of the existing Clubhouse building in or around 1905. You will glean from this article a good idea of the breadth of the popularity of this tourist destination for Canadians and more particularly American visitors from many influential walks of life.

Holiday at the Canadian Camp Club - 1909

(Lake Wacquekobing / Big Basswood Lake – Algoma District, Ontario)

BY A. H. S.

It is a grand thing to have headquarters in the woods. Attractive in their ever changing beauties as these splendid resorts for all Canadians who can visit them are, they are dreary indeed during rain and at certain periods of the spring and fall. With a well fitted up headquarters however one can be independent of the weather and visit the woods as business and other claims will allow. To be sure the woods are bad during "fly time," headquarters or not, but though flies can produce misery enough to exceed human imagination they are often braved and their pestiferous attentions endured for a time.

History Corner (cont'd)

Although it is not everything, a headquarters therefore means a good deal and the Canadian and United States sportsmen who established a headquarters on the shore of Lake Wacquekobing (now called Big Basswood Lake) at the end of the Mississauga canoe trip, knew very well the advantages to be gained there from. This canoe trip, which has attained wide celebrity and considerable popularity, is taken generally from Biscotasing, a station on the main line west of the Canadian Pacific Railway and ends at stations on the Soo branch of the same famous road.

Thus it is easy to reach the embarkation point and at the close, to go to any station in Canada or the States the tourist may wish to visit. At headquarters, known as the Canadian Camp Club, one may recuperate for a day or longer as circumstances dictate. Or if the canoe trip not be taken, the Club House may be visited in the first place and excursions made of any length or time, exploratory or merely of a recreative character, using the Club House as a base.

Lake Wacquekobing, which name is said by the Indians to mean "Grey water," is about eleven miles long by six wide, though it narrows down to much less than this at places. Like most Canadian lakes it is full of points and bays and contains three fine islands, at present covered with pine. A goodly portion of the shores have been devastated by forest fires and the rocky ridges, which looked fine with their wealth of pine and birch, are now disfigured and unpleasant.

Even with these drawbacks 'however a visit to headquarters is pretty sure to be productive of some pleasant experiences.

Knowing this the writer, when circumstances proved favorable for a visit in August of last year, speedily made such arrangements as would permit of office cares being left behind and the delights of the Northern Ontario woods explored for a fortnight.

A party of three left Western Ontario by the evening train, caught the Muskoka –Sudbury express by changing at West Toronto and early next morning were in Sudbury, the little mining town made famous by the mineral discoveries in the immediate neighborhood. There is not much to see in Sudbury and the five hours before the Soo train was due was a good deal more than sufficient to enable one to see it all.

The Soo branch gives evidence along its whole length of fishing and hunting possibilities. It was at Thessalon where the train was left and by previous arrangement a doubled seated rig was in waiting to transfer the passengers from the station to the shores of the lake.

Visions of a springless wagon had been floating through one's imagination and it was an unexpected pleasure to find the rig. The road, too, was likewise an agreeable surprise. Although rough at times, and roughly made as compared with the model "good roads" of Western Ontario, it proved one of the best of the Government roads in Northern Ontario, and having been favored with a dry spell it was really at its best. The whole twelve miles to Sowerby is along a high road and only for the last half mile, after leaving that little settlement for the shores of the lake, do any serious bumps occur.

History Corner (cont'd)

It was seven o'clock in the evening when, after this long, cold ride, the party were dumped down with their baggage on the shores of a little bay, and cheered with the information that as the lake was rough Superintendent Hope, who was to have met them, might be delayed indefinitely. (this bay would likely have been Coles Bay due to its proximity to Sowerby – it could also have been Indiana Bay where Basswood Lake Resort now occupies the site, however this would have made for both a longer row from the Clubhouse and a longer wagon ride from Sowerby)

It was not a pleasant prospect and it is certain the two ladies regretted leaving their comfortable home in a settled district. There was the further unsettling reflection that the boy driver, (who started off as soon as he was paid, being late for his supper, might have made a mistake and Mr. Hope be waiting in another bay the information having been volunteered during the drive that for such purposes a second bay was often used.

As a means of warming themselves the ladies decided to walk over to this bay to reconnoitre, it being agreed that they should return upon hearing a halloo. They had not however proceeded far when a second party drove up, a professional gentleman from Thessalon, who with his wife and family were camping across the lake, and a young lady living at a farm on the opposite shore (presumably one of the Dunn family daughters). The latter, a particularly bright specimen of her sex, saw at once what was the matter. In a second she induced the gentleman to produce a match and had us all hunting for dry wood. In a few minutes a glorious camp fire was blazing and with warmth, good humor returned. Mr. Batson, the gentleman in question, told us that no signal was possible and that patience was the only policy.

Scarcely had he made this explanation when a boat was seen approaching and the question was which party were to finish the last stage of their journey first. The boat proved to be one from the Club House and Mr. Hope himself was the rower. Greetings over, the long row to the Club House against a heavy sea followed. A lantern had been placed on a stump outside the Club and long before arrival this steady light was seen. It was nine o'clock before the Clubhouse was reached but a hearty welcome and a warm dinner speedily enabled the new comers to view the last incidents of the journey in a philosophic light and to smile over the little mishap which appeared so great at the time it occurred.

At the Clubhouse there was quite a pleasant gathering that evening. Mr. S. T. Ballard of Louisville, Ky. who is interested in a large flour business in that city, had arrived the previous day (Mr. Ballard was later to become the Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky and a noted philanthropist – see <https://digital.janeaddams.ramapo.edu/items/show/6235>). This gentleman headed a party consisting of himself, wife, his young son Rogers, son-in-law (Dr. Moreton) and two lady cousins. In addition there were three young New York gentlemen fresh from the Mississaga trip, which, with the energy of youth and the strenuousness which mark our friends to the South, they had accomplished in eleven days and meant to take the train for their home the following morning. The talk was all of backwoods experiences and the surroundings made it particularly appropriate.

History Corner (cont'd)

A quiet Sunday followed, the young men going out without fuss after an early breakfast. They left in backwoods' costumes with their dunnage bags, intending to resume conventional garb at the first hotel at which they stopped.

Fishing was the order of every day during the ensuing fortnight. In pursuit of the small mouth black bass not only was Lake Wacquekober tried but pilgrimages made to Clear Lake, a half mile easy portage only being between the two lakes, Little Basswood Lake and other lakes.

Clear Lake belies its name for the water in that lake is by no means so clear as in Lake Wacquekober. In Clear Lake also we ran across a school of pickerel and persistently caught pickerel when we wanted bass. So far as the fish were concerned, the best place we struck was a point a few yards from the Club House. Here we took as many as seventeen in one half hour.

For fishing as a pastime however give me Clear Lake. It will be a long, long time before I forget that first Tuesday up in' the Northern wilds. For one whole, long, delightful day I sat in the bottom of a canoe holding a little steel rod. I would go an hour without a bite but just drink in the beauty of the lake and its surroundings and feel supremely content with the bliss of the quiet calm. It seemed almost like a desecration when the guide paddled across to the opposite shore for lunch, and I almost resented the appearance of another fisherman (the guide called him an old mossback) who soon made it plain that he came fishing only for fish. Indeed the day was a disappointment for several members of the party and at the Clubhouse that evening discontent found voice.

As for myself, however, that day marks a time of absolute contentment. The world and its cares were forgotten for a period and quiet meditation took the place of stern problems of existence. It was then that the full delights of fishing were experienced. That day I fished for the fishing and not for the fish. The total for the whole party was small and my contribution to that total an inconsiderable one. I would however that life contained many more of such days, the recollections of which form no mean asset in one's existence.

The next ripple to the quiet life of the backwoods was caused by the appearance of Doctor Thompson, of Chicago, and Doctor Lawrence, of Boston. Both these gentlemen, who are accustomed to take a backwoods trip together every year, had come down the Mississauga in canoes and taken their time over the trip, making several side trips of an interesting character

Those at the Clubhouse who were making their first visit to the woods were mightily amused with the manner in which these parties arrived. The woods come right up to the Club House and the portage from the Mississauga is a long and difficult half mile. Usually at breakfast time or immediately afterwards one would notice, either from the window or on the verandah, a man walking out of the woods with a canoe on his head. He was the forerunner of a party and welcomed accordingly. In a short time questions were asked and answered and the new comers given such information as placed them again within touch of civilization, although the "latest news" was at least forty eight hours old.

History Corner (cont'd)

One gentleman had an amusing query. He had been careful to mark, down in his diary the day of the month but was at sea with regard to the day of the week. In my case, with my limited fortnight, I kept track of the day of the week but had forgotten the day of the month. Between the two of us we were able to get things in their right places.

The doctors had not been successful with their guides, whom they "fired" on their way down, giving them a canoe and provisions and continuing their journey alone. Both gentlemen were emphatic upon the delights of a backwoods life and repudiated the idea of anything of the nature of "hardship." Their outings are matters of consideration all the year round, every detail being planned with care, and one of them much amused the ladies by declaring that his coat, a comfortable but not particularly taking garment, in which, however, he saw many virtues, had occupied him a whole day in making its selection.

The doctors described the trip as uninteresting for the first few days from Biscotasing. The timber has been cut and the land burned over. Waters on the lakes had been raised for logging purposes, with the results that the trees around the shores had been killed. After passing Cat Bay things got a little better and improved until the Height of Land was reached. At Upper Green Lake they got into timber and found Norway and white pines, though the birds were few.

They met Mr. William Kinney, the head ranger, who has a force of twenty men under him at the Rangers' Cabin on Bank Lake. Mr. Kinney was courtesy itself and showed willingness to assist tourists in every way. His system and discipline seemed perfect, and he controlled every movement of his men, who all spoke in high terms of their chief. These men cut trails, clear out portages and by diligence in preventing and fighting forest fires perform fine national services.

The rangers recommended a trip to Sauble Lake as prettier than any lake on the main river. Upon this recommendation the tourists made the trip and were well repaid for their trouble. The next day they returned to Bark Lake and in the afternoon and evening had the rangers as their guests. On resuming their journey they caught some fine trout in the head waters tributary to the Aubinadong.

The latter they found a rocky stream, but when they reached Minnesinaqua they found ample compensation in its beauties for all their exertions. They journeyed to Round Lake and Seven Mile Lake, where they met some more rangers, and thus on to Winnebagon. Through lake and portage — one called the Devil's Portage, two miles long — they proceeded to Aubinadong River. After several side trips they decided to finish on the Mississaga and paddle on to Aubrey Falls, which they described as one of the most picturesque sights they had seen in fairly extensive travels. By means of lines and poles they scrambled down and took a number of photographs. They strongly advised all tourists to arrange to stop off at least one day at this point and enjoy the magnificent scenery, which requires time to fully realize its entrancing beauties. From a good position one can get a view of the surrounding country for twenty miles. Lower down they had six miles of rapid waters.

History Corner (cont'd)

In the course of the trip they caught all the fish they required. They saw a great deal of big game, including moose and deer, and many ducks, including canvassbacks, teal and black duck. These sights were highly gratifying to them and enabled them to enjoy every minute of their trip; and in particular the reminiscences over the camp-fires in the evening.

So crowded were we in the Clubhouse that Mr. and Mrs. Davidson, of New York, who fished enthusiastically, had to put up at Dunn's farm, a really pretty place on the opposite side of the lake from Sowerby. This farm looks like an oasis in the rockbound coast of the lake, and every visitor gives it a call. The writer made two visits, and on each occasion enjoyed a pleasant time. On the second the lake was too rough to take the ladies across, and they remained until the mail and some necessary provisions were procured from Sowerby, while Mrs. Dunn made us all cordially welcome at tea. The only drawback was the thought of the return trip, for the lake did not go down and the boat was heavily laden. However, the journey was successfully negotiated, and another pleasant memory added to the many gathered throughout the holiday.

It was on Sunday morning that Dr. and Mr. Penrose, with three Indian guides, came in. Dr. Penrose is an ex-professor of Pennsylvania University and Mr. Penrose a resident of Colorado Springs, Col. (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Bingham_Penrose). Both have been great travelers, and conversations with them proved rich feasts. They camped in a little bay and took meals at the ClubHouse.

It was a fine sight to see their Indians make camp. "Big Joe," the Chief of the Mississaga Indians, was in charge. The men first erected their master's tent, each man doing his own share without speaking a word, and each making his task fit in with the others in such a way that the work went forward with expedition and neatness. Tents up, a fire-place was arranged and many little conveniences contrived, which soon made the camp a home in the wilderness. Further acquaintance deepened the respect for these Indian guides.

The last visitor to arrive while we were there was Mr. Upton White, of Philadelphia, who for several weeks had been wandering out through rivers and lakes to the northwest of the Club House under the guidance of Geo. Linklater. Like all who become acquainted with that fine guide — who is an ex-Hudson Bay factor, was born, reared and spent his whole life in the woods — Mr. White was much impressed with his companion's capacity and readiness for service when so largely dependent upon him for most things.

While reticent as a rule, George became communicative 'round the camp fire and told several stories of his adventures. He also imparted to his companion many ideas of woodcraft and did all he could to insure a pleasant time for his employer. Mr. White manages to keep up memories of youth by means of these annual trips to the woods, and retains his health and vigor in a manner which gives eloquent testimony to his gain from outdoor life. He joined the Penrose party and added to the pleasantness of the intercourse which proved a most enjoyable feature of our camp life.

Dr. Penrose told of his cooking, and added that even at home he does useful service in that respect. He is a member of a club in Pennsylvania — membership being strictly limited to the male persuasion — whose members all study the art of cookery, and it is the duty of each member to cook a weekly dinner for the members as his turn comes round. The member who is unable to send up a well-cooked joint is mercilessly criticized on his performance. Such practical studies at home of course makes the performer independent of a camp cook, and as appetites increase alarmingly in camp this is a great advantage. All the cooking during the canoe trip was the work of the doctor.

History Corner (cont'd)

One day we visited the lower falls of the Mississauga and sat on the rocks for an hour, watching the waters pour down into a rocky basin amidst a white whirl of foam and pass out between rocky walls (likely Slate Falls at the start of the Portage up to Big Basswood Lake). The portage contains a saddening memorial carved on a tree of a drowning accident. This, and a visit to the little settlement of Goldenburg, past which the Mississaga flows in grand peacefulness, was a pleasant experience and enabled one to see the summer life of New Ontario at its best. The walk through the woods, the falls, the settlement with its little schoolhouse and smiling fields, won from the surrounding woods, together with the beautiful river, presented a variety and series of beautiful pictures which will long live in the memories of those privileged to spend a pleasant half day amongst them.

In the course of such a holiday the gathering of blueberries goes almost without saying anything about them. They are to be found in abundance on rocks near the Club House, and one morning we gathered a grand supply. Any time we wished for dessert the supply was near at hand and practically unlimited.

Our fishing was successful enough to keep the Club House fully supplied all the time of our visit, and in addition to give messes to settlers, who, though so near a plentiful supply, find themselves so busied in other ways as often to go without a healthy diet because of the time and trouble necessary to procure fine article of food. This does not apply to the youngsters, who often prove ardent and successful fishermen, despite the handicap of poor equipment. The resourcefulness of these youngsters is a matter of surprise, and should mean much to them in their future careers.

All too soon the halcyon days of the holiday drew to a close and it was necessary to return. The lake got up an angry mood for the last day, and the night before it rolled on the shores in such a fashion as to make it doubtful whether the journey across could be accomplished.

To avoid being stormbound, an early start was made, and on landing at the other bay than the one visited on the inward journey, Mr. Cameron, who was waiting with his rig, stated that just before the boat arrived a doe and fawn had passed. Though he invited them to remain, informing them that visitors unused to such sights were near, they went on and to our regret were out of sight when we landed. We left the Clubhouse and crossed the lake in rain, which cleared up as we reached the opposite shore. Thus the dust was laid and the drive made pleasant. At Thessalon we learned that a bridge was down and in consequence the train service was irregular.

Even delays and a crowded train could not spoil the pleasure experienced in the delightful journey on the new line through Muskoka to Toronto. That busy city was reached just in time to allow a good dinner to be partaken of before another train was taken, and in consequence the last stage of the journey was entered upon in good spirits.

A large store of pleasant memories will long remain with those who were privileged to spend a holiday in 1908 at the Canadian Camp Club House, where Superintendent and Mrs. Hope did their best to make all visitors welcome and to ensure that their stay should be pleasant and enjoyable.

History Corner (cont'd)

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Added above to this fascinating 1908 diary is a copy of a vintage postcard showing Slate Falls on the Mississauga River – now submerged under Red Rock Lake. This is the location where the final portage of the famous Mississauga Canoe trip headed up the hill through the woods up to the Canadian Camp Club House on Big Basswood Lake. The village of Goldenberg would have been a short walkt up-stream from Slate Falls (Basswood Lake Outfitters).

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