

## EVOLUTION IN THE BRIGHTON AREA - FROM WILDERNESS TO SUBDIVISION

Fishbeck, Suhr, Conrad, Dorr, Buek - the names of early settlers in Genoa Township surrounding Big and Little Crooked Lakes read as tho' one were in Germany. (Most of Genoa's settlers were German speaking immigrants.)

Altho' one might enjoy the beauty of a lake and appreciate the change of diet fresh fish could bring, these hardy settlers knew that one didn't build a home on its shore. Everyone knew that fevers and ague, rife in this state of marshes and swamps, were caused by the rising mists and vapors.

However, by 1878, when "Uncle" Henry Schoenhals bought the old Carpenter farm on the west side of Little Crooked in Section 28, a swimming hole on that shore had been used for some time by local youngsters.

Uncle Henry would let you drive your wagon with camping supplies down his lane. "Ach, be sure to lock the gate gut, so Uncle Henry's cows don't get in the corn." "I want to do the next one too, Papa." "Yah, und let deiner kleine brother help." It wasn't necessary to haul fire wood because the old tamarack swamp nearby furnished fallen trees and roots. "The big bon fires Papa builds at night are so exciting!" Drinking water was pumped from the well old Henry put in and milk and eggs could be bought from him also. Bread, meat and other staples were purchased from Bogan and Brogan's Store in Chilson.

Around the turn of the century sparse frame structures called 'camps' began to be built by various owners of land around the lake. The train, with a station at Chilson, brought parties of young people for a week or so of camping, decorously chaperoned by their elders.

World War I; changing economic conditions; the auto industry; roads being graveled to meet the demands of the thousands of new auto owners who wanted to get out of the cities and go places at the breakneck speed of 25-30 mph; all created a tremendous interest in the lake as sites for summer homes. As shore property was sold this meant the end of camping at the old swimming hole.

In 1927, the Burroughs Adding Machine Company purchased the property on Brighton Road as a place of recreation for their employees, building dozens of small cottages scattered over the hills.

In 1981, "Burroughs" was purchased by a group with plans to continue the recreational appeal of the "Farms". The development of Oak Pointe into a place of desirable living quarters was put into action. The small cottages are no more and in their place one finds attractive condominiums and homes well suited to the 1980's lifestyle of having one's privacy while enjoying pleasant surroundings. (Edited and Condensed from "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memories" by William Pless and assistance of Rory McDonald.)

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