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**Crooked Lake in the Late 1800s and Early 1900s**

It is interesting to know that the name “Crooked Lake” was applied officially to this body of water as early as 1837, the year Michigan attained statehood. The name is found in a legislative act of that period which provided a system of canals to cross southern Michigan and do for this region what the Erie Canal was doing successfully for New York State. The canal was to be known as the “Clinton and Kalamazoo” and was to start at Mt. Clemens, where the Clinton River empties into Lake St. Clair, come west to Crooked Lake, then on through this watershed and join the Kalamazoo River as the last link into Lake Michigan. A branch or feeder canal was to come up to Crooked Lake from Dexter some 25 miles to the South. Construction was started at Mt. Clemens, but the rapidly growing railways doomed most of the ambitious canal and streams projected in this and neighboring states. Plat

Of the three islands in Little Crooked Lake, the northern one lies in the Northeast quarter of Section 28, while the other two lie in the Northwest quarter of that Section. All of these islands and the farmland at the south and southwest of the lake had been acquired by F. Truhn from the original owners in 1867. The Truhn family played an important part in the early life of this region.

About 1897 Laughlin and Henderson, who operated a thriving store at Chilson in a large double structure, bought the north island and built a cottage on it, probably one of the earliest lake cottages to be built in the county. It was sold in 1903 to Carl Weimeister, a blacksmith of Howell, who acquired it along with all the farmland at the south end of the lake. The cottage was a frame structure, barn-like, with a few windows and no interior finish. On the shingle roof was painted in large letters the name “Nordica” named for Lillian Nordica, who was at the peak of her fame as a singer at that time.

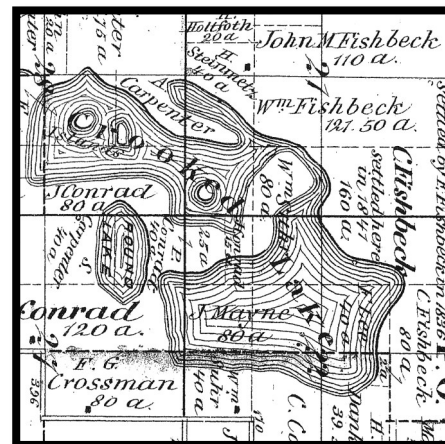
For many years this was rented to groups of young people from the area who came in horse drawn vehicles and spent a week

“camping” as it was called, chaperoned by their elders. Mr. Weimeister sold the cottage in 1914 to Mr. Slear, the station agent at Chilson, and he soon sold it to one of the Toledo families, the Bauers who had been renting it. Mr. Bauers later transformed the old frame Nordica cottage into the present fieldstone summer home equipped with all modern facilities.

A great many people camped in tents on the shores of the lake in those days and cooked in the open. The favorite spot on Little Crooked was the “swimming hole” on the west shore about the center of the present Homestead Beach Development.

Another camping site occasionally used was on the east shore of Little Crooked near the fine, large spring on the hillside south of Round Lake. A campfire there, high up on the bluff, was always a cheering sight to those camping on the west shore near the swimming hole.

*(This story was compiled by Jerry Damon from the writings of William Pless (1974) and from “Crooked Lake: A History by Willis Lyon (1979).*



**Plat Map 1875**