

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



The current display, running through March, at the CoBACH Center in downtown Brighton, is entitled "Memories of Island Lake." Please plan a visit and check-out the rich history of Island Lake. Below is a story about one of its most famous visitors.

"King of Swat Coming to Island Lake"

"King of Swat Coming to Island Lake," read the headline in the Brighton Argus. The Island Lake Hotel was the stopping place of Babe Ruth. The Babe spent all his spare time at Island Lake while the Yankees were playing at Detroit. When a special banquet was held for him in Detroit in the summer of 1922, he missed it because he was at the Island Lake Hotel having dinner with Governor Groesbeck. A week earlier, he threw baseballs from the pavilion to the first island just to show the local boys how it was done. The following week he batted home runs out onto the lake for the boys in swimming to catch. He said he would be back the next month to have a number of pictures taken.

Early in the summer of 1926, the state-park caretaker lodged a complaint against the Babe. Apparently he was caught in the act of illegal fishing. He was accused of fishing without a license, fishing out of season, and catching undersized fish. The caretaker took Babe and his companions to Brighton and turned them over to Deputy Sheriff Morgan who was charged with seeing that the Babe would appear before Justice Collett. Justice Collett was out of town so Deputy Morgan took the Babe and his friends to Howell to appear before Justice Stowe. No warrant was issued and the men could not be held without a warrant so the Babe went back to Detroit to play ball. He was willing to pay a fine during the procedure at Howell, but no opportunity was offered before his departure.

Later a warrant was sworn out with the intention that it would be served at a later date. However, this warrant was withdrawn and officers from the State Gaming Department came and stated that they wished to handle the matter. The matter was prosecuted and Ruth was ordered to appear on August 7, 1926, before Justice Collett, at Brighton, to answer the charges. There was a problem. On that day the Yankees were to come to Detroit and the Babe had to play ball. Standing firm, the authorities professed that, "If he doesn't appear, Mr. Wilkinson, from the Conservation Department will go down to Navin Field and bring him out. The state will go through with the prosecution like they would with any violator." The last of the infamous Babe Ruth caper ended when he came to Brighton and appeared before Justice Collett like, "a little man" and paid his fine.

(This story was taken from the book written by Carol McMacken, "From Settlement to City Brighton, Michigan 1832—1945. This book is available for purchase from the Brighton Area Historical Society and has many wonderful stories about the Brighton area.)

