

THE STORY OF BALSAM LAKE.-The Early Years [CAL'S DREAM COMING TRUE]

By: Curt Hudelson 2021

When Cal purchased the first 40 acre parcel at Balsam Lake, I imagine his 2 conditions would have been ; price, and isolation. The latter was certainly true. He found a place with wonderful potential at the end of the road. Actually he had to bulldoze a new road from King Lake all the way down past Munson Bay into the parcel. [Now county Road 346]

The road was little better than a Jeep trail, Barely one car wide, 2 wheel tracks with tall underside cleaning grass in the center. Driving it was tricky. If you met a car coming the other way, well, good luck. However this was highly unlikely in the beginning since there was no one else at the 'end of the road'. Rain would wash out parts at best, and at the worst make some of the hills impassable. More than once we would walk in from place on the road.

Being an adventurous outdoors man [he had been an actual cowpuncher in Montana, and a WW1 veteran] this was 'no sweat' for him. He did sweat, however, in clearing the land, cutting down some trees, pulling stumps with his trusty 1938 Buick and where he hadn't enough horsepower, simply dynamited them, and using the trees to build a log cabin.

The land was hilly and swampy until you got to the lakefront where it leveled off enough to build a cabin with access to the main Balsam Lake and also Munson Bay. It was perfect.

In the beginning he would have had to live in a WW1 army tent until the cabin had a roof [and of course, walls], Drilled a well, build an outhouse, and provided a beachhead for a fishing boat.

The cabin was built using the help and advice from some of the neighbors, Charley Barwise and Lloyd Ostly. All work done using

hand tools; drawknives for flattening the logs, axes for notching, hand saws for cutting the trees to proper length, and the trusty '38 Buick for rolling the logs up the ramp to be stacked one on top of the other.

The cabin was one big room, with a counter top and sink in the NE corner, slop pail under the sink drain which had to be emptied daily and a bucket filled with the best tasting, purest, coldest water ever.

It was my job upon arriving on Friday afternoons to fetch water from the lake to prime the pump, and fill the galvanized bucket with the wonderful cold water. In the fall the double barreled heating stove needed to be stoked up with local birch logs, and of course the wood fired cookstove to heat up dinner eaten by kerosene lamplight, which also provide illumination in the 'living room' part of the enclosure. Sleeping cots were provided near the Eastern walls. There was an old metal kitchen table against the West wall with chairs, a couch , couple easy chairs, and miscellaneous tables scattered around, I'm sure all donated. Not fancy but cozy and comfortable.

It was sometime latter when the inside of the logs were paneled over with knotty pine and interior walls of like material erected demarking the areas already in place. Doorways to bedrooms but no doors to be found..

'Twas necessary to electrify the place before covering the interior, so Cal installed electrical outlets and light fixtures powered by a 12 Volt battery bank in the garage, charged via a Windmill on the roof. It worked but the batteries discharged quickly at night so it was marginally useful. Kerosene is much more reliable.

After the cabin, he set about with a myriad of projects: The first outhouse was East of the cabin at the foot of hill. [hidden by brush and small trees], Brushing out the area South of the cabin, building the log garage using the same techniques learned

from the cabin. Excavating by hand and building a Root Cellar halfway up the hill on the east side, Building a Boathouse on the shore in front of the cabin.

Cal's wife, Helen, hated the place with a passion. Partly because of it's isolation, and probably because Cal spent every weekend out there. She was not a 'camper', nor outdoors woman. She called the place "Back of the Moon"!

And of course the Garden. On top of the hill, access to the road, Cal cleared an area, pulled stumps, cultivated the soil using a hand pushed plow. essentially a steel plow shaped implement mounted at the end of 2 long handles enabling one to push it through the soil. Sort of a Mediaeval method.



HAND PLOW

Tilling the soil, erecting fence around the garden with gate access to the road was next. Gardening was his passion. The fence kept some of the critters out, but some burrowed under, and of course the deer could jump over, but a decent crop of potatoes, carrots, raspberries, pole beans, peas, onions, rutabagas, cabagges, squashes, etc were produced.

Some time elapsed before Cal expanded the garden. More clearing, stump pulling and reinforcing the fence produced a much more productive area. He rotated the crops, keeping one half in alfalfa and the other half in veggies. Plowing under the alfalfa in the fall and planting that half next season, while now keeping the first half in alfalfa. Now he needed a tractor to keep up with the cultivating and potato hilling, and of course that required building a Tractor Shed which also housed all the required gardening implements.

Occasionally Cal would fertilize the soil, hauling and spreading trailer loads of manure , working it into the soil. One of my most unfavorable chores, shoveling cow droppings and flies into wheelbarrows and spreading it. So, let it not be said that I don't know how to spread the bullst around! I absolutely hated working in that garden. Felt like slave labor. The deer flies, the mosquitos big as airplanes, the wasps, ticks, the scorching heat. Didn't seem to bother dad. He seemed to love it, surrounded by flies, mosquitos etc., while I preferred anything else, preferably catching fish. Or hunting. Or reading. To this day I don't enjoy digging in the dirt or even mowing the lawn. I did, however, enjoy the fruits of the labor.**

The tubers and squashes were stored in the root cellar where they would be preserved even through the winter [somewhat] . Albeit potatoes would get kinda weird and sprouty, carrots were soft, same with turnips. Onions & cabbages survived reasonably. The beans & peas would be canned by Helen. And raspberry pies. Jam was always a treat year round.

Cal began to acquire more Munson Bay front parcels adjacent to the first, including one which surrounded the little pothole lake East of Cnty Rd 346 was situated. This was great hunting ground since it extended all the way to the south end of King Lake. He eventually sold this chunk in exchange for the Radosivich property across Munson bay and adjacent to the rest of the Hudelson complex. [This later became grandson Warren's land, eventually Nordica's and Jamie's]. He also acquired a chunk of land on Scrapper lake, [South of Balsam] connected to Balsam Lake by a nice short river.

Scrapper was pretty good fishing and reasonably accessible with a motorboat. Cal later traded this land for another piece on Hunter Creek, straight across from the cabin and remains to this day as prime hunting ground.

Eventually, electrification came to Balsam. Sometime , I think in the '50's. There were no other residents near the "end of the Road" so they had to string a lot of wire to get into the place. Somehow Cal convinced the bureaucrats it would be in their best interest as an incentive to future populate the area, even though he controlled all the land on both sides of the road all the way in.

Besides lights, Modernization meant drilling a new well with a pressure pump, so **RUNNING WATER !, Flush toilet and Septic tank with drain field down towards the bay. The new well, though right next to the cabin did not produce the clarity of the original, but with a filter, it was drinkable.**

The original cabin was built with a screened-in front porch serving as additional living area. In summer months it was an ideal place to relax during the day, and watch the gorgeous evening sunsets. Sometime later, the screened back porch was added. A place to stage stuff for later importation into the main house, a place to observe the deer in the back yard, and more easily enjoy the Northern Lights. Place to keep the beer cold during the fall months!

North of the cabin, a hill interfered with walking down the point. Heavy brush blocked the view of the 2nd outhouse, established there when the garage was built and removed when septic and drain field established. During the 1960's Cal had this hill bulldozed flat and pushed the dirt down into what was swampy land near the Bay, grass reclaiming, and producing what is now a beautiful useful lawn all the way to the water.

Once this was accomplished, the point was cleared and brushed out all the way to the end. Hundreds of seedling pine trees were planted, making a fantastic walk down the point, and 50 years later folks enjoy the entire property covered in huge magnificent trees.