

In more than a few older Douglas Lake cottages, there are drawers or albums that contain vintage postcards of the type that show a real photograph of a beach landscape, of a resort or, on occasion, of the owner's own cabin, taken many years earlier. Typically, these postcards featured recognizable scenes or locations found right here on Douglas Lake.

The final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the rise of tourism due to the combined impact of the new train lines being laid in Northern Michigan and the strategically-placed ports of call for steamship companies plying the Great Lakes, all of which had made inland lakes such as Douglas Lake more accessible to fishermen, tourists, and other members of the general public.

Likewise, the latter 1800s and very early 1900s also witnessed the development of new types of cameras that utilized more advanced plates and, later, celluloid film, to record and duplicate photographs of locations and buildings that these individuals were visiting. Thus was born the real photograph picture postcard, which would then be sold to the new residents and visitors who came to Douglas Lake from roughly 1905 and thereafter.

The postcards in my family's collection featured handwritten names like "Beebe" and "Deibert" and "Foley", typically placed in the lower right hand corner of the photograph. Little additional information was revealed. However, the local newspaper, the *Pellston Journal*, which had begun publication in October, 1903, noted that "E.L. Beebe, a photographer from Kalkaska," had been taking "views" in the area during the early spring of 1905 and that he had stayed for two to three weeks making photographs of industries, residences, and places of interest.

Like some of the early photographers who ventured to Douglas Lake, Edward L. Beebe had engaged in another profession (in this case as a school teacher and school superintendent) before becoming a very successful Kalkaska-based photographer in 1904. David V. Tinder in his study entitled *Directory of Early Michigan Photographers*, described Beebe as "a prolific maker of postcard photographs depicting the lumbering industry and the towns it spawned in the northwestern portion of Michigan's lower peninsula." Tinder further noted that his "negatives were used to produce thousands of post cards, many of them postmarked between 1906 and 1921."

Nancy Ritsema, in an article about Beebe published in *The Antrim Review* in November of 2014, states that Beebe earned the nickname "Postcard Man" because of the enormous number of real photo postcards of the towns, lakes and rivers on the Chain of Lakes. According to her, he had left the area and had ended his career as a professional photographer in 1917. His career change had been triggered, in part, by the introduction of the Kodak camera, which had allowed vacationers to record their own scenic views and family photos. Prior to that time, Beebe had been able to sell his postcards to the general public for about five cents each.

In roughly 1906, William Howard Deibert, formerly a farm hand on a family farm, had come to Pellston, where he opened a photography studio. About 5 years later, Deibert moved his studio

to Alanson for several more years before leaving the area to settle in Munising in 1914. Once in Munising, he continued to work as a professional photographer until 1931. According to David Tinder, the towns and villages as well as the lakes in and around Pellston and Alanson were featured in his earlier body of work.

Tinder has indicated that John R. Foley initially worked with one or more of his brothers as a professional photographer on Mackinac Island in 1894. Thereafter, he opened a photography business in Petoskey in 1905. He remained in business in the Petoskey area until roughly 1946. Included among his real photograph postcards were scenes from Pellston and Douglas Lake.

Tinder has also listed two other Pellston-based photographers from the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: C.W. Smith in "circa 1903" and William H. Miller, who worked out of Pellston from 1906 through 1909. Since I have not seen any of the photographs produced by these latter two photographers, I do not know what type of photographs they specialized in.

Dating some of these real photograph postcards can prove difficult because of the nature of the reproduction process. The original photographic plates could be used to duplicate pictures and to create current postcards from scenes based on photos taken many years earlier. Similarly, other postcards might show mailing dates many years after that photograph was originally taken. Nonetheless, these early photographers have managed to re-create for us those early days at Douglas Lake and offer us a black and white window into our past.

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Jack Hobey, *Wish You Were Here--: The Edward Beebe Story* (Harbor House Publishers, January 2007)  
176 pages.

Nancy Ritsema, *The 'Postcard' Man – Edward Beebe*, The Antrim Review, Bellaire, Michigan, 2016.

David V. Tinder, *Directory of Early Michigan Photographers*, edited by Clayton A. Lewis (William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, online edition updated December 2013), pp. 279, 694, 862.