

DOUGLAS LAKE YESTERDAY

EARLY HISTORY



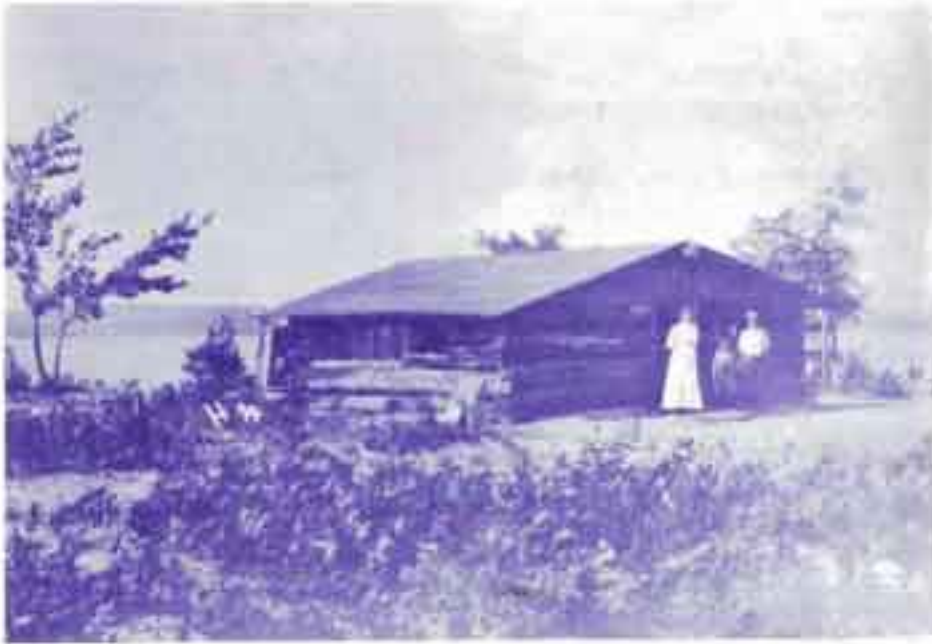
Pioneer settlement of Douglas Lake began with hand-hewn log cabins such as this one built by the Judsons.

The only way to reach the few early families living on the shores of Douglas Lake* in the 1880's, was to take the stagecoach along the Indian Trail between Cheboygan and Harbor Springs, disembark near the present site of the University of Michigan Biological Station, find the row boat owned by the Bentleys, and paddle yourself across the lake to visit. The Judsons, one of the earliest families on the lake, built a hand-hewn log cabin there. Its unusually sturdy notched construction has weathered the years, and it is still the home of Judson descendants today.

This is not to say that these pioneers were the beginning of history on Douglas Lake. The Judson family found Indian arrowheads and artifacts, a fire pit, and even two cannonballs as they cleared the ground for their homestead. The cannonballs may have been carried from Fort Michilimackinac at the Straits which was settled 200 years before Douglas Lake. Douglas Lake was undoubtedly the site of Indian hunting parties and camps for thousands of years before white settlers arrived. A copper spear point about 3,500 years old and a 2,800 year old limestone adze have recently been found at the University of Michigan Biological Station.

Although a visit to Douglas Lake in the late 1800's still represented a trek into the wilderness, Michigan's lumbering era was just beginning to boom in both Emmet and Cheboygan counties. Pellston and Levering, towns to the west and northwest of the lake, grew with railroad activity and lumbering. During this time, trees were felled by hand and skidded by horses across the ice of Douglas Lake, over the short expanse of land to Burt Lake, where logs were stacked waiting for spring thaw and the steamboat to float them along the Inland Water Route to Cheboygan mills.

*The exact origin of Douglas Lake's name is unknown. The lake was called Turtle Lake on an 1873 Atlas of Michigan. The name changed to Douglas (sometimes spelled Douglass) in the late 1870's or early 1880's.



All this commerce brought attention to the scenic and resort qualities of Douglas Lake. Colonel Bogardus, a Pellston lumber baron, built a summer cottage near Pells Island which still stands today. And by the early 1900's the aforementioned family had sold part of the half-mile homestead on the north end of the lake to a minister named Inglis who established a summer resort. "Ingleside", as it was called, was a huge, U-shaped hotel that included thirty or forty guest rooms, an enormous lobby with a fireplace, a post office, and a store. A horse and buggy were sent at intervals to Levering to meet guests and tourists at the train.

Log Lab in 1909, the first permanent structure of the Biological Station.

Throughout the recent history of Douglas Lake many fires have occurred. The forests, with abundant slash remaining from lumbering activity, burned repeatedly. At least seven major forest fires occurred in the area between 1880 and 1920. Written and photographic records of this devastated landscape as well as scientific observations of the lake and streams were recorded diligently from 1909 on by University of Michigan Biological Station scientists.

The early site of the Biological Station and adjacent University of Michigan surveyors camp (Camp Davis) was an old railroad grading camp on the south shore of Fish Tail Bay. Colonel Bogardus, anxious to get rid of the logged and burned land, sold 1,400 acres to the University in 1908, and the first session followed in 1909.

The opening session of the Station boasted fourteen students and four faculty and staff. In the seventy years since, the Station has grown to 10,000 acres with two-hundred fifty students, professors, researchers, and staff members who come from throughout America and the world. The water quality of the lake and other natural features of the area have been the subject of many research projects and publications for seven decades.

Distinguished scientists in all fields have furthered their knowledge and/or taught at the Biological Station, including two Nobel Prize winners; Tom Weller, polio virus discoverer, and James Watson, unraveler of the DNA genetic code. Dr. Olin Sewall Pettingill, distinguished ornithologist, author, and lecturer was also associated with the Station for many years.

Douglas Lake reflects its history. From two families in the 1800's, 244 homes have sprung up on the lake's shore. Names of places change, and the people come and go. And the quality of the lake water and the surrounding land is changing too. The following sections of *The Douglas Lake Profile* examine how this is happening and what it will mean to the future of the "history" of the lake.

(Most appreciative thanks to Wendell E. Judson, Douglas Lake, for his storehouse of knowledge concerning the early history of the lake as known by his ancestors. Thanks, also, to Dr. David Gates, University of Michigan Biological Station Director, for Station history, and to Randolph Bricker's detailed history of Colonel Bogardus and Pellston, "Pellston, The Dream, The Reality, and the Community", Randolph Bricker and Robert D. McLouth, available at the Pellston Public Library or from the author.)

GLACIAL HISTORY

Douglas Lake was formed by the action of the last continental glacier about 10-12,000 years ago. When the enormous mass of ice retreated northward through this region, it left behind seven huge blocks of ice. When these ice blocks melted, the resulting seven depressions formed the basin of the lake we know as Douglas Lake.

The receding, melting glacier also created a series of mammoth lakes in the Great Lakes region. One of these lakes, called Lake Algonquin by geologists, was much larger and deeper than the present Great Lakes. It covered the land around Douglas Lake, with only the tops of the highest hills appearing as islands. As this ancient lake gradually receded, Douglas Lake, being about 110 feet higher in elevation than lakes in the Inland Water Route (Burt, Mullett, Black, Crooked-Pickerel) became a separate lake about 4,000 years sooner than those lower lakes still connected to the Great Lakes system.

Most of the land around Douglas Lake is easily erodible sand that washed out from the glaciers. In contrast, the erosion resistant ridges on the lakeshore from Robert's Point through Pells Island and from Sedge Point to Grapevine Point are composed of "morainic" soil; sands, clays, and gravels piled up by the glacial action.

For a more detailed history of the Douglas Lake and Emmet and Cheboygan Counties area, see "Profile of the Land: Natural Features of the Inland Water Route of Northern Lower Michigan", by William L. Foster, The University of Michigan Biological Station.