



Douglas Lake Improvement Association



December, 2011

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Holiday Greetings from The Lake

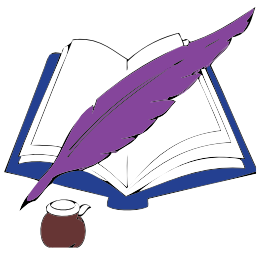
This fall has been a predictable mix of beautiful colors, cooling temperatures and some rainy, cloudy days.....Northern Michigan Fall. The sunrises and sunsets spectacular evidence of changing seasons.

We had a great gathering at the DLIA Potluck following the Annual Meeting at UMBS in August. Even though the weather forced us into the dining hall it seemed that the weather couldn't dampen spirits. The committee provided centerpieces of materials gathered from around the lake and did a yeoman's job of moving everything inside when the weather turned. The dishes shared proved once again that the Best Michigan Cooks live here.

Hope you have Book marked our website as there are several new features that include an interesting history column called Now and Then. Jan Huntley is the editor of this addition to the site, she welcomes others to contribute their recollections. You can find the site at www.douglaslake.org

We had some questions re: disposal of old batteries, there are containers available at Cook's Hardware in Pellston and at Fairbairn's
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THE HISTORY CORNER

As a special treat the History Corner is pleased to offer a selection of Douglas Lake History compiled and written by Jan Huntley. We only ask than you enjoy reading but do not reproduce without permission of the author.

THE PURPLE GANG AND DOUGLAS LAKE

During the 1980s and the 1990s, during the final decades of his life, Max Silk ran two small restaurants near Corktown, close to the old Tiger Stadium in downtown Detroit. He was a fixture in the luncheon trade and was well known by many of the lawyers practicing in the area.

It was rumored that he had been either a junior member of or a close associate/employee of the notorious Purple Gang, a ruthless criminal consortium that held sway over Detroit and the eastern side of the state up through northern Michigan in much the same way and at the same time that Al Capone did likewise over the greater Chicago area and over the western portion of Michigan's lower peninsula.

In his latter years, Max would politely decline to answer pointed questions about his membership in the gang or would deflect the questions with laughing, good-natured denials. However, there was little doubt among the lawyers or the local media (both the Free Press and the Detroit News had their offices within blocks of his

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establishments) that there had been some type of connection during Max's youth.

Although most of the criminal gangs of that time were Sicilian, the Purple Gang was unique in that it was made up mostly of Russian Jewish immigrants or their children. Names like the Bernstein brothers come to the fore when thinking of those gangsters, whose heyday coincided with the Prohibition Era. Not surprisingly, a major focus of their criminal activity involved the importation, hi-jacking and distribution of alcohol from Canada, most of which entered the United States either in the Detroit area (I.e. across the Detroit River, the St. Clair River, or Lake St. Clair) or along the eastern portion of the state up through Mackinaw City. The local media estimated that roughly 75 percent of the alcohol entering the United States during Prohibition came through the Detroit, Michigan area, making that activity one of the major sources of criminal revenue during those turbulent times. The dividing line in Michigan ran up U.S. 31, with the Capone gang overseeing criminal activity west of U.S. 31, which travels through Petoskey and Pellston on its way to its terminus in Mackinaw City, and the Purple Gang holding sway over the eastern portion. Douglas Lake fell in the eastern, or Purple Gang portion.

Prohibition in Michigan began three years prior to the adoption of the federal Volstead Act in 1920, based upon a local Michigan initiative. For many of the 16 years constituting Prohibition here in Michigan (save for a brief period in which the Michigan Prohibition Act was struck down by local courts), the Purple Gang was a major force in the lucrative illicit liquor trade, which persisted through the repeal of the Volstead Act in 1933. At its height, in the latter 1920s and early 1930s, the illegal alcohol trade employed almost 50,000 people, according to the Free Press, either operating the so-called "blind pigs" that dotted the neighborhoods in metro Detroit or elsewhere Michigan or handling the importation and distribution of the Canadian alcohol. Included in its membership or associations were many so-called "rum runners" -- who drove the trucks or boats containing the kegs of whiskey intended for distribution in Detroit and across the nation. Max Silk cheerfully conceded his own "rum running" activities during that period. The American Legion Convention that took place in Detroit in 1931 was apparently a huge impetus for the importation of even larger quantities.

In any event, Max was a wonderful teller of tales, many of which some people tended to brush off as the chatter of a charming "restaurateur/raconteur". However, several of the local Jewish attorneys who knew him best and who may have been related to other members of that interesting association have stated that his stories were probably conservative descriptions and that he had undoubtedly been involved, at least peripherally, in the "rum running" trade during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Every time a new attorney would walk into his tiny restaurant along Michigan Avenue in the shadows of what was then Tiger Stadium, he would sidle up and introduce himself and find out who you were and what you were interested in. He and I chatted occasionally over bowls of his celebrated bean soup while I was working in the State Office Building at Sixth and Howard Street in Corktown, only two blocks from his tiny fiefdom.

One day, I happened to mention that I was going up North to spend the weekend at my cabin up near the Mackinaw Bridge. His ears perked up almost immediately and he asked me where the cabin was located. When I told him "Douglas Lake," almost the first words out of his mouth were that he had spent many a wonderful day or two staying in one of the small cabins at the Douglas Lake Hotel. Apparently, he would drive up to pick up a load of alcohol coming in from Canada. Because the conditions on Lake Huron could vary, he might have to wait a day or more for the "product" to become available. Those days were spent quietly at Douglas Lake. Then, when word would come that the merchandise had arrived (presumably on the hotel telephone), he would pick it up with his truck and drive back to Detroit

Later in the conversation, Max realized that John Bryant, the then owner of the Douglas Lake Hotel, was my mother's stepfather (her mother Julia Squibb having married him in 1932). At that point, he shut up immediately and managed to "forget" that he had ever been in Northern Michigan, despite the fact that his memory operated unimpededly in all other areas, whenever I broached the subject again. Were any of our local residents aware of what had been going on? Who knows? And, after the passage of so many years, who cares?

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SOMETIMES THEY EVEN NAMED THEIR BOATS

Like their cottages, the Douglas Lakers also gave names to their boats, whether these boats were stately Chris-Crafts or everyday row boats. And, once again, multiple sources of inspiration for those names can be found.

More than a few Chris-Crafts have plied the lake through the years, well-loved boats that have brought many years of pleasure to the families of their owners. Two of the earlier ones, which belonged to the Todds and the

Colbys, next door neighbors on Bentley Point, dated back to the 1930s. The Todd's Illinois was acquired in about 1930, just about the same time as John Colby purchased his own, which was called the Indiana, a title that called to mind the name of his cottage, named the Indiana Cottage after his home state. Not too many years thereafter, in about 1941, William Fleming, Jr. added yet another such boat to the Douglas Lake fleet. In time, both the Colby and the Todd boats were replaced with newer Chris-Crafts. The second Colby boat was acquired in around 1950 and was dubbed, not all that surprisingly, the Indiana II, a pattern continued by the Todds in around 1960, when the Illinois II came to the lake. Although the Todd boat has since been sold, the Indiana II is still owned by the Fangman family, although it has remained in storage the past few years. So, too, does the MEE MEE, the affectionate nickname given to the Fleming/Mercke/Eberhardt boat in memory of Jeanie Lou's Aunt Jean Foster Fleming, the sister of her mother Louise Fleming Mercke. Although not used this past summer, it has cruised the lake for most of the summers that it has belonged to the family.

Many of our lake families have used wooden launches, which have tended to have varied and interesting names. A not-uncommon pattern was to name a boat after a member of the family, as was the case with one of the earlier launches on the lake belonging to Bill Hill, who had sold his summer cottage to Fred Colby in 1917. Fred acquired the Hazel Hill, which had been named for Bill's wife Hazel, at the time he purchased the cottage. Later, however, his son John Colby, Sue Fangman's father, sold that boat to Fritz Robert's family, who continued to use that name during their ownership of the boat.

Betty Young, in her interview some years back, recalled another piloted launch named The Peggy, which, according to her, had belonged to "Grandpa [William] Fleming," whom she described as "the Commodore of the Douglas Lake Fleet."

Charles Nutting, who had built one of the earlier north shore cottages in 1912, was another owner of a wooden launch, this one having been named Old Gold, in honor of the University of Iowa, where he had been a professor of zoology.

Some years later, the family of Graham Paton acquired an inboard launch that they named the Marion, presumably in honor of his mother, who shared that same first name. Another wooden craft, this one a Thompson, was also named for members of a family --- the Butler family -- using the first few letters of each first name to create the Be-Su-Ja-Sal honoring daughters Betsy, Jane, and Sally. The source for the "Su" designation was not identified, however.

Two of Sue Rockwood's wooden boats have also joined this list. According to those who knew her, she had a penchant for naming just about anything, including her boats. One was her wooden Lyman, which she christened The Rocky, based upon her last name. The second boat, this one a Thompson, had the much more fanciful moniker of Lemonade. According to a neighbor, this latter boat was so named because of its bright yellow color.

Even row boats could not completely escape the naming trend, as witnessed by The Orange Crush, owned by the Berleskey family. Although not explicitly stated, one has to suspect that its color was orange, which is only a guess. No such guessing is necessary regarding the Bypass IV, a Thompson rowboat that was repaired, repainted, and refitted by Graham Paton during his recovery from open heart surgery. It is pretty clear where that name came from.

Two of my favorite stories relate to two of the older boats on this lake. The first of these two was also a Paton boat.....a steel-hulled row boat that had rusted over the years and managed to sink like a stone one day while out on the lake. It must have been rescued from its watery tomb at some point, however, since it was said to have ultimately been disposed of by Harold Brill in the 1940s, after which it had been replaced by the aforementioned Marion. The second galvanized steel rowboat had been acquired by Bob Waggener and dubbed Old Ironsides. As explained by son Joe Waggener, Old Ironsides had begun its service at North Woods Camp many years earlier. Once in Waggener hands, however, it was fitted with a sail and used to sail about the lake in its second incarnation.

Other sailboats were also tagged with interesting and imaginative names, as with The Red Submarine, an old wooden Lightning purchased by Linda Orlow's father. When describing that boat some years back, she left the distinct impression that the name chosen had something to do with the fact that the boat tended to leak and required rather constant bailing.

Another Lightning belonged to the Halls, the uncle and aunt of Jim Osgood. At the time, their fiberglass Lightning was part of a sailing fleet that eventually numbered 11 or 12 such vessels owned and operated by various north shore families, including the Halls, the Eddys, the Cranes, the Patons, the Youngs, the Olsavers, the Peters, and the Osgoods, who participated in Saturday races during the summer months. The Halls had named their Lightning Ursa Major and the accompanying dingy Ursa Minor, a totally charming reference to celestial navigation, since Polaris, or the North Star, used by northern hemisphere sailors, can be found in Ursa Minor [the Little Dipper].

Although there was not much information available concerning this next boat, it was clearly one of the fastest boats on the lake in its day. The name of the boat was The Red Devil and its driver, Irving Crane, brother of Rick Crane, was himself a bit of a dare devil. In time, it was sold by Irving to the Gardners.

One final boat comes to mind when speaking of named boats around the lake. It is The Island Queen, a name that is reminiscent of a certain ferry in Martha's Vineyard but which also quite accurately describes its home base, on Pells Island, where it spends its summer ferrying Greg and Chris Ruda back and forth to the mainland or around the lake for pleasure.

And one final thought on the naming trend. As it turns out, cottages and boats were not the only structures that were accorded names through the years at Douglas Lake. From time to time, even lowly outhouses were deemed worthy of such honor. The names of a few of those interesting outbuildings have been identified from time to time. For instance, the Pattison family named its outhouse Uncle John. And the Miller family (the relatives of Joann Miller Hiles) dubbed theirs Aunt Sadie. But one of the funnier ones belonged to the Todd family. According to Ferris Todd, their outhouse was referred to as the room without a phone.

One suspects, however, that none of the above mentioned buildings is currently used for its original purpose. Not so on the island, however, where

electricity was not uniformly available. The Ruda family, with two outdoor "facilities" plus an indoor version for the little ones, have named their three bathrooms Billy, Bob, and Billy Bob, respectively. Since real deal indoor plumbing is on the agenda for next spring, however, one suspects that Billy, Bob, and Billy Bob will soon be only distant memories.

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President's Message
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Hardware in Alanson.

There are a few additions and corrections to the directories distributed this summer so we are going to publish an addendum. Would you check your information, including e-mail addresses, and send corrections to Nat Wilkinson natwilkinson@gmail.com or to me suenelson2004@yahoo.com? We hope to have this information compiled by early January. Thanks for your help.

Wishing you a Happy Holiday Season.

Sue Nelson, President



**Proper
Lighting**

Light Pollution



**Improper
Lighting**

One of the great things about the area around Douglas Lake is the night sky. Generations of lake goers have gazed at the stars and watched the meteor showers during the summer months. Thank you to all who have helped prevent light pollution by using shields on your outdoor lighting. Not only does this prevent stray light from affecting your neighbors, but it also results in better lighting in the intended areas without glare. So next time you are outdoors at night be sure to take in our beautiful sky as it is truly a remarkable thing to behold.



2012 Dues are due in January
If you have NOT paid please
Send your check (\$10.00 per year) to:

The Douglas Lake Improvement Association
Attn. Walt Naumer, Treasurer
P.O. Box 472
Pellston, MI 49769



Editor's Comments

Hope you enjoyed this newsletter! My thanks to Jan Huntley for contributing to the "History Corner" For future issues please remember that I welcome history items of the Douglas Lake area. Please feel free to contact me with the history facts or write and submit the actual article

Unless something newsworthy comes up in the meantime, our next issue will be in the Spring. If you wish to contribute please forward your articles or announcements to me by April 10th. If possible e-mail the information to me at barbwilkinson@comcast.net , otherwise please type and mail your information to me at P.O. Box 1067, Jackson, MI 49204. Remember to keep in touch with any address changes, lake news you wish to pass along or obituaries we need to print. The "We Will Miss" column will return in the next issue. Directory corrections will be printed with the spring newsletter so please be sure to send any changes to the above address or e-mail to Nat at natwilkinson@gmail.com

May you have a Holiday filled with Good Cheer and a Wonderful 2012!



The Station has just finalized its Mini-Course offerings and instructors for 2012. Mini-Courses will run from Wednesday, June 13 to Sunday, June 17 at the Station. The perennially popular Birds of Northern Michigan class returns, joined by Aquatic Macroinvertebrates and Wetland Ecology. The prices and the registration form will be available on the UMBS website (www.lsa.umich.edu/umbs/events/minicourses) beginning February 13, 2012. In the meantime, read what the instructors have to say about their classes.

Aquatic Macroinvertebrates of Northern Michigan Lakes and Streams (Kevin Cronk): This class focuses on the identification of aquatic macroinvertebrates commonly found in Northern Michigan lakes and streams, but also delves into macroinvertebrate biology and general stream ecology. You will visit a variety of lakes, streams, and wetlands on a daily basis to collect aquatic macroinvertebrates, practice identification skills, improve understanding of macroinvertebrate ecology, and, optionally, create individual reference collections. Kevin L. Cronk is the Monitoring and Research Coordinator for the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Birds of Northern Michigan (Mary Whitmore and Bob Hess): The focus of this class is on learning to identify birds by sight, sound and habitat. The course includes an overnight field trip to the Seney National Wildlife Refuge. Mary Whitmore has a rich background in ornithology and is very familiar with the birds of northern Michigan. Bob Hess is especially interested in the connection between birds and habitats and is the former director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Nongame Wildlife Program.

Wetland Ecology (C. Eric Hellquist): This class will visit wetlands including Great Lakes shoreline marshes, inland marshes, cedar swamps, and peatlands. We will discuss the post-glacial history of the landscape that provided the context for today's wetland environments. A central focus of our class will be reviewing the ecological processes responsible for the abundance and distribution of the species we observe. C. Eric Hellquist is an Assistant Professor at the State University of New York at Oswego and a faculty member at the University of Michigan Biological Station. If you have any questions please contact Alicia Farmer < UMBS, 734-764-5212

