

NOW AND THEN

On the trail of the Old Stage Coach/Post Road

Prior to the completion of the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad line extending north from Petoskey to Mackinaw City in 1882, early travelers to Douglas Lake had few avenues of access. One important route was via the old Stage Coach/Post Road that ran from Cheboygan (a steamship port of call) to Harbor Springs and Petoskey (likewise steamship stops for Great Lakes travelers).

Parts of what is now Riggsville Road formed a portion of that route, particularly sections closer to Cheboygan. One way station along the road was at Riggsville, site of the now-derelict store front east of I-75. The post road continued westward, passing close to South Fishtail Bay on Douglas Lake, where passengers arriving at the Lake could disembark.

From there, the stage coach road swerved south and west, passing through what is now farmland (to include the Spencley farm located on Sands Road, near the intersection with Plains Road).

From this point onward, the route veered towards Brutus, crossing Maple River Road near what is now the Hidden River Golf and Casting Club and then across Brutus Road, with a stop at what was then the Brill family farm (a name quite familiar to residents on the north shore of Douglas Lake), before moving on towards Alanson. Apparent traces of that route can be found on maps of Alanson, where a road named "Old Stage Coach Drive" passes south and west of the town. From that point, the stage coach road traveled north of Crooked Lake between Alanson and Oden before proceeding to its final destinations.

This bit of history is interesting not only because it identifies a route of travel for our earliest lake visitors, but also because it involves sections of roadway that most of us use while traveling to Cheboygan or Petoskey. I, for one, was totally unfamiliar with the old stage coach road until I interviewed Garth Spencley, then a Douglas Lake resident, some years ago. Thank you, Garth, for keeping this piece of our history alive for us.

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