

The Rise of Tourism at Douglas Lake

The latter 1800s and very early 1900s saw dramatic changes in the growth of tourism in and around Douglas Lake. Prior to the mid-1870s, when land grants for the Munro Township area began to be issued, the immediate area was largely an inaccessible wilderness. The arrival of the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad, coupled with the increased arrivals of passenger and freight-bearing steamships docking in nearby ports, served to make this area more accessible to commercial and agricultural development and, ultimately, to tourism.

As noted earlier, the railroad system originated in Cincinnati, Ohio, making its way through Indiana and into Michigan, ultimately reaching Grand Rapids in 1870. Further development along the line saw tracks extending to Petoskey by 1873. The final phase brought service up through Alanson, Brutus, Pellston, and Levering before arriving at its northern terminus in Mackinaw City, located on the Straits of Mackinac. That new line opened on July 3, 1882.

During the 1880s, the primary profits for the railway line were derived from the transportation of lumber and other wood products generated as the result of extensive timbering taking place at that time. By the latter 1880s and 1890s, as many of the forested areas were being depleted of their timber, the railroad sought to increase its declining revenue stream by aggressively marketing northern Michigan as a tourist destination. Dubbing itself "The Fishing Line", the railroad began publishing guides to fishing locations and newly-created resorts along its route, while simultaneously advertising them in various mid-western population centers. Not surprisingly, local entrepreneurs began developing fishing camps and small hotels on those lakes being serviced by the GR&I.

Douglas Lake was no exception, as can be noted when examining the platted areas on and around the lake as found on the official Munro Township map contained in a book entitled *The Plat Book of Cheboygan County Michigan*. That book was published in 1902 by the Consolidated Publishing Company, a company that reproduced county plat maps and local plat surveys for the various individual counties in the state of Michigan. It should be noted that the published plat maps depicted in this volume were not the dated originals but, rather, were copies made by the publisher's own staff based upon "the actual surveys and county records."

That 1902 plat map of Munro Township showed three either actual or proposed resort areas on Douglas Lake, based upon surveys and filings documented in the Cheboygan County records. The first of these resorts, identified as the "Douglas Lake Resort," was located on Bentley Point. Like the other two locations depicted on the township map or on one of the related surveys, this "resort" featured a designated "hotel" area as well as a number of platted lots that were or would be made available for sale to individuals desirous of owning vacation property on the lake. In this instance, there

were 60-some lots either along the lakeshore or accessible by one of the five interior roads. Some of the “back” lots were arranged four-deep in relation to the shoreline.

The second identified resort, also named the “Douglas Lake Resort”, was directly across the lake from the first site. It was positioned next to the Douglas Lake Road, which was at that time the only roadway leading from Pellston, and its railway station, to the lake. When examining this portion of the township map closely, there is a rectangular building positioned along the shoreline as the Pellston road passes between it and the lake. That building is identified as “Bryant’s Hotel” and “PO” [post office]. The road bends to follow the lake’s contour while traveling eastward in the direction of Grapevine Point. On this map, there is a substantial dock located directly in front of the hotel. However, in the more extensive plat map specifically submitted for that particular resort, also contained in the same 1902 book, the Douglas Lake Road has instead been extended alongside the hotel, not in front of it, creating a road end leading directly to the dock, which is now adjacent to, but not in front of, the hotel building. These discrepancies offer some proof that the plat maps in question may have represented proposed developments rather than resorts in actual operation at that time. This second plat map, setting forth the particulars for this second Douglas Lake Resort, makes it clear that a far more ambitious development was being contemplated than was envisioned for the Douglas Lake Resort area on Bentley Point, directly across the lake from it.

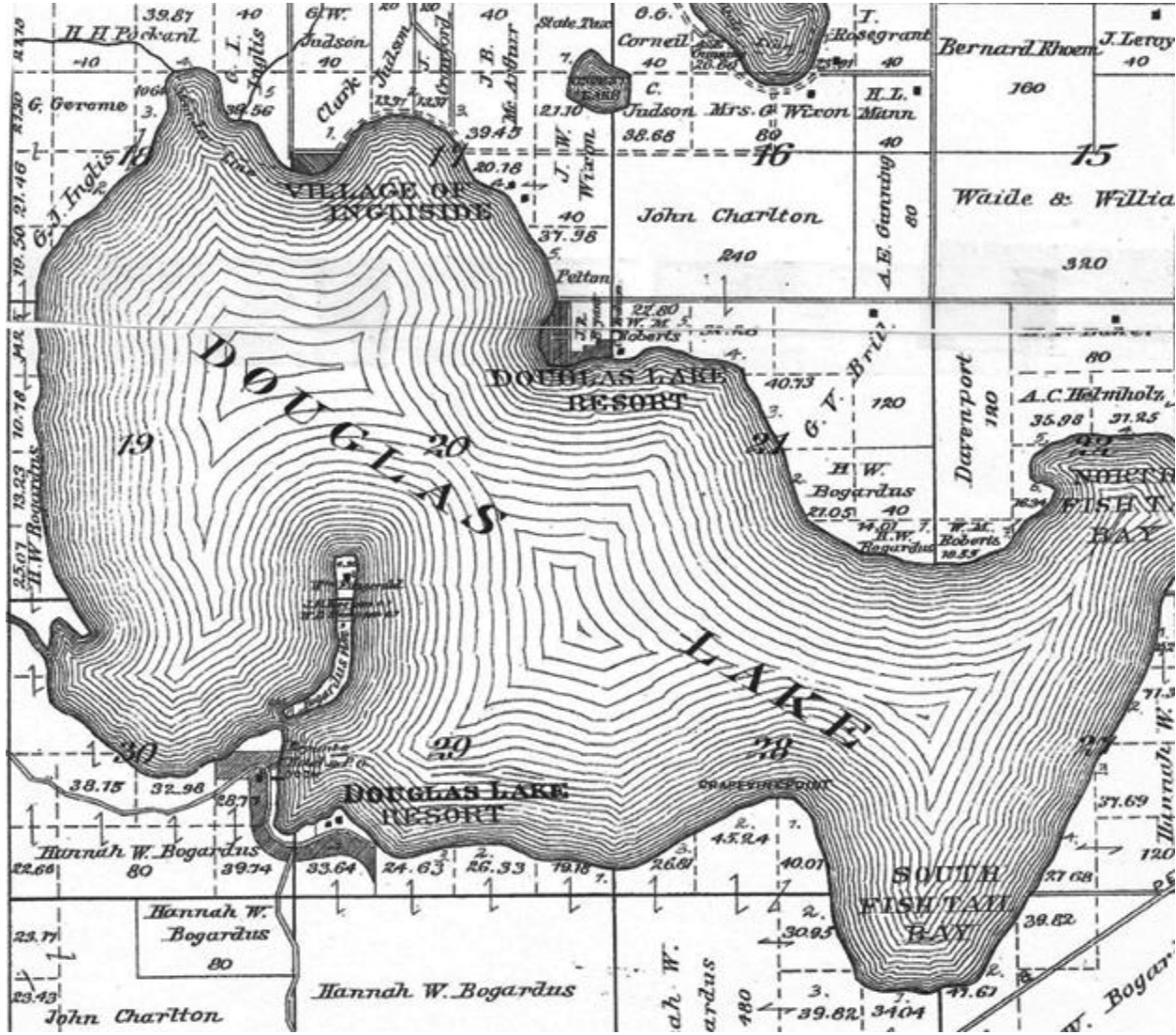
According to this second plat map, there would be roughly 100 lots for sale. These lots, clearly created for sale to vacationers, were arrayed along approximately 15 interior streets, with separate reserves designated for “golf” or for “park” land. In some locations, the lots stretched back from the lake front from seven to nine-deep. Interestingly enough, two short avenues closest to the two reserves were named “Tennis Avenue” and “Golf Avenue,” further reinforcing the suggestion that recreational areas were being included in the planning for this particular resort. In addition, two “plaza” areas were also depicted.

When returning to the Munro Township plat map, there was a third potential resort area, although it was merely described as “The Village of Ingleside.” The individual and more detailed plat map for the village, also found in the same 1902 book, included a mark designating a place of public accommodation that it identified as the “Ingleside Inn.” The inn was positioned on the first two of 11 designated lots. Presumably, the remaining 9 lots were to be made available for sale to the general public.

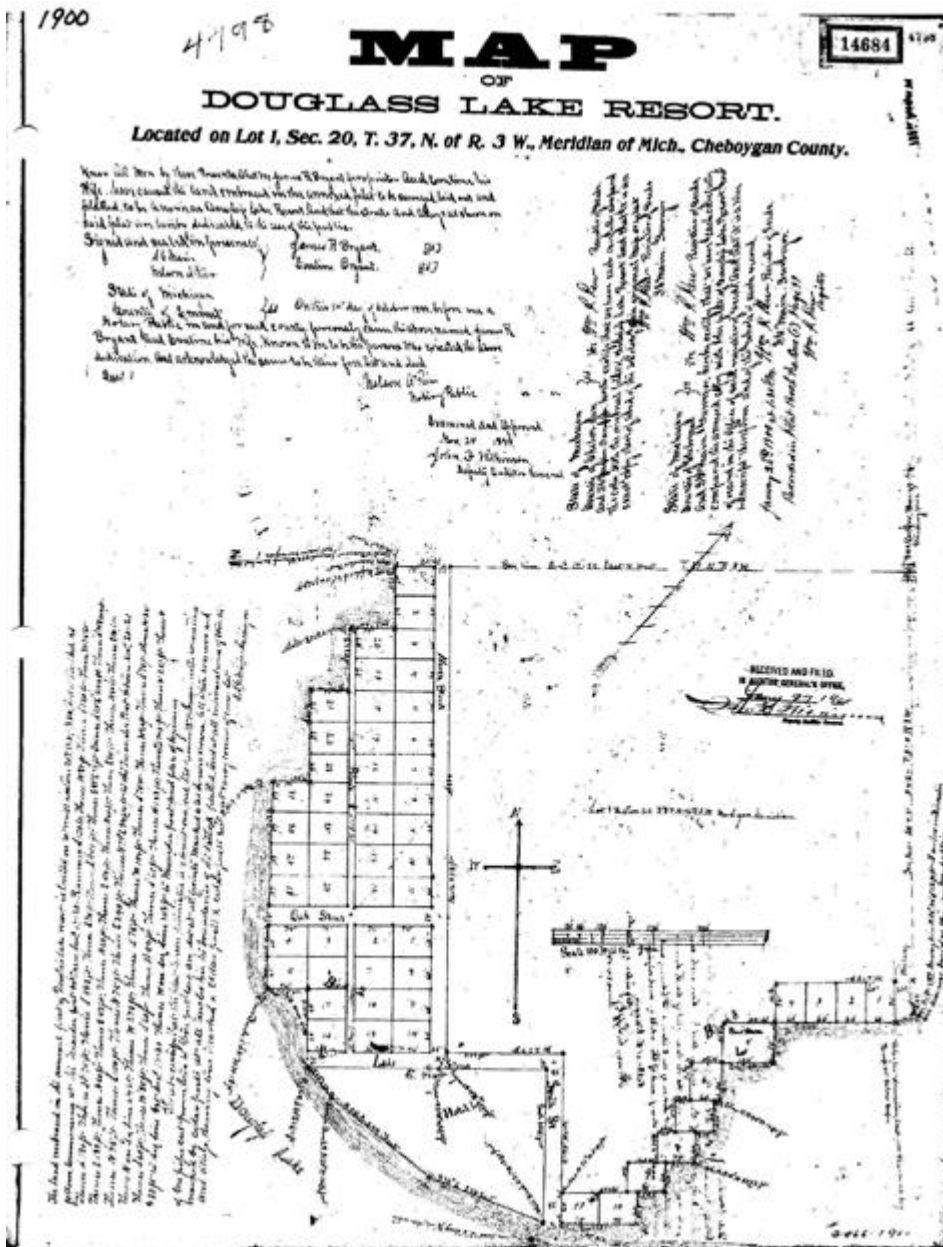
In time, all three residential hotels came to be built, either during the latter years of the 19th century or the first few years of the 20th. They were constructed to accommodate the increasing number of tourists flowing into the area courtesy of the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad and the various steamship lines plying the Great Lakes. During that same interval, some of the lakefront lots shown on the various plat maps were acquired by vacationing individuals and families. Many of these early lots have remained in the hands of the same families that originally purchased them over a century ago.

The following plat maps, three of which appear in The Plat Book of Cheboygan County Michigan, illustrate the locations of these proposed resorts and provide details as to the type of resort that was being contemplated. All of the maps in question pre-date the 1902 publication date for this volume, which I am fortunate to own.

The first illustration contains a portion of the official Munro Township plat map that was contained in the Cheboygan County volume of this state-wide series. As pictured, it shows the locations of all three of the resorts being discussed: the Douglas Lake Resort on Bentley Point; the Douglas Lake Resort on the south shore of the lake; and the Village of Ingleside located on the northwest portion of the lake.

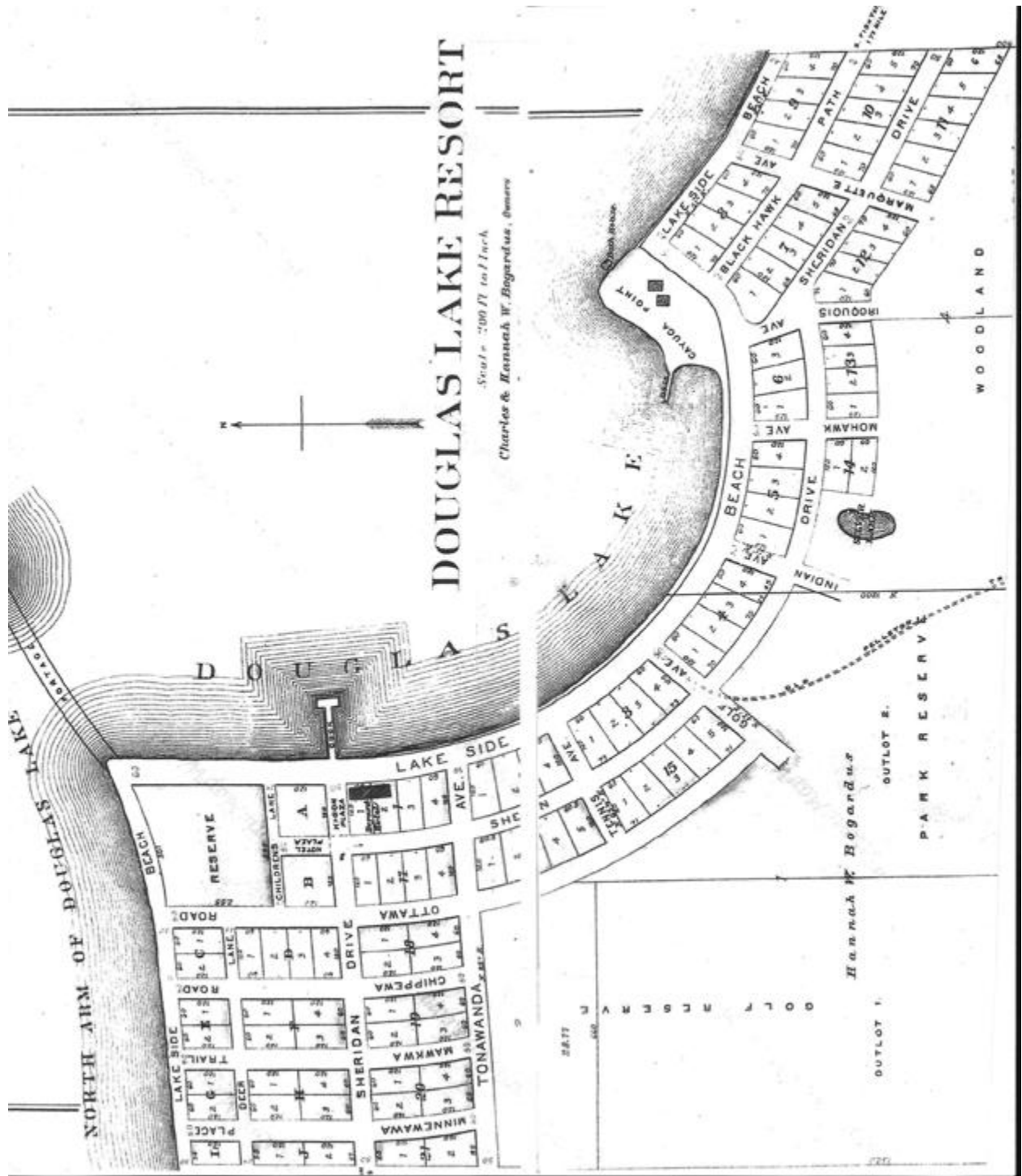


The second illustration, entitled “Map of Douglass Lake Resort”, did not appear in the above- cited book. Instead, it is a copy of the original plat map for that resort that was initially submitted by James R. Bryant and his wife Evaline, the parents of John A. Bryant, in 1899.



The third plat map in this series once again describes a “Douglas Lake Resort”. This second resort bearing that name was to be or was being constructed on land belonging to Charles Bogardus and his wife Hannah Bogardus. Hannah was the daughter of Pellston founder and land baron William Pells. Following Mr. Pells death and the subsequent death of her brother Edgar Pells in 1899, Hannah and her husband inherited title to the land and contemplated building a substantial resort community on the south shore of the lake that was to be anchored by a second Bryant Hotel, this one

apparently owned by John A. Bryant, the son of James R. and Evaline Bryant. As with the first plat map, this particular map was published in the Cheboygan County book.



The final map in this series, like the one immediately above, had initially appeared in the Cheboygan County plat map book and illustrated the plans being submitted for the

Village of Ingleside and its planned resort, which included the Ingleside Inn. On the map as submitted, the inn was to be constructed on lots 1 and 2 of the subdivision. However, when reading accounts of early residents living in that area, it seems that the inn was actually built on lots 3 and 4 of that plat. It is also possible, given that the Ingleside Inn burned down on at least two occasions that the location of one of the rebuilt inns was moved to the two larger lots immediately adjacent to the first location.

