

9 Cottage Country

The advent of summer vacations and the transformation of the Ogden shoreline

Starting in the 1860s some affluent Montrealers chose the shores of Lake Memphremagog to escape the heat, noise, and pollution of that increasingly industrialized city. However, these new villégiateurs (summer residents) were few in number and none established summer residences south of Magoon Point. The Ogden shoreline is largely steep and rocky, and was almost all forest then, just broken here and there by farmers' pastures where gentler slopes prevailed. Only in Harvey's Bay and Cedarville did a wharf beckon the steamboats to call, and certainly no cottages, let alone imposing mansions, disturbed the lakeshore.

In the early to mid 19th century, outside of the elite, the ownership of shoreline property for recreational purposes simply did not exist. After the American Civil War a somewhat self-identified middle class began to emerge, both in Canada and the U.S. Massive industrialization brought with it a significant growth of managerial and senior clerical support staff. At the same time, a greater respect and accreditation was awarded certain professional streams (doctors, lawyers, etc.). An increasing proportion of the population could accumulate some modest savings, and at least contemplate taking a small amount of time off work. The concept of vacations began to take root, and more and more the ability to take a vacation became a prime means of differentiating the middle class from the labouring classes. However, because pleasurable leisure was then commonly viewed with puritanical suspicion, many vacations taken in the second half of the 19th century were tempered with an element of self-improvement. As a consequence mineral springs (health), religious revivals/gathering (morality, salvation), and touring and chautauquas (broadening one's knowledge), were all considered more acceptable forms of vacation.

"Wilderness" camping was also considered an acceptable and productive way to spend time off, combining healthful exertion, fresh air, and spiritual reflection. Cottage culture grew directly, if gradually, out of the camping movement.

With the launch of the first steam paddle-wheeler on the Lake in 1850, the *Mountain Maid*, pleasure excursions on the Lake began. The passengers were tourists, mostly middle-class Americans, but also somewhat surprisingly, local Canadian residents from the surrounding countryside and small towns. Both categories of passengers were treated to a more profound appreciation of the Lake's picturesque shoreline, and for some that translated into a desire for longer, more permanent encounters.

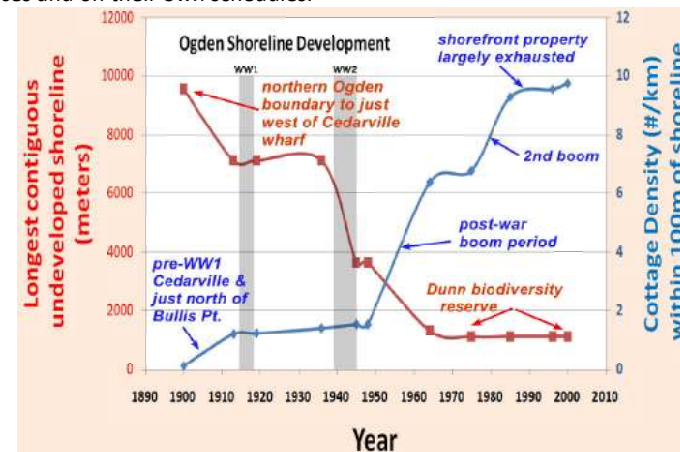
The use of the Ogden shoreline for temporary summer stays, can be traced back to 1885 which saw the completion of a 17-room lakeside inn at Cedarville. Two years later local farmer Joseph Bullis transformed the recently abandoned Customs house into a rental cottage.



Promotional image put together for Joseph Bullis showing the delights of vacationing near Cedarville, circa 1890.

However, a new trend was taking hold. Instead of short stays at a lakeside hotel, it was becoming fashionable to purchase one's own summer property. On the American side, just across the border, cottages were being erected at Lake Park north to Eagle Point, starting in about 1885.

Lakefront properties in Ogden started to be sold in 1902 and initially were purchased largely by local residents in the Stanstead region. Further development occurred through the '20s and '30s attracting a greater proportion of Montrealers, but the major boom in cottages commenced in the late 1940s and continued through the 1960s, spurred on by a substantial rise in median incomes, five-day work weeks, and with the automobile now allowing families to travel greater distances and on their own schedules.



Graph showing increase of cottage density and loss of wild shoreline over time

Since 1913 the footprint of the cottager has increased an astonishing 820 per cent in Ogden, and there now remains almost no shoreline available for development in the municipality.

The plebeian eastern shore

In the middle 1800s, the villages of Stanstead, Rock Island and Beebe were humming with activity as new stores and factories were established, making everything from overalls to buggy whips. The population there grew rapidly, with many fine residences appearing as the economy expanded. Meanwhile, on the shores of Lake Memphremagog, in the area that would eventually become Ogden, there was very little development taking place as it belonged mainly to farmers, who had little use for the rocky shoreline. There was regular steamboat

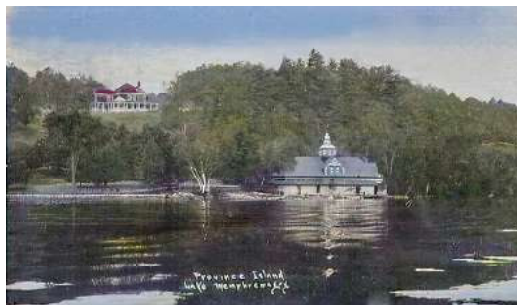


Prior to 1865, steamboats bypassed the eastern shore south of Georgeville.

service between Newport and Magog, meeting trains at either end, carrying cargo and passengers but these made stops at Georgeville and the Mountain House at Owl's Head, bypassing the eastern shore near the border.

In 1864 the situation started to change, and an important catalyst was Canada's decision to establish a customs port in our area. Harvey's Bay was considered but rejected in favour of a point of land further south, on the east side of Echo Bay, owned by farmer Daniel Noakes. In 1865 construction had begun on a wharf at Cedarville, for the newly established customs port, and by 1886 a hotel was built near the wharf in the hope that passengers from the steamboats would be enticed to spend some time there. Alas, when the railway was extended to provide a land connection between Newport and Sherbrooke, transport of cargo by boat was greatly reduced and eventually the Cedarville customs port was closed (likely the fall of 1886) and the steamboats no longer stopped.

At that time, both Canadian and American railroads had been actively promoting, to those who could afford such luxuries, "wilderness" vacations (fully catered!) and they included Lake Memphremagog in their itineraries. As a result, the idea of having a permanent summer home to which they could travel by train and boat, to escape from a hot city, took hold among the upper classes. In 1885 a wealthy American realtor from New York City, Andrew C. Zabriskie, acquired Province Island, and over the next two years built a summer mansion and the iconic boathouse that still stands.



Postcard from circa 1920 showing Zabriskie's country "cottage" and boathouse.

In 1892, another wealthy New York family, Charles and Ximena Covell purchased the recently built inn, which had been constructed to profit from the customs port. The Covells only used it for four years, as they then rented it to Robert Stanley Weir in 1896. Weir bought the property in 1900 and renamed it "Cedarhurst".

The Zabriskie and Covell families were the first and last conspicuously affluent summer residents on Ogden's shoreline for the next several decades. The middle class wanted their piece of paradise as well!

Joseph Bullis and "Mystic Park"

Joseph C. Bullis acquired the Daniel Noakes farm in 1874. This farm included all of the shoreline that is now served by Descartes 20 through 25, except for the customs house and the land where the inn would be built. It would appear that Bullis also bought the customs house after the port was closed and the office had been abandoned, because by 1889 he had transformed it into what he called "Cedarville Cottage". He was vigorously promoting it in 3 separate advertisements, thinly disguised as articles in the April, May and July 1889 issues of the Stanstead Journal, as the ideal spot for families or groups to relax and enjoy the leisurely pleasures of summer.

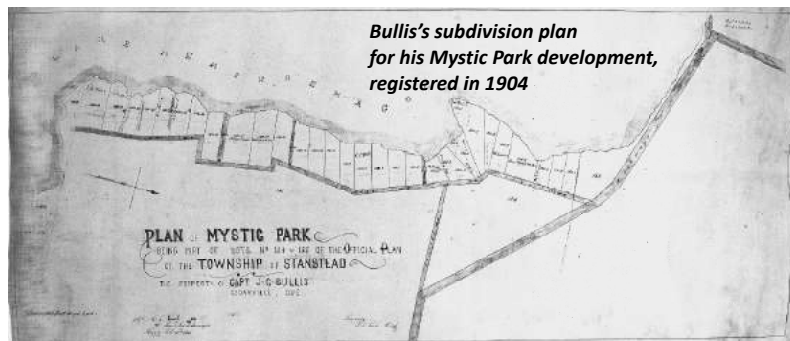


Farmer and entrepreneur Joseph Bullis (far left) and family members posing for a promotional image, c. 1890. His farm is in the background, and he is standing on shoreline that will form part of his Mystic Park development.

Bullis' efforts to promote the summer experience in Cedarville had big competition from Lake Park, situated on the American side, just across the border. Many prominent families from Stanstead either built or rented cottages there and they mingled with the Americans that arrived by train. In that same July 1889 issue of the Stanstead Journal a correspondent from Lake Park boasts of sports and entertainment including "the celebrated Boston Ideal Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar Club", as well as "an admirable tennis ground" and mentions that "The piano for Col. Butterfield's casino will arrive this week." Casino? Beat that, Captain Bullis!

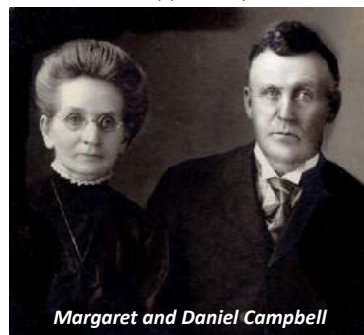
That same report also points out that *"Mr. Bissonnet [well-known citizen and later MLA for Stanstead], of Stanstead Plain, who some years has had a place at Cedarville, has just built a boathouse and stable near the wind mill and will in future make Lake Park his pleasure resort."*

Perhaps realizing that turning Cedarville into a summer resort destination would take more work (and investment) than he was willing to provide, Bullis wisely took another approach and subdivided his property south of Weir Beach into lots, and called the development *"Mystic Park"*, likely because he was born near Mystic, Quebec, near Lake Champlain. He set about renting these lots and then selling them for an average \$50 per acre, often to the individual who had been renting, and who, in some cases, had already built a cottage on the property. These new cottagers were generally from Stanstead and the surrounding area; his first sale was to Charles W. Ruiter Jenkins, who owned a general store in Smith Mills, and Robert H. Burke, a physician and surgeon from Derby Line. Other lots were sold to fellow farmers who wanted access to the lake for fishing, or to local businessmen.



Daniel Campbell and "Woodlands"

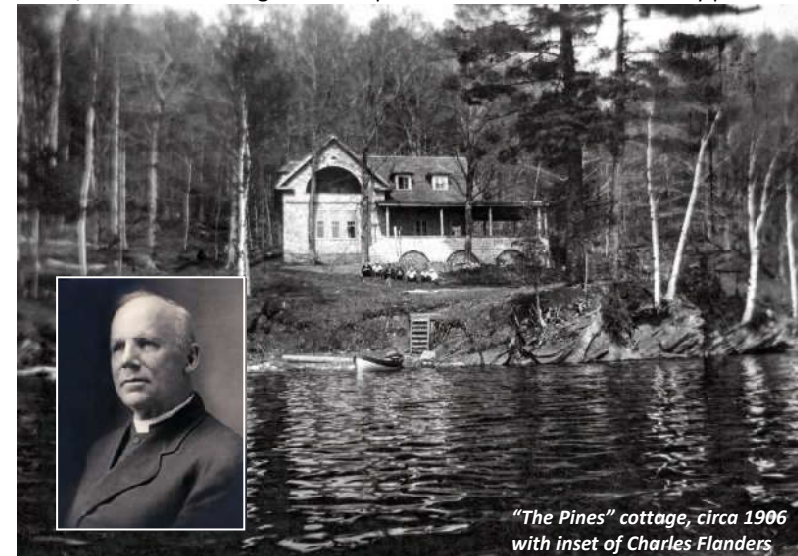
Daniel Campbell, a Scottish immigrant who came to Canada with his parents when he was 10, was living in Stanstead. The 1871 census shows that he worked for the Passumpsic Railroad, which had leased the Massawippi Valley Railroad the previous year. He married Margaret Alice Bullock, the eldest child of James Owen Bullock, a blacksmith whose farm included the land where Descente 19 is now, next to the Bullis farm at the shoreline. In 1903 James Owen and his wife gave the farm to Daniel and Margaret in return for an undertaking to look after them for the rest of their lives, including *"a good safe horse and vehicle"* and a cash allowance of \$8 per year.



Campbell and Bullis certainly knew each other - they were close neighbours and went to the same church - and they no doubt discussed the idea of selling lakeshore lots, perhaps thinking about eventual retirement as Bullis was 62 and Campbell 53 in 1903. Daniel never had any plans to develop his shoreline himself, and there were no existing cottages or other buildings, so he went directly to selling lots, mostly to local people. Here, going from south to north, are the stories behind four of these transactions that resulted in cottages being built. According to the social notes column in the Stanstead Journal at the time, this development was collectively referred to as *"Woodlands"*, a term apparently soon abandoned.

"The Pines"

Charles Flanders was a Methodist minister who served for a time at the church in Beebe, where he baptized Daniel Campbell's son and buried Joseph Bullis' father, so he knew of both families by the time he was appointed principal of Stanstead Wesleyan College in 1893. Popular among the students, it appears that Dr. Flanders led picnic excursions by boat *"around the point"* from Cedarville to a large, unoccupied beach at the northern limit of the Bullis farm. This beach, as subsequent generations well know, is perfect for picnics and swimming, as well as having a fine view of Owl's Head and Bear Mountain, so little wonder why Flanders chose to build a cottage there. He bought the one-acre shoreline lot that included the beach from Joseph Bullis in 1904, and the next year purchased an additional one acre lot from Daniel Campbell, the adjacent lot to the north, which provided a better place to locate a cottage than the steep hill behind the beach. He caused a fine, two-storey house to be built, with a large covered porch and a prominent *"half-moon"* arched balcony upstairs. He called his cottage *"The Pines"*, no doubt referring to the tall pine trees that stood on the rocky point.



"Silver Birches"

Charles Flanders' sister-in-law, Anne Sarah Davies, had moved to Ontario where she married a lawyer, William Henry Deacon. Alas, Deacon died five years later and Anne move back to Stanstead to live with her parents and to be close to her sister Martha. When Dr. Flanders embarked on his plan to build The Pines, Anne must have been attracted by the idea of spending summers at the lake next door to her sister, for she purchased, from Daniel Campbell, the one-acre lot to the north and there she caused to be built a modest cottage nestled in a grove of birch trees, overlooking the lake. She called it "The Silver Birches".



The "Silver Birches" circa 1950, inset the Davies sisters, Anne & Martha

"The Hemlocks"

George Alfred Grant-Schaefer was a musician and had studied piano and voice in Montreal where, perhaps, he met Robert Stanley Weir, Edward Douglas and others who would become his Ogden lakeshore neighbours. We do know from the Stanstead Journal that he was a guest of the Weirs at Cedarhurst on several occasions, and maybe this is what convinced him to purchase a lakeshore lot from Campbell. The lot was densely covered with mature hemlock trees, and still is today, and he called his new cottage "The Hemlocks". It was built c. 1907.

The initial plans for Grant-Schaefer's cottage consisted of one large, main room with a stone fireplace and two small bedrooms plus a kitchen on the side away from the lake. A covered porch ran the length of the house on the west side,



overlooking the water, and continued around the south end, providing an outdoor sleeping porch. Soon after, a small elevated stage was added to the north end of the cottage, with a square Steinway grand piano in place.

The "Hemlocks" today

In 1908 Grant-Schaefer did the vocal harmony arrangement for Robert Stanley Weir's O Canada!, and it seems very likely that the two friends' collaboration occurred at one cottage or the other.

"Douglas Cliff"

Edward Robert Douglas was familiar with the Memphremagog area well before he came to purchase one of Daniel Campbell's shoreline lots, his immediate family often visiting the region, as well as having spent summers at Cedarhurst as early as 1895. In 1906 he bought a piece of land from Campbell, 20 rods along the lakeshore and located to the north of those previously sold to Flanders, Davies and Grant-Schaefer. There he had Nathan Beach build a house on a flat spot overlooking the lake. There was a steep cliff down to the water, about 20 feet in height, and Edward called his cottage "Douglas Cliff"

His son, Dr. Donald Douglas, writing about his father says, "It was partly to have a place where he could bring his mother. He chose well, for there were springs at the bottom of the cliffs, which supplied us with drinking water, and were used for refrigerating food. There was an unimpeded view, both north and south, of the lake." Below the cliff there was sufficient beach upon which to eventually build a boatshed, the only one of the original cottages near Bullis Point to have this feature. Edward was a musician, an accomplished pianist and had studied the organ, but his favourite instrument was the cello. He and his neighbours would often gather for musical evenings beside the lake.



A recent photograph of "Douglas Cliff"

Cottage Boom

Cottages began to appear on the Ogden lakeshore in the late 1800s and early 1900s, but large stretches of shoreline remained only sparsely populated at the end of the 1930s. This situation changed rapidly as the Second World War wound down in 1945, when the convergence of several factors made cottage life possible.

Having learned a lesson from the Great Depression, both federal and provincial governments continued the level of investment so necessary during the war years, only now with an emphasis on creating jobs for the almost one million soldiers and personnel returning to Canada. Expenditure on infrastructure provided more and better highways for families to drive their newly-affordable cars on, and the general adoption of a five-day workweek meant weekends were free to get out of the cities and explore the countryside. Even better, paid vacations were becoming common in many types of employment, and parents started thinking about ways to get their children and themselves out of the city during the summer months.

To meet the demands of those who ventured to the Ogden area looking for lake-shore lots to build on, these were being made available by farmers who were willing to part with shoreline property, or by people who had previously purchased the land with the intention to perhaps someday build there, but for one reason or another had decided not to. Since these vendors were not advertising in city newspapers, many of the sales were to those who already knew the area, possibly from having grown up in Ogden and moved to the city or having visited friends who had cottages here.

Often, it seems, groups of friends would buy adjacent lots and create a small community of cabins where (usually) the women and children would stay the entire summer while the men spent the week at work and weekends with the family, looking forward to their two weeks of vacation at the lake. One of the

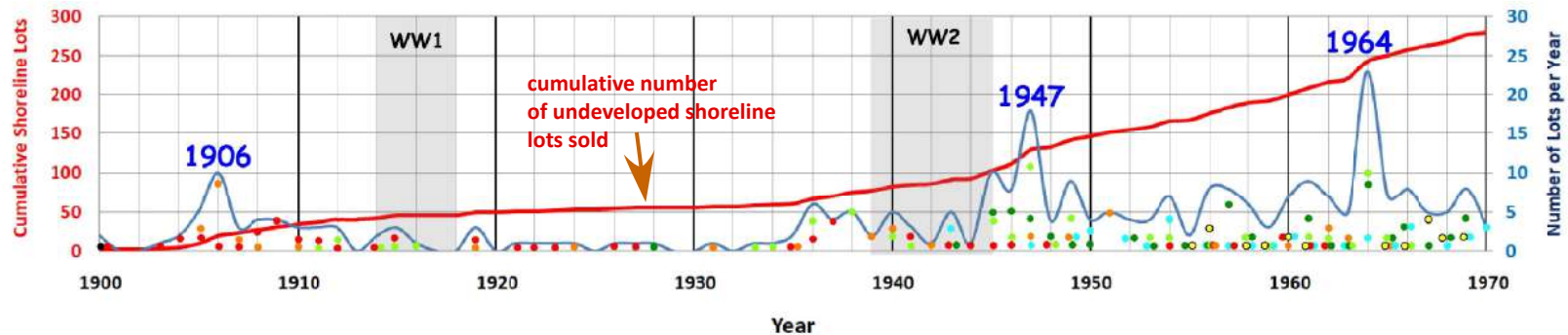
earliest examples of such a community was *Klericalerrers* near the head of Fitch Bay (see separate story). Typically, in the early years, these cabins would initially have no electricity, no indoor plumbing, and perhaps no easy access by car. Soon, however, propane gas was being delivered from Magog for cooking and lighting, gasoline-powered pumps drew water from the lake, and, over time the cottage owners came to agreements with Southern Canada Power to put up poles for electricity and telephone service and by the middle 1960s it appears that power had arrived all along the lakeshore.



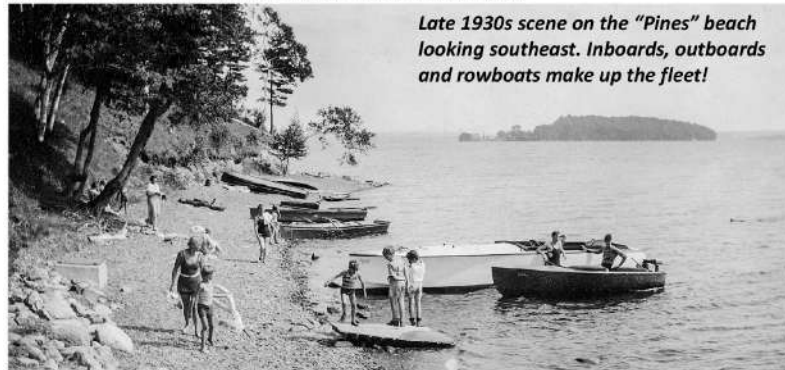
Three of an eventual six rental cabins built for Armand Houle at Harvey Bay, as seen in the late 1930s. Purpose built rentals faded by the 1960s. Image courtesy of Gilbert Elliott.

Having a lakeshore cottage often led to acquiring boats, and the lake became much busier with traffic that included everything from canoes and flat-bottomed rowboats to large mahogany-hulled inboard craft that were the envy of adolescent boys! A progression over time of boat types reflected what was currently popular: canoes, rowboats and cedar-strip outboard craft, followed by Sailfish,

Ogden Shoreline Development



Sunfish and Hobie Cats. Motorboats grew steadily bigger and faster over the years, often pulling kids on Aquaplanes, then on water skis. Larger sailboats began to appear, cruising sedately up and down the lake. Some of these were big enough to be used as live-aboard accommodation for those who either couldn't or did not want to have a summer residence on land.



Late 1930s scene on the "Pines" beach looking southeast. Inboards, outboards and rowboats make up the fleet!

At first, supplying the fuel to run the motorboats meant either lugging containers that had been filled at the gas station in Beebe, or going by boat to Big Timbers marina on Quinn Bay, or south to Newport. Either option meant using up a good amount of fuel just to get there and back. Around 1957, however, Buster Baker opened a marina at the Narrows end of Fitch Bay and this became somewhat of a social centre as motorboat owners converged there to fill the tank on Saturday mornings. Soon after, Baker was organizing annual regattas, with races for all classes of motorboats, up to large, loud hydroplanes that roared around the course between the marina and Camp Arrowhead, raising tall "rooster tail" wakes. Those were different times!

Boathouses started appearing at Tompkins Creek around this time, the first one having been built in the late 1940s by Gordon Bullock, a farmer who also acted as a fishing guide for businessmen, but whose farm didn't include any of the shoreline. Ten years later there were at least two dozen boathouses there, lining both sides of the creek. Before 1965 a boat could be launched next to the bridge at Harvey's Bay by backing a trailer into the shallow water there, instead of going to the Federal wharf next to Weir Park. No pre-launch washing of boats back then!



Tompkins Creek boathouses c. 1955

A typical project after a family established themselves in a lakeshore cottage was putting in a dock for swimming, fishing, sitting in the sun, and where the boat

could be tied up. Many were simple platforms on posts that could easily be lifted out and stored on land over the winter, to avoid damage caused by moving ice during the spring breakup. Seasonally installed aluminum boat hoists started to appear in the mid-1960s. Other docks were built as permanent structures: heavy cribwork filled with stones and covered with thick hemlock boards, and these were more or less successful at resisting ice damage in the spring, depending on which way the wind was blowing as the ice went out of the lake.



1951, the Packards build their cottage and wharf

Especially during the 1950s, when there were not as many cottages as there are now, there was plenty of unoccupied territory, both inland and on the shoreline, for kids to roam and create adventures all summer long. Open spaces provided endless quantities of raspberries, blackberries and blueberries to be picked. There were many big trees ideally suited for the construction of treehouses, and there were empty beaches and even islands that became picnic destinations. Rowboats full of pre-teens, with no adults and no lifejackets, would set off to Tea Table Island, which had no houses then, or to Loon Island in Fitch Bay, to spend the day. A children-only expedition to another beach to swim, picnic or just get away from the family for a few hours, also gave, no doubt, much-needed peace and quiet to the adults back at the cottage!

Cottage life, decades ago, also included some commonly accepted activities that would horrify us today. For instance, it was the usual thing for some cottagers to load empty cans, broken dishes and bottles into the boat, row out into the lake, and sink them there. No doubt, other non-floating items that would be awkward to dispose of otherwise, also wound up at the bottom of the lake. Even worse, the treatment of wastewater could have been anything from a pipe directly into the lake or to a cesspool that regularly overflowed on rainy days. Proper septic systems were a rarity in those times, and the coliform count rose to alarming numbers in many parts of the lake. Thick algae blooms in August were a common occurrence, as well. In 1967 several concerned citizens formed *Memphremagog Conservation Inc.* and hatched a brilliant plan: a map of the shoreline was posted in the villages, showing coliform counts taken in front of each cottage. This, along with locally enacted bylaws, raised the public awareness of the problem to a point where a great deal of activity installing septic systems took place over the next few years. The continued involvement of MCI has steadily improved the water quality of the lake, to our great benefit.

To have such a wonderful resource as Lake Memphremagog within easy striking distance of Montreal, particularly after the autoroute was opened in 1965, inevitably meant that more lots were subdivided, more cottages were added and Ogden's shoreline gradually filled in to the density it is today, with some of the houses becoming permanent residences. However, the description of the area in the Stanstead Journal of July 4th, 1889 still applies: *"With the pure air which prevails here, the invigorating breezes and clear crystal waters of the Lake, fine boating, sailing and bathing and beauty of scenery, this place stands second to none on the Lake."*



A rowboat full of kids at Harvey Bay, not a lifejacket in sight! In the 1930s the Dasen family ran a summer camp from their farm. Image courtesy of Walter Jacobi.

Klericalerrers and Past-the-Pastors: the building of a summer community along the shores of Fitch Bay

contribution by Eleanor Ward

Along the Ogden shoreline, there has been very little planned development. Summer communities have grown quite organically, often by word-of-mouth, with friends or relatives encouraging others to join the adventure. Perhaps nowhere is this more true than with the very first group of cottages built north of Harvey's Bay.

Around 1940, Edythe and David Forsythe of Montreal rented a boat from Ridgewood Inn at the Narrows and rowed around the lake looking for land for a cottage. They chose an area of shoreline where there was flat terrain and a large sparkling white rock and bought a lot from the local vet, Dr. Ruthven Douglas, who owned 100 acres on Cedarville Rd.



Ridgewood Inn and covered bridge at the Fitch Bay Narrows in the late 1940s. Image courtesy of Gilbert Elliott

To build their cabin, they used big swede saws to cut their cedar trees. Huge spikes nailed logs in place. They filled the gaps in the logs with oakum. There was a well up the hill, a pump and a wood-burning stove in the kitchen, and out back, an outhouse. Everything came in by boat, or down a path from the top of the hill.



The Ward cottage in mid-construction, c. 1951. In doorway, Eleanor Ward, Rev. Gardner Ward, Maynard Booth, Dr. David Forsythe, David Forsythe, Art Lovelace. David Ward balancing on the log.

In 1941, they invited their friends, Maynard and Lee Booth to visit. The Booths helped build a cedar log guest cabin and then they bought the lot next door. In turn, Jean and Art Lovelace and Madeline and Gardner Ward bought the next two lots.

All the men were United Church ministers and they all built cabins by

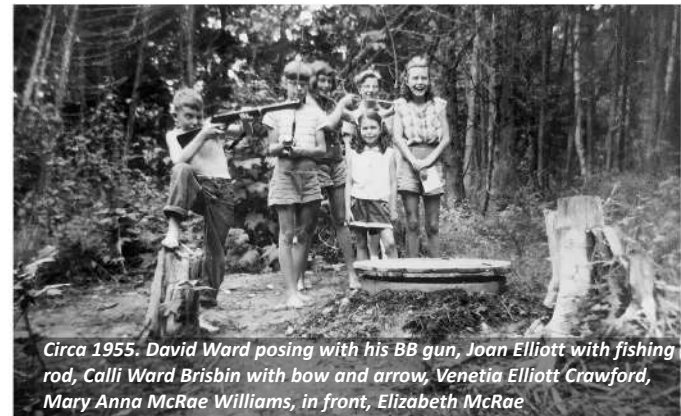
hand out of cedar logs cut from their properties. In fun, they called their community, *Klericalerrers*, a deliberate misspelling of "clerical errors". The Forsythes built a chapel by the shore with logs for pews and it's been the tradition for 80 years for the community to gather together there on Sunday mornings.

In the mid 1950s, Dr. Don McRae and his wife, Bea, and Drs. Allan and Frances Elliott, bought the next two lots. They called their cottages *Past-the-Pastors*. They brought in electricity. Eventually, they all got party line phones.

In the 40s and 50s, the mothers and children would arrive as soon as school was out and would stay until Labour Day with the husbands coming back and forth. For many years there was no electricity and no phones. The lake was teeming with fish. Bass, Perch and Sunfish gathered in the shade under docks. There were millions of frogs along the shore. Pickerel swam in the shallows. It was easy to catch 50 frogs and study them in a big washbasin before letting them go. The ditches were full of garter snakes. There were foxes, mink, skunks, turtles, bats, bears, and deer.

It felt very remote and it was. The roads were rough. The only smooth surface was when you drove over the covered bridge at the Narrows. There were very few cottages on the lake, just deep woods. Camp Arrowhead and a handful of cottages were on the opposite shore.

Gangs of children went swimming together. They ran barefoot along the upper and lower forest paths. The children climbed the hill to collect the mail, walked along the road to the Douglasses', drinking from the pump at the back and hoping Dr. Douglas would come outside. He always had pockets full of candy. Then they walked on to the Smith farm for pails of milk.



Circa 1955. David Ward posing with his BB gun, Joan Elliott with fishing rod, Calli Ward Brisbin with bow and arrow, Venetia Elliott Crawford, Mary Anna McRae Williams, in front, Elizabeth McRae

There were so many celebrations and singsongs and fires and parties, storytelling and potluck shore suppers. Tradition dictated that gifts for birthdays and anniversaries had to be homemade; poems were written on birch bark. They revelled in the thrill of summers in harmony with nature.

O Canada: Our national anthem and Robert Stanley Weir's Memphremagog muse

contribution by Stephen W. W. Simpson

O Canada, our national anthem, was adopted in 1980 by an act of parliament. Like the nation it seeks to reflect and honour, it is a most curious but successful amalgam. Its title is aboriginal (St. Lawrence Iroquoian), its musical score was composed by a very talented French-Canadian musician and nationalist, Calixa Lavallée, who lived a good part of his life in the U.S., and its French and English lyrics were penned by jurists, Adolphe Basile Routhier and Robert Stanley Weir, respectively. All three men were equally at ease in both languages and both cultures.

Originally this national song was presented to the dominion-wide convention of French Canadians held in 1880 in Quebec City hosted by the Société Saint Jean Baptiste where Routhier's lyrics, reflecting the proud history of French Canada and a resolute Catholic faith, were set to the stirring music of Lavallée. Weir, a second-generation Canadian born in Ontario but raised in Quebec, wrote his English lyrics in 1908 in association with the tricentenary celebrations of the founding of Quebec. His words appeal to a more secular patriotism and an abiding identity with the "True North".



*The Weir children at Cedarhurst, 1908.
L to R, Douglas, Bea, Wyn, Mar, Ron and Dot*

the Port, and north of the Lachine Canal, where both light and heavy industries were then concentrated. Robert was one of eight children. Despite humble beginnings, Robert was destined to lead a very productive and varied life. He was from the outset a prodigious learner and excelled in law, music and literature. He was a teacher, principal, lawyer, church organist, essayist, poet, failed politician, choir director, music teacher and arranger, historian, lecturer, golf enthusiast and jurist. Fluently bilingual, he was appointed Recorder for the City of Montreal in 1899 and became a Judge in Admiralty of the Exchequer Court of Canada in 1925.

Robert, affectionately known as "Bert", was extremely passionate about this country, but the one spot in the vast dominion closest to his heart was Cedarville. In 1882 he married Margaret Douglas ("Gertie") and it was through his in-laws that Dr. Weir was introduced to the Lake Memphremagog region in the mid-1890s.

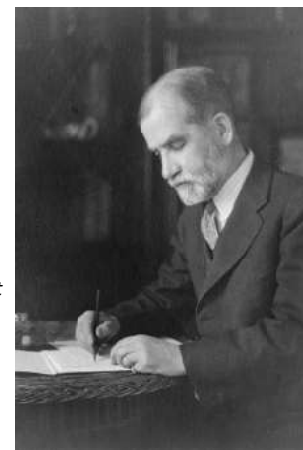
Robert Stanley Weir K.C., D.C.L., F.R.S.C. (1856 – 1926), was born in 1856 of working-class Scottish immigrant parents. The Weir family moved from Hamilton to Montreal around 1858, when young Robert was two. His father, William Park Weir, was originally an iron founder. They settled as tenants in Griffintown, the predominantly Irish Catholic working-class neighbourhood that lay just west of

It was here at his summer home, *Cedarhurst*, on Lake Memphremagog in July of 1908, whilst the Tercentenary celebrations were taking place in Quebec City, where Weir started to write the words to our national anthem. Weir had been involved in the Tercentenary planning and fundraising, and as a patriotic and literary Canadian he may well have wished to contribute verse to further promote the official undercurrent of the festivities, that is, pride in, and reconciliation between, the two founding races. Enter his friend and fellow summer resident of Cedarville, George Grant-Schaefer who was a Canadian musician and arranger, teaching in Chicago. That spring, George had heard a truly inspiring march played by a Canadian military band. He didn't recognize it but the tune couldn't be dislodged from his head. At the lake, he hurried over to Weir's place to see if the judge could identify the music. Of course, Robert immediately recognized the airs of Lavallée's wonderful melody. Grant-Schaefer then proposed to Weir to write English lyrics to the tune. Weir agreed, then quickly demanded of George that he fashion a new and fresh arrangement for Lavallée's composition. The product of their collaboration was finished and published by the fall.

Robert Stanley Weir's love for the Lake Memphremagog region is most profoundly expressed in his poetry, of which two volumes were published. Many of his poems make mention of the Lake, and three are entitled Memphremagog. The subject matter ranges greatly. It is clear that the carnage of, and the courage displayed in, the Great War, as well as the death of Douglas, his eldest, had a profound impact on Robert. His poetry writing must have served as some solace in his grief, as did the Lake, with its enduring capacity to bring peace to the soul.

Lake Memphremagog 1922

*Here are no legends of dark history,
No echoes of war bugles, fifes or drums;
Only the ever lovely mystery
Of how the glory of summer comes;
No clamour, neither, save a shouting loud
When on the mountain breaks a thunder cloud;
Then we, who weep not lest we cause them pain,
Welcome the lamentation of the rain;
Legends not old, but new, that whispering tell
Of ten tall youths who knew these waters well:
Swam them and sailed them and from mountain height
Watched the gray eagle's solitary flight:
Whom we shall see no more until we join the Dead;
Who lie far hence, with Christ's cross at each head.
Thou now art spirit-haunted, lake, and this
Gives thee a solemn glory kin to bliss,
As we remember Them, and brood and pray,
Till the day break and shadows flee away.*



Judge Weir died of pneumonia at his beloved Cedarhurst on August 20, 1926.

Sir Andrew MacPhail wrote of Robert Stanley Weir after his death,

"It can be truly said he was just in the exercise of power, generous in the protection of weakness, and beloved for his charm of kindly courtesy to timid souls of all classes."