

DAVID BALDWIN LOT 6, CONCESSION 13

Submitted By: D. Baldwin

Our property is the point of land at the head of the lake facing west and south. To the North of us lies Algonquin Inn and to the east Parkway Cottages. The property was owned first by a Miss Langstaff around the turn of the century, followed by a Miss O'Connell from New York who had the legal work done by my maternal grandfather. The family has been coming to Oxtongue since 1926 at Miss O'Connell's invitation, and in 1936 she deeded the property to my mother and her two sisters. The land very quickly acquired the informal name "Dogwenso Point" in honour of the three sister co-owners. When my mother Dorothy Baldwin died in 1960, her two sisters, Gwen and Sophie Boyd, deeded the property to her six children, a daughter and five sons, of whom four sons remain.

It was a much quieter lake in the days of the early 30's. The highway was gravel, the highway bridge was farther north at the narrows leading to Patterson's Bay, and we reached our cottage by water. Mr. Robertson would have our boat waiting for us at the Bishop's dock (now the Blue Spruce Inn) opposite our boathouse. There were, as far as I know, only three year round residents: the Keowns, who ran the general store and cabins; the Robertson family, a bit to the north of them; and a Mr. Harlock who lived in a small cabin on the highway a bit to the south of the Keowns. Of the cottagers you had the Chapins from New York State at the south end on a very large property, and the Lewis's from Chicago a bit to the north of the Chapins on the opposite side of the lake. There were no other cottages from there until the Keowns, and none at all on either side of the lake until you came to the Bishops on the west side, and us on the east. To the north of us there was nothing until you came to one log cabin belonging to John Robertson on the east side of the lake halfway between the present bridge and the former log bridge. There was a very old log cabin at the bridge on the east side and above that towards the top of the lake (Pattersons Bay) on the west side, were the Pattersons who came from Rochester. On the west side of us, all the way to the narrows of the Oxtongue River, there were no cottages. At the narrows was the Fire Ranger, Tom Parris' cabin and his tower, from which he watched diligently on all clear days. It was situated on a substantial hill behind his cabin. The only other cottage was on the river towards the falls. It was owned by the Peters from Detroit, and was called the Last House. There were no other cottages in what is now known as Harris's Bay, and the big island was known as Camper's Island.

There was no hydro and no telephone, except at the Keowns' and Tom Parris'. The Chapins had a big generator, which provided them their own electricity. Their property was maintained by Mr. Keown whose outboard we could hear each night returning to Keowns Bay. The big event of the summer for us young ones was the annual tour of the lake by the Chapins and the Lewises in their big white launches. As soon as we spotted a launch we would race out in our white dinghy (with two sets of oars) to ride the crest of their swell and to wave to them and be waved at in return. There were many marvelous trails maintained by Tom Parris, which we would tramp through to various little lakes, the biggest of which was Long Lake, about three miles west of the Bishops. Tom would often paddle to the Bishops in the evening and it was so quiet we could hear the conversation at the dock. We called him the "lone ranger" and we would call back and forth as he paddled by, often stopping for a chat at the dock in our bay. He was our great hero and was very much amused by our fascination with him. The lake was so quiet that we could stand at the boathouse dock and yell to the hills and hear up to five echoes. The highway ran along the lake and was so infrequently traveled we could hear cars coming north for three to four minutes before they arrived.

We all had our chores each day. My older brothers Steve, Mur and Rid, would haul logs, trim them, cut the logs into stove size cuts with a crosscut saw, and split them into pieces to fuel our cooking stoves three or four mornings a week. Peter and I would haul the brush up from their tree trimming and pile them. Each morning Pete and I would struggle up the hill from the pump with pails of drinking water for my aunts and grandmother at the yellow cottage and for our family at the brown cottage (which until recently we called the new cottage – built in 1937 by Bill Keown). We also had to haul up lake water for the stoves for cooking and dishwashing each morning and evening. All our laundry was done with an old fashioned

laundry tub and scrub board. Another task we had was to break up pine branches to make into bundles wrapped with old newspaper to serve as fire starters for the stoves. And we would gather up wood chips and small brush for kindling to start fires in the potbellied heating stove in the brown cottage and the fireplace in the yellow cottage. Each morning and evening we had a little flag raising and lowering ceremony with Ridley providing the appropriate music on his bugle! Each morning my grandmother, my aunts and my mother would trim the wicks on the coal oil lamps which served as our evening lighting in the pre hydro days. Fresh milk was a rarity and would turn sour immediately after a thunderstorm, so we drank a powdered version mixed with water, called Klim.

In those early days we spent the whole summer from the day we were let out of school until Labour Day at Oxtongue. There were no super highways, the roads were much more winding, the last forty to fifty miles were gravel road and the trip took anywhere from five to six hours longer, if we had blow outs. Tubeless tires had not yet been invented! Pete and I usually managed to be sick at least twice before we arrived. Shortly after arriving we would make a trip to Huntsville to pick up a huge wooden box of canned goods shipped by train, ordered from Toronto. There were so many things for all of us to do. Every second year or so my older brothers Steve and Mur would select a suitable spruce tree from which we would fashion a mast for our dinghy so we could sail. There were trails to explore, and picnics we would take, setting out in two canoes and our rowboat/dinghy if the whole family was present. Because we were on a point of land we could swim all day in the sun, starting with the bay and following the sun to the point, ending the day at the boathouse as the sun slipped over the hills.

The marsh, bounding our property on the east was a real wet swamp at that time, literally teeming with wildlife. Rid and I would spend hours and hours working our way across it jumping from log to log. Over the course of each summer Pete and I turned the sandy portion of our beach in the bay into a network of lakes and streams complete with villages, stores, cars, boats and so on! There was absolutely no one to disturb our creations. Inevitably summer would come to an end and we would sadly prepare to leave. We were not particularly impressed by Aunt Soph's gentle reminder that the sooner we left the sooner we would return. Leave-taking was a sad affair and we always looked back as we drove down our little road, calling out goodbye to our summer home.

Some sixty years and three generations later I now see some truth in Soph's statement...especially now that the seasons seem to whiz by with such dizzying speed! What a wonderful summer home we have shared for over seventy years, now the only remaining rallying point for the extended family. How fortunate we have been and how lovely to contemplate the new generations coming along to share this family treasure. May Dogwenso Point continue to be the magic place it is for many more generations.

Gratefully submitted in loving tribute to our forebearers;
Edward and Minnie Boyd
Leslie and Dorothy Baldwin
Patricia Rutherford and Stephen Baldwin