

## KEITH LOT 9, CONCESSION 12

*Submitted By: I. Keith*

The Keith family property is about 51/2 acres and is bisected by Tom Parris Trail. We are at # 45 and are part of Lot 9, Con 12. Twp of McClintock. It was first acquired from the Crown by Ray and Mildred Smith, based on a survey, dated July 1943, at which time I believe they built the first log cabin, chicken house and tool shed. It was the first of a number of log buildings Ray built in the community. It was our understanding that they were going to have a chicken farm to provide food for the "war effort." They obtained the deed to the property, "in consideration of the sum of \$99.00" in June 1945. By then the War was over and in July 1945 it was sold to a school teacher, Mr. W.J. Brown, who in turn offered it for sale in the summer of 1946 because he said "Mrs. Brown did not like the bears looking in at her."

My parents, Dr. Bill & Mrs. Eleanor Keith first acquired the property in September 1946, after my father had come back from the War. The title was transferred to myself (Ian Keith) in 1987 at my father's death. At first there were no services to the property. Coal oil lamps (Mr. Brown said "wait till it goes putt putt putt, Mrs. Keith") a riverside spring (42 degrees F.) and a hand pump for water supply, an out house and a wood cook stove were the order of the day. Access originally came through Ruth Horn's back yard, but now comes in off Tom Parris Trail on our property. The original route was a lumber road with a river crossing at the shallows by our main cottage. For many years wooden cribs, which had floated away from the crossing at some time in the past, could be seen in the bay beyond the river mouth.

At the very center of what our family calls the "magic" of Oxtongue remains the memory of the gracious and affectionate personality of Tom Parris, our area fire ranger. No one should underestimate the strength of his character. Family expressions such as "take to your scrapers" and the bullfrog's advice to Tom to "go-roun" when paddling through shallow water, continue in our vocabulary at the cottage. He told us how to clean potatoes by pouring cold water into the pail with the potatoes and then "randy dandy" them with a stick by stirring them hard. Then they were ready to cook. My 2 younger sisters were his little angels and having his summer fire tower cabin just across the river at the river's mouth resulted in calling that area "Tom's Point". The Ratepayers Association can be proud of its tribute to Tom's memory in the form of a bronze plaque on the large stone on Tom's Point. It is worth a brief visit when paddling up to the falls.

Dad's first big project was to build the stone fireplace with a "heatilator". It must have been daunting for my mother when he cut out the space in the end of the wall of the cabin and started building it. Fortunately Mrs. Brown's bears didn't come to visit while the hole was there. Over the years Dad and Ray Smith built a larger front veranda and extended the cabin for a bedroom and a bathroom with indoor plumbing. In the 1950's a sleeping cabin was added, which in the 1960's had an extension as the children's families grew. The antlers and horns found on trips were added as my father traveled around Canada. But the "original" owners were not shot by him since he was not a hunter. My parents even added electric power and a telephone! But no T.V.! It's all very tame now. Fortunately for those times when the power goes out we still have a few oil lamps handy and a wood stove.

The cottage is a tribute to the character of "Oxtongue" (as we call it when we are away), to those who have gone before and to my mother and father whose presence is apparent throughout. Family and friends have cautioned me "Don't change a thing."



*Dr. Bill Keith neurosurgeon, Toronto, constructing fireplace on main cabin - 1947 or 48*



*Main cabin plus sleeping cabin both built by Ray Smith before 1953*