

FAIR ISLAND

By Cathy Morrison

In 1916, Septimus Campbell and his son, Frank, both from Toronto, purchased an island on Otter Lake, sight unseen, from an ad in the Toronto Mail & Empire. At the cost of \$50.00, they must have been very excited about their new piece of real estate. On the deed, the size of the island read '1/4 acre, more or less'. I wonder if they realized just how tiny it was! They named it 'Fair Island'.



Fair Island is located in the southern area of the lake, next to Round Island, near the mouth of the Short Arm.

Septimus and his wife, Elizabeth, had 12 children, of which three frequented the island. Their daughter Eva, and her husband, Harry Woodcroft, spent their honeymoon there that first summer in a tent.

With the help of a local carpenter, Septimus and Frank soon built two identical cabins, each with two bedrooms, a living room and a verandah. Each cabin had a woodstove for cooking and most of the furniture was brought by rowboat from Holmur station, by Septimus' son-in-law, Harry Woodcroft – quite a workout all the way from Little Otter! Harry built a cairn out of cement and rock to store the perishables (see photo). In later years, this was replaced with more modern refrigeration – an ice house. Double walls were filled with sawdust and ice was delivered in the winter by a local man who dragged ice blocks to the island with his team of horses. Somewhere along the way, a boathouse was built, which is no longer standing today.



Septimus & Elizabeth's daughter, Maude, married Benjamin Dickson, and had a son named Harold. In 1921, Harold Dickson bought Frank Campbell's share of the island, then in 1928, Harold also purchased Septimus' share, now owning the entire island.

Harold & Vida Dickson had two daughters, Catherine and Shirley. Shirley has fond memories of the island, spending two weeks there every summer, as that was all the holiday time her father had. Her mother would purchase fruits and vegetables from Eaton's in Toronto, which would be shipped by train to Holmur station on Little Otter. The family arrived at the Elliott House and purchased the rest of their food supplies from Harold Hill. Harold would take them up to the island in The Bluebird. Of course, there was no running water or electricity. Today, they enjoy such luxuries as a propane refrigerator and a telephone, but still no running water or hydro!

With few cottages on the lake, the Dickson's got to know their fellow islanders, the Holtby's on Bluebell Is., the McMurtry's on Sentinel Is. and the Nicholson's on Round Is. Shirley remembers getting all dressed up with her sister, complete with bows in their hair, to attend a tea party at Grace Holtby's cottage on Bluebell. Upon arriving, the island was lit up with coloured lights. With only oil lamps and candles, Shirley doesn't know how they accomplished this, but as a child, these things were of little concern.

Around 1943, Septimus' daughter, Eva and her husband, Harry Woodcroft, purchased an island of their own nearby and called it 'Woodcroft Is.' (next to Rusholme Is.). They had two children, Russ and Eleanor.

Upon Harold Dickson's death in 1981, Fair Island was left to his daughters, Catherine Langdon & Shirley Bradbury. It remains in the family to this day.



Eva & Harry's Honeymoon



'Pinecrest Villa'