

FROM THE DESK OF

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DATE

REAL ESTATE BROKER

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East Troy, Wisconsin

RESORT HOTELS

With the sale of Beulah Island to the Jesuits, a new summer hotel was built by John Porter on the property now comprising Beulah Park, a level plot of ground and a beautiful and extensive sand beach. That was in the year 1887 and was operated up to the autumn of 1895 when it burned down.

Mr. Porter immediately planned and built another hotel, which for those days was a luxurious hostelry accommodating 500 guests. At the time it was the largest frame building of its kind in the southeastern part of the state.

It was U shaped with a receiving court at the rear and had extra wide covered verandas on three sides with a view from the front across spacious lawns and down the lake.

The main building was four stories high with a six story tower in the center.

Nothing was omitted in order to provide for the comfort and convenience of the patrons.

A large steam electric plant furnished electrical power purposes, known in that era, and the trees on the lawns and the waterfront twinkled with colored lights making the one and only gay spot on the lake.

A five piece orchestra <sup>was</sup> hired for the season <sup>and</sup> played <sup>on the veranda</sup> every evening at the "tea Time" <sup>hour</sup> for the promonaders.

On Saturday nights the ballroom echoed to the strains of waltz and two step music.

Bowling alleys were in constant use.

There was a long wide pier extending into the lake, ~~with~~ row boats galore and the inevitable steam launch for excursions along the shores. <sup>the</sup> large bath house, with dressing rooms for the swimmers, and a baseball field to the south of this building, which attracted local teams ~~of great rivalry, if not of~~ ~~professional~~ who were great rivals if not of professional status. There was a livery stable ~~giving~~ which gave "bus service" to and from the depot, and also rigs were available for special hire.

The only telephone in the whole surrounding countryside was located in the hotel, and was strung from Milwaukee, giving much needed contact with the outside world. Messages would be delivered by the steam launch crew on their daily rounds. Four blasts of the whistle meant "come and take it".

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A few facts pertinent to the very early history of Lake Beulah Area:-

Who can think of primitive Lake Beulah and the activities of the time without including the names of Nicholas McGraw and John Porter, the hotel operators of the East Shore?

The John McGraw family arrived in Wisconsin in 1854 by ox drawn covered wagons and settled on the shore of the lake, where they built a tiny log cabin. Mr. McGraw hunted, trapped and farmed to make a living. Of his family of six children, only two remained for many years on Lake Beulah. Nicholas, who built the hotel which was conducted by the family for some 40 years, and Mary McGraw, who became the wife of John Porter, famous for his fine hotel which housed Chicago and Milwaukee guests for many years.

The first postoffice of Lake Beulah area was located near the Stewart farm home, the farm now owned by the Richard Swendsons.

The first postmaster was Mr. John F. Potter, the same Mr. Potter who made his name famous in the halls of Congress and for whom Potters Lake was named.

The Stewart farm, approximately an acre of land, was given for use of the district school, which still bears the name of the donor. This was the second school built in the area, as the little log building erected in 1840 on the opposite side of the road was destroyed by fire.

The second school, built in 1865-66, a small frame building was used until 1940, when a new brick building was constructed.

The early post office and schools were, quite naturally, built near the "Expressway" of those days, - the Old Army Trail.

The trail in its total length led from Ft. Dearborn (Chicago) to Ft. Howard (Green Bay). Over this trail Indians, soldiers, and later the oxen wagons of the settlers traveled.

Some old, old residents of that period related colorful stories of the ox team and stage coach era over the Army Trail between East Troy and Mukwonago. An inn or stopping place for stage coaches was not far north of Stewart School. This activity caused much interest and excitement to the younger people of those days.

Mrs. Ella Depuy Randolph, whose life span extended more than a century, was a most alert, active and interesting woman. In her youth she lived on the shores of Lake Beulah, on the property now known as the Shepard Farm.

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She recalled many interesting incidents of her early life and experiences as a pupil in the first Stewart School. There were frequent and unexpected visits of Pottawatomi Indians to the school - not hostile but inquisitive visitors. They often made calls at her home, usually looking and asking for gifts of food and clothing.

Mrs. Randolph well remembered a visit to a camp of Indians at Army Lake, where a meal was being prepared, which they very cordially offered to share stewed muskrat!

The first Congregational Church meeting ever held in East Troy was held at the DePuy Farm, the childhood home of Mrs. Randolph.

Courtesy of Mrs. H. C. Cole  
Route 1  
East Troy, Wisconsin

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The Stewart farm, approximately an acre of land, was given for the district school, which still bears the name of the school. There was the second school built in the area, as the little building erected in 1840 on the opposite side of the road was destroyed by fire.

The second school, built in 1851-52, a small frame building was used until 1860, when a new brick building was constructed.

The early post office and school were, quite naturally, built near the "expressway" of those days, - the old Army Trail.

The trail in its total length ran from Ft. Dearborn (Chicago) to Ft. Howard (Green Bay). Over this trail Indians, soldiers, and later the oxen wagons of the settlers traveled.

Some old, old residents of that period related colorful stories of the ox team and stage coach era over the Army Trail between East Troy and Mukwonago. An inn or stopping place for stage coaches was not far north of Stewart School. This activity caused much interest and excitement to the younger people of those days.

Mrs. Ellis DePuy Randolph, whose life span extended more than a century, was a most alert, active and interesting woman. In her youth she lived on the shores of Lake Koshong, on the property now known as the Shepard Farm.

## LAKE BEULAH

Back in the year of 1837 the district that we now call Lake Beulah and Troy Land was still in a state just emerging from the wilderness and was sparsely settled by struggling farms and a few settlements with growing pains.

Roads were mere wagon ruts, horses were few, oxen somewhat more prevalent and power practically unknown. The horse treadmill did feeble work, and man's ingenuity was called upon to bring progress and development to a land of great promise.

Falling water and wind had to be harnessed for man's use, and the latter was still several years away from general use, due to lack of manufacture. (The windmill).

Water mills, from old world experience, could be, and were thought of, as a power source to be employed for grain grinding and wood sawing.

Water falls had to be created in our gently rolling country side, and lakes furnished the reservoirs by damming them up and using the spillways to turn our water wheels.

In the year of 1838 Dr. James W. Tripp, a retired army surgeon from New York state, with an engineering eye, found three lakes, all rather small, but connected by flowing streams. Each lake was slightly lower than the other; and a fourth lake, not connected but with small natural waterfall at its outlet, could be heightened sufficiently for real power, but lacked the reservoir supply to be worth the effort and expense to build the necessary dam.

Dr. Tripp saw immediately, from an experienced mind, that the combination of water supply of the four lakes would give an unexhaustible supply of water IF they could be connected and their levels raised to a practical and sufficient height to accomplish the desired results.

With organizing contributory work and some money raising, he proceeded with the development of the project, and the result was a large reservoir roughly three miles in length that was dubbed "Crooked Lake" for lack of a better name. For several years previously it had been called Tripp Lake.

The streams connecting the first three lakes wound through a forest of white pines. The stream beds can still be seen in the early spring before the weeds start growing, and early legend has it that before the reservoir formation, pioneering farmers made a shortcut to the settlement of East Troy by driving through the woods and fording the stream.

The fourth lake had to be connected with the other three by digging through a gravel ridge, and it was at this outlet that the mill

Legend has it that they had the first power vessel to float on Lake Beulah, a two decked affair that had probably been an old river boat.

Prior to the building of the Wisconsin Central Railroad, in 1886, from Chicago, a formulation of a rail company of several logging roads combined to deliver lumber to the fast growing big town. Chicagoans had to train up to Milwaukee and then out to the village of Eagle, with a seven mile drive to "Crooked Lake".

At this time of development, due mostly to the completion of the Wisconsin Central Railroad (now the Soo Line) the summer resident influx increased annually with many Chicagoans establishing summer residency.

Milwaukeeans had to drive to the lake by horse drawn rigs, 30 miles or more. The two railroad stations, Lake Beulah and Mukwonago were about five miles distant from the shore of this beautiful body of water.

This "Crooked Lake", as rumor has it, was renamed "Beulah Lake" by the Jesuits, and the settling on its shores by summer residents called for recreational activities of various kinds. In about the year of 1894 a group of sailing enthusiasts formed, and obtained a charter for, a yacht club named the Lake Beulah Yacht Club. The charter is still in force to this day. Not only were races scheduled, but card parties and lawn and dancing affairs were very much in vogue, being held at various homes donated for the day by the owners.

The acreage of the various owners was often quite extensive as land was cheap and water frontage sold at \$100.00 per acre.

By today's comparison, life was primitive. Roads were gravel ruts, and the horse was the only mode of travel with the exception of pedestrianism.

The easiest and quickest way to contact neighbor residents was by boat. Canoes and rowboats were prevalent.

Four steamboats constituted the power fleet from an immense (for those days) 35 footer, owned by Hately, down to a 25 footer owned by the Smiths.

Naptha launches were next in popularity, following the steam jobs, as they could be underway in a fifth the time of a steam propelled boat.

Internal combustion engines soon made these obsolete, and today we all know what the modern power craft can do.

The sailing craft were many and varied with anything and everything from home made sailing canoes to beautiful 26 foot sloops.

Certainly much has changed to make lake living more comfortable in the seventy-five years that have passed, and few are the original homes that remain from that era; yet, although the new face of Beulah makes the old shores hard to recognize, the same Yacht club burgee flies over the same waters, and the same love of sailing and same spirit of friendliness still prevails.

We are indeed fortunate to be a part of that great tradition.

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