

The Story of Our Lake

Lake Kashwakamak, or Long Lake, is one of several lakes in the upper watershed of the Mississippi River. This area is part of the southern extension of the Canadian Shield and was considered very rugged and remote.

The Mississippi River and its watershed were well known by the native peoples from the earliest times. They travelled the area hunting, trapping and fishing. The Iroquois or the Algonquin held the area at different times, but latterly the Algonquin were dominant. The Mississippi also brought the French fur traders to the upper reaches of the watershed in the early 18th century. Apart from a few trappers' cabins, the region was relatively untouched until the 1800's.

Lumbering in the Area

The British had considered this region to be total wilderness, as it was 90% forested. Their military started surveying for lumbering potential in the 1830's. The logging of the huge pines began in the 1850's. These pines were estimated to be about 400 years old, with a diameter of a metre or more. All the timber was squared to at least 30cm (12 inches) before being hauled out to the river or lake. This left behind a lot of waste, which fuelled many local brush fires throughout the area.

The lumber companies built logging camps in the centre of the area they were going to cut. Logging required a large number of men, with horses and equipment. Crosscut saws and axes were used to fell the trees. Drivers with teams of horses or oxen hauled the logs out. In winter, the logs were "skidded" out to the river or lake to await the "spring drive."

The companies built log chutes and dams on the lakes to simplify floating the logs downstream. Steam driven boats were used to pull large booms of logs down the large lakes. Then they were released through the dams to travel downriver.

In "The Oxen and the Axe", Donald Perry, in his history of the Addington Road, reports that in 1860 alone, 23,000 white pine and 2,000 red pine were cut in the Mississippi watershed. The lumber went to Britain for construction and shipbuilding and in later years to New York City and Chicago.

Lumbering returned to the area in the late 1930's. The Sawyer Stoll Company began operations in 1939 and other companies followed. Lumbering enjoyed a boom after the Second World War and the Annual Lumberman's Picnics drew large crowds in the

1940's and early 1950's. By the late 1950's the trees were running out and lumbering again went into a decline.

Settlement/Addington Colonization Road

Lumbering brought the first settlers into the area, but because of its remoteness, few settled permanently until the Addington Colonization Road was built (1864–1867) from Napanee to Denbigh to open up the country for settlement. A.B. Perry was the surveyor and contractor, while his brother Ebenezer was the land agent responsible for encouraging settlement.

The new road was only a rough, rocky, rutted track with corduroy through the swampy areas. Travel was easier in the winter using sleighs on the snow. From Kaladar to Denbigh could take two days! However, five years after the road opened, free land grants had been given to 179 settlers.

The settlers built log cabins to house their families and cleared land for agriculture. The men had winter work in the logging camps and the early farming was fairly successful. They grew wheat, corn and vegetables and were able to provide for themselves with enough to sell to the camps in the winter. They stored crops in root cellars in the winter and many cut blocks of ice from the lake to use in ice houses with sawdust insulation for summer storage.

Oxen were gradually replaced by horses, there were more cattle (which led to cheese factories) and at one time there were large flocks of sheep, which were better suited to the poor thin soil. The settlers knitted the yarn into hats, mitts, socks etc. However, sheep raising gradually died, due to losses from wolves, bears and wild dogs.

From 1870 to 1890 the area enjoyed a prosperity based on lumbering and farming. However, when the pine was gone, the lumbering companies moved on, taking away the only source of income. The settlers found the soil had become depleted and many moved to the cities or out west. Those who stayed were often on patches of better soil.

In these hard times, the sense of community was strong. Churches and schools had been built; general stores, hotels, livery stables, blacksmiths etc. were all established. Many social gatherings were held.

The Addington Road was constantly being repaired and upgraded.

1902 Kaladar to Cloyne 2 to 3 hours (formerly 8 hours)

1920 Kaladar to Cloyne 1 ¾ hours

The remote location, rugged landscape and lack of suitable farming land delayed the improvement in economic conditions that other parts of southern Ontario were experiencing in the early 1900's.

Mining in the Area

In the late 1800's and early 1900's, promising surface deposits of gold and other minerals led the settlers to believe that mining might take over the economy as the logging declined. Although several shafts were sunk, most prospectors were disappointed with the results. The quality of ore obtained was too poor to sustain any long term operation.

Prospecting carried on into the late 1930's, with small mines and shafts being opened up. However, none lived up to expectations and all were abandoned.

There were three main gold mines in the area.

Golden Fleece Mine

After the first discovery of gold near Flinton in 1881, the Golden Fleece Mine (later the Addington Mine) was opened up and was in production in the early 1900's and employed thirty men in its heyday.

Star of the East Mine

This gold mine was in active production from 1903 to 1907, situated on a ridge above Marble Lake. Twelve men were employed and a few thousand dollars' worth of gold obtained.

Ore Chimney Mine

This mine near Northbrook was the largest in the area and was in operation from 1909 – 1936 and at its peak production employed eighty men. Gold was found associated with pyrites. During the 1920's and 30's, mining was of a social and economic advantage to the area. However, in the late 1930's, the owners were unable to obtain financing to carry on and the mine was closed.

Tourism in the Area

Tourism, which drives the current economy of the area, had its early beginnings around the end of the 19th Century.

The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway to Ottawa through Kaladar Station in 1882 made the area accessible to tourists from the cities. Bon Echo Inn was built on the Mazinaw in 1899, and under its second owner, Flora MacDonald Denison, became a center for artists of all kinds. The Inn drew wealthy tourists to the area for twenty years. Most would come by train to Kaladar station, then by coach up the Addington Road to Mazinaw and then completed their journey by boat.

In 1933, Highway 7 was opened as a Provincial Highway and in 1935 Highway 41 was completed incorporating parts of the Addington Road. Hydro reached the area in 1939. Many American tourists were discovering the area for its pristine lakes and superb fishing and hunting. Camps and lodges were built on many of the lakes and the better roads and highways brought in more and more tourists. Bon Echo Provincial Park opened in 1965 on land donated by Merrill Denison.

Many cottagers were brought to the area in the 1960's when the Province sold CrownLand waterfront lots on many of the lakes. So began the Land o' Lakes Tourist Region.

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