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RUSSELL ISLAND PROPERTY OWNERS NEWSLETTER

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Don Pollard, Editor

ISLAND ITEMS

The Association board of directors has decided to reinstate, after a one year lapse, the \$10 ferry subsidy. As before, the subsidy will be an addition to the annual Association dues. This year, however, it will be collected directly by George Webster.

This, in brief, is the reason for the decision:

Like all forms of public transportation, the ferry is carrying fewer passengers each year. Last year George's profit, considering the hours of work involved, was not enough to make the business worthwhile.

And the decline is almost certain to continue. Each year more cottagers have their own boats and, for the most part, use the ferry only in bad weather or other emergencies.

But the theory behind the subsidy is that even those who use the ferry very little should bear some portion of its expense.

Because the service still is of distinct value to them.

Even a cottager with a half dozen boats would still need the ferry for such things as workmen and servants coming to the Island, heavy deliveries, unexpected guests and a dozen other contingencies.

Such very important considerations as medical service, police protection and fire protection are involved in the maintaining of adequate ferry service.

Not to mention mail service.

Any cottager who feels he "doesn't need the ferry" and that "it means nothing" to him, should consider what the effect would be on the value of his Island property if suddenly the service ended.

As it well might sometime in the future if the problem is not recognized and met.

In the past the subsidy plan was accepted without protest and the directors are confident that Islanders now will recognize the need for its reinstatement.

In fact they even suggest that cottagers who feel like paying more than the stipulated \$10 are welcome to do so!

There is so little fire protection on the Island that Aubey Glancy, our unofficial fire marshall, thinks we should know a lot more than we do about what protection is available.

There are now two pumping engines standing by, one in the red shed back of the Pop Stand and the other in the Glancy back yard at the head of the island.

The pumpers are on carts that can be hauled by truck or by hand and each carries 500 feet of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch hose capable of throwing a 50 foot stream. Coupled, to give a length of 1,000 feet, they should stretch from the river to practically any cottage on the island.

"The pumping engines are always fueled and a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon can of gas is kept with each--so long as no thoughtless arsonist steals it, as has happened in the past," Aubey said. "If a fire breaks out when some men are around who know how to operate the pumpers we aren't in too bad shape. But very few cottagers have bothered to find out how they work.

"There's a little trick in knowing how long to run the engine to bring up the suction before releasing the valve to open the hose line."

Aubey says he will be glad to give instruction to any interested person at any time. If he can arouse enough interest he will hold a class on the subject.

In addition to the pumpers, 30-pound, dry-chemical hand fire extinguishers have been placed at seven locations.

"At each location the extinguishers are hung on the outside of sheds where they are always available," Aubey said. "They have carrying handles and there are simple directions for use printed on the tanks. If each Islander knew the location of the extinguisher nearest to his cottage it would be fine."

The hand extinguishers are located as follows:

At the aforementioned red shed back of the Pop Stand and on sheds at the cottages of the following:

Aubey Glancey, Bob Fleischer, Herb Path, Herman Hamel, Gordon Laramie and Andy Pipor.

Last spring the pumpers were used to extinguish a fire in the George Marsh backyard which had ignited the wood pile. They had been used previously on fires in the O'Brien cottage yard and the string of boathouses back of the Art Ternes cottage.

In each case they helped avert what might have been a serious situation.

More of Mrs. George Brosn's recollections of the Island early days:

Islanders still grumble about the difficulties of getting to and from their autoless Eden but their problems are nothing compared to those the pioneers faced forty to fifty years ago.

In the beginning there were three ways to travel from Detroit to Algonac--by auto, by interurban and by excursion steamer.

The auto trip was nothing to brag about. The present Dyke road, between Fair Haven and Pearl Beach, did not exist and the motor route followed narrow, gravelled country roads winding through the Starville area.

The interurban system ran a convenient branch line via New Baltimore around Anchor Bay but it was on the decline, with the advent of the auto, and evaporated rapidly into nothingness.

Likewise the lake steamer service, which at one time had been almost as convenient as it was pleasant, fell off rapidly and soon was gone altogether.

This was too bad because for many years previously the Tashmoo, Wanketa and Owana had passed the island daily on their trips between Detroit and Fort Huron. Virtually all the transportation of Heavy goods to the Island in the early days was by those steamers.

The old Big Dock, which stood at the site of the present picnic grounds until after World War II, was large enough to accomodate the largest of the passing ships. Island kids enjoyed jumping into the whirlpool churned up by their propellers as they pulled away.

After the demise of the big ships and the interurban cars, the commuter arriving at Algonac, by auto still faced a big hurdle in getting to the Island.

"The only ferry service at the time was provided by the Walpole Island ferry," Mrs. Brown said. "We called it the Indian Ferry. As it was an international ferry Russell Island passengers had to go from Algonac to Walpole and clear customs before getting to their destination. Returning, they had to repeat the process, going to Walpole before proceeding to Algonac.

"Also the service was extremely unreliable. The ferries were supposed to stop at our Island on call but very often they passed us by, leaving our people stranded on the dock.

"Our own girls depended on it to get to school in Algonac. Many a day they went down to the dock at seven in the morning and it never came for them.

"When cottagers got stranded either George or I would have to run them over to Algonac in our boat, and that is how the Island ferry service began. In 1929 George bought a boat--the same "Island Queen"

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that remained in service until the late 40's--and began to operate his own service."

In the beginning the ferry fare was ten cents. The principal operators, prior to George Webster, have been Percy Genaw, and the late Franklin R. (Smitty) Smith, both nephews of Mrs. Brown, and Russ McCartney.

During the early days, when the Brown family was living on the Island year-around, their winter transportation problem was even more difficult, of course.

"During World War I there was food rationing and we couldn't stock food as we would have liked, making it necessary for George to go to Algonac rather frequently through the winter," Mrs. Brown said. "It was always a problem. Either the ice was flowing or it was frozen in big jagged piles with open water between.

"George had a duck boat and he would start walking on the ice pulling or pushing the boat. When he came to open water he would get in the boat and row to the next solid ice. I always took the girls down to the shore on these occasions and we would stand there, waiting, until he was safely back.

Fred Anderson, who died Oct. 28 and was buried in Roseland Park Cemetery Nov. 1, had been a Russell Islander for more than 40 years.

He and Frieda built what is now the Flajstek cottage and occupied it in the 20's and 30's. They had occupied the present Anderson cottage at the head of the island for the last 24 years.

"During the depression, when we had to sell our first cottage and leave the island for two years," Frieda said, "Fred would cry every Friday night--he was so lonesome for the place. The last words he said in the hospital were to remind us to get the leaves at the cottage raked."

The second death of the winter was that of Betty Heick on Dec. 8.

Eli and Betty had completely rebuilt the interior of their cottage only last year and Betty was looking forward to settling the new rooms in the spring.

Eli and the children say the cottage will remain in the family. The Children, Rob, Steve, and Sandra, spent their growing-up- summers on the Island and in that sense are Island oldtimers.

Steve completed his military service only a month after his mother's death--another event that Betty had been anticipating eagerly.

The third death was that of Alma Sharp who died suddenly Jan 31, at her home, 633 Neff, Grosse Pointe.

Dr. Elwood A. Sharp and Alma built the log cottage now occupied by the Vallasis shortly after World War II. A few years ago, when it began to seem "too big", they built the small riverfront cottage with the tiny second floor on the riverfront between the LaJoie and Suppus cottages.

This cottage is sufficiently unique that the Detroit Free Press once carried a picture of it.

Alma backed up "Doc" during his long and distinguished career with Parke Davis & Co.

The fourth death of the year was that of "Pat" Degrieck, who entered the hospital on Oct. 21, 1966, and had 3 major operations.

Returned home Jan 28, 1967 and died at home on Feb. 14. Pat and her husband Jack own the yellow brick cottage that a lot of us, use to guide into the ferry canal, they also are long time residents of Russell Island.

The Association once again extends its heartfelt sympathy to all members of the respective families of the above deceased.

All the recent Island festivities have been so well arranged and managed that it becomes monotonous saying the same thing of each.

Those who missed the Feb. 4 get-together at Cambridge Hall in Detroit missed one of the better ones.

Credit for the success goes to Chris Harris, general chairman, assisted by Lou Schuck, George Havel and Harry Krieh. And, of course, their respective wives.

The flowers--the big table arrangement and the individual corsages--were compliments of Richard Dinan, florist. Address, 33316 Grand River, Farmington, Michigan. Phone GR 6-7350

The Andy Pippers and Norm Schultes have started what may become another winter colony of Islanders. Both have moved into mobile houses in Joy Villa, a trailer park off Joy Road between Gratiot and the freeway. Very convenient to Algonac!

To the person who took the wrong beige raincoat from the Pop Stand on a rainy evening last Labor Day weekend;

Jim Scott wants to say that the coat was his and he would like it back.