

GOOD SPIRIT LAKE

From pioneers to the present day, Canora Beach has a long history

Canora has a fine beach on Devil's Lake.

The lake is a veritable paradise for campers, both young and old. There are scores of suitable places for tenting, both at the creek and on farmer Oldroyd's place.

The shores of the place are nicely wooded and the beach is a long stretch of beautiful white sand. Devil's Lake is also full of pike and pickerel which make delightful eating.

—From "A History of Canora and District" by J.F. Barschel, 1960.

From the time settlers first made the trek north from Yorkton into the virgin territory just being opened, Good Spirit Lake has been a recreation magnet. With its wide sandy beaches, gently sloping shoreline and miles of sand dunes, it offers a myriad of activities for those in the mood for rest and relaxation.

The area around the lake was first settled by ranchers in 1887, many of whom had moved on by the turn of the century when farmers were establishing the first homesteads.

Of the two families that stayed, the family of Albert Oldroyd became well known for allowing camping on their section of the lake. In the area since 1892, Oldroyd left behind diaries, letters and business papers that give a fascinating glimpse into life in the area in those exciting days of development and expansion.

Albert Oldroyd left England for Canada on June 24 and arrived in Port Levis, Que. on July 5, 1891. He had spent the year before exploring possibilities in the new world, and had decided this was the place for him.

He travelled to Canada with 12 friends, none of whom ventured farther west than Toronto. In his diary, he noted the names of the group, the daily expenses he incurred, and his thoughts about

his experiences.

He worked for about a year before he ended up in Yorkton, and enquired about his friend, Sam Green. It turned out he was working as a hired hand on a ranch owned by a man named Miller, north of Yorkton.

After reuniting with his friend, Oldroyd began working for William Dunlop on Sept. 12, 1892.

By June 5, 1893, Oldroyd and Green were partners, and by 1894, Dunlop had opened the first farm machinery dealership, representing Massey-Harris, in Yorkton. Dunlop later became the Mayor of Yorkton and in 1904 was the last M.L.A. elected for Yorkton in the N.W.T.

Correspondence still exists from sports clubs in the area, inviting Oldroyd to play several sports, including soccer and cricket. A photo considered to be of the earliest sports team in Yorkton shows Oldroyd with the North West Football team in 1897.

Oldroyd had left a young woman behind in England, whom he had been courting, and in 1897 he went back to England to marry her. Lily Priscilla Heaton Oldroyd travelled to the new land with her new husband, and they had two children, Annie, born in 1899 and Jack, born in 1902.

When settlement in this area began in 1902, all of the ranchers except the Oldroyds and Pattersons moved away. Later still, the Oldroyd farm became the camping place for people from Canora and Buchanan.

Month by month it is becoming more and more popular as a pleasure resort for visitors. Some Sundays more than 150 people from Canora and district enjoy a day's outing.

—From "A History of Canora and District" by J.F. Barschel, 1960.

People had been camping on Oldroyd's property starting in

1896. By 1904, the Oldroyds had a little store tacked on to their house. By 1906, the first cabins were being constructed, and by 1925 a hall had been erected and many local people went to dances there. The dances were held on Wednesdays as not to interfere with going to church on Sunday. After Canora was established, many businessmen moved their families out to the lake for the summer months and commuted into town for work. Cabins rented for 50 cents a day and \$15 for the season.

The first phone was installed in 1919.

Visitors from town to the Devil's Lake fishing and camping resort this week were: E. Herman Barschel, Jno. McCorrison, A. Kennedy, H. S. McKee, L. D. Barry, Walter Limprecht, D. Keast, and Melville Malcolm.

—From the Canora Advertiser, June 18, 1908, vol. 1 issue 6.

Darryl Deighton, who now manages the resort, said his grandmother, Doris Potter, a niece of Lily Oldroyd, first came to the lake to clean the cabins and dance pavilion in the 1920s. One of the first bands to play at the dance pavilion was the Barschel Brothers Orchestra.

During the years 1906 to 1925, cottages and a dance pavilion were built there. Some Sundays hundreds of people came there to bathe, fish, play games or spend their time otherwise."

—From "A History of Canora and District" by J.F. Barschel, 1960.

During the 1930s and the 1940s, the popularity of the lake as a tourist destination waned. Cabins were abandoned. The crowds went north to Crystal Lake, following the highway.

By 1951, the Oldroyd family

had declined to Jack, who lived at the lake alone until 1972.

A few people still came, mostly to fish. George Tiechko operated a boat rental business at Canora Beach from 1959 to 1971. The whole family was entertained, with both swimming and fishing possible at the same place. Some days Lewchuk's Midway was brought out from Canora to set up rides at the beach.

Doris Potter married Harold Deighton, and had three sons, Doug, Ken and Ron. The family moved into Canora in 1944. Her brother, Wilfred, had come to the area looking for work, previously married and settled there.

In 1975, Jack Oldroyd asked his only family in the area, Ron Deighton, for help with the new wave of popularity the beach was experiencing. Ron took over leasing cabins and campsites for Jack, who moved in with the Deighton family for the last seven years of his life. He died in 1982.

Darryl Deighton took over as manager in 1982 and continues the modernization of the resort.

He subdivided the property and began selling lots, now numbering 140 in total. Canora Beach also operates one of Saskatchewan's largest private campgrounds.

"The lake is a beautiful expanse of water, stretching nine miles in length by about three miles in breadth. It is located 12 miles southwest of Canora.

"The drive to the lake is very pleasant and, for the coming year, the roads should be in first class shape for travelling. A drive from Canora to the lake is a real pleasure and recreation, especially in fall when grain in the field is ripe, when ducks rise in large flocks from the sloughs and the chickens and partridge are plentiful on the land."

—From "A History of Canora and District" by J.F. Barschel, 1960.



ALBERT OLDROYD, 1891: Albert Oldroyd sat for this photo in 1891 during his first visit to Canada. He later married Lilly Heaton in England and settled on land adjacent to Good Spirit Lake.



IN FRONT OF HALL: Posing in front of the dance pavilion at Good Spirit Lake, in this photo taken in 1928 or 1929, from left, were: Charlie Hill, Mrs. Hill (behind car), unknown (in white skirt), Granny Dobson, Flo Hill, and two unknown at right. The photo belonged to relatives of the Deightons who now manage Canora Beach.



DANCE PAVILION, 1928/29: The dance pavilion at Good Spirit Lake was built in 1925 and was the scene of dances for many years. It was moved in 1953. The two figures in the photo were Bill and Albert Nettleton.



GOOD SPIRIT LAKE, 1918: Fishing on Good Spirit Lake in 1918, from left, were Paul Berndt and his daughter, Rose, Paul Barschel and his twin sons, Herman and Ernest.