

# What's In A Name?

## - An Informal Look at Lake of Bays

by Michael Woodside, Braemore Pond Studio

### PLACE NAMES

Water quietly laps over some rounded emerging rock. The light thickens, wavelets roll in velvet greens and blues, and tiny bass flit through dark preCambrian crevices. Good things of day droop and drowse in the late afternoon air. This is a magic place, yet one we all know .. What is it called? Is it called anything? ... a little sparkling jewel in the great cobalt tiara we call the Lake of Bays. That is all.... nothing more and nothing less.

Points and bays, streams and islands - they all have names, but many we don't know, for they may not be in the part of Lake of Bays most familiar and dear to us. Some are ancient, and some are forgotten, and some are not even listed on our official reference hanging framed or taped to a dusty wall in the family cottage, the big, brown, friendly map of the Lake of Bays originally created back in 1966. Some names change with owners, and some because the land itself changes. Then the attitudes toward these places change, but two factors always remain constant - Lake of Bays place names change depending upon what the place does TO us or FOR us! The following is an attempt to recapture many of the names forgotten or changed, set aside or ignored, and if possible, an attempt to brighten up their shadowy origins. A map has been provided for easy reference to these sometimes obscure places, even though there is no intent in usurping the position of the "big, brown friendly". These names may have escaped the notice of cartographers and bureaucrats, but it is hoped not our interest!

### NAMES OF DESCRIPTION

"I think it looks like an alligator, no perhaps a camel!" Many of the place names in the Lake of Bays are based on simple description or association. Does Rabbit Bay really have lots of rabbits? Is Rat Bay infested with rodents? We're really not sure, but Camel Heights with its two mounded hills rising from the mountain greenery on Trading Bay seem appropriate, Garnet Beach north of Bona Vista is really quite red. in sand colour, Crown Island looks like a crown, and Haystack Island really does look like a haystack, and may have been partially responsible for the naming of Haystack Bay called Three Mile Bay at the turn of the century. In fact, at the turn of the century, many, places sounded different including Ten Mile Bay called Ten Mile Creek Bay because of the long creek that flows into the bay from Gosling Lake on the east side. Just south of Chevalier Point, a high jagged cliff or promontory rises up and appears from several vantage points, as an Indian chief's profile, a sort of Lake of Bays version of The Sleeping Giant from Lake Superior. This was often pointed out to visitors coming down the bay on their way to Dorset by steamer in the old days.

Dorset itself has not always been Dorset. Its first name was Cedar Narrows, so named because the cedar lined little channel was narrow enough to permit squirrels to jump from one side to the other during their daily shopping excursions. When the dam was completed at Baysville, the water rose to such an extent that the original little wooden bridge had to be



*Peanut Island - off the tip of Pleasant Point*

replaced by a wider arched variety still present today. Zachary Cole, an early pioneer, had the name changed to Colebridge for a while until it was discovered that there already was an Ontario Colebridge, and the name would have to change if the residents desired a post office. The local inhabitants then decided upon Dorset after the county of Dorset in England. In England, there is a town of Sherbourne in the county of Dorset, but on the Lake of Bays, there is a town of Dorset in the county of Sherbourne! Go figure. At one time, Dorset boasted its own pharmacy across the road and up the hill from today's Greenaway Gallery, and hence the name Pill Hill. Little Trading Bay, it is said, used to be called Johnnycake Bay because the original farming family had a difficult time of it with the meagre Muskoka soil and were only able to grow corn which no doubt formed a major staple in their diet.

Living a precarious homestead existence shows up in place names in other Lake of Bays locations where Richer Island at the mouth of Dwight or North Bay was at one time referred to as Poverty Island and was probably joined to Poverty Point. Some time into the twentieth century, the name was made more inviting, and Poverty became Huckleberry Island and Point. To this day, there are some who still use this name although Huckleberry Island and Point are now separated by a shallow, unnavigable channel. The next "island" down the lake on the east side is usually called Sea Gull Rocks, but as late as the early 1960s, the "rocks" boasted one solitary tree, hence the name One Tree Island. The tree was eventually done in by ice or the gulls or both, but there seems to be evidence that another tree is struggling for existence in a somewhat unsympathetic locale. Perhaps, too, the name may return and once again

make a claim. On the east side of the lake, across from One Tree Island, we find Blueberry Point, named by the local residents who found blueberries in great abundance in the 1950s before it grew over. Below this point lies a stretch of land known to many older local residents as the Gold Coast because of the relative "substantial" quality of the cottages compared to those on the west shore across the lake at Bona Vista. As more cottages were developed on both east and west shores in the 1960s and 1970s, the designation lost much of its significance as most new cottages constructed were larger and more luxurious. It was once humourously suggested that since Bona Vista had been originally settled by United Church clergy members that it ought to be called "The Holy Coast"! North of Bona Vista lie Dreamhaven and Garnet Beach. Dreamhaven was

very sandy and open in the 1950s, and quite noticeable from the lake, but has now become considerably grown over. Dreamhaven Creek still flows under the road and into the lake just south of Dreamhaven, and in the "old days", the spring at its mouth provided the only source of fresh water for the Bona Vista residents. In the early part of the century, oxen would be "swum over" from Dreamhaven to Point Ideal to help plow the fields for the resort. Before that, Point Ideal was referred to as Pleasant Point, and Point Ideal Bay was called Horseshoe Bay because of its shape. Just off the tip of Point Ideal in the main channel lies Peanut Island, but up until the 1950s was usually referred to as Point Ideal Island or just "the little island". The name "peanut" may have been bestowed upon the island in the mid 1950s by some of the younger guests of Point Ideal who may have camped there from time to time

while supping no doubt on peanuts!

There are many other place names on the Lake of Bays that are based on simple description and would be too numerous to mention here. It would be safe to assume that there are several Picnic Points, Sunset Rocks or Points, and a few Echo Bays scattered about the bays and shores. Some spots are even named because of natural calamities such as Burnt Island and Fire Island (a.k.a. Gardiner Island in Haystack Bay), and some are named because of small but significant botanical details like Rosebank Lodge in the Baysville narrows or Norway Point so named because of the apparent profusion of local Norway pines. Some places are named even after cultural references (songs, poems, cartoons). For instance, two small islands on the south side of Dwight Bay are referred to locally as Tom and Jerry Islands, whereas in another part of the lake, a group of islands near Glenmount was once referred to as Faith, Hope, and Charity Islands. The largest, now owned by Jim O'Neill and referred to as O'Neill's Island, was previously known as Poyntz' Island, while on the "big, brown, friendly", it's labelled Mariebianca Island, and is flanked by Champion and Castle Islands, the latter having on it a miniature castle built of stones. Prior to the installation of the dam at Baysville, the water level was four feet lower than today, creating a totally different configuration. Champion and Castle Islands formed one island and (another) Gull Rocks formed a second. These two, along with Mariebianca Island, formed Faith, Hope, and Charity Islands!

#### NAMES OF ASSOCIATION

Some names in the Lake of Bays are created through association with

particular activities. A small inlet between Richer Island and the Oxtongue River mouth on the south side of Dwight Bay is known locally as Fiddler John's Bay, no doubt because a guy called John liked to fiddle there! Paint Lake, also known as St. Mary's Lake, was apparently given the name because of the early indigenous populations, who applied the local bluish clay to their faces for ceremonial reasons. On the map, Harper Island in Trading Bay, the little one down from Reuben Island, is also known as Honeymoon Island, although the origins of its local name are unknown to us, unless one were to speculate on its cosy and diminutive size. Fairview Island, near Clovelly Point, was at one time locally called Christian Island because of the religious retreat known as Campus in the Woods that flourished there at least until the 1950s. Vimy Ridge Island, a small island in the top end of Haystack Bay may harken back to World War I, but in a humourous way, really refers to the bitter and long standing argument of ownership between the Robson and Monroe families. The name Lake of Bays itself dates from 1854 and was named by Alexander Murray, a provincial geologist. Prior to that, it was Lake Baptiste (1826), Lake of the Forks (1837), and Trading Lake, so named because it was used as a trading centre by the Yellowhead Rama people, a southern Ojibway group, that traded with other native populations to the south and east.

#### NAMES OF RESIDENCE

By far, the most numerous of place names in the area are based on early residents of the lake. Reuben Millichamp, after whom Reuben and Millichamp Islands are named, sold his island between Montgomery's



Point and Point Ideal, to Reverend Pilcher from Australia who camped there for many summers until finally selling it to Bert Boothby in 1916. The Boothby family still owns the uninhabited island as well as Picnic Point and (an) Echo Bay just to the east. Although listed as Millichamp Island on most maps, the local residents still refer to it as Pilcher's Island. Across the lake, Needier's Point, originally known as Robindale, still has the farmhouse in which Professor Needier, a one time professor of German at the University of Toronto, summered with his daughter Mary for many years without a scrap of electricity or power of any kind until his death in the 1960s. The Needlers owned much of the shoreline to the north which remained undeveloped for decades. Many of the bays and points have the names of the original residents; Wards'

Point at the end of Garnet Beach north of Bona Vista, Cockshutts' Bay to the north of Blueberry Point, settled in the early 1900s by the Cockshutt family of Brantford, Macdonalds' Bay, south of Britannia and north of Garnet Beach, Osbornes' Point at the entrance to Portage Bay and now a heritage site, Montgomerys' Point (with the gazebo) just across from the western tip of Bigwin Island. Wahawin, a heritage site on Black Point was thought to be named after an Indian princess – not so! It was built in 1902 by Thomas Brown of Brown's Brae, and named after WALTER, HARRY, and WINthrop Green, the sons of owner W.J. Greene who sold the cottage in 1950 to Roy Miller whose daughter Ruth owns Wahawin today.

Bastedo Creek, in the Baysville narrows, was named after Burlie and Marie Bastedo, who ran a boarding

house, Burlmarie, for lumbermen in the early days, and for which we receive the name Burlmarie Road. Other early boarding houses in the Baysville area were Rosebank, now a private cottage on Mary Roberts Road, Idylwyld, (now still in operation) built in 1901 and featuring a swing bridge across the river for transporting grazing cows, and Jelly's Hotel or the Jelly House, later called Rowe's Hotel, but these days known as Lincoln Lodge or The Rock.

Many of these place names are now gone but not completely forgotten. They seem like ghosts whispering their names as you glide past in a canoe. They are part of the velvet greens and blues, the dark preCambrian crevices, and the broken, submerged rocks. They are still there lying in wait for us in the shadows, and in an instant,

reminding us of our heritage, the past and present of the great blue tiara called the Lake of Bays...  
 "We reached a long narrow lake stretching away southward for several miles. This with its surrounding shores is the finest in appearance with which we met. This we termed Lake of Bays."

*Alexander Murray 1837*

Special thanks to the following for their informative contributions without which this article could not have been written: Ross Boothby, Betty Campbell, Harvey van Clieaf, Ruth Dolphin, David Johnstone, Anne Mathews, Marlene Parker, Brad Robinson, Mary Warner - Smith, Vicki Weaver, and a host of Baysers young and old.



*Wahawin  
Present  
Day*



*Wahawin  
(1908)*

