

“A View From 7th Avenue” by, James Goeltz, 1988

(Earl Louis Goeltz’ recollections as told to his son James.)

CHAPTER 7 DIAMOND LAKE

Back in 1924 Grandpa acquired some land on Diamond Lake and we decided to build a cabin for Grandma. That was quite a task in those days, getting the material out here, because Bibon swamp was some hole, yes, it was. Especially in the rainy season and this particular year, they decided to work on it. So we used an old car, the old touring car which was a Saxon, a six cylinder. It had power and was strongly built because it was built out of heavy material in those days.

We had to start out early in the morning to get to Bibon swamp because the crew was opening up and the crew would say, “Go ahead, but we’ll help you through.” But more than once I thought it was going to tear the bottom from underneath us because it was heavily loaded with lumber, timber, roofing, and everything else. In those days the old road came straight out from Grandview about a mile and straightened this was through the hills. It had three dips in it. You can imagine driving out those roads in those days with all that lumber because those roads were just a snake trail, you might say. When you got to the bottom of a hill you’d unload the truck, carry the materials up the hill, bring up the car, load it again, and you’d do it the next time. When we got to the lake, which was practically all a clearing back up in here, we’d drive through kind of a broken trail and drive up on a hill. That’s how we got all the material over to Grandma’s place. It was all by hand. Her place was built first, in 1924.

Hjalmer Sandstrom and Doc Thorsen helped us build it. Good chums in those days, especially hunting through this area. We started that about September sometime. No, it was June, as I started mine in September. All the lumber we had was what Dad cut on the 40 acres he had on the German settlement, and it was all hardwood. And green. You can imagine trying to drive nails and spikes in that hardwood, why we zinged more off in the lake than we put in the lumber. Chuckle. Well, it wasn’t perfectly dry, that’s a fact. We finally got it up pretty much the way it looks today – not much change in it, though Sis (Aunt Letty) did much changes to it.

Well, we used ordinary roofing paper, not the kind you have today which is sealed. The first thing they put down was ordinary tar paper. It had a tendency in warm weather to either shrivel or pull apart. The tar that was in it would run together leaving some sections without protection it needed. Chuckle. We zinged more nails into Diamond Lake because hardwood was something. Bend them, no use trying to pull them out, waste more time doing that so you just hammer them flat. But that’s the way it was in them old days. The old Bush Leaguers kind of stuck together - - sure, you growl at each other and this and that - - but you got along fine, there was 10 or 12 in that organization up there.

“Grandma’s Cabin”, built in 1924.



When I decided to build this one over here that was a different story. We got Otto Huddleston, he was doing quite a bit of house repairing and so forth around this area so he put me onto the lumber yard that was in Cable. The man’s name was Mr. Brandt, a very good fellow. Of course, right away they want your financial statement, whether you’re going to pay for it or not. But Otto, he’d say to them, “He’s got it, yeah, he’ll take good care of you. You won’t have to worry about your money.” As long as he got his so he could go to some bar, was all he was worried about.

I had Otto, Joe Fox and Mr. Hanson there at Trapper’s Lake, and Fox and Hanson were both from Southern Wisconsin. Mr. Hanson was really a carpenter by trade. He was about 67 or 68 at the time. Joe was just a common laborer but Joe could really work. We hauled all the gravel from Junek’s Point over there on Namekagon, he hauled the gravel for me and we used a lot of sand from the lake by just scooping it out and letting it dry off that way to make the cement for the

foundation. It was dug deeper in the back, they had to go down about three or three and a half feet in the back and we filled it all in with hardhead rocks, just like the docks all around there.

This part here is not on foundation but on blocks. It got down around three and a half feet back there and graduated up to two feet up here in this corner. We filled it all in with rocks then cement on top of it. Smoother it off so we could put the plate on so we could put the bolts in to anchor the frame and the house to it.

Those two fellows worked very, very good but Otto, he was just a foreman. I'd come out quite a few times to check and I'd either find him in Grandview in some tavern or find him along the road up here. His car in some ditch and he asleep. And the boys waiting for material. Well, that went on three or four times, being in a saloon I couldn't knock his block off because he was always a good friend. But, that's what you had to contend with. Hanson was the architect of it, he knew what he was doing. Of course, I put a lot of help in it. I hired extra help that year, I hired Eleanor Danz that summer. I hired her for two months to help Nellie out. Jean had the kids to take care of. Building this one here was simple compared to Grandma's place over there. It was something building with that hardwood. That was quite a task putting it all together – altogether it was put together good, hardwood has a tendency to dry rot in time and with all the leakage I thought it would give way but it didn't. The old carpenter from Benoit patched it together the best he could. (I am talking about Grandma's place.)

The deal I had with Haddleston, he got his money but he done very little work. Chuckle. But that's what I had to contend with, if I wanted anything done. Sure, I could have had Amos Kinkel come out or I could have got one of the Moss boys - - and their rate was very reasonable - - but in this area you like to have someone who is close at hand then you have someone there in case you need anything repaired and you have someone to call on.

That was a good-sized cabin, I'd say, not any larger than this. But it had a big sun porch on it like this, and I had it all screened in. It got along that fall, the framework of it all, enclosed and so forth. I had a kitchen stove in it. I didn't have any living room stove in it. I had a lot of lumber in it to make partitions the next year. Had a coupe beds put in it, yes, because we used it in the fall some, hunting purposes and so forth. Mother Margaret and the kids came out but it was all enclosed but not finished inside as I had the material to start on the inside in the spring time.

I had built it in the fall of '26. I came out one day and brought all my Navy equipment, the two sea bags full of all my clothes and all my fishing tackle. That must have been the last part of May or the first part of June, 1927. And my two shotguns, I remember, a .32 Winchester Special and left them here. That weekend Letty came to me and asked if she, Elda and her husband Bill Matthews (and he had a brand new Nash) could spend the weekend at the cabin. That was alright and they came out on a Friday night after Bill got through work in the afternoon. Of course, they had to come out the old road I was telling you about in their brand new car. He hadn't driven it a hundred miles. I suppose he just overworked it coming through there. That Nash was a heavy car. He drove it up and parked right along side the cabin. Well, the old root house here is where

I kept my boat and another raft of some kind and they got that, lit the kerosene lamp on the porch, on the screen porch, and put the lamp on the table. Didn't start any fire in the kitchen stove, it wasn't necessary, I suppose, lit the lamp and set it on the porch table. Then got the boat out to go over to Fox's - - Mrs. Fox's resort over there - - to get some milk, eggs and supplies, for their stay. And of course ice. I suppose they stayed there about an hour, hour and a half, it was a nice evening. When they were coming around the corner by Westgate's the whole cabin was ablaze. Yes. But that's the side that caught fire, the car and the cabin on that side. Must have overheated, I would say. Bill Matthews said he wouldn't swear to it. As far as property damage on it all I had on it was \$600. But in those days you could build quite a shack for \$600. But I had everything in there. I didn't have enough insurance on it. I really didn't have enough material in there to make all the partitions, fix the walls, as in those days, you didn't have to have composition to make them out of white birch to make the wood filling and to stain it and lacquer it. It would have made nice walls of birch and knotty pine but that's how the thing went up in smoke.

Yes, we had a sewing machine in there, used the head of it for a boat anchor for many years. That is about all we ever salvaged out of it. Bed springs. It was the first part of June that happened, I'm sure. It was warm. The road was in terrible shape and he just overworked that machine. When they came along side the cabin - the lamp was still lit and burning but the rest of it was consumed in flames. So it wasn't up there a year. But where I lost out, I didn't have any insurance on my guns, or sea bags, or fishing equipment. Today it's different, when you take out a policy everything in your household is practically included. They don't even mention it anymore, it's all covered. Those days, if you wanted anything like it would be extra.

Back then up on top of the hill was all clear, the logging company had cleared that out, they made a root cellar in which to keep their supplies, had ice on top. I used it as a boat house. I had intentions at one time, Amos Kinkel and I talked about it - - to put a little cabin right on top of it, a one room affair. Then I just decided to build a cabin entirely instead of just doing that. But that's the way it went. Of course, then Weik came along, he came here 1924 or 1925, someplace in there, and I got pretty well acquainted with him, around the store, Ted, Scott Buchanan, a few more, well, then it was Delta days. So I didn't rebuild out here.

A view of the cabin I built on Diamond Lake in 1947-48.
This was taken the winter of 1950.



Lake shore in front of the 1947 cabin.



Great Grandson, Mike Goeltz looking at “Grandma’s cabin” in 2023.

