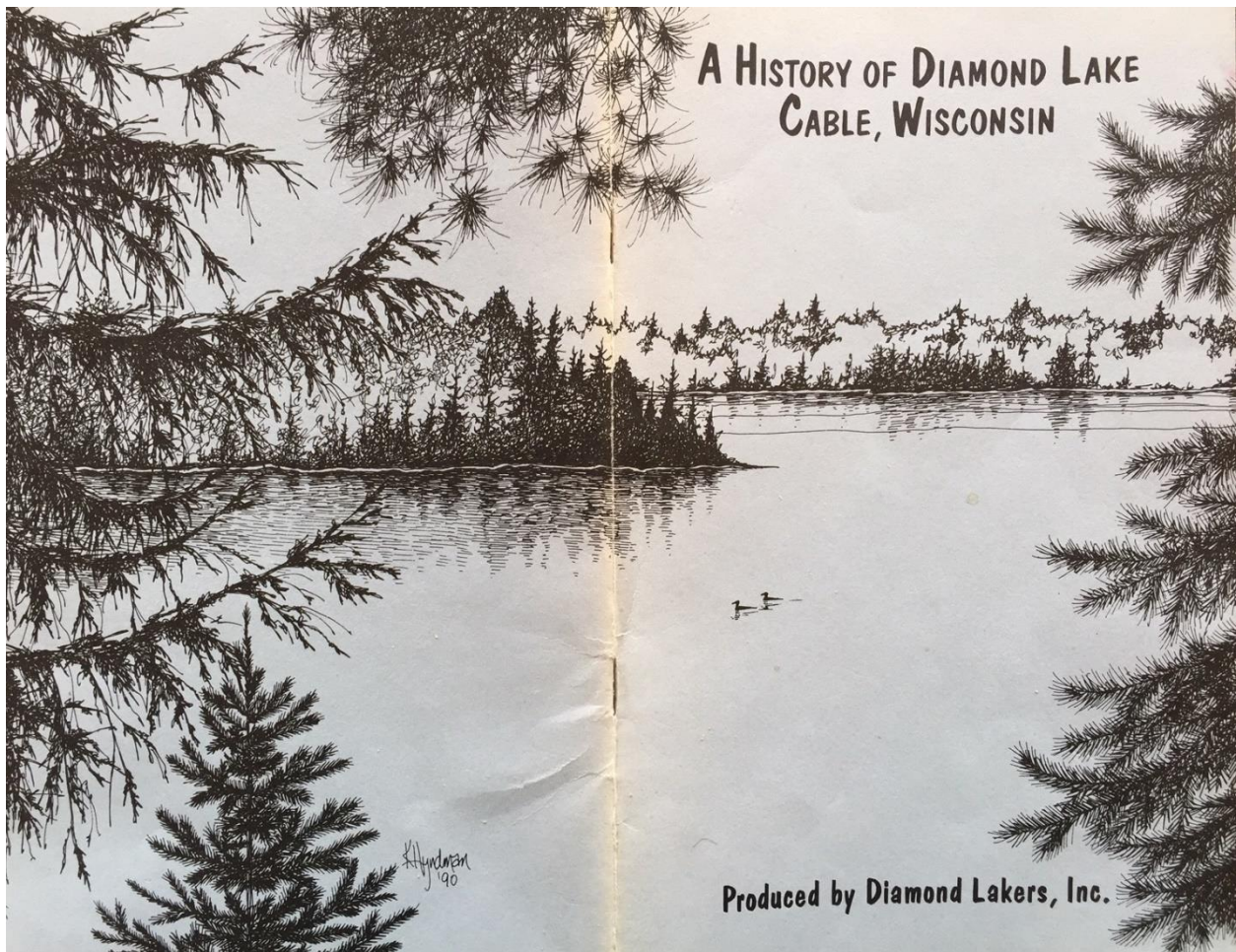


A History of Diamond Lake, Cable Wisconsin

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of Tom Stavron, longtime Diamond Lake resident, Diamond Lakers Founding member and officer. Tom's tapes of interviews with Diamond Lake residents provided the base of information that made this booklet possible.

Special credits are owed to Terry Doonan for his contributions summarizing and editing and Kathy Hyndman for her beautiful cover.

*Diamond Lakers, Inc.
1990*



Over eons, the topography of Diamond Lake must have undergone numerous changes. One can assume that with each glacial period the level and dimensions of the lake would change greatly. By examining contour maps of the area, it would appear that the lake at times was two to three times larger than it is at present and encompassed the present low area to the east and the west and to the south including Crystal Lake (along present Twin Pines Lane) was a peninsula or island.

With this large body of water, 18 Mile Creek would have been a sizable river draining to the north. It was along this river that the first settlers of Diamond Lake arrived.

It is believed that the first human cast his eye on Diamond Lake 2,000 to 2,500 years before Christ. This was a period long before the Roman Empire was established and when nomadic tribes were still roaming Europe. The first visitors were called the Copper Age People and were the ancestors of our present Indian culture. They started their migration from Mongolia, across the Bearing Straits, and over hundreds of years reached all of North America. Part of this migration found its ways into Lake Superior and hence into 18 Mile Creek, then to Diamond Lake, where in 1969 Walter Moore found a copper spearhead while excavating his home. This spearhead has been authenticated by the University of Michigan as belonging to the Copper Age People. The spearhead has recently been presented by Walter to the Cable Museum and is on display there. It is among the oldest-known artifacts ever found in the upper Midwest, and so it is conceivable that from this point of Diamond Lake, a branch of the Copper Age People migrated southward and was the beginning of an Indian culture in North America. This discovery in 1969 was certainly a most historical find.

From the beginning of our history, we can visualize that the area was kept untouched for thousands of years. Perhaps the next visitors were the early French explorers in the 1600's who fanned out from Chequamegon Bay and traveled southward. In 1800 timber cruisers roamed the woods in search of prime stands of white pine, and so we enter into the next phase of Diamond Lake history, and that is the logging.

Logging began on Diamond Lake with a granting of the area to the State of Wisconsin by the Federal Government under the Land Grant Act of 1883. The State then sold the land to the Chicago/St. Paul/Minneapolis & Omaha Railroad, who in turn sold it to various buyers. A plat of 1906 shows Sections 29 and 32, which cover all of Diamond Lake, owned by various individuals and lumber companies. The

north end of the lake was owned in 1906 by the railroad and the United State Government. The west side was owned by the railroad and a Mr. N. A. Power. The southwest side of the lake was owned by the Northern Wisconsin Lumber Company.

It is very difficult to determine when and by whom the actual logging was done, but most of the white pine was cut in this area between 1890 and 1906. Some of Diamond Lake was cut later and some never but because it was owned by individuals or the government. Some of the timber that was cut found its way via sled and logging train from this area to a point near Lake Knotting and then on the Superior Railroad to Grand View, and from Grand View it was shipped to mills at Hayward or other southern Wisconsin mills, such as New Richmond or Rice Lake.

After the white pine was gone, the cut-over land was sold to the American Immigration Company in 1906, who in turn sold it to real estate speculators and to individuals who wished to settle in the area.

This led to the settling of the lakeshore. It is interesting to find that what was probably the first dwelling on the lake was either a homesteader or a squatter who cleared land and built a barn and a dwelling on a site adjoining 18 Mile Creek and where the **Witts** originally built. When an old barn was torn down by Witts in 1922, a newspaper was found between the walls of the barn dated 1890. So we can assume that the area was occupied near that time.

There is not much evidence of any other building activity until **Cash Coburn** established Diamond Lake Lodge on the extreme north end of the lake. This was about 1900. It is believed that Coburn was a timber cruiser for the John S. Owen Lumber Company, and when the logging was completed at the northeast end of the lake, he bought the lumber camp and named the camp Diamond Lake Lodge.

The next building which we have a record of was purchased by **Hale H. Cook** in 1911 from the American Immigration Company. This building was on the present site of the Scotts. Mrs. Florence Cooper, daughter of the Cooks, report that at this time there was another cottage to the north of them owned by Mr. Power. So, in 1911 we have three known permanent homes – **Coburn's, Power's and Cook's**.

The next building on the lake took place in 1921 when the **Witts** built on the west side of the lake adjoining Diamond Creek. Next, in 1924, **Earl Goeltz** and **Howard Whiting** built on the northeast end of the lake. In 1925 a subdivision was developed by **Art Goff**, who purchased the land from the American Immigration Company,

and then subdivided it. This is on the southeast end of the lake. The first buyers in this subdivision were **George Lang, Henry Kempf, and George Hoffinger**. This is followed in 1926 by the **Frenches, the Johnsons, the Pennings**; and on the west side of the lake by **Bud Raws**, who built in 1927. This was followed by the **Taylor**s in 1928. So by the end of 1928 there were 13 dwellings on the lake.

Things slowed down a bit during the depression years, and we see the next cottage being built in 1930 by **Dr. Collins** in the Goff subdivision. This was followed by the **Doonans** in 1935. So between 1933 to 1940, we see besides those already mentioned, the **Chapins, Sasmans, Palmers, Fayes, Goffs** and **Wildmans** all building on their property.

Today there are about 53 individual property owners on the lake. Of the early dwellings, the Coburns sold Diamond Lake Lodge to **Nettie Fox** in 1921, who in turn sold to the **Hartmans**, and it is now owned by the **Homers**. The Cook location was sold in 1922 to **Ed Zayner**, who sold to the **Sieberts**, who sold to the **Wagners**, who sold to the **Scotts**. The Witts location was sold to the **Von Holtums**. The Goeltz and Whiting location are still in the family. The Power location was sold to **Dr. Conklin**, and then to the **Mellens**. The Raws was sold to the **Wuests**, the Taylors was sold to Diamond Lake in the Rough, which was a boys' camp, and then sold to the **Cogswells**. The Frenches sold to the **Fiberts** and then to the **Byrds**. The Johnsons sold to the **Radkes**. The Hoffinger property was purchased by the **Walkers**. The properties owned by the Collins, and the Doonans, and the Langs, and Chapins, the Sasmans, and the Fayes are retained by the original families. The Penning property was sold to the **Bauers**, to the **Tobins**, to the **Johnsons**, and is now owned by the **Walkers**.

And now something about the early transportation in the area. In the early 20's, the only roads in the area were logging trails. The one main road into Diamond Lake came from Grand View. Evidence of this old road is still seen, part of which is used as a snowmobile trail to this day. It started just west of Grand View and went south over Butler Hill, past Lake 16, over Ramstead Creek, and into Diamond, near the point where the Chapin and Goeltz Road is now located. It then turned west to Diamond Lake Lodge.

The early cabins that were built had lumber rafted into them from either the north end of the lake or the south end because there were no roads going around either side of the lake. On the south end of the lake, there were some logging roads built in the

late 1900's. These were cut by John Junik and were used to haul lumber to his mill on Junik's Point.

Mrs. Cooper reports that when she was here in 1911, they would walk through the woods to a farm on Jackson Lake for some of their provisions. The road to Cable was built around 1921, and up to that point, all mail and provisions came from Grand View to the Diamond Lake Lodge and then by boat to the various cottages on the south end of the lake. The Diamond Lake Road was built about 1937, which then allowed the opening of lots on either side of Diamond Creek. The road to the Pioneer Store, which is today the Pioneer Road, was partly an old railroad right-of-way and partly logging Road. It was impassable with any kind of rainfall. The road was improved in the late 30's, when the hill going to the corner of D at Pioneer Store was cut down. Up to that point, only the strong of heart would attempt to go up or down it. It was really a very severe test, not only to the passengers but the car as well. Many springs were broken attempting to climb it.

County Trunk M was built about 1910, and it opened up Lake Namekagon from Cable. But it was not an easy road to travel until the early 40's. Coming from the east, the best route was to Glidden, to Clam Lake, and then the old railroad right-of-way to what is now the camp owned by the University of Wisconsin on Taylor Lake, and then to Pioneer Store, owned at that time by Ray and Minnie Frick. After the traveler stopped to inquire about the roads and to down a quick beer, they were on their way via the Triangle Road or the hill, depending upon the weather. It is reported that a trip from Chicago to Diamond Lake in the middle of the 20's took 2 ½ days. The route was up 13 to Glidden, then across to Clam Lake, and then to Taylor's Lake, and on up to County Trunk D.

From all indications, fishing in the lake was fantastic in the 20's and 30', keeping in mind the adage "you should have been here yesterday." Most mentioned are the northerns, the trout, bass, and the pan fish, which can be attested to by the numerous trophy fish that are mounted in various lake cabins. At that time you could get the frying pan out, invite the neighbors over for a Friday night fish fry, then go out a few feet from shore and get all the fish you needed for the feast. In the 60's and early 70's, walleyes were stocked in the lake, and again it was easy to catch fish; the word spread, and every guide in the area was bringing in their customers. Soon the walleye population diminished, but not until they had fed upon the bluegill and crappie population, which diminished rapidly.

Another unique feature of the lake was that it supported an abundance of ciscos. A cisco is a fish that cohabitates with trout in very deep and cold water, such as we have in Diamond Lake. They're a silvery fish about 10-12 inches long and are really delicious when smoked. They spawn just before the lake freezes up in November. Their spawning beds were on the rocky shores in front of the Doonan and Parker points. It was not unusual for a two-man seining crew to catch a washtub of ciscos with one or two passes along the shore. For some reason, the ciscos have diminished over the years; but if you stand quietly near the shore on a cold November night, you can still hear the few that are left splashing about in the water. It was also common for very large trout and northerns to follow the ciscos into the shore and feed on them. These fish were often caught in the net and, *of course*, were always removed and thrown back.

In 1980 Tom Stavrum interviewed some of the old-timers of the lake. They told some interesting stories, and these stories are on tapes, which are available. I'll try to highlight some of the information contained in some of the tapes. All of them talked about a real character who lived on the north end of the lake and owned Diamond Lake Lodge in the 1920's and 1930's. This was **Nettie Fox**. It has been said that every community must have a character, and Nettie was certainly ours.

The Foxes came from St. Paul in 1921 and established the lodge as a fish and hunting resort. Nettie's husband left her in the middle 20's, leaving Nettie to raise a daughter and also run the lodge. About twice a week she would row her boat from the north end of the lake to the south, visiting all who were available. This was an all-day trek for Nettie, who generally would make her first stop at the Frenches, then the Johnsons, then the Hoffingers, the Pennings, the Collins, the Kempfs, and the Langs. She'd make certain to start at a time when she could have breakfast at the Frenches and then over to the Hoffingers by noon for lunch, and then an early supper at the Langs. And on her way home, a stop at the Raws and the Witts. Of course, she would vary her visits depending upon the availability of the people. But she always was welcomed by the residents, where she was the purveyor of all the news and the gossip of the lake. One thing Nettie made sure of was that she had her three squares before departing home.

She rowed backward and would talk constantly. It made little difference if anyone was listening or not. On a still day you could hear her jabbering away halfway up the lake. This was her way of announcing her arrival or departure. Everyone knew

when she would soon make her first stop of the day, and from then on it was guessing where she would land for her next meal. But everyone was always prepared.

On one such visit she noted that, while visiting, one of the residents had just paneled their living room with knotty pine. They were so proud of the appearance of the pine knots, and they asked Nettie what she thought of the paneling. Her remark was that she hoped they didn't pay too much for the lumber because it sure had a lot of knots in it.

After Nettie sold to the Hartmans, she lived in a shanty near the lodge, and it was inhabited by various and sundry animals including chipmunks, a couple of sheep, many cats, a mangy dog, and a one-eyed chicken, to name a few. She died in the middle 50's, and as requested in her will, she was cremated and her ashes were scattered in Diamond Lake. Mrs. Hartman recalled ringing the old lodge bell as the ceremony took place.

Win and Katty Chapin had some interesting comments on Tom Stavrum's tapes. The Chapins are located on the northeast end of the lake and are the largest property owners on the lake. They have 3,500 feet of shoreline and approximately 135 acres of land. Win Chapin died in the early 80's, but it was always his desire to keep the land in its natural state and not to sell off or subdivide the property. Katty has continued to honor this request. It is evident from the old stumps on their property that logging was done in the late 1800's. This logging was only for the white pine, and the hemlocks and hardwoods were spared. And so today, because of their love of nature, the Chapin property adds immensely to the beauty of Diamond Lake.

A rather amusing incident is recorded on the tape by Katty when she tells how Nettie Fox would visit her, along with her one-eyed chicken. This chicken would follow Nettie everywhere she would go. And looking at this one-eyed chicken bothered Katty very much. One day the assessor, Mr. Unseth, came to do the assessing of the property, and he brought his wife along, who waited for him in the car. Now Katty, noticing that the poor woman was sitting in the car, all alone, envied her in. They were having a difficult time carrying on a conversation so for lack of anything else to say, Katty told Mrs. Unseth about Nettie's one-eyed chicken named Pecky, and how difficult it was for her to look at something which had only one eye, and that when she would serve cake and coffee to Nettie and the one-eyed chicken was present, she just couldn't eat a thing. About that time Win and Mr. Unseth came

back to the cottage after assessing the property, and for the first time, Katty noticed to her embarrassment that Mr. Unseth, the assessor, also had only one eye.

There were no utilities on the lake until the REA installed service in 1949. It was a memorable day when with a flick of the finger, the lights would go on. No more cleaning lamp gloves and wicks or buying kerosene. Soon inside plumbing was installed, and a new era was under way. Telephones in the 40's and early 50's reached Cable and a few resorts. If someone wished to reach you, they could call Rondeau's store in Cable and leave a message. They would then send a messenger out and you could return the call from their store.

Of interest also are the names of some of the teenagers who lived on the lake in the early 40's. There was Jim Chapin, Jack Gift, Bill Wildman, Nancy Faye, Gladas Witt, Bud Taylor, Terry Doonan, George Lang, Marge Hartman, Jane Sasman, Jim and Marry Mathewson, Bobby Hunt, Teresa and Rosemary Hoffinger, and Maryann and Jim Mereck.

A sad incident occurred at the Gift residence in the early 40's when a young man who was visiting the gifts drowned while swimming near their boathouse. This was the only known drowning on the lake in all these years.

These were the days before water skis were invented, so the water sport of the day was to ride on a wooden surfboard, usually in a prone position behind a 15 or 20 horsepower motor. The sport was only for the more daring. Also swimming was a great pastime. The general swimming for the day was between Johnsons, which was in the bay where Radkes now live, across the lake to where the Wuests are now located.

Grace Driscoll, who at that time was **Grace Collins**, also had some comments on the Stavrum tapes. Her folks built their cottage in 1930. However, Grace had come up in 1926 to visit with Ruth Penning, her friend who lived next door to them. At that time the following cottages were on the lake, starting from the east bay: the Frenches, the Johnsons, the Hoffingers, the Pennings, the Kempfs, the Langs, the Zayners, the Conklins, the Raws, the Witts, the Foxes, and Goeltz. That was the extent of the activity on the lake.

The road going into Cable, which was known as the mail route, was put through about 1924. At that time, Grace, along with two of the Penning girls, started walking towards Cable, which is 12 miles; and they didn't realize how difficult it was to walk that far, especially in the loose sand. They were very pleased upon reaching Cable to find that there was a couple staying at Diamond Lake Lodge who were in town and gave them a ride back home. Grace reported that they finally realized that they bit off a little more than they could chew.

The Collins cabin was the first cabin built by Walter Moore, who went on to build many homes on Diamond Lake and other homes in the surrounding area. The original Collins cottage is now owned by Grace's son, Ron, and his wife, Pat.

Another old-timer on the lake was **Ed Lang**. His father, George Lang bought the property in 1924 from Art Goff, and the cottage was built in 1925. Ed reports that when he came up in 1924 the ground was flat as a pancake. All the trees had been logged off, and you could see for miles all around. In the early days they came by train from Chicago on the fisherman's special, which went as far as Spooner, and from Spooner they transferred to Omaha Railroad, which got them into Cable. Ed reports that fishing was excellent for trout, northern pike, bass, and blue gills. The Lang property is now owned by Ed's sons Eddie and Kenny.

The third cottage on the lake was built by the Witts. Gladys Heppard reports on Stavrum's tape that the property was bought by her father in 1920 from the railroad. In 1921 the cabin was built. There were four other buildings on the lake at the time – Foxes, Zayners, Frenches, and the Witts. **Ed Zayner** bought their location in 1921 from the Cooks; he began clearing the land and attempted farming, which was not too successful.

Gladys reports that when she and her family would drive from Chicago there was no road into their cottage, so they would park their car at Ed Zayner's farm and then row their boat to the cottage. All of the mill-cut lumber used in building their cabin had to be floated down from Zayner's to the building location. Mr. Witt had been a court reporter in Chicago but thought he would like to do some farming, so he bought 300 angora goats. When the goats arrived in Cable by railroad, he and Ed Zayner shepherded them all the way out from Cable via the back logging roads into the clearing, which was the original homesteader site in the back of their property. The goat program didn't work out too well, and after one year those that survived the tough winter were sold and the goat experiment abandoned.

The **Witts**, like many of the early homeowners, built an ice house at the same time they built the cottage. In the winter they would hire someone to cut ice and store it in the icehouse. Ed Zayner and Walter Moore, who were both carpenters, found that this was a profitable sideline for the winter months, so they would do the cutting of the 30" ice and store it with sawdust in these ice houses. As roads improved in the late 30's there were people who delivered ice, such as John Junik and Walter Moore. Also during that period, various travelling grocery and meat trucks would call on a regular basis at the summer homes; but if you were at the end of the line on a very hot day, you had to be most careful of the meat you were buying, as the only refrigeration on those trucks was ice, which usually had melted by the time the truck reached Diamond Lake.

In **Bud Raw's** tape, we learned that he and his wife Mill came to Diamond Lake in 1926 when he was 23 years old and Mill was 19. They came because the doctor had recommended that because of poor health he spend a year out in the open, in the fresh air of the North. So they built where the Wuest's are now located. Because there was no road to the site, the lumber had to be floated in from the landing, so they spent the winter of 1926 and 1927 there, which was really a very unique experience for these two people who had never been out of the city before. They had four dogs and four pups, which were fed with boiled fish and rabbits which had been shot in the vicinity of the cottage. They got their water from the lake and had a dugout underneath the house to serve as an ice box. They burned pinecones for heat because at that time all the land had been cut over and there was very little timber left for heating. Very often, Bud reports, they saw timber wolves on the ice in the bay where the Raves and the Sassmans now reside, so he called the area "wolf bay".

In 1926 Bud bought the land which he was on from Art Goff. This lakeshore then extended from where the Cogwells are now located to past Sassmans and around the point to where Witt property joined it. He made one payment of \$1250, but when time arrived to make the second payment of \$1250, he couldn't get the money together; so a good portion of this land went back to Art Goff. Bud kept 500 feet of frontage and then Goff got the property back and sold the remainder of it to the Taylors and to the Fayes and to the Sassmans. Bud talked about taking Ed Zayner's team and sled to Cable once a month for supplies. Making this trip was Doc Conklin, the Zayners, and the McKays and the Robertsons, who lived on Crystal Lake. They would load up the sled for the special trips, such as attending a Christmas play at the one room schoolhouse which was located across the road from the Pioneer Store.

Because the doctor thought the fresh air would be good for Bud's health, they slept in an open screened porch even when it was down to 40 below zero. By the end of 1927, he had gained 15 pounds and had regained his strength, which he attributes to his year on Diamond Lake. He went on to become a very successful electrical engineer with Kimberly-Clark but came back to the lake every summer until the early 80's.

This pretty much covers the highlights of the tape. We can only imagine what a beautiful area this must have been in the 1800's. Today white pine stumps which were cut in the late 80's measure from 12-16' in circumference. They reached a height of over 110' and helped supply the timber which built the great cities of Chicago and St. Louis.

We who live on this beautiful lake are truly fortunate and must constantly strive to maintain its pristine condition and perpetuate its history through individual action and an active Diamond Lake Association.

