



# Historical Vignettes

*ELDON MARPLE, whose columns on the historical background of our area appeared in THE VISITOR for over a decade, grew up on a pioneer farm near Round Lake, worked in logging camps as a youth, graduated from Hayward High School and the University of Wisconsin. He was a teacher, employee in several government agencies in the United States and overseas, and returned to Sawyer County upon his retirement to make his home. He was a student of the history of Indian and European settlement of America, was the official Sawyer County Historian, and a tireless leader and worker in the Sawyer County Historical Society. Eldon died of a massive stroke on December 17, 1990, at the age of 86 years, but his infinitely-researched chronicles are timeless.*

## SPIDER LAKE . . . The Jewel That Jake Christie Found

*The story of Spider Lake began in the June 9 issue and we left its history with the development of the lake's first resort by Jake Christie, as reported in THE WISCONSIN NEWS of April 4, 1885. It was located on the knoll northeast of the junction of Hwy. 77 and Heineman's Road about a quarter mile from the south end of the lake.*

By 1889 Jake and his wife Mary were having troubles and she moved to Hayward. Jake rented out the place to Matt Ford of "Hubbard" (now Phipps) and in 1891 to F.C. Hall, "for fishing"! The next year David Archibald had it and in 1893 title passed to the North Wisconsin Lumber Company. In 1894 William E. Cornick took over the old place as a "Fisherman's Camp on Spider Lake."

Bill Cornick and his wife, Matilda A. (Turnbull), moved their resort up to the lake by putting up tents for guests on its shore. In 1896 it was reported that a cottage they built there "was the only building at or near Spider Lake"!

On January 8, 1898, Empire Lumber Company transferred Lot 4 on the lake, and adjoining the above forty, to the Cornicks; presumably this lot is where they had been building their lakeside cottages. The title transferred contained the following conditions by Empire: "reserve unto itself all the pine timber — and the right to use the shores — for the purposes of holding, storing or driving logs or timber, and the right to erect and maintain a dam on any stream, and to flow any part thereof, and the right to pass and repass over and through said land"! Apparently they were not too hoggish under the terms of their contract for they left an island of virgin timber around the resort which is still there — to remind us of what might have been, had we the foresight to control the logging. This lot was homesteaded by Theo. B. Wilcox in 1879; he had sold it to Empire.

The Spider Lake Resort had cottages on "Johnson's Point" in 1899 and a correspondent who visited the place that year gave a glowing account of its wonders, including tales of fish he caught. The June 26, 1902 issue of the *Hayward Republican* reported that the Cornicks were erecting a seven-room build-

ing at the resort. This is probably the main lodge at Heineman's place today. The old resort was sold to Alex LeTourneau in 1921 and he operated it for many years. The holdings transferred then included most of the shoreline of the south bay.

On July 13, 1902 two homesteaders received their titles from the government: Frank Griffin in the southeast quarter of Section 28, and Gus W. Feldt, a barber in Hayward, in the southwest quarter of the same section. Griffin died in 1906 and Feldt sold to E.A. Feldt in 1907. Part of the government's bargain with each homesteader who filed for free land was that they must live on their land part of the time for five years and make improvements, which included a livable shack. Thus these men must have filed in 1897.

John Holmes received his homestead title to Lot 1 and part of the northwest quarter of Section 28 in 1904, selling the 147 acres to Arthur E. White and wife, Lillian (Drake), in August, 1905, for \$800. "Art" had come to the county in 1897 from Augusta and, always an entrepreneur, shipped out the area's first carload of livestock to the market. He settled at the corner of Round Lake School and Peninsula roads where he had a sawmill and lumber camp — the three log buildings were still extant when I lived there in 1915 as a boy. White transferred all of his logging operations to his new place and cleared out a large farm and built and operated a resort. This later was bought by John Kmiec who built a nine-hole golf course and a beautiful clubhouse on the site. In 1984 Spider Lake Country Club was purchased by Richard and Elaine Titus, the present operators. Adjacent to the golf course is the Edgewater Inn, a bed and breakfast inn, located on the lakefront at the site of the Art White home.

A schoolhouse was built at the intersection popularly known as "Art White's corner" in 1914 for the many new families moving in at that time. The old road was also known as Art White's road until Mike Murphy, a tough old camp foreman, was hired to rebuild it on the section line; then because of the near impassability of the new road over the sharp

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sand hills, it became known as "Murphy's Folly," later respectably renamed Murphy Boulevard.

Hiram Stewart settled on the knoll at the corner in 1914, his son, Isaac E., a half mile northeast. The Prestons moved a mile further northeastward and bought White's mill in 1918, eventually moving it to the shore of North Lake of the Spider chain of lakes where the family logged and sawed lumber for many years.

After World War I resorting increased swiftly. In 1918 Otto and Maria Hohman built a new resort on the peninsula at the northeast end of the lake. E.O. Eggert bought it in 1923 and it was later known as Hahn's Hen Roost. Cedar Lodge at the east end of the big lake was built the same year by Wesley Turnbull, brother of Mrs. Cornick. Frank LeTourneau bought it in 1926 and operated it for many years.

Liberty Lodge was built by August Dittrick, an Austrian immigrant and the maitre d'hotel of the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago. He had contracted to buy the land April 23, 1914 at the same time my father bought his Round Lake farm — they had looked at land together and were great friends. An old camp building laid up by Ike Stewart in 1911 still stands at the water's edge at the bottom of what was once a log rollway.

The resort's main lodge was put up in 1923; Charlie Peterson was the carpenter. The guests dining there were served in the manner of the Blackstone. During the summer of 1927, Vice President Dawes was a guest for a time.

Moody's Camp on the peninsula at the north end of the big lake was erected by Ted and Myrtle Moody in 1922-23 with lumber transported from LeTourneau's on the ice and by boat. Preston's mill furnished some lumber and this was moved down the creek by boat. The Moodys opened their camp in 1924 and at that time there was no direct road to the area. Guests were brought in to Preston's by way of the Lake Helene road, then boated to their cabins.

An interesting experiment in conservation of forest areas was begun in 1926 under the leadership of Ted Moody and twenty-five of his guests. They formed the No-Pi-Ming Association, each of the members to share in the responsibilities and privileges afforded. By 1928 the association had bought four thousand acres of cut-over land which they still hold and on which they carry out acceptable forestry

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practices. Ted Moody and his buddy, Bill Jacobs, are buried near the lodge at their own request. The road which traversed their preserve in the logging days is known as Dead Man's Trail because an inebriate logger who started for camp one stormy day, didn't make it and spent the rest of the winter in a snow-drift. When his body was found in the spring after the snow had melted away, it was necessary to bury him beside the trail where they found him.

Another interesting experiment in conservation in the township was carried out by Camp Smith Lake of the Civilian Conservation Corps which was in operation about two miles to the northwest of Spider Lake from 1933 to 1941. The work done by these young men is most obvious in the millions of trees planted in the Seeley hills.

After the American Immigration Company took over the lands of the many Weyerhaeuser interests about 1907 (which included most of the land in the township surrounding the lake), their well-organized recruiting programs brought in many settlers, despite the fact that most of the land is infertile and not suitable for farming. They bought land mostly in the southwest corner of the township, few of them surviving as farmers after the depression. An interesting facet of this settlement was the community of people of Finnish descent who found homes here.

## **MURPHY BOULEVARD**

The two-mile section of country road northward from Hwy. 77 at the Spider Lake Church is known as Murphy Boulevard and it has always been a difficult road to travel in bad weather, particularly before it was paved. This is due to the fact that it runs arbitrarily on the section line, totally disregarding the terrain which it traverses. Town Boards, when laying out new roads, appear to be concerned only with making them straight and on a property line between contiguous owners, not with their practicality as highways when completed.

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There has always been a sly bit of humor attached to the name for this road. It took some inquiry to find out why. The road was built on contract by Mike Murphy, a famous logging-camp foreman, in 1912 or shortly before that, probably in partnership with Art White, whose place was at its north end. Although it may have been built to the specifications required by the town board, many of the steep hills were almost pure sand and devoid of the binding clay or silt necessary to make a solid road bed; often it was a morass of sand or mud and unfit for vehicular traffic.

George Brandt, who grew up in that community and knew Mike well, tells why the snide comments were made in regard to the name, "Murphy's Boulevard." Mike started construction at the south end and worked northward. When his job was completed the road bed was so bad that he had to bring his equipment back to his place near Lost Land Lake by way of another road! Needless to say, whether this story was true or not, it was repeated by every traveler who found the hills and sand washes of Murphy Boulevard too difficult for their convenience.

Mike Murphy was typical of some of the strong characters who followed the logging trade. In 1902 he was a camp foreman for Moses & Gaynor and was running their Hay Creek camp. In 1903 he was foreman of their "log drive" and was called their "old reliable." In 1904 *The Hayward Republican* noted that "Mike, James and Edward Murphy were in from their camps."

About this time Mike also lived at Leonard's Spur in the Namekagon valley where he was probably a "camp-watcher" for F.C. Leonard, one of the larger loggers of the day. He also apparently acted as postmaster there. In 1923 the paper reported that Murphy was living in the log buildings of an old abandoned camp on the east side of Ole Lake near Lost Land Lake. He was already an old man, a hermit type so common here after the pine logging period was ended.

Not long ago George Brandt found a "land looker" plat book in the Round Lake dump. It had M.C. Murphy's name in it and there were many topographical features of this area drawn in. Some years ago Art Thompson of Seeley found a packet of papers in the Seeley dump which concerned many transactions that Murphy had made as a camp foreman. Goerge and Art, who are both interested in the local history, donated these finds to the historical society. Any material of this nature is useful in doing historical research of the logging days and is appreciated by those whose job or hobby is dependent upon having such information at hand.

Michael C. Murphy was born in Pennsylvania of Irish parents. He died in Hayward on November 12, 1945, aged 90 years, 9 months and 15 days. His only lasting monument is his name on a piece of country road.