

# The History of Big Bear Lake

As told by Katherine Louise French

This is a transcript of a taped interview of **Mrs. Katherine Louise French**, by **William H. Thomas Sr.**, in mid-summer of 1985 on Burns Avenue, Big Bear Lake, at the cottage of Mrs. French. The interview was conducted by Mr. Thomas, 14186 South Shore Dr, Big Bear Lake, Charleton Township, Otsego County, for the purpose of writing a history of the Big Bear Lake area.

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Ready? Let it run a minute. Ah...would you give me your full name, Mrs. French?

Katherine Louise French.

Katherine Louise French. And where did you come from?

Well, we lived down in Oakland County...

Oakland County?

Yeh. At Oxbox Lake.

Oxbow Lake.

Yeh.

Okay. I know where that is, because I lived in Oakland County.

I'm going to move this chair over this way a little bit. Do you want to tell me about when you first came here?

Yes. We came here - a friend ours, a boy that I had gone to high school with in Highland Park, Michigan - Harold Morris, bought a section of land on the south shore there, from Mrs. Gertrude Going who was the wife of Judge Going.

Was he still alive?

No. He had died and it had all been left to her. Because when the son found out that his mother sold that section of land, he tried to get it back but he couldn't do anything because Harold Morris had paid cash for it. So that Freeman Going was out of it there.

How far was that - was that what was called Lucal's Villa now?

Yes. Lucal bought Morris out.

And you came up here in 1936?

Yes. Just to his place, is all.

Oh. To visit...

He was visit...building them.

I see.

They were building their first cabin over there and we stayed in tents and he had a trailer in over there. And we didn't come in- you know where the old logging trail comes in?

No. Where does that come in at?

Well, up the hill a ways from 13<sup>th</sup> Street, opposite from the road that comes through the woods - there's a road, you know, comes through the woods from Winding Road there. And right along the shore here.

On the west shore?

This shore here, yes - and then the trains came up here on the old railroad grade.

Where were...on...on what side...on this side of the road?

Oh, right up...right back of our house-it runs right across our lot there

Oh. Was that right?

Yes. Sure.

What...which railroad?

...and it runs right past-what's the name of the first folks on the hill there - Trays? Yeh. That's a kind of cut through there. That's where the train came through...the logging train.

Did it stop here? Did it stop there?

It stopped up there and loaded logs, sure. Then it went on to Johannsburg. It came from Lewiston. Because this was big logging time in here, you know. It gives you in the abstracts the names of the loggers. And this one man, Headley, a grandson of one of the men who owned this, is one of the men who told me all about it when he was in the lodge (Silver Beach Lodge) 'cause

they used to come up to the lodge when we were in the lodge and spend their vacations there. Oh, yes. And he told me about coming here as a little boy, 12 years old, and the logging camp was right on top of Eighth Street, there where the men slept and ate, and his grandmother was the cook.

Is that right?

Yes. And now Mr. Headley was a veteran of World War I, and at one time was, I think, the big commander, something like that of veterans here. And then they bought property down on the lake- down where Russell Cooks owned?

No. I don't

You don't. Well, it's the...

Was it down near the lodge?

No, it's the next place down here. And people by the name of Owens from California own it now. And they bought - Mr. Cook bought that off of - the woman who recently...The Headleys both died and this woman received the property. I might be telling tales but I think it was the brother's girlfriend that got it eventually and she sold it to the Cooks. But the Headleys always came to the lodge while we were there. And the year we left I had the nice long letter- I should have saved it - from the Headleys, telling me how sorry they were that it had changed hands when we left, because they had enjoyed our being there and also enjoyed it when - oh, what was the name of that elderly couple before we came there - Art Shipman and wife?

Shipman?

Shipman and his wife, Tessie.

Tessie?

Yeh. But when it changed hands from us, she said, "All we got to eat was canned pork and bean." And she said, "we were so disappointed, there all summer. The man had a stroke, in fact, he died. Their name was Jones.

What year was this?

Fifty. That was in 1950. Nineteen fifty. Because we went there in '46.

Did you own the lodge or were you working for...

No. We rented it. We paid Mr. Going for the use of it and we rented it out as a lodge. And he took care and rented the cabins himself.

In fact, he ran a lottery in the dance he worked in, in Chicago, and they won chances and you got this cottage to use- is how he rented his cottages.

Oh, yeh?

We cleaned the cottages-he had us for cleaning thee cottages at all, so.

Well, ah...

We just run the lodge and we rented that from Mr. Going.

Yeh. When did he put the cottages up, do you know?

The cottages, well...well, the big one across the road from the ah, lodge and the one where Mrs. Munier lives-do you know where she lives?

No. I don't.

Mrs. Menier? Well, it's a little yellow cottage down in back there—right back of where there's the three cottages right together there???

And that was an old hotel he torn-had torn down in Gaylord, and he brought it out here and built those two places. Now the Katherine Hefferman you know is the original one on this in 1911. And she was Judge Going's private secretary.

Oh. Was that just...do you think that was just a business transaction, or did she actually own it?

I don't know. But it's in here-it's her name...it's in her name in 1911. Yeh. Well, they both got it from Frederick and Dogwar Grant. That's who they got it from, and it was - the transaction was in Cook County, Illinois, you see. And this Katherine Hefferman was Judge Going's private secretary. Then she turned it over to-where is that now=she turned it over to Judson Going in December of 1913. She held it from '11 to '13.

Now, that was Judson - that was the judge?

Yes, he was the judge. Yeh.

What was his son's name - his first name?

Freeman.

Freeman. That's right.

Freeman. Uh-huh. Yep. And his log is in here when they passed away and all. Don't you folks have one off these (abstracts)?

I have an abstract. I don't know if I have the same information in it as you have.

You must have.

Probably do.

Oh, you must have. Yes, you do. Uh-huh. Yeh. Yeh. Because it gives in here about their wills and everything. When Going, he passed away, he must have died in about 1913, or so. No. He died...it was later than that when he died. Because that's when Mrs. Going took over. But it wasn't until 1936 that she sold to Harold Morris, see.

Do you have any idea what they paid for thee property?

Ah, no. I don't think there's any idea—wait now. Let me see here- (Mrs. French is checking her abstract). - if it gives anything in here. On money...and that is only-just see here, and I know they must have paid more than that.

Construction \$2,219. Could I see that a minute, please?

Because I'll tell you. You know Mr. Going owned Little Bear Lake, too, didn't you?

Yes, I did. Uh-huh.

And he sold that out to, ah, McFarlane in Detroit, and it was called McFarlane Land Company. And that's when the McFarlanes subdivi...put a man out there and subdivided it. Because when we first came up there, we went in on a trail to Little Bear Lake because Harold Morris had a boat over there and there wasn't a thing on that lake.

Nothing in 1936?

Not a thing. No. No.

How about...what was on this lake in 1936?

Well, the lodge was there, and Mr. Going had the big house across the street and the little house down the where, ah, Mrs. Manier is, and then on the corner up there at Ninth and Lake? There was a little one-room place there that belonged to an electrician in Gaylord. They built that. Then, back of that, on the next street, there was a cabin that Mr. Going owned. He owned five cabins besides the lodge. No. Six—there were six cabins, because my husband helped build the sixth one while we were there. Then, there was, on the lake front, a cottage, and that was owned by a cousin of the Goings', I

can't remember their name. That was on the lake front. Then there wasn't anything until 12<sup>th</sup> Street there was a little log cabin, and that was owned by people by the name of Morehead from West Virginia. He came up here for his xxxxxxxx. They sold a little log cabin, and that was owned by people by the name of Morehead from West Virginia. He came up here for his hay fever. They sold that place - now on the road going up to Gaylord up here, you know where there's a real nice place - the first place going to Gaylord on the north side of the road?

On 32?

Thirty-two. With the oil well in back. That's where Mr. Morehead went when they sold down here and he built that place. 'Course she's been dead for years now. But the family, of course, has that place.

How did you get back and forth up here? Ah, by railroad?

On, no. We drove.

Oh, you drove?

We drove, sure. We all had cars - we all lived in Highland Park at first and worked all for Ford Motor Company. And that's where Mr. Morris worked.

What, ah...the road, ah existed now? They were...they were...

Just plain gravel roads. In fact, the first time we came up here, there was no paving north of Bay City when we first came up here.

I forgot to ask you what your husband's name was.

Maxwell A. French.

Maxwell A. French. And you were both born in Detroit?

No. He was born in Detroit, but I was born in Pennsylvania.

Oh, you're from Pennsylvania? Whereabouts?

Hadley Pennsylvania. In Mercer County. It's on the old Carrie Highway north of Pittsburgh, about halfway between Pittsburgh and Erie.

I was-ah-we just visited there to a funeral - what's the name of that place Zelianople?

I don't know as I ever heard of that even.

That's an old city, there.

Must be.

Ah. How about the schools?

School up here?

Yeh.

Well, there was the school in Johannesburg - on the corner there, that they tore down. (on the southeast corner of M-32 and Heatherton Road). That, you know, had been - well, before that there was just a little school over here on Winding Road.

Oh. There was?

You know where Mathews Road comes down?

Yes.

Right in there. You'll notice kind of a clear place in there. There was a school there.

Oh, for heaven's sake.

Yeh. And I can't remember the name of it. (Crystal School) But there was a school there, and then the school, of course was in Johannesburg.

Was there ever a school up here on the Meridian near Vienna?

No. They built a church in there - that place, that was...

The first one (meaning the most southerly of the small buildings near where Dewey Thomas lives.)

That was a church. There was no school there, no.

Ah. How about the CCC camp?

Oh, that was where the state campground was. That was, of course, during Roosevelt's administration. And right across the lake here, you know, it went over as far as where that new road goes in where it was subdivided - see the west shore was subdivided when we lived in the lodge...

Oh?

Yeh. In '48, and the road that does down in there does clear through you know, to that Dagon Road now. Yeh, and from there, through to the section line up here, which First Street, was all CCC Camp because on the other side of that is all state land, you know. Yeh.

Yes, I know because...

Because I know some boys who were here.

Oh. Do You?

Yeh. Uh-huh Yeh. A couple of boys that...

Where were they from?

They were originally from Detroit, they were.

Most of the CCC? Of all of them?

No. They came from all over. And quite a few of those boys married girls up here.

Is that right?

Yes, they did. Uh-huh. One in particular, I know, is the Miller boy, married a McCredy girl, and the McCredys built the lodge.

Oh, is that right?

Yeh.

When was the lodge built?

Ah, let's see now. It wasn't built until after - I wish I had kept the book I had. I only let some people take it because we had out place up for sale and thought we were going to sell out. What the hell they did with it, I don't know. Um. It was here when Harold Morris bought in here. It was here then.

It was here before 1936?

Yes. Yes. It was there. Yeah. Uh-huh. I can't tell you the year, but you see, how that was built was, - there was a book around here- someone must have one - Raymond Wallace?

Yeah. I've got one.

You've got one?

I've got a copy of it from Mrs. Lundgren.

All right, the...In there it must tell you something doesn't it?

It doesn't say when the lodge was built.

No. But McCredys came in here with those people.

Oh, he did?



Yes. They were from Indiana, too. McCredy came...

And McCredy built the lodge?

Built the lodge. Yeh. And for the lack of \$500 to finish it, Judge Going took it away from him.

Oh yeah?

Yes.

Oh, that wasn't built for him then?

No. The McCredys was going to run a business there.

Oh. They were going to build it themselves?

Yes. They did. And they were...and for the lack of \$500 they lost it to Judge Going. Now, Chet Feltner, who came in here with the surveyors, told me all of that. And he used to own this little place on the corner. In fact, bought all these six lots off of him. 'Cause some of his boys got lots of wages.

Oh, yeah?

Because Raymond Wallace went broke, you know. Lost everything.

When did they have to give it back? Do you remember?

Ah no. I can't say when. I can't say when.

Was it before World War II?

Oh, yes. Yes. It was before World War II. Yeh.

During the depression?

I think it was more or less during the depression days.

And you...worked for the lodge for- for who? For Going?"

We rented it from Going...Freeman Going.

You rented it from him.

Yes.

...and then ran a business there.

Yes. We rented a lodge there.

And what did you have there?

Well, we rented out rooms. There were seven bedrooms that we rented out. And I served meals. Sure.

Ah. Who had the grocery store? Do you recall?

At the corner, here?

No. In the lodge.

No. There was no grocery store in there when we were there. When Tessie and Art Shipman was there, they sold bread and milk and a few things like that, but when we took it over I said no. I wouldn't be bothered with the people running in and out, because we were running that completely ourselves and I didn't think that people renting rooms needed to be bothered with people coming in and out. Now, would you?

No. But, you know when I...

It was a business.

When I came here in 1959, we could go over there and buy bread and milk.

Oh, sure. That was when um oh...what was his name- he was a Hungarian wasn't he?

I don't remember his name.

Yes. Wasn't he crippled?

I don't recall that, either. I was in there perhaps, two or three or four times.

Yes. Yeah.

I really didn't know him very well.

No. After we left these Joneses took over. She eventually married this McCredy who built the place. But the Joneses moved in there and they didn't even last the summer. And then a man by the name of Cline came in there and he didn't last but about three months because he was caught breaking into the restaurant in Lewiston. So he was out. Yeh.

Do you know his first name?

No. I...darned if I know what his name was, and he left here, anyway...then they railroaded him, of course. And I don't remember who took over then. After that. There were three or four people in there before this here Hungarian, or whatever he was, took over.

You...you went there...opened...you had the place in 1936 until what year?

No. 1946.

'46 until...?

Yeah. We went there May of '46 until May of '50.

On. When did you...when did you come up here permanently? 1936?

No. Nineteen...No. We just came up summers, was all-over to Harold Morris'.

Oh, I see.

No. As I say, we went to school together in Highland Park, Michigan. He worked the Ford Motor Company. My folks had all worked for Fords and that's how we happened to know each other. And he and his sister at one time owned a grocery store at Oxbow lake near where we lived.

Oh.

Well, the boys used to come up around these parts hunting. So Harold bought that over there. Well, all these people around Oxbow lake and around there all came up to Harold's see?

Sure.

Yeh. And then he sold out to Lucal. I think it was either '52 or '53, something like that.

Lucal was still there when I bought a place.

He was. Yeh.

And he still owned all those cottages along the lake but he, of course, sold those off after, and I don't know what years those were off.

I don't know either. Harold sold off...ah...let's see...one, two, three, four - you know where the loop comes down and makes a loop back of the cabins? Well, there was a log cabin there. Well, beyond that, Harold sold four or five lots in there and people built in there.

He didn't have cabins in there though. He just had lots?

No. He built eight cabins in there Harold Morris...

No. I mean on those lots that he sold at that time?

No. He sold them and people built there - yeh. I can't think of the names of any of the people there. Because beyond that, then, was were Bomersheins (sp.) owned, and then Ashleys of the undertaking parlors, and Dr. Sokol.

Yeh. We're next...we're between Kelly and Sokol.

You're between Kelly and Sokol. Yeh. And then, Dombrowski. Well Dombrowski was there, and the Kellys was there and Sokol was there.

Ah. Ashleys. And the Bomersheins.

And that was all over on that side?

And Vogel.

Vogel?

Vogel, from Columbus, Ohio.

Where was Vogel...Where was Vogel?

Right next to Harold. The last place beyond Harold, because they were from Columbus, and they owned that for years.

I see.

Yes.

Harold...

Morris.

...Morris.

Yeh.

Did Morris also own-do you know where McKay is? Not McKay-there are two...you go down to, by Morris' or Lucal's and there's a little road and there's a couple of cabins in there. Were those his, also? Besides the ones that went this other way?

On the lake, you mean?

Yeh.

When you come in the South Shore Road like this...

Then you go down...

Then you turn to go over where you are...

No., You go past Lucal's. Past...

Past Lucal's, eh?

And when you get down there, there's a little road that runs off and it's kind of a dead end.

Oh, I know...yeh. Yeh. No. Those Harold sold off. That's the place he sold those lots off. And he owned a section there clear from the lake to the Meridian. And, no. He just sold those lots.

Oh, I see.

Yeh. And then he retained that forty acres back, you know, where the airplane went down? Harold owned that. And then in...oh...what year was it he called me up - we had keys to the cabin that's back up in the woods?

Umm.

You know where it is?

Off the Meridian, in there-yeh.

That was his place?

That was his place, too. Yeh. He and five other fellows. That was their hunting lodge that they went to. And I knew all the others. They were all our neighbors on Oxbow Lake. And White Lake. Yeh. And, ah...they retained that until-well, the Cooks had come up and built here, and now they been here...they built fourteen years ago. It must be about 13 years now, maybe. Thirteen. Because there had been some break-ins over at Little Bear Lake and all. It was in the papers. And, ah...it was very sparsely pop...you know, populated around herre, see, them, and Harold called me on the phone and he said, "Kate. I've got some people coming from Belleville to look at that place in the woods." He says, you've got the keys. Would you take them over?" And I said "Yes", and so the people came, and I said to Max, "My God", I says, "With all that breaking in over at Little Bear", I says, "Maybe we ought to be a little leery of going down there alone." So we went down and Mr. Cook and Mrs. Cook went, and these boys took their guns. Well, everything was all right. We opened the place and we wasn't there very long when the people came. Well, I thought they came to look. Ha. Then came to stay. They moved right in.

Oh, was that right?

Yeh. So I came right back and called Harold on the phone 'cause he was in California. "Course, he told me where to him, so I called him up and told him.

I says, "Well, I don't know whether you're sold or not, but the people moved right in." He laughed and said, "Kate, I just got a call from a real estate man. He said, 'It's sold.'"

To them?

Yeh. To the people from Belleville. Yeh.

Ah. Do you know of any drownings on the lake?

Yes. When Mr. And Mrs. Morris had the place over there, they had a young couple that rented one of their cottages. And the young woman had a bad heart...a very serious heart condition. And they went out in the boat...to fish...and she had a heart attack and toppled into the water. He dove in after her and she got hold of him and they both drowned.

They both drowned?

They both drowned.

You don't know what their names were?

No, I don't.

About when was that?

Well, that must have been...ah...well, that was...it must have been in the early forties because it was just before we moved into the lodge that this happened. Then, ah, when we lived in the lodge, and the west shore was subdivided. There was a man and his wife came in and moved a trailer in over there. It was one of the first places. And, I don't know what was wrong with the woman, but anyway, the man told me himself about it. They were out by the water there where that goes up in there. And she said, "Go in the house and make some lemonade" And he went in and make lemonade, and when he came out, she was gone. A little bit later he saw her floating out on the water. She drowned herself.

She was not well?

No. She was not well. There was something wrong. Then there was some people that was renting a cottage down here, ah, in the Going's place, and their-or did they buy the place? - I think maybe they bought it. And they had a little boy who had something wrong with him. And they let him go out in the boat, and in the middle of it he had one of his spells, and he fell over the side with his head in the water and he drowned. Now, that's the only drownings I know of.

You don't know when.. .when was that?

Well, that happened after we left the lodge. That was after '50. Sometime in the fifties.

Sometime in the fifties.

Fifties, yeh.

What time did this woman-what-ah, when did this woman drown?

Well. That woman drowned-oh, it must have been around the summer of '49.

Forty-nine?

'Cause it was just before we left here. And that was the only ones-I know there's a horse out there, that's in from the days of cutting ice.

Oh. You had a horse drown out there? She went through the ice?

Yeh. There was no electricity here, you know, and they cut ice. The last year that ice was cut was in-urn--' 46. We had ice put up for '46.

Where did you store it?

Ah. Well. Right where the road to the old railroad bridge was, in here, and you know where the light poles go up through the woods? Right-there was an old icehouse there. Mr. Morris' --I guess they've all torn that out, too, because my husband and his brother helped him build that one.

He had an icehouse, also?

Yes. He had an icehouse. And they had to cut ice. In fact, stores from around here came in and got ice.

I see.

Because they didn't have electricity at the corner, you know, or any place around here at that time. We had Delcos when we lived in the lodge.

Ah. Batteries to...

Yeh. Big Delco system and batteries in the basement. Yeh.

How did you charge them?

Ah. With a gasoline motor.

Oh. I see.

And then from that we run the pump for the water 'n...

Well, when would this horse have gone in?

That was before--ah--well, let's see. Harold had been here, I think, three or four years, he said. So that must have been

Thirty--'38, '39, or '40?

Somewhere around that time was when that horse must have gone through the ice. Yeh.

So, there's a skeleton still down there some place?

Well...it must be, I guess. Yeh.

Of course, he'd be hard--they couldn't get him out, could they?

No. Ah, no. But that's all that we know of that was drowned here. Other than a deer that they found washed up one time from a storm.

Do you know of any Indian artifacts, or anything like that?

No. Not Indian. No. All we've ever found was things that--they had the horse barn in here. And Mr. Feltner told us that this was where they kept the horses, and all.

For who?

For the lumbering days.

Oh.

From the lumbering days. And when we bought here and started digging, we dug up old tin plates, and, ah--spikes from the railroad grade and, ah, horseshoes and old kitchen knives.

Right in here?

Right in here. Yeh. Right in here. Yeh. Where that's level out there. Yeh. But the camp where the men stayed was at the top of Eighth Street, right up there where it's kind of level.

How many do you think there were in there...do you have any idea?

I have no idea. No. Mr. Headkey never said. It was quite a large concern, though.

Did they...when did they lumber here?

Well. Now, here, in here it gives you when the Headkeys... ah. . .

Can we go back to the CCC for a minute?



Yeh.

Ah. . . How many. . . how many were there-how many men?

I have no idea. I don't know how many men were in there. It was quite a large camp, and, ah.. .Some of the people around here went over and took the concrete sections out of the thing and there's some of them right here under this garage over here.

Oh, is that right?

And out in front there's concrete, and that was from the old CCC camp.

Were they the foundations of their buildings?

They broke them up, yep, the foundation of the building. And they broke them up and hauled them away.

How long were they here?

I don't know how long the duration of the camp was here for that time.

Were they here in 1936 when you came up?

No. No. It was gone.

Oh, they had already...

They had already gone. Oh.,yes. I think they was...who's that? Oh, that's Jean coming. Ah. I think that...they must have pulled out of here.. .hmmm.. .they were gone when Harold came in here. In '36. They were out of here. I can't say when. Because...the boys from the camp built a little one-room log cabin over there, where they used to go and play games and things. They even put a well there.

Where was the cabin built?

Right in from where the camp was. Right straight across the lake, here. It now is quite a good-sized place because the people have built on to it. But...

Do you know who. . .

When they broke up camp over there-Mr. Going had never said anything to them about where they put that log cabin. See. But when they broke up camp he notified the State that that cabin had been built on his land, and so was the pump, and they would have to leave it right there. And that's how he got that little cabin.

Who owns it now?

I don't know who owns it now, but Mr. Going, at the time we lived in the lodge sold it to a man--Ed Ball, and, of course, he's been gone for years: and he was from Holly, Michigan.

Ed Ball from Holly?

Yeh.

That's where I came from.

Well. Did you know an Ed Ball there? Years ago?

Well, there were a lot of Balls.

Well, this was Ed Ball and he owned up on the Meridian Road, up here. Ah. Well. They had built places--there's a couple of log cabins that they rented out at one time. And then they built the place quite big in there. But when Ed Ball and his wife lived there it was about the size of a garage.

North of Vienna?

No, no. Right straight...just up the road, here.

Oh, just here?

Right up here. Almost to the end where the Little Bear Lake Road comes out, you know where there's a row of places through there? Well, just north of there. And, ah, I don't know who owns it now. But at one time there was just their place in there, a little log cabin on beyond that where there's a trailer in there now, and in where the other trailer is, this way, was an old log place that belonged to...ah...Dewey Thomas' grandfather and grandmother.

That's where Dewey...

But their name was not Thomas--it was Hill.

Oh, Hill?

Yeh. Because Dewey's mother married Jack Thomas after they came up here from--they all up here from Kentucky, you know, during the logging days.

Oh, did they?

Yeh.

And Hills were already here?

Oh, yes. Yeh. Yeh.

Where...where is that log cabin site, ah, exactly?

When you go across here and there's a road that goes out...

No. I mean the one that Dewey's...that Mr. Hill's spot?

Oh. That's all gone now. There's a trailer in there.

Where would it be...on this side of the road?

No. No. No, there was nothing on this side of the road. Until you got way up there where, ah, the lady that owned it. Well, the little lady that owned it, she sold it a little while ago. But there's a house up in there, and where the house is, the first house now.

Well, of course, there's that road going in there...you know. Fairgrieve?

Fairgrieve Road, yeh. Then north, there, just up...there's one first house there?

Well, there was a farmhouse there and people by the name of Richards owned that.

I see.

Yeh. Then there wasn't anything more until...the little old house they tore down this last year, you know?

Oh, Yeh.

That was a farmhouse and that belonged to a Thomas. Thompson! Thompson! They sold off to Miller who was the boy from the camp over here that married the McCredy girl.

I see.

Yeh.

And where was the Hill log cabin?

On the opposite side of the road, only closer here. You know when you go up, you come to one log cabin going up on the right side of the road.

There's...first there's a log cabin? Then next you come to a little red clapboard house. And then a gray shingle place. Yeh. Then there's a road that goes in back to some trailers. Then there's a new trailer moved in there?

Oh, yes.

And that is where the original old Jack Hill place was, there. Then the other side of that is where this Ball--Ed Ball--owned.

That's where Bill Thomas is--up in there.

Yeh. Bill Thomas is just beyond that. Yeh. Yeh. He's kind of between it and there's a little old log cabin...cabin that a John Paddy (sp.) owned when we were here. Yeh.

And this other log cabin...this is...that one is where? How...where that...is it near the trailer over there?

Well, yes. It's closer to the road from the trailer.

How many houses down from the trailer, would you say?

I don't know. I haven't been over there in quite a while, and there's been some stuff built in there since.

But it's right in that area?

Yeh. But that is where it was, of course my husband--Now we didn't sell anything over there. We, well, just, ah, kept the lodge, and we rented that from Going. And, ah, but my husband did oversee that over there. And, ah, he showed the property, but we had no license to sell anything. We'd show it, and then write Mr. Going and tell him, because we had no phones in here then, you know. And Mr. Going then would come up and take care of the real estate end.

That is the...

And he still probably owes a little dough on that yet, you know.

He promised us. But I understand everybody around says that he did them, so...

Freeman (Going) died?

Yes, he did.

When was that? How long ago was that?

Well. Let's see now. Nina told me that two years ago (1983). That's Nina in the picture. She knew him quite well. And I think that was a year--two years ago. When Nina told me he died.

Nineteen Eighty-three?

He died about the same time as...did you ever hear of Comstock...Frank Comstock?

No.

Well he was one of the Comstocks from...You know where the Lustreware is?  
Where?

The Lustreware--the place north of Lewiston?

Yes.

Okay. Beyond is a big old farmhouse?

Yes.

Well. That's where Comstock--Frank Comstock--was born and raised.

Oh.

Then he went to Chicago and he worked for the Chicago Tribune. And that's where Going got acquainted with him, is through that

Did Going go back to Chica...did Freeman go back to Chicago?

He always lived in Chicago. He never lived up here.

Oh, I thought he lived --he had a cabin up here.

He did when he retired. When he retired. Yeh.

But he still lived in Chicago?

But he still lived in Chicago. Yeh.

How about the mail plane? You...could you tell me anything about

Oh. Let's see now. That was some boys from where, now? Oh my gosh.  
Where were they from? They used to come in from over there. And they stayed in Harold--one of Harold Morris' places.

Oh. Uh-huh. But they weren't... they didn't come here regularly, to live or anything?

No. No. They just come...You know where Allens own the first place over there?

Lynn Allen?

Glenn (six) yeh. Well, he's from Pontiac, too, you know. His father was the county treasurer for so many years.

Right.

Well, there was a couple that used to be in there--now just rented it when Harold was here. Used to come by this seaplane just to visit.

What years was that--where that--was that?

Well, that was sometime when we lived in the lodge in the forties.

Ah. Well. I remember the...a seaplane being down there for the first year or two that we were first here in '59 or '60.

Well, that probably might have been, well, it could have been somebody that lived...because the Allens used to come up and rent from Harold, you know. "Cause they knew Harold. In fact, Harold's wife was...ah...worked for this Lynn Allen who was Oakland County Treasurer. 'That's before she married Harold. She was a Monroe. A Monroe. You have heard of the Monroes of Pontiac?

Well, yeh. It's a well-known name There's a Monroe street, and so on.

Yeh. Well, that's the same outfit of Monroes. There was a Dr. John Monroe, and Monroe was head of the waterworks for many, many years in Pontiac. And they're the ones. Yeh. But now, anymore about the lake, why, as I say, ah...I've told you about all of the older places here. Well, now, up in here there were some places. The little place up on the hill over there, that people by the name of Friliga

(sp.) from Detroit owned. That was built by McCredy. The log place.

And this place down here, this log place down here where Ken Lahr (sp.) owns--his uncle Charlie had that built back in 1932. And this place across here was built in 1932.

So most of the development early was in...right in through here?

Yeh. Right up in here, yes. Because, as I say, Morehead's is the only place I know of down there, other than Going's

Ah. Dombrowski and none of these people were over there when you came up--when you first came up?

Yes. Dombrowski was there when we first came to Harold Morris'.

Oh, was he?

Oh, sure. Because Harold... Dombrowski, you know, was a lawyer in Hamtramck. He had something to do with the jail business down there. Because jailbirds built his place over there.

Is that right?

Yes. He brought them up there and left them there and they'd come over to Harold Morris' and Harold Morris would have to see that they got food.

Oh, for crying out loud.

Sure. That was Dombrowski . He even had stuff over there from the Old Ponchetrain Hotel...some of the big old plate glass windows, and some of the kids around...I don't know where from... went over and broke them up for him.

That lodge was pretty well broken up and then, when his nephew came in there, he re-did it.

Re-did it.

Very nicely.

There was beautiful antique furniture in there that the Dombrowskis had brought up there. I never met Mrs. Dombrowski. I never knew of her to come up here. But Stanley came a lot, and he used to come over to the lodge when his place was full of hunters, and slept on the davenport a couple of nights. Yeh.

How about Sokol? Was he there when you came up in '36?

No. No. Dr. Soko1...I never met Dr. Sokol. No. He never came.

Who...was there anybody else on that side besides Dombrowski?

Ashleys.

Ashleys were there.

Ashleys have been here a long, long time. And the Bomersheims.

Who owns the Bomersheims now?

I can't tell you. I don't know...I don't know.

Was there any...any one else over there?

Hell, there was this Dr...this Vogel, who was a professor at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, who owned just over from where Harold owned. It was just a little log cabin. Ah, of course he's dead now, and I understand the daughter is, too, because they must be way up in years, you know. And that place was there. Other than that, I don't know of any other places there.

How about on this side?

Here, where we are?

No. I mean on the...

Oh, on the other? There was nothing on that side, other than the log cabin the CCC camp boys built. Because that wasn't subdivided until 1948.

Oh, I see.

Yeh. That's when we lived in the lodge that was subdivided in there. Ehh

How was the fishing?

Then, it was good. Yeh. Very, very good.

I've seen some stringers from...catches from the lake. They were excellent. Yeh. Yeh. Excellent fishing, but with all the speed boats now you can't expect anything. My grandson came up wanting to fish this week...last weekend. He went once. He said, "Grandma," he says, "'There's just no fun out there anymore at all."

You can't...well, you can't fish out there on weekends now because of all those skiers.

Yeh. No. He said, "Grandma, there was just no fun at all." So.

Did you ever hear anything about a sanitarium? (for tuberculosis) Ah, an idea that they might put up a sanitarium over on the point (straight across on the South Shore ridge where Kelly and Thomas are located) across the lake?

No. (pause) Now that point that comes out, as I say, where the little cabin was that the boys built (on the West Shore)...during the time that we were in the lodge, people. . . a Dr. Johnson came up and he built that beautiful big place on the point; right there, see. (meaning the farthest point on the western shore from the public beach.)

On this side?

Yeh. Over here. Right in from where the CCC camp was. Yeh. And then next to him, ah...these people used to always come and stay with us at the lodge, see. They stayed with us when building. Same as a lot of people from Little Bear Lake stayed with us.

So you knew them before they even built their places?

Yes. Uh-huh. Because it was through us that some of them bought. And then he built this lovely place. And then in beyond his was Doc, ah, oh, what



the devil was his name? He was from down...ah...that island down river from Detroit.

Grosse Isle?

Grosse Isle. Yeh. He was from Grosse Isle. And, um...then someone else came in there. Oh, um...He was from Farmington. He still is up here. Aaaaah.

That's not Lindbert's?

Lindberts!

Is it Lindbert?

Yeh. Because they stayed with us at the time that they bought that.

And the one next to him on the point...that's where the cabin was? The CCC cabin?

No. In this way was where the cabin was.

Oh, this way.

This way in from there. Yeh. In from there. 'Cause they didn't own...see, the state owns a line right straight through there. From where the end of the park is, see. And up that way there's some there...They go in over state land to go to that, see? To go to those places. And that's where the Lindberts built. Then their son built a place in there, too.

Yeh. He's over right across from me.

Yeh.

I'm right next to Kelly. Let's see. There's Kelly, and then Bowman, and then Ashley.

Yeh. Uh-huh. Yeh.

And then so on.

Yeh. Yeh. Uh-huh. Yeh.

You didn't know... did you know the Keaseys?

Keaseys? I remember something about that name.

There were two families of Keaseys.

Yeh. Ah, they were from where, now?

Pontiac.

Yeh. Pontiac. They had an electrical business, didn't they?

Yes. Uh-huh .

Yeh. They bought when we lived in the lodge. Built the first place over there. ???????? Yeh.

Well, we bought their place.

Oh, you bought the Keasey place. Yeh, I know. That was built when we lived in the lodge. Yeh.

So you left there in...

Fifty.

Fifty. So it was before...it was between '46 and '50?

Ah...yeh .

He said that he had had trouble getting material because of the war. Well, this was probably...he probably came in there in '46 and started building.

Right. Might have been about that time. Yeh. Because...well...a lot of them had trouble getting stuff around, too, you know. Because up in here, ah, they didn't seem to get stuff as quick as they did down around Detroit.

Where did...ah...where were...did you have any stores close by here?

Nothing. Only at the corner.

Up at Vienna?

Yeh. And across, where the Laundromat is, used to be a little old country store. And when we came up here, that Harold Morris owned it.

Oh?

Out to, ah, I believe two people by the name of Bardings, bought that then. Then the Bardings sold out to someone else, and so on, until a fellow by the name of Art Bergerone got it, and it burned down. And, of course, the bar was originally a garage and blacksmith shop. And Harold Morris and Mr. Black started that. 'Cause Mr. Black owned it. And Harold Morris went in with him, and they're the ones who originally started that Spot.

Ah, did Davis' start the business on this side?

Yes. Yeh. Uh-huh. Spite business.

Spite business?

She had an argument with Art Bergerone so...well, they had a garage there at first, see. And she had an argument with Bergerone, so she started with bread and milk. Well, Lil's a very good friend of mine. I've known her for all these years. But she put the bread and milk in, and, of course when the store burned down, she went into business then.

They had originally a garage there, is that right?

Yes, it was a garage. Yeh. Uh-huh.

And a gasoline station?

Yes. That's right. Uh-huh. Yeh.

Let's see how my tape's doing... Oh, I've got some left. Well, let's see what else we have here. How about fires? Forest fires. Do you recall any bad fires around here?

No. Not right through here. The closest fire we...I remember was south of here...down, oh, that little lake. You go on down south of, ah...Dollar Lake? No. No. At that time it was run by a man by the name of Drouillard. Oh, shoot! What is the name of that little lake down there? I can't remember. But it's a very small lake, although you'd be surprised how many houses there are around it now. (Caulkins Lake) And at that time there was only a shed on it that Drouillard (sp.) owned. And they run the bar over in the 'Berg at that time.

Oh?

Now it might have been, if you could have gone and gotten in touch with Harold Burns over here. Harold Burns' father came in here with the surveyors. And they're the ones who built this little place over here. And his father also ran the bar started in Johannesburg. He's buried over in that cemetery.

Is that where you get the name, "Burns Avenue?"

Yes. That is how it's named Burns Avenue. Yeh. Now I understand that they got some of this property for wages, too. Is what I heard that quite a few men that owned in here originally, you know, from Indiana - but that's how they got it. This Graham and Wallace went Kaffloey.

And they didn't lose that property when Graham and Wallace lost their property?

No. No. Somehow they...

I'm surprised that they wouldn't lose it, because...

No. They didn't. No. They didn't It, ah...

Of course, anybody who bought the property from Graham and Wallace, if they paid cash for it, they would own it, wouldn't they?

Oh, yeh. Yeh Yeh.

So you don't know of any big fires right around here?

No, I don't. That over there... there was a fire over there one time, and that's right south of us here. Ah, south...you go down past Little Bear Lake. And there's a road goes on down in there--there's a little lake down in there. I don't know what they did call that

One of the Spectacle Lakes?

Oh, no. No. No. Not one of the Spectacle...No. It's there beside the Old State Road.

The other side? Oh, ah...

Yes. It's south of the Old State Road.

What's the name of that lake? Is it Shupac...or...

No. No. Shupac is on over towards Lovells.

But it was off of that road to...

It was off of that road, yes. 'Cause it didn't jump across Old State Road.

When was...what year was that?

Well. We lived in the lodge at that time, so, gosh, I...

Between '46 and '50

Yeh. Yeh.

Were there homes lost or...

No. No. There was nothing over in there but woods. Nothing but woods.

Ah...what other incidents stand out in your mind, Mrs. French, about this place up here? Have you lived up here in the winter time back then? Of course you did. Yeh.

Yes. We lived in the lodge year-round. And we have lived here year-round until three...four winters...it will be four winters this coming winter, when Mr. French started having some light strokes. And our three daughters...two of them live in Madison Heights and one lives in Detroit...and

they said that we couldn't stay up here alone in the winter anymore, because it was getting...we were having a bad time finding somebody to plow us out. 'Cause when the oil wells came in here, you know, they all went to work for the oil wells. And they didn't want to work just...you know.

Ah...Dewey wouldn't plow you?

Dewey (Thomas) plowed us right until then. Yes. And they got rid of this stuff then, they said, a lot of it, and so they didn't plow anymore.

Is your husband still living?

No. He died in '83. Dec. 28th of '83.

Ah...that's the same month my mother died.

Is it? So we came up... He was here that summer before... the summer of '83, and then he passed away. We were at my daughter's when he dropped dead.

Last winter I tried to get a hold of you in Madison Heights. Mr. Kelly talked with somebody and told him your daughter's name was Collins.

Yes, it is.

And I tried to get a hold of...to find it, but there were so many Collins' in the book that I...it was impossible.

Yeh. Yeh. Because her mother-in-law and all of them live there in Madison Heights.

But...but what would be the phone number there?

I'll get it for you in a second.

All right. Okay.

Now, One Two Oh-313-li7-1502.

If, ah, this winter when...I'm going to try and put this all together this winter...

Uh-huh.

But I may want to call you and ask you some things.

Okay. Yeh. Well, I'll be going down there probably about the first of October.

First of October?

Uh-huh. And I'll stay until, oh, May as a rule. I came back last year in May and this year in May.

Do you have any pictures of old...way back?

No. I don't have. My daughters have all those.

Oh.

Yeh. When we decided to sell here, why the girls came up and took all of the stuff that they... 'cause...yeh, I had, even a picture of the old corner store.

Is that right?

Yeh. The old corner store.

If...if we decide to put pictures in this history, would it be all right to come and see you and make some copies?

Sure. Sure. Yeh.

Ah, I also want to tell you what we are going to do ...Is, I told the people at-- the librarian at Johannesburg that I would give her all my tapes when I was through, so when somebody wants to...research or whatever, they'll be there.

Yeh. Yeh.

So they can use them.

Yeh. 'Cause there's quite a few people around here that belong to the library group over there...association, and, ah. So they would...they'd probably be very willing and glad to get these.

Do you recall the year that that plane crashed...that jet plane?

Ah...well, I should. The Burns '--Barnes who lived over here, and he was out on the lake fishing. And that year we had a terrible time with those damn planes around here. Diving over the lakes, you know. And...ah...Bud was out fishing, and we saw him come tearing up, and we was out here on the porch. And he come there. "My God," he says, "A plane went down over here." He says, "I thought they were going to come right down over the lake and take me," he says, "Like the one over at VanAtten Lake (sp.)" You know they decapitated a couple over there, you know?

Oh, did they?

Yes, they did. Years ago. And Bud knew about that, see. He says, "My, God. I thought he was going to come right down. He says, "He finally went up

and," he says, "He's down over there on Harold's place. And, of course, Harold didn't own it then. Harold had sold out, see. But you know where it went down back up there?"

Yeh. I've been to the site. (About 100 yards west of Meridian Line Road, and about 50 yards or less south of South Shore Drive. In 1988 a pilot could still see a gap in the tree canopy.)

Yeh. Bud came here. Well then, we all rushed down to the lake, of course, and we could see the smoke and stuff coming up, except...And then we...of course, right away the army was here. And they even came here.

They wouldn't let you...

And they wouldn't let anyone over there, at all, see. And, ah...I did have a piece of the...because Bud did go over there after that, one day, and they did find a little piece of aluminum that was pretty well banged and blistered. I had that for a while and then I gave it to my grandson.

You couldn't find a piece of metal, though, that was bigger than that over there. (about the size of a cigarette package.)

No. No.

But...ah...do you recall what year that was?

I'm just trying to think what year that was, now.

Back in the Sixties?

Oh, Yeh. Well...yeh. It must...Well, because we retired and came up in '64 and built the house, here. The year that Mr. French retired from the Ford Motor Company. And we came up and built this place that year. And I think it was maybe two or three years after that...or maybe possibly four.

Sixty six... '67.

Sixty-seven. Somewhere along there. Sixty-eight It was somewhere along there. It was before '70. I'm quite sure it was before '70.

I know my kids were quite little when it happened.

Yeh. Yeh.

Sixty-six, '67?

Yeh. Somewhere around there. It must have been. Yeh. Then you don't think, what...you know, about marking down dates or anything.

You're younger then, and we didn't, you know.

Yeh.

When now I...when I think back there's a lot of things that I could have marked and I'd know the dates, but danged if I know them now.

You know what my dad used to do. He lived on a lake (Bush Lake) in Holly. And he used to have a calendar...one of those big ones with blocks?

Oh, yes.

And he put everything that happened on that day, you know, anything of importance he put in there, in the square. So he had quite a list of things.

Yeh.

Ah. Do you think of anything outstanding that you recall about all the years you were here?

I don't know of anything that happened or anything other than, as I say, that, ah...that airplane going down. That really was the biggest, and the only thing here at the lake. And then those few drownings. I don't know of another thing... we've been very fortunate... No fires or anything like that.

Very fortunate on that.

And we have worried a lot about that because of the state park. And as to what people would...how the fires would be built up there.

Yeh. As long as they keep them on this side of the road.

Yeh. Yeh.

They'll be all right.

And, ah...ah, 'course since they're...they're patrolling that a little better than they used to. Although, that was a few years, you know there that they had college boys there in the summer time.

I remember.

And I still think that they make enough money that they still could hire those boys. Cause in the summer time those college boys need work.

Yeh. They'd be at that shed, too.

They were at the shed...right at the shed. Collect it when the people came in. As it is now, I've heard from different men of Conservation, they're finding very little money, some times, in the can.



Well, is that it? Is it an honor system?

It's an honor system. Honor system. Other than he comes in and asks everybody. Well, they all paid. But what have they got to show for it, or what has he got to say?

Yeh. Well, if they have or haven't, he can't prove it.

When the young men were there, it was taken care of. And you can't tell me they didn't make enough money off of that, then. So the State, why...a lot of it is just the way the state runs things. See the grease out there to keep the squirrels off the feeder? And even at that, they get up and wreck three of the things on this side of it.

Oh, I see. Just a????????

I had to put some wire stuff on it. Little snots.

Those birds are pretty there.

Oh. We've had beautiful wild canaries here. Chipmunk. was just trying to go up, but it's greasy down there and he couldn't make it, either.

Did you ever see any bears or wildcats around?

Ah...bobcat. Yes. Yep. We did. Of course, don't tell anybody. That thing's not on, is it?

Yeh.

Yes. He was right out here in the front yard, and we chased him out of here.

How long ago...Oh. That would be since '64.

Oh, yes. Yes. That was since the Cooks lived here. Cooks was living down here then. 'Cause I came in the house and told Russ, I said, "I just chased him your way. Uh-huh. And once we saw a bear.

One bear?

Yeh. Up across the road, up here over back of where the mail boxes are.

Yeh. And we've seen lots of bear tracks along the lake shore. Early, and when we lived in the lodge, there were a lot of bear tracks there.

But...ah...fox. They've come right out here and fed out of the feeder, fox have.

Oh, is that right?

Yeh. Uh-huh. But that was some years ago, before it was so built up. Yeh. And that's, too, in the fall of the year when we were alone, and there was nobody else here, see. Ah...we saw a bear north of here, 'course, up in that...

That's thick up there.

Yeh. Up there. Because they hunt bear up there every year.

That's a pretty thick forest up there.

Yeh. We've seen that up in there. We've seen bear there. Not, I mean...

I saw about seven or eight elk up there last year. Not there, but up around the corner...up where ???????? around. (Sparr Road)

Oh, yeh. Uh-huh. Yeh. Up in there that...ah...there is a lot of elk up there.

Yes, there is. In fact, we have friends who live up there, on Roby Road?

Yeh, and they don't even put a garden in, any more, because the elk came up and ruined everything.

Is that right?

Yeh. Uh-huh. Yeh.

I was on Roby Road yesterday. I wanted to see where it went so I went down it...

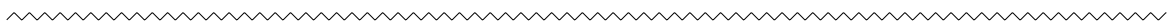
Yeh. It dead-ends.

I came down to a chain down there.

Yeh. Uh-huh. Yeh. It dead ends there. There used to be some elderly people in there when we lived in the lodge, and they raised...ah...ah...fox, and had some mink.

Oh, yeh?

Yeh. You know-for the pelts. But they're all gone now. They were old maid brothers and sisters. They had no families and they all...



**(end of tape, made at the summer cottage of Mrs. Katherine Louise French; on Burns Avenue, Big Bear Lake, by William H. Thomas Sr.)**