



As we move into the winter season on Sand Lake and we enjoy the peace and solitude, we thought it might be useful to view Stewardship of the lake in the review mirror and look at some history of the area. Here is what we know: Sand Lake was originally part of the lands of the Ojibwa Nation and was named Migiziwijiwan. Neighboring Fireside Lake was named Rice Lake. An article in the Leader Telegram Chippewa Valley dated August 30, 2009 details information about the Ojibwa Mission Cemetery located on Indian Mission Road by Fireside Lake that has a message board giving the history of the cemetery. It talks about a skirmish in the area between the Sioux and the Chippewa in 1840. In 1897 it was bought by the La Crosse Diocese for an Indian Mission Church that was active until 1915. A large white cross and smaller crosses remain at the cemetery.

According to the Wisconsin State Historical Society's 1914 Plat book of Rusk County, our lake was renamed Sand Lake and had 9 property owners holding the land surrounding it. A section of the north end was owned by Judge Dayton Cook and parts of that property are still owned and inhabited by his descendants. Between 1915-1920, most of the north and east ends of the lake, adjacent to the Cook property, was purchased as farmland by the Lewis family who had sheep and cows. This area is now owned by the Sapetta, Hehn and Cook families. Located at the south end, where Wimpy's Bar was later located, was a fish camp that was active during the logging that took place in the early 1900s. Divers in that area have found remnants of old kettles and logging capstans. The nearest Post Office was in Island Lake.

Moving forward, Sand Lake history is dependent on the reminiscences of local residents including David Morley, Jude Wright Peskuski and David Cook. By the 1950's there were 3 commercial enterprises on Sand Lake that included Reimer's Birch Point Resort (now Wright's Birch Point Resort), McGill's Bar (now a private residence owned by the Franks) and Wimpy's Bar (now also a private residence owned by John O'Connor).

Dan and Katherine McGill's Bar was the gathering place on Sand Lake. Everyday people would come to the bar for a drink or two, but most of the time, they were just catching up on the news at Sand Lake. Lasting friendships were developed and for the kids, there was a juke box and games to play. Fourth of July was celebrated yearly at McGills with a picnic, kid's games and beauty contests such the prettiest men's legs contests. There was no formal Lake Association. The pontoon parade was also held at that time and sponsored by McGills. Groceries and other items could be purchased at McGills or down Highway 40 at Brandstetter's Grocery Store.

In the 1960's, Wimpy's Bar, owned by the Vandervoorts, was a "happening place". Lots of people loved to go there for the fun inside, but there was also great fun outside. Wimpy made a wonderful softball field in the field just north of the Bar. Softball teams played in the summer league, and there would also be occasional softball tournaments there too. People loved to play there, and there were also many spectators that joined in the fun. Wimpy had a great business!

Reimer's Birch Point Resort, now Wright's Birch Point Resort owned by Jack and Jude Wright Peskuski has a long history. Originally, the land was purchased in 1936 by the Reimers from a single woman who lived there with her special needs son. The Reimers turned it into a resort and named it Birch Point Lodge which was later renamed Reimers Birch Point Resort. At that time, visitors to the resort were mostly cops and fireman that came up to relax, fish and get away from the city of Chicago. In the mid 1940's, the Reimers put the road in. Prior to this, everything came across by pontoon including lumber, tools and food. Putting the road in was a major undertaking since it had to go through some 90 plus, acres of woods that had birch trees everywhere. Fortunately, mid-way, they found a gravel pit and sold the gravel to the county, which helped pay for the road. The shoreline was filled in with sand. The sand was brought over on the ice and then when the ice melted, the sand dropped down. Apparently, this was the only legal way to add to the shoreline. The entire resort was finished in the 50's including the "Point" which was also known as Cottages 3,4 and 5 and is now owned by Catherine Mary & John Schiller, the John & Mike Shaughnessey family and the McDonnell's. In the spring of 1975, Mort and Marge Wright purchased the resort as their retirement, having come there as resort visitors since 1956 and it became

Wright's Birch Point Resort. In 1988, the "Point" became the Condominium Association and was divided up into the current properties. In 2006, Jack and Jude Peskuski gradually took over the management of the resort from Marge Wright.

Stewardship of the lake is an ongoing process and one endeavor that has been ongoing since 1986 is the monitoring of the clarity of the water. Fred Cook was one of the first people in the state to participate in the monitoring of the water. After him, Greg and Ellen Mihm began monitoring and now David Cook continues the monitoring that his father began. In general, the average water clarity has improved from an average of 9 ft in 1986 to an average of 16 ft in 2020. Efforts by lake owners are benefiting the lake.

The Sand lake Association formalized into a 501c3 nonprofit in 2016. This has allowed the organization to apply for grants like the Clean Boats Clean Waters grants from the DNR that have funded the boat inspector at the boat landing. Currently there are between 80-85 landowners on Sand Lake and estimated 13 year round residents.

Sand Lake carries deep emotional ties for those who grew up spending their summers at this beautiful spot. Through good stewardship of our lake, these same ties will continue to future generations.

Since history is constantly being made, we would love to hear information that others have to contribute toward this document. We can periodically update you with these posts.

Please send information to the Education Committee at [educationcommittee@sandlakewi.com](mailto:educationcommittee@sandlakewi.com)