

## **A History of Timberlane Rustic Lodges by Mark and Laura Varey**



### **Timberlane at the turn of the Century**

In 1882, Nathaniel Davidson purchased his farm of 250 acres on the shores of Lake Manitou for \$104.85 from the Crown by Patent. Here he and his wife Elizabeth Timblyn raised their family of 5 children. Nate died in 1892 at the age of 47, leaving his wife, Elizabeth, and his oldest son Bert, aged 16, to run the farm. Together they continued to develop the farm until she married Alexander Porteous in 1903. The next month she transferred the homestead to her eldest son, Bert, for \$1.00. He never married. He continued to improve the farm and added a farm house and a large barn in early 1900, just west of the driveway. The barn has since been taken down.

In 1928, Bert sold the farm to Percy Campbell for \$2200.00. In 1931, Vesper McCutcheon married Percy’s sister, Lily, and Percy sold the farm to him for \$2500.00. Vesper (Vep) continued to improve the farm. Vep also liked to fish, so one day he decided to move an old hen house down to the flats by the harbor for his fishing gear. It was located where Cedar Cabin is today and it was quite visible from the water. Some American fishermen noticed the building and asked Vep if they could stay there on their next trip. Vep agreed and he added a sleeping wing to each side of the cabin. This is how the Lodge began.

Each year, Vep would build a new cabin. He called his creation 'McCutcheon's Cabins'. The new lodge owner built a central shower with individual access to the private stalls directly behind Oak Cabin. Vep's wife Lily, loved to cook and recite poetry. Lily and the cook, Mrs. Roberts, did all the cooking on a wood stove located in the old summer kitchen in the farm house. Refrigeration was achieved with an ice house. Every winter, ice was cut by hand from McCutcheon Bay (now called Timberlane Bay), by Vep and the Middaugh boys. Three to four hundred blocks were pulled up the hill by horses and placed in the icehouse. Sawdust sprinkled on each layer kept the ice from freezing into a large mass and also kept it from melting during the summer. The ice was used to cool the cleaned fish. When the fishermen left, the catch was wrapped in wet jute sacks, and packed with ice in a container so it would stay fresh for the two to three day trip home.

In 1951, Vep sold the farm and Lodge to Robert and Evelyn Hans from Indiana. They improved the property by building the office and residence to live in while they were here in the summer and fall season. They built a gate "Han's Timberlane Camp". This was the first time that the name 'Timberlane' was used.

In February 1964 the Hans family sold the Lodge and farm to Robert and Letea Busche also from Indiana. In 1973 they sold it to Dowling Motor Hotel Ltd. This Company was owned in turn, by John and Eva Moss from Sudbury. On May 28, 1976, the Moss family sold to Robert and Eleanor Taylor from Southern Ontario. They only had the Lodge for two years before selling to Eleanor's sister Mae and her husband Kevin Mackan in 1978. The Mackans had been invited up to help the Taylors. They loved the location so much they asked to take over the resort and the Taylors agreed. The Mackans made many improvements. They rebuilt the break water, originally put in by Vep McCutcheon, added two pontoon boats and the six Stanley boats all with new motors. They tore down the original cabin, the chicken coop, and built Cedar Cabin. They relocated the building known as "Timbers" from Southern Ontario where it was once a barn for race horses. This 'barn' became the new recreation hall. They also rebuilt the fish factory. The central shower was replaced by individual bathrooms in each cabin in 2002 or 2003. Gas stoves or fireplaces replaced the old stone fireplaces in some cabins. Refrigerators, microwaves and coffee makers were added. The Mackan family owned the Lodge for 29 years before selling to the current owners, Laura and Mark Varey, on May 9, 2007.

While the dining room in the old Victorian farmhouse was in good shape when the Wall-Varey clan took over, the old summer kitchen was getting tired and there were no bathrooms on the main floor. Over the winter of 2008-09 the recreation hall was transformed into the new dining room with a modern commercial kitchen. In the winter of 2009-10, the unused portion of the same building was refinished as the new recreation hall called 'Timbers'. The next goal will be to open the home behind the office and the old farmhouse to the public as housekeeping accommodations plus a 'Bed and Breakfast'. This will allow Timberlane to cater to winter guests for snowmobiling, ice fishing, cross-country skiing or just sitting by the fire.



Timberlane Rustic Lodges from the air today.