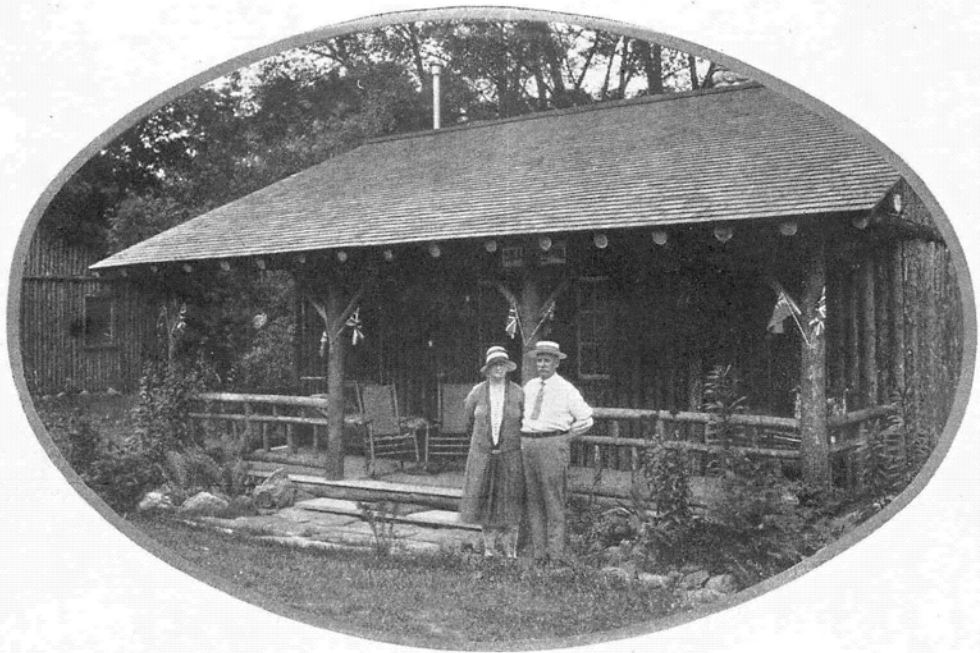


CEDAR SPRINGS

SUMMER CAMP
1924-1932



W. D. AND MRS. FLATT
AT THEIR CABIN
CEDAR SPRINGS

CEDAR SPRINGS PRIVATE RUSTIC CABIN

SUMMER CAMP, 1924-1932

It is with a sense of gratification in one way and, if the two extremes can be combined, with a feeling of deep regret in another, that the active control of Cedar Springs is passed on to the Cedar Springs Community Club. The active control of the management of the Cedar Springs rustic cabin development has meant more to me than a business venture. It has been an accomplishment that represented the fulfillment of a dream. It has been one of those things in an individual's life to which, he can give whole heartedly of time and care and feel, when the dream becomes a reality, that the success attained more than merited the effort given.

In having watched the growth, within less than ten years, of this majestically wooded vacation ground into a beautiful summer camp where families can, while within short distances of leading cities, enjoy the peace and contentment found only in the solitudes of nature, I have felt a certain pride as the decade slipped by. I endeavored to promote a community spirit—a community camp where the highest ideals of loyalty and citizenship would prevail. I feel, as the Community Club steps in to take over where I leave off, that I have achieved my purpose and that control is now in the hands of people whose co-operation helped as much as my individual efforts to make possible the Cedar Springs development.

I desire to mark the occasion of the change in control by recalling, briefly, interesting facts, legends and stories that I believe will interest the cabin owners who continue to spend their summer at the beautiful summer camp. As those familiar with the camp are aware it comprises about three hundred and fifty acres of hills, shaded valleys and rolling landscape, a secluded vacation ground of enchanting beauty. The location is convenient to great centres of population such as Toronto, Hamilton, Brantford, Galt, Guelph, Kitchener and other cities and towns.

One has to visit Cedar Springs to gain a proper appreciation of the true beauty of the camp. A short motor ride from the aforementioned places permits one to step out of a motor car at one of the highest elevations above the sea level in the Township of Nelson, and see the natural beauty of the rugged hills and woodlands. Apart from the sites of cabins, nestling among the cedars, the location, other than minor developments for the pleasure of the community, is still in the primeval state. Cedar Springs brings at once to one all the beauty, charm and spirit of restfulness that can only be otherwise obtained in the solitudes of the great Northland.

In presenting a brief history of the township in which the summer camp is situated and in relating stories, I do so with the hope that they will take the reader back in memory, as they do me, to the adventurous characters who hewed their homes out of the virgin forests of Nelson township and who were a link with England in Empire development in the then outposts of Canada. With the stories and history I relate, added to further by personal study and interest, I trust you

will follow me through those decades that witnessed changes in industry, science and transportation and have played their part in Canada's progress and some of which are fresh in the minds of the present generation.

Cedar Springs private rustic cabin summer camp is located in the township of Nelson, County of Halton, occupying the greater portion of the lands where the villages of Cumminsville, Dakota and Willbrook stood. The exceptional water facilities for power purposes made the township of early days the center for grist mills, saw mills, tanneries, furniture factories and a powder mill.

The township was the earliest settled portion of Halton County. Back in 1800 the Bates family settled there and the first white child to see the light of day in the township or county was Augustus Bates. As one delves into the early history of the township the notable figure of Captain Joseph Brant is encountered. The life and progress of that period enable one to visualize the important part played in early Canadian development by Captain Brant, not only in the role of war chief, by which so many recall him, but in diplomatic relations with the nobility and ablest statesmen of England. Perhaps there is no more striking testimony to the noble character of Brant than his early realization of the need of a missionary among his own people and the pioneers. To his insistence on the presence of a religious leader Mr. Davenport Phelps was appointed in 1801, and resided in the Township about 3 miles from Burlington Bay, from where he travelled far and wide in the discharge of his duties.

The first actual settler on the land where Cedar Springs is located was Mr. Thomas Simpson, a veteran of the Napoleonic wars. He was a cavalry man and the proud possessor of three medals for distinguished services with the Imperial forces at Salamanca, Vittoria and Toulouse. In the reign of George IV he was given a crown grant of one hundred acres on the hill above number two fairway of the golf course at the Springs. Mr. Simpson left England in a sailing ship that took fifteen weeks to make the voyage to Canada. Arriving at Wellington Square in 1814 he made his way north and on the site of the aforementioned grant, solid bush then, he built a log cabin and began the clearing of the land. Soldier, tailor and man of many parts, Mr. Simpson's varied abilities fully equipped him to become the ideal type of pioneer. He could tan deer skins and make boots for his family. He carded and spun wool and knit and wove it into cloth, mitts and socks. His handiness with the scissors and needle made possible all the provision necessary for clothing the family. The living conditions of those days required not only sterling character and initiative on the part of the head of the pioneer household but an able helpmate. In this respect Mr. Simpson was fortunately blessed. The nearest store to the Simpson cabin was at the corner of the present Dundas street highway and the Cedar Springs roadway, just below the rock cut east of Water-down. It was not uncommon for Mrs. Simpson to throw a quarter of cured pork on her shoulder and trudge over the trail to the store to trade for groceries. Mrs. Simpson was one of the first women to offer produce of the farm on Hamilton market. It was necessary for her to carry her produce on horseback to the Market, quite a contrast to the present methods of conveyance.

Notwithstanding the arduous duties of pioneer life, Mr. Simpson, an ardent Presbyterian, never forgot his kirk or its teachings. He spread his enthusiasm for a place of worship to his neighbors and was responsible for them joining in a bee to erect the first church in the vicinity. The logs were cut down, dressed and the church built on the site where St. Paul's Presbyterian church on the Dundas highway in Nelson now stands.

Interesting stories have come down of the Simpson family and other pioneers of Nelson. It is related that Mrs. Simpson had a horn hanging on the wall of her log cabin kitchen and on which she could blow blasts that reverberated through the woods. One day a pioneer was lost in the dense woods. Mrs. Simpson could hear an occasional call for help from him. She secured the horn from the cabin and kept answering the lost man's calls. It transpired that the pioneer had been pursued by wolves and time after time he felt the pack would have attacked him if the vigorous blasts from Mrs. Simpson's horn had not stopped the trailing animals in their tracks and enabled him to reach the clearance in safety.

Mr. Simpson, no doubt due to the soldierly instinct that associated water with campaigning, used rare judgment in building his home close to that abundant supply of water now known as Twelve Mile Creek. His military training also implanted a love of horses in him and he was the first man in the vicinity to own a horse, a trusty and inseparable friend of pioneers.

It was only fitting that when the final chapters in the colorful careers of Mr. and Mrs. Simpson were written that they should be laid to rest in the cemetery

beside the little log church that they struggled so valiantly to build and maintain and in which the early and still thriving faith of their fathers was planted.

In 1857, the Canada Powder Company purchased lands where Cedar Springs now stands. A powder mill was constructed and these, too, typified the difficulties pioneers of the farm and industry overcame in this section. The powder press was shipped by boat to Hamilton Beach, moved on greased timbers to Wellington Square and then drawn on a specially constructed sleigh by thirteen yoke of oxen to the site of the powder mills. Later this company was taken over by the Hamilton Powder Mills company and it was this concern that supplied much of the powder used in blasting the Canadian Pacific Railway's right of way through the Rockies.

On October 9th, 1884, a terrific explosion wrecked the powder mills. The explosion happened at the noon hour when, fortunately, only six men were on duty. Four met instant death, another died the same night and the other survivor of the shift lived a number of years. The mills were not rebuilt. Some two hundred men were consequently thrown out of employment. They drifted to other parts of the country and the villages were soon practically deserted.

Many stories have been related of the explosion and I will recount two that have been passed along but that I would be chary of vouching for the truth of. One man claimed he was blown so high when the explosion occurred that he could see ships sailing on Lake Ontario, ten miles distant. It is hardly necessary to elaborate the story by saying he survived.

Another man, who was a short distance from the mills at the time of the explosion, said his false teeth were blown out of his mouth and were found one year later at a point two miles distant.

Following the explosion, Mr. Edward Corlett, manager of the Hamilton Powder Mills company, purchased the company's lands and planted a large apple orchard. It might be interesting to note at this stage that present day statesmen were not the first to sense the possibilities of intra-Empire trade. For many years the apples from this orchard found a ready market across the sea, the fruit comparing in standard and quality to any shipped from the Province. A number of cabins at the Springs are built in this orchard.

After Mr. Corlett acquired the land, my brother and I purchased the virgin pine at the north end of the property. This was in 1885. Some of the pine monarchs of the forest were six feet on the stump and over one hundred feet high. We found a ready market for this timber in Quebec and much of it was destined for masts and deck planks in England's merchant marine. The timber was hauled to Lake Ontario and rafted into drams at Hamilton Harbor, the drams being one hundred and fifty feet long by fifty feet wide. They were then towed across Lake Ontario to the St. Lawrence River. There river men took charge and with huge oars guided the drams of timber down the Lachine Rapids and to Quebec. At this sea port the timber was loaded in ocean vessels for England. Some of the old stumps from these pines, cut forty-seven years ago, were dynamited out in the past year when the Cedar Springs golf course was under construction.

During the time we were removing the timber from these lands, I became fascinated with the natural beauty of the property, the great abundance of pure spring water, spring creeks and other advantages. This impression never left me and in later years I found myself returning to the property at different times to spend a few happy, restful hours and commune with nature. Then again, there was another magnet that drew me to this part of Nelson Township. Just one mile down, the winding Twelve Mile Creek, that now flows gently through the land that comprises Cedar Springs, passed the home of the girl who later became my devoted wife—the woman who has faithfully shared my trials, has encouraged my dreams and ambitions and has made possible any success I may have achieved. It was quite natural, therefor, when the time came to carry into effect my cherished plans, that I had a highly impelling motive in building a rustic cabin summer camp on lands that I had been so intimately connected with in my early career.

In 1824 more settlers took up land where the Cedar Springs site is now laid out. Exactly after the lapse of a century, in 1924, I began purchasing the lands that form Cedar Springs. Much of the property had been rented for years and it required no end of effort and expense to acquire and put the property in shape for cabin buildings. In 1926 the first cabins were offered for sale and sold readily. The work of cabin building was completed in 1932, seventy-eight cabins having been constructed and sold to desirable families in Hamilton, Toronto, Guelph and other cities and also to some families from the states of New York and Pennsylvania. Mrs. Flatt, Bill and I retain the ownership of one cabin, therefore remain as one of the family of Cedar Springs Cabin owners.

With the cabin development scheme a reality within less than a decade, it, with the undeveloped property comprising about two hundred and fifty acres more or less, the lodge, community buildings, etc., is now handed over to the Cedar Springs Community Club, an executive body of owners that will manage the camp for the cabin owners. This was the original intention I had as soon as certain conditions were complied with by the cabin owners and I am now fulfilling it.

Of the several developments in which I have been interested and have played a part in the expansion of the Chedoke section of the southwest end of Hamilton and the north shore of Hamilton, there is none which has afforded me a greater amount of joy than the completion of the Cedar Springs project.

The success I have attained in establishing a family playground that, in my opinion, is second to none on the continent has eclipsed my fondest dreams. It has only been made possible by the loyal, faithful and consistent co-operation of those employed on the grounds and the wonderful community spirit of good will shown by the cabin owners. My inspirations and ambitions were achieved through the spirit that others entered into the Cedar Springs development. In placing the operation in the hands of the Cedar Springs Community Club I do so knowing that the goodwill born of the venture will endure. I sincerely wish and pray that during the years to come the families that make up the community of Cedar Springs will truly enjoy the health, happiness and pleasure it was my aim to provide in this beautiful recreation camp. If such is their lot I will derive a satisfaction that I could measure by no higher standard than that I have played some part in contributing to the happiness of others.

Sincerely yours,

W. D. FLATT.

I CANNOT find a truer word
Nor fonder to caress you;
Nor song or poem I have heard
Is sweeter than "God bless you!"