



S.S. Carolina at Goodrich Dock - 1920

CHAPTER XI

NEW HOPE

Mr. Phelan seems to have been a rather good prophet, for although other areas of the state forged ahead in fruit growing and factory growth, agriculture and the resort business kept the White Lake Area alive. In the late 1890's and early 1900's White Lake and the Montague Area offered a resort paradise to city weary folks from the East.

The first summer cottages were built in the Sylvan Beach area in 1883. By 1890 the farmers who had been taking in "summer boarders" were already beginning to realize they could make a lot more profit from the tourist crop than from any other they could scabble out of the sandy soil.

In 1894, three men from Moline, Illinois were spending the summer at Sylvan Beach with their families. One day, on a walk down the beach, they came upon a spring of fresh water and above it a long, flat strip of land. It seemed ideal for cottages. They induced a Grand Rapids man to join them in purchasing 40 acres from J. R. Austin, owner of the farm, later summer resort, known as "The Pines." An Indianapolis man agreed to buy a cottage, so the name Michillinda was born, out of Michigan, Illinois and Indiana. The property was purchased January 25, 1895, and by 1900 all of the 23 lots were built upon.

TABORS DECORATING
Carroll W. & Marjorie Tabor
John W. Leddick

MONTAGUE OBSERVER

Probably the word of the Michillinda venture spurred local people to take advantage of their location, too, and in the summer of 1895, the Sylvan Beach Association was formed.

Whether it was the publicity given by the formation of the two associations, or the sight of the activity in building houses, or whether there was some other cause for the resort boom around White Lake isn't exactly clear now. But there was definitely a boom.

The San Juan Association was formed in 1902 by a group of people from St. Johns on land purchased from the Dowling estate, between Long Point and Indian Point. Tom Bush was hired as caretaker and he and his wife operated Bush's Inn there. He died in 1936 and Mrs. Bush continued to operate the Inn until she retired in 1939.

Farmers all around the lake began to ignore corn and concentrate instead on summer visitors. Mrs. Nora Svensson of White Lake Villa tells amusingly the story of her family's entry into the resort business. They had sold milk and produce to the various cottages along the lake shore. Then came a development which changed the whole course of their existence.

A letter arrived from Chicago asking if three Irish families could spend their summer vacation at the Johnson home. You can imagine what consternation this request caused, and what turmoil over the question if Irishmen would enjoy Swedish cooking.

But the Johnsons agreed and pretty soon it was an accepted way of life that the Johnsons spent the summer in a tent while "summer boarders" lived in the house. Eventually a dining room was built, cottages were built, and farming was abandoned except for a garden for fresh vegetables for the hotel table.

Much the same tale could be told of nearly all the farms along the lake shore.

The most famous of our summer people of the past was John Alexander Dowie the most colorful figure ever to cross the White Lake scene.

The founder of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion came to full bloom, and withered away, during the years when White Lake ("My Little Galilee," as he called it) provided the summer retreat for the Dowie family. It also provided a source of Sunday spiritual refreshment and/or entertainment for the area's citizenry who were so inclined.

Ben Mac Dhui, site of the Dowie home, was a polished emerald in a rough emerald setting of oak forest along the north shore of white Lake, just outside the Montague City Limits.

The stately white frame house, with its gables, looked out on the waters of White Lake, across expansive green lawns dropping

in terraces to the water's edge. The lawn was bisected by a series of wide white stairs down the series of slopes.

The Dowie sect centered on Zion City, Illinois. The city is situated on Lake Michigan 40 miles north of Chicago. At the peak of its glory it was a city of 8,000 population, strictly ruled by Dowie as a totalitarian temporal as well as religious community.

Dowie called himself the First Apostle. He ruled Zion with an unyielding opposition to alcohol, tobacco, sex, and it has been said oysters.

On one occasion he banished from the city a dozen young people, two of them members of his church, in, to use his own words, "one of the saddest things in my whole experience," terming them "good for nothing." They were guilty of "a vice too shameful for me to express."

Spiritual center of Zion was the tabernacle, seating 10,000. There was a great white robed choir. There was the Zion City band. Each summer these were brought one weekend to BenMacDhui, (the name harks back to Dowie's Scottish ancestry.)

Hundreds would come to see the pomp and panoply incident to the appearance of the robed choir and uniformed band, arriving by steamer from Chicago. The ship could dock at the wharf on the Dowie lakefront.

On a Sunday afternoon the procession would move across the lawn in front of the house, along the brink of the bank, to a large tent erected to overlook the lake at what is now Pack Street. There Dowie would thunder forth his message, arrayed in purple-trimmed flowing white robe, and "crown," his full white beard adding to the impressive attire.

A small man, Dowie was a forceful exhorter. His spell-binding ability brought him from nowhere to a place of national, and international attention, if not exactly of renown. Somewhere along the way he acquired a title of "doctor."

John Alexander Dowie came up from obscure birth in Edinburgh, Scotland, by way of Adelaide, Australia, to San Francisco, and to Chicago.

It was at the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago that Dowie really got his show on the road. He developed into a person of purest saintliness, or into one of the smoothest of con men, depending on the viewpoint.

He took his "message" abroad, but with indifferent success. His most fruitful field was in the American Midwest. In a bout with the devil in Madison Square Garden, New York, he fell on his face flatter than any purely human pug.

Dowie founded Zion City in 1901, and in July of that year 5,000 of the faithful streamed out of Chicago for the promised land.

He had purchased his White Lake estate in 1900, from James and Peter Dalton. The house had been built in 1870 by James Dalton.

Dowie enlarged the house. An electric power plant and a pumping station were built to furnish power and water. That was some years before Montague had electric lights or running water.

The automobile was in its infancy, but Dowie had a launch on the lake, and a span of black horses, and black plumed carriage and two-seated four-runner cutter.

In return for permission to shut off the public road along the lake fronting his property, Dowie improved the present Old Channel Trail with clay. His whole estate was enclosed with a white picket fence. An attractive gravel driveway led into the house grounds.

Dowie in the end was to suffer the fate usual for dictators. He was overthrown by underlings in his inner circle.

As his temporal-spiritual structure was tottering Dowie was seized with a stroke. He died March 7, 1907, at the age of 60.

Dowie's widow and son, Gladstone, continued residence at Ben MacDhui, and for a time operated it as a summer resort. In his will Dowie had cut Gladstone off with \$10.00.

Mrs. Dowie and Gladstone finally left White Lake.

Dr. and Mrs. Dowie had had one other child, Esther. She was fatally burned while heating a curling iron over an alcohol lamp, as a young girl.

The Dowie house on White Lake burned in 1950. At the time it was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Struven, of Blue Island, Illinois.

The estate has been subdivided. The site of the Dowie house now is owned by Hooker Chemical Company.

These Resorts are representative of the type of facilities that made the Montague Area a favorite summer retreat for many Midwestern families.

Pigeon Hill Resort located on Old Channel Trail just north of Lloyd's Landing, which was the site of the first White Lake settlement known as the "Mouth".

The Robert Leitch family built the resort, gradually adding facilities and now have nine housekeeping cottages and a motel unit for four housekeeping apartments. This is a family type resort, covering over ten acres and extends from Old Channel Trail to the shore of Lake Michigan with its own private beach on Lake Michigan.

White Sands Resort was once the summer residence of the Lobells a Chicago family. It is situated at Long Point bordering White Lake on Old Channel Trail just south of Montague. The Resort includes housekeeping apartments, a lodge, guest house, and a boat house and docks. Operated by John Rybik.

The Timbers formerly a private estate owned by H. D. Sturdevant of Chicago, Illinois. The resort is situated on a bluff overlooking White Lake and has 30 acres of woodland. A half mile drive through the acres of woodland give it its name. It has a 500 ft. frontage. Genevieve Clabaugh Dunham, widow of Keith Dunham, also of Illinois, who purchased the land from Sturdevants, sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Smith the present owners, in February, 1952. The Smiths started the resort with two housekeeping cottages and six rooms in the main lodge and has been expanded to eight housekeeping units. The main lodge was built in 1898 and has many antique pieces of furniture and the carpeting is 40 years old and in good shape. It is located on Old Channel Trail, 2 1/2 miles from Montague.

Glenn Villa Resort located in Maple Grove on the north side of White Lake. Once known as Harvey's. The place was bought by Dan Christian about 1916 and operated by him until about 1944 when it was sold to John Strmic. It is now known as Aldumar Inn.

Lost Valley Beach Lodge situated on Lake Michigan dunes at the west end of Fruitvale Road about five miles northwest of Montague is considered a Lake Michigan showplace. It consists of 270 acres with 4,000 feet of lake frontage. It was purchased in October, 1961, by Jack Pastras from Ben Hennink of Lansing who was Sec. Treas. of Michigan Mobile Homes Association. A beautiful building has been built on the site with the side toward the lake being mostly glass. Lost Valley Beach Lodge opened for business in 1962.

Rochdale Inn owned by Fruitvale Resort Company. Situated on Brown's Pond at Fruitvale. It was started in the early 1900's and until 1930 it was a popular resort. At one time Gustave Kopp managed it. During Goodrich boat days, hundreds came to spend six day vacations with all expenses, boat included, for \$23.50. Deluxe trip for eight days was \$31.50. By train it was \$27.50. At one time, Trading Post bridge was taken out with the idea that boats could come up the river to Fruitvale, but the idea was later abandoned. It burned in 1946 and at that time was owned by John Strmic of Chicago.

Pine Bluff Resort was owned by Christian Jacob Weber who was born in Wurtenberg, Germany in 1845. He arrived at White Lake in 1868. At that time most of the settlers were of German extraction. In 1870 he purchased the nine acres of land facing the channel on which the two story house was later built, from John Selah the owner of a maple grove mill. Weber built the house to accommodate vacationers and was considered to be one of the first to do so. The dwelling was surrounded by spreading shade trees high above the stream from which point one could watch shipping in the channel. While many ships did anchor and load by lighters,

TABORS TRUCK & CRANE SERVICE
Steve & Opal Tabor

TERESA'S PIZZARIA
Anthony & Teresa Caputo

the channel was deep and wide and the schooner Ellen Wood was seen turning around in front of the house. Two more buildings were later built but finally burned. Sometime later Weber's grand-nephew, Christ Weber, took over the management with his wife whom he married in 1925. A resort has been operated there until the fall of 1966.

Jack & Jill Ranch-Resort began back in 1938, designed as a then new concept in Vacations - Exclusively for Young Adult Guests between 19 and 35 years of age. It has grown to become the Midwest's largest and finest Ranch-Resort and is still exclusively for young adults. During the 29 years of operation, over 200,000 guests have found that this is the one place that is more than 'just another Resort'.

The first year the Ranch operated in true 'old-fashioned' style; the guests (totaling less than fifty each week) lived in old wooden buildings and some in tents. There was no electricity here back in those days either. Since that humble beginning the Ranch has grown into over 1,000 acres of Michigan's beautiful Vacationland, beautiful pines and cedars, private lakes, a glass-enclosed, heated pool, lots of horses (55), live evening stage shows, all sports, carpeted rooms with tile baths, and famous food (all you can eat). But even more important is the unique Double-J brand of friendliness. For this is the most special thing about Jack & Jill Ranch-Resort - - the friendships the guests make here, the memories that stay with them long after the echo of the last activity or song has died away, long after the last 'so long' has been heard.

There are some other things about which we're mighty proud, too. There is no bar or cocktail lounge at the Ranch. There are 65 full-time staff members, including 10 men on the Sports Staff who always have lots of musical talent, too - - live stage shows and hootenannys - - shucks, never had a week without 'em!

The local churches have had the custom for many years of holding special services just for Jack & Jill guests. And each year nearly 80% of our several thousand guests attend church on Sunday morning during their vacation. We take them to church on hayracks.

White Lake Villa has the most unbroken record of ownership, being one of the 100 year farms of Muskegon County. Since the coming of Carl Johnson to the area, five generations have lived there.

Idlewild is located on Lake Street on White Lake in Whitehall and is the site of the first Swedish settlement on White Lake. In 1856 the Johnson and Sorenson families built a log cabin and lived there during winters. The next year they built a house across

ROESLER'S CITGO SERVICE

Henry E. Roesler Sr., Gladys Roesler,
Donald Roesler, Wayne Roesler

SKIPPER'S LANDING

Harry & Stella Pillinger

the road which became Johnson's home and site of the White Lake Villa. In early 1900's the place came into the possession of Fred Schmidt an enterprising hotel keeper who built several cottages there along the road. This resort became one of the best resort hotels on the lake. Idlewild has had a succession of owners and in 1960 Mr. and Mrs. Sam Shellhamer became owners.

Lakeside Inn was formerly the Michillinda Store and Post Office. It went by several names; The Dalton Mill, Spriggs Landing and Green's Mill. George H. Mason owned the store and gradually went into business renting rooms above the store and built rental cottages nearby. In 1917 it was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Glen Tallant who remodeled it into 17 rooms and three cottages. Mr. Tallant died in 1936 and in 1940, Mrs. Tallant sold to Louis Groessel and son Leslie. The father retired and the son now owns it. It is located on the south side of White Lake.

Murray's Inn first building was started in 1908 by Mr. Wm. Murray. The land was known as "The Flats" which had been camping grounds of Chief Wabaningo and his Ottawa tribe of Indians. Wm. Murray was the son of John Murray early settler. He borrowed enough money to start the building. Later other buildings were erected, one of which was built on the water's edge known as "Kumonin". Later, about the 1920's another large building was added. In 1944, Leo, son of Wm. Murray, took over the management which was considered one of the busiest resorts on the lake. Wm. Murray died about 1960 and Leo erected a two story modern motel on the channel side. It is still operating.

Michillinda Beach Lodge located north of the channel on Lake Michigan was once known as Michillinda Beach Tavern and built by Charles Stevens of Moline, Illinois as a home in 1905. Later it was sold to E. M. Duttonhofer who operated it as a resort for 29 years. Again it was sold to Mrs. and Mrs. Ray Johansen, who have developed it into a prestige resort of high quality. It is still operating.

Sea Fever Lodge formerly the summer home of the Gerber Baby Food family. The lodge is located on the edge of Lake Michigan at Sylvan Beach, Whitehall. In 1961 was bought by Mrs. Wes. Jamieson.

Although the Railroads did offer passenger service from Chicago, the bulk of the summer people chose the overnight trip from Chicago on the famous lake streamers of the Goodrich Transit Company.

At first the Steamer Ryerson ran a daily shuttle service from Grand Haven to White Lake with connections on the Goodrich boats to and from Chicago.

Each resort and most of the summer homes that sprang up around

VIKING TOOL
Warren Hutchins
Wayne Dulyeo

ROTHBURY RAMBLER & INTERNATIONAL
Fred, Ruth, Edward & Robert Webber

the lake had their own docks and the Ryerson made stops up and down the lake to pick up and deliver passengers and freight. Many the summer visitor, recalls with pleasure the trip across Lake Michigan on the Georgia, the Virginia, the Arizona, the Missouri or the Alabama, but it remained for the Carolina to become White Lakes own Goodrich boat. In the early 1900's, the Carolina began a regular daily overnight service from Chicago to White Lake making regular stops at the Sylvan Beach dock and then up the lake to the Goodrich Dock, located on the point of land at Maple Grove where the Montague City beach and Barteau Boat Works are today.

During those early days of the resort business roads were mere sand ruts throughout the length of the lake, and in those days families came early in the summer and stayed put until it was time to leave in the fall. Resort hotels were popular because they meant a real vacation for the wife and mother: no meals to cook, entertainment more or less the responsibility of the resort keepers, and a number of other families around for sociability. The same was true of the various cottage dwellers. People came early and stayed late, to the profit of local merchants and resort keepers.

Ferry boats were the accepted means of travel between the various resorts and from the channel to Whitehall and Montague. Little steamers like the Cayuga, Sylph and Sailor Boy made the runs at first, later succeeded by gasoline launches like the Oriole, the Three Sisters and the Esther. They followed more or less of a schedule, most of them planning a couple of round trips a day, and after the instigation of the regular Goodrich Line service, the ferry met the Chicago Boats at the dock and distributed the passengers to their various destinations up and down the lake.

Most old time White Lakers remember the fine old Carolina a former hospital ship that during the Spanish-American War served the nation on the Carribean, with her friendly crew and well loved skipper, Captain "Jerry" Magarrity. She was a black Iron steamer of some 275 feet in length with three upper decks of passenger cabins painted gleaming white above her black hull line, topped by one huge bright orange and black stack almost amidships.

What a sight she made steaming down White Lake with the early morning sun glancing from her bright varnish work and painting, her white upper works a soft pinkish gold, a long cloud of black smoke rolling from her stack. For many years from 1900 till her last trip in 1933, the summer life of the Montague Area was woven around the arrival and departure of the Carolina. Even today on certain quiet evenings, and early mornings, some old timers think they hear the hoarse melodious sound of her whistle echoing back and forth across the lake as she proudly sailed away to become a

part of our history, a victim of progress, the automobile and the great road building era of America.

Another important, if specialized, summer development was the coming of the Boy Scout camp, and through its example the development of the Y.M.C.A. and other boys and girls camps. First of the Owasippe Camps, Chicago Boy Scout Council, was developed on Crystal Lake (now Lake Owasippe) in 1910. It housed 40 boys on a 30 acre site donated by the Whitehall Chamber of Commerce.

Today the Chicago Council owns thousands of acres in Blue Lake Township on Big Blue Lake, White River and Lake Owasippe, has a number of camps, scores of buildings and facilities for more than 5,000 Boy Scouts a year.

Illinois Girl Scouts own more than 1,000 acres on White River. Muskegon Boy Scouts have camps on Britton Lake.

The Muskegon Y.W.C.A. operated Camp Emery on Blue Lake. Camp Pendalouan is the Muskegon Y.M.C.A. camp on Blue Lake.

So many camps have been established in Muskegon County that it now ranks second in the nation in Scout camp population.

From 1915 through 1920 the Evanston Scouts shared Owasippe with the Chicago Scouts. In 1920 a group of 8 older Scouts from the Evanston Council decided to explore sites in the White Lake area. They heard about Duck Lake and hiked cross-country to the place, coming out about where Camp Wabaningo is located.

They explored the area around Duck Lake and Lake Michigan, were enthusiastic, telegraphed the camp committee, who came, saw and were equally enthusiastic, and made arrangements to buy 100 acres at the channel from Miss Carrie Mears, whose father had owned the mill at that site. A few years later they purchased the Austin-Cooper tract from Mrs. Austin, which took in most of the north side of Duck Lake. They named their site Camp Wabaningo after the old chief Mears found when he entered White Lake. Today there are 37 buildings at the camp and accommodations for 175 boys per period.

In 1927 the Grand Valley Council of Boy Scouts, Grand Rapids, purchased land from the Evanston group and set up Camp Shawondossee at the eastern corner of the lake. Today it has nine separate camp sites, a dining hall which seats 300, there are cabins for central staff members, a first aid lodge, staff recreation building, a guest lodge and a trading post.

In order to provide support for our resort business, leisure time activities were born.

Golf came to White Lake about 1900, Mrs. Helen Lyman Greer recalls in her history of Michillinda. Margaret Lyman and George Grimes sank four empty tomato cans in J. R. Austin's field.

"Everyone laughed at Margaret's four-hole golf course," Mrs.

Greer writes, "but soon all the enthusiasts were using it, there being nothing else available."

Golf actually was responsible for the building of the Michillinda Road. The Muskegon Golf Club opened and two ardent golfers built several miles of the road at their own expense in order to be able to get to Muskegon to play.

In 1916 Judge M. Henry Guerin and a group of friends circulated a petition and got 58 signatures to form the White Lake Golf Club.

In the winter of 1902-3 a group of White Lakers got together at the home of Ed Douglass in Chicago and during the conversation the White Lake Yacht Club was born. Twenty-four members were present at the charter meeting at the Dus-Kew-Rera clubhouse at Long Point in 1903. The clubhouse was used as the social center for the club.

Because the site was inconvenient for Sylvan Beach and Michillinda residents, who made up the bulk of the fleet owners, plans for a new clubhouse on this side of the lake were started in 1904, with Mr. Roberts commissioned to draw the sketches. The site was leased (later purchased) from George Mason and in 1906 the clubhouse was finished.

In 1917, war, the automobile, golf and lack of aggressive leadership virtually closed the club. For nine years it was empty and there were even thoughts the building ought to be torn down.

In 1925, the late Albert Pack and Clarence E. Pitkin were successful in bringing to White Lake the annual regatta of the Mississippi Valley Power Boat Association. On the wave of the enthusiasm engendered by this event Mr. Pitkin in June, 1926, sparked a move to revive the yacht club.

About 40 former members met at the clubhouse, the reorganization was voted, and the White Lake Yacht Club entered on a fabulous era of growth which has continued to this day. For much of this progress credit must be given to Clarence E. Pitkin, who has served as secretary-treasurer of the organization every year since the reorganization with the exception of four years in the flag line.

A sailing school was started under the direction of John G. Guerin which has graduated more than 1,300 sailors and is regarded as a model school.

1967 is a significant year for the Old Channel Trail Golf Course, as it marks the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the first nine and also the opening of the new pro shop and the second nine which was built last year.

When the first nine was built in the 1920s, it was built with the aid of teams of horses and also one of the very first farm tractors in the area. A reminder of times gone by was the finding of Indian arrowheads both during the construction of the first nine in 1926 and the second nine in 1966.

WHITEHALL LEATHER
A Genesco Division

WHITE LAKE BOWLING LANES
Joe and Marion Gibson
Tom, Sonya, Paula, Richard, Clint, Tom Jr.
& Nordine Shapley