

Historic Homes – Ellergill to Timbers

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Ellergill by the Lake, Summer Home of W. D. McKey

In November, 1894, it was announced in the local newspaper that Chicago resident W. D. McKey had purchased the land next to the Douglas property on which he would be erecting an \$8,000 cottage in the Spring of 1895. The house was built atop a bluff on the north shore of White Lake and considered neo-classical in style. They called it "Ellergill by the Lake".

William Davis McKey was born in Janesville, WI in 1853. He, along with Charles M. Poague, co-founded McKey & Poague, a real estate service company in Chicago in 1889. McKey was also the president of Woodlawn Trust & Savings bank as well a founder of the Washington Park bank, both of Chicago. William married Grace Appleton; they had a son (who died as an infant) and three daughters. He died November 11, 1915, at the age of 61 years. She died in July 1924.

A 1900 map of the local area shows property listed to W. D. McKey and several other McKey families located near the old Dowie estate.

Henry Dexter Sturtevant became the next owner of McKey's Ellergill and the estate has since come to be referred to as the Sturtevant Estate. Sturtevant was born at the Old Channel in 1862 to James Dexter and Minerva Hills Sturtevant. He was a Chicago stockbroker by trade, Director of the Chicago Stock

Exchange for 11 years, and a member of the Chicago and White Lake Yacht Clubs. He served as Commodore of the White Lake Yacht Club from 1926 through 1928. He died in 1936.

Shortly after Sturtevant's death, M. Keith Dunham, a Chicago resident and friend of Al Pack, purchased the property. He was one of the founders of the National Cylinder Gas Company in Chicago. Dunham constructed the outdoor swimming pool and the tennis court. He also constructed an elevator that would take him and his wheelchair down the hill to his boat which was docked on White Lake. Dunham died in 1940.

In 1952, Frank E. Smith and his wife Helen purchased the house with all the furnishings. At that time, the property included the pool, a tennis court and 3 guest houses. They developed a resort and opened the facility known as the "Timbers Resort". They also opened five of the bedrooms in the main house to guests.

The number of housekeeping cottages was increased to eight. In 1957, the weekly rates averaged from \$110 to \$150 for a double, on the American plan. Nightly rates ranged from \$14 to \$22 for a double. Cottages rented on the European Plan for \$45 to \$80 per week. They also offered shuffleboard, archery, lawn games, and horseback riding as well as free motorboats for fishing.

For several years during the late 1950's, the Smiths also offered the use of their pool to the Montague Summer Recreational Program for swimming classes.

The Joseph Kurland family were regular summer visitors at the Timber's Resort, and when the property became available, they purchased it in 1973. They continued to operate the resort until around 1983, when it became a private residence once again.

A couple of years ago the house was again for sale, but a new family has purchased it and now they will become a part of its long history.

