

HISTORY OF LAKE FENTON:

Lake Fenton Once Had an Indian War

Villages of Podunk and Mount Pleasant All But Forgotten

An Indian "war against nineteenth-century "racketeers," legal battles over an island once homesteaded by a trapper, horse-drawn rail cars, long-disappeared villages of Mount Pleasant and Podunk.

These are some of the interesting items of legend and history about Lake Fenton which present day residents and visitors are not aware of as they fill leisure hours with the fun of lake living.

It was a favorite camping area of the Chippewas. Known as Long Lake then, its 850 acres of clear water enticed their canoes to an abundance of fish. The forests were bountifully supplied with deer, wolves and bear. Quantities of wild rice in the marshes at the south end attracted flocks of waterfowl.

Legend has it that in 1804 there was a Battle of Long Lake. There has been some question as to the authenticity of the records, but the first white settlers passed on the story of this fray.

The Battle of Long Lake was planned by Chiefs Ne-O-Me of the Chippewas, O-Ke-Mos of the Ottawas and Chesaning of the Hurons, to rid the region of a band of outlaws.

Some 80 of them levied tributes on the Indians and on the traders who came among the tribe. The outlaws also had kidnapped two daughters of one trader and held them in captivity. The "battle" in which all the outlaws supposedly were killed by the Indians, was said to have taken place in a ravine back of Bay Port at the north end of the lake.

The Long Lake area so delighted the Indians that they chose it, literally and spiritually, as their "Happy Hunting Grounds."

They chose their final resting places along the sandy northeast shore of Little Mud Lake, their faces laid to the setting sun with the winds in the tall pines moaning a suitable requiem.

Though the burial grounds have long since disappeared, as late as 1877 a party of workmen, constructing a dirt road across Crane's Cove at Lake Fenton, found a skeleton of enormous size buried two or three feet below the surface. It was assumed to be that of a warrior. No explanation was found for his burial there, rather than in the common burial ground. After the first white settlers had become established, the Indians of the village of Chief Fisher (also known as Visger), on the southern line of Mundy Township about a mile above the lake, began to scatter, some to farm primitively on plats near Gaines and Flushing. As late as 1879 two sons of Fisher had farms near Gaines.

THE SYLVAN BEAUTY of Long Lake was recognized early by Philip H. McOmber, who had come from Saratoga County, N.Y., about 1835 to practice law.

He chose the eastern shore of the lake, just below the Narrows, to erect his home. His stories of Genesee County refer to the McOmber home as "a most hospitable mansion which welcomed all who came, and the delicious peaches raised by him for many years on the shore of the lake were freely bestowed upon friends and visitors.

McOmber, who was the first resident attorney in Genesee County and its first prosecutor, viewed the Flint-Pontiac stage line passing his place as a profitable source of business for a tavern. He established what became Long Lake House, with horse sheds across the road, and it was not uncommon to see as many as 30 ox teams and lumber wagons pulled up there. The tavern stood at the end of what is now Petts Road.

The property was purchased in 1868 by Nathan T. Thurber, a Fenton merchant who made extensive improvements, opening it the next year as Idlewild.

The hotel became known far and wide as a summer resort for "those wishing a quiet place in the country with ample provisions for fishing, hunting, boats and carriages."

The landlord was Dwight DeNio. He and his wife were noted for their French hospitality and excellent cuisine. The DiNios later operated hotels in Fenton and Clarkston.

A doubled-decked side-wheel steamer, the George C. Langdon, named after the then mayor of Detroit who summered at Idlewild with his family, was added in 1875. Built by Capt. Palmer Westcott, Mrs. DeNio's father, it was later renamed the Idlewild. The spot at which the boat anchored was known as "The Well," considered the deepest point in the lake.

This was not, however, the first steam boat to ply the lake, as we shall see.

The building burned in 1880, but not before its patronage and popularity had been well established; there was even a waltz composed in its name.

IT MAY COME as a surprise to present-day lake residents, as well as others in Genesee County, that there was a thriving village called Mount Pleasant at the northwest corner of the lake. The village took in the present Long Branch section.

It was laid out in 1840 by John and Solomon Cook and an addition was made to it five years later.

Mount Pleasant was bisected by Long Lake and Genesee (now Torrey Road) and the Long Lake-Shiawassee Road. Streets bore such practical names as School, Water, Church, Mill, Mechanics, East, North, West and First. The old church and school remained for many years after the village disappeared.

Even earlier settlements left their imprint on this history.

A mile north, on what is now Main Road at Thompson, was Cook-sockie, the site of a small iron works which cast the pots and skillets used by the pioneers. The four corners also had a gunsmith and trading post.

And beyond it, a short distance north into Mundy Township, was Podunk, which had been the Indian village, De-mon-e-ka-wink, before the first white settlers erected about a dozen buildings, including a mill, blacksmith shop and trading post.

There are differences of opinion on how the community got its unusual name, but it is generally credited to an excited Indian, who upon seeing the mill and hearing the slap of the under-slung wheel as it hit the water, called it "pa-dunk, pa-dunk."

George Judson, Indian interpreter and original settler of Mundy, owned the Podunk Mill.

He moved it to Mount Pleasant after the village was abandoned. The need for closely linked settlements became less important as roads were improved.

Judson, appointed in 1851 as the first postmaster in Genesee County, was said to have skated across Long Lake for the mail in winter. In 1845 an office for mail had been established north of the lake as "Long Lake Post Office." It later was moved to the Judson place in Mundy.

The dry banks of a raceway, cut from Long Lake to Podunk in 1844 to run the mill are still there, now clogged with the over growth of nature. The raceway found its way into tributaries of Swartz Creek.

The time came when nearby districts were forbidden by law to divert water from the lake, causing some dissension among the residents in the Long Lake, Mundy and Linden areas.

About 100 descendants of Podunk pioneers held a reunion at the Long Lake Church in June of 1935, recalling perhaps such tales of early days as when Morgan Baldwin dragged a log through the woods so the children could find a way to Odell School (for 100 years at Baldwin and Torrey Roads); how Thomas Glover shot a bear on the main street, and the women hid in their cabins when the Indians were paid their treaty money.

IT WAS Capt. Charles Bennett, originally from New York State, who settled in Mount Pleasant in 1856 with his son-in-law, T.B. Case, and began the boat trade on Long Lake.

The captain had been offered a farm at Lakeside, on the east shore, for \$700, but it had no good harbor and he bought at the north end for the same price. Case purchased what became known as the Otis Dart farm.

The captain lost no time in building a boat, a four-masted vessel, Lady of the Lake, and had it ready to transport those attending the first Genesee County Pioneer Picnic in 1857 to what was then Governor's Island.

Up to that time, no one had laid claim to the island, some assuming it belonged to the government, but it was in truth part of the west shore, belonging to Walter Davenport.

There were as yet no docking facilities on this scenic piece of property, but Capt. Bennett, a large, powerfully built Scot, overcame this handicap by carrying his passengers ashore.

Since women were wearing hoop skirts at that time, this method of landing caused some consternation among them.

The story is told of one who considered it too immodest to be carried thus. So she sat in the boat until the picnic table was piled high with tempting goodies ? when her hunger got the better of her, she called for the captain to come and get her. When he reached the boat, he didn't carry her as he had the others, but tossed her over his shoulder" as one would carry a bag of grain," depositing her smack on a picnic table.

Captain Bennett had become acquainted with Enoch Smith, a trapper who had lived among the Indians, Smith, living in a dug-out covered with bark, made his home on the island long enough to establish "squatter's rights."

Bennett built a home for Enoch, buying his "right and title," and it became Bennett's Island.

The captain and a son, Capt. W.H. Bennett, who like his father had spent some time on the Great Lakes, built additional equipment for their picnic grounds on the Island. In 1874, the latter built a boat, the Evening Star, using the engine from an old lake boat. That craft was rebuilt into a double-decker, the Mettie Helm, accommodating about 300, which the Evening Star towed.

The gay little Evening Star, first steamer to operate on the lake, built a good deal of history for itself. It was still making trips from Long Branch to the south end as late as 1882.

W.H. Bennett and a brother, Charles J., ran a sawmill in Mount Pleasant, and the latter also built a small hotel on the main corner.

AS BENNETT Island grew in value, people from Flint and Fenton attempted unsuccessfully to dispossess Capt. Bennett.

In 1880, he traded the island and his property at the head of the lake to T.B. Case, who was living at LaSalle, in Monroe County, for a 50-acre farm. Case ran into the same difficulties, going through years of litigation and dying before the decision was made in his favor.

Case's ownership of the island was contested by descendants of the Davenport family and others.

It was not until 1898 that Evington, Charles E. and Emily Case, sons and daughter of Timothy B. Case and his wife, the former Emily Bennett, were declared undisputed owners.

Along the western shore was the farm of another pioneer, Elam Crane, whose name has been connected with lake history through the years.

Crane, native of Bristol, N.Y., took over 105 acres, which he increased to 800. Part of it fronted on what was then Black Bass Bay, behind Bennett's Island.

A large part of this area, including Crane's Cove and Cranewood, has been developed by members of the family.

THE SECOND summer hotel on the lake was built in 1867 by Hugh (Squire) McCann. He rebuilt his farm home, which stood back from North Long Lake Road east of Main, for a popular vacation spot and called it McCann House.

It later became widely known as the Long Branch House when run by McCann, John Dopps, Lewis Peer and William Henry Charters. Some of the older residents of the area may recall the popular ballroom with its old-fashioned "spring" dance floor.

When the Long Branch house was destroyed by fire in 1889, Mr. Charters was operating it. Although he and members of his family escaped, they lost the family dog that had aroused them.

McCann's Grove was for many years the site of the grand old Pioneer Picnics.

Another pioneer of this vicinity was Walter Sluyter from Broom County, N.Y., who in 1839 "took up" 131 acres of farm land along the northwest shore. It was here that his son, Isaac, erected a fine home which still stands at 12041 Torrey Road.

Its present owner and occupant, Clarence F. Miller, who has made something of a hobby of lake history, bought it 20 years ago. The structure, with its scenic view of the lake, retains the sturdy comfortable style of that early period, although the interior has been remodeled.

SAILING BECAME a competitive sport about 1880, and Isaac Sluyter's son, Walter, was said to be the best of a group which included Capt. Westcott, Cash Jones, John O'Hare and E. M. Edie.

Edie owned a two-master, the Who-Would-Have-Thought-It, built by Capt. Westcott to beat any other craft on the lake. Walter, it is recorded, with one of the captain's oldest boats, could run circles around it. O'Hare had a flair for "freakish" sails.

By 1890, facilities for campers had begun to appear around the lake and on the island, where a colony made up mostly of Flint folk set up about 40 tents along three "street's," Davision, King and Marsh.

During one bad storm about that time, all were blown down, but it did not dampen their interest in the area. Recreation included a so-called "bowery," for dancing, run by Will Schrivaner of Saginaw.

A sloop-rigged yacht, the Minniola, was available at Long Branch to get to the island. Passengers frequently were dunked, since the boat had far too much canvas for its size.

(Although the island was not platted until 1896, the first cottage there was built by John McColumn of Fenton in 1893.)

ON THE EASTERN shore of the lake, George S. Woodhull had staked his land in 1843. This spot, known as Woodhull's, as it is today, had a hotel as well as camping grounds which attracted tourists from all over the state. The approach from Fenton Road was a lane through the farm, as it is today.

Farther south was Mead's, better known as "Saints Rest," because of a small colony of Baptist ministers. They occupied the first four cottages on the lake, two-room structures built by Mr. Mead.

Some rivalry apparently existed between Mead and Woodhull, who once remarked wryly that he could recognize the mosquitoes from Mead's "because they carried hymn books."

This property became Lakeside Park after it was acquired by H.B. Latourette of Fenton.

Along these shores Flint Union Blues and Knights Templar from Flint and other areas were wont to camp, entertaining visitors with their special drills and bands in the 1890s.

The promontory between Mead's and Woodhull's was known as Severance Point, part of a 500 acre farm acquired by Lewis Severance in 1854.

It was purchased by A.H. Lemen of Fenton in 1894 and it was here he erected the handsome summer home designated as Log Cabin three years later. This was described at the time as "a rustic lodge in the wilderness, spacious and roomy." It was a show place and landmark until razed in 1948.

THE INFLUX of tourists created a need for more convenient transportation, up to that time supplied by the horse and buggy, and a new project was advanced in 1891 by G. Marion Eddy. His son, Charles S. Eddy was proprietor of a livery stable in Fenton.

There had been some talk of digging a canal, or running a spur from the railroad to the south end of the lake.

The elder Eddy bought an abandoned car line in Muskegon, bringing the narrow-gauge rails and car to Fenton, where he enlisted the support of citizens to begin grading for a roadbed that year.

A news account of May 15, 1891, said "the soliciting committee had \$900 subscribed yesterday to bonus the project." By July it was a reality.

There are numbers of people today who recall the horse-drawn car, in use until 1916. George Bridson took over its operation after Mr. Eddy's death.

The trip was made twice daily, conveniently meeting the Detroit and Milwaukee (now Grand Trunk) trains, and taking passengers to Eddy's Landing.

There were times when the over-loaded car needed a push from the passengers as the horse labored up the grade from the lake, but it was all part of the fun.

The driver (paid 25 cents a day for his labor) frequently bragged about the blind horse which usually made the trips, never stumbling on the ties, while some with sight frequently did.

Before the turn of the century, however, the bicycle became the rage. Popularity of the bicycle led to plans for constructing a cinder path from Flint to the lake. The path was promoted by the Wheelmen's Club of Flint and a group of civic-minded citizens, but it never was completed beyond Cook Road. The trail could be seen along Fenton Road for many years afterward.

Speed was apparently as much a prestige factor in those days as it is somewhat today where "wheels" are concerned.

It seems that the best time clocked for the trip from the Courthouse in Flint to the lake was 50 minutes until a Davison chap by the name of Hills made it in 47 minutes for an all-time low.

Two of the speediest cyclists in the Wheelmen's Club, Harvey Pontius and B.F. Kellerman, who later became well known as businessmen in Flint, were ready to take on any challengers when races were held at the old fair grounds on Lapeer Street, but they never could beat Hills, the Davison "farm boy."

Years later, Dr. Herbert H. Hills came to Flint to practice medicine after graduating from University of Michigan. He told the "wheels-men" that he was the "farm boy" who by rigorous practice on rough, country roads found the leveled stretches at the track a breeze.

Dr. Hills received the first delivery of a Buick car here in August 1904. It was after a ride with Dr. Hills that W.C. Durant, who later became president of General Motors, became interested in the car. The doctor left his practice in 1906 to become assistant sales manager for Buick Motor Car Co. He later went to Packard Motor Co. in Detroit where he was a vice president.

As late as 1905, some Flint men were talking about promoting a more accessible route to the "only summer resort in the county."

They were investigating the possibilities of the new "gasoline" engine to operate cars on rails over a high-grade roadbed. But nothing came of it, perhaps because of the growing number of automobiles.

ALTHOUGH THERE were only a dozen cottages at Long Lake in 1890, the building of summer places, widely separated at first, began to supplement the accommodations of summer hotels.

The first Flint families to build at Lakeside were those of M.A. Knight and O.M. Smith in 1898. (The men were partners in the former O.M. Smith Dry Goods Co.). It was from their dock that the first naphtha launch (Racine, Wis., brand) made its debut. The shiny, pleasure craft with its gay fluttering pennants was a novel sight as it plied the waters where rowboats and sailboats had hither-to been the small-craft means of getting from one landing to another.

Other Flint families to occupy cottages there in the beginning were the Frank Willetts, Lester Hendersons and the A. A. Rikers.

Mrs. Irene Powlison of Fenton recalls that her father, the Rev. S.A. Northrop (then a resident of Kansas City) occupied the first cottage at Lakeside. At that time the area was dubbed "Saints Rest." Dr. Morris Fikes of Detroit was another in that colony of Baptist ministers to whom H.B. Latourette had given the sites.

WOODHULL'S had attracted a group of Cleveland sportsmen, who established the UP and Up Club there, using it until about 1905. It was then sold to W.H. Edwards. It has been the summer home of Dr. A.J. Wildanger the last 43 years.

The former hotel at Woodhull's was converted into a summer home by William R. Wells. Other early residents there were Charles M. Begole, Fred J. Pierson, William (Billy) Jeffers, B.F. Cotharin, R.L. Notman, all of Flint, and Steve Hegel, Goodrich. The senior Matthew Davison, who like other Flintites had camped at the lake, bought the Notman cottage. It has been in use by members of the Davison family ever since.

Another early builder there was W.A. Paterson, (pioneer industrialist and president of the carriage company of that name) who bought a parcel of property in 1904, erecting "Oban" (all cottages had names in those days), a commodious summer dwelling.

Mr. Paterson's son-in-law, William R. Hubbard, built next to him in 1907. This cottage, still occupied in summer by his daughter, Mrs. Mary Hubbard Gulliver, now of Daytona Beach, Fla., is said to be the oldest built and occupied by one family on the shores.

Robert T. Armstrong, cousin of the Patersons, then built "Gilnochie," and Mr. Paterson's son, Will, erected his summer place next to Armstrong's to complete this early segment of the beach.

AT THE NORTH END of the lake, Capt. Foster built the Bay Port Hotel in 1903, and this area was destined to be a popular region of entertainment for many years.

The first wooden structure was a two-story affair with the bedrooms opening out onto a second-story porch and a pleasant view of the lake. Excellent food was provided in the first-floor dining room and the place was well patronized, though its accommodations were limited.

There were two popular picnic areas at Bay Port, Robinson's Grove, now Fenton Township Park, and W.B. Banghart's, the latter having the first sheds for horses.

Some improvements were made to the hotel in 1905, when Capt. Dave Sanders, who was operating the "Mayflower" (formerly the Maccabee) took it over.

It changed hands again a few years later when Miss Jennie McLaughlin of Chicago acquired the property. The dances she held in her "pavilion" were quite an attraction twice a week. A notation in June, 1911, announced Roberta Barnays, violinist, a niece of John Phillip Sousa, as one of her musicians.

Eliphalet E. Edwards of Flint built the first cottage west of the hotel in the early 1900s.

The Bay Port area was platted by Capt. Foster, Charles S. Brown of Flint and Edith Marsh, who with her father, was operating the hotel in its early years.

Other Flint people to build early at this point were Perry Allen, Henry Ingham, Fred Swan, Clark Dibble (at that time, 1901, mayor of Flint) and Frank Rutherford, whose cottage is remembered by its name, "Inside and Out."

LONG BRANCH, west of Bay Port, was not only one of the first areas to attract summer cottagers, but it also was the site of the first Auto Club of Flint.

Its members, who were the owners of the first and certainly conspicuous motorcars, erected a cottage there about 1905 as a suitable rendezvous for weekends and holidays.

Laverne P. Marshall, Flint automobile dealer, recalls that his father, William M. Marshall, whose cottage adjoined the clubhouse, was so impressed with Will Paterson's Winton, styled with a turtle back tonneau, that he bought it in 1906.

Though there were less than 16 autos in Flint at that time, transportation to the lake could be arranged by calling James Parkhill, who had the first garage in Flint, as well as its first "taxi" service. Many families used this service.

The club cottage was purchased a year or so later by G.E. (Bert) Pomeroy, whose family occupied it for a number of years.

Others who built cottages there about the same time were Dr. Paul Rose, S.B. Clark, B.F. Kellerman, Dr. J.R. Shank, Fred Weiss and J.R. MacDonald.

BY 1907, cottagers had begun to populate the beach known as Man-Ta-Wau-Ka on the east shore of the lake south of Bay Port. The beach's Indian name, meaning "rippling water beach," was given it by L.G. Willison, who was one of the developing group from Flint. This section at one time had its own lighting and water-pumping equipment.

Along the high banks of this shore were homes of George H. Flanders, Will Warren, George L. Simmons, Charles L. Bartlett and Dr. Mark S.

Knapp, whose formal garden was quite an attraction.

The peninsula known as Orr's Point was a sheep grazing area (since it needed no fences) when owned by Davis Orr of Linden before 1896. It was platted as Grove Park by George L. Brondige of Pontiac.

Dr. Albert Paterson of Flint was one of the earliest summer residents, taking over the property of the first cottager, an unidentified minister, whose cottage burned.

Dr. J. Walter Orr (no relation to the former owner) whose lovely year-round home, "Wideacres" commands a view of the water on both sides of the Point, has owned it for 43 years.

The beach at Cussewago was known originally as Kelly's Point. Capt. Charles Bennett frequently used it as the nearest approach to Bennett's (now Case's Island) when he sailed his ship.

THE NAME CUSSEWAGO, was given to the property when platted about 1910 by Leonard T. Freeman of Flint. It was named after a township in Crawford County, Pennsylvania, from which he came. Judge C.O. Swayze is said to have been the first to erect a cottage there.

The lake became even more of an entertainment attraction in 1915 when Summit Heights, one of the most widely known and popular resort attractions in the state, was built by Mr. and Mrs. Charles MacGillivray. Their property was at Cedar Point, just west of Bay Port.

The three-story pavilion provided a huge dance floor, restaurant and facilities for water tobogganing, swimming and boating. Fine orchestras furnished music, a great attraction for the young people of Flint and surrounding areas until it burned after a dance in 1936.

This, like so many landmarks, has passed into the avenue of memories.

Perhaps the most imposing of them was Log Cabin, with its turrets, balconies and stone chimneys, which dominated that point for more than 50 years. Though it was occupied by C.H. Bliss after 1921 (he also owned the adjacent farm), a part of this property was sold for cottages in 1914.

Another significant change came in 1932 when the lake's name was changed to Lake Fenton. Though it caused some bitterness among longtime residents, the petition for change noted that since there were 106 Long Lakes in the state, a more distinctive title should be chosen.

THE EVER-CHANGING scene over the years has, however, skipped one remnant of the past and the early village of Mount Pleasant.

It is the old homestead of Capt. Charles Bennett, which still stands in a grove of shade and sloping lawn on N. Long Lake Road, back of the new Lake Fenton Methodist Church.

The captain's grandson, Evington Case, sold it to Oscar Marsh in 1901, who in turn sold to Martin E. Covert. In 1919, it became the property of R.B. Moffett of Flint, whose family occupied it many years.

The Moffets turned over title for the present church location in exchange for that of the original church on Thompson Road, between Torrey and Main. The Bennett home recently was acquired from John Williams by Myron Gallagher of Flint and Fenton.

The memory of another pioneer lake family has been perpetuated in both churches, old and new. The former church on the corner, now the educational building, contains a window inscribed to Walter and Nancy Sluyter who were among its founders, and dedicated by their grandsons, Edgar and Walter F.

Mrs. E.J. Cooper, 1517 Gainey Ave., daughter of Walter F., donated the chancel chair in the new church as a memorial to her grandparents, Isaac and Phila Sluyter, who built the home still standing on Torrey Road, and her parents, Walter F. and Leafie.

MUSIC WAFTED over the waters from passing steamboats and shores, where wholesome entertainment provided pleasure for two generations, is but a memory.

Speedboats churn the waters where once the silence was broken only by swift passage of Indian canoes.

The singing forests which crowned the domain on three-quarters of its shores have long since relinquished their majestic stand as plat after plat of modern dwellings have supplanted the former wilderness.

Today, Lake Fenton is a year-round abode for hundreds, a busy community, still expanding over the land so cherished by the Chippewas.

Lone Trapper Once Ruled Island

Could Call Fish by Snapping His Fingers

Enoch Smith, who established "squatters rights" on Case's Island in Lake Fenton more than a century ago, went to the island as probably the first white settler because he was a trapper and friend of the Chippewa

Indians.

During the 1830's Chippewas from the Saginaw and Chesaning areas camped on the island during the trapping season. Enoch Smith accompanied the Chippewas, who were known as the Fisher tribe.

After one trapping season, probably about 1837, Smith decided to stay and took possession of the island. He dug a cave in a hill on the south side, covered the entrance with bark and lived there in primitive fashion for several years. He was dark-complexioned, tall and slightly stooped. His eyes were crossed and he had a crooked finger on each hand. The old settlers thought he was of French and Indian descent.

He lived for five years on what then was known as Governor's Island and it was taken for granted that he had established squatter's rights.

When 60, and not in good health, he decided to go back to New York State, where he had relatives. So he sold his title for \$75.00 in 1842 to Walter Davenport, who owned a farm on the mainland across from the island.

As told later by Charles E. Case, the story goes that he was not well treated by his relatives and returned to live in his island dugout in 1847.

Some seven years after this, Davenport swam a team of oxen across to the island to plow and put in a "piece of wheat." Enoch would not permit it, saying he had lived there seven years longer, and he now again owned the property by squatter's rights. He was sharp enough to declare the deed he had given Davenport was not legal, since there was only one witness. Davenport figured it would cost more to try to get it back than it was worth and relinquished the property.

(In later years, there was much litigation over ownership of the island. Smith sold it in 1856 to Capt. Charles Bennett, who traded it in 1880 to T. B. Case, from whom the island got its present name. Descendants of Davenport were among those involved in the lawsuits. Heirs of Case won title to the island.)

Smith had an eye for business. He not only was a good trapper but a noted fisherman. In his flat-bottomed boat, which he called the "Black Maria," he would haul his catches to trade for pork and butter with the farmers in the area. It was noted, too, that he always had a jug of whisky to sell to the Indians or to white men on fishing trips.

He made butter bowls and ladles from the Pepperidge trees that grew around the lake. He made back-scratchers also. Fashioned from thin pieces of wood, these were narrow and semi-circular and notched at one end. The crafted items also were traded to the farmers for produce or money.

When he had visitors at the island, Smith would entertain them with an odd trick, snapping his fingers in the water to summon two pet snakes and some dock fish that would eat meal out of his hand. For five cents, he would exhibit a caged badger.

Henry Chapin, a Fenton pioneer who knew Smith well, remembered that the pelt of the last beaver trapped in this part of the country was taken to Fenton by Smith.

Beavers were so numerous in 1834 that they nearly completed the dam across the narrows at the lake. The dam was built of trees five and six inches in diameter, which they gnawed through and towed to the lake.

- Joyce S. Cook.

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