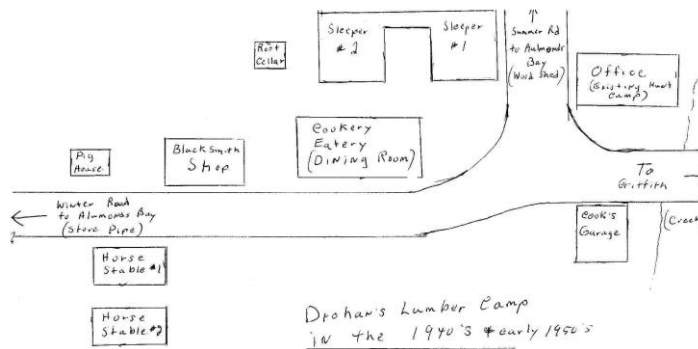


History of Snake Rapids Hunt Camp

Our ancestors came to this area by way of the old Addington Road and, each fall, they seemed to be drawn back to it to hunt deer. The O'Briens, Dwyers, Ryans, Sullivans, and, of course, the Madigans have hunted this region which is, today, part of Ontario's WMU 58, since before the turn of the century, in 1900. Early access was only by means of what remained of the Addington and those initial trails or logging roads that branched off of it. Boats and canoes on the river provided the less arduous way in, so some of the first hunt camps, Ambrose O'Brien, Thomas Ryan... were built along the shores of Snake Rapids. From there, the men hunted the swamps and hills northward to what is now labelled, on modern topographical maps, as the "Icy Hills".

The first camp the hunters used came to be known as Ryan's Camp along the shores of Snake Rapids. As the number of hunters increased and to shorten the distance to the Icy Hills, in November 1935 the men built a second camp, "Old Number 2" we've called it, located just a hundred metres, or so, south of the 'highway' and between Kopitoski's Rock and Garnet Yuke's. However, the hunters who remained at the river and those at Number 2 always hunted the area in a friendly and cooperative way, often working a chase together or joining each other at lunchtime.



In the mid to late 1940's John T Drohan acquired the timber rights in the area. A lumber camp was built on the present site of the hunt camp and included a wood shed, blacksmith shop, horse stables, cookery, a sleep camp and an office. In the bush, during the winter months, the men would room and board at the sawmill camp during the week and a truck with a closed-in box, called the caboose, was used to transport them daily to and

from the work sites, and out to their families on the weekends. During those years Henry Fleguel worked for John T Drohan as a foreman and jobber.

After Drohan, the Sawyer-Stoll Company continued operations at the present site for a few more years. But, times were changing. Piece workers began harvesting the forests for the lumber companies providing sawmills with enough logs for the spring, summer, and fall sawing season. Improved roads into the bush and better vehicles made lumber camps passé. However, one can imagine how the operations of these lumber companies opened up many new roads and trails for hunters to access the area.

In the mid 1950's, the Ministry of Natural Resources were poised to dismantle all of the buildings at the site of the old lumber camp. James P, Jerome and Leo made a trip to Tweed, the location of the Regional MNR Office at that time, and convinced them to leave the Office for use as a Hunt Camp. The Office was left standing, as well as the woodshed and one of the horse stables. In 1956 James was issued the first licence to lease an acre of land on a year-by-year basis for the purpose of a Hunt Camp.



In the early 1960's, the Ministry built a new forest access road from Quadeville to Griffith along what is now known as the Addington and Highland Creek Road. From the top of the Ramp to the Birches (the Stables), it ran fairly parallel and a few hundred metres north of to the old road. Because it was in much better condition – although it was still just a gravelled road - it became known as “The Highway”.

From the mid-fifties to the late 1970's, the original Office space served as the Camp. The dining table, a wood cook stove, and two sets of double bunk-like beds made for a crowded but cozy overnight stay. The family was growing; grandchildren wanted to join James P's sons, the sons were gradually bringing more friends to enjoy the fall deer hunt and it was becoming more and more evident that an addition was needed. That, of course, would again require Ministry approval. By the fall of 1978 a new sleeper was added to the Office structure.

However, shortly after the hunting season in November 1982, someone purposely set fire to the north end of the 'new' sleeper. Fortunately, a MNR truck and crew was driving by shortly thereafter, saw the fire and happened to have a powered water pump with them. They were able to save the original Office structure but we had to get Danny O'Malley down with his backhoe and dump truck to clean up what was left of the burned sleeper. The Toronto brothers, all well into a policing career, much of it investigative in nature, put their detective skills to work and, although were able to ascertain, with reasonable certainty, the identity of the culprit(s), charges were not pursued. The offenders wisely decided to never return to hunt between Snake Rapids and the Icy Hills.



By the following 1983 hunting season, with the help and cooperation of so many in the gang, and in the community, a new sleeper, bigger and better than the old one, was ready for occupation.

The nature of the 'Camp' is difficult to put into words. It's family, friendship, community, music – lots of music - , great meals, jokes, card games, and stories galore. One fellow says he enjoys "the shooting in the camp" more

than the shooting in the bush. New fathers can hardly wait for the day their young sons are old enough to join them for the experience. With apologies to the author of the words for "Song For the Mira", the song has been adapted –same melody – to capture the essence. A couple of the verses are shared below.

*Down at the Hunt Camp on cold autumn nights
The old woodstove pours into a diamond-skied night
They stand 'round the fire singing songs with their friends
Oh, I wish I was with them again.*

*Can you imagine a place in the universe more fit for princes and kings,
I'll trade you ten of your cities for one rocky ridge and the pleasure it brings.*

*And around the old table the stories are told
Each one is home here, their real selves unfold
And if you come broken, they'll see that you mend,
Oh, I wish I was with them again.*