

# Remembering When ...

## OUR HISTORY

**DOUGLAS LAKESHORE – THE BEGINNING** Ever notice—our history always has a beginning—and it usually starts with an interesting story.

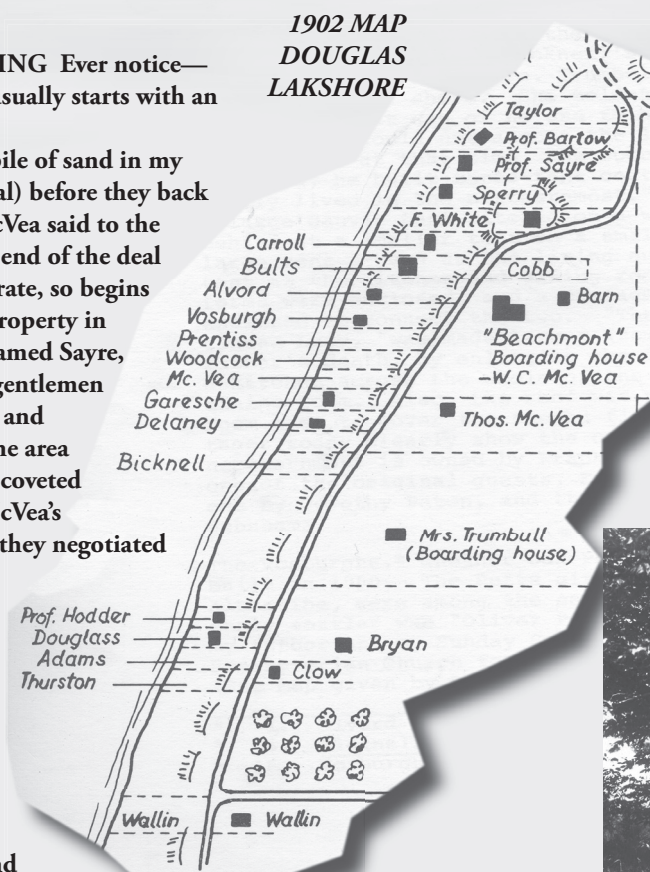
“Three damn fools want to pay \$500 for a pile of sand in my cow pasture, and I want to close it up (the deal) before they back out” -- the Irish farmer and sailor Thomas McVea said to the Allegan County surveyor. Who got the better end of the deal is obscured in the haze of history. But at any rate, so begins the story of the sale of a piece of the McVea property in the summer of 1899 to three “city slickers” named Sayre, Canfield, and Sperry. After short visits these gentlemen had fallen in love with the Douglas lakeshore and hatched a plan to build summer cottages in the area just north of the present Douglas Beach. The coveted property was on the edge of what was then McVea’s farm. Determined to proceed with their plan they negotiated for a piece of the McVea cow pasture which included 500 feet of Lake Michigan beach.

At that time the area included just two summer resident families, the Barto and the Douglass families, from the Chicago area. Nearby, to the east, were the Trumbulls and McVeas – who were serious farmers, sailors and pioneers of the area.

Sayre started to build and completed his place straight away. The others made plans and built in 1900 on what became known as The Knolls. In fact in that year a building boomlet commenced when some six cottages were completed. In the next ten years land prices went up, Shorewood was created and the pioneer settlers with fattened wallets went into the summer resort business and built Beachmont (McVea), Five Acre Farm (Trumbull), and Rosemont (Bryan) .

Those summer roots grew deep and so our history began....

*By Jack Sheridan.*



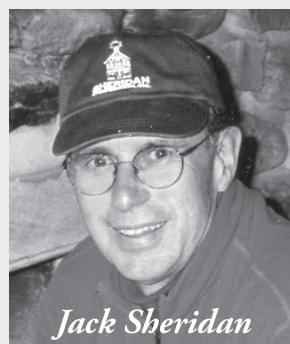
*Above - The McVea family home Beachmont catered to summer visitors. Photo ca 1940*



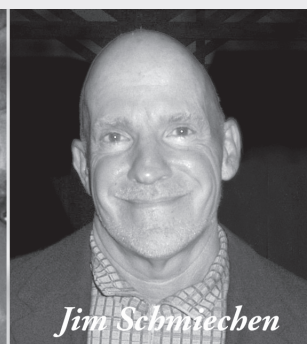
*Top - View of Center St looking east toward Ferry St. corner  
Above middle - Looking north from corner of Lakeshore Dr. and Center St.  
Bottom - “Orchard Cabin” on the corner of Center and Lakeshore Dr. The cottage has recently been restored. These photos courtesy of the Wallin family-were taken ca 1910.*

The Remembering When feature is the creation of Jack Sheridan and Jim Schmiechen of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. Please visit the Society’s museum – this years exhibit “Lincoln’s Ready-Made Soldiers: Saugatuck Area Men in the Civil War is open through the fall. The museum is located on the west side of the Kalamazoo River at the foot of Mt. Baldhead, and is open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. There is no admission charge.

We welcome your comments on Remembering When. Call 269 857-7901, email us at [sdhistory@accn.org](mailto:sdhistory@accn.org) or write to Box 617 Douglas, MI 49406. SDHS historical images can be seen on the SDHS web site at [www.sdhistory.com](http://www.sdhistory.com) and all historical photos are available for purchase in print sizes up to 12x17. Our historical image database is growing through your contributions. We scan your old photos—you keep the originals—and we then provide you with a CD of your digitized images.



*Jack Sheridan*



*Jim Schmiechen*