

The Evolving Muskoka Vacation Experience 1860-1945

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the development of tourism in Muskoka in the Canadian Shield region from 1860 to 1945. Three key themes are examined: the tourists, the resorts and projected image of the area. When taken together, they provide insight into the origin and evolution of the meanings attached to tourist destinations in the Canadian Shield. The Muskoka Lakes region provides the venue in which continuity and change in each of these elements of the tourism landscape are explored. This dissertation uses previously underutilized primary source materials ranging from hotel ledgers, financial reports, personal correspondence, period brochures, guidebooks, and contemporary newspaper articles to reconstruct the Muskoka tourist experience over an extended period of time.

The volume of literature pertaining to American tourism history significantly outweighs similar work conducted on Canadian destinations. This dissertation, therefore, begins with an overview of key works related to the historical development of tourism in the United States followed by a survey of corresponding Canadian literature. The lack of an analytical structure in many tourist historical works is identified as a methodological gap in the literature. A framework is developed to guide data acquisition. Utilizing this framework, the tourists, resorts and images that were projected of Muskoka are examined through five stages of development, from the opening of the region to tourists to the immediate postwar era.

The findings from this analysis are used to build an understanding of the changes and continuities in the meanings, or essence, of the Canadian Shield tourist experience. While significant changes are observed in the nature of the tourists, the form and function

of tourist lodgings, and the content of projected images, the meaning of the Canadian Shield tourist experience exhibits substantial continuity. From the beginning of tourist development, two opposing perspectives emerge: those of the insider and the outsider. Insiders were thought to be more unpretentious, cognizant of tradition, with a greater sense of belonging in the landscape than the outsiders who were perceived to be pretentious, conscious of societal norms, and a threat to the established traditions of the resort region. The meanings of the destination are informed by the dialogue and tensions between these two perspectives on what a Canadian Shield vacation experience should entail. These meanings, which reflect perceptions of a lifestyle that has been and is continuously under threat from outside forces, persists throughout the stages of tourism development in Muskoka and can be observed in the contemporary period.

Acknowledgements

My first encounter with the Muskoka Lakes was in August of 1980 when at just six weeks of age my parents brought me on vacation to the small Paquana Cottage resort outside Windermere on Lake Rosseau. Over the course of several subsequent summers, family vacations entailed a seemingly never-ending drive North to a series of small resort hotels on the Muskoka Lakes to spend a week or two swimming, boating, and relaxing on the shores of the lake as generations of visitors had done before.

My memories of these resorts are strikingly similar. I easily recall the small musty cabins with their spongy plywood floors and narrow beds. The rambling old lodges also vividly appear in the mind's eye with their large dining halls, kitchens, and warren of small bedrooms upstairs that seldom seemed to be occupied. From a child's perspective the obvious shortcomings of these properties disappeared. For my sister and I they became playgrounds, the setting for unlimited adventures.

Like many families before, we left the world of the resort hotel purchased property and built a private cottage. However, even here on the site of an older resort hotel the past function of the land was discernable by the abandoned rock gardens, and hotel debris consisting of broken dishes and bottles that could be found in the shallow waters of the lake and deep in the woods.

My interest in the history of Muskoka and its tradition of hotels began at this time and has culminated in this dissertation. Along the way many individuals and organizations have contributed immensely to this project beginning with my parents, Michael and Susan, who introduced me to the region and provided innumerable support

and encouragement to my studies. My sister Ashley contributed both as an editor and along with my parents as a sounding board for ideas and discussion.

This work would not have been possible without the assistance and resources of many public libraries and institutions. Special thanks is given to the staff of the Muskoka Heritage Centre, Muskoka Lakes Museum, Bracebridge Public Library and Port Carling Library as well as the National Archives of Canada, the Archives of Ontario, the Thomas Fisher Library, the Toronto Reference Library, and the Canadian Museum of Technology.

A special acknowledgement is given to Ken Judd who graciously offered the use of his family's rich archive of materials tracing the development of Muskoka back to 1870s. As well my research was greatly aided by the kind support of individuals including Jim Dixon who provided materials on Bigwin Inn and Lake of Bays, Vivian Rogers who loaned me materials related to the Bluff Hotel, Glen Brownlee who provided taped interviews of individuals associated with Juddhaven and the Royal Muskoka Hotel, and Ian Turnbull who provided invaluable material on George Martin and Wigwassan Lodge.

Lastly I wish to thank my supervisor Dr. Geoff Wall and committee members who guided me through this process with timely advice, thoughtful criticisms and equally abundant encouragement. The support of my supervisor and committee along with the cottagers, tourists, and former resort owners I encountered on the way made this journey both rewarding and pleasurable, much like a trip to the lake on a warm summer's eve.

Dedication

For their generosity and support, I dedicate this thesis to my parents,
Michael and Susan Shifflett.

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xiv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Context	9
Scope of Research	9
Tourism History	10
American Recreation, Leisure and Wilderness Experiences.....	11
Beginnings of American Tourism.....	13
American Resort Hotels.....	16
Social Functions of American Resort Hotels	19
American Resort Hotels in the Twentieth Century	22
The Canadian Context	25
Canadian Wilderness and Nature Experiences	25
The Canadian Pursuit of Recreation	28
The Canadian Cottage Experience	36
Gaps in the Literature	38
Chapter 3 Methodologies	40
Development of the Research Question	41
The Tourism-Landscape-Identity Nexus	43
Development of a Framework for Analysis	47
Key Concepts.....	47
Expanding the Framework	51
Muskoka as the Case Study Region	54
Sources	56
Strengths and Weaknesses	56
Information Sources	57
Materials Available to Study the General Development of Tourism.....	58
Materials Available to Study the Tourists	60
Materials Available to Study the Resort Hotel.....	61
Materials Available to Study the Projected Image.....	61
Research Process.....	63
Organizing the Findings	66
Chapter 4 Findings	69
Defining Muskoka	69
Exploration Phase 1860 - 1870	70
Tourism Developments 1860-1870.....	70

The First Tourists.....	71
The Visionary.....	77
The Tourists 1860-70.....	80
The Hotels 1860-1870.....	82
The Projected Image 1860-1870.....	84
Summary of Exploration Phase 1860-1870.....	85
Involvement Phase 1871-1879.....	87
Tourism Developments 1871-1879.....	87
The First Summer Hotels.....	87
The Northern Railway Arrives.....	92
The Demise of the Muskoka Club.....	95
The Tourist 1871-1879.....	97
The Hotels 1871-1879.....	99
The Projected Image 1871-1879.....	102
Summary of Involvement Phase 1871-1879.....	106
Early Development Phase 1880-1894.....	109
Tourism Developments 1880-1894.....	109
Tourism Area Expansion.....	109
The Fate of the Settlers and the Free Land Grants.....	112
Early Settler-operated Hotels: Prospect House.....	116
The Tourists 1880-1894.....	119
Tourist Activities.....	122
The Hotels 1880-1894.....	124
Interior Treatments and Room Layouts.....	129
Grounds.....	131
The Verandah.....	133
The Projected Image 1880-1894.....	135
Health and Unfashionable Vacationing.....	136
Summary of Early Development Phase 1880-1894.....	142
Late Development Phase 1895-1914.....	145
Tourism Developments 1895-1914.....	145
Fashionable Muskoka.....	146
The Muskoka Lakes Navigation Company and Tourism.....	149
The Royal Muskoka Hotel.....	154
Persistence of 'Unfashionable' Muskoka.....	161
The Expansion of Muskoka.....	166
The Lake of Bays.....	169
The Tourists 1895-1914.....	177
Origins of Tourists.....	183
Life at the Resorts.....	190
The Hotels 1895-1914.....	196
Exterior Design.....	196
Interior Treatments and Room Layouts.....	207
Grounds.....	212
The Projected Image 1895-1915.....	213
Natural Landscape and Health.....	215
The Highlands of Ontario.....	219
Native Imagery and Evocation of History.....	222
Summary of Late Development Phase 1895-1915.....	231
Consolidation Phase 1915-1945.....	233
Tourist Developments 1915-1945.....	233
U Auto Come.....	233

Development Stalled: The First World War	236
Bigwin Inn	242
The WaWa Hotel Fire	248
Muskoka Beach Bungalow Camp	251
The 100-Mile Cruise and the Creation of Tourist Attractions	254
Muskoka and Religion.....	260
Restricted Clienteles.....	264
The Great Depression.....	269
Cottages.....	278
The Second World War.....	281
The Tourist 1915-1945	288
The Sporting Tourist.....	292
The Tourist and the Automobile	296
The Hotels 1915-1945	302
New Resort Hotels	304
Adaptation of Older Hotel Properties	314
Tourist Houses, Cabin Camps and Motor Courts.....	322
The Projected Image 1915-1945.....	329
Muskoka’s Reputation Transformed	330
The Traditional Promoters of Muskoka	334
The New Promoters of Muskoka	339
A Generation of Wanderers	345
Scenic Descriptions and the Benefits of a Muskoka Vacation.....	348
Changing Interpretations of Muskoka’s Past	355
Summary of Consolidation Phase 1915-1945	362
Postscript	365
Postwar Muskoka 1945-	365
Chapter 5 Discussion	370
Analyzing the Tourists, the Hotel and the Projected Image.....	371
The Human Landscape: The Tourists.....	371
The Built Landscape: The Resort Hotels	379
The Imagined Landscape: The Projected Image.....	388
The Meaning of the Muskoka Vacation Experience	398
A Reinterpretation of Landscape Change.....	400
Insiders and Outsiders.....	403
Meanings.....	406
Effectiveness of Framework.....	410
Chapter 6 Conclusion.....	416
References.....	424

List of Figures

FIGURE 1:1. RELATIONSHIP OF MUSKOKA DISTRICT TO TORONTO AND GEORGIAN BAY.	4
FIGURE 1:2. MAP OF THE MUSKOKA LAKES, 1889.	5
FIGURE 3:1. TOURISM-LANDSCAPE-IDENTITY NEXUS.	44
FIGURE 3:2. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK	46
FIGURE 3:3. THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS.	48
FIGURE 3:4. EXPANDED FRAMEWORK.	51
FIGURE 3:5. EFFECT OF DESTINATION ENVIRONMENT ON DESTINATION VISITOR IMAGE.	52
FIGURE 4:1. STUDIO PORTRAIT OF MUSKOKA CLUB MEMBERS, 1866.	76
FIGURE 4:2. INTERIOR OF TYPICAL SETTER'S CABIN 1871.	83
FIGURE 4:3. TYPICAL SETTLER'S CABIN, 1875.	83
FIGURE 4:4. LITHOGRAPH OF ROSSEAU BAY, 1883.	89
FIGURE 4:5. ENGRAVING OF MUSKOKA WHARF STATION, 1883.	92
FIGURE 4:6. LAKE COUCHICHING HOTEL, 1875.	93
FIGURE 4:7. JAMES CAMPBELL'S COTTAGE, LAKE JOSEPH, 1886.	96
FIGURE 4:8 MONTEITH HOUSE, ROSSEAU, C1880.	99
FIGURE 4:9. ROSSEAU HOUSE (PRATT'S) C1875.	100
FIGURE 4:10. ROSSEAU HOUSE (PRATT'S) 1883.	100
FIGURE 4:11 SUMMIT HOUSE, 1887.	101
FIGURE 4:12 OFFICE, SUMMIT HOUSE, 1887.	101
FIGURE 4:13. CAMPERS, REEF ISLAND, LAKE JOSEPH, 1887.	111
FIGURE 4:14. PROSPECT HOUSE, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1888.	118
FIGURE 4:15. TENNIS PLAYERS AT PROSPECT HOUSE, C1895.	122
FIGURE 4:16. BEAUMARIS HOTEL, LAKE MUSKOKA, 1893..	124
FIGURE 4:17. WINDERMERE HOUSE, LAKE ROSSEAU, 1891.	125
FIGURE 4:18. MONTEITH HOUSE, C1890.	126
FIGURE 4:19. MAPLEHURST HOTEL, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1900.	127
FIGURE 4:20. SUMMIT HOUSE, C1895.	128
FIGURE 4:21. SITTING ROOM CRAIGIE –LEA HOUSE, C1900.	129
FIGURE 4:22. CLEVELANDS HOUSE, LAKE ROSSEAU, FROM THE MINETT FARM, C1905.	130
FIGURE 4:23 OUR OWN HOLIDAY PARADISE.	138
FIGURE 4:24. ARTIST'S CONCEPT, BRIGHTON BEACH HOTEL, 1893.	147
FIGURE 4:25. ARTIST'S CONCEPT OF PROPOSED HOTEL ON LAKE ROSSEAU.	152
FIGURE 4:26. ROYAL MUSKOKA HOTEL, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1925.	155
FIGURE 4:27. MAIN FLOOR PAN, ROYAL MUSKOKA HOTEL.	156
FIGURE 4:28. ELGIN HOUSE, LAKE JOSEPH, C1900.	164
FIGURE 4:29. WAWA HOTEL, LAKE OF BAYS, C1910.	173
FIGURE 4:30. COVER OF LAKE OF BAYS, HIGHLANDS OF ONTARIO, 1909.	175
FIGURE 4:31. ADVERTISEMENT FOR ROYAL MUSKOKA.	179
FIGURE 4:32. ERNESCLIFFE HOTEL, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1902.	185
FIGURE 4:33. MLA REGATTA AT ROYAL MUSKOKA HOTEL, C1914.	191
FIGURE 4:34. BOWLING CONTEST BETWEEN ELGIN HOUSE AND PROSPECT HOUSE.	192
FIGURE 4:35. BASEBALL GAME AT ELGIN HOUSE, C1908.	193
FIGURE 4:36. HAYRIDE AT FIFE HOUSE, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1905.	194
FIGURE 4:37. CLEVELANDS HOUSE, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1890.	199
FIGURE 4:38. CLEVELANDS HOUSE, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1900.	199
FIGURE 4:39. BELMONT HOUSE, LAKE JOSEPH, C1905.	201
FIGURE 4:40. HOTEL ROSTREVOR, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1905.	202
FIGURE 4:41. PROPOSED ADDITION TO MONTEITH HOUSE, C1895.	202
FIGURE 4:42. EXPANDED WINDERMERE HOUSE, C1919.	203
FIGURE 4:43. BEAUMARIS HOTEL, LAKE MUSKOKA, C1905.	203
FIGURE 4:44. MILFORD BAY HOUSE, LAKE MUSKOKA, C1900.	205
FIGURE 4:45. NEW WINDSOR HOTEL, BALA, LAKE MUSKOKA, C1910.	205
FIGURE 4:46. SWASTIKA HOTEL, BALA, LAKE MUSKOKA, C1910.	206

FIGURE 4:47. MONTEITH HOUSE LOBBY, 1902.	207
FIGURE 4:48. DINING ROOM, BLUFF HOTEL, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1910.	208
FIGURE 4:49. SITTING ROOM, ERNESCLIFFE HOTEL, C1905.	209
FIGURE 4:50. ROTUNDA, ROYAL MUSKOKA HOTEL, 190-.	210
FIGURE 4:51. LOBBY, WINDERMERE HOUSE, C1905.	210
FIGURE 4:52. GROUNDS OF THE ROYAL MUSKOKA, C1920.	213
FIGURE 4:53. TOURISTS FEEDING BEARS AT MONTEITH HOUSE, C1900.	214
FIGURE 4:54. THOREL HOUSE PLATE, C1915.	220
FIGURE 4:55. MUSKOKA LAKES NAVIGATION & HOTEL COMPANY PLATE, C1905.	221
FIGURE 4:56. MONTEITH HOUSE PLATE, C1905. SOURCE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.	221
FIGURE 4:57. ROYAL MUSKOKA HOTEL CASEROLE DISH, C1905.	221
FIGURE 4:58. ON THE PICTURESQUE SHORES OF LAKE ROSSEAU, 1901.	227
FIGURE 4:59. INDIAN ROOM, MONTEITH HOUSE, C1905.	228
FIGURE 4:60. GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY, <i>MUSKOKA LAKES</i> , 1904. S	229
FIGURE 4:61. AUTOMOBILE AT SUMMIT HOUSE, 1909.	233
FIGURE 4:62. MAPLEHURST HOTEL, C1926.	239
FIGURE 4:63. ARTIST RENDERING OF BIGWIN INN.	244
FIGURE 4:64. SLEIGH RIDE AT MUSKOKA BEACH INN, LAKE MUSKOKA, C1928.	253
FIGURE 4:65. ADVERTISING CARD FOR 100-MILE CRUISE, 1925.	255
FIGURE 4:66. MAIN STREET BALA, C1940.	257
FIGURE 4:67. ENTRANCE TO CHEROKEE TRAIL OUTSIDE PORT CARLING, 1937.	259
FIGURE 4:68. MONTEITH INN, C1940.	266
FIGURE 4:70. REMODELED WINDERMERE HOUSE, 1937.	273
FIGURE 4:70. WINGWASSAN LODGE BROCHURE COVER, 1938.	293
FIGURE 4:71. TWENTY-ONE CLUB, PORT CARLING, C1935.	299
FIGURE 4:72. MOTOR ENTRANCE TO PINELANDS HOUSE, LAKE JOSEPH, C1935.	300
FIGURE 4:73. ROTUNDA, BIGWIN INN, C1920.	305
FIGURE 4:74. DINING HALL, BIGWIN INN, C1920.	306
FIGURE 4:75. BIGWIN INN INFORMATION BOOTH ON HIGHWAY 11, 1936.	308
FIGURE 4:76. MUSKOKA BEACH INN, C1928.	309
FIGURE 4:77. TAMARAC LODGE, LAKE MUSKOKA, C1950.	310
FIGURE 4:78. ASTON VILLA, LAKE MUSKOKA, C1941.	310
FIGURE 4:79. ELGIN HOUSE BOATHOUSE, C1940.	311
FIGURE 4:80. GLEN HOME HOTEL, LAKE JOSEPH, C1950.	312
FIGURE 4:81. ELGIN HOUSE, 1944.	317
FIGURE 4:82. MOTOR ENTRANCE, ELGIN HOUSE, C1940.	317
FIGURE 4:83. CLEVELANDS HOUSE CASINO, 1930.	319
FIGURE 4:84. LONE STAR COFFEE SHOP AND CABINS, MINETT LAKE ROSSEAU, C1945.	320
FIGURE 4:85. THE HEDGES, MINETT LAKE ROSSEAU, C1950.	321
FIGURE 4:86. WILTOWN LODGE, BRACEBRIDGE, C1945.	324
FIGURE 4:87. TOURIST CABINS OUTSIDE GRAVENHURST, 1936.	326
FIGURE 4:88. JOE GAWA HOTEL, GRAVENHURST, C1950.	326
FIGURE 4:89. CABINS AT PAINGTON HOUSE, LAKE ROSSEAU, C1944.	328
FIGURE 4:90. CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY, <i>POINTE AU BARIL</i> , 1926.	332
FIGURE 4:91. CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY, <i>MUSKOKA LAKES</i> , 1926.	333
FIGURE 4:92. GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY, <i>MUSKOKA LAKES</i> , 1915.	334
FIGURE 4:93. MUSKOKA BILLBOARD IN TORONTO, C1935.	343
FIGURE 4:94. GRAVENHRUST ARCH, C1925.	344
FIGURE 4:95. ONTARIO GOVERNMENT, <i>ONTARIO, CANADA'S PREMIER PROVINCE</i> , 1923.	346
FIGURE 4:96. CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS, <i>ONTARIO PLAYGROUNDS</i> , 1921.	351
FIGURE 4:97. CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY, <i>MUSKOKA LAKES</i> , 1924.	352
FIGURE 4:98. CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY, <i>ONTARIO PLAYGROUNDS</i> , 1928.	353
FIGURE 4:99. BIGWIN INN PLATE, C1920.	355
FIGURE 4:100. BIGWIN INN, 1928.	356
FIGURE 4:101. ARCHERY DEMONSTRATION AT INDIAN VILLAGE, PORT CARLING, 1936.	358
FIGURE 4:102. INDIAN WIGWAMS AT PORT CARLING, C1925.	359

List of Tables

TABLE 4-1 SUMMARY OF EXPLORATION PHASE	86
TABLE 4-2 SUMMARY OF INVOLVEMENT PHASE	108
TABLE 4-3 SUMMARY OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT PHASE	144
TABLE 4-4. ERNESCLIFFE REGISTRY DATA, 1901-14.	187
TABLE 4-5. COTTAGE DATA. SOURCE: MARSHALL, 1899 & ROPER, 1915	189
TABLE 4-6 SUMMARY OF LATE DEVELOPMENT PHASE	232
TABLE 4-7, ERNESCLIFFE REGISTRY DATA 1915-1918.	237
TABLE 4-8, ERNESCLIFFE HOTEL REGISTRY DATA, 1919-1939.	271
TABLE 4-9, MLA MEMBERSHIP DATA. SOURCE: MLA YEARBOOKS, 1936, 1957, 1962.	281
TABLE 4-10, ERNESCLIFFE HOTEL REGISTRY DATA, 1940-45	284
TABLE 4-11 SUMMARY OF CONSOLIDATION PHASE	364

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away (Thoreau, 1910, 263).

Chapter 1 Introduction

“There is a sense in Canadian literature that the true and only season here is winter: the others are either preludes to it or mirages concealing it” (Atwood, 2004, 59). This dynamic enhances the importance in Canada of the few brief months of summer when the landscape is transformed to a panorama of glistening lakes and pine-scented forests. It is the time of year when summer colonies re-populate the mountains, the rivers, the lake margins and the sea coasts as vacationers escape the urban environments in which most live for the rest of the year, unless they make a brief sojourn to the warmer south. It is an irony that in a country so closely associated with winter, time spent in secondary, predominantly summer homes, be they lodges, camps or cottages, has also become a part of the Canadian identity.

The summer migration to scenic, rural or wilderness landscapes is not uniquely Canadian. Northern Europeans and Americans have adopted similar migratory patterns for generations, in some cases predating by decades the establishment of cottage properties in Canada. Describing the coastal cottage communities of Sweden in the bleak months of winter, Orvar Löfgren describes a landscape stripped of inhabitants who have left the relics of summer to be frozen in time, like intruders from another world (1999, 2). Löfgren contends, however, that this is far from being an abandoned landscape. It is a landscape that is heavily imprinted in the minds of numerous vacationers remembering, dreaming and fantasizing about past summers (2). The summer vacation destinations are imbued with meanings, emotions and identities. They are territories in which people root

their concept of self, often resulting in the secondary home overtaking the primary residence in terms of emotional attachment (139).

The characteristic traits of summer vacation destinations have formed and have evolved amidst deep emotional attachments. Summer residents are often deeply involved in their second community in an effort to become 'local' and this is often manifested in an interest in local history, customs and traditions (139). For many, a return to the summer home is a marker of the passage of time (138). While there is an enduring component to this seasonal migration based on a summer routine that has been passed on from generation to generation, there is also an evolution over time. Löfgren identifies a particular summer aesthetic where the chief concern is a return to a simpler mode of living in an unchanged environment (137). New technologies are shunned, from television to electricity and even indoor plumbing. Decorations and fashions remain locked in time and hostility may be expressed towards even minor changes. Löfgren notes that the carving out of emotional spaces within the summer landscape and the elaboration of a cultural capital of belonging may cause other visitors to be seen as intruders (139).

The idea that outsiders perpetually threaten the summer vacation landscape is widespread. This notion of threats of many kinds is central to Margaret Atwood's identification of 'survival' as being fundamental to Canadian identity. While Atwood emphasizes survival as a central theme in her landmark guide to Canadian literature, her observations have wider ramifications. Like the symbols of 'the island' and 'the frontier' in Britain and the United States, 'survival' is a cornerstone of Canadian identity (2004, 41). It can mean different things in different contexts: physical survival in a hostile

environment, cultural survival in face of other dominant cultures, or as the surviving vestiges of a “vanished order which has managed to persist after its time is past” (41). Regardless of the form it takes, the result is often some underlying anxiety (42). It is manifest in the concern that something is on the verge of being irreversibly altered or lost that pervades descriptions of summer resort regions in Canada. This is particularly the case where emotional stakes are highest, such as in the older summer cottage communities of the Canadian Shield.

Atwood captures this in her short story *Wilderness Tips* (1991). The tale follows the power struggles, infidelities and insecurities of a family staying at their cottage, ‘Wacousta Lodge,’ on an unnamed lake in Ontario, one summer day in the early 1990s. The cottage, however, is the main character in the story. It is the embodiment of a summer house that is weighed down with the traditions and emotions of its inhabitants. Rituals as simple as folding a lawn chair are considered sacred, while everything within the house remains as it was when built nearly eighty years before. As a setting, it envelops and overwhelms its inhabitants. Its power to do this rests in the presence of the past within its unchanging walls and the anxiety brought about by fears of change to this sacred place. Motorboats are criticized and moths are feared to be eating the stuffed birds. Suspicions are leveled that the brother-in-law will sell the cottage to a wealthy Japanese person looking for a retirement residence, even though he may be more cognizant of the cottage’s symbolic powers than the others. The most telling passage, however, is the brother’s description of the drive north from Toronto where the townhouses that are being extended into the countryside are said to be the tents of the

invading Goths and Vandals (182-3). It is such 'outsiders' that provide the greatest threat to Wacousta Lodge.

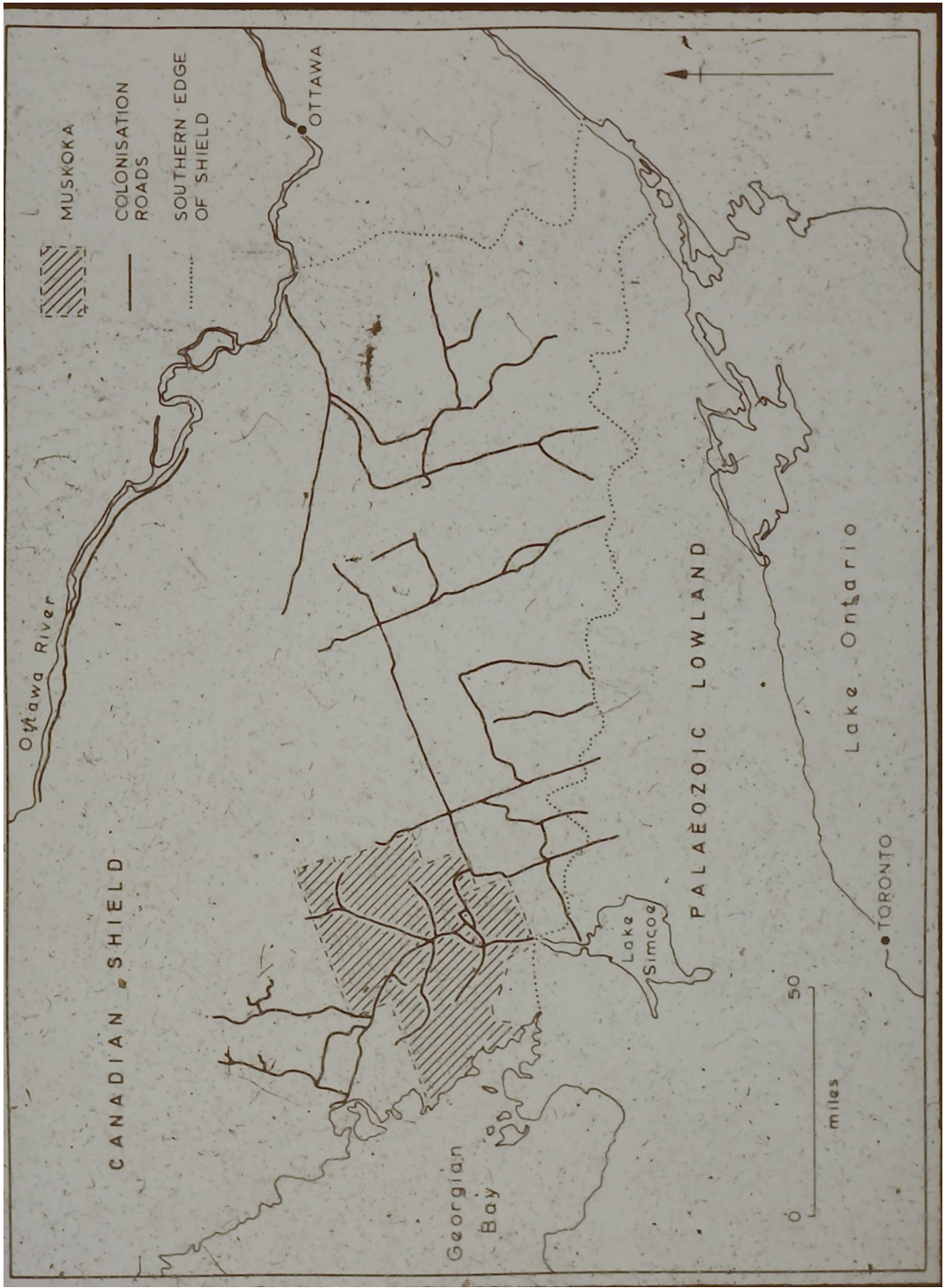


Figure 1:1. Map showing relation of Muskoka District to Toronto and Georgian Bay.

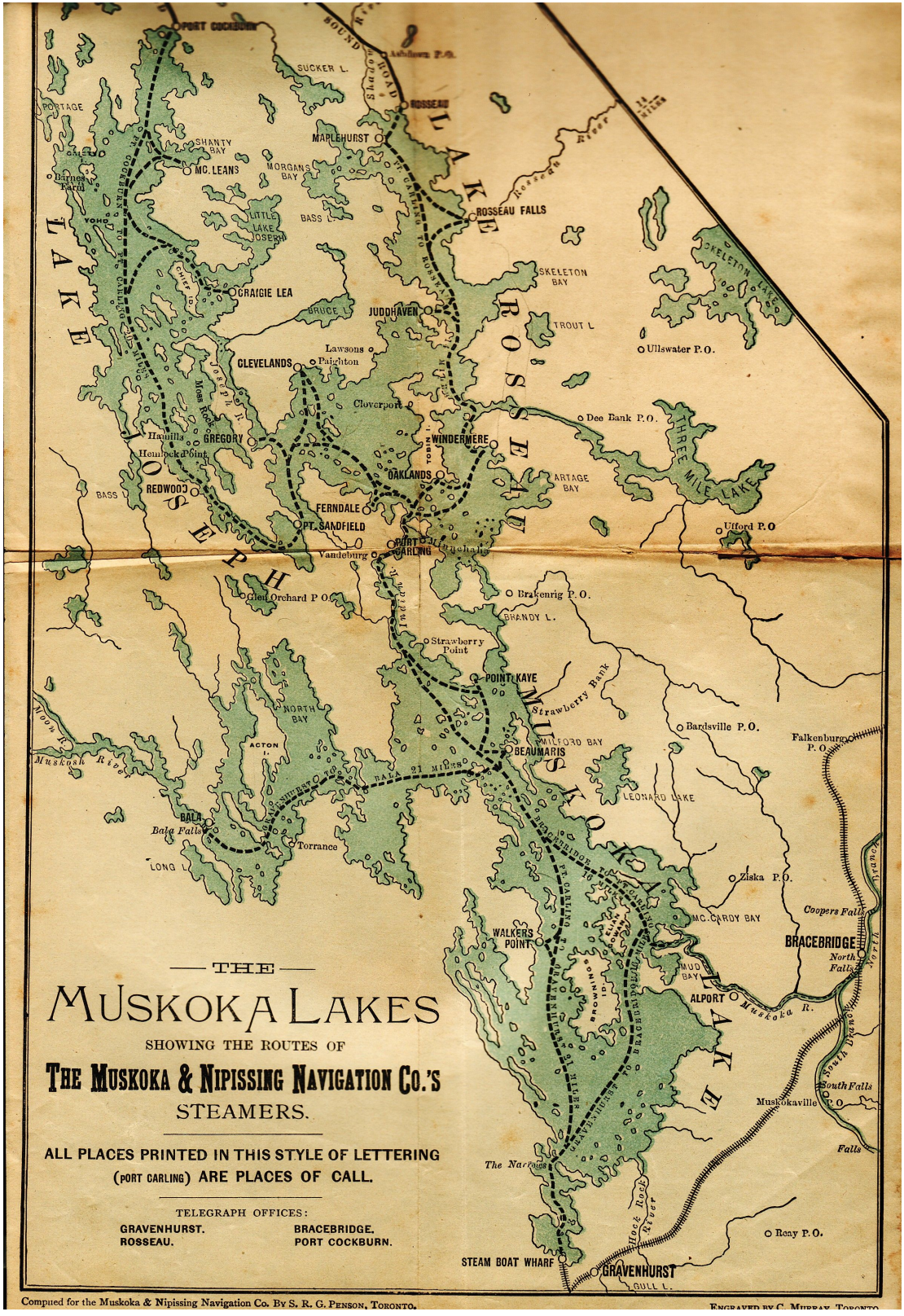


Figure 1:2. Map of the Muskoka Lakes, 1889. Source: Adam, G. M. *Muskoka Illustrated with Descriptive Narrative of this Picturesque Region*, 1889.

While “Wilderness Tips” is a work of fiction, the same fears regarding the prospect of change in an Ontario cottage setting can be seen in Stephen Metcalf’s (2008) article *Provence Profound*, which discusses the Muskoka Lakes (Figure 1:1 and Figure 1:2). Metcalf provides an outsider’s perspective on the social rituals of Canadian cottagers, noting how every season a new wave of urbanites heads north for a sense of wilderness seclusion and roughing it, only to be mocked by established cottagers who view them as despoilers and poseurs. (1). One matriarch of an old moneyed Muskoka cottaging family is even quoted as describing the new cottagers, particular wealthy American movie stars, as “rich, white, trash” (1). The same cottager notes that the way of summer living to which she is accustomed is ‘fading’, lamenting that new visitors, are simply incapable of understanding how to ‘cottage’ (2). For her, cottaging still means summer after summer of the same activities “without much worldly distraction of any kind” (2).

This represents what Metcalf calls ‘Old Muskoka’, an often-used yet heavily-weighted term that has persisted for nearly half a century and still resonates with the notion of cottage country as a haven from the social distinctions of the city (2). Metcalf notes insightfully that the region’s human landscape “has always been made up of irony, social distinction and loss” (2). The greatest threat posed by the new moneyed cottagers to the ways of ‘old Muskoka’ is the increase in property values and, in turn, tax assessments that jeopardize the ability of established cottagers to retain and pass on their cherished summer houses to the next generation. Traveling to nearby Georgian Bay, Metcalf is informed by cottagers there that it is where ‘real people’ now go to escape Muskoka (3).

Taken together, Löfgren, Atwood, and Metcalf all identify common themes pertinent to the understanding of cottaging and summer cottage destinations. These include a strong sense of continuity, emotional attachment, and anxiety over perceived threats from outside forces that could change the destination and the experience it offers. Thus, it can be asked, what, if anything, is changing and where do these anxieties originate? In order to understand both continuity and change, it is necessary to delve into the past of these tourist landscapes to understand their origins and evolution, not just in terms of increasing tourist numbers and changing infrastructure, but also in the development of their meanings, culture, and place identities.

In the postwar era, cottages have become the predominant form of accommodation in these areas. However, up to the 1950s, resort hotels dominated these landscapes and were fundamental to the experiences that were offered and the images that were created. Summer hotels, once described as being the setting for the “most surprising things,” where possibilities arose “for gossip, for scandal, for enjoyment, for memory” (Symons, 1948, 56), provide a point of entry for exploration of the forces that underpinned the creation and development of such destinations. As commercial operations, hotels adapt to cultural change more readily than private cottages and, thus, are a more accurate barometer of the evolving cottage country experience. Through examination of the resorts, study of the tourists themselves, and the images that have been projected onto them for marketing purposes, it will be possible to understand how they have influenced the development of tourism and attitudes towards recreational regions over time.

Drawing upon a wide variety of historical and archival sources, and with a focus upon resorts, their users and their marketing strategies, this thesis examines the evolution of tourism, its images, and its meanings in Muskoka, one of Canada's most iconic tourism regions. This study begins with a review of the literature to date on tourism history as it relates to North American summer recreation areas to contextualize the Muskoka experience. A framework for analysis is then proposed combining the study of resort hotels, tourists, and projected images that will be used to reconstruct the various meanings attached to the destination at various times. Research methodologies are also discussed. The fourth chapter, which comprises the majority of this thesis, chronicles the developments in the Muskoka tourism landscape from 1860 to 1945, organized into five stages of development. The fifth chapter utilizes the insights provided by previous chapters to evaluate the meanings attached to Muskoka tourism and places these themes within the context of the literature surveyed in chapter two. The effectiveness of the framework developed in the third chapter is also evaluated. The thesis concludes by revisiting the discussion of continuity and change in the Canadian Shield tourism landscape.

Chapter 2 Context

This chapter will provide a broad context within which the development of tourism in the Canadian Shield and, specifically, Muskoka can be situated. It will address key works of tourism history literature related to the North American experience and, in doing so, will identify the gaps in the literature as they pertain to Canadian tourism development.

Scope of Research

Arguably, there can never be only one history of any region. In Muskoka there are multiple histories that can be told from a seemingly unlimited range of perspectives from the native, settler, lumberman, visitor, young, old, male, female, local and immigrant, focusing on an equally vast array of experiences within the landscape. For example, a history focused on the native experience would vary greatly from one based on that of the European settler who displaced them in the landscape. Jocelyn Thorpe (2012) studies such a relationship in *Temagami's Tangled Wild: Race, Gender, and the Making of Canadian Nature*. Thorpe proposes that the very notion of Canadian wilderness is a myth that can be thought of as a tool of the colonizer that continues to deny the pre-existing civilization of the First Nations.

This thesis takes a different approach to exploring human and economic relationships within the Canadian Shield region by focusing on the tourists and their accommodation in Muskoka. This is a relationship that still produces contradictory notions of what the Muskoka tourist experience should represent and entail while also speaking to larger themes of human relationships with nature and wilderness. While the experience of the cottager is discussed in areas where the space of both the tourist and

cottager overlap, generally the cottager and their private accommodations are excluded from this study, as are the camper and the camp. Similarly, the experiences of individuals and institutions not associated with Muskoka's tourist industry are excluded.

By focusing on one specific user group, the tourists, this thesis provides a narrow but detailed perspective on Muskoka's history. The following contextualization for this study reflects this narrow focus. American literature is first surveyed to chronicle the North American origins of travel into rural and wilderness locales. The origins of the resort hotel, changing attitudes towards nature, leisure and recreation, as well as the effects of transportation change are discussed. The Canadian literature is then explored, focusing on the relationships between Canadians and their natural and wilderness landscapes. Literature on the history of tourism in Ontario and relevant works related to cottaging on the Canadian Shield are surveyed. This literature survey reveals that the resort hotel has received only minor attention in the study of Canadian and, specifically, Ontario tourism history, outside of the park systems. When discussed, hotels are often addressed only as a sideline of inquiry and the unique insights provided by this specific form of tourism have not been fully explored or conceptualized in Canada.

Tourism History

To understand the development of tourism on the Canadian Shield, it is imperative to appreciate the origins of travel to such destinations. Canadian literature on the subject is limited compared to writings on the American experience as revealed in studies of attitudes towards wilderness, leisure, and recreation. Americans were important in the opening of the Shield region to tourism in the second half of the nineteenth century and,

thus, it is appropriate to discuss their attitudes towards both wilderness and recreation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

American Recreation, Leisure and Wilderness Experiences

Foster Rhea Dulles (1965), in *A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play*, traces Americans' changing attitudes towards leisure from the country's early colonial settlement to the twentieth century. Dulles identifies unease with leisure in America, originating with the Puritan settlement of the new colony as evidenced in seventeenth-century laws and regulations that forbade idleness and prohibited amusements (4). Attitudes towards leisure only began to shift in the eighteenth century when puritan notions lost favour and the colonists began to seek and develop opportunities for recreation that they previously did not have time to contemplate (22). These activities included "hunting and fishing, the sports and games associated with farm festivals, shooting matches and horse-races, country dances, the amusements of the colonial tavern" (42). New forms of recreation developed as the nineteenth century dawned and the United States entered the first phases of its transformation from an agrarian to an industrialized urban society (84).

This same period also brought about a re-emergence of old religious sentiments against any form of recreation. As Dulles states, "seriousness of purpose was heightened by strong religious feeling; the average man locked himself in his office and his wife in his home." (98). However, by the mid-nineteenth century, the wealth created by industrialization resulted in a considerable increase in leisure time for the nation's well-to-do elites, facilitating the beginning of pleasure travel and the growth of the early summer resorts (148). These summer resorts came about as a direct result of the

improved means of transportation associated with industrialization and their adoption by fashionable people with increased discretionary time (149).

While Dulles examines the attitudes towards recreation, Roderick Nash (2001), in *Wilderness and the American Mind*, studies attitudes towards the natural environment. In doing so, he explores how and why Americans increasingly chose to spend their expanding leisure time in the wild spaces of the continent. Attitudes towards wilderness, like leisure, began with negative associations. Nash explains this as a combination of religious sentiment carried over from Europe and, also, as a result of Americans' early constant exposure to wilderness that "gave rise to fear and hatred on the part of those who had to fight it (wilderness) for survival and success." (43).

It is not surprising, then, that appreciation of wilderness began in the urban centres rather than in the countryside where people were in closer proximity to the natural world. Romantic ideals of nature were embodied in literature and art from Europe and digested by an increasingly literate society (44). The Romantic Movement connected the sublime qualities of nature, particularly wild nature that was previously thought to be threatening, with God (46). While the romantic enthusiasm for wilderness did not directly challenge the long-held aversion to nature held by the pioneers (65), it did have a profound effect on overall attitudes towards America's landscape and the wilderness frontier of America began to be viewed as an asset. Michael Lewis (2007), in *American Wilderness: A New History*, equates the romantic landscape paintings of the early nineteenth century with newly positive attitudes towards both wilderness and the frontier. These landscape painters turned to the American countryside to portray the future promise of the nation by illustrating a juxtaposition of settlement against the backdrop of

wilderness (67). Soon, wilderness itself was celebrated in both American literature and art (Nash, 2001, 65).

Both Nash and Lewis point to the writings of Henry David Thoreau as fundamental in changing American attitudes towards wilderness. Thoreau gained widespread popularity in the mid-nineteenth century with his books and lectures that promoted a new appreciation of the spiritual qualities inherent in America's wilderness landscapes. For Thoreau, it was essential to spend time in the wilderness to counterbalance the negative effects of 'civilized' life (92). For a generation of tourists, Thoreau's ideas would be groundbreaking, encouraging them to venture into the untamed landscapes of the continent.

Beginnings of American Tourism

Orvar Löfgren (1999), in *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, identifies the Romantic Movement and, particularly, appreciation of the picturesque as the origin of modern tourism. As part of the Romantic Movement, advocates of the picturesque in Europe proposed ways of selecting, framing, and representing views (19). Thus, tourists were taught what landscapes to look at and also how to sense and experience them. Art played a key role in this process both by representing ideal landscapes and inspiring the manipulation of the landscapes themselves to imitate art. The English, in particular, incorporated this perspective in their landscape design. They also sought to experience landscapes elsewhere through the Grand Tours of the eighteenth century (20). Löfgren notes that the picturesque "was about sensibility: a search for atmosphere and sceneries that opened your senses and sent your thoughts flying" (21).

John Sears (1988), in *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions of the Nineteenth Century*, notes that an American equivalent to the delight in scenery as experienced in Europe did not take hold until the 1820s and 1830s (3). His explanation of the delay mirrors Dulles' arguments for America's slower acceptance of leisure compared to Europeans. Prior to the 1820s, Americans were too preoccupied with clearing wilderness and founding towns to take much notice of the surrounding scenery (3).

American appreciation of landscape and involvement in tourism began with improvements in transportation and increased leisure time among the elite and middle-class (3-4). Like Lewis, Sears also connects an emerging spirit of nationalism with new appreciations of landscape. New tourism sights became sites of pilgrimage for a travelling public eager to match European levels of culture while, at the same time, developing a distinctive national identity (4-5). In this, natural wonders were an important ingredient.

Niagara Falls was one of the earliest and most famous of these sites in North America. It was a stop on the North American equivalent of the European Grand Tour and it gained prominence as a site of courtship and a honeymoon destination (12). Visitors were expected to have an intense emotional reaction when visiting the falls, in some cases bordering on a religious experience, based on its picturesque and sublime scenery (13-4). As the visitor experience became more commercialized by the 1830s, a visit to the Falls became almost a cliché and initial impressions were often reported as being disappointing (15). The promoters of the Falls suggested that visitors should plan

on spending up to a week to experience the full effects. Hotels were built and the falls became a commodity with contrived attractions charging admission fees (22-3).

The geographic location of the falls directly on the border of Canada and the United States and its early adoption as an iconic tourist destination for both countries has resulted in the creation of an international literature. Pierre Berton's (1992), *Niagara: A History of the Falls*, compares and contrasts the Canadian and American experience there. Patrick McGeevy (1994), *Imagining Niagara: The Meaning and Making of Niagara Falls*, explores the different relationships between people and the falls. William Irwin (1996), *The New Niagara: Tourism, Technology and the Landscape of Niagara Falls 1776-1917*, shows how human additions to the landscape, such as bridges, factories and power plants, became tourist attractions in their own right, sometimes outshining the cataract itself. Karen Dubinsky (1999), in *The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls*, explores the cultural meanings of the destination in relation to the honeymoon traditions that developed there beginning in the 1820s. Ginger Strand (2008), in *Inventing Niagara: Beauty, Power, and Lies*, again explores tourism at the falls but is highlighted here for the excellent and extensive survey of literature and sources related to the falls in the final chapter. In fact, the above references are merely a sample of the writing on Niagara, which is very extensive.

Another important destination for American tourists was the Hudson River Valley. Here, tourists reflected on the nature of the North American settlement process by observing how wild scenery coexisted with domesticated rural landscapes (49). The relationship between civilization and wilderness were illustrated in panoramic views obtained from high locations along the Hudson River Valley (53-4). One of America's

first resort hotels was constructed on a high bluff overlooking the valley. Built in 1823, the Catskill Mountain House provided the ideal setting for guests to appreciate the river valley scenery. Visitors flocked to the Mountain House to experience the “dramatic contrast between the elegance of the hotel and the wildness of the landscape surrounding it” that appealed to their romantic sensibilities (68). The hotel inspired the construction of a large number of similar properties throughout both the Catskill and the White Mountains. Together with the emerging spa hotels along the seacoast and medicinal springs, the newly constructed resorts became key elements of the leisure landscape of the United States.

American Resort Hotels

Andrew Sandoval-Strausz (2007), in *Hotel: An American History*, and Jeffrey Limerick (1979), in *America's Grand Hotels*, both study the American resort hotel.

Architecturally, these early resorts exhibited a striking uniformity in design and amenities. The typical resort hotel featured wood construction and horizontal massing that typically increased exponentially in size as the decades passed and demand for accommodation rose (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007, 90). While similar to other hotel types in that they were commercial enterprises that were underpinned by the capitalism, rapid urbanization and improved transportation of nineteenth-century America, they played a significantly different role in the hotel system (92). They were not located at travel crossroads. Rather, they were placed at the end of transportation routes and were places that people arrived at rather than travelled through (92). They were refuges from the urban environment, representing “a new economy of travel: one based not on moving

goods, workers, or information but rather on transporting people to safe, pleasurable surroundings where they could occupy and consume the land in new ways.” (92).

Architecturally, resort hotels had to embody two distinct functions. First, they needed to be efficient operating plants providing meals, clean rooms and other services (Limerick, 1979, 13). Secondly, they exposed their clientele to an environment that was different from the urban world, providing an escape for their guests who still desired a taste of the good life (13). As the most public part of the private world of the wealthy consumer, these hotels competed with various expressions of one-upmanship (45). Architecture followed residential design but on a palatial scale (49). Queen Anne, Shingle and Craftsmen styles dominated the exteriors while interiors were increasingly opulent (49). As the century passed, more novel architectural styles, such as Italianate Revival and the Chateaux style, gained favour (52). Limerick summarizes the intentions behind the designs as follows:

These buildings, so obviously palaces, were designed for a class of wealthy Americans in control of the emerging industrial nation in styles that reflected the extraordinary confidence of this era. And yet this rich architectural eclecticism of the turn of the century also provided a sense of cultural assurance for a nation somewhat unsettled about the meaning of its roots (52).

By the 1870s, Americans began to embrace tourism *en masse* (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007, 111). Middle-class consumers employed in clerical and managerial professions joined the elites in having leisure time to spend on vacations (111-2). The result on the resort sector was a period of exponential growth. Railways and steamship companies built hotels along their routes to stimulate tourist travel on their lines and offered organized tours (Limerick, 1979, 49). These resort hotels benefited from the symbiotic

relationships between the ease and excitement of travel and the wanderlust of Americans with their newfound discretionary time and the money to indulge in tourism (45).

The natural settings of the resort hotels were important to the experiences that were provided and great care was paid to meld the physical environment of the hotel property to the landscape surrounding the resort. The hotels featured long porches, gazebos and viewing platforms that took advantage of their picturesque situations and gave the visitors opportunities to take in the scenery (Sears, 1988, 66). These landscapes were the hotels' "*raison d'être*" (Limerick, 1979, 47). As such, the surrounding landscape dictated the particular theme of the resort (Limerick, 13). This is particularly evident in the rustic architecture of the Adirondacks, the colonial and federal architecture of the New England states, and the Spanish revival styles of the Florida winter resorts.

Sandoval-Strausz explains the relationship between a hotel and the surroundings as being complex and constantly changing (2007, 91). The aesthetic character of almost all resort hotels deliberately blurred the urban comforts of the interior spaces with the natural landscape outside (91): "Wide verandahs allowed guests to be out in nature yet sheltered from the elements, and gardens, lawns, footpaths, and other carefully designed grounds provided a gradual transition from the manicured flora to untamed wilderness." (91).

The desire to visit untamed wilderness settings resulted in some resort hotels precipitating new settlement in frontier areas (114). As an indispensable part of domestic tourism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, resort hotels brought large numbers of white Americans to remote areas that they might otherwise never have visited, "in some cases hastening permanent Anglo settlement of entire regions" (119). In many respects, resort hotels were seasonal projections of the American urban grid into rural or

wilderness areas (112) and the social constraints and complexities of the urban world came with the tourists.

Social Functions of American Resort Hotels

Social life at the American summer resort hotels soon overtook the attractions of health and scenery in the second half of the nineteenth century (88). The hotels were large enough to create a community in which guests stayed from weeks to entire seasons (88). Jon Sterngass (2001), in *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport & Coney Island*, explores the public world of the nineteenth-century resort hotel social functions. Resorts provided three primary settings for guests to engage in social activities: the verandah, the parlour and the dining room. The verandah allowed guests to observe the social scene without being directly in it (116). It also acted as a stage for the theatre of resort life (117), where the disciplined middle-class postures of the Victorian age could be relaxed as they would be in a private home (118). Hotel parlours shared many of the characteristics of their residential counterparts. They were dedicated to entertainment and the presentation of decorative possessions; in other words, they were a space to show off (119). Hotel parlours encouraged “an overacted theatricality of manner in an atmosphere of economically useless repose and beauty” (119). Finally, the dining room was a space where hotel guests took dinner at the same time, providing an opportunity for them to observe one another (120).

One of the attractions of the nineteenth-century resort was the opportunity it presented to mix with strangers in an atmosphere of informality, facilitating unaccustomed social interactions (121). The verandahs, parlours and dining halls of the summer resort hotels allowed a degree of social mobility that was not available almost

anywhere else in nineteenth-century America. These situations enabled a degree of social activity that became notoriously associated with the resorts (124). Flirting and courting were features of behavior at the resort hotels. Flirtation was considered to be the ultimate social game to be conducted in one of the few public hetero-social spaces to be found in middle-class American life (133). Sterngass remarks that “the juxtaposition of the desire to experiment with boundaries of truth and falsity, the longing for a communal public life, and the yearning for a stable place in a free-floating social system created the piquant tension that was both the glory and the undoing of the nineteenth-century American resort” (145).

Cindy Aron (1999), in *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States*, explores the negative consequences of these activities. Many nineteenth-century Americans remained uncomfortable with the idea of leisure and feared the moral repercussions of spending time at the fashionable resorts where guests were idle and separated from the discipline of daily work (70). The large, expensive, fashionable hotels with their well-to-do clienteles offered a routine of scheduled activities that lent a regimented air to the stay (86). Less fashionable resorts provided a more relaxed setting (87). In this context, the term ‘unfashionable’ or ‘not fashionable’ is a positive descriptor (96), meaning much the same as the term ‘unpretentious’ in a modern context.

Two key differences existed between the fashionable and unfashionable resorts. First, fashionable resorts often received negative press. Secondly, women were thought to play a greater role and have more influence in the fashionable resort. Much of the criticism leveled at fashionable resorts stemmed from the overwhelming presence of women and their perceived influence on the creation of a snobbish, gossipy atmosphere

(91). Instead of time being spent in rest and relaxation, it was perceived to be wasted on displays of fashion (89) and activities that turned the establishment into a site of artifice, deceit and immorality (92). The American public was warned by social commentators to avoid those who followed “fashion and put on airs” for they “threatened the sincerity necessary for a moral, social order” (92). The way to avoid this was to vacation at unfashionable destinations far removed from fashionable society with its pretensions, deceptions, temptations, and sexual immoralities (95). Aron summarizes this conflict between the fashionable and not fashionable as being a lingering reflection of the uncertainty about leisure and vacationing in general (98): “For a middle class that defined itself against such vices and associated the numerous sins of idleness with the vicious poor or the idle rich, resorts could present a serious threat.” (99). The origins of these attitudes stretch back to the Puritan settlers of the seventeenth century and the work-minded citizens of the early nineteenth century who shunned leisure and saw it as a threat to a moral society.

By the late-nineteenth century, the public venues of certain fashionable resorts began to disappear and were replaced by private venues. Sterngass presents the resort town of Newport as an example. Hotels in Newport were bought and replaced by the private cottages of the American elite. At one time, these cottages were considered dull and unfit settings for the display of ‘leisured magnificence’ compared with the opulent grand hotels (2001, 185). Changing attitudes, however, resulted in a view of “permanent residency in a single family dwelling” as the embodiment of “the platonic ideal of higher status and greater wealth” (185). As ownership of private cottages became the norm for the wealthy, former patrons of the resort hotels went elsewhere, reducing the perceived

quality and attractiveness of the hotels (191). The sense of being able to interact with social equals or betters at the resort hotels began to erode (182). As the twentieth century dawned, private ownership of vacation homes surged, contributing to the end of the golden age of American resort hotels.

American Resort Hotels in the Twentieth Century

John Jakle (1985), in *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth Century North America*, discusses the immediate fate of many fashionable resorts in the early years of the twentieth century. Fashionable society retreated further into more exclusive, private resorts such as Bar Harbor, Newport and Palm Beach, leaving middle and lower class tourists to ‘inherit’ other resorts such as Atlantic City (53). The wealthy classes preferred the private cottage, far removed from the crowded public spaces of the hotels (63). The net result was that few new resort hotels were built between the wars (61).

The search for natural beauty continued, providing an ongoing impulse to travel in North America (53). As older resorts developed into contrived tourist locations (23), tourists, under the pretense of seeing the ‘real’ world, travelled further and further to find authenticity (27). Motoring provided new opportunities for travel (64) that allowed an increased interaction with the landscape, more so than previous forms of travel such as the train and ship (101). It enabled the increasing popularity of visits to National Parks, which led to a new tourist aesthetic (73-4). However, the quest for nature remained a search for pleasure rather than for ecological understanding (67).

Marguerite Shaffer (2001), in *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*, explores the rising importance of the National Park system in American tourism through the See America First advertising campaign initiated at the See America

First Conference held in January 1906 (26). The See America First slogan would have many incarnations throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century. However, they all shared a common goal: to encourage Americans to forego expensive trips abroad and, instead, to invest the time and resources in seeing and experiencing their own country (27). The slogan received widespread exposure at the Pan-American Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915. Here it was suggested “that the ‘true’ America could be seen in western scenery, where the promise of nature, representing both divine sanction of an American empire and the wealth of natural resources supporting the progress of that empire, offered an inspiring alternative to the decaying civilization of the Old World.” (34). The exposition provided visitors with a canon of American attractions to visit, such as the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone (34).

At Yellowstone Park, the Northern Pacific Railroad developed a new tourist resort that differed from the European-style resorts of the east (43). The Old Faithful Inn was at the centre of this new tourism landscape. The Inn introduced a new architectural aesthetic to resort design, using materials and methods that blended with the landscape. The Inn was constructed of rough-hewn lodgepole pine and basalt rock with the effect of a massive frontier cabin (47). It became the archetype for national park architecture (47) inspiring similar designs in the Grand Canyon’s El Tovar Hotel (54), the Glacier National Park Hotel (64) and the Many Glacier Hotel (72) among others in the national park system. Initially, large railway companies constructed these hotels. However, they increasingly served the motoring tourist as automobile ownership increased and roadways improved.

Drastic changes occurred to the older established resorts in the 1920s and 1930s. Highways encouraged travel from place to place, with only one or two night stays at resort hotels becoming the new trend (Limerick, 1979, 162). Some of the older hotels maintained their exclusivity by keeping rates high, while other owners replaced or rehabilitated older properties with new structures built of fireproof concrete and steel (162). Standardization and professionalization of the industry resulted in hotels becoming more uniform both in design and operation (162). However, the Depression greatly impacted the industry: patronage was reduced, new construction ceased, and railways curbed operations leaving some hotels further isolated. Many hotels went bankrupt and were torn down or converted to other uses (169).

The rise of motor tourism caused old hotels to be replaced by new forms of tourist accommodation. John Jackle, Keith Sculle and Jefferson Rogers (1996), in *The Motel in America*, described the rise of these new forms of accommodation. The need for inexpensive roadside accommodation led to the creation of new types of hotel (23). The first to appear were the auto camps (31) followed by tourist homes (35), cabin courts (36), cottage courts (41), motor courts (43) and, finally, motels. The building of cabin camps in the 1930s was hailed as the first building boom of the Great Depression (34). Resort hotels adapted to meet the needs of the motor tourist with parking lots and listings published in the guidebooks of the American Automobile Association. They were used for both extended stays and as overnight accommodation while in transit to other destinations (29). The growth of automobile travel and demand for convenient accommodation led to motels growing in size and adding more luxurious services that drew more and more tourists away from the hotels (58). The proportion of travelers

staying at hotels decreased from seventy-five percent to sixty percent between 1929 and 1936 (31). The era of the resort hotel as the dominant source of accommodation for the American leisure traveler appeared to be over.

The Canadian Context

While tourism and the literature on tourism in Canada evolved in parallel and with links to the United States, there are important differences. The resort hotel in the United States has been researched more extensively there than in Canada where it is often mentioned only as a secondary consideration. In contrast, postwar Canadian cottage landscapes have received extensive coverage. Another primary area of interest for several Canadian scholars has been to compare Canadian attitudes towards wilderness, nature, and recreation with those of the United States.

The following section surveys the Canadian literature in each of these areas as they pertain to this study of the Muskoka region. The focus, thus, will be on the literature pertaining to the private provision of tourism activities in rural areas as opposed to those provided publicly in national and provincial parks as well as urban resort environments (Butler and Wall, 1985, 290-1). Further narrowing the scope of literature, works that pertain to the Canadian rural-recreational countryside, or cottage country landscape, are considered a part of but, at the same time, distinct from the rural countryside (Halseth, 2004, 52).

Canadian Wilderness and Nature Experiences

One key area of cultural difference between Canada and the United States is the relationship and attitudes of people with wilderness and nature. These differences have been identified as originating in the historical development of both countries with the

United States being born out of revolution and Canada being a part of the broader British Empire, which the United States rejected.

Marcia Kline (1970), in *Beyond the Land Itself: Views of Nature in Canada and the United States*, compares the different representations of nature between the two countries and their origins. Kline suggests that by revolting against British rule, Americans rejected the old world and embraced nature (55). Canadians, on the other hand, rejected both the revolution and the environment, which represented America, the land, and natural rights (55). Kline describes the result as fear of and indifference towards the wilderness that was evident in nineteenth-century Canadian cultural outputs (47). Americans looked westward and embraced the western frontier as affirmation of their “march into virgin land” (41). Canadian’s made forays northwards and viewed their own natural landscapes as being inferior to English patterns of civilization and, so, descriptions of the former were tamed and pastoralized (41).

Gaile McGregor (1985), in *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape*, further identifies differences between Canadian and American attitudes towards wilderness, suggesting that they stem from different associations with the frontier. Americans embraced the frontier as representative of the future greatness of their country while Canadians were fearful of the wilderness and recoiled from their frontier (59). The frontier in America was a ‘western’ frontier denoting “a temporary and arbitrary boundary that may not only be transcended but actually redefined – moved, advanced, or even eradicated – by human effort.” (59). On the other hand, Canada has a ‘northern’ frontier denoting ‘limits of endurance,’ “an intangible but ineradicable line between the ‘self’ and the ‘other,’ between what is and is not humanly possible.” (59).

Canadians, therefore, have a more tenacious and not entirely positive relationship with their land. Americans embraced the wilderness areas of their country much more quickly than Canadians, an important distinction that will be evident in the opening of the Canadian Shield for tourism. Margaret Atwood (2004), in *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, shares many of the same conclusions as McGregor. Both McGregor and Atwood draw parallels between Canadian attitudes toward wilderness with attitudes toward the Native populations.

Northrop Frye (1971), in *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, ties the very mystique of Canadianism with wilderness. “To feel ‘Canadian’ was to feel part of a no-man’s-land with huge rivers, lakes, and islands that very few Canadians had ever seen” (220). Frye further wonders “if any other national consciousness has had so large an amount of the unknown, the unrealized, the humanly undigested, so built into it” (220). The Atlantic Seaboard defined American culture with the frontier stretching beyond to the west. To enter the United States, therefore, was to cross an ocean. Canada, on the other hand, was not a gateway but an obstacle, blocking the way to the East. To enter Canada was akin to being “silently swallowed by an alien continent” (217), the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes offering a route to the interior. Frye also identifies a tone of terror in regards to nature, particularly in Canadian poetry. This terror, according to Frye, has less to do with any notions of physical discomfort or the enigmatic qualities of the natural world but a terror of the soul related to uncivilized nature (225).

Ian Angus (1997), in *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality, and Wilderness* returns to the different conceptualizations of the frontier between Americans and Canadians. Angus takes a philosophical approach to conceptualizing Canadian

identity. Using the dynamic of primal and ultimate he proposes that, in Canada, wilderness is primal and civilization the ultimate (125). Canadians, thus, strive to transform the wilderness into civilization with Europe as the template. Taming the wilderness is not just a necessity, but also a moral crusade (126). Key differences between Canadian and American experiences with nature are traced back to the founding and settlement of both countries. American social history was articulated around the concept of the frontier where life “consists in escaping civilized constraints in the very moment that one recreates them” (128). Canadians did not embrace the frontier due to Canada’s imperial-driven centre-periphery relationship with Europe (129). Accordingly “wilderness is not experienced as something to be transformed in civilization, but as a limit to the civilizing project” (129). Kline, McGregor, Atwood, Frye and Angus all clearly identify a Canadian wariness towards the unsettled or wilderness regions of the country, a relationship strikingly different from that of Americans. Like Americans however, Canadians began to embrace and transform these marginal regions into recreation areas in the nineteenth century.

The Canadian Pursuit of Recreation

Den Otter (2012), in *Civilizing the Wilderness: Culture and Nature in Pre-Confederation Canada and Rupert’s Land* looks at the efforts by British North Americans in the years leading up to confederation to tame the wilderness and exploit its resources. Otter proposes that the distrust and, at times, fear of wilderness by mid-nineteenth century English Canadians was channeled and harnessed into a ‘confident management philosophy’ called civilizing that aimed to convert the wilderness into an ‘idealized landscape’ (xx). Fear of wilderness gave way to desires to manipulate and exploit it as

Americans had, albeit without the conservationists' voices proposing that wilderness sanctuaries should be established that already were being heard in the United States at this period (xxi). Tourism in Canada's wild regions was born out of this exploitation. Railway companies, keen to recoup the cost of expanding into and traversing these regions, strived to attract tourists on to their lines. Comfortable trains, steamers, hotels, and sophisticated advertising that harnessed the work of artists, writers and photographers were used to transform the image of Canada's wild places from "dark and dangerous to idyllic, beautiful, and inviting to affluent travellers" (314).

The mid-nineteenth century also saw the opening of the Muskoka Lakes district to settlement through a process comparable to that outlined by Otter (2012). Geoff Wall (1970) explored the settlement of the Muskoka Lakes, including the misinformation conveyed to both government and individual settlers as to the appropriateness of the region for agricultural use. J. David Wood (2006) in, *Places of Last Resort: The Expansion of the Farm Frontier in the Boreal Forrest in Canada, c. 1910-1940* also explores the trials and tribulations of agricultural development in the former wild regions of the country, concluding that the ethical issue remaining is the apportionment of blame for "the waste and suffering that resulted, whether from individual incompetence, the colonization zeal of churches and other agencies, or the kind of internal colonialism administered by various governments" (182). These works are relevant to the understanding of tourism development on the Muskoka Lakes because the failure of the agricultural settlement of the region forced early settlers to look towards tourism as a means of generating income, thereby accelerating the growth of the tourism in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Canadian motivations to seek recreation and solace in the backcountries of the country mirror those of Americans in the nineteenth century as a form of the back-to-nature movement embodying an escape from urban cores to the rural periphery. Jamie Benidickson (1997) in, *Idleness, Water, and a Canoe: Reflections on Paddling for Pleasure* includes a discussion of the cultural motivators explaining the increasing popularity of paddling in nineteenth-century Canada. Nineteenth-century paddlers explained the virtues of paddling with reference to notions of ‘mental and physical well-being’ stemming from direct experiences with the outdoors and natural environment (33). The therapeutic attraction of recreational paddling and, by extension, direct encounters with the outdoors increased in importance during periods of intense societal pressures brought about industrial change (33). In Canada, one such period was in the early years of the twentieth century.

The turn towards nature can also be interpreted through a strong anti-modern movement in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. Tina Loo (2006), in *States of Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century*, looks primarily at the power and politics behind Canadian conservation practices. Loo does, however, address the turn towards wilderness as a therapeutic source of rejuvenation and as escape from the urban world in terms of the economic exploitation of wilderness regions. Government conservationists promoted recreational encounters with wilderness and wildlife not as a critique of modernity, a judgment against urban living and technology, or a call for primitive living, but as a therapeutic engagement that allowed “people to go back to the city renewed and ready to do battle in different jungle” (35). Recreational

holidays in the wilderness where, thus, viewed as a treatment for the symptoms of modernity.

Sharon Wall (2009), in *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-55*, examines Ontarian relationships with nature from the vantage point of the various children's camps established across the province, including Muskoka, in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Wall, as early as the 1870s and 1880s, Canadian commentators began voicing their concerns about the ill effects of urban growth (5). The city was characterized as "dirty, immoral, cold, and indifferent" and also seen as the site of a host of temptations ranging from "excessive drinking, prostitution, and all sorts of other consumer products and entertainments" (5). For some social commentators, the solution to these ills was to eliminate them in the urban environment while others sought to escape the city, resulting in the development of a range of back-to-nature solutions (6). Ontario's first summer camps for children appeared in the early 1900s on Lake Temagami and, by 1920, eleven private camps, five fresh air camps, and three additional agency camps were operating in the province.

The Canadian Shield region in Ontario was well situated to provide the landscape for the burgeoning back-to-nature movement. Roy Wolfe (1977), *Summer Cottages in Ontario*, includes a brief discussion of the factors that made the Canadian Shield so popular for recreational users. The landscape of the Shield fills the need for the illusion of solitude, not the reality of solitude, which allows cottagers to not have direct evidence of human works before them while providing the ability to find the conveniences they desire nearby (21). Wolfe also credits part of the shield's attraction to reminiscence of the time when there was a frontier on the land (22). For the Wolfe, by the mid-twentieth

century, the cult of wilderness in Ontario was no longer exotic but took pleasure in the experiences “that were recently commonplace and difficult” for the early pioneer, resulting from living on the bare rock of the shield and the effort required to penetrate the forest (22).

Wolfe was one of the first Canadian scholars to examine the development of the Canadian Shield, including the nineteenth century history of summer hotels (1962). *The Changing Patterns of Tourism in Ontario* (Wolfe, 1982) focused on the development of tourism on the Muskoka Lakes as understood at that time. He summarizes development as follows:

The resorts of Ontario were of little consequence until the 1870s, and indeed everything that came before 1890 was little more than a prelude. But by the 1890s the people of Ontario first joined vacationing visitors from the United States in making intensive use of their own wilderness for recreation. The first boom in Ontario tourism came with the economic boom that started in 1896, but in a sense it was a restricted boom, because only the well-to-do participated (134).

Wolfe describes this era as being one of the society resort with newspapers closely following the prominent people summering in Muskoka and on Lake Simcoe and Stony Lake (134).

The initial heyday of the Ontario summer resorts lasted from 1896 to 1913 when economic downturn and the subsequent outbreak of war severely diminished the economic prosperity of the moneyed classes (134). A second tourist boom occurred in the 1920s with the return of economic prosperity and the arrival of the new auto-borne tourists (135). Working-class resorts developed in places like Wasaga Beach in the 1920s while once fashionable resorts, such as Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby Beach and

Thousand Island Park, faded into oblivion (136). This second boon ended with the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Geoff Wall (1982), in *Recreational Land Use*, returned to the study of the Muskoka Lakes focusing on the then neglected subject of the historical geography of outdoor recreation (139). Wall credits the development of the recreation industry in Muskoka directly to the ‘forest-lake complex’ and its situation in close proximity to the well-settled parts of Southern Ontario (143). Wall notes that on the Muskoka Lakes both commercial and private form of recreational land use developed from a very early date (145). Commercial forms of land use primarily entailed the establishment of resort hotels that attracted wealthy socially conscious vacationers (145). Private recreational land use consisted of cottages and campsites. Cottage development in Muskoka began on the northern islands of Lake Joseph but quickly spread to other sections of all three of the larger Muskoka lakes (147). Like the resort hotels, these summer homes were “the prerogative of the wealthy” (147). Wall suggests that scenery, while a major attraction to many visitors, was second to socially-driven motivators attracting vacationers to the lakes at this time (150).

Patricia Jasen (1995), in *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario 1790-1914*, examines the historical development of tourism in central Canada. Jasen’s argument is that the Romantic Movement that originated in Britain (7) inspired tourism in Ontario by propelling individuals to search for wildness in the northern regions of the province (3). Jasen connects several of the tourist experiences found in the American literature to different destinations in Ontario (4). Niagara Falls and the adjacent battlefields of the War of 1812 are placed in the context of the romantic and sublime.

This is a similar interpretation to that of Sears (1988, 33). The St. Lawrence River and the Thousand Islands are connected to the search for scenic panoramas and the picturesque often associated with the Hudson River Valley in the United States (56). The upper Great Lakes region is regarded as a destination providing romantic wilderness experiences (81). Jasen writes; “For Europeans, then Americans, and finally urban Canadians themselves, the forest serves as a symbol of a lost world of worlds, and the experience of the forest was partly an exercise in collective nostalgia.” (82). The idea of Canadians seeking wilderness in the mid-nineteenth century contrasts with McGregor’s argument regarding Canadian fear and hatred of the wilderness in the same time period.

Jasen links the Muskoka Lakes region with the back-to-nature movement. She also credits the popularity of Muskoka as being the result of wilderness tourism and therapeutic holidaying (116). She argues that the region was marketed by the Grand Trunk Railway as a vague extension of the United States to attract tourists (121). Choices of accommodations in the region are said to have been based on two considerations: the social status of the guests and degree of rusticity that they were willing to endure (123). Rising numbers of visitors and improving tourist infrastructure changed the meaning of Muskoka. First, the region became the place of choice for an increasingly well-to-do clientele and, secondly, it became more domesticated than many tourists liked (126). Finally, Jasen examines the relationships between white tourists and native guides while hunting and fishing in Ontario’s north (134).

Jasen (1995) provides the best starting point for historic studies of tourism in the region. It includes a large section that is devoted to the emergence of the back-to-nature movement and the rise of health tourism in the Muskoka region. However, the book has

been criticized for the omission of data that does not support its premises and a suggested lack of awareness of relevant tourism literature (Wilkinson, 1997, 761-4). Nevertheless, Jasen's work is still the most convenient source on the history of Ontario tourism. It is often cited and is the basis on which other research has been conducted. Jasen's work will be drawn upon throughout this thesis and a reassessment of some of her interpretations and conclusions will be offered in chapter five.

Claire Campbell (2005), in *Shaped by the West Wind: Nature and History in Georgian Bay*, provides one of the most recent and comprehensive interpretations of the history of this region focusing on the interactions between external agents and local reality. Campbell traces the opening of the Georgian Bay district to recreation in the 1870s as being an attempt by urban-weary Victorians to embrace the 'frontier' character of the region, a characteristic of the region that continues to differentiate it from other cottage areas (86-87). Tourist hotels appeared by the 1890s, sharing common design characteristics including ornate three-storey wood construction surrounded by double-height verandahs (89). These resort hotel landscapes, with exception of the odd rock projecting through their manicured lawns, according to Campbell could have been anywhere with little to differentiate them from other fashionable summer resorts (89). However, Campbell asserts that although it is easy to interpret the early twentieth century Georgian Bay tourist experience as one with white shirtwaists, maids, caretakers, private yachts, and the bungalow indicative of imperial leisure, such a 'kid-glove' approach that "kept the Bay at arm's length was not at all representative of the first summer communities" (90). Campbell notes that the Bay asserted its wilderness credentials when compared with other resort regions, especially its primary rival, Muskoka (151). The

communities rest side by side and exhibit a similar human landscape of grand resorts and cottages combined with an image that “suggests money and old society” (151). “To Georgian Bay cottagers, Muskoka signifies a busy social schedule, expensive resorts, green lawns and crowded cottage neighbourhoods – an essentially urban way of life and a status-conscious public display that has crowded out the natural environment” (151). Changing perceptions of the Muskoka tourism landscape and comparisons with other places will be discussed throughout this study.

The Canadian Cottage Experience

In Ontario, second homes and cottages have received more attention than resort hotels, beginning with the pioneering work of Wolfe (1951) on *Summer Cottagers in Ontario* and followed by *Summer Cottages in Ontario: Purpose-built for an Inessential Purpose* (1977). Greg Halseth (1998), in *Cottage Country in Transition: A Social Geography of Change and Contention in the Rural-Recreational Countryside*, examined the Cultus Lake area of the lower Fraser Valley in British Columbia and Ontario’s Rideau Lake area to explore the rural and cottage residential areas, the social separation of these two areas and recognition by residents of the differences in collective interests between the rural and cottage areas (5). One important conclusion of this work is the clear separation of both physical and social space between residents of rural areas and cottagers (228). In his study, Halseth does not explicitly explore the place of the tourist in this dynamic. Julia Harrison (2008), in *Shifting Positions*, studied the motivations of cottagers in the Halliburton region.

John Marsh and Katie Griffiths (2006), in *Cottage Country Landscapes: The Case of the Kawartha Lakes Region, Ontario*, set out to identify the values of the cottage

country landscape and the threats to them (219). This paper is in the edited volume of essays by Norman McIntyre, Daniel Williams and Kevin McHugh (2006) that provides information on second homes both in Ontario and abroad, particularly Scandinavia, as does Löfgren's previously mentioned work on the history of vacationing. Of more relevance to this study is Peter Stevens' (2010) doctoral dissertation in history, *Getting Away from it All; Family Cottaging in Postwar Ontario*, which examines the development of cottage communities on the Canadian Shield region, with a particular focus on the Muskoka region and changing gender roles.

Stephen Svenson (2004), in *The Cottage and the City: An Interpretation of the Canadian Second Home Experience*, explores the key differences between tourists and cottagers. This is an important clarification that compares the experience of the cottager with that of the tourist. For the tourist, a vacation is to be in a community without having responsibility for it (73). Cottaging, on the other hand, involves a commitment, "in its strongest sense a commitment to a place, a community, and future generations" (73). The key difference between cottagers and tourists relates to place attachment, both tangible and intangible.

Cottages, perhaps as a result of deeper rooting of cottagers than tourists in the recreational landscape, have thus been the focus of more studies than the resort hotel. The difference in coverage can also be attributed to temporal elements. Today, the cottage country landscape is dominated by cottages. The recreational landscape of the resort hotel is, in a sense, a past landscape yet it is a key type of landscape that links the natural landscape of pre-European settlement with the cottage landscape of today. This study focuses on this landscape in Muskoka.

Gaps in the Literature

American examples dominate the dialogue on North American tourism history. Works on American tourist history are far more numerous as compared to Canadian tourist history, forcing the tourism researcher to extrapolate the American experience to explain historical developments in Canada, which may not have been the same. However, one topic on which extensive Canadian work has been undertaken is the national park systems (Baker 2002; Bella 1987; Hart 1983; Johnston 1984; MacLaran ed. 2007) resulting in insights that are fundamentally different from other places where park officials' preservation aspirations were more muted.

In a general sense, significant drawbacks have been identified in North American tourism literature. Namely, historical research has not benefited from strong links with leisure research and has “not become deeply involved in the theoretical and ideological debates” which characterize British leisure research. (Towner and Wall, 1991: 79) Consequences include a great emphasis being placed on the study of specific places, neglecting an analysis of whether they were unique or typical. Similarly attention has been concentrated on periods of rapid change over the continuities that exist in the patterns of tourism (80). There is also a need to apply analytical frameworks to areas of study that have not benefited from their use. For example, historians have seldom utilized and benefited from the use of such framework to conduct research. Geographers use such frameworks more frequently.

As recently as 2006, Stephen Page suggested that the limited number of historical studies published in *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Tourism Management* reveals an “absence of a wider engagement of tourism researchers in historical analysis” (1074) with

the vast majority of temporally based studies limited to either applications of the resort-cycle or discussions of heritage tourism. This thesis provides a Canadian context and content to the existing body of North American literature on tourism history. At the same time, the author is cognizant of some the criticisms that have been leveled at tourism history as a whole. Methods of historical analysis will be adopted that will take this study beyond a discussion of heritage tourism, resort-cycle applications or uncritical reporting of events. More importantly, this thesis will place the evolution of Muskoka tourism in the context of other regions to draw out similarities and differences. In this way, a clearer understanding of the historical development of tourism in the Canadian Shield region and its place in the tourism landscape will emerge.

Chapter 3 Methodologies

One can argue that the past is passed it cannot be changed. This statement is both true and false at the same time. Historical facts may remain; however, the interpretation of these facts gives history vitality. Some have argued that geography itself is fundamentally historical because people-environment relationships are changing and not constant (Jones, 1925, 255 in Baker, 1997, 231). Here, though, it is better to define historical geography as the study of a place at some point or points in the past.

Baker argues that studying the geography of a place at some time in the past, or the changing geography of a place during some period in the past, is to study “a dead reality” (Baker, 1997, 232). The historical geographer’s emphasis on a ‘dead reality’ separates this field from others in geography. In historical geography there is no opportunity for direct observation through surveys and questionnaires or other such methodologies that are the foundation of many cultural geographic studies. Instead, accounts of witnesses and surviving material culture must be relied upon. While such limitations must be acknowledged, it is also important to realize that there are positive aspects in researching a dead reality, because the “inevitable distancing of the historical geographer from the object of study theoretically permits a greater degree of impartiality than might otherwise be the case” (232).

Historical geography also provides challenges in terms of its writing. Where historical writing tends towards the narrative, geographical writing is usually concerned with cross-sectional retrospectives (239). Baker suggests that researchers adopt a particular approach in historical geographic to overcome these challenges; this process is

followed here. After establishing a research question based on the published materials related to the area of study, it is imperative to develop a research plan and then to survey the primary sources that are available. In this section, in an effort to balance the narrative, interpretative and analytical components of the research, several models of tourism will first be examined to help articulate a research question and develop a structure to organize the research findings. The case study will then be introduced and the primary sources that are available for this particular study will be considered. Finally the strengths and weaknesses of the source materials will be discussed including an acknowledgement of potential limitations.

Development of the Research Question

Where the practices of historical geography are applied to the study of tourism, insights are revealed such as the identification of change and continuity, which otherwise might not be apparent (Butler and Wall, 1985, 287). In their 1985 assessment of the state of tourism history, Butler and Wall identified opportunities to improve the then emerging field. The analysis of change in the field of tourism history often took two separate approaches; one of studying the changing tourist and the other changes in the destinations. However, such studies were seldom undertaken together (292). Therefore, the need was identified to analyze the changes in tourism elements such as tourists, infrastructure, and places, along with changes brought about by tourism itself, and to place both within a broader context (292). One of the primary objectives of this study is to design a framework to facilitate this and to test its utility by applying it directly to an established tourist region.

The Canadian Shield of Ontario is a region that holds an important place in the identity of the province. Through the words of poets and the images of artists, it has come to symbolize and act as a repository for the tangible and intangible heritage of the province. The Shield region is a landscape that has attained an almost sacred aura within our society, a true cultural landscape. The Canadian Shield is a symbolic ingredient in what it means to be Canadian

Sauer defines cultural landscape as being “fashioned out of the natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape the result” (1925). In the Canadian Shield, this cultural landscape is evident in many forms, not the least being tourism. Understanding the cultural landscape is the act of “deciphering the identity of a place from its landscape”, through the “complex process... of peeling back a place’s history, layer after layer” (Knudsen et al, 2008, 133).

The importance of tourism, especially on the southern margins of the Canadian Shield, is not revealed just as figures and structures in the cultural landscape. It is also an agent in its continuing evolution and interpretation. Saarinen expressed this as follows:

Developing tourism not only creates welfare and the physical landscapes which we or ‘others’ live in and experience, it is also a major element constituting the way in which we see our environment, other places, and cultures, and the way in which ‘others’ see and represent us and our daily environment. (2004, 162).

Therefore, tourists play a significant role in the creation of landscape meaning. However, tourists are not alone in the tourism landscape. It is beneficial, then, to look at the complex perspectives of tourists and other agents such as tourism operators and local residents, and their interpretations of landscapes, and place identities. The edited volume of essays by Knudsen et al. (2008) addresses “the relationships between identity and

landscape, the relationship between tourism and landscape, and the way in which these intersect with meaning” (133) by utilizing what they term a tourism-landscape-identity nexus.

The Tourism-Landscape-Identity Nexus

In their introduction, Daniel Knudsen, Anne Soper, and Michelle Metro-Roland state their intention to re-theorize tourism by moving away from Foucauldian notions of the gaze towards an approach that draws instead on the social construction of meaning (1). Meanings in a tourism context are conceptualized as being constructions of a multiplicity of insider and outsider perspectives, both intentioned and unintentional (1). Therefore, they sought to ‘tease out’ both how tourist sites are constructed and the ways in which tourist landscapes are “filled with intended and unintended meaning for the tourist” (1). This constitutes a different approach to that of John Urry’s (1990) *The Tourist Gaze*, which conceptualized the fundamental practice of tourism as being the observation of objects by tourists. The role of the tourism industry then is the production of such objects or symbols to look upon (Urry 1990 in Knudsen et al, 2008, 3). Knudsen, Soper and Michelle-Roland criticize this theory by arguing that tourism is more than just gazing, it avoids considerations of authenticity, overemphasizes the role of tourists and, finally, does not address the forces compelling people to tour (2008, 3-4).

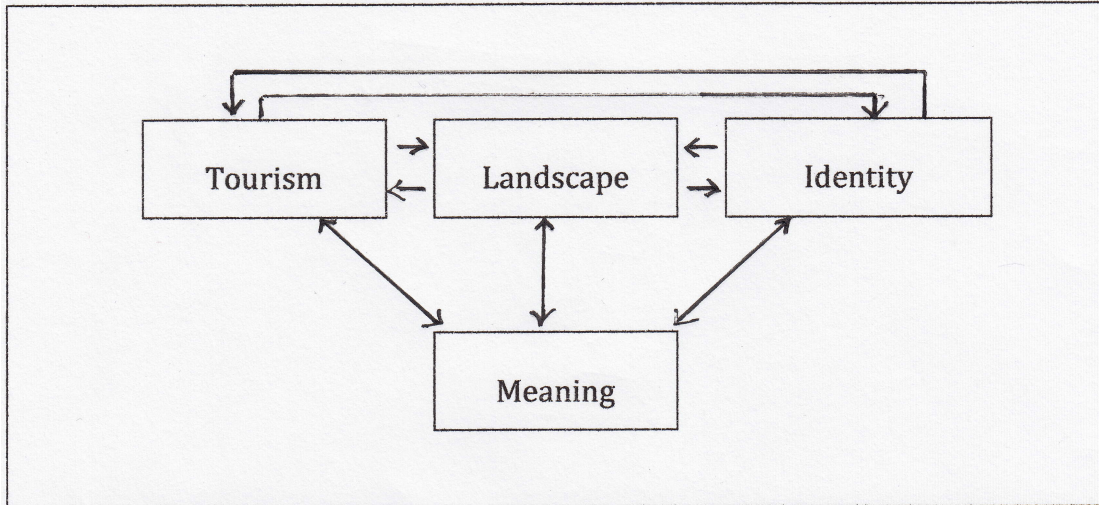


Figure 3:1. Tourism-Landscape-Identity Nexus. Adapted from Knudsen et al, 2008.

In place of Urry’s tourist gaze, Knudsen, Soper and Michelle-Roland propose a landscape approach to tourism based on seeing and reading the landscape in order to interpret its meanings (4). This is embodied in a tourism-landscape-identity nexus that intersects with meaning (Figure 3:1). Within this nexus, tourism, embodied by tourists, locals and intermediaries, interacts with the landscape (here specified as resorts hotels), which is created, recreated and contested through social processes, to decipher identities and produce meaning (4-5). This suggests that tourism is far from being a one-way process as suggested by gazing but, instead, is a complex series of interactions (5). “The act of touring is thus quite complex and revolves around deciphering the identity of a place and its inhabitants from that place’s landscape, using all the tools available to the modern tourist” (5).

It is therefore possible to study intangible ‘meanings’ of destinations by looking at the interrelationships among tourism, landscape and identity. This framework, combined with temporal change as revealed in life-cycle theory, serves as a starting point to direct research into a study of tourism history. However, further discussion is required of each

of the terms tourism, landscape and identity are each broad concepts that require both narrowing and clarification to fit the scope of this study and to reflect the different research materials that are available to shed light on past tourism landscapes.

To begin with, it is desirable to clarify the concept of landscape as used here. While landscape usually encompasses more than the attributes of accommodation in which tourists stay, it is suggested that the landscape of the resort hotel provides an effective way to address landscape in a manageable way by focusing on a particular type of tourism place. Limerick highlights the insights that can be gained by focusing on resort hotels. While his comments are specific to the United States, they are applicable to other places:

By looking at the resorts, one can appreciate the impact of new means of transportation and technological innovations; the American attraction to novelty and fashion; the changes in American attitudes towards nature and landscape and the connection between architectural styles and cultural aspirations. (1975,12).

More than mere buildings, resorts hotels are often destinations in themselves.

Unlike urban hotels, which function in conjunction with other sites, resort hotels are often self-contained and embody a large proportion of the visitors' experiences. Thus, the landscape of the resort hotel is used to represent the broader tourist landscape,

In much the same way, tourists, can be substituted in the framework for the more encompassing concept, tourism. Local residents and cottagers are largely excluded from the present study to provide a clear focus and reduce the scope of this study. However, intermediaries such as operators and advertisers will be treated under the headings of landscape and projected image. This leaves identity, which in an historical context, is

difficult to ascertain giving its intangible nature. Yet, identity is manifested in several forms, one of which is in image. Image has been defined as the “sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination” (Crompton, 1979, 18). These components are embodied in the image that is projected through the promotional materials of a resort region. The projected image can only represent a certain sample of identity given the range of different identities attached to one region at any given time. Unlike many of these different identities the version embodied in the projected image survives today in the material culture. If identity is replaced by projected image, then the framework can be modified as in Figure 3:2 where the meaning of the destination is discernible from a combination of cues related to the resort hotel landscape (landscape), the tourists (tourism), and the projected image (identity).

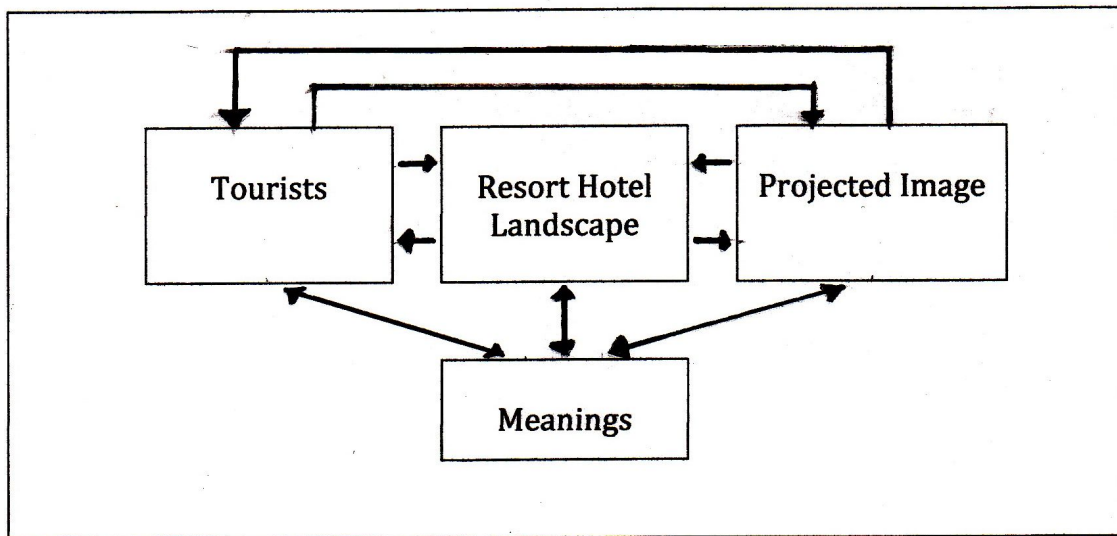


Figure 3:2. Proposed Framework

With a preliminary framework in place, it is now possible to state the research question as: How do the evolution of tourist infrastructure in the form of lodging operations, the nature of tourists and the projected image combine to reveal the essence, or meaning, of the tourist destination over time. Drawing upon business, tourism,

recreation, and transportation history, this study will contribute to the understanding of the evolution of tourist destinations. It accomplishes this by examining the role of lodging facilities in the creation of various place meanings in the developmental stages of the region, by studying the resort hotels themselves, the tourists who frequented them, and the materials produced to promote the destination. The development and utilization of a framework for the organization of each of these facets of the tourism experience is central to this endeavour. It is intended that this framework can be applied as a tool to aid in the analysis of different resort areas on multiple scales to provide a fuller understanding of the evolution of tourism.

Development of a Framework for Analysis

Key Concepts

In Sack's (1992) framework for the geographical understanding of place, regions are constructed through the interaction of three structures or forces. They are labeled as follows: the realm of nature, which comprises the physical world, the realm of social relations, which comprises the social, economic, and political forces that define issues of race, gender, class, and bureaucracy, and finally, the realm of meaning, which represents the forces of the mind, such as the ideas, values and beliefs that are utilized to give meaning to the world. Places are, thus, defined as "those spatial locations where the three overlap." (Young, 1999: 389).

Within the same tradition, Saarinen (2004) defines tourism as a spatial and social phenomenon. He develops his own model explaining the transformation of tourist regions. Arguing that theoretical treatments of development processes and changes that have been employed to date, such as life-cycle analysis, have not been conceptualized

from this perspective, he suggested that the development of tourism can be understood as being part of a larger social and ideological processes that take place in the destinations themselves. The processes can be explored from the “perspectives of constructivism or realism”. (166).

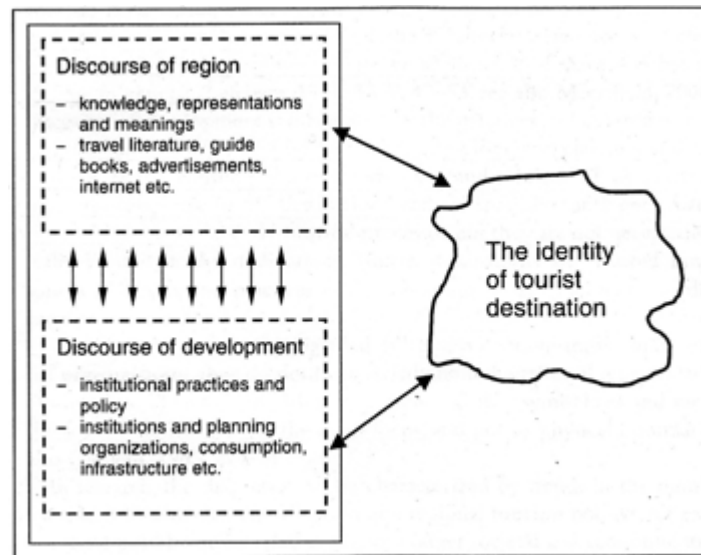


Figure 3:3. The Process of Transformation of Tourist Destinations. Source, Saarinen, 2004.

Saarinen theorizes that complex sets of changes can be understood through discourses, which he defines as historically-produced, coherent meaning systems and practices, which both manifest and are power structures at the same time. (166): “On a pragmatic level, discourses include the immaterial and material production of ‘reality’. This dual nature of discursive processes implies both the idea of tourist destinations and the actions constructing the physical and symbolic landscape based on that idea(s), which can be conceptualized through *a discourse of region* and *discourse of development*.” (167) (Figure 3:3).

The discourse of region reflects the social and cultural, as well material aspects, of tourist destinations. The main factors in this discourse are those that produce the idea of the region, including: tourism (the tourists), travel literature, regional literature, tourist

maps, guide books, other tourist materials and the media in general. Together, these both produce and reflect local geographies that define tourist destinations (167-8). The discourse of region therefore makes the destination popular by referring “to a process in which the socio-spatial meanings and representations characterizing the destination and its cultural and natural features are produced, reproduced, stereotyped and marketed” (168).

The discourse of development reflects the institutional practices and processes shaping the destination, and they constitute the material and economic nature of tourism. This discourse is manifested in the practices and outcomes of organizations and institutions concerned with the development, planning, and marketing of tourism, including the consumption of goods, services, and ideas (168). While these institutions operate in the destinations, they are not necessarily located in them. The discourse can be characterized by trends in the numbers of tourists, infrastructure, consumption and regional tourism politics (168). The discourse of development also links the destination to a larger regional and economic structure (169).

The work of Ash Amin (2004) on the politics of place is applicable here. Amin distinguishes between territorially and relationally interpreted regions. The traditional definition of a region focused on the territorial unit (33). Here regions are territorial entities, whereas if they are viewed relationally they are part of wider interconnected networks. Questions of territorial identity arise out of this dialogue. Politically, popular support may emerge for some form of regional devolution designed to protect a regional cultural identity from a threatening cultural ‘outside’ (37). Amin states that an insider culture is imagined as a territorially defined public sphere or public culture (37). The

relation between insider culture and a threatening ‘outside’ culture will be discussed in the fifth chapter.

Returning to the discourses of region and development. Together, they ‘create’ meaning for a tourist destination, combining what the destination is and represents at the moment as well as the historical and present practices that transform it (Saarinen, 2004, 169):

It is a construction that includes the discourse of region with different texts and textual practices and the discourse of development with physical elements, institutional practices and processes. Through the process of spatial socialization the present identity of a destination characterizes, names it and its tourists and separates it from other destinations and the surrounding physical and social environment. (169).

As social constructions, destinations are a constantly changing outcome of the process of transformation and the discourses constructing it (169). When considering the evolution, change, growth and decline of tourist destinations, it is imperative to note that tourist destinations are not just resources waiting to be extracted; they are social phenomenon and, thus, “they are ours’ and others’ constructions” (Allen et al., 1998: 2 in Saarinen, 2004: 172).

Expanding the Framework

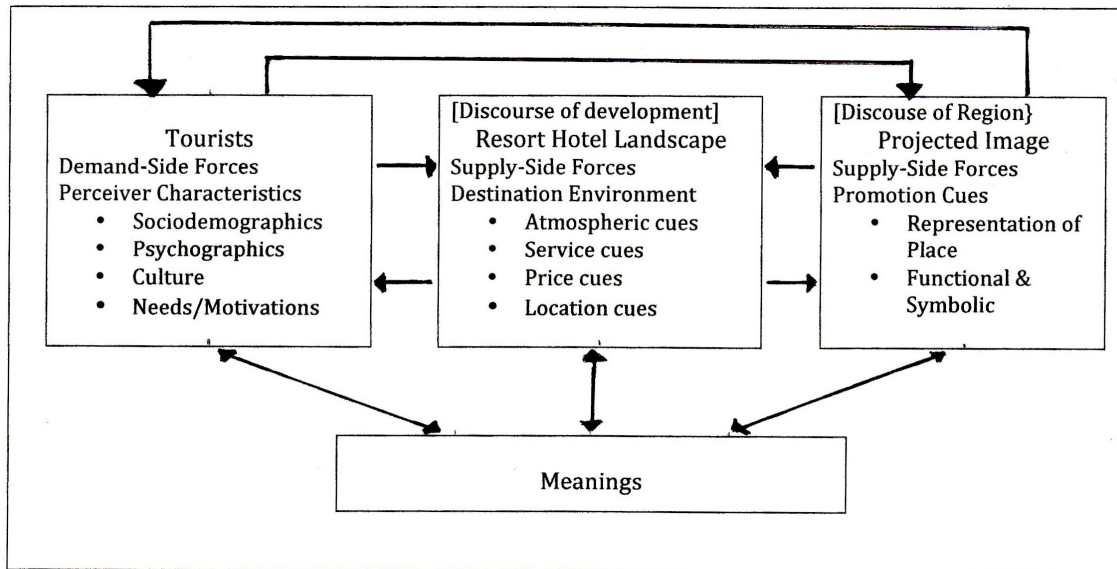


Figure 3:4. Expanded Framework. Adapted from: Knudsen et al 2008, Saarinen 2004, Sirgy and Su 2000, Tasci and Gartner 2007

Saarinen's framework does not illustrate explicitly the role of the tourist. Knudsen states that the tourist is an essential component to the understanding of places. They give meaning to the landscapes through their shaping and interpretation of them (2008, 133). By adding the tourist to Saarinen's framework, the visitor interacts with the discourses of development and region to create meanings. A diagram has been created, similar to Figure 3:4, where landscape and identity have replaced development and meaning, respectively. Substituting new, narrower, terms such as the resort hotel landscape, projected image and tourist, it is now possible to expand the framework further to include how each topic will be examined (Figure 3:4).

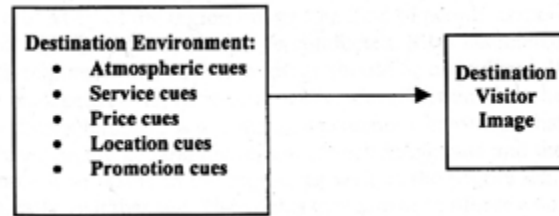


Figure 3:5. The Effect of Destination Environment on Destination Visitor Image. Source: Sirgy and Su, 2000, 341.

The resort hotel landscape represents the broader landscape. Resort hotels are a component of the supply-side of the tourist industry and part of the ‘bricks and mortar’ of the tourism landscape. They also represent the ideas and decisions of operators of tourism who contribute to the discourse of development, as outlined by Saarinen. Resort hotels can also be considered as landscapes in their own right that can be read as ‘texts’. Of the numerous methods available to read the landscape of the resort hotel, the destination environment cues that are outlined by Sirgy and Su (2000) will be used (Figure 3:5). These ‘atmospheric’ cues are comprised of the natural landscape, historic interests, hotel design, and tourism infrastructure. Together they “form the overall context within which tourists make travel and patronage decisions and are likely to have a significant impact on destination image” (Sirgy and Su, 2000: 341).

Identity is represented in the figure by projected image. It is important to clarify which kind of image is referred to since the centre of the framework also contains elements of image and identity as embodied in the meaning or identity of place. Projected image is the idea of the destination as promoted in tourist materials issued by the tourism operators, as opposed to the consumer’s concept of image and identity as expressed by Gunn (1988) in his organic, induced and complex images. However, it is to be expected that a relationship will exist between these.

Promotional materials represent travel products that are by nature substantially intangible. The projected images that they contain are important as they portray and represent the product and the destination, until the destination is experienced first-hand through a visit (Tasci and Gartner, 2007: 415). Of the various components of tourism promotional materials, the visual images receive more attention since they are ‘eye-catching’ representations of the destination (415). Prior to an actual visit, destination images depend strongly upon these visual representations, rather than on the destination’s actual features (Mackay and Fassenmaier, 2000). Thus, the image that promoters of a destination are trying to create for themselves can be determined by the amount and content of visual materials and, more importantly, by the inclusion or exclusion of certain dimensions of the tourism experience (Tasci and Gartner, 2007: 415). Therefore, changes in the representation of a destination, be it either through the symbolic (personality) or functional (physical) types of images in promotional materials, (see Sirgy 1985) can inform the study of broader changes in destination image, or place identity, over time.

Completing the triad is the tourist who takes the place of the broader concept of tourism in the diagram. The key questions asked of the tourists are “Who are they?” and “Why are they there?” Key considerations of socio-demographics, psychographics, culture, needs and motivations are included in the answer to this question. Tourists play an important role in the formation of identity by directly influencing the built environment and the projected image, both designed specifically to meet their needs. By understanding who the tourists were and what their needs and motivations were, we see

how visitors influenced hotels and the projected images. As the makeup of tourists adjust, the built environment of hotels and promotional image adjust.

It is through the interactions and dialogues between the human landscape of the tourists, the manufactured landscape of the hotels, and the imaginary landscape of the projected image that meaning and identity emerges. Each of the three influence each other and interact with the overall meanings attached to the destination. Within this framework the tourists come first as without them there is no tourism. However once tourism has been established, the other components soon develop and begin to influence the tourists and the associations they make with the destination, embodied through meaning and identity. By utilizing the framework at different periods in the region's development, temporal changes in the tourist, hotels, and projected image can be traced in an organized manner that allows for a better understanding of the evolution or continuity of meaning and identity.

Muskoka as the Case Study Region

The Muskoka Lakes tourist region is located on the southern margin of the Canadian Shield in Central Ontario. It is an ideal place to apply this framework as an organizational aid in analyzing the historical geography of tourism. The suitability of the region as a case study is based around several key strengths. To begin, tourism in Muskoka began earlier than many other adjacent regions. At the same time, Muskoka tourism developed after other wilderness destinations, such as the Adirondacks and the White Mountains and thus, has left a more accessible range of sources. Muskoka tourism history therefore also sits between the first developments in North American tourism centred in the eastern United States and prior to later the development of tourist

destinations in the north of Ontario and the west of the continent. Additionally, tourism in the region also developed alongside other economic sectors in the region, beginning in tandem with European settlement of the area. Its popularity as a resort destination also means that Muskoka is covered extensively in the media as well as promoted by a wide variety of means.

Muskoka also provides the opportunity to undertake a case study that covers a wide variety of tourists with different socio-economic backgrounds and motivations. Unlike other destinations that may be more homogenous in the clientele they attracted, Muskoka has long been a destination for consumers from many different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The history of Muskoka is not another case of ‘mass following class’, as the two have intermingled in the district from almost the outset of tourism development to the present day, giving rise to multiple meanings being attached to Muskoka that illustrate how a landscape can support different and often, competing identities. Chapter five discusses these different concepts of Muskoka in depth and their implications on the tourist landscape. Differing identities are reflected in the wide range of tourist infrastructure designed to cater to multiple consumer markets, thereby enriching the study of tourism development. Also, Muskoka has not been the site of tourist innovation, such as the invention of a new recreational activity, new lodging type, or a new form of promotional vehicle. Instead, Muskoka has been a place where innovations have been adopted from elsewhere, especially the United States, and adapted to a particular locale. Although it is not the main focus of this study, Muskoka also provides an excellent venue to study the effects of transportation change on resort destinations. The arrival of the lake navigation, railroad, and the automobile had major consequences

for the tourists, hotels, and identity of the region. In this regard, the choice of Muskoka as a Canadian case study complements other works, such as the study of the effects of transportation change on the land-use patterns of American seaside resorts conducted by Maryann Brent (1997).

The evolution of tourism in Muskoka will not be analyzed in its entirety. Rather, focus will be placed on the crucial period of development, ending at a time when the destination image of the region solidified at the end of the Second World War. By this time, the predominant forms of tourism that exist today were in place and the rate of change diminished. The decision to end analysis in 1945 stems also from the nature of the source documents, which change fundamentally from archival sources prior to 1945 to first-person testimonials afterwards, which would require a different approach to study.

Sources

Strengths and Weaknesses

According to Baker, “No study of historical geography can be better than the sources on which it is founded: the best studies are those based upon a wide spectrum of sources.” (1997: 234). Before surveying the available Muskoka materials, it is beneficial to consider the nature of sources in general, focusing on the unique opportunities and insights they can provide but also to be aware of their limitations. By the very nature of past landscapes and events there is an inability to observe the subject being studied directly. Thus, there is a forced reliance on the testimony of witnesses and this defines historical geography as a distinctive part of the discipline (232). Marc Bloch (1954) states that: “explorers of the past are never quite free. The past is a tyrant. It forbids them to know anything which it has not itself, consciously or otherwise, yielded to them.”

(59). Since much of history has gone unrecorded and so much of what did get recorded has been lost, the knowledge of the past will never be complete. Indeed even that which has survived needs to be treated with caution. Raoul Narrol (1962) identifies two major sources of bias in historical sources as selective survival and selective deposit. Questions related to the types of people who left the material, the possible presence of a class, age, or gender bias, and the possible absence of other vital sources of data should be considered.

The remedy to these issues in availability of historical sources is to first have a good understanding of what exists, what has been lost, and then to use the widest spectrum of sources possible to mitigate biases. With this in mind, we will now turn to the sources available in the context of this Muskoka case study.

Information Sources

The variety of sources is available that is relevant to tourism research base on Muskoka is varied. Much material has been conserved in public archives and museums.

Guidebooks, maps, and photographs from the prewar era exist primarily in these places. However, twentieth century materials, especially from the 1920s onwards, are not as well represented in public collections with the postwar era being particularly under-represented at this time. Additionally the brochures and other ephemera from Muskoka's long history as a popular summer resort destination are not well represented in public collections. My own personal collection of Muskoka tourism material was used to fill these gaps.

My personal collection has accrued over twenty and now consists of several thousand items. The focus of the collection is on the tourism industry of the Muskoka

Lakes spanning a period from 1870 to 1990. It consists primarily of postcards, photographs, brochures, crested hotel-ware, maps, and guidebooks. While extensive, the majority of objects within this collection are not necessarily unique or one-of-a-kind. As products of the tourist industry, most of these items were mass-produced and, thus, can be found in other private and public collections.

Another group of privately-owned materials that was used extensively for this research is the Judd Family collection held by Ken Judd in Minett, Ontario. The Judd family emigrated to Muskoka in the 1870s and began accommodating summer visitors in the 1880s, eventually constructing the Ernescliffe Hotel on Lake Rosseau in the early 1890s. They operated the hotel until the early 1960s, at which point it ceased commercial operations and was sold to a religious group, who used it as a retreat for a number of years. Eventually, Ernescliffe was abandoned and subsequently burned to the ground in the mid-1970s. However, the family has retained a great deal of material from the entire period of the hotel's operation. This includes complete guest registries, financial ledgers, correspondence, invoices, and hundreds of photographs and related ephemera connected to the hotel.

Materials Available to Study the General Development of Tourism

A large body of secondary work exists on the history of Muskoka tourism, most of which has been published in the last fifty years. Most of these works focus on one element of the Muskoka experience or several elements concentrated in one specific location, such as a town or individual resort hotel. As seen in chapter two, several excellent dissertations and journal articles have been written on the phenomenon of cottaging, land use, and transportation systems, among other themes. Many popular local histories have

been published on hotels, cottages and steamboats. However these tend towards the descriptive, biographic and, in some cases, are overly nostalgic, as opposed to being an interpretive analysis of the subject matter. While these secondary sources have been used as references, most of the research for this thesis is based on surviving and previously untouched or new primary documents.

An advantage to conducting a study such as this at this particular moment in time is that, in the past several years, a large amount of archival material has been digitized and made available through the Internet. This includes rare guidebooks housed in often obscure public and university collections that are now easily accessible through the San Francisco-based Internet Archive. Even more relevant are digitized back issues of newspapers, which are also now available. The ability to search old newspapers using key word has brought to light articles that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. These newspaper articles are the main sources used in the reconstruction of a historic narrative of the development of Muskoka Lakes tourism. The availability of such sources has transformed the ability to explore tourism history.

Where primary documents specific to the Muskoka Lakes are limited, secondary sources have been used to bridge gaps and, especially, to provide a further context to key developments. Where such secondary source have been used to enrich understanding, they have been linked directly to Muskoka through the use of primary sources that demonstrate that what was happening in tourism elsewhere had implications for Muskoka. However, such secondary sources have been used sparingly in favour of primary source documents in an effort to ensure historical accuracy.

Materials Available to Study the Tourists

Secondary sources tell little of who the tourists were and what they were doing while on vacation in Muskoka. Therefore, primary sources have been used to understand the tourists themselves. Newspaper articles have been used but the most useful materials have been gleaned from surviving hotel documents, personal correspondence and contemporary memoirs.

The vast majority of resort ledgers, registries, and other documents were destroyed by either neglect or fires that destroyed many of Muskoka's largest lodging operations. In the case of resorts that closed and were demolished, these documents were often discarded as being of no value. With the exception of the occasional guest register or income statement, those that have survived are seldom in public collections. Thus, it is very fortunate that a large collection held by one of the descendants of an early hotel keeper has been made available for this Muskoka case study.

Muskoka is perhaps better known for its cottagers than its tourists. After the Second World War, Muskoka experienced an enormous growth in the number of cottagers, many of whom were formerly guests of the resorts that will be discussed later in this thesis. The postwar cottage experience in Muskoka has been studied extensively by Peter Stevens in (2010) *Getting Away From it all: Family Cottaging in Postwar Ontario*. In the present study, the cottager will be distinguished from other tourists for, while both differ from the resident in that they reside in the region seasonally, the cottagers pay land tax to the municipality whereas the tourist does not. The distinction is necessary as the focus of this study is on the resorts and their users.

Materials Available to Study the Resort Hotel

Almost all of Muskoka's resort hotel infrastructure that predated the mid-twentieth century has been lost to demolition, neglect, and fire. It is, therefore, necessary to use a variety of sources such as photographs, published descriptions and promotional materials to reconstruct the lost properties and to trace their development over time.

Fortunately, large quantities of photographic images are held in various archives and museums. Noteworthy collections are the James Esson (1870s), Frank Micklethwaite (1880s-1910), and John Boyd (1920s) photograph deposits at the National Archives and the Ontario Archives, numbering a total of approximately 3,500 different images. The Canadian Science and Technology Museum holds the CNR archives, which contain thousands of images of recreation regions in Ontario taken between the 1910s and 1950s. The Ontario Archives contains images created for the Ontario Department of Tourism. In addition to these public holdings, thousands of postcard images survive and provide even more visual evidence. The value of these images is twofold: first, they are excellent sources of factual evidence of leisure scenes, and secondly they can be analyzed for an understanding of contemporary culture (Towner, 1995: 342).

Materials Available to Study the Projected Image

As a popular tourist region, the surviving promotional materials generated for Muskoka are varied and extensive, ranging from newspaper articles, guidebooks, brochures, and even a few films. These can be divided into three groups based on place of origin. These groups include materials produced by transportation companies attempting to increase traffic on their lines, hotel and resort operators looking to increase patronage, and provincial and local tourist organizations and business bureaus advertising to increase

tourist patronage to a specific place, such as a town, or to a larger provincial or national region.

Commercial navigation on the Muskoka Lakes began in the mid-1860s with a steamboat line operated by A.P. Cockburn. The Northern Railway of Canada, which became the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR), arrived in Gravenhurst in 1876. Later the Canadian Northern amalgamated with the GTR becoming the Canadian National Railway (CNR). All operated routes to the lakes. In the nineteenth century, the navigation company partnered frequently with the railways to jointly produce guidebooks and brochures, beginning with an 1874 booklet published by Cockburn as a guide to the lakes in anticipation of the arrival of the railway. All of the railroads produced promotional materials for the Muskoka Lakes up to the early 1930s and they are filled with written descriptions of the region, maps, hotel directories, numerous photographs and often feature elaborate cover art.

Muskoka lodgings have produced various forms of advertising since the 1870s. However, early material is extremely rare. The vast majority of hotel brochures surviving were produced from 1920 onwards. Whereas navigation materials have a strong presence in archives and libraries, hotel materials are scarce. More material is available for larger hotels than for smaller lodgings, most likely owing to the sophistication of production as well as a bias of survival; larger hotels produced more material and their size and perceived grandeur likely made their brochures more collectable.

Beginning in the mid-1920s and continuing to the present day, a large amount of general tourist literature has been produced by both the Muskoka Tourist Association and

the Provincial Ministry of Tourism. These publications sometimes include directories of accommodations and tourist maps but, primarily, they are visual pieces that focus on various lifestyle aspects of Ontario tourism.

Research Process

Owing to the large amount of source material available, it was necessary to adopt a systematic approach to the undertaking of this research. The first step of the research process was to amass as much information as possible from a wide variety of sources. This included preliminary visits to several museums, libraries, and archives to ascertain what does and does not exist. In subsequent visits, a flat bed scanner and digital camera were used to obtain digital copies of primary documents to be examined at a later date.

Once the primary material was gathered, the next task was to identify and confirm themes present in the sources and to categorize the documents accordingly. These themes were derived from a range of secondary source materials that discuss elements of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century tourism in North America that were not on Muskoka specifically. When such themes were identified, the primary sources on Muskoka were examined to see if the same phenomenon occurred there. If sufficient primary evidence was found, the theme was included in a list of topics to be researched.

The primary materials were then grouped according to the time period when they were created and to which part of the framework they belong in, such as the tourists, the resorts, the projected image, a combination of the three, or none of them though still relevant to the understanding of tourism development. When sources did not fit into a category, they were either put into the general tourist development category of the appropriate phase or placed under the dominant theme. Occasionally a source existed

that was relevant to more than one phase of development. Where this occurred, the entire topic was often best covered within one phase for the sake of continuity. Once the sources had been compiled for each section, they were studied more in depth. In some cases this included quantifying data, such as in the case of hotel registries. In other cases, such as with promotional materials, the selection of quotations involved identifying examples of contemporary language to be used.

Additional themes, connections and insights that were not apparent during the initial research process were revealed through the process of writing. In some cases, this generated additional research, either through a reassessment of secondary sources, the making of additional trips to public collections and, in some cases, additional contacts with private collectors possessing the specific primary sources needed. In other cases, new insights led to a reorganization of data.

Throughout the entire research and writing process, the key considerations in analyzing the primary source material were to examine with a fresh perspective, meaning that each document was approached as if it has not been interpreted before by previous researchers. This revealed some errors in the historical record that could be attributed to a misreading of the source materials at some point in the past and compounded as future researchers referred to the secondary material, rather than the primary document. Another key consideration was to always approach the sources with a broader context in mind. This was made easier by identifying themes in the secondary sources and then looking for evidence in the primary Muskoka sources. It was also necessary to try to identify the 'voice' in the tourist literature, for example, who wrote the documents and

with what purpose. It is clearly noted in the findings where doubt remains, in spite of cross-checking.

One source of information that is seldom used in this study is first-person accounts as recorded in oral histories. The main reason for their absence is that much of the time period covered in this case study falls outside the realm of living memory. This is unfortunate because oral histories do give examples of the personal experiences of regular people (Towner, 1995: 342).

Were this study to continue beyond 1945, as it eventually could, the nature of sources would change significantly. Many of the primary sources from this recent period have yet to find their way into public collections. New forms of media, such as radio and television have greatly changed the transmission of projected imagery and its survival in the form of news broadcasts and travel programs more ephemeral than that in print form. Governmental studies of tourism in the region also increased in the later half of the twentieth-century, providing sources that do not exist for earlier periods.

The lack of survival of key documents leaves gaps in the historical record. One major potential source of information, the business files of the Navigation Company that dated back to the nineteenth century, were deliberately destroyed in 1954 by company officials (Tatley, 1984, 258). Hotel documents fared even worse. For every family such as the Judds, who saved large quantities of information, there are scores more who simply disposed of old records. Other collections were scattered and lost following death and inheritance. Also, a strong market for Muskoka ephemera among collectors and decorators has led to surviving collections being dismantled and, thus, unavailable for study.

Such limitations are common in historical research. Baker notes that our past will always be incomplete due to the impossibility of attaining every necessary source. It is, therefore, in the new analysis of old data and the discovery of new sources that make reinterpretations of the past possible (1997, 239). In this study, a large and varied pool of resources is drawn upon that, hitherto, has been unused.

Baker also notes that historical writing, to a great extent, is composed of the art of persuasion (239). This study is no different. It will be an interpretation of the past based on the sources that have been identified. The “impossibility of final proof of any historical generalization must be conceded, given the absolute complexity of the past and the relative simplicity of the evidence surviving from it” making “argument and controversy” integral components of work in historical geography (239).

Organizing the Findings

Butler’s tourist area life cycle (TALC) model is used to arrange data temporally. It provides an organizational tool to breakdown the study period into smaller units based on the TALC stages of development. These shorter periods are then compared using the framework. The factors Butler utilizes in assigning the various stages of the model are essentially the number of visitors and time, although these are linked to a wide variety of other factors, such as changes in the nature of tourists, the life cycles of tourist infrastructure, and changes in the natural and cultural landscapes, which are responsible for the destination’s initial attractiveness to tourists (Godbey & Bevins, 1987: 18). Butler (1980) proposes six stages that tourism sites will go through. (18). Briefly, the six stages are exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation, followed by either decline or rejuvenation. The resulting ‘asymptotic’ curve (Figure 3:6) echoes that

of the product life cycle in marketing theory, with the key exception being that, for products, there is not the pressure for rejuvenation at the end of the life cycle (Gale and Botterill, 2005: 156).

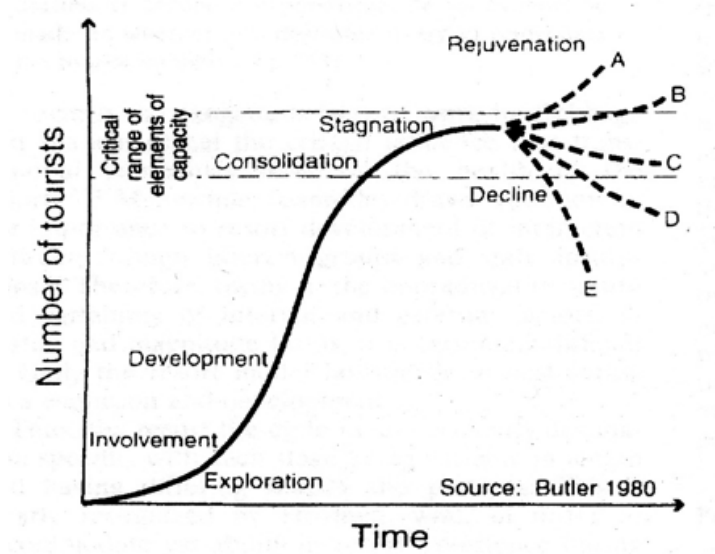


Figure 3:6. The Tourist Area Life Cycle. Source: Agarwal, 1997, 66.

For this study, the first four stages of the TALC will be considered. The first stage of exploration will be applied to the period from 1860 to 1870, the involvement stage from 1871 to 1879, the first part of the development phase from 1880 to 1894, the second half of the development phase from 1895 to 1914 and, lastly, the consolidation phase from 1915 to 1945.

These divisions are based on a qualitative overview of key dates and trends apparent in the history of Muskoka's tourism. The exploration phase spans the period from the arrival of the first tourists in July 1860 to 1871, immediately prior to the opening of the district's first summer hotel. This is a period of limited tourist infrastructure. The involvement phase begins with the opening of the region's first resort hotel and covers the period when promotional material first began to be produced for the

area and transportation infrastructure was drastically improved. The involvement phase is deemed to end when the local population began to enter the hospitality sector through the accommodation of tourists and the construction of additional lodging infrastructure as demand for such services rose. The development phase covers a period of rapid growth in tourism and ends with the outbreak of the First World War, which brought an abrupt halt to the construction of new resort hotels. Primarily due to the length of this period from 1880 to 1914, it has been broken down into early and later phases to aid in analysis and presentation. The division is set at 1894, the approximate time when the dominant projected image of Muskoka switched from being an unfashionable to a fashionable destination. The consolidation phase covers the period from the start of the First World War to the end of the Second World War and is dominated by changes in the transportation infrastructure, which are studied through their effects on the hotels, tourists and image of Muskoka. This study ends in 1945 when the accommodation choice of visitors to the region changed from resorts to cottages.

This study stops short of the stagnation phase for several reasons. First, the concept of destination image should be solidified just prior to the stagnation phase. More importantly, both the number of visitors should have peaked and the resort should begin to lose its fashionable status according to the TALC. However, in Muskoka and the Canadian Shield region in general, this is complicated by the change from resort tourists to cottagers. While the TALC has been adapted and applied to reflect an increase in cottages in the stages of stagnation and decline (Strapp, 1988, 506), this is especially pertinent in Muskoka as the region has experienced substantial growth in cottages yet, the use of the region by visitors has not stagnated or decline.

Chapter 4 Findings

Defining Muskoka

The term ‘Muskoka’ has come to symbolize several different things. First and foremost, it is the name of a geographic area located on the Canadian Shield in Ontario, about one hundred miles north of Toronto. The region’s landscape is noteworthy for its forests, lakes, and rock outcrops. The political area of Muskoka begins at Severn Bridge in the south, and stretches to Parry Sound Township in the north, encompassing portions of Georgian Bay in the west, and bordering Haliburton in the east. Four large bodies of water are located within this area, constituting the primary tourist sites. Three of these lakes - Rosseau, Joseph, and Muskoka - are interconnected, forming the Muskoka Lakes, while Lake of Bays is to the northeast.

While this administrative definition of Muskoka is rigid with well-defined boundaries, Muskoka as a tourist destination occupies a slightly different space. For example, the northern portions of both Lake Rosseau and Joseph are situated in Parry Sound administratively, while the eastern portion of Lake of Bays, including the town of Dorset, is located in Haliburton. All of these locations are considered to be part of Muskoka in a tourism sense. The reverse is true for Honey Harbour on Georgian Bay for it is within the boundaries of the district of Muskoka yet, in a tourism context, is usually considered to be a part of the Georgian Bay region.

The term ‘the Muskokas’ can represent a much larger portion of the Canadian Shield, compounding the difficulty of defining Muskoka. For example, in Barbaranne Boyer’s (1987) *Muskoka’s Grand Hotels*, the hotels of adjacent regions, including

Algonquin Park, Point-au-Baril and Parry Sound, are included. Richard Tatley's (1983) *The Steamboat Era in the Muskokas; Volume 1 To the Golden Years* also broadens the definition of Muskoka to include Lake Nipissing and the Magnetawan River System, which are both located far outside the usual reaches of the Muskoka tourist district. Muskoka has even become an adjective used to describe a certain type of landscape or design aesthetic.

It is, therefore, necessary at the outset to provide a clarification of the definition of Muskoka. In this study, Lakes Rosseau, Joseph, and Muskoka, commonly referred to as the Muskoka Lakes or 'the big three', are the primary tourism area and the focus of study. In addition, Lake of Bays is also considered as part of the Muskoka tourism district, although this lake has been considered as both a part of Muskoka and as a separate tourist area at various stages in the region's tourism development. While smaller lakes in the area have developed lodging and cottage infrastructure, they fall outside of the scope of this study as they have usually played a secondary or minimal role in the region's tourist development when compared to the four larger lakes.

Exploration Phase 1860 – 1870

Tourism Developments 1860-1870

Prior to the settlement of the Muskoka region beginning in the 1850s, Europeans had very little contact with the area. Lieutenant Henry Briscoe of the Royal Engineers conducted the first exploration of the Muskoka Lakes in 1826 (Pryke, 1994, 51). The region acquired its name three years later when Alexander Sherriff explored the area to ascertain the lumbering potential (53). Sherriff recorded the name Muskoka based on the accounts of fur traders in the area. In the 1830s, one of these fur traders, Jean Baptiste

Rousseau, named both Lake Rosseau and Lake Joseph after his father, Joseph Rousseau (55). David Thompson first surveyed the Muskoka Lakes in 1837. However his work had little immediate impact on the region. The Muskoka District was not put forward as a potential area for settlement by the government until the mid-1850s (55). The first efforts to promote settlement occurred in 1858 when a series of colonization roads were cut through the district, with the most successful one, the Muskoka Road, reaching what would become Gravenhurst in 1859 (Wall, 1970, 395).

Prior to the opening of these roads, there was no permanent European settlement on the lakes (393). Despite efforts by the government to sell plots of land along the road, development was very slow. In 1860, for instance, only 41 settlers had taken up land and had cleared a mere 170 acres for agriculture (396). The first tourists arrived at a time when there was limited human intrusion on the lakes.

The First Tourists

The image is a wide vista of a lake as seen from a broad sandy shore on which sit two wigwams, with not a single cut tree in sight. This mental picture is the first recorded tourist image of the Muskoka Lakes region recorded, as witnessed by the eighteen year-old James Bain Jr. and twenty year-old John Campbell on a July day in 1860 (Mason, 1974, 5). The presence of these two young men standing on the shore of Lake Muskoka is in itself unremarkable for many had come before. Algonquians, Huron, and Iroquois had frequented the area for centuries and more recent arrivals included assorted fur traders, explorers, settlers, hunters, preachers, and surveyors, who took in exactly the same view. The truly remarkable aspect of this particular moment is the reason why Bain and Campbell were there in the first place.

Bain and Campbell, both from Toronto and on a week's vacation from their work at the publishing firm of John Campbell and Sons, were there for the pursuit of recreation. James Bain, reminiscing forty years later, explained that they were inexperienced novices on the lookout for adventure (5). They had arrived on foot and would return on foot to the settlement of Severn Bridge from which they departed on their adventure. The lingering image of Lake Muskoka would entice both Bain and Campbell to return the following year to further explore the lake.

This second trip, in 1861, along with their friend Crombie and a dog, is the first recorded tourist exploration of Lake Muskoka itself. D.H.C. Mason documents this trip in great detail in his (1974) *The First Islanders*, based on Bain's journal from this trip. He gives an impression of the 1860s visitor's experience, including the logistical challenges to be overcome to reach the Muskoka Lakes. As with their 1860 vacation, the journey started by train to Barrie, then by passage on the steamboat Emily May to Orillia where they retired for the night. On the next day they rowed to Washago on Lake Simcoe from where they walked through the woods for a couple of miles before arriving at the Severn Bridge Hotel for a second overnight. From Severn Bridge, they set out on the Muskoka Road north towards Muskoka Bay, fighting the mosquitoes and black flies all the way with nothing more than handkerchiefs and tree boughs. After twelve miles, they finally arrived at a new addition to the landscape near Muskoka Bay, the Freemason's Arms otherwise known as Micky McCabe's Tavern. Thomas McMurray, in 1871, described the Freemason's Tavern as an unpretentious log cabin built in 1861, dull on the outside, but clean and orderly within with clean white curtains to keep insects out and feather beds to afford "sweet rest to many a weary land-seeker." (14). After sampling Mother McCabe's

‘stirabout’, a mixture of water, molasses and vinegar, the men retired for the night, before setting out on Lake Muskoka the next day in McCabe’s scow (Mason, 1974, 6).

On Lake Muskoka itself, their journey only extended about two-and-a-half miles. They spent their time collecting botany specimens and taking in the scenery. They camped for a night on an island and returned to the Freemason’s Tavern the following day. They finished their 1861 trip with a further excursion of ten miles up the Muskoka Road to Muskoka Falls, after which they returned via McCabe’s to Severn Bridge and back to Toronto.

In the 1880s, John Campbell then a noted Professor of Church History wrote a ballad about this first boat excursion on Lake Muskoka:

Tis five and twenty years ago,
Though I’ve forgot the day
When three youths launched a rickety scow
On Fair Muskoka Bay.
One was a bluffer, the other a duffer
And the third who sings this lay
Tonight is just the kind of man
That anyone cares to say.

And ever since then all kinds of men
And women and girls and boys,
And lots of those strangers non-descripts
Best known as hobbleboys
Have left their homes homes in the wilds to roam
Through all these changing years,
To go in the track of that kittless pack,
The hardy pioneers (7).

The unusual nature of their trip to the region as recreation is evident in Mrs. McCabe’s recorded initial reaction to their presence: “Yez’ll be measuring and surveying, I suppose.” “No.” “Yez’ll be preachers then?”(6). The concept of a pleasure trip into the

backwoods of Ontario was unfathomable to her, which is not unsurprising as the whole notion of outdoor, let alone wilderness, recreation was relatively new.

Tourism, particularly recreation-based tourism, was in some ways a new concept for North Americans, especially those living north of the American border. Since the last quarter of the eighteenth century, well-to-do Europeans, particularly the English, were accustomed to travel in pursuit of the picturesque and the sublime (Sears, 1989, 3). In the United States, tourism would not become a force until the 1820s and 1830s when certain economic and societal changes had taken effect (3). Even then, tourism was restricted to the wealthy. The idea of vacationing, as a middle-class pursuit, did not emerge until the 1840s and 1850s when the wide-standing celebration of work in America began to be questioned and the benefits of leisure were argued (Aron, 1999, 16). For Bain and Campbell from Toronto, to even take a vacation was a privilege in 1860. However, to vacation was likely to involve a trip to Niagara or the Thousand Islands, as typical mid-nineteenth-century destinations, but to go into the Muskoka backcountry to ‘explore, rusticate, and botanize’ (Jasen, 1995, 117) was another thing entirely.

The growth of North American cities, spurred by the Industrial Revolution, changed the dynamics of how citizens interacted with and viewed the environment around them. Jakle sees this urban growth and the associated changing physical environment as a stimulus of the ‘back-to-nature’ movement in the nineteenth century that “valued wilder places for their picturesque and romantic qualities (1985, 64). The influential works of Henry David Thoreau stem in part from these developments. Thoreau entered Walden Wood on the outskirts of Concord, Massachusetts, in 1842 to live for two years. This episode and other similar interludes in the forests of Maine and

Canada formed the foundation of his future career as one of nineteenth-century America's most influential philosophers and a leading transcendentalist. Whether or not Bain and Campbell were familiar with Thoreau's works directly is not known and cannot be determined. However, giving their 'rather literary circle of friends' (Jasen, 1995, 117) and intellectual pursuits it is unlikely that they would be unaware of Thoreau's writings.

Mid-nineteenth century America left many men like Thoreau insecure with the idea that a "technological civilization and the pursuit of progress was disrupting older, better patterns of living" (Nash, 2001, 86). Accordingly, where Thoreau believed modern society had led to the extinction of the 'wild man', such as in England, society was left 'effete, sterile, and moribund' (90). America, to Thoreau, had not yet suffered this fate and, in order to avoid it, a balance between the modern way of life and the older ways of his ancestors needed to be achieved. Thus, Thoreau advocated the need for the advantages of wildness, embodied in vitality, heroism, and toughness, to be combined with the benefits of civilization, such as delicacy, sensitivity, and 'intellectual and moral growth" (92). The means to achieve this, for Thoreau, was to alternate between wilderness and civilization (93), a pattern that cottage owners in Canadian cities were to embrace.



Figure 4:1. Studio portrait of Muskoka Club members in rustic costume, 1866. Source: Toronto Reference Library, Baldwin Room, JRR 1128 Cab.

Bain and Campbell would continue to make excursions to Muskoka over the course of several summers, each year bringing an ever-expanding group of like-minded individuals with them, and venturing further and further up the Muskoka Lakes. (Figure 4:1) In September of 1864, their excursion group was formally organized into the Muskoka Club, an organization that came complete with a constitution and a one-dollar per annum membership fee (Mason, 1974, 24). By 1866, the Club took up permanent residence on Chaplain's and surrounding islands on Lake Joseph, about the same time that women began to accompany the group (25). From their vantage point on Lake Joseph, club members would observe the natural scenery of Muskoka, keeping journals,

writing songs and poems, and sketching. The philosophical and cultural bent of the Muskoka Club very much followed in Thoreau's footsteps and set a precedent for early tourism in Muskoka, where the enjoyment of the scenery took precedence over sportsmen's activities, such as hunting and fishing, at least in the summer months.

The Visionary

In September 1865, another party of strangers arrived at McCabe's Tavern seeking shelter. Among them was the twenty-eight year-old Alexander P. Cockburn. As with the group of three youth who arrived in the summer of 1861, these men were on an excursion exploring the unsettled regions of the North by paddle. They were at the end of their three-week journey having explored, among other areas, the Magnetawan River and Lake of Bays. While in discussion with Mother McCabe that evening, it was revealed that they had not visited what was in her opinion the crowning jewel of the area, Lake Muskoka. As a consequence of her insistence, the party set out to survey Lake Muskoka the next day.

Where Bain, Campbell and Crombie found a region that was picturesque and full of inspiration for their efforts in poetry and song, Cockburn saw raw economic opportunity. While Cockburn did perceive the picturesque qualities of the lake and how it could be harnessed for tourist exploitation, it was the commercial value of its timber and the agricultural potential of its soil that stoked his imagination. The lake he deemed perfect for navigation, the key to harnessing the economic potential he saw. Back at home in Orillia, he wrote a letter to the then Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, that outlined his account and observations of the region complete with suggestions. One of his proposals was that if the government undertook some capital

works to improve navigation, he would, in turn, build a substantial passenger and freight vessel for Lake Muskoka to assist in the development of the region. The report was well received and Cockburn was “furnished with a letter guaranteeing the right of pre-emption for settlers going in anywhere pending surveys; a liberal land policy, the making of roads, and the improvement of navigation in exchange for the construction of the boat.”

(Cockburn, 1902, 2-3).

With the letter being favorably received; Cockburn launched the steamship *Wenonah* on Lake Muskoka in June 1866. Business was slow at first, with little demand as of yet for the ship’s services owing to the small size of the Muskoka settlement. Cockburn, however, had a plan to increase business on his boat by developing the Muskoka economy through three industries: lumbering, agricultural settlement, and tourism. He was instrumental in convincing his father-in-law, George Proctor, to establish a large sawmill in the district. He also used his status as an opposition MPP in the coalition government of 1867 to support the passage of the 1868 Free Land Grants and Homesteads Act, which authorized the appropriation of public lands as free grants for settlers. This act proved instrumental in the settling of the district (Tatley, 1983, 54).

Key to the success of these ventures was the improvement of transportation infrastructure in the district, namely the building of locks and channels connecting Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau, and Joseph. The three lakes could only be traversed through a series of portages, making the transport of people and supplies difficult. The construction of rail links to the urban centres south of the district was also seen as key to the region’s future success.

It is interesting to note that navigation of the lakes had been attempted without success before Cockburn visited the district. Vernon Wadsworth recalled that J.S. Dennis of the Provincial Land Survey had a twenty-foot sailing boat brought to Lake Rosseau in the summer of 1861 to assist with work and shipping of supplies to the survey party working in the district. The fate of this boat is unknown, as it had disappeared from the lake as early as 1864 (Murray, 1963, 335-6). In the early 1860s, several small wood sailing boats were in use on Lake Muskoka to transport goods and carry passengers. In the same period, a large flat boat propelled by horsepower was constructed to link the settlement of North Falls (Bracebridge) and McCabe's Landing (Gravenhurst). However, it only managed one trip before being abandoned. Another expansive sloop built for the same trade was also a failure (Kirkwood and Murphy, 1878, 72).

It is therefore not entirely surprising that six months before Cockburn set eyes on Lake Muskoka, the idea of channel improvements between Lakes Muskoka and Rosseau had been put forward by J. W. Bridgland to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Alexander Campbell, in February, 1865 (Murray, 1963, 338). Two years later in 1867, Bridgland reported to Alexander Campbell on the need for locks at Obigewanah (Port Carling) stating that there was not enough demand to warrant the large expenditure by the government to build lock facilities owing to the limited settlement above the proposed locks (339). Cockburn presented a petition for their construction in 1868, stating that they were essential to the development of Lake Rosseau. Construction finally commenced in July 1870 and was completed in 1871.

At the same time that the locks at Port Carling were under construction, another project was in the works that would connect Lakes Rosseau with Joseph, effectively

creating the Muskoka chain of lakes, which became the centre of the Muskoka tourism region. In September 1870, Charles Marshall of England, accompanying the Premier of Ontario, Hon. John Sandfield MacDonald, on a tour of the Muskoka Lakes, visited the site of the canal being cut between Lake Rosseau and Joseph at a location where the two lakes were separated by a mere two hundred yards of sand. He described the thrill of watching trees being felled with mere strokes of the axe, and the patriotic songs sung by the party around the bonfire before retiring under the stars in tents. The spot was named Port Sandfield in honour of the Premier. The canal would not be finished until 1872 after much dredging (403).

Railroad construction would take much longer to realize and belongs to the next era of Muskoka tourism development. Cockburn was a driving force behind the various projects without which development in Muskoka would have been delayed. Although his early efforts focused on the encouragement of settlement along the lakes to increase trade on his boat, his attention was also drawn to the tourism potential of the region, in which he would take a more active interest in the 1870s.

The Tourists 1860-70

The number of people visiting the lakes for pleasure was limited in the 1860s. The Muskoka Club visited every summer; however their numbers were never large. For example, in 1874, the Muskoka Club recorded 86 members and guests visiting the Club's islands over the course of the summer months (Mason, 1974, 29). While perhaps impressive for the Club's operations, 86 visitors do not amount to a thriving tourism industry. Other excursion parties, such as Cockburn's in 1865, crossed the region but

with no tourist lodgings beyond the rare settler's homestead, such as McCabe's the groups were limited to self-reliant tent parties.

Nevertheless, evidence of Muskoka's burgeoning tourist trade can be found in (1866) *The Canadian Handbook and Tourist's Guide* that briefly mentions Muskoka as an excursion option from Lake Couchiching:

If the tourist wishes to extend his trip into the genuine wilderness, he can take the steamer 'Fairy,' which connects the Muskoka Settlement, some forty miles north-east, on a lonely lake of the same name, rich in scenery and sport; but here he must be prepared to rough it with the lumberer or the pioneer of civilization, who may be clearing for himself literally a home in the wilderness; must be prepared to satisfy his hunger with salt pork, and at night to be well acquainted with the yielding properties of a pine floor (Small, 138).

It is clear that tourist infrastructure was still lacking and the region was considered to be wild and only suitable for the hardiest of travelers.

Pleasure seekers, however, were on the lakes, establishing the foundations for the tourism industry that would blossom in the coming decades. Cockburn's advertisement for his services in the *The Daily Globe Toronto* on July 7 1866 states that the new region reached by his steamship *Wenonah* was "now attracting the attention of businessmen and farmers, and for pleasure-seekers tourists and sportsmen, it is quite unsurpassed in Upper Canada" (3). This was the first media advertising of the area as a tourist destination.

Another advertisement running in the *The Daily Globe Toronto* on July 22 1863 titled *Lake Simcoe and Couchiching, Summer Visits and Pleasure Excursions* published by the Northern Railway of Canada and the operators of *Emily May* and *Fairy* steamers advertises:

Tourists, excursionists, sportsmen and families, seeking health, recreation and the most varied and delightful scenery are now afforded most convenient and economical facilities for reaching Lake Simcoe and

Couchiching, Orillia, Rama, the Falls of Severn, Muskoka and the wild region and romantic region northward, abounding with every picturesque attraction and every element for sport (3).

The Muskoka Falls are given particular emphasis as they were the region's first tourist attraction serving as a popular excursion destination from the summer resorts being established further south on Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching. Thomas McMurray, in his (1871) *Free Grant Lands of Muskoka*, makes note that Grand Muskoka Falls, as he refers to them, are "as always attractive to tourists, and much admired by lovers of nature" and "multitudes of those who love the sublime and picturesque take a trip hither once a year." (30). McMurray notes the carved names of visitors from across the continent on the bridge spanning the top of the Falls. W.E. Hamilton, described the Muskoka waterfalls in the most sublime terminology in his *Guide Book & Atlas of Muskoka and Parry Sound Districts* (1879). His description of the Falls dominates the discussion of tourism and scenery (Hamilton, 7-9). In addition to the Muskoka Falls, he makes note of the picturesque qualities of the lakes. In reference to Lake St. Joseph (Lake Joseph) he states, "Here the sportsmen and the pleasure seeker can enjoy the richest possible treat and men with shattered constitutions may here have them repaired." (McMurray, 1871, 19). The allusion to the health-giving benefits and sporting opportunities of Muskoka attracting large numbers of tourists would prove prophetic.

The Hotels 1860-1870

As the *Canadian Handbook* mentioned, the traveler to Muskoka was warned to expect to make do with the pine floors of the settlers' cabins as sleeping accommodation (Figure 4:2). Prior to 1865, there was no hotel accommodation on the lakes of any sort beyond the board provided by settlers. The Freemasons' Arms run by the McCabe's, for

example, was essentially a tongue-in-cheek name applied to their log house where, when guests arrived, they shared accommodation with the family. Similar arrangements could be found at several points in the region, including Severn Bridge and Muskoka Falls.



Figure 4:2. Interior of Typical Settler's Cabin 1871. Source: Toronto Reference Library, Baldwin Room, JRR 3009



Figure 4:3. Typical Settler's Cabin, 1875. Source: Toronto Reference Library, Baldwin Room, JRR 3117 Cab.

In the latter half of the 1860s, small lodgings constructed of logs, such as the 'Polar Star' at Port Carling, and the 'Ro Seau House' at Rosseau, were opened primarily to cater to land-seekers and transients. These accommodations were simple and often

resembled settlers' cabins (Figure 4:3). Of the various small accommodations available for tourists, none resembled the contemporary resort hotels operating elsewhere on the continent. Accommodations designed for the tourist and other tourist infrastructure did not exist prior to 1870.

The Projected Image 1860-1870

Tourist advertising originating from local sources did not exist in this period. External organizations, however, were beginning to promote Canadian Shield tourism. The limited advertising and media coverage of the Muskoka tourism industry that did occur consisted of one passage in the *Canadian Handbook and Tourists Guide* and a few transportation advertisements in Ontario newspapers mentioning pleasure trips available on Cockburn's steamers. The lack of promotional material for the region surviving in the historical record from the 1860s suggests that it was primarily word-of-mouth advertising that was drawing tourists to the area in these early years, most likely emanating from the members of the 'Muskoka Club'.

Settlers and land agents did not concern themselves with tourists in these early years of development. Promoters of the region focused on attracting settlers in order to create a population base in the district. Tourism had not yet been identified as a key area for economic development, although the potential of the region to attract tourists had been recognized. Muskoka's projected image in the 1860s, therefore, was not based on tourism in either the message or the medium used to convey the image. Coverage of the region included several editorial pieces commenting on the suitability or unsuitability of Muskoka as an agricultural region, often including a brief description of the area's climate and topography.

Summary of Exploration Phase 1860-1870

The attributes of the exploration phase are summarized in Table 4-1. The economic development of the Muskoka Lakes District began in the 1860s, primarily in agriculture and lumbering, but there were also some early signs of the region's future tourism. Tourists actually predate many of the region's settlers, arriving in small parties as early as 1860. They were young, middle-class Torontonians coming to the region not to hunt and fish, but to get back to nature. This manner of vacation is consistent with future generations of tourists concerned with rest and rejuvenation rather than any modern concept of adventure tourism. Until the mid-1860s these tourists merely toured around the lakes, camping where they saw fit. By the mid-1860s the members of the Muskoka Club had become more organized, selecting a permanent campsite and adopting an organized structure. This paved the way for the future adoption of permanent structures designed for seasonal use, the precursor of the cottage, and the culture that developed around the region's summer colony. Numbers of tourists remained low due to an almost total lack of transportation and accommodation infrastructure, as well as limited promotion of the region as an attractive vacation destination.

By the end of the decade, several developments began to change the future outlook of the region. From a tourism standpoint, the arrival of the entrepreneur Alexander Cockburn, was the most important. First coming as a tourist himself, Cockburn set out to transform Muskoka's economy by developing three key sectors: agriculture, lumbering and, most importantly, tourism. The key to Muskoka's rising fortunes as a tourist destination was Cockburn's ability to establish a boat service on the lakes and to convince various levels of government to invest in transportation

infrastructure in the region. As the 1870s dawned, Cockburn increasingly turned to the tourism potential of the lakes and almost single-handedly, created the Muskoka tourism industry by addressing the region’s lack of proper tourist accommodations, poor transportation links to urban centers, and lack of promotion.

Table 4-1 Summary of Exploration Phase

Exploration Phase 1860-1870			
Historical Developments	The Tourist	The Hotels	The Projected Image
<p>First recreational visitors arrive at same time as early settlers.</p> <p>Infrastructure developments aimed at aiding in the economic development of region also aid in tourist development. However tourism is not a priority at this time.</p>	<p>Tourists are few in number visiting from nearby urban centres.</p> <p>These visitors are returning season after season and are composed of a social group of like-minded individuals.</p> <p>Their primary objective is to experience the undeveloped natural scenery.</p>	<p>Tourist hotels do not exist.</p> <p>Lodgings are provided by settler families in their homesteads while small communities have primitive hotels aimed at newly arrived settlers, lumbermen and businessmen.</p> <p>Tourists tend to bring their own provisions and camp.</p>	<p>Promotional material is limited for the area.</p> <p>Only external promoters advertise region as a potential tourist destination</p> <p>Media coverage focuses on other sectors such as agriculture.</p> <p>When promoted for tourism, the region is mentioned briefly in relation to other more established destinations.</p>

Involvement Phase 1871-1879

Tourism Developments 1871-1879

Local legend states that a ghost haunts Lake Rosseau's Picnic Island. The story is that an unfortunate man committed suicide on the island's shores, to put an end to the misery of his broken heart. His body was found in a position facing across the lake to the Rosseau House Hotel, the summer home of the object of his affections, a pretty and fascinating Southern widow (Taylor, 1997, 11). The tale, dating to the 1870s, illustrates several new additions to the tourism landscape of Muskoka, including the female summer tourist and the summer resort hotel. The first proper tourist infrastructure in Muskoka was created in the 1870s, which marked the beginning of the accommodation sector.

The First Summer Hotels

A meeting between William H. Pratt and Alexander P. Cockburn was a critical event in the evolution of Muskoka. The location, date, and nature of the meeting are lost to history. However, we do know that it occurred on a business trip to the United States made by Cockburn in the closing years of the 1860s. Muskoka must have come up in discussion, since in 1869 Pratt visited Lake Rosseau to evaluate the region's potential for himself. The potential he recognized was not lumbering or agriculture, but tourism. He saw Muskoka as an ideal destination to attract his fellow American tourists, then more familiar with the idea of a wilderness vacation than the Canadians.

While Muskoka was still isolated with no railway connection, the biggest drawback to tourism was the lack of suitable accommodation for tourists. Pratt identified this and almost immediately began construction of a 'first-class' hotel at the head of Lake

Rosseau in what would later become the village of Rosseau. Rosseau House, or ‘Pratt’s Hotel’, first took guests in 1871. Much has been written in the past fifty years highlighting the sheer revolutionary and defiant nature of Pratt constructing a luxury hotel so isolated from civilization. However, Pratt was even shrewder than modern commentators acknowledge. While the Rosseau House, when opened, was almost eighty miles from the nearest train station; Cockburn had already acquired a charter for a train line connecting Gravenhurst with the ‘front’. It is unlikely that this fact was omitted in Pratt’s and Cockburn’s discussions making the prospect of the inconvenient transport links a temporary situation. The hotel’s location at the far northern reaches of Lake Rosseau is also deceiving. While Rosseau was at the limit of Cockburn’s navigation fleet in 1871, it was also the landing site and beginning of the livery service to Parry Sound and, thus, a natural point of transfer for anyone heading further north. This provided the hotel with a steady stream of customers directly to its front door.

The novelty of a hotel like Pratt’s, with all its first-class amenities and comforts, while a revolutionary and potentially risky move in Ontario, was a tried and true formula for success south of the international border. Although some contemporary sources list Pratt as a native Bostonian (Watson, 1887, 63), it is generally accepted that he was, actually from New York (Tatley, 1983, 63) and undoubtedly would have been familiar with one of America’s most famous hotels of the mid-nineteenth century, the Catskill Mountain House overlooking the Hudson River in New York State. Opened in 1823, the Mountain House built its reputation by providing luxurious accommodations in a wilderness setting (Sears, 1989, 66). After a long steamer ride up the Hudson River, visitors to the hotel had to endure a four-hour stage ride up the steep grade of the Catskill

Mountain escarpment before finally arriving at their destination. What awaited them has been described as an oasis of luxury (67). The juxtaposition of the elegant Mountain House, with the wilderness of its mountain setting and the panoramic scope of the view from its piazzas, was a lucrative tonic to the romantic sensibilities of the traveling American public (68). The success of the Mountain House led to the opening of a series of similarly isolated hotels across the northeast states throughout the nineteenth century (66).



Figure 4:4. Lithograph of Rosseau Bay showing Rosseau House (Pratt's) in the distance, 1883. Source: Roper, 1889.

Pratt's vision for the Rosseau House replicated this concept of an oasis of luxury in the wilderness, though placed in the Canadian hinterland for the first time. (Figure 4:4) Yet, for all of its fame, few first-hand accounts and images of Rosseau House survive. B. A. Watson, recounting a mid-September visit to the Rosseau House nine years prior, in

his (1887) *The Sportsman's Paradise* gives us one of the few contemporary accounts of the hotel. He recalls the hotel accommodating about one hundred guests at the time, the majority being Americans from Boston. He also recalls Pratt charging his party 75 cents for bed and breakfast (63). Another account is that of Edward Roper who recalls visiting Pratt's Hotel years earlier when, in 1891, he wrote *By Track and Trail*. His account does not shed much light on the hotel itself but instead gives some insight into the personality of Pratt himself. Roper recalls Pratt being a very well-known character whose oddities included a peculiar treatment of his guests, including a conspicuous rudeness that he used as a form of business advertisement that, in many cases, left people deeply offended. (426)

The bards at the Muskoka Club did not appreciate the opening of the hotel and the changes it was bound to bring to the district. As with many of their observations, they immortalized it in song:

Peace and plenty in our dwelling
Beef and biscuit in our store
Oatmeal, all oatmeal excelling
Where's the wretch that asks for more!
Let him go and live at Pratts'es
Roost a while with Dugald Brown
Where mamas with noisy brats-es
Long to pack their traps for town.

Far from the gasolier's and lustre's
Sickly artificial light,
Every eve our party musters
Round the campfire burning bright,
None may sleep while Signor Sandi
Leads the philharmonic din,
While we raise our voices and he
Plays upon his violin (Mason, 1974, 27).

Within these two short stanzas, the root of one of the major themes in Muskoka tourism history can be seen to already be taking shape: the conflict between new and old, and resistance to change.

Pratt did not enjoy his exclusive hold on the Muskoka hotel scene for long. As the finishing touches were placed on Rosseau House in 1871, Cockburn was introducing Hamilton Fraser to Muskoka. Fraser, also a New Yorker, came from an experienced family of hotel owners, and saw in Muskoka the same opportunities that Pratt had two years earlier. He purchased a large parcel of land at the head of Lake Joseph and named his settlement Port Cockburn in honor of Cockburn himself. He then set out to build his own hotel, Summit House.

Fraser's Summit House was, in some ways, a simpler affair than Pratt's Rosseau House. It was smaller, taking in about 75 guests in 1875 after expansion (Cumberland F., 1876, 67). It was also decidedly simpler in design. Summit House, like Rosseau House, was located near access to the Parry Sound Road as well as the fishing districts extending towards Georgian Bay. Thus, it was well situated to attract patronage. Expanded and renovated, Summit House became one of the largest and most fashionable hotels in Muskoka by the twentieth century, though visitors in the 1870s would have found a modest clapboard structure with a comfortable porch.

Rosseau House and Summit House would not be joined by another substantial resort hotel until the 1880s, but there was some additional growth in tourist lodgings to examine. The North Star at Port Carling expanded in 1874 and began to advertise directly to tourists and pleasure seekers. (Cockburn, 1874, 24) The old Rosseau Hotel was also expanded at this time but continued to cater predominately to land seekers and

transients. Hotel accommodation was also being developed in both Bracebridge and Gravenhurst but their focus was not on the tourist market.

The Northern Railway Arrives

Cockburn's successes in getting the locks at Port Carling constructed and the canal at Port Sandfield cut were not initially met in his desire to extend the railroad from Barrie to Gravenhurst. Unable to raise the necessary capital to act on his charter of 1869 to extend the railroad, Cockburn and the population of Muskoka had to rely solely on the unreliable stage services connecting Muskoka to the 'front' as the settlements of Southern Ontario are referred to.

One of the challenges faced by Cockburn was a lack of awareness of Muskoka. His attempt to counteract this ignorance took the form of several press tours of the lakes during the early 1870s. Often the experience would be written up and appear in the Toronto papers. These detailed accounts comprise the few images of Muskoka being projected to the public in the years prior to the arrival of the railroad.

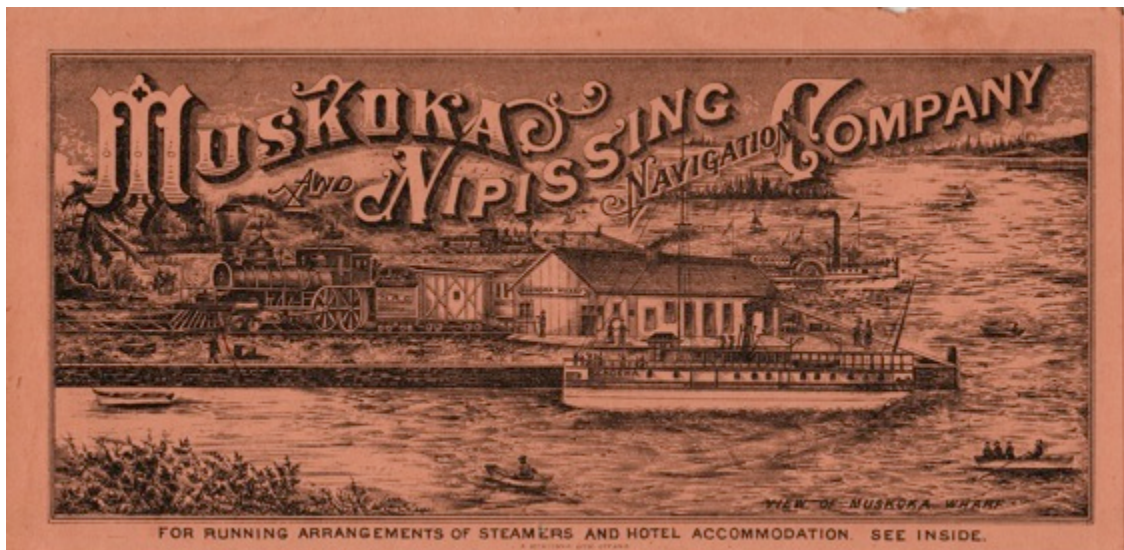


Figure 4:5. Engraving of Muskoka Wharf Station, 1883. Source: Brochure, Muskoka and Nipissing Navigation Company, 1883. Author's Collection.

Meanwhile, funding was finally being arranged for the extension of the railway with the city of Toronto, the Ontario Government, and local municipalities contributing resources. The Northern Extension of the Northern Railway commenced in 1871 and slowly extended northward, reaching Orillia in 1872, Washago in 1873, Severn Bridge in 1874 and finally, in fall of 1875, into Gravenhurst. Cockburn ensured that the track of the railway was extended down to the waterfront where the boats could meet the train directly. The station was named ‘Muskoka Wharf’ and would be the primary access to the Muskoka Lakes by tourists for the next quarter century. (Figure 4:5)

The arrival of the railway transformed the tourist experience in Muskoka. It also allowed the railway to place Muskoka firmly within its own resort network. The key resort in this network in the 1870s was the Lake Couchiching Hotel located just outside of Orillia. Unlike the relatively inexpensive and unfashionable accommodations available to guests of the Muskoka Lakes, the Couchiching Hotel in Cockburn’s words “provides the families of Western Canada (Ontario) all the advantages of a seaside summer residence, without the great expense and fatigue inseparable from long journeys to and from the sea” (1874, 10).



Figure 4:6. Lake Couchiching Hotel, 1875. Source: Brochure, The Northern Railway of Canada, The Direct Route to the Highlands & Lake District, 1875, 2. Author’s Collection

The Lake Couchiching Hotel was founded around 1874, when the railroad reached Orillia, by a group of Toronto businessmen with the Northern Railway, who invested in the new hotel. If Pratt had established the first wilderness hotel in Canada at Rosseau two years prior, the Toronto investors at Couchiching took the concept of luxury in the wilderness much farther than Pratt had accomplished. Situated on a point of land, the hotel commanded views stretching out in three directions on its namesake lake. Accommodating two hundred guests in a sprawling three-story building surrounded by double-tiered verandahs, the hotel cut a striking profile (Figure 4:6). Outdoors one could find pavilions, summer houses, croquet lawns, floating bath houses, and especially attractive for the ladies: “Experienced boatmen are always to be had, courteous men, who for a ‘small consideration’, will row them about the lake, showing them the beauties, at the same time being as careful of them and solicitous for their safety as the most exacting paterfamilias could desire” (Cumberland, F., 1876, 45). Indoors, the Lake Couchiching Hotel offered gas-lit rooms. It was frescoed and finished to a high standard. A star attraction was the domed dining room, complete with a minstrel gallery for the weekly hops and where a “full staff of colored waiters may be found at their post, with every delicacy of the season to be found on its tables.” (46).

While not located within the confines of the Muskoka Lakes region, the Lake Couchiching Hotel is important to our understanding of tourism in the Canadian Shield, just prior to the development of the Muskoka Lakes as their own tourist region. The company building the Northern Extension had invested in the building of the Couchiching Hotel and, eventually, the Northern Railway took over these investments giving the railroad an invested interest in the hotel’s prosperity. This interest was

manifested in the prominence that Couchiching received in Northern Railway tourism publications, with the entire Northern Lakes vacation experience hinging on the centrality of the hotel at Orillia. The Lake Couchiching Hotel did not operate for an extended period of time as it burnt to the ground after just two seasons. With its destruction we will see Muskoka begin to emerge as a destination in its own right.

The Demise of the Muskoka Club

The Muskoka Club had expanded and grown through the early 1870s from its founding in 1865. It was known well-enough to warrant mention in most of the guidebooks published up to 1876. Sometimes, as in Cockburn's 1874 guide, the Muskoka Club was listed as a resort in itself; this is not entirely surprising considering the Club controlled several islands on Lake Joseph, with their headquarters based on Yoho Cucaba Island. Over the course of the summer months, visitors would come and go at Yoho. Days consisted of the rituals of eating, water sports, sketching, sermons, and fishing. Evenings involved bonfires and nights slept under canvas. Mason notes, the Club was devoted to "plain living and high thinking" (Mason, 1974, 32).

As mentioned above, club members looked at the intrusion of Pratt's hotel, with its modern conveniences, with a certain amusement, if not scorn. The next affront would come from one of the Club's own members (31). John Campbell's father came to visit the club in the summer of 1875, earning the nickname the 'Chief' or 'Chieftain' for his staid and dignified behavior. Nicknames aside, he enjoyed himself and, in the fall of 1875, purchased a large island near Yoho, renamed it Chief's Island, and in the following year, built the first summer cottage on the lake. The club members wrote a song about what they came to refer to as the Colonization of Chief's Island:

Heretofore we've been the only
Summer lodgers but not lonely.
But a merchant grave and solid
And well past the age of jolly
Said why should these young folks
Monopolize the fun and jokes.

Thither in the early summer
Came with carpenter and plumber
Painter, glazier, blacksmith, mason
The Chieftain brave and high oh!

Then uprose a cosey mansion
Planned for liberal expansion
With dining, drawing, bed-rooms
And offices full store.

Why they've chairs and tables, napkins,
Silver spoons and all such flash things.
Demoralizing plain folks.
It will never do at all. (31-32).

Others would soon join the Campbells. Toronto merchants began to view the islands of Muskoka as suitable sites for summer residences now made conveniently close to the city with the completion of the railroad extension.



Figure 4:7. James Campbell's Cottage, Lake Joseph, 1886. Source: Mason, *First Islanders*, 1974.

John Campbell Jr. had one of these cottages constructed for himself (Figure 4:7). The Muskoka Club ceased operations just one year after the construction of the Chief's

cottage. The Club's demise was discernable by the purchase of its five islands by Campbell Jr. in 1877. Unfortunately, what happened and why the Muskoka Club ceased to exist remains a mystery, but perhaps it was the realization that the Muskoka they had discovered for themselves seventeen years earlier was beginning to change. John Campbell Jr. would carry on some of the traditions of Yoho, such as his weekly Sunday sermon that would attract large crowds to Yoho. The era of the Muskoka Club had passed.

The Tourist 1871-1879

New tourist infrastructure, from rail connections to purpose-built hotels, supported an increased number of tourists on the lakes. Unfortunately, although it is impossible to provide exact figures, it is safe to assume that visitor numbers increased steadily throughout the 1870s leading to the expansion of lodging infrastructure to meet demand in the early 1880s. W. E. Hamilton identified two types of tourists visiting the Muskoka Lakes in the 1870s (1879, 9). The first was landscape tourists visiting to appreciate the scenery, while the second type were sportsmen visiting the district to trap, hunt and fish.

Members of the Muskoka Club were landscape tourists. They visited the lakes to commune with nature and favoured a limited number of restful activities. No tennis courts or bowling lawns had appeared yet on the lakes, so these tourists had relatively little to do other than to sit, paint, write poetry, and relax amidst the 'romantic scenery' of the lakes (Cockburn, 1874, 17) away from the 'pertinacious bores' of the urban world (Hamilton, 1879, 9). They vacationed to escape the conventions of the city (Cumberland, F., 1875, 20). Whether camping out in tents, summering in a 'cheap board hut or

cottage', or staying at one of the regions new hotels, for landscape tourists a Muskoka vacation was expected to be a change from the hustle and bustle of city life (21).

For the sportsmen, Muskoka provided a very different type of vacation. Sporting vacations often occurred in the spring and fall months as opposed to the summer months when the landscape tourists frequented the lakes. The location also differed: where landscape tourists flocked to the islands of Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau, and Joseph, the sportsmen ventured further into the backcountry to smaller lakes and areas well off the tourist trail. Accommodations also differed, with sportsmen often using deserted lumber shanties as shelters in addition to the camping grounds of the summer tourist (Hamilton, 1884, 37). This form of tourism provides the earliest examples of settlers having direct interaction with the tourist through their employment as amateur guides. This arrangement may not have been ideal owing to both the quantity and quality of guides available. However it was suggested that hotelkeepers would be able to provide referrals to good guides (Cumberland F., 1875, 25).

The sportsmen's presence in the Muskoka tourist landscape would be limited. As tourist development proceeded into the 1880s and 1890s, they were steadily pushed farther afield into new uncharted territories as transport links allowed. On the other hand, landscape tourists increased in numbers and evolved into the summer tourists that continue to be heavily associated with the region. As their numbers increased, their demands for accommodations and supplies encouraged greater numbers of local residents to enter the hospitality field to cater to their needs, laying the foundation for the rapid development of lodging infrastructure that began in the early 1880s.

The Hotels 1871-1879

Just four hotels operated on the Muskoka Lakes in the 1870s that catered explicitly to tourists. Of these, the Rosseau House and Summit House were the only ones that could be called true resort hotels. The other two, the Monteith and Polar Star were located at Rosseau and Port Carling, and were much smaller operations catering to transients, settlers, and lumbermen, as well as the occasional tourist (Figure 4:8). Additionally, a number of hotels also operated in Gravenhurst and Bracebridge that provided accommodations to tourists but these were designed to serve a clientele that was not there for recreation.



Figure 4:8 Monteith House, Rosseau, c1880. Source: Dorothy Coate Papers, Bracebridge Public Library.

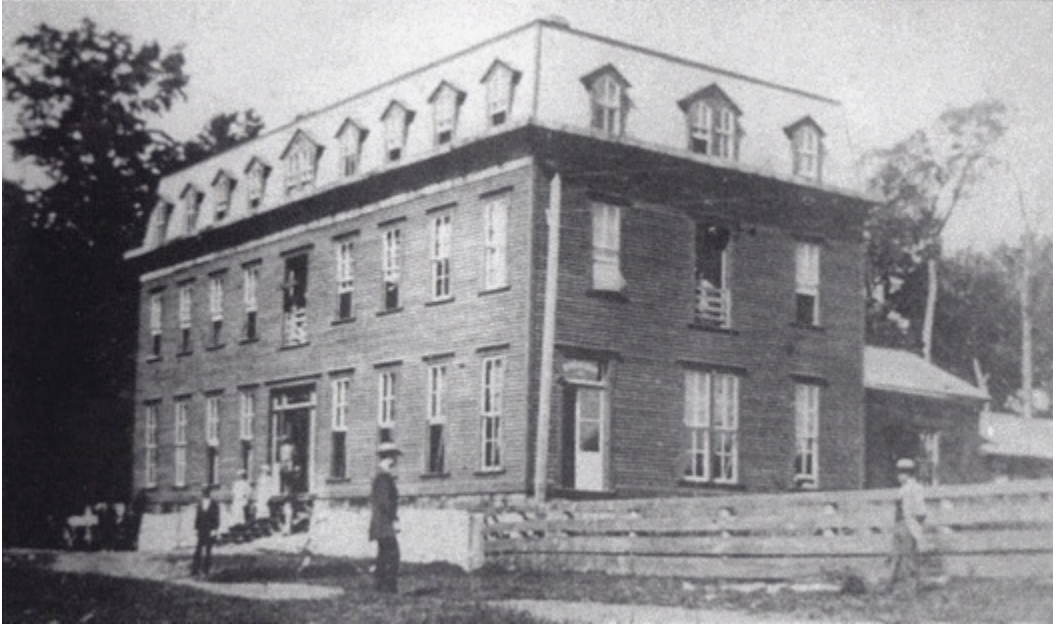


Figure 4:9. Rosseau House (Pratt's) c1875. Source: Rosseau Historical Society.



Figure 4:10. Rosseau House (Pratt's) 1883. Source: Dorothy Coate Papers, Bracebridge Public Library.

Architecturally, the two resort hotels were very different. The Rosseau House originally consisted of a box-like, three-story, wooden structure sitting on a stone foundation. The earliest known image of Rosseau House shows that the hotel exhibited a certain degree of refinement in its detailing including tall windows, transomed doors, cornice, and a mansard roof, which give the building an element of Italianate styling.

(Figure 4:9) The addition of side wings on either side of the original building and the addition of a particularly fine double verandah in the early 1880s gave a significantly grander appearance to the Rosseau House. (Figure 14:10) Unfortunately no accounts of the interior treatments survive.



Figure 4:11 Summit House, 1887. Source: Public Archives of Canada, PA 179668



Figure 4:12 Office, Summit House, 1887. Source: Public Archives of Canada, PA 68333.

The Summit House, in contrast, was a simpler structure, again constructed of wood but lacking the exterior architectural detailing of Pratt's Hotel (Figure 14:11). The overall style was more Vernacular with simple double-hung sash windows, plain millwork and simple design. However, like Pratt's, the hotel was situated to benefit from the extensive views that could be enjoyed from its lofty bluff overlooking Lake Joseph. Inside, guests would find comfortable but simple lodgings with bare wood floors, unadorned plaster walls, decoration limited to various framed prints, and the prominent display of both the American and British flags (Figure 4:12).

The Projected Image 1871-1879

In 1874, as the Northern Railway line to Gravenhurst neared completion, Cockburn published the first guidebook for tourists to the Muskoka Lakes. It is titled, *The Tourist's Guide to The Muskoka Region giving A Descriptive of the Lake and River Scenery with the Best Spots for Waterside Summer Resorts, Hotels, Camping Outfit, Fishing and Shooting; Distances, Costs of Travel, Cost of Hotel and Other Accommodation*. An earlier guide published by Thomas McMurray in 1871, while listing some of the scenic attractions and climatic advantages of the region, was aimed at the potential settler. Cockburn's, however, was aimed squarely at the tourists and their needs.

Cockburn's target market was the citizens of Toronto and urban dwellers of Western Canada (Ontario). The guide asserts that one of Muskoka's key advantages over the resorts of the St Lawrence or Lake Superior is its closer proximity. Cockburn writes that Muskoka is "well adapted for those who prefer *short* trips and a retreat from some of the conventionalities of city life" (1874, 5). Interestingly, the very name Muskoka, is often used interchangeably with the term Free Grant Territory. One conclusion that can

be drawn from this is that the term 'Free Grant Territory' was just as, or even more, familiar to the public than Muskoka.

The journey to the Muskoka Lakes takes prominence in Cockburn's guide. Of its nineteen pages of text, six are devoted to the rail, stage, and steamer journey required to get from Toronto to Gravenhurst. Two routes are proposed: the direct one for the businessmen consisting of a direct rail ride to Washago and then stage to Gravenhurst, or a slower more picturesque route for the pleasure seeker that takes in steamboat cruises on Lake Simcoe and Couchiching before reaching the stages at Washago.

For Muskoka itself, Cockburn describes some of the settlements and locations on the lakes where his steamers stopped, including Gravenhurst, Bala, Port Carling, Rosseau and Port Cockburn. The romantic scenery on the lakes is duly noted while the fishing prospects are routinely emphasized. Cockburn also describes locations such as Port Sydney, Hoodstown, Maganetawan, Nipissing, and Huntsville that, while not on the route of his steamers, were locations that might appeal to the traveler.

Writing of the options available to tourists in terms of accommodation, Cockburn states that they are "neither expensive nor *fashionable*, at the same time moderately comfortable: 'no *killing toilets*' required here" (5). It must be noted there is a contradiction between this statement and other descriptions of Pratt's Rosseau House. Most primary source documents and published reminiscences depict Pratt's as 'fashionable'. A possible explanation for the discrepancy is that the pretentious nature of the Rosseau House was incongruent with the unpretentious image of Muskoka that Cockburn wished to establish. Another possible explanation is that the Rosseau House, with its predominately American clientele, operated as an anomaly in the tourism landscape or,

simply, that Pratt's was not as pretentious as it later became or was remembered to be. While it is difficult based on surviving documentation to account for these discrepancies, it is clear that several accommodation options existed. Cockburn also mentions that for those who did not wish to stay in a hotel, the opportunity existed for camping and the construction of cheap huts or cottages at various points on the lakes.

Cockburn did not have a monopoly on the promotion of the Muskoka Lakes or complete control over the image being created for the region. Frederick Cumberland, the General Manager of the Northern Railway, the person most responsible, along with Cockburn, for bringing the railroad North, had a grander image of what the Northern Lakes, including Muskoka, could become; a vision of tourism on a scale grander than Cockburn had envisioned. The grandeur and ambition of the Lake Couchiching Hotel was part of this vision. The target clientele was another important divergence from Cockburn's promotion. In 1875, the Northern Railway produced its own guide titled *Picturesque Canada: The Northern Lakes of Canada, Their Summer Resorts and Sporting Districts with Map and Illustrations* to complement Cockburn's guide of 1874. The *Northern Lakes* actually incorporates Cockburn's description of Muskoka almost word for word, but makes a significant addition. While Cockburn focuses his guide on meeting the needs of Canadian tourists and, in particular, travelers from urban Ontario or Western Canada, Cumberland's 1876 edition of *Northern Lakes*, as with the 1875 edition, opens with the section "To the American Tourists" marking a vast broadening of the region's potential markets. For the American tourists, Cumberland offers a country with distinct national characteristics that possesses infinitely more to the American tourist than just Niagara Falls, the Thousand Islands and the St Lawrence River. Instead,

Cumberland offers the American a northern route into the heartland of the new nation, beginning in Couchiching, crossing “petite graces of the wooded islets and shores of the inland” Muskoka and onto the “glorious grandeur, the lofty headlands and wide-spreading waters of Lake Superior” (Cumberland, F., 1876, 6).

For the Canadian tourist, Cumberland switches tactics and offers the Northern Lakes, as a more convenient alternative to the seacoast, as a destination from which to enjoy the benefits of water, cool breezes, and splashing waves (Cumberland, F., 1875, 5). Lake Couchiching and the Lake Couchiching Hotel are suggested as the alternative to the seaside for Canadian families being “foremost in point of attraction, situation, and capabilities of easy and economical access” (Cumberland, F., 1876, 8). As further promotion, the ease of access allowing heads of families and businessmen convenient access to their places of business is emphasized. Cumberland notes that the Lakes of Muskoka “whose name is legion, and variety infinite” lie further inland (8).

Throughout the early editions of *Northern Lakes*, Muskoka is given second ranking behind Lake Couchiching. Six options are given for routes through the Northern Lakes. The first is Toronto to Couchiching, the second Couchiching to Muskoka, the third Couchiching to Sparrow Lake, the fourth Bracebridge to Fairy Lake, and the fifth and sixth routes being to the farther afield destinations of Parry Sound reached through Muskoka, and Lake Superior reached via Collingwood. With the exception of the sixth route, a stay at the Lake Couchiching Hotel was an integral part of each itinerary.

Attention paid to the Orillia area in these guides is best illustrated by the final section of the 1876 guide that publishes media accounts of the lakes under the title ‘Couchiching and the Northern Lakes’ (44).

After the destruction of the Lake Couchiching Hotel, the Muskoka Lakes benefited from the fact that a rival region that had consumed a great deal of the railway's advertising resources was effectively removed as a source of competition. For example, in the 1879 version of the *Northern Lakes*, the introduction making reference to the benefits and convenience of Couchiching was replaced. Instead, the Lakes of Muskoka are placed ahead of new regions such as Georgian Bay, the Great North Manitoulin Channel, and Lake Superior. When Frederick Cumberland's son Barlow Cumberland revised and expanded the Northern Railway's *Northern Lakes* guide in 1886, he gave it a red cover with the title *Muskoka and the Northern Lakes of Canada* embossed in gold.

Summary of Involvement Phase 1871-1879

The main features of the involvement phase are summarized in Table 4-2. Tourism began to take hold in Muskoka in the 1870s through the provision of tourist accommodations, the building of transport infrastructure, and the projection of an image through advertising. The decade began with the establishment of the first tourist-oriented resort hotels at Rosseau and Port Cockburn. The Rosseau House, in particular, played on the novelty of its first-class appointments in a wilderness setting far from the urban world. This concept was an American import and paved the way for the region to be adopted by Americans as a choice destination.

The increasing presence of Americans led contemporary commentators to speculate that Canadians themselves did not appreciate what they had. With the exception of the early cottagers, the predominant tourist of the 1870s hailed from the United States. Also, while outsiders were developing tourism infrastructure, local residents appear not to be as involved with tourism in these early years as later periods.

Sears states that a nation's delight and ability to search out picturesque and sublime scenery are only possible when several key requirements are met. Speaking of America in the 1820s and 1830s, these requirements were met when "a population with the money and the leisure to travel, an adequate means of transportation, and conditions of reasonable safety and comfort at the places people go to visit" were in place (1989, 3). In Muskoka, it would appear that these conditions were not met until the 1860s and 1870s.

For Muskoka, the full effect of Canadians awakening to the beauty and attractiveness of their own scenery and an increasing awareness of the health benefits ascribed to a holiday in the wilds would be realized in the coming decade. Unlike the 1860s and 1870s when outsiders championed the development of tourism, the 1880s would witness an almost spontaneous grass-roots embracing of the emerging tourism industry by locals. Muskoka was on the cusp of full-scale tourism development.

Table 4-2 Summary of Involvement Phase

Involvement Phase 1871-1879			
Historical Developments	The Tourist	The Hotels	The Projected Image
<p>Rapid improvements in infrastructure, not necessarily directed at tourism, greatly increased the accessibility of the region.</p> <p>These included lock and canal construction and the laying of rail lines to major urban centres.</p>	<p>Improved transportation links increased tourist numbers.</p> <p>Tourists also came from further distances with American visitors being dominant. Motivations were either to hunt and fish or simply to rest and enjoy the scenery.</p>	<p>The first tourist resorts were built by non-residents and catered primarily to foreign guests such as Americans.</p> <p>Hotels provided the novelty of luxury accommodations in a wilderness setting and mimicked summer resorts found in proximity to the origins of their owners.</p>	<p>The opening of direct transportation connections to urban centres coincided with an increase in tourist literature, mostly produced by transportation companies.</p> <p>Media coverage began to mention the region in the context of tourism. Projected an unpretentious image of tourism.</p>

Early Development Phase 1880-1894

Tourism Developments 1880-1894

Early in the morning hours of October 6, 1883, an era abruptly ended on the Muskoka Lakes. Nearly empty of guests and at the end of its summer season, Pratt's Rosseau House burned to the ground. The fire was devastating, taking with it not just the main hotel building, but also all of its associated outbuildings, effectively wiping Muskoka's pioneering resort hotel off the tourism landscape. Pratt himself was not there at the time and could only joke afterwards that at least it made a good blaze. In the end, he decided against rebuilding and quickly the Rosseau House was a mere memory (Boyer, 1987, 21).

Tourism Area Expansion

As late as 1879, W. E. Hamilton noted that most of Muskoka was 'virgin' territory untouched by the 'army of tourists' (6). For most tourists, Hamilton admits that Muskoka meant Pratt's Hotel at Rosseau or Fraser's at Port Cockburn, the immediately adjacent islands, and little else (6). Barlow Cumberland in (1886), *Muskoka and Northern Lakes of Canada*, noted some of developments in the years after the destruction of Rosseau House:

Pratt's hotel, which stood on a well elevated situation, but was destroyed by fire one autumn, used to monopolize the tourist business, and so great was the satisfaction of visitors with the amusements and the beauty of the environs of this part of the lake, that attention was almost wholly directed to it, and it was not until the withdrawal of the hotel accommodation having obliged visitors to seek other points of sojourn, that the world woke up to the knowledge that there were many other beautiful spots on the shores of the lakes, and that as each had its own peculiar attractions and advantages, it was best to see them all. (125)

While there is no doubt that the loss of Pratt's freed up the supply side of the tourism industry in Muskoka, Cumberland's version is more straightforward and, in a way, more romantic than truthful. Contrary to Cumberland's assertions, the historical evidence suggests that tourists were beginning to seek out other locations and lodgings in Muskoka prior to the fire of 1883.

As Hamilton indicated, at the end of the 1870s, the stock of summer hotels on the Muskoka Lakes remained primarily unchanged from the years immediately prior to the arrival of the railroad. At the head of Lake Rosseau and Lake Joseph, the large summer hotels of Rosseau House and Summit House had expanded, while the smaller Ro Seau Hotel, now under the ownership of John Monteith and renamed Monteith House, continued to cater to summer tourists during the season. At Port Carling, the North Star soon to be renamed the Interlaken, catered to the same clientele as Monteith's. A small but growing cottage community was emerging consisting primarily of Torontonians who built summer houses on the islands of Lake Joseph and Rosseau where they and their families were able to "spend their summer holidays in boating, fishing, and other amusements, in perfect independence and retirement not to be had at the hotels" (Hamilton, 1879, 31).

The combination of the railway arriving at Gravenhurst, and the destruction of the Lake Couchiching Hotel, with the resulting concentration in promotion of the Muskoka Lakes, resulted in an upsurge of tourists coming to Muskoka. These tourists provided increased demand for accommodations and new lodging options appeared across Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau, and Joseph in the opening years of the 1880s. (Figure 4:13)



Figure 4:13. Campers, Reef Island, Lake Joseph, 1887. Source: Public Archives of Canada, PA 68346

The (1883) *Northern and North-Western Railway Guide to the Muskoka Lakes* lists a new grouping of summer hotels. Temperance hotels operated by Edward Prowse at Beaumaris, Lake Muskoka, Charles Minett at Minett, Lake Rosseau, and Mrs. C. Hall at Craigie Lea, Lake Joseph, had opened accommodating twenty-five to fifty patrons each. Additionally, Thomas Aitken had opened an as yet unnamed hotel at Windermere, Lake Rosseau, accommodating another forty people. Port Sandfield was now the site of the fifty person capacity Prospect House run by Enoch Cox while, at Port Carling, Stratton House and Seymour Penson's Ferndale House joined the Interlaken in catering to tourists' needs. Private boarding options were now available across the lakes, including Juddhaven on Lake Rosseau, and Bala on Lake Muskoka. (34). All of these hotels opened at least the summer before the destruction of Pratt's. However, unlike Pratt's and Fraser's hotels, these were not owned and operated by outsiders or purpose-built *per se*. Instead they were growing out of the homesteads of the settlers, many of whom had settled in the region a decade or more before. To understand why so many settlers were

seemingly all at once turning to the tourist industry, it is imperative to look at the fate of agricultural settlement on the lakes.

The Fate of the Settlers and the Free Land Grants

Cockburn had championed the passage of the Free Land Grants Act of 1868 and his vision for Muskoka was in step with the government's determination to have the district settled as an agricultural region. This determination was based on a series of optimistic reports lauding the area's suitability for agricultural development that dated back to the earliest years of settlement, around 1860. Despite mounting evidence that the reports were based on the erroneous assumption that the district's ample and varied forests were evidence of a rich soil base, settlement was actively encouraged (Wall, 1970). The very need for the passage of such an act as the Free Lands Grant was an indication that the prospects of agricultural development were woefully overestimated.

Prior to the passage of the act, the government encouraged settlement through the building of several colonization roads into the district designed to facilitate the movement of settlers. Land was cheap, and the roads were initially successful in encouraging settlement. However, after a few short years, development slowed considerably with some of the early pioneers abandoning their plots in frustration, unable to earn a living from their new homesteads (Wall, 1970, 395-6). Of the myriad of difficulties facing these early pioneers, it was the very nature of the soil and land that proved their ultimate undoing. What they found under the forest canopy was, to their great dissatisfaction, a thin layer of soil on top of rock. Further, the soil quickly eroded when the trees were cleared. Speculators took advantage of the situation, buying up large tracts of land, either leaving them uncleared or stripping them of the valuable pine. The situation deteriorated

to the point where Simcoe County Council, who had jurisdiction, petitioned the Governor-General that free-grants, with a series of rigid conditions attached, was the only way to ensure proper settlement and keep the speculators out (Tatley, 1983, 28-9).

The conditions of the Free Lands Grant Act stated that any settler over the age of eighteen, could if he agreed to settle, clear, and cultivate the land, receive a Free Grant of one-hundred acres, which was upped to two-hundred acres for married couples in 1869 (Wall, 1970, 396). The initial results were encouraging, no doubt due to the efforts of promoters such as Bracebridge newspaper owner Thomas McMurray, who lauded the benefits of agricultural opportunity in his (1871) *Free Grant Lands of Muskoka*, where a somewhat exaggerated account of the district's agricultural potential is presented.

According to McMurray, settlement in 1871 was easy work (53). Given the prime situation and climate of Muskoka, described as 'mild, taking into consideration the latitude of 45 degrees North' (16), combined with his claim that a full two-thirds of the land was cultivatable, McMurray was of the mind that any failure to build a thriving farm in Muskoka must rest with a weakness in the character of the settler himself (42-3). As evidence of his claims, he published a series of testimonials confirming his assertions.

One settler who arrived in Bracebridge the same year that McMurray was publishing his book is Harriet Barbara King, who did not share his optimism. In 1878, King collected her thoughts and reminisces in a volume titled *Letters from Muskoka by an Emigrant Lady*. Displaced by the Franco-German war in 1870, King opted to leave her beloved Calais on the recommendation of a relative and emigrate to the Free Lands of Muskoka, near Utterson. King's optimism about life in the Muskoka bush appeared to be dashed before she even arrived and was hindered when confronted with a relative who, in

France, had been full of high spirits and health and, after a year in Muskoka, was a thin, pinched man who had aged prematurely (53). She lasted through three years of hardship including, but by no means limited to, brutal winters, blistering summers, failed crops, and death, while constantly immersed in the impenetrable woods. The opportunity for her to leave the bush presented itself when, after a particularly bad year, her son had had enough and decided to leave himself, having spent years of his prime in hard labour with uncertain prospects, opting to cut his losses rather than “continuing to bury himself alive.” (181).

King summarized her experience in Muskoka by describing the state she found herself in after just three years:

I went into the bush of Muskoka strong and healthy, full of life and energy, and fully enthusiastic as the youngest of our party. I left it with hopes clearly crushed and with health so hopelessly shattered from hard work, unceasing anxiety and trouble of all kinds, that I am now a helpless invalid (186).

This contradicts Thomas McMurray’s claim that Muskoka’s ‘bracing atmosphere’ was so very conducive to the potential homesteader’s health (1871, 16).

The experience of King, and the other settlers that she describes, speaks to an entirely different set of relationships with the landscape than those of the first tourists. At the same time that the first guests of Rosseau House and Summit House sat on porches, sketched, rowed, and fished, and while the members of the Muskoka Club sang songs about the glories of the wilderness around campfires, a short distance away King took shelter in her log shanty, fearful of fires, animals, criminals, and, most of all, the menacing forest itself. The forest, or simply the ‘bush’, is at its most terrifying at night

although even in the day it provided King with a dreadful feeling of suffocation (1878, 33).

Unfortunately, King's experiences were not unique, and as the 1870s progressed, the realization that the majority of the Muskoka region was not suited for agricultural settlement finally took hold and new agricultural settlement began to decline after 1878 (Wall, 1970, 397). For the settlers that remained, there were few options to augment their meager incomes. For King, extra money was gained by the publishing of a few of her articles in the *Atlantic Monthly*, while others found employment in town during the winter months. For the unskilled settler, the lumber trade provided much-needed extra income. Less than ideal and often entailing leaving their families for months on end in the dead of winter, lumbering was a means of simple survival for these settlers. Lumbering also provided a crucial market for settler's products. However, the lumbering trade was unsustainable and began to retract after the arrival of the railroad in 1875 when new timber reserves were opened further north. The loss of the lumbering market left many more farmers with few options but to abandon their homesteads or survive at a bare subsistence level (399).

As these developments were underway, the tourism industry was growing. The new tourists from the city needed accommodations and supplies and they looked to the settlers for help in procuring these and, in some cases, to act as guides. For those fortunate to have their homestead located near the routes of Cockburn's boats on the three main lakes, the opportunity to augment their meager incomes by providing accommodations was becoming an increasingly attractive opportunity to be seized upon.

Early Settler-operated Hotels: Prospect House

Fanny Cox could not sleep. She had come to her father's farm on Avon Bay, Lake Joseph, for a summer visit and to see the small boarding house he was having built overlooking the canal at Port Sandfield. Called to duty, cleaning and setting up the new boarding house for guests, Fanny and her sister had only time to clear the lime and mortar from the ground floor rooms when, unexpectedly, the first tourists, a group of four young men, arrived asking for accommodations. Not wanting to turn business away so soon, they gave up their father's shanty on Avon Bay and retired to the unfinished and unfurnished hotel, making do with blankets over the lime and mortar-encrusted floors to provide some comfort for sleeping. Dreams when they did come that night consisted of one of the new arrivals going suddenly mad and cutting off her right ear with a carving knife (Hathaway, 1904, 111). So began the first night of operation for Prospect House, soon to become one of the area's leading summer resorts.

Fanny Cox recalled this night years later in her *Muskoka Memories*, that was published in 1904 under the alias, Anne Hathaway. In her book, Fanny changed almost all of the characters and place names to hide the identities of her family for fear of any offence. Analysis shows that these names are often the real names only slightly changed. As such, it is possible to ascertain the proper people and locations easily and, thus, in this discussion the actual names will be used where possible. As a first-hand account of the decisions and actions by certain settlers to enter the tourist industry in 1880s-Muskoka, Fanny's book is unmatched and provides a valuable window into the era.

The eight-person-strong Cox family, led by parents Enoch and Sarah Cox, arrived in Canada from Stratford-upon-Avon, England, in March of 1871, landing in Portland,

Maine, and traveling to Toronto where they ran a boarding house. Enoch Cox, having tried farming in England, was eager to establish a farm in Canada and left with his eldest son Edward to take up free grant lands on Avon Bay, Muskoka.

Enoch Cox left for Muskoka in May of 1873 with arrangements made to live and work on the Charles Montgomery homestead while, at the same time, establishing his own homestead. While the tone of Fanny Cox's and Harriett King's books differs considerably, Fanny provides a much more pleasant picture of the homesteaders' life. The hardships faced by Enoch while not explicitly stated are nonetheless evident in the description of the slow process and unprofitability of his foray into farming. Unlike King and many of the fellow settlers, she states that the Cox family did not reside year-round in Muskoka. Sarah and the children continued to live and run the boarding house in Toronto, while Enoch moved to Muskoka in the summer months to farm, thus avoiding the hardships of winter and complete reliance on the farm for a living. When the time came to build his hotel, Enoch was still residing in his small "rude log shanty" (67) from years before, unable to construct for himself the proper house that he had initially planned.

The idea to build a boarding house, according to Fanny, stemmed from discussions between her mother and her son-in-law, John Rogers, a prominent settler at Port Sandfield who was already beginning his side-career as a provider of charts and maps to settlers and tourists. According to Fanny, in the opening years of the 1880s, "people were just beginning to discover the advantages of Muskoka as a summer resort" (100). The number of summer visitors was increasing every year while the accommodations available to these 'strangers' were limited. She recalls hotels at both

Port Cockburn and Rosseau with a third at Port Carling, most likely referring to Summit House, Rosseau House, and the Interlaken respectively. Summer cottages to her were still unknown and while the supply of settlers' homes was extensive, they were "as a rule, small and roughly finished, and furnished with little except children" (100). Thus, there was a challenge of providing for all the tourists when they did come.



Figure 4:14. Prospect House, Lake Rosseau, c1888. Source: Brochure, Prospect House, 188-, Author's Collection.

A cash inheritance from the death of her grandfather back in England gave the Cox family the opportunity to address this accommodation shortfall. Enoch purchased land facing the cut at Port Sandfield and, in the spring of 1882, commenced building his own hotel, Prospect House. The hotel, designed to accommodate fifty guests, is described as a structure of two-and-a-half stories, a 'plain and homely barn' with an added verandah (102). An image of Prospect House on the back of a leaflet published around 1888 shows how the hotel appeared at this time. (Figure 4:14) Fanny's description of her chores in opening up the hotel indicates that the interior was plastered. However, a description of the layout of rooms and furnishings is not provided.

Fortunately, Fanny does describe the first season's operations. Fanny and her sister managed the house, Fanny taking care of the upstairs rooms and waiting on tables, while her sister undertook the kitchen tasks. Enoch's tasks are not elaborated on, but he is mentioned visiting with guests on the verandah. The description of the first guests to Prospect House reads as a cross-section of summer tourists, most likely a simplification of the actual guests, but it is still valuable in understanding the needs and wants of the 1880s summer tourist to Muskoka.

The Tourists 1880-1894

Both the landscape tourist and the sportsman continued to frequent the Muskoka Lakes throughout the 1880s and early 1890s. A wide variety of books and articles appeared for sportsmen that described the sporting opportunities of the Muskoka Lakes. As in the 1870s, the sportsman was not necessarily a summer visitor but more likely to be found on the lakes in the shoulder seasons of spring and fall. The predominant visitor to the region during the summer months was the landscape tourist, a type of visitor that was coming to the region in increasing numbers throughout the period.

Landscape tourists, as a group, became increasingly diverse with many subcategories appearing by the end of the century. Cox, in *Muskoka Memories*, describes five groups of tourists visiting Prospect House in its first season, each unique in their age, profession, and attitudes. The first group consisted of the four young men who arrived unannounced before the hotel had opened, having been misinformed by word-of-mouth that accommodation was ready at Port Sandfield. Little is said about this group except that they turned out to be very pleasant and gave little trouble, choosing to go for rows on the lake. In many ways, the description of this group of young men corresponds with an

earlier group of four men Fanny had encountered at Port Sandfield three years earlier while visiting her father. This group had taken out a fishing yacht and rowed around the bay angling. The description of both parties, taken together, hints at the type of tourist who had been coming to Muskoka beginning with Bain and Campbell in 1860: groups of young men coming on excursions looking for a bit of sport and relaxation.

The next group of visitors described is a party of three, an elderly gentleman, his much younger wife, and her unmarried older sister. Unlike the easy-going nature of the young men, this party of tourists proved to be a handful. The head of the group, Mr. Furness, was determined to get as much value for his room and board as feasibly possible to the extent of ordering one of virtually everything each time he took his seat in the dining room. He was, however, a puppet in the hands of his wife who, in turn, was dominated by her sister, a Miss Nora Pole. Fanny describes Pole as having the manner of a school ma'am, never holding back on criticism or the well-placed put-down. She also had the tendency to pursue the young single men of the hotel with a great vigour, resulting in great amusement. For activities, this group of guests rented a boat and spent most of their time during the day out on the water.

Two maiden ladies are the third group to appear in *Muskoka Memories*, arriving with their dog, Fido. Besides a regular morning dip in the lake, the two women spent the majority of their time on the verandah;

Busily engaged with squares of coarse linen, needles, and bunches of washing silks with which they were patiently producing hideous monstrosities in the way of flowers, birds, and butterflies, holding them up for each other's admiration. (118)

Groups of similar ladies would take position on verandahs across Muskoka over the course of the decade. Their questionable handiwork is a recurring reference.

A fourth group of summer visitors described by Fanny is a family who arrived, again unannounced, one night in a driving rainstorm. The Merryweather's of Chicago consisted of Mr. Merryweather, a lawyer, his wife, a former English governess, and their three children under the age of five. This was their first holiday and the goal was to get as far away from civilization as possible and live out of doors (122). They had intended to forego the hotel altogether, choosing to bring a tent with them in order to set up camp. They gave up the idea and stayed a full month at Prospect House, promising when leaving to return, build a small cottage and make Muskoka an annual summer destination. In this regard, the Merryweathers represent the future growth of the summer cottage colony, beginning with extended stays in the summer hotels followed by the decision to establish more permanent roots.

The Rev. Theophilus Monk represents the fifth type of tourist. The tall ascetic-looking High Church clergyman described by Fanny Cox with his shaven face, high collar, and clerical coat, found himself at Prospect House for medical reasons. Suffering from insomnia and dyspepsia from over-study, his doctors had recommended that he retreat for a few months and 'recuperate his physique' (119). The depiction of Monk as a worn out soul, seeking recuperation in the bracing climate of Muskoka, along with the other portrayals of tourists, provides a surprisingly durable cast of characters that would each typify Muskoka tourists' experiences. These newly articulated types of summer visitors provide a glimpse of who was choosing to vacation in the region and hints at their motivations to do so. Also, the 1880s witnessed a discernable change in the activities of tourists.

Tourist Activities

A promotional letter by a Torontonion named Bob is included in (1886) *Muskoka and the Northern Lakes of Canada* edited by Barlow Cumberland. It describes a weeklong stay at the Beaumaris Hotel on Lake Muskoka in August 1885. While the authenticity of such letters is often suspect, many written by the promoters of Muskoka (Shifflett & Wall, 225, 2010). Nevertheless, Bob's account does provide a glimpse into the guests' experiences at a large Muskoka hotel in the mid-1880s and shows how the resort industry was rapidly developing in comparison to the simple pursuits of the guests at the contemporary Prospect House described by Fanny Cox just three years earlier.

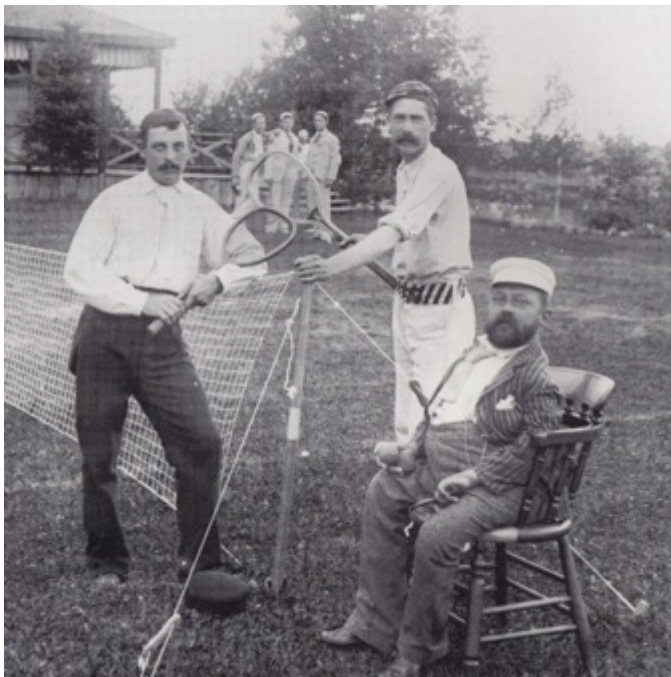


Figure 4:15. Tennis Players at Prospect House, c1895. Source: Public Archives of Canada, PA 68320

As with the early guests of Prospect House, Bob spent a great deal of time rowing, fishing, and hiking, although now in the company of a guide for fishing and equipped with prepared meals provided by the hotel. These activities were generally reserved for the mornings as, after lunch, Bob usually spent his day at the hotel bowling,

bathing, and playing tennis on the hotel's courts overlooking the lake. (Figure 4:15)
Dinner was consistently served at 6:30 p.m. and followed by dancing, sing-a-longs, concerts, or playing billiards at the hotel.

Days that stray from this general itinerary included one which saw Edward Prowse, the proprietor of the hotel, charter a steamer to take fifty guests on a day-long excursion to Lake Rosseau and Lake Joseph, as well as another where Bob took a Navigation Company steamer to see the sights of Bala. Sunday at Beaumaris saw services in the morning and afternoon, with sacred music and the singing of hymns in the evening (Cumberland, B., 1886, 114-16).

While activities such as fishing and rowing have remained popular since the opening of the district to tourism, we find in Bob's description the emergence of new recreational activities such as tennis, croquet, and lawn bowling. This is evidence of a wider awareness of competitiveness and physicality that was emerging in North American society during the period (Aron, 1999, 72). Across the resorts of the continent, a myriad of outdoor recreational sports were being offered in addition to the more traditional sedentary resort hotel experience (Tolles, 1998, 20). New enthusiasm for good health and physical fitness has been attributed by resort hotel historians such as Bryant Tolles to post-Civil War American society's "romanticized vision of outdoor life and athletic competition" (20).

Many of the activities as described by this guest required purpose-designed spaces to be created, such as recreation facilities, dance halls and billiard rooms, as well as additional staff to be procured, such as musicians. As such, the physical infrastructure of

both the hotel buildings and their grounds evolved to keep pace with guest requirements and, in doing so, modified the dynamics of tourists' interactions with the landscape.

The Hotels 1880-1894

A striking characteristic of the physical form of the first lodgings opened by settlers in the first half of the 1880s was their similarity in design. So similar was the architecture that many of these new boarding houses were virtually indistinguishable from one another, indicating a possible common group of builders and craftsmen. The predominant form was a two-and-a-half story wooden structure with projecting dormers on the upper floors and a single-level verandah surrounding the main floor. Of the two large hotels that predated the new boarding houses, it is the simple exterior styling of the Summit House that was mimicked, leaving the more sophisticated Italianate styling of the Rosseau House unique in the region.

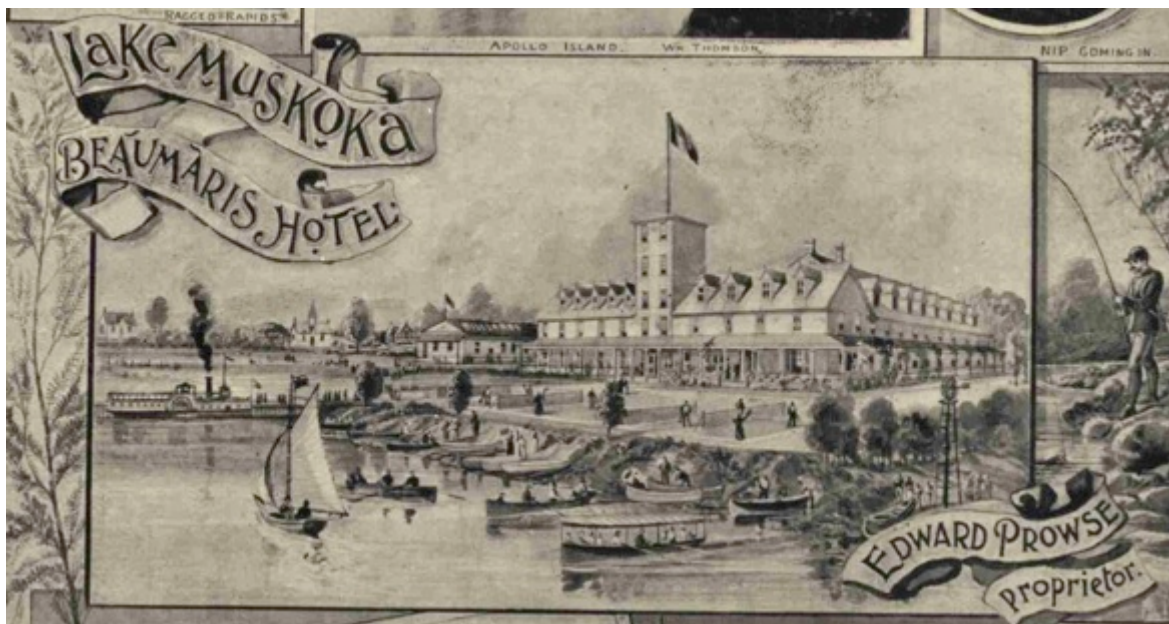


Figure 4:16. Beaumaris Hotel, Lake Muskoka, 1893. Source: Muskoka Navigation Company, *Picturesque Views and Maps of the Muskoka Lakes, Canada*, 1893.



Figure 4:17. Windermere House, Lake Rosseau, 1891. Source: Smily, *Canadian Summer Resort Guide*, 1897.

With subsequent expansions throughout the decade, each resort developed its own architectural styling through the addition of embellishments with decorative features such as towers and more sophisticated upper stories. For example, Edward Prowse at the Beaumaris Hotel on Lake Muskoka opted for a large five-story tower as part of his 1884 expansion (Figure 4:16). Thomas Aiken at Lake Rosseau's Windermere House included a single four-story tower and double-level verandah in his design for the hotel's new lake façade around 1887-8 (Figure 4:17). With these new embellishments, the simple Vernacular style of the early 1880s was transformed into a modest Victorian stick style as the preferred architectural form of the hotels by the 1890s.



Figure 4:18. Monteith House, c1890. Image shows from right to left, the 1870s addition, the 1883 addition, the 1887 addition, and the dance hall visible far left. Source: Muskoka Lakes Museum.

The pioneering use of the stick-style in Muskoka hotel design occurred in Rosseau where notable exceptions to the Vernacular trend could be seen in John Monteith's large 1883 and 1887 expansions to his Monteith House and John Brown's 1886 Maplehurst Hotel, envisioned as the successor to Pratt's Rosseau House, which had burned in 1883. In expanding the formerly small and inauspicious Rosseau House dating from the 1860s, Monteith chose a far more elaborate style than was currently in fashion around the lakes. The first addition designed for year-round use mimicked some of the Italianate detailing of his rival Rosseau House. However, this was applied to a distinctly Victorian building with its focus on the vertical rather than the horizontal profile. More significant is the 1887 expansion for the use of summer guests that is an elaborate Victorian stick-style design complete with decorative half-timbering, brackets, and deep rafters (Figure 4:18).



Figure 4:19. Maplehurst Hotel, Lake Rosseau, c1900. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Across the bay from Rosseau, John Brown opened the Maplehurst Hotel in 1886. (Figure 4:19) Unlike other new hotels appearing at the time, Brown was not a farmer set on augmenting his income by catering to the tourist trade. Adam Mercer, in 1889, described the hotel as providing an appreciable departure from “the slattern, huggermugger domestic economy and table-service,” which was characteristic of other “watering-places” (16). As the successor of Pratt’s, Hotel, Mercer also notes traditions maintained from its predecessor such as the glitter of lights and the dress parade of fashion evident on the hotel’s verandahs (15).

Architecturally, Maplehurst did not depart significantly from the other hotels of the era. With a pale green, red-roofed, two-and-half storey frame structure, featuring deep eaves and a single-level verandah that rose to two levels on the front façade, Maplehurst, with its symmetrical design and detailing, does provide a more uniform and

refined architectural statement, while retaining the predominant design ethos of its contemporaries. E. Adams, in 1894, described how surprising it was to find in Muskoka, where the buildings are often “rough and rude”, that “such comfort and even luxury can be found and enjoyed as at Maplehurst, with its appointments and cuisine equal to many of our first-class city hotels” (86).



Figure 4:20. Summit House, c1895. Clockwise from top left, exterior of hotel, dining hall, parlour, and office. Source: Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre.

The leading hotel of the late-nineteenth century in Muskoka, however, was not to be found at Rosseau. The Summit House had expanded significantly since opening in 1872, becoming the largest and best patronized of the Muskoka resorts with the destruction of Pratt’s (Attraction of Muskoka, July 4, 1891, 1). Architecturally, Summit House retained the simple design of a three-story frame structure with minimal ornament. However, its interior treatments became more elaborate with papered walls, decorated

ceilings, fine woodwork, and carpets (Figure 4:20). Rooms were created and set aside for a myriad of specific purposes, including an office, smoking and reading rooms, parlors, music room, billiard room, and dining hall (*Toronto World*, July 14, 1887 in Denison, 1993, 20).

Interior Treatments and Room Layouts

Throughout the 1870s until the turn of the nineteenth century, a number of extensive articles appear in the newspapers of Toronto highlighting tours of the Muskoka Lakes, ranging from reporting on a particular press tour given by Cockburn and the Navigation Company, a tour of the region by a dignitary such as the Governor General, or by reporters who strived to outline the principle features of each resort to inform tourists. On July 14, 1887, one such article was published in the *Toronto World* that included a detailed description of each of the hotels operating on the lakes and uniquely described their interior finishes and room arrangements in addition to the standard prose about location and aspect.



Figure 4:21. Sitting Room Craigie –Lea House, c1900. Source: Postcard (detail), Author’s Collection.

The interior spaces of the hotels were divided into a multitude of smaller rooms assigned for specific purposes. An office and dining room were standard at all hotels. Music, dancing, and billiard rooms were present at nearly all the larger hotels while individual parlor spaces were set-aside for ladies, reading, and smoking. Upstairs guest rooms featured high ceilings and wide hallways to encourage the passage of cooling breezes. While Summit House and Monteith House featured plastered and papered walls, most interior treatments consisted of natural wood paneling, as can be seen in the parlor of the Craigie Lea House (Figure 4:21). Even at the Maplehurst Hotel, otherwise noted for its luxury, the interior is “finished in natural pine, oiled to develop the grain, without the false ornament of moldings and paint” (Denison, 1993, 20). Furnishings, likewise, are described as solid hardwood, while mattresses generally had inner springs.



Figure 4:22. Clevelands House, Lake Rosseau, from the Minett Farm, c1905. Source: National Archives of Canada, PA132134.

Grounds

The 1893 guide *Picturesque Muskoka Lakes Ontario Canada* describes Muskoka as “the country where primeval forests jostle close with summer hotels, and nature can be studied and enjoyed freed from the artificialities of everyday city life” (21). However, photographic evidence tells a different story. The vast majority of summer hotels operating on the Muskoka Lakes in the late-nineteenth century had grown out of the accommodations provided to tourists by free land grant settlers in the late 1870s and early 1880s. As such, these hotels were not situated within or even directly adjacent to the ‘primeval’ forest but, instead, on the edge of farms and, thus, their immediate surroundings were more rural and agrarian than wilderness (Figure 4:22).

South of the border, agricultural settlement within a wilderness setting was a highly romanticized concept. Steven Stoll, writing in (2007) *American Wilderness: A New History*, outlines how artists such as Thomas Cole painted the settlers’ opening of homes in the wilderness and how such subjects were used by artists to understand America’s future, the act of farmers arriving and clearing wilderness to establish farms being considered “a crucial moment for philosophical musings” (67). In Muskoka, there is little evidence of this same sense of romanticism attached to agricultural settlement in this period. When the artist, Edward Roper, published his views of Muskoka in 1889, his twelve lithographs depicted a nearly pristine wilderness untouched by human activity, surely involving a fair degree of artistic license to remove two decades of agricultural development coupled with deforestation caused by lumbering activities. The lithographs of the Summit House and the view of Pratt’s are the only two that show extensive agricultural activity.

Another region that, like Muskoka, was experiencing rapid tourist development in the late nineteenth-century, driven in part by homesteaders entering the accommodation sector, was New England. Dora Brown, in (1995) *Inventing New England*, examines the burgeoning tourism industry surrounding summer boarding at rural farmsteads in Vermont and New Hampshire in the 1890s. Here, tourists chose to board on farms as opposed to already available hotels in nearby scenic locations, such as the White Mountain or on the coast. In Muskoka, tourists boarded initially on farms out of necessity and, later, at private cottages or hotels.

Some of the elements of a vacation on a farm, as outlined by Brown, are worth highlighting as both appear in the advertising literature of Muskoka. The first element discernable in the Muskoka marketplace is the focus on plain and simple furnishings and treatments in accommodations. The (1886) *Muskoka and the Northern Lakes of Canada* guidebook assured potential visitors that no ‘extra velvets’ would be found at the Muskoka resorts, as well as no ‘sauces of civilization’ (Cumberland, B., 1886, 5). Brown describes in detail the struggle between hosts and guests over food, which was the stumbling block on which many a vacation floundered (1995, 159). Plain country fare was what was expected: good bread and butter, fresh vegetables and eggs, all prepared in a simple manner (157). In Muskoka, the presence of the hotel farm often only appeared in reference to food.

The *Picturesque Muskoka Lakes* describes hotel tables covered with “fresh fish from the fishing grounds of the neighborhood, and with fresh milk, butter, and vegetables produced upon the hotel farm” (Cockburn, 1893, 1). Fresh Muskoka lamb was also

featured, as well as fresh berries of all kinds that could be had for picking around these 'homelike' resorts.

In keeping with the double use as both farm and tourist accommodation, the grounds of the early boarding houses and hotels remained fairly basic with landscaping efforts kept to a minimum. Where possible, old stands of trees surrounding the hotel buildings were retained, as at Summit House. Elsewhere, the hotel buildings would be clustered close to the water's edge. Popular outdoor activities of the period that required special spaces to be created included tennis courts, croquet grounds, and bowling alleys. Boathouses and bathhouses were generally built around the hotel's steamer dock from which all guests arrived and departed.

The Verandah

Straddling this outdoor world and the interior spaces of the hotels were the hotel verandahs and porches that every hotel, large or small, sported in some manner. The verandahs served multiple purposes and, thus, are one of the most important features of the nineteenth-century Muskoka summer hotel, both in terms of design and function. From a design perspective, the verandah provided often much needed ornamentation to otherwise very plain buildings (Blackmar and Cromley, 1982, 51). On a functional level, the verandah helped to fulfill one of the essential functions of the summer hotel by providing a space for guests to come into contact with nature without fully exposing themselves to the elements (53). In a similar manner, summerhouses and gazebos also provided shelter and a transitional space to experience nature in a controlled manner. In Muskoka, the summerhouse was a popular feature within the hotel grounds and was often located on scenic outlooks.

The hotel verandah also served a social purpose and came to be synonymous with some of the prejudices held against resort hotels. The nineteenth-century resort hotel played an important societal role by bringing individuals of similar socio-economic status together, be it for business, courtship, or the maintenance and management of social status (54-5). These duties generally fell to the women of the families and, the verandah became their domain from which they could observe comings and goings within the resort. The verandah became notorious as the setting for various social engineering efforts.

For critics of the summer resort hotel, the verandah came to embody all of the negative associations they fostered. Appearing on page five of *The Globe*, July 20, 1889, a passage pertaining to one lady's view of hotel life is reprinted from the *Boston Herald* next to an article on Muskoka. The author answers the question, "Why I don't go to a hotel?" The answer includes having to say 'good morning' to sixty people, many of whom she could not care less about, having to explain every intention and what she was up to to other women guests whenever she stepped foot on the verandah. Even being forced to fake admiration for the questionable fancy-work being created by the ladies for their local church fairs is mentioned amongst the misgivings. The image the author creates is of a summer hotel environment where artifice combined with a complete lack of privacy predominates. The challenge for the operators of the Muskoka tourism industry, in which Cockburn was still actively involved, was to engineer a projected image of the resort that dispelled these negative associations and differentiated Muskoka from its competitors.

The Projected Image 1880-1894

J.T. McAdam, or Captain Mac as he is often referred to, published his own guidebook to the Muskoka Lakes and Georgian Bay in 1884, independent of the guides being produced by Cockburn and the railway companies. He opens his book by relaying an imagined conversation of an American family trying to decide where to spend the summer.

Options include Cape May, Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic City, the White Mountains, Old Orchard Beach, the St. Lawrence, and Europe, all of which proved to be inferior in the end to the northern lakes of Ontario, including both Georgian Bay and the Muskoka Lakes (3-5). Besides providing a list of the Muskoka region's predominantly American competitors, this passage also identifies American families as a desired target market.

Even more telling are the reasons given for each rival destination's inferiority to the resorts of Georgian Bay and the Muskoka Lakes. Cape May and Chesapeake Bay are portrayed as possessing unhealthy climates where nightly fogs and mists induce fevers, while torrid heat, sand flies, and mosquitoes ruin the enjoyment of the daytime (3). The Lower St. Lawrence is a 'feeding-ground' for a vague group of particulars that are not elaborated on; though the gloom of Saquenay and the mosquitoes of Ramouski are noted. Europe is ruled out based on the snobbery and ridicule exhibited toward American travelers and the inferiority of European natural wonders in comparison to those found on the North American continent (4).

The majority of ridicule is reserved for the summer resorts of the Atlantic coastline. As with Cape May, the days feature torrid heat, sand flies, and stinging insects combined with fears of undertows and malaria. The summer hotels of these resorts are described as containing a "life of feverish excitement; of subjection to imposition and

extortion; of plot and counterplot from the landlord to the porter” (4). The health benefits of staying at these Atlantic Coast resorts are claimed to be counterproductive for there was no “comfort or home privacy” in the large summer hotel, resulting in a lack of enjoyment and “instead of robust health sought for, we obtain an enfeebled constitution and diminished energy” (4). In the end, and not surprisingly, they decide on a trip to the Upper Lakes and Georgian Bay. The inducements include its affordability, ease of transit from the border, the potential to gain great pleasure, and the renewal of health so that they would be fit for “another season of toil and business excitement” (4).

Health and Unfashionable Vacationing

Two themes are strongly present in McAdam’s guidebook that predominate in the advertising literature produced for the Muskoka Lakes throughout the 1880s and well into the 1890s. The first theme is that Muskoka is an ‘unfashionable’ destination, setting it apart from the frantic atmosphere of the very ‘fashionable’ resorts of the Atlantic Coast as described by McAdam. The second theme that recurs with increasing frequency throughout the same period is that a vacation in Muskoka has health-giving benefits that allow the visitor to perform better on return to the city workplace.

It is Cockburn who initially proposed Muskoka as the ‘unfashionable’ alternative to the ‘fashionable’ resorts that required great expense and elaborate ‘killing toilets’ in his 1874 guidebook (5). The same passage is reprinted in the 1875 *Northern Lakes* guide (Cumberland, B., 20-21) and reappears frequently in the railway guidebooks of the late 1870s. The early appearance of the concept of Muskoka as ‘unfashionable’, nearly a full decade before the boom of hotel building in the period between 1882-4, leads to the

conclusion that the concept was both well entrenched and framed visitor expectations of the accommodations in the region.

As the Prospect House, Beaumaris Hotel, and the newly-expanded Monteith House entered their first seasons, and Pratt's Hotel alternatively entered its last, the 1883 *Guide to the Muskoka Lakes*, published by the Northern and North-Western Railway, connected the 'unfashionable' with health-giving benefits unattainable at other resorts:

This chain of lakes for camping parties, or those desiring a lodge in the wilderness and away from fashionable summer resorts, offers great attractions. It is a resort where for a brief season those weary with business cares can throw off the trammels, and get rest and recreation which will fully compensate for all the time and money spent. (17)

The list of hotels operating in the district at the back of the guide is dominated by temperance operations and private boarding houses, speaking to the 'unfashionable' nature of the hotels of the time.

As already discussed, McAdam in 1884 used the 'unfashionable' nature of vacationing in Ontario's north as an inducement for American visitors to select the region as their destination of choice, by highlighting the unhealthiness of vacations at the more fashionable east coast resorts. The expanded (1886) *Muskoka and the Northern Lakes of Canada* again returns to the notion that Muskoka is an 'unfashionable' destination providing great health-giving benefits, describing Muskoka as a place not to go for the:

Display of fine clothes or many changes of raiment, to see dusty crowds hurry past in herds, measuring their pleasure in mileage over which they rush: but it is a place where, within convenient and cheap distance of the great highways (3½ hours from Toronto) exists high altitude and pure air, pretty scenes and mingled land and waterscape: where the game laws are respected and fishing carefully preserved as being the greatest source of attraction to the work-worn city man; where rest from the busy whirl can most surely be obtained; and where there it be under the canvas covering of the camp or in the comfortable bed of an unpretentious hotel, the resin-laden smell of the sighing pine and soft lapping of the little wavelets on

the quiet shores will lull the weary brain to sound and unaccustomed sleep (Cumberland, B., 4-5).

In specific regards to the hotels of Muskoka, the author adds that they are not 'caravansaries' but modest inexpensive houses where plain meals, fresh milk, clean rooms, and comfort can be found (5). The author does also clarify that a stay at one of the hotels by no means meant 'roughing it in the woods' but that "common, simple wants are fully supplied and the extra velvets and sauces of civilization are left at home" (5).



Figure 4:23 Our Own Holiday Paradise. Source: Cockburn, *Guide to the Muskoka Lakes* 1888.

The apex of the advertising initiative to differentiate Muskoka as distinctly unfashionable occurs in the closing years of the 1880s and the early 1890s. The Muskoka and Nipissing Navigation Company's guidebook of 1888 again stresses the point that Muskoka is for those seeking a restful vacation free from the 'bondage' to the "wiles of fashion, which governs the more pretentious summer resorts"(19). The middle-class urban dweller is targeted with numerous claims related to the moderate prices and unpretentious lodgings. To the 'toilers' of Ontario towns and cities, both 'muscle and brain workers', Cockburn offers a vacation in Muskoka as a place to be "nerved both in mind and body, and better fitted to resume the earnest work of life" (19). To illustrate the point, a cartoon is included on page 127 near the end of the guide titled "Our Own Holiday Paradise" depicting the visitor with family in tow bidding *adieu* to an overdressed woman complete with tiara, holding a sign reading 'seaside resorts', telling her "No Dame Fashion, I'm going for rest and relaxation this summer, and I've found out where to get it!" (Figure 4:23).

Cockburn, in his own advertisements, consistently adheres to the idea of Muskoka as a destination for middle-class urban dwellers of Ontario towns and cities. As of 1891, his vision was still the predominant image of Muskoka and was reflected in the clientele that the Muskoka resorts were catering to. Edward Roper, who had traveled to Muskoka back in 1883 and had published his pictures of the region in 1889, revisited the area towards the end of the decade, publishing his accounts in (1891) *By Track and Trail*. He describes Muskoka as catering to Canadians who did not have the wealth to go to the very expensive "watering-places on the United States coasts, or even to the less expensive ones on Canadian soil, down the St Lawrence" (423). Roper does note that

with more wealth, Canadians were taking more enjoyment in life and this was reflected in the desire for pleasure that was leading to more summer cottages by lake and stream (423). Evidence of this is numerous in Muskoka from the 1890s onward. Cottages were built across the lakes, while hotel accommodations continued to grow substantially from the first two summer hotels operating at Port Cockburn and Rosseau in 1880 to twenty-three by 1894 (Adams, 1894, 102).

Muskoka was an alternative in many ways to the more expensive and lavish resorts that attracted the well-to-do. According to Brown, rural and coastal areas in close proximity to large North American cities such as Toronto were entering the business of providing for vacationers not possessing the means to travel to well-established 'fashionable' resorts. These tourists chose to board at farms or small boarding houses, even in some cases establishing tent colonies (1995, 75). These lodgings were designed to fulfill an entirely different set of social needs and aspirations than the large hotels of other resort areas (76). Though this theme is prevalent in the Muskoka tourism literature, a number of tourist promoters saw a great deal more potential for Muskoka tourist development than being a second or third tier destination, as implied in much of Cockburn's marketing.

Until 1890, Cockburn's voice dominated Muskoka publicity and presented the region as 'unfashionable'. Increasingly though, other promoters began to diverge from this image. Thomas McMurray pre-empted Cockburn in 1871 calling "Ye broken-down millionaires, fly hither and recuperate!" Although his guide was not intended for tourists as Cockburn's were, it is interesting to note the difference in opinion related to the socio-economic status of the tourists thought to compose Muskoka's natural market (19). As

we have already seen, McAdam courted the American clientele in his 1884 guide. Adam Mercer, in (1889) *Muskoka Illustrated* lauded many of the same health benefits that Cockburn did of a vacation in the woods and lakes of Muskoka, but directed his promotion to the ‘wearyed and over-worked professional man or devotee of commerce,’ (1) making no mention of Cockburn’s ‘muscle workers’. As has already been seen, beginning in the 1870s, the railway guides issued by Frederick Cumberland and later his son Barlow, in addition to numerous passages written by Cockburn, contains extensive promotional efforts aimed at Americans.

As Cockburn’s promotional activities taper off around 1891 after a near fatal case of influenza and a subsequent power struggle within the Navigation Company that he founded (Tatley, 1983, 172), other promotional voices came to the forefront envisioning a different image for Muskoka. The first edition of *Toronto and Adjacent Summer Resorts* edited by E. Herbert Adams (1894), diverges completely from Muskoka’s traditional target markets. Instead of hard-working Ontarians, it is the few fortunate tourists that winter in far off places such as Florida, California, Italy, and the French Riviera that the benefits of the Ontario climate are directed towards (7). Ontario summers, according to Adams, provide the same climate in summer as the “balmy south during its fashionable season, when Northerners doff their furs and leave their land of ice and snow for the everglades and flowering shrubs and zephyrs of the sunny south” (7).

This shift from the promotion of Muskoka as an established ‘unfashionable’ destination to a potentially ‘fashionable’ destination similar to other resorts that it once took great pains to differentiate itself against, would profoundly change the region’s tourist industry. As we will see in the late development phase of Muskoka tourism,

stretching from the 1890s through to the outbreak of World War One in 1914, these changes become evident in the motivations and actions of tourists in the Muskoka landscape, the form and function of the resort hotels, and in the very meaning of Muskoka as expressed through its projected image.

Summary of Early Development Phase 1880-1894

The attributes of the Early Development Phase are summarized in Table 4-3. Tourism infrastructure expanded rapidly in the 1880s with new areas of the lakes being opened to the traveling public. Possibly the greatest change in Muskoka, though, was the entry of a number of settlers into the hospitality industry. The individual motivations for converting barns and homesteads into boarding houses and hotels are varied. The poor state of agriculture left many early settlers reliant on outside income from lumbering and catering to tourists to make ends meet. These early operations were notable for their homogeneity in operation, design, and setting. The typical hotel was located on the edge of a farm operation rather than in the midst of forest groves or in dramatic natural settings, resulting in placement in an agrarian setting.

The rapid increase in the supply of hotel rooms for summer tourists reflects a surge in demand for such accommodations. In the 1870s, the typical tourist to the Muskoka Lakes could be characterized as either a sportsman or a landscape tourist but they become more heterogeneous in the 1880s with a more varied range of motivational factors attracting them to the region. Female travelers, already synonymous with summer resort life at many destinations across the continent, gained dominance in the Muskoka marketplace in this period. Families and invalids as well as young college students joined these tourists. An upsurge of involvement in recreational pursuits based on

exercise introduced new diversion, such as tennis and bowls, to the resort hotel scene, each requiring purpose-designed facilities.

The projected image of the tourist region did not vary greatly from that which was emerging in the 1870s, mainly because it remained in the hands of the same small group of promoters. Muskoka was trumpeted as the choice destination for members of the middle and professional classes who looked for value, rest and, above all, an unpretentious holiday destination far removed from the conventions of the city. By the late 1880s and early 1890s, other narratives began to emerge that repositioned Muskoka as a potential fashionable resort, sparking a long-standing conflict between the opposing views of Muskoka as an unpretentious or fashionable destination.

In the second half of the exploration phase, this conflict grew as the Muskoka hospitality sector began to diversify with properties beginning to cater to different types of consumers and addressing distinct niche markets. The 1880s would be the last decade in which the image of Muskoka would be relatively uniform, with the region's tourism infrastructure and advertising being controlled by a very small group of individuals, led by Cockburn, sharing similar goals. Different voices providing different narratives would complicate the image of Muskoka in the following decades beginning in the mid-1890s.

Table 4-3 Summary of Early Development Phase

Early Development Phase 1880-1894			
Historical Developments	The Tourist	The Hotels	The Projected Image
Local population becomes more involved in the tourist sector as other sectors of the economy, such as lumbering and agriculture weakened.	<p>The types of tourist frequenting the destination become more diverse.</p> <p>Women began to dominate the summer hotels as men returned during the week to the city.</p> <p>Recreational sports such as tennis and bowls joined the traditional pursuits of fishing and rowing.</p>	<p>Rapid expansion of hotel stock as local residents turned homesteads into boarding houses and small resorts.</p> <p>New hotels expanded the tourist area.</p> <p>Lodging stock was relatively uniform in terms of design, amenities, and price.</p>	<p>Region marketed as ‘unpretentious’ in relation to other established ‘fashionable’ destinations.</p> <p>Being ‘unpretentious’ marketed as beneficial, meaning that the artifices of fashionable were absent.</p> <p>Region marketed as a tourist destination rather than as a point on an excursion.</p>

Late Development Phase 1895-1914

Tourism Developments 1895-1914

The scene at Prospect House on a summer's evening in August of 1895 following the annual Muskoka Lakes Association Regatta was one of frantic excitement. The hotel was filled to capacity. Guests and cottagers mingled together on the grounds and along the verandahs that were strung with Chinese lanterns. Inside in the ballroom, which was decorated with great bunches of ferns, bunting and flags, the more active guests danced to the strains of Glionna's Orchestra that Edward Cox brought up from Toronto just for the occasion. The men provided a relatively uniform appearance as they danced in tennis flannels and yachting costumes, their brightly colored coats and shirts adding flashes of colour to the occasion. The women, however, were more varied in their assessments of the appropriateness of certain outfits for the occasion. Women's apparel ranged from simple afternoon dresses through to full evening dress with bare neck and arms, while, between the two extremes, some women opted for yachting dresses complete with sailor hats (Our Summer Resorts, Aug 24, 1895, 9)

The image of mingling people in expensive fashionable evening gowns with those showing up to a ball in relatively casual afternoon dress captures the nature of change in Muskoka at the turn of the twentieth century. In spite of the assurances made throughout the 1880s that the tourist experience in Muskoka was unfashionable, times were changing and the pretentious elements of fashion were emerging. By the outbreak of World War One, Muskoka was a fashionable place to visit. In the intervening years, however, there was a struggle amongst tourist operators, cottagers, local residents, and the tourists

themselves over what the Muskoka experience should mean. A fundamentally changed tourist experience emerged by 1914, marking a break with the nineteenth century and setting a course for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Fashionable Muskoka

While the summer hotels of Muskoka flourished through the 1880s, as a whole they remained relatively modest affairs, providing comfortable but not lavish lodgings. Other areas in Ontario were also developing their own tourist economies and building increasingly elaborate summer hotels that, by the 1890s, began to put pressure on the promoters of the Muskoka Lakes to develop their own truly first-rate resort hotels.

As Couchiching had done in the mid-1870s with the construction of the Lake Couchiching Hotel, other areas began to open facilities of a superior quality in the 1880s. The Parry Sound Hotel Company opened the Belvedere Hotel, located high on a bluff overlooking Parry Sound and Georgian Bay in 1886. The Navigation Company's 1888 guidebook chose to highlight a passage from *Grip* that included a stop at the Belvedere. The writer expressed his chagrin upon learning of the existence of the hotel filled as it was with guests from Toronto, New York, and Boston. His feeling was that any chance of "thrilling adventure" in the hotel's vicinity was slim. In protest, he refused to sleep in the hotel, explaining to his guide that "I came here on an expedition, not a summer holiday" adding that "I want to rough it. Isn't there some uncomfortable place where I can pass the night – some place where my fitful slumbers can be broken by the growl of bears and the howl of hungry wolves?" (Muskoka and Nipissing Navigation Company, 1888, 38).

By 1890, another first-class tourist hotel at Penetanguishene was built by the Lakeside Land Company and simply called the Penetanguishene Hotel (Muskoka and Georgian Bay Navigation Company, 1890, 105). Marketed as “Canada’s great summer hotel” and the “Ponce-de-Leon of Canada” in reference to the famous hotel operated by Henry Flagler in St Augustine Florida, the Penetanguishene was far more elaborate than any of the Muskoka resorts operating at the time (Smiley, 1897, 35). The Peninsular Park Hotel on Lake Simcoe was on a similar scale and was in operation by 1894. It was built at a cost of \$50,000 and boasted such refinements as electric lights and other “modern improvements” (Adams, 1894, 117).



Figure 4:24. Artist’s Concept, Brighton Beach Hotel, 1893. Source: Muskoka Navigation Company, *Picturesque Views and Maps of the Muskoka Lakes, Canada, 1893.*

With new competitors continually emerging in the summer tourist market in Ontario, Muskoka needed first-class accommodations to remain competitive. William Odel Whiting, a speculator out of Toronto (Tatley, 1983, 158), recognized this opportunity and purchased land in the vicinity of Torrance on Bala Bay and began preparations for his new large hotel around 1892. The Brighton Beach Hotel was to have accommodated 300 guests, making it nearly fifty percent larger than its nearest Muskoka

competitor with relatively higher projected room rates (Adams, 1894, 117). An artist's concept shows the hotel as a four-story frame structure with three large towers and a double height verandah all in a high Victorian style. (Figure 4:24) The building featured stone foundations, steam heating and was lighted by electricity, a first for any Muskoka hotel. Guest facilities were to include a sand beach, dancing hall, billiard room, bowling alley, tennis courts, and a croquet lawn (76).

The Brighton Beach Hotel first appears in Cockburn's 1893 guide *Picturesque Muskoka Lakes* and it is stated that it would be ready for guests that summer (7). However, not all went as planned. The 1894 *Toronto and Adjacent Summer Resorts* still lists the Brighton Beach Hotel as being in the course of construction during the next summer (Adams, 76). Barbaranne Boyer in her *Muskoka's Grand Hotels* states that the hotel was opened for business in July 1895 but did not last a week before burning to the ground. (1987, 57) While this has become the standard account of the fate of the Brighton Beach, the historical record tells a different story.

The *Daily Mail and Empire* of July 5 1895 lists the Brighton Beach Hotel as parcel one of a judicial sale to be conducted on July 16, 1895. The description of the parcel includes the information that the hotel building was only half completed (5). The following July the same paper reports the hotel property up for auction through judicial sale again, but notes that the hotel had burned down the previous summer (1896 July 11, 2). These accounts suggest Whiting simply lacked the monetary resources to realize his vision.

After the fire that destroyed the incomplete and indebted Brighton Beach Hotel, Whiting went on to build a much smaller and more modest hotel of the same name. With

the dreams of Whiting dashed and the initial Brighton Beach Hotel reduced to a historic footnote, Muskoka would wait another six years before getting its own truly modern and fashionable summer resort hotel, this time constructed by Cockburn's Navigation Company.

The Muskoka Lakes Navigation Company and Tourism

By 1890, Cockburn had been building his navigation fleet for nearly a quarter of a century. From his first steamer, the *Wenonah*, he had expanded his fleet to six vessels on the Muskoka Lakes and was operating or had been operating boats on Lake Nipissing, Georgian Bay, and the Magnetawan River. The primary purpose of these operations was the moving of people, freight, and towing between ports of call that were otherwise inaccessible. Part of this business model was the fostering of tourist travel to the region to augment the company's income. However, the tourist trade was not the primary driver of the Navigation Company and the focus of operations was the movement of local commerce and the towing of lumber.

The northern expansion of the railroad in the mid-1880s fundamentally changed this business model by bringing other options to the remote communities that had relied heavily on the Navigation Company to bring in people and supplies. The first shock to the Navigation Company occurred in 1886 when the Northern Railway was expanded to Bracebridge and beyond. Cockburn himself stated that development alone caused a near paralysis of the Muskoka transportation business with freight receipts dropping nearly seventy-five percent (1902, 10). A change in route by the railway builders to North Bay on Lake Nipissing would also spell the end of operations there (9-10). Operations on Georgian Bay initially proved profitable but were short-lived in the face of other

competition; the Navigation Company withdrew in the early 1890s (11). This left the Muskoka Lakes and the Magnetawan River system as the base of operations for the Navigation Company by the early 1890s.

The 1894 annual report of the then Muskoka and Georgian Bay Navigation Company contains the following passage in regards to increased business:

This improvement arises mainly from the tourist and passenger trade, from which source the future profits of the company must be primarily derived, and which there is good reason to hope will continue to increase; many summer cottages being erected yearly, and the beauty of the Muskoka Lakes getting more widely known and appreciated, not only by Canadians but also Americans (Muskoka and Georgian Bay Navigation Company [MGBNC], 1895, 1).

The immediate outlook for the Navigation Company would not be rosy, and economic recession in the mid-1890s stagnated development on the Muskoka Lakes. In the 1896 annual report this is presented as the reason for the disappointing returns of that season owing to the reduction in traffic on the lakes caused by the “prevalent depression and scarcity of money” (MGBNC, 1897, 1).

This stagnation within the Navigation Company can be seen in the financial statements themselves with revenues growing a mere two percent from 1894 to 1896. The lack of growth is also present in the region’s summer resort hotel stock, which actually decreased from twenty-four hotels in operation in 1890 to twenty-one in 1897. The turnaround was swift though and although financial statements of the Navigation Company are unavailable for the years 1897-1901, the 1902 statement shows a stunning one hundred and four percent increase in trade with hotel numbers increasing to fifty-nine by 1901, representing an eighty-three percent increase in accommodation capacity from 1897 (MGBNC, 1903, 2). Between the season of 1897 and 1898 alone, twelve new hotel

operations appeared, increasing the available accommodations by seventeen percent in just two seasons.

Within this climate of prosperity and optimism, attention returned to what Cockburn referred to as “the want of a really first-class, up-to-date, highly priced hotel for the Muskoka Lakes” (1902, 14). Jakle, writing primarily about the United States, notes that the typical resort of the period at its heart contained at least one mammoth resort hotel (1985, 60). Often constructed by a transportation company as a means to stimulate demand, these hotels, in addition to merely serving as accommodation for wealthy travelers, were attractions in their own right (60). During its brief existence, the Lake Couchiching hotel served this function at Orillia, the Muskoka Lakes being a side excursion recommended to its guests. Pratt’s Rosseau House also served this function in some ways until its demise in 1883, after which Muskoka lacked such a facility. In the west of Canada, the Canadian Pacific Railway was building large imposing hotels at places such as Banff and Lake Louise. On the east coast, the Algonquin Hotel on Passamaquoddy Bay, built by the St Andrews Land Company in 1889, also fits this mold. Across the United States from the Del Monte and Del Coronado in Monterey and Coronado, to the Greenbrier and Wentworth in White Sulphur Springs and Portsmouth, such places were centres of attraction to wealthy tourists who hopped from one summer resort to another (61).

Muskoka’s lack of such an establishment was a major hurdle that had to be overcome for it to be the fashionable resort destination that a handful of its promoters wished to develop. Whiting had tried and ultimately failed to build such a hotel at Bala. According to Cockburn, several attempts of this nature had been made but all had met

with failure (1902, 14). Of these other attempts, the only surviving evidence is an image located at the back of a small book showing the Muskoka Tourist Company's Hotel, Lake Rosseau, which was a massive turreted five-storied, four-winged hotel (Figure 4:25). This hotel was to have opened in 1901 and may have been the immediate precursor to the Royal Muskoka Hotel since the landscape it is depicted in is strikingly similar to the future site of the Royal; though, architecturally there is little resemblance between the two.



Figure 4:25. Artist's Concept of Proposed Hotel on Lake Rosseau. Source: Muskoka Navigation Company, *Muskoka Lakes*, 1900.

The arrival of Ernest L. Sawyer, a relative stranger, as Cockburn put it, around 1900 marked a turning point in tourism on the Muskoka Lakes. Sawyer approached the Navigation Company with a scheme contained in a now lost prospectus but whose highlights Cockburn reports just two years later. Sawyer's scheme was to purchase a controlling interest in the Muskoka and Georgian Bay Navigation Company and to use it as the nucleus of a new company, the Muskoka Navigation Company, which would embrace both navigation and hotels. Central to Sawyer's vision was the building of a

series of first-class hotels on the Muskoka Lakes, superior to any other summer hotels in the Dominion, to be owned and operated by the Navigation Company itself.

These developments were announced to the public in the April 12, 1901 edition of the *Globe* under the title “New Hotels for Muskoka.” The newspaper report suggested that the new Muskoka Navigation Company had three primary objectives: the first, to build two new \$50,000 hotels, the second to provide an improved Grand Trunk Railway service to Muskoka Wharf; and, lastly, to establish more frequent and up-to-date steamboat service between Muskoka Wharf and various resorts on the lakes. All of this was in response to a perception that the “popularity of Muskoka has led to its overcrowding, and well-to-do people, accustomed to comforts at home, have complained of the lack of proper steamboat and hotel facilities to be found in the district” (3). The timing of these operations were crucial, with the Pan-American Exposition opening in Buffalo and a hoped-for increase in visitor numbers, Muskoka needed to be in ‘top shape’ for the “worldwide advertisement” the exposition would provide.

The article goes on to reveal details of the new hotel being built by the company on Lake Rosseau. The architect was Beaumont Jarvis of Toronto and, with contracts in place, construction was to begin in a matter of days on the new resort. The hotel itself was slated to cost between \$60,000 and \$70,000 and was to be a three-storey building in the Venetian style, with 225 bedrooms, 65 bathrooms, electricity, and steam heating. An ambitious completion date was set for July 1 with the construction of another similar hotel to commence shortly afterwards (3).

As with the Brighton Beach Hotel six years previously, financial difficulties soon emerged. Cockburn wrote that the “movement for a time began to look somewhat like a

‘wild-cat’ scheme, tales of reckless expenditure began to circulate freely” (1902, 15). By mid-summer, with Sawyer unable to get sufficient capital subscribed but still proceeding with construction, only the dining room, vestibule and one bedroom wing were ready to be opened (14). When finally finished, the hotel cost \$171,908.25 according to the 1905 balance sheet of the Navigation Company. This was far beyond the proposed \$70,000 reported in the April 12, 1901 *Globe* article. The ballooning of costs was detrimental for Sawyer, who was quickly forced out by the directors of the Navigation Company over the situation. The task of financing the hotel project then fell back to Cockburn who, after years of close partnership with railroads, was able to secure a guarantee on the financing of the Navigation Company through the Grand Trunk Railway (Tatley, 1983, 265).

With financing in place, the new Royal Muskoka Hotel opened in August 1901 on its own private island in Lake Rosseau and was fully complete for the summer of 1902. The Muskoka Lakes at last had its first-class hotel and its transition to a fashionable resort destination was complete.

The Royal Muskoka Hotel

The *Boston Daily Globe* on April 7 1902 ran an advertisement that reads as a mission statement for the Navigation Company’s new hotel and provides an insight into the vision for the Royal Muskoka and, more importantly, the direction in which Muskoka’s tourism leaders wished to take the region. As the Penetanguishene Hotel had claimed years before to be the Ponce de Leon of Canada, the Royal Muskoka Hotel was now to be, for Canada in the summer, what the newer and even more prestigious Royal Ponciana Hotel of Palm Beach, Florida, was in the winter months: “the fashionable resort of the

continent, where the romantic and the beautiful can be enjoyed with all the luxury and comfort of the most modern hotel life” (The Royal Muskoka, 10).



Figure 4:26. Royal Muskoka Hotel, Lake Rosseau, c1925. Source: Postcard (detail), Author’s Collection.

The allusion made between the Royal Muskoka Hotel and the grand winter resorts of Florida operated by Henry Flagler of the Florida East Coast Hotel Company, such as the Royal Ponce de Leon in St Augustine, went beyond mere descriptive words. Architecturally, the Royal Muskoka borrowed numerous features from the Flagler hotels, particularly the Ponce de Leon in St Augustine (Figure 4:26). These features included the use of building materials such as stucco and red-tiled roofing treatments. Stylistically, the architect also evoked the winter resorts in the hotel’s design that featured low-pitched roofs with deep eaves and Italianate towers. (Figure 4:28)

Susan Braden, in (2002) *The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant*, describes the importance of architecture to the leisure class that frequented these hotels. According to Braden, guests interpreted the historical styles of these hotels as symbols of class through their associations with grandeur and

prestige (117). This symbolism extended to the grounds themselves where, in Florida, gates, fences, and even a portcullis at the Ponce de Leon, separated the hotels from their surroundings. At the Royal Muskoka this level of privacy and exclusion was ensured by the placement of the hotel on a private island. Intentionally or otherwise, by evoking the architecture of the winter resorts, Jarvis, Sawyer, and the directors of the Navigation Company embedded these very same associations in the design of the Royal Muskoka.

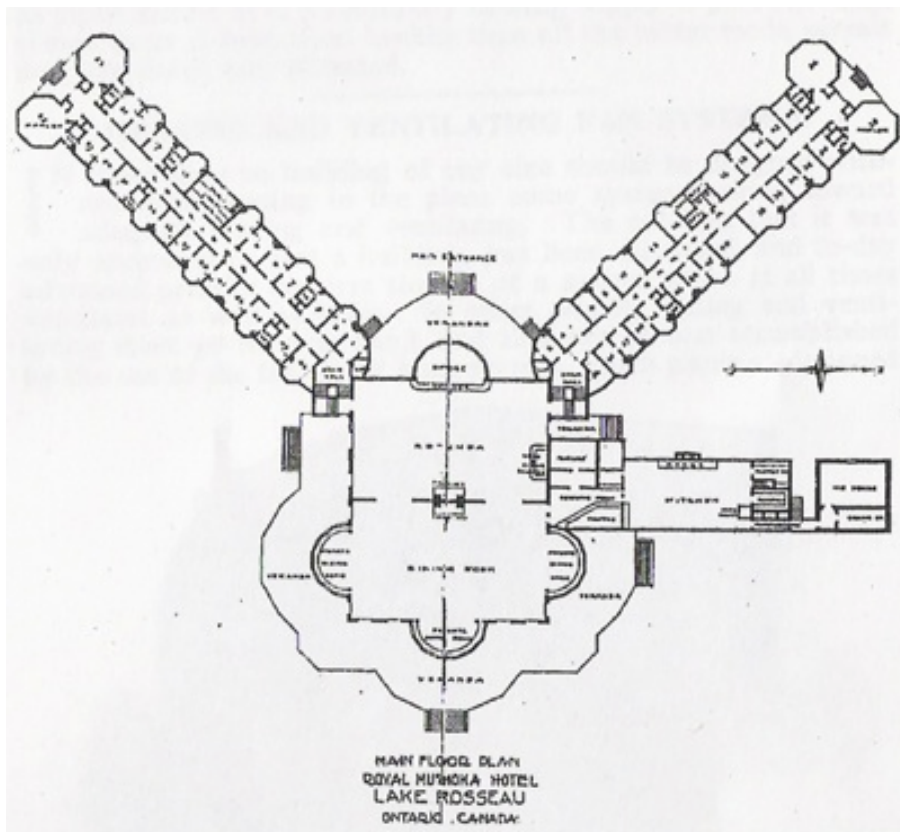


Figure 4:27. Main Floor Plan, Royal Muskoka Hotel. Source: Inland Architect and News Record, July 1902.

Inside, Jarvis did away with the established room layouts of Muskoka resort hotels that featured a myriad of small functionally defined public spaces on the main floor with guest accommodations on the upper floors. For the Royal Muskoka, Jarvis centralized all the public areas in a three-story structure called the rotunda, a term in common use in Florida and other American hotels, but unheard of in the Muskoka region

(Figure 4:27). On the main floor, this rotunda contained a bar room, billiard hall and a café. Upstairs, the second floor was divided into two large multi-functional spaces: the dining room, which also served as a ballroom, and the main reception room, which served as an office, lounge, concert hall, and also contained the telegraph office, newsstand, and a Grand Trunk Railway ticket counter. Three wings spread out from the central rotunda. The two largest contained the guest rooms arranged in various combinations. They were furnished with electric bells and marble washbasins, either with or without private baths that featured luxurious porcelain tubs (MLNHC, 1910). Some featured private sitting rooms. The third, smaller wing contained the back-of-house service areas of the hotel, such as the kitchen, offices, and storerooms.

Gender-defined spaces, such as parlours for ladies that could be found at other Muskoka resorts, were absent from the floor plans of the Royal Muskoka. Again, the innovation of gender-neutral public spaces is an idea that can be traced back to the resort hotels of Florida. The Ponce de Leon Hotel, built in 1888, contained many gendered spaces, but by the mid-1890s a de-emphasis of gender-segregated spaces was emerging in the new hotels such as the Royal Ponciana (Braden, 2002, 119-21). Braden attributes this to a ‘paradigm shift’ in society itself that saw a change in the status of women, a change that was reflected in the Muskoka tourist landscape throughout the opening decades of the twentieth century (120).

Building on the connections with Florida resorts found in both the architectural design and the projected image of the hotel, many of the people hired to operate the hotel had Florida connections. As with the summer resorts that generally operated from late June to early September, the winter resorts of Florida had a limited season running from

late September through to early April. This allowed many of the leading hotel people of the era to work in Florida during the winter months and to move to the north during the summer months (121-122). The 1905 Royal Muskoka Hotel brochure emphasized that its new manager, Lucious Boomer, had connections to the Florida East Coast Company (MLNHC, 1905, 15). In addition to the manager, many of the hotel's officers were drawn from the Florida resorts. The guest bulletin of April 4, 1910 from the Ponce de Leon Hotel lists the summer destinations of some of the hotel's staff, including the cashier Mr L. W. Maxon, the assistant clerk Mr. Glen A. Miller, and secretary to the manager, Mr. M. M. Brasse. All took positions at the Royal Muskoka Hotel as the manager, cashier and manager's personal secretary respectively.

Taken together, this combination of image, design, and operational knowledge, all derived from the winter resorts of Florida, represents a profound shift in the Muskoka tourism industry at the turn of the twentieth century. Previously, the hotels of Muskoka had been owner-operated and relied upon personal service and a relaxed lifestyle to entice patrons. This was reflected in the relative simplicity of the design and services offered by these hotels. The Royal Muskoka Hotel operated very differently. Author Susan Pryke described the image of the hotel when viewed from the air as if a "spaceship had skidded to a halt in the pine trees" (1990, 106). The allusion to an alien body in the landscape is an appropriate metaphor for the appearance of the hotel in 1901. From its American architecture to its staff, the resort was in its own way a foreign body amidst Canadian lakes, rocks, and trees. Advertised as the finest, largest, and most comfortable summer hotel in Canada (MLNHC, 1903, 12), it was a shock to the established ways of

the Muskoka resort; the new age of wealth, fashion, and privilege it introduced was not universally accepted as a positive turn.

On May 9, 1901, as the Royal Muskoka began to take form, the *Orillia Packet* published an article mentioning the changes occurring in the hotel industry in the district. The author laments that twenty years previous, “thousands of people did not want elegant rooms nor did they look for such other accommodations - they used to say it was to avoid these things that they got away to Muskoka” (The Evolution of Muskoka). Plain, clean food, good milk, bread and butter brought them to Muskoka. The article suggested that the new style of luxury that was provided caused these modest people to move on from Muskoka or to choose to board with farmers. What was thought elegant just ten years prior, the author stated, was now being discarded for the more “nobby or luxurious”. The epitome of this new Muskoka for the author was the Royal Muskoka Hotel, which was then under construction. It is the inclusion of forty private bathrooms that the author finds most bewildering considering that most guests would be swimming. Of these private washrooms, the author simply wrote them off as the latest ‘fad’ that the modern hotelkeeper must pander to.

The *Montreal Gazette* on August 15, 1901 noted the increase in American traffic to the lakes and also emphasised the new Royal Muskoka Hotel, noting that the hotel filled the long-felt want for a new modern hotel on the lakes. The article makes note of the hotel’s size and appointments, from hot and cold running water to private bathrooms, electric bells and the fact the hotel is under the management “of one of the best hotel men in the United States and is operated in every way with a view of the comfort and pleasure of its guests” (Tourists in Canada, 5).

The increasing number of Americans on the Muskoka Lakes, particularly in the hotels, is also noted in the August 16, 1901 edition of the *Globe*. The author feared the direction that the region was taking with the changes in relation to fashion and the opening of the Royal Muskoka. The Royal Muskoka represents, in this article, the continuation of the encroachment of modern comforts and conveniences by providing “a standard of living that will undoubtedly appeal to those who like to carry with them into the wilderness all the comforts and luxuries of civilization” (The Northern Lakeland, 4). The lack of the necessity to dress up, the opportunity for rest and lethargy for whole days, and the ability to go from breakfast to dinner without changing outfits were noted as being central to the area’s charm. The author feared that the conversion of any of the Muskoka resorts to a “dress parade”, as the Royal Muskoka appeared to be encouraging, would be a “capital mistake” that “should be courageously resisted by those who go there for rest, and not for display” (4).

Unease concerning the lifestyle that the Royal Muskoka Hotel was introducing to the area is common in the sources. The conflict between the fashionable crowd that the new hotel catered to and the unpretentious ideals of Muskoka’s established clientele and image emerged. This is no more evident than in an illustration found in the *Toronto Star* of August 2, 1902, that shows after dinner in a camp with two men on a shore relaxing beside a bonfire, juxtaposed beside an image of after dinner at the Royal Muskoka showing fashionably-dressed people promenading on the hotel’s verandah (1).

Tourists had mixed views on the Royal Muskoka. On the back of a postcard dated 1909, an impressed visitor to the lakes commented that the Royal Muskoka was a hotel that would make your eyes “snap” before noting that the cheapest rate was five

dollars per day. Ruby McQuesten of Hamilton was less impressed. She wrote to her brother, Calvin McQuesten, on August 10, 1903 about a visit to the Royal Muskoka Hotel. To her the hotel was a “big affair certainly ugly to look at but fine inside, the main room downstairs is a fine place with a huge grate with large logs burning & next it is the dining room, very pretty with about three dozen large square tables for four with a maidenhair plant placed in the centre of each.” While her view of the building was mixed, her description of the guests took a more negative tone: “There were a lot of fat heavy looking people around, quite a number of Jews and suppose these people are up in the art of stowing away lots of eatables & drinks, mild & otherwise, mostly otherwise.” Besides the glaring anti-Semitic remark, McQueeston also exhibits other fears rooted in fashion, religion, appropriate leisure activities and temperance common in the period. These themes emerged consistently throughout the first half of the twentieth century in Muskoka.

Persistence of ‘Unfashionable’ Muskoka

The opening of the Royal Muskoka and the subsequent press coverage and advertising relating to it did much to transform the image of Muskoka away from being an ‘unfashionable’ to a ‘fashionable’ destination. However, ‘unfashionable’ Muskoka persisted and in many ways thrived in the years leading up to the First World War. These two notions of Muskoka would intermingle not just in words, but also in the behaviours of tourists and hotelkeepers.

On August 22, 1907, J.T. Gibson of the *New York Observer and Chronicle* described the Sabbath on the Muskoka Lakes and distinguished this ‘other’ quieter, slower-paced Muskoka removed from the fashionable balls and regattas that dominated

the press coverage of the region. Gibson described with admiration that, unlike other places where secular pursuits had crowded out the “Lord’s day of rest and communion with God”, in Muskoka “all ordinary avocations and amusements” were suspended.

Not a wheel of the Muskoka Navigation Company turns on the Sabbath, except those of the one boat that brings passengers from the train on Sabbath morning and returns to the train Sabbath evening. There is no loud cry of the newsboys selling Sunday newspapers; there are no Sunday excursions; the private launches and yachts that may be seen on the lakes carry worshippers to and from the church services. (249)

Even the churches of Muskoka, devoid of large facades, organs, trained choirs, and eloquent sermons, brought the worshippers into “real, helpful, comforting fellowship with their heavenly Father” (249).

It is not just the actions of Muskoka’s inhabitants on Sundays that propelled Gibson to state that Muskoka’s “atmosphere contains more physical, mental, moral, and spiritual ozone than any other atmosphere on the American continent” (249). It is the natural landscape of Muskoka that lends itself so well to communion with the maker. Gibson gives two reasons to account for the clarity and pureness of this atmosphere. First, a requirement of having clear, pure, and logical thinking was to have a strong mind within a strong body and the Muskoka environment was thought by him to be well-suited for improving physical conditions. Of more interest to this study is the second reason. This relates directly to the nature of Muskoka’s visitors. Gibson observed that the visitors to the region “usually dismiss the anxious, corroding cares, the sordid commercial schemes, and the petty, selfish ambitions of their every day lives when they go aside to rest awhile” (249).

Gibson connected the appreciation of nature with an appreciation of God’s nature and the resultant moral uplift. However, personal self-improvement through simple

pursuits within the wilderness setting of Muskoka can be linked back to the ambitions of the Muskoka Club nearly a half century before. The fashionable pursuits being ushered in by enterprises such as the Royal Muskoka Hotel were, from Gibson's perspective, corrosive to one's morality and challenged not only the meaning of Muskoka to many but also the purpose of a Muskoka vacation.

The influence of the Temperance Movement on Muskoka's summer hotels emerged in the 1880s, with hotels listed in the early guidebooks clearly labeling themselves as temperance operations. The inclusion of a bar serving alcoholic beverages at the Royal Muskoka and a handful of other Muskoka hotels, such as Monteith House, antagonized many Muskokans. Thomas McMurray in his guide of 1871 warned against the temptations of alcohol (115-6). Many of the early settlers evidently shared this viewpoint and when they opened their own tourist lodgings, a strict ban on liquor was commonly maintained. However, there is evidence that strict temperance was abating by the 1890s. The Beaumaris Hotel on Lake Muskoka, owned and operated by Edward Prowse, was advertised in (1883) *Northern and North-Western Railway Guide to the Muskoka Lakes* as a temperance hotel (34) but, by late 1897, its brochure stated that while there was no bar, "guests who wish can either bring their own wines, etc. or can have what they require (of the best quality) procured in a few hours" (Prowse, 11).

One hotel operator who had no interest in compromising his personal Methodist ethics was Lambert Love who opened his own resort hotel, Elgin House, in 1900. Lisa and Paul Love, descendants of Lambert, wrote in the August 25, 1988 *Muskoka Sun* that Love in building Elgin House, was inspired in part by the Mohawk House in the Adirondacks (34). Unfortunately no record of a Mohawk House exists in the

Adirondacks; however, the Lake Mohonk Mountain House does exist. It was a leading resort hotel of its era and also shared many of the same operational patterns as the Elgin House. It is likely the hotel that Love is reported to have visited in the 1890s. Writing of Mohonk, Aron notes that it operated in the emerging tradition of ‘religious’ resorts that were established in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Methodists led this movement and were compared with other denominations as being reluctant to “relinquish their prohibitions of amusements” (1999, 108) such as the consumption of liquors, dancing, card playing, gambling, and other morally absent activities. Mohonk was established in the 1870s by twin brothers Albert and Alfred Smiley who maintained firm policies against drinking, card playing, and dancing and upheld the observance of the Sabbath to the extent that carriages could neither leave nor enter the resort on Sundays (109). Mohonk was successful in providing a safe place for women and children sent by concerned relatives who feared the negative influences of these ‘fashionable’ pursuits.



Figure 4:28. Elgin House, Lake Joseph, c1900. Source: Ken Judd Collection.

At Elgin House, Love adopted many of these same principles. He banned alcohol, playing cards, and dancing from the resort and rigidly maintained the Sabbath by banning swimming and the playing of sports on Sunday. In 1906, he built a chapel on the grounds for church services. Love's inspiration for building Elgin House, as relayed by his descendants Lisa and Paul Love, resulted from an 1893 visit to the World's Fair in Chicago where he was impressed by the cleanliness of the grounds and the displays of summer resorts. He returned to his home on Lake Joseph and developed plans for his own resort hotel (Love, 1988, 34). It would take seven years before he would be able to welcome guests to his hotel, a large three-story Queen-Anne structure on the shores of Lake Joseph capable of accommodating 125 guests in 1901 (Figure 4:28).

With its imposing Queen-Anne styling, immaculate grounds and amenities, on the surface, the Elgin House physically resembled the sophistication of the Royal Muskoka Hotel, albeit without the Royal's inclusions of multiple private bathrooms and electric lights. Operationally, the hotels were very different; where the Royal Muskoka featured dances, euchre tournaments and wine service, Elgin House banned all these pursuits. However, of the two, the Elgin House appears to have been more commercially successful. The financial statements of the Royal Muskoka show an operation that more or less broke even, some years turning a modest \$368.99 (1905) profit while other years, losing as much as \$7,397.79 (1907). This is further evidenced by the fact that in the course of its operations, the Royal Muskoka was never expanded. On the other hand, even without surviving financial statements, the Elgin House expanded rapidly in a very short time, growing in size from having accommodations for 125 in 1901, to 300 by 1914, through the addition of various wings and annexes.

This recipe for success at the Elgin House, as with the Mohonk Mountain House, was the provision of a ‘safe’ place to spend a vacation. This concern cut across various levels of wealth and class. Although, as Aron writes, Methodism originated among “poor country folk” and the urban middle classes (1999, 108-9), Elgin House was able to attract the wealthiest of guests. The founding families of the Massey-Harris Company can be used to illustrate this point. While the Harris family, including a teenaged Lawren Harris of future Group of Seven fame, vacationed at the Royal Muskoka (Larisey, 1993,79-80), Raymond Massey recalls his father, Chester Massey, sending him along with his mother and brother, the future Governor General Vincent Massey, to Elgin House because his father knew that Lambert Love, “had a chapel with services every Sunday and, as father said, he kept the young people in hand.” (1976, 33).

The Expansion of Muskoka

The growth of Elgin House in the early years of the twentieth century was indicative of the resort industry in Muskoka as a whole. The Navigation Company’s annual reports show a surge in passenger revenues on the lake steamers from \$40,008.74 in 1902 to \$52,953.25 in 1906, up from passenger revenues of less than \$20,000 in the mid-1890s. Hotels were also increasing from a combined capacity of 3,602 people in 1901 to 4,964 by 1906. As for private cottages, Cockburn, in a letter dated November 12, 1903, to a Captain Scott, noted that there were up to 500 present on the lakes with around a hundred private boats.

The Navigation Company was enjoying great prosperity and the outlook was so positive that the board of directors decided to add a new flagship to the Muskoka fleet for the 1907 season. Unlike her predecessors, which had been designed to serve multiple

functions from moving freight and passengers to towing scows of lumber, the new *R.M.S Sagamo* was primarily designed as an excursion vessel for the tourist trade. One hundred and fifty-two feet long, with a capacity of 800, the *Sagamo* boasted such refinements as a dining salon, lounge, ladies lounge, and a smoking room (Tatley, 1984, 12-13).

The period of time from 1906 to the outbreak of World War One has come to be known as the “Golden Age” in Muskoka tourist history. It was a period in which, in the popular imagination, a perfect balance was struck between the wilderness and development, the rustic and the elegant, and the quiet stroke of a paddle with the toot of a steam whistle. In the contemporary popular press, this period garners the most attention whether in non-fiction works such as John Denison’s (1993) *Micklethwaite’s Muskoka*, Barbaranne Boyer’s (1987) *Muskoka’s Grand Hotels*, or Liz Lundell’s (2003) *Century Cottages* as well as fictional works such as Gabriele Wills’ (2011) *The Summer Before the Storm*.

However, there is more to this era than meets the uncritical eye: there is a surprise within the surviving Navigation Company’s financial documents held by the Muskoka Heritage Centre. Between 1906 and 1907, business on the lake steamers dropped twelve percent, matched by a ten percent decline in board receipts at the Royal Muskoka Hotel, and a slight two percent retraction in the district’s total accommodations after years of growth. The numbers are even more startling given that the *Sagamo* with its 800 passenger capacity entered service in June of 1907. This sudden change in fortune for the Muskoka tourist industry can be attributed to a multitude of changes in the region that occurred almost simultaneously in the middle years of the decade, leaving Muskoka with two, for now, distinct resort regions within the district’s boundaries.

The Navigation Company and the Grand Trunk Railway up to 1906 had enjoyed a virtual monopoly in providing transportation of tourists into the region. The vast majority of tourists entering the region did so via Muskoka Wharf station in Gravenhurst and then, to finish their journey, took a Navigation Company steamer to their hotel or cottage. Cockburn had a close relationship with the railway and maintained exclusive berthing privileges at the wharf, which he defended to ensure that his fleet of steamers remained unchallenged by what he referred to as “small tramp vessels” (1902, 16) that provided other options. However, this arrangement was also being challenged by the private boats of cottagers who, by 1902, began to transfer guests to private residences without the use of the steamer fleet, but the effect remained minimal (16).

The Grand Trunk Railway heavily promoted the Muskoka Lakes both in elaborate pamphlets and folders, as well as with magazine and newspaper advertisements that often featured the Royal Muskoka Hotel. The close relationship between the Navigation Company and the Grand Trunk Railway was, in many ways, a personal one with Cockburn himself. However, Cockburn passed away in June 1905 leaving a sizable void in the Muskoka tourism operations that led to many changes.

The most dramatic development was the arrival in Muskoka of two additional railways. The Canadian Northern Railway was building a line to Sudbury that ran up the western shore of Lake Muskoka. In October 1906, this line was complete with stations at both Bala Park, on Lake Muskoka, and at Barnesdale, on Lake Joseph. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) joined the Canadian Northern Railway in June 1907 when the CPR opened a station at Bala. Both railways built summer stations with steamer docks

and the CPR included a customs agent to assist visiting Americans at its Bala Wharf Station (Tatley, 1984, 23).

The combined effect of three railways serving the Muskoka Lakes should have increased tourist traffic to the region in 1907 and beyond, but the evidence indicates that other factors were at play. Mason recalled that the Lake Joseph Station provided cottagers with the opportunity to forego the Navigation Company boats, instead using the new inboard gasoline boats to transfer from the train to their summer residences. This he describes as “the first nails driven into the coffin of the Muskoka Navigation Company, which never seemed to recover from the shock, and gradually declined as it became more unnecessary” (1974, 44).

Another effect of these developments was a noticeable change in the advertising of the district conducted by the Grand Trunk Railway. While the railroad advertised a larger area under the umbrella term the ‘Highlands of Ontario’, the tourist region of Muskoka often took top billing against other rival tourist regions such as the Magnetawan River, 30,000 Islands of Georgian Bay, the Kawartha Lakes, and the Lake of Bays. With exclusive access to the Muskoka Lakes lost to the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern Railways, around 1906 the Grand Trunk began to switch focus to another region within Muskoka for which it still had exclusive access, the Lake of Bays.

The Lake of Bays

In many respects, the Lake of Bays, or North Muskoka region, is its own resort area independent of the Muskoka Lakes or South Muskoka. Both regions developed along similar trajectories, albeit not at the same time, owing primarily to the later date at which transportation networks developed on the Lake of Bays. That said, the distinctions

between the Lake of Bays and the North Muskoka tourist area with the South Muskoka tourist area are often blurred. Some tourist literature, particularly from the 1930s onwards, treats the two regions as one. For this reason, Lake of Bays will be included in this study. Unfortunately, it is not possible to present an exhaustive analysis of this region at the present time; rather key developments in North Muskoka will be referred to as they relate to the primary focus of this study, the South Muskoka Lakes of Muskoka, Rosseau, and Joseph.

Lake of Bays itself is a large body of water located northeast of Bracebridge and in close proximity to a connected chain of smaller lakes - Mary, Fairy, Peninsula and Vernon - to which Huntsville is the key point of entry, as Gravenhurst is the main point of access to the Muskoka Lakes. Lake of Bays itself is not connected to these lakes, being separated by a narrow portage with a change in elevation of nearly one hundred feet. The lake had been identified early as being of potential interest to the tourist. Cockburn (1874, 20) mentions the lake briefly in his early guide and Cumberland (1886) devotes one paragraph to it, noting that, due to its isolation, “the shores of its deep blue clear waters remain more in the state of nature than any other. Neither the settler’s axe nor the fires of careless camping parties have denuded the banks of their leafy coverings” (149). Mercer Adams, in (1889) *Muskoka Illustrated*, recommends the Lake of Bays as an ideal excursion from Bracebridge by way of the Muskoka River and stage to Baysville, admitting that one could still access the region via train to Huntsville (11). Even by 1897, the *Canadian Summer Resort Guide* gives little mention to the lake itself but includes it in the description of the Huntsville lakes under the descriptive term “The Switzerland of Ontario” (Smiley, 54).

The tourist potential of the Lake of Bays was widely recognized by 1900. The Grand Trunk Railway issued a special folder specific to the Lake of Bays, including the Huntsville chain of lakes. The lake itself though, was still relatively inaccessible for, as mentioned above, it was separated from the Huntsville chain of lakes by a portage with a significant change of grade. The isolation of the lake lent much to its early character. A July 6, 1908 article published in the *Globe* announcing the opening of the WaWa Hotel states, “only a little while ago the beauties of the Lake of Bays district were known but to a few sportsmen and nature lovers, who, scorning the modern hotel, would pack their tent and steal away” to the untouched beauty spots of Lake of Bays (2). While isolation may have had its attractions, the economic potential of the lake was not being ignored and two options emerged to open up the Lake of Bays for tourist travel. The first was to construct a railway line from Bracebridge to Baysville, in essence annexing the lake to the Muskoka Lakes chain. The residents of Baysville, who wished to see their town become the gateway to the region, championed this option (Tatley, 1983, 224). Captain Marsh, the founder of the Huntsville Navigation Company, was keen to see another option materialize. This was a scheme to build a short railway over the portage separating Lake of Bays and Peninsula Lake, thus firmly connecting the Lake of Bays to the Huntsville chain of lakes and his fleet of boats. Marsh began construction on the Portage Railway in 1903 with the first passengers crossing the divide in July, 1905 (226).

Captain Marsh, who pioneered the construction of the Portage Railway, passed away in November 1904 and did not live to see its completion. Like Cockburn in South Muskoka, Marsh had been instrumental in the development of the North Muskoka Lakes and again, like Cockburn, left a vacuum in his absence. A relative newcomer to North

Muskoka, Charles Orlando Shaw, originally from Maine, filled this vacuum. With a fortune built in the tanning industry, Shaw saw potential in the Huntsville Navigation Company and quickly set about buying a controlling interest (Tatley, 1984, 67). Like Cockburn before him, Shaw would transform his part of Muskoka into a competitive tourism destination with the Lake of Bays as its primary draw. One of the first developments was the building on the Lake of Bays of a truly first-class hotel like the Royal Muskoka Hotel on Lake Rosseau.

The year of 1908, which saw stagnation in the hotel accommodations on the southern Muskoka Lakes, saw the true birth of the Lake of Bays tourism industry with the construction of two large resort hotels, which rivalled the size and amenities of the hotels in South Muskoka, one even challenging the Royal Muskoka Hotel itself as the finest summer hotel in Canada. The first large hotel to appear was the Hotel Britannia built by Thomas White at Kingsway on Lake of Bays for the 1908 season. It was capable of accommodating 150 guests and featured electric lights, and private baths and hot and cold running water (*Lake of Bays*, 1909, 7). However, the premier resort hotel of the Lake of Bays district was the WaWa Hotel, constructed by the Canadian Railway News Corp. on Norway Point also in 1908.

The origins of the idea to build the WaWa Hotel are unknown. It has been written that Shaw had a hand in its construction but evidence from primary sources is lacking. It is known that construction started on the WaWa Hotel on January 25, 1908 and was completed just five months later, opening on July 4 (*Globe*, July 6 1908, 2). Architect George Gouinlock of Toronto designed the WaWa. It featured one hundred rooms with twenty-four private bathrooms and all the modern conveniences. As Jarvis had done at

the Royal Muskoka, Gouinlock arranged the WaWa around a central rotunda featuring the public spaces of the hotel, with two wings spreading outward containing the guest rooms and a wing towards the rear containing the dining room and the back-of-house service areas.



Figure 4:29. WaWa Hotel, Lake of Bays, c1910. Source: Postcard (detail), Author's Collection.

The exterior styling and interior treatments, however, differed greatly from the Royal Muskoka Hotel. Gouinlock designed the WaWa in the ‘cottage-style’, more commonly referred to as the shingle style of architecture (Figure 4:29). It had two stories and featured one central tower in keeping with the moniker of the Lake of Bays as the Switzerland of Ontario. An early brochure noted that a powerful searchlight was “placed on top of the dome of the hotel, which will cast its rays over lake, wood, and island scenery during the evenings. This a novel and interesting feature, new to Canada, and one that is very popular at leading resorts in Switzerland” (*Lake of Bays*, 1909, 9). Inside, the hotel’s public rooms, unlike the Royal Muskoka, were divided into various smaller writing rooms and ladies parlours. However, the term ‘rotunda’ was retained for the main lounge and office. Again departing from the Royal Muskoka, the WaWa turned

away from plain plastered wall treatments in favour of elaborate Georgia pine paneling evoking the feel of some of the other older Muskoka lodgings such as Maplehurst.

The stated purpose of the management of the WaWa Hotel was to “offer the maximum of comfort and service at a reasonable rate, and the charges have been made to meet the most modest of pocketbook, as well as those wishing more pretentious surroundings” (11). As the Royal Muskoka had done eight years previously on the Muskoka Lakes, the WaWa marked a change in the nature of vacationing on the Lake of Bays by introducing a previously unknown element of fashion to the tourist experience. As justification, the author of a *Globe* article announcing the new hotel on July 6, 1908 wrote: “It is the call of the wild, to which an ever increasing stream responds. But all cannot take to tent and canoe, and it is those who cannot who are indebted to the spirit of enterprise which provides the conveniences of modern life and at the same time preserves the natural beauty of the place as far as possible” (2). While the WaWa may have shattered the isolation and wilderness atmosphere of the Lake of Bays, the popularity of the hotel was instant, for the 1909 season demand was so high as to necessitate a series of tents complete with board floors and elaborate furnishings to be added as auxiliary to the hotel. By 1913, demand had necessitated the expansion of the main building, increasing accommodation from 250 to 300. Also, the Hotel Britannia expanded quickly from accomodating 150 in 1909, to 250 in 1913 (*Lake of Bays*, 1913, 24).

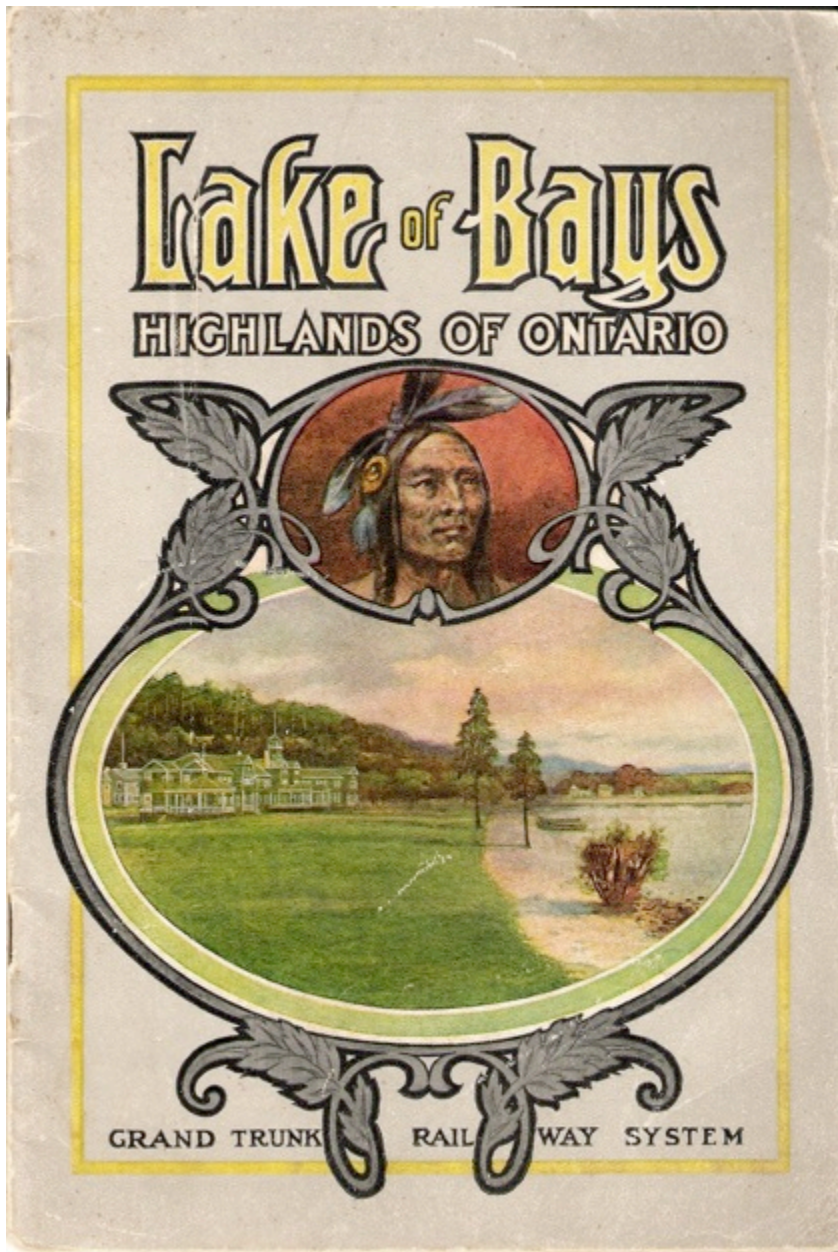


Figure 4:30. Cover of Lake of Bays, Highlands of Ontario, 1909. Source: Author's Collection.

The popularity of the WaWa Hotel and the Lake of Bays region was certainly given a boost by the increased promotional efforts of the Grand Trunk Railway. While the GTR continued to advertise the Muskoka Lakes with large colorful pamphlets, the Lake of Bays region was publicized with full colour booklets printed on expensive paper that provided a much more sophisticated image (Figure 4:30). Even in print ads, it was

the WaWa hotel that was featured where the Royal Muskoka had been featured just a few years earlier.

Shaw himself noticed the popularity of the Britannia, the WaWa, and a smattering of other lodges around the lake and recognized the potential it hinted at for the expansion of hotel infrastructure on the Lake of Bays. He envisioned a summer resort hotel that would eclipse all others. There are several accounts regarding how Shaw came to building his hotel and from where the inspiration for it came. One account has him being turned away from a full WaWa Hotel in the summer of 1909 and, out of pure spite, vowing to build a hotel that would render the WaWa obsolete directly across the lake on Bigwin Island (Tatley, 1984, 94). Another account has John McKee, the secretary-treasurer of the Lake of Bays Navigation Company, suggesting to Shaw that the Navigation Company could increase its profits by building a hotel only serviced by its own steamers similar to the Canadian Pacific Railway undertaking with the building of the Banff Springs Hotel in Alberta (McTaggart, 1992, 20). Either way, Shaw began construction of the Bigwin Inn in 1911 (*Toronto Star*, Sept 30, 1948, 2).

Shaw, along with his architect John Wilson of Collingwood, designed Bigwin to be unlike any other Muskoka resort. Instead of one main lodge, the Bigwin Inn would feature separate buildings all built of fireproof concrete and steel. The project, including the use of primarily non-wood construction materials and the difficulty of building on an island, meant that Bigwin would require considerable time to complete. According to a 1948 newspaper article, the slow pace of construction led many to think that “someone had gone completely crazy” with the uncompleted Inn being referred to as “Shaw’s Folly” (2). The outbreak of war in 1914 and the resulting shortage of labour and supplies

delayed construction even further. Still, the *Financial Post* of August 19, 1916 reported that the hotel was nearly complete but admitted that it was unlikely to open until after the war (5). In the end, it would not be open to the public until late June 1920, by which time the development of Muskoka had passed into another stage to which Bigwin primarily belongs.

The key difference between pre-war Muskoka and the inter-war period was the introduction of new, more accessible, transportation technologies of which the automobile would be the most transformative to the Muskoka tourist industry. Shaw overlooked the automobile in the planning stages of Bigwin Inn, an error that would hinder the hotel for decades to come, as the impact of car transportation changed Muskoka in a very short period of time.

The Tourists 1895-1914

An ongoing theme in the tourist landscape of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Muskoka was flirting and courtship. These activities are important in the world of the resort hotels of the era and comprise one of the key functions of the resort hotel vacation experience. They can be illustrated by drawing upon postcards and letters sent from the resorts.

Writing from the Shottery Guesthouse on August 15, 1909, an unnamed female employee of the owner, Fanny Cox, provides a brief window into the world of the early twentieth-century tourist on the Muskoka Lakes. Sharing the job of running the guesthouse with Cox, the writer shared her duties with another employee, Lizzie Hird. Hird took care of the upstairs work and waited on one table, while the author was in charge of the downstairs work, including waiting on two tables and doing the

dishwashing. In a letter, she describes the movement of guests with twenty-nine staying the previous week, ten leaving the day before with eight new ones arriving and a further two expected that evening. Of the guests themselves, we are only treated to a description of an old maid singing upstairs in the manner of a ‘rooster trying to practice crowing’.

The workday as described by the writer is busy, allowing her just 5 to 10 minutes to sit on the wharf after nine in the evening. This was long enough it seems for her to make the acquaintance of a young man from Montreal who provided her with small gifts. This apparently caused a rift between her and her co-worker who thought she overheard her making arrangements with the young man to meet with him later.

Another letter posted from Prospect House on September 12, 1902, written by Mark Stubbing to his Aunt Beatrice in Oxford, England, announces his engagement to Eloise McEvoy. In the letter he describes meeting the American Eloise while she summered with her family in Muskoka the year before.

For the Victorian middle class male and female, the opportunities to meet members of the opposite sex were limited due to societal customs. The upper classes enjoyed the social seasons of the city where eligible young heirs and heiresses could mingle, but for the working middle-class, the work schedules of young men left little time for courtship (Blackmar and Cromley, 1982, 54). The resort hotel was one of the few places providing an appropriate setting for this, allowing for the “shopping around that matched a society committed to the free market economy but reluctant to let that market into its private sphere” (55).

The atmosphere of the resort hotel was particularly conducive to this behavior. Cindy Aron notes that it provided a space where some of the social rules of the middle

class could be relaxed, allowing for closer contact between young men and women than was generally tolerated (1999, 79). This space included physical activities such as bathing and sports as well as the various dances and hops that were popular at the time.

The flirting and courting of the young patrons of resort hotels provided a source of amusement and entertainment for other guests with the very prospect of meeting attractive members of the opposite sex serving as a primary motivating factor for some frequenting these spots (80). The challenge for hotel operators and promoters, therefore, was to ensure an adequate balance between young men and women at their resorts which, given the predominance of women at these locations, was not easily accomplished (85).



Figure 4:31. Advertisement for Royal Muskoka. Source: Muskoka Navigation Company Brochure, 1913, Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre.

For the promoters of Muskoka, attempts to attract men included both the subtle and not-so-subtle approaches. In the Navigation Company's 1913 brochure an

advertisement for the Royal Muskoka Hotel, under the heading “Wanted! Young Men” (Figure 4:31), asks, “where can young gentlemen go to-day and enjoy his holidays as much as he can in the invigorating, health-giving climate of Muskoka”, adding that the hotel has “fitted up for the use of young men, a limited number of rooms with all the comforts and conveniences of the higher priced rooms added” (23). More subtle is the opportunity of finding love, usually on the water in a canoe, hinted at in the early advertising and media coverage of the district. One early example is found in the 1890 guidebook to the Muskoka Lakes published by the Navigation Company. As with many early guidebooks, this one contains several sample letters from tourists to the region, including one from Frank, a gentlemen vacationing by himself at Interlaken House in Port Carling. Frank tells of the husbands coming up from the city for the weekend to spend time with their young wives at the hotel and the various ‘spooning’ made him quite lonely (60). Frank would not remain lonely for long as he soon met Grace, a young lady staying with her mother at the same hotel. As he puts it, “people are thrown so much together in the idleness of a summer resort that we had become great friends, and in fact frankly, old chappie, I found myself in love with her” (61-2). Taken with the beauty of a canoe ride through the lilies, Frank proposed. For the wedding the following July, he intended to ship in some of the white lilies. It is important to note that this story, as with others, are likely fictitious accounts of romance on the lakes. They are almost solely written from the male perspective, the intention primarily being to draw young men to the region to balance the ratio of women.

Cartoons in the newspapers of the era often poked fun at the rituals and sometimes absurdities of courtship at the summer resorts. The *Toronto Daily Star* ran

numerous cartoons to this effect in connection with its summer resort pages published weekly in the early 1900s. One such cartoon featured Cholly Littleneck fishing on the shores of a lake with his bait of worms for black bass and a can of small talk bait to hook a summer girl, one of which happens to be emerging from the water (August 11, 1900, 1). Another features a young man and woman seated in a canoe with the text of conversation as follows: “You remind me of a page in a new book” to which he replies “Because I’m clever?” to which she retorts “No: I have to turn you down so often to keep you in your place” (Hard on Him, July 14, 1900, 9). In the same 1900 edition of the paper, another cartoon titled ‘With a Diamond’ illustrates the competition to court a desirable candidate with a man and women looking over a harbour scene. The caption reads: Ethel- “She’s the belle of the hotel.” Edward replies “Yes, and there’s twenty men anxious to ring her” (With a Diamond, 9).

The competition was not only for the women. The August 25, 1895 *Globe* mentions that the new trend both among young men and women in Muskoka was to have their various lady friends stitch their names with colored silks into the boys yachting jacket, it not being out of the ordinary for one young man to have the names of several lady friends on his coat (9).

The opportunity and expectation for guests to meet their social equals were tied to the ideas of flirting and courtship, and provided the opportunity to maneuver socially as well as to make business liasons (Braden, 2002, 54). Resort hotels provided an element of danger in the minds of turn-of-the-century tourists. Aron notes that resorts, particularly fashionable resorts, were not just places of innocent amusement: dangers lurked within, many of them directly associated with the habits and behaviours of female

guests who had come to dominate them (1999, 89). Women were characterized as being more interested in the display of fine clothes than relaxation, (89) prone to gossip and snobbery, contributing to the creation of an environment of artifice and immorality (91). In addition to the influence of women, the resort hotel also offered “unsavory characters access to respectable society” where they could con and corrupt innocent or naive men and women (92-93). The American press presented vacationers with a list of potential dangers lurking at their favorite watering places, “where pretense and deception reigned, where opportunities for dissipation tempted, and where sexual immorality lurked” (95).

The operators of Muskoka tourism throughout the 1880s had dispelled these fears in regards to Muskoka by trumpeting its unfashionableness. With the 1890s bringing larger and more expensive lodgings, a wealthier ‘fashionable’ crowd, and an increasing array of activities such as balls and regattas, Muskoka was quickly becoming what Aron would term a ‘fashionable’ resort destination. Hotel operators, in an effort to discourage unsavory types from their operations, used a variety of methods to provide a safe environment for their guests. Lambert Love at Elgin House enjoyed great success by observing the tenets of his Methodist faith by banning cards, dancing and alcohol from his property. Few other operators went as far as Love in regards to dancing, and card playing, however, the serving of alcohol at many resorts was taboo well into the post-Second World War era. Other methods included expensive room rates and isolated geographic locations, such as the expensive Royal Muskoka situated on its own island where access could be controlled. South of the border, the nineteenth century saw active discriminatory practices that restricted the clientele at many summer resort hotels, including the banning of people of the Jewish faith. The reason given was that the

presence of Jews hurt business by discouraging gentiles who did not like their company (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007, 298). It is not known if these practices were in place in Muskoka as early as the 1800s, but, by the 1920s, the term ‘restricted clientele’ does begin to appear in hotel literature for the area.

Origins of Tourists

Much of our discussion of the tourist thus far has referenced works written primarily about nineteenth-century American tourists as opposed to the Canadian tourist who, generally, has not received as much academic attention. While the argument can be made that the American tourist is different from the Canadian tourist and thus not entirely relevant to this study, this overlooks the fact that Americans were coming to Muskoka in large numbers both as tourists and as cottagers. These tourists brought with them American attitudes and expectations of what a summer resort vacation was meant to be and influenced the course of development in Muskoka.

Americans had been playing a role in the development of the region since the earliest years with the first two summer resort hotels in the area, Rosseau House and Summit House, being owned and operated by Americans and the railway actively courting the American market. While evidence suggests that Cockburn believed that the natural market for tourists was to be found in Ontario, other promoters strived to attract a well-to-do American clientele to the shores of Muskoka. The results of these various actions can be seen in *The Globe* on August 16, 1901, which reported that a common remark made by Americans when visiting Muskoka was that Muskoka was under-appreciated by Canadians themselves, owing to the majority of guests at the hotels hailing from the United States. The author of the article rebuts that this sentiment may be

erroneous if one includes that cottagers whom he felt were predominantly Canadians living in both Toronto and Hamilton. Still, it was reckoned that Canadians indeed may have been a minority in the region. (4)

Like *The Globe*, the *Toronto Daily Star* of July 9, 1904 makes the claim that the Canadians were possibly in the minority in Muskoka by suggesting that upwards of eighty percent of tourists to the lakes were American. The author of this article also notes the difference between ‘Yankee’ expectations and Canadian expectations of what a summer resort should be and that there was debate in Muskoka as to what extent one should pander to the Americans as “these are supposed to be the real ‘spenders’.” The Bracebridge solicitor John Ashworth is quoted as stating that the difference between American and Canadian tastes was that Americans liked excitement and Canadians preferred nature in a quiet wildness setting. Ashworth further suggests, but certainly does not endorse, that the attraction of more Americans would be to turn a centre of Muskoka, such as Port Carling, into a carnival land complete with merry-go-rounds, band concerts, free shows, and ‘throw for cigars’ that would become a destination for people to go to from the solitude of their islands (Muskoka Colony, 3).

A great many hotels certainly marketed themselves directly to the American market. The Royal Muskoka, as has been noted, tried to be the Royal Ponciana of the north. Other hotels, such as Craigie-Lea House (Cockburn, 1893, 13) and Summit House (Summit House, c1910, 13) labeled themselves “the only American house on the lakes”. When sisters Mary Anne Walker and Kate Kelly decided to enter the tourist accommodation sector by building a twenty-room lodge near Whiteside on Lake Muskoka around 1902, they named it simply American House (Boyer, 1987, 76).

The Grand Trunk Railway actively promoted Muskoka as part of the ‘Highlands of Ontario’ to entice the American market. Jasen observes that the railway, along with other promoters, portrayed Muskoka “as a vaguely defined extension of the United States rather than as part of a separate country” (1995, 121). The Grand Trunk Railway’s (1896) *Gateways of Tourist Travel*, for example, melds the Muskoka Lakes into the series of destinations accessible along what it calls the “greatest tourist route in America” (5) stretching from Chicago to the St. Clair tunnel at Niagara, through Ontario and Quebec into the American resort destinations of the Adirondacks, White Mountains, and the coastal resorts of Maine. After a brief description of the Muskoka Lakes, the intrigued tourist is directed to address the Chicago ticket agent or the Toronto agents (15).



Figure 4:32. Ernestcliffe Hotel, Lake Rosseau, c1902. Source: Bayne, *The Muskoka Lakes, A Place of Health and Pleasure, The Sportsman’s Paradise*, 1903.

It is unclear exactly how many tourists were venturing to Muskoka in this period. *The Saturday Globe* on April 18, 1903 states that some thirty thousand visit the lakes in a

year (Henderson, 1), while the *Financial Post* on June 15, 1923, again gives a figure of thirty thousand tourists passing annually through Toronto on their way to Muskoka and the Highlands of Ontario just prior to the First World War (10). Unfortunately, the accuracy of these numbers cannot be ascertained and they do not indicate who these tourists were and where they came from. The hotel registries are the most useful source for this information. Among the few surviving hotel registries are a complete set from the Ernescliffe Hotel on Lake Rosseau continuously spanning from 1901 through to 1953. Alfred Judd, a pioneer settler in the district, founded Ernescliffe in 1895 (Figure 4:32). It was expanded in 1900 to become a full-fledged resort hotel. This particular hotel is advantageous to use as an example since in many ways it was fairly average in terms of size and amenities within the Muskoka accommodation sector and, thus, can be treated as being more representative than the larger resorts such as the Royal Muskoka and Elgin House, which served defined market niches, and the smaller hotels that likewise tended to serve a smaller, more homogeneous clientele. By analyzing the ratio of guests from different areas, it is possible to study the changing trends and fluctuations of patronage that displays more fluidity than is generally recognized.

For the years spanning 1901 to 1914, the patronage of the Ernescliffe Hotel consists on average of 222 entries per season in the registries with twenty-nine percent of parties being from the United States, thirty percent from Toronto, twenty percent from Hamilton, nineteen percent from elsewhere in Ontario, two percent from other Canadian provinces, and one percent from outside of Canada and the United States. The trend for American patronage during the period appears to be steady from thirty-five percent in 1901 to thirty-eight percent in 1914 with a low of twenty-one percent in 1909 following a

high of forty percent in 1908. The citizens of Toronto appear to have been coming to Muskoka in greater numbers over the period, representing just thirteen percent of entries in 1901, but increasing to twenty-five percent in 1914 with peak years of forty-one percent in each of 1909 and 1910. Patronage from Hamilton starts strong in 1901 with twenty-seven percent of entries being from the city but trends downwards to just ten percent by 1914. Guests from other Ontario cities remain steady through the period as does other Canadian and international patronage. (Table: 4-4)

Table 4-4. Ernescliffe Registry Data, 1901-14.

Ernescliffe Registry Data 1901-1914											
Year	American Guests		Ontario Guests		Toronto Guests		Other Canadian Guests		Other Guests		Total Guests
1901	39	35%	49	44%	14	13%	1	1%	8	7%	111
1902	44	31%	67	47%	31	22%	1	1%	1	1%	144
1903	65	31%	76	36%	62	29%	7	3%	1	0%	211
1904	66	23%	118	41%	93	33%	3	1%	5	2%	285
1905	82	31%	125	47%	54	20%	2	1%	3	1%	266
1906	87	31%	129	46%	58	21%	3	1%	5	2%	282
1907	66	23%	118	42%	95	34%	1	0%	1	0%	281
1908	94	39%	47	20%	90	38%	6	3%	1	0%	238
1909	45	20%	81	37%	91	41%	2	1%	2	1%	221
1910	72	25%	95	33%	119	41%	2	1%	0	0%	288
1911	66	28%	101	42%	64	27%	6	3%	3	1%	240
1912	69	32%	97	45%	47	22%	2	1%	2	1%	217
1913	52	26%	69	35%	67	34%	8	4%	4	2%	200
1914	48	38%	44	34%	32	25%	3	2%	1	1%	128
Total	895	29%	1216	39%	917	29%	47	2%	37	1%	Avg/Yr: 222

These numbers reveal that at the Ernescliffe Hotel, the perception that Americans were the vast majority of hotel guests was incorrect. However, the observation holds for the larger, more expensive hotels. We can get an idea of the patronage of the larger hotels from the guests lists published periodically during the period 1900 to 1905 in the

Toronto papers. Unfortunately, whereas the complete guest registries cover the entire season, these guest lists only provide snapshots of new arrivals at a certain place on a particular week and, thus, do not reflect shifts in patronage throughout the season.

Nevertheless, they are still useful for comparative purposes.

On July 28, 1900, the *Toronto Daily Star* lists the week's arrivals at Beaumaris as consisting of nineteen parties in total with fifty-three percent of new arrivals coming from the United States, sixteen percent from Toronto, and twenty-two percent from elsewhere in Ontario, plus one from Montreal (Catboats Sail, 9). The *Toronto Daily Star* also provides a list of 'late arrivals' at the Royal Muskoka on August 2 1902 (At Royal Muskoka, 1902, 12) that lists 91 separate parties, sixty-nine percent of whom hail from the United States, eighteen percent from Toronto, eleven percent from elsewhere in Ontario, and two percent from abroad. The *Toronto Daily Star* also contains the list of new arrivals at Cleveland's House (Recent Arrivals, 1902, 11), a far more modest and less pretentious hotel than either the Beaumaris or the Royal Muskoka, where the prominence of guests is reversed, with seventy-two percent coming from Toronto, twelve percent from Ontario, and sixteen percent from the United States.

The data suggests that there was a variation in the patronage enjoyed by different hotels on the lakes. Large and more expensive hotels seem to have catered to a predominantly American clientele, while moderately sized hotels primarily catered to a domestic Canadian clientele. The complete Ernescliffe data further hints at a rising Toronto market with an increasing share of guest rooms being occupied by Torontonians.

At the same time as resorts were expanding, the cottage community on the Muskoka Lakes had been consistently developing since the earliest days of Muskoka

tourism. By 1900, these cottages were increasingly elaborate in size and complexity and often architects and expert craftsmen were employed to build them in the Queen Anne, Shingle, or Arts and Crafts styling popular during the period. Unlike the large American presence found at even the moderately sized hotels and sheer dominance at the larger resorts, the cottage community on the Muskoka Lakes appears to have remained predominantly in Canadian hands. The 1899 Marshall Map of the Muskoka Lakes has a directory of cottages and their owners, which reveals that Americans, owned just eleven percent of cottages with the remaining eighty-nine percent held by Canadians, of which forty-five percent of the total belonged to Torontonians.

Table 4-5. Cottage Data. Source: Marshall, 1899 & Roper, 1915

Cottage Data				
		1899	1915	% Change 1899-1915
Ontario	Cottages	112	195	74%
	% of Total	38%	26%	
Toronto	Cottages	145	361	149%
	% of Total	49%	48%	
USA	Cottages	32	165	416%
	% of Total	11%	22%	
Other	Cottages	8	37	363%
	% of Total	3%	5%	
Total	Cottages	297	758	

Marshall indicates that the total number of cottages present on the lakes in 1899 was 297. Sixteen years later the number of cottages had almost tripled to 758 as listed in Captian John Roger's (1915) *Blue Book and Directory of the Muskoka Lakes*. The American presence as a proportion of total cottages doubled to twenty-two percent, mainly concentrated on Lake Muskoka, but was still far short of the seventy-six percent of cottages still owned by Canadians. Torontonians maintained their share of the

ownership at forty-eight percent from forty-nine percent, and a small number of international buyers acquired a two percent share in the Muskoka cottage market. Taken as a whole, the summer visitors to the Muskoka Lakes, both those staying at the hotels and cottages, were primarily composed of Americans from the border-states and Torontonians, the ratio between the two depending upon the time of season and the size of the resort hotel. Residents of Hamilton and smaller Ontario cities also visited, but visitors from Toronto's rival city, Montreal, and other provinces, as well as international guests from outside of North America, were largely absent, with only a handful coming from either the Caribbean or Europe. (Table: 4-5)

Life at the Resorts

Cox, in *Muskoka Memories*, states that the population at the turn of the century was gradually dividing itself into two classes termed either as "tourists and settlers, pleasure and toil, capital and labor, butterflies and bees" (1904, 143). The gulf that existed between the two groups is highlighted by their differing attitudes towards one another. She writes that the pleasure-seeking tourist tends to look down "with a kind of pity on the hard-working settler, and it is just as natural for the hardworking settler to look down on the giddy tourist." (143).

Cox's description of the tourist combines both the cottager and hotel guests into one single group and sets their summer lifestyle of leisure against the hardships of the settlers. This is indicative of the time when the social life of the resort hotels and the cottagers were essentially the same. Cottagers and hotel guests freely intermingled at dances, regattas, and tournaments. Guests of one hotel would frequently visit guests at another hotel or at a cottage and, in doing so, created a highly interconnected social

network. When viewed on a macro scale, one large resort community existed instead of a series of separate insular resort hotels and cottage enclaves co-existing relatively independently of one another. The benefit of this lies in the fact that most of the social functions of the resort hotel, from networking, ‘shopping’ for a spouse, and material for gossip and intrigue, required a large patronage to provide the necessary cast of characters (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007, 88).



Figure 4:33. MLA Regatta at Royal Muskoka Hotel, c1914. Source: Postcard, Author’s Collection.

The interconnections between the various resorts and cottages had developed early, beginning with Prof. Campbell’s sermons on YoHo Island in the 1870s, which had attracted a large collection of worshippers from various points on the lakes. Hotel dances were also popular rendezvous points for tourists. As early as 1894, Cleveland’s House at Minett was becoming known for its open houses on Tuesday evenings when non-guests of the hotel were made welcome to participate in the evening’s amusements (Smily, 84). The newly-formed Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) of summer residents held the first

annual regatta in 1894. Of the numerous regattas held at various towns and hotels, the MLA regatta was and remains the largest and most prestigious. Until the late-1910s, the regattas were always held at one of the larger hotels such as Prospect House, Windermere House, Beaumaris Hotel, or the Royal Muskoka Hotel. They drew thousands of spectators who participated in the festivities (Figure 4:33). Hotels would even send their own contingents of competitors in uniform to participate, whether it be the blue and orange colours of Windermere or the birch-bark badges of Rossmoyne (*The Globe*, August 24, 1895, 9).



Figure 4:34. Bowling contest between Elgin House and Prospect House, c1905. Source: Public Archives of Canada, PA 158473



Figure 4:35. Baseball Game at Elgin House, c1908. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The opportunity for guests of different hotels to compete against one another in sport extended beyond the regatta (Figure 4:34). Baseball was immensely popular in the early 1900s in Muskoka. The guests of each hotel would form a softball team and either compete against a team made up of employees or settlers or, more likely, the opposing team would be from another hotel and the game itself would be held on the grounds of either hotel with fans cheering and yelling out their hotel's specific cheer. These games became such a stable activity that accounts of them filled the summer resort sections of the Toronto daily newspapers and several souvenir postcards featured images from the events (Figure 4:35). Besides baseball, tournaments became a feature of almost any physical pursuit from the newly arrived sport of golf, to tennis, ping-pong, and bowls.



Figure 4:36. Hayride at Fife House, Lake Rosseau, c1905. Source: Public Archives of Canada, PA 159524

In addition to organized sports, guests could find diversion by taking part in an overland excursion to a secluded lake or the top of a high bluff to get a picturesque view. Water excursions remained popular, with many of the larger hotels, such as Summit House and Prospect House, having private yachts to carry guests to other towns and resorts. In the evenings, hay rides and bonfires are also reported by newspapers as being popular (Figure 4:36). Rainy days brought euchre and bridge tournaments to many hotel lounges while, at the Royal Muskoka Hotel, professional dancers provided instruction and demonstration. The Royal advertised that Mrs. N. S. Rice and Mr. Harry Lambert, graduates of New York's Castle School, and famous in the smart circles at Sherry's, the St. Regis, the Plaza, and the Automobile Club "are now charming the guests at the Royal with their exhibition of the Argentine Tango, the Brazilian Maxixe, the new One-Step, the Hesitation, the Gavotte and the Jungle dance", adding that one should come to the Royal Muskoka and enjoy "an interesting schedule - of country dances, cotillions,

colonial dances, paster parties, masked ball and cup contests” (*Toronto World*, July 25, 1914, 11).

Of all the activities undertaken by summer visitors to the Muskoka Lakes in the years surrounding the turn of the century, it is the hops, dances, balls and masquerades, whether held at a hotel or a private cottage, that drew the most attention from the various newspapers covering the happenings of the lakes in their summer resort sections. Dances and concerts were held almost every night of the week with the exception of Sunday at the larger hotels. Prospect House was famous for the quality of its dance floor, as well as the Royal Muskoka and Monteith House, but all resorts down to the small establishments and even some of the private cottages hosted dances. If a guest was staying at a small resort or one such as Elgin House that did not allow dancing, they could frequent and participate in those held at other resorts. The most popular pastime seems to have been the masquerades that were organized frequently and attracted participants from around the lake.

The guest experience in Muskoka during the period 1895-1915 became one of routine with many organized events filling the days and evenings as opposed to the unstructured days of lounging and mild diversions of the early periods. This change is indicative of the transference of a resort destination to a fashionable one (Aron, 1999, 86). Of course, not everyone in Muskoka was ‘fashionable’; many different forms of accommodation existed and a visitor could tailor their stay to their own personal tastes. Yet, one thing is certain. As Muskoka entered the 1910s, the resort hotels were the epicentres of the summer colony of tourists, be it hotel guests or cottagers, serving as the

setting or backdrop to the full array of summer activities. As such, their physical layout and construction needed to be adapted to these new demands and expectations.

The Hotels 1895-1914

Entering the late phase of development, Muskoka's tourist lodgings are noteworthy for their homogeneity. In the course of two decades, a great deal of differentiation occurred with the summer lodging sector offering a diversity of designs, operations, pricing, advertising, and patronage. As already noted, the number of hotels and boarding houses catering primarily to the summer tourist grew substantially over the period from twenty-one in 1894 to sixty-nine by 1914, with accommodation capacity rising from 1,960 to 5,007 over the same period.

The initial uniformity of the resorts is apparent in the Navigation Company's 1890 guidebook. The information given to prospective tourists to the lakes indicates a uniform room rate of about \$1.50 per day at most lodges rising to \$2.00 in August (Cockburn, 67). The number of hotels in close proximity to each other is also noted but the only hint of differentiation in the marketplace is that it is stated that the nature of the trip should dictate the choice of lodgings. For a tourist going for pleasure alone, the large hotel is recommended for the company it will provide, while for quiet and restful holidays, a "retired and less frequented place of abode" is suggested (69). The uniformity dissolved throughout the 1890s and 1900s and can be witnessed in the design of the hotels themselves.

Exterior Design

Leading upto 1915, the trend in exterior design of the Muskoka hotels is one of increasing elaboration and sophistication at the larger properties, with smaller operations

often mimicking the styling of their larger counterparts. As with other elements of the hotel operations, particularly the large hotels, these ideas were imported from other resort destinations and modified or reinterpreted for the Muskoka marketplace. The transfer of ideas and designs between resorts of Florida and the Royal Muskoka, and the Elgin House and the operational style of the Lake Mohonk Mountain House have already been described.

It is necessary to turn again to developments in the United States to understand fully the physical transformation of the Muskoka hotels away from the simple Vernacular style of the 1880s, to the more elaborate designs of the Edwardian era. Jeffrey Limerick, in (1979) *America's Grand Resort Hotels*, notes that resort hotels possess two, often contradictory, architectural characteristics. The first is that they are designed to provide efficient and systematic provision of meals, clean rooms, and other required services. The second is they must convey “the popular image of the good life” as well as offer an “environment that is distinct from the everyday urban world of most resort goers” (13). According to Limerick, the style of the resort hotels is often inspired, chosen and meant to complement the natural setting or local history (13).

For the most part, the operators of the Muskoka resorts prior to 1900 avoided the more grandiose and fanciful architecture evident in the resort hotels of the United States. Nevertheless, the influence of the Muskoka landscape is evident in the building materials and forms of the hotels themselves and is closely related to the ‘unfashionable’ image that Muskoka aspired to in the nineteenth century. With the arrival of ‘fashionable’ Muskoka, the design of the hotels followed American examples and became more elaborate and fanciful. Yet, American designs were altered and in most cases simplified

to meet the tastes of the Muskoka marketplace. Limerick also notes that in America, the resort hotels, as conservative business ventures, tended to avoid being “in the vanguard of architectural style”, instead being “composed of images familiar enough to their patrons to put them at ease, yet novel enough to hold their attention and to reinforce the notion that the hotel is a special place.” (14).

Bryant Tolles Jr., in (1998) *The Grand Hotels of the White Mountains*, studies a resort area that has several similarities with the Muskoka Lakes, one of which is that the majority of hotels did not utilize architects in their design. This resulted in a hotel stock that was relatively “plain, unembellished, and highly functional” (17). Still, the hotels were able to achieve both an “aesthetic and functional impact, with resultant pleasure for their guests, by virtue of their immense size, sensibly arranged and appointed interiors, and pronounced visual imagery” (16-17). Initially foregoing the revivalist architectural styles, these hotels, like those in Muskoka, adapted the contemporary fashions in residential design, particularly the Queen Anne and Shingle Style for their own use (Limerick, 1979, 49).

By the mid-1880s, the Victorian stick-style of architecture was evident in a couple of the Muskoka resorts. However, it is not until the 1890s that these styles were fully adopted. A noticeable lag is evident in the architectural development of Muskoka resorts in comparison to the contemporary resorts that they strove to rival. The relative geographic and cultural isolation of Muskoka is likely the reason for this delay. For example, even as the Queen Anne style emerged in Muskoka in the 1890s, it was already slipping out of fashion in the design of the American resorts where architects were

turning to Europe for inspiration (49), a movement that itself would not reach the shores of the Muskoka Lakes until the building of the Royal Muskoka in 1901.



Figure 4:37. Cleveland House, Lake Rosseau, c1890. Source: Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre.



Figure 4:38. Cleveland House, Lake Rosseau, c1900. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The emergence of new design ethos is apparent in the alterations made to the pre-existing hotels in the 1890s. The inclusion of the stick-style in the expansion of both Monteith House and Windermere House in the late 1880s has already been examined, but it is not until the expansion of Clevelands House by Arthur Minett in 1891 that the Queen Anne style appears on the Muskoka resort landscape. Queen Anne design is typified by an irregular plan and massing with gables, turrets, dormers, towers, and pinnacles enlivening facades and rooflines (49). In the United States, its purest expression can be found in the Hotel Del Coronado constructed in 1887 outside of San Diego, California (Wilson, 1982, 16). Clevelands House, prior to Minett's alterations, was a prime example of the typical Vernacular Muskoka hotel of the 1880s as described in the previous chapter (Figure 4:37). When Minett chose to enlarge the house in 1891, he abandoned this regional styling and opted for a third floor addition with a mansard roof and, most significantly, a four-story octagonal tower on one end of the lodge. This was designed to mimic the lines of a ship in reference to the steamboats plying the lakes (Figure 4:38). Although a very simple interpretation of the style, Clevelands introduced two innovations. First, it acquired the irregular asymmetrical massing of the Queen Anne style and, secondly, the lake-land scenery surrounding it directly influenced the design.

The Brighton Beach Hotel of 1894, which was never completed, also borrowed elements of the Queen Anne style with its elaborate silhouette featuring numerous towers. During the mid-1890s, there was little building or expansion of the Muskoka resorts but, when growth re-emerged in the late 1890s, the new style became more evident.



Figure 4:39. Belmont House, Lake Joseph, c1905. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The most notable and influential example of Queen Anne resort architecture on the Muskoka Lakes appeared in 1900 with the opening of Love's Elgin House. Although departing a bit from some of the tenets of the style with its symmetrical design, Elgin House, with its three large mansard-roofed towers and intricate windows and moldings, embodied many characteristics of the style. Coinciding with the building of Elgin House, nearby Prospect House added two large mansard-topped towers similar in design to those of Elgin House, giving the older hotel an asymmetrical effect. Across the bay, the smaller Belmont House appeared in 1904, copying in simplified form the overall design of Elgin House complete with a large central tower, flanked by two smaller towers and a wrap-around verandah rising to two stories at the front (Figure 4.39).



Figure 4:40. Hotel Rostrevor, Lake Rosseau, c1905. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The purest expression of Queen Anne architecture is found at the much smaller Hotel Rostrevor constructed by Arthur Dismore on Lake Rosseau in the early 1900s (Figure 4:40). Here, with its smaller scale, the Rostrevor was able to fully express the residential elements of the style with an off-centre tower and elaborate multi-paned windows.



Figure 4:41. Proposed Addition to Monteith House, c1895. Source: Muskoka Heritage and Boat Centre.



Figure 4:42. Expanded Windermere House, c1919. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.



Figure 4:43. Beaumaris Hotel, Lake Muskoka, c1905. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Elsewhere on the lakes, established hotels expanded along the lines of their pre-existing style. An 1890s illustration of Monteith House shows a never-realized addition to the south duplicating the 1887 addition to the north. (Figure 4:41) Windermere House,

expanded for the 1904 season, copied its stick-style tower giving the hotel a symmetrical massing and creating one of the most iconic Muskoka resort structures. (Figure 4:42) At Beaumaris, architect Charles Gibson maintained the overall style of the Beaumaris Hotel during his 1902 renovation of the property (Lundell, 2003, 151). The front of the hotel was lengthened and the roofline raised with one of the few new decorative details added being a cap to the tower resembling a Lutyens hat. (Figure 4:43)

The most dramatic departure from these trends in hotel design in Muskoka was the Royal Muskoka Hotel of 1901. As previously mentioned, its architect, Beaumont Jarvis, opted not for the Queen Anne style, but instead a revival architectural style more indicative of the Italianate and referencing the winter resort hotels of Henry Flagler. Again, this is in keeping with trends in the American market towards the palatial architecture of Europe as an inspiration for hotel design (Limerick, 1979, 49). The experimentation in style utilized by Jarvis at the Royal Muskoka would not be copied at the other large first-class hotel of the era. The WaWa on Lake of Bays, was designed in the shingle style, an offshoot of the Queen Anne incorporating elements of the Arts and Crafts movement. Not until the opening of Bigwin Inn, in 1920, did large style elements of the Royal Muskoka's architecture appear again in the district. However, small elements of Jarvis's design were mimicked by other Muskoka resorts, such as the use of stucco as an exterior wall treatment at the Maple Leaf House of 1906 when the Hough family rebuilt the hotel after a fire. Elsewhere, F.S. Hurlburt copied the design of the twin-towered ends of the Royal Muskoka's sleeping wings in his 1906 Hotel Waskada.



Figure 4:44. Milford Bay House, Lake Muskoka, c1900. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.



Figure 4:45. New Windsor Hotel, Bala, Lake Muskoka, c1910. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.



Figure 4:46. Swastika Hotel, Bala, Lake Muskoka, c1910. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

At the smaller hotels of Muskoka, functionality trumped decorative ornamentation. One defining architectural feature of these lodges was the use of mansard roofs on the upper floors, seemingly pioneered at the Milford Bay House (Figure 4:44) and later adopted at Woodington House (1895), Paignton House (1891), and American House (1902). Elsewhere, hotels appeared that featured little design interest, opting for pure functionality, as at the New Windsor Hotel (Figure 4:45) in Bala that was more or less a wooden box with a verandah and the nearby Swastika Hotel (Figure 4:46) that resembled a red brick box.

Tolles, in reference to similar structures in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, refers to such structures as bland, unimaginative, Vernacular creations, which still formed a part of the grand hotel tradition in that region (1998, 17). As in the White Mountains, these plain hotels form a part of the wide spectrum of design forms present in Muskoka in the years leading up to the First World War. From the uniformity found in the early 1890s, the Muskoka hotel market had diversified considerably in a very short stretch of time to the point where, in 1914, the Grand Trunk Railway could claim that

Muskoka was noted for both the number and *variety* of its hotels and boarding houses. “From these the visitor can select a place to suit his taste and purse. There are comfortable farmhouses, and scores of cleanly, well-kept hotels offering good substantial food and endless variety of attractions. The prices range from the modest fee of \$5.00 per week up to those of greater pretension” (Grand Trunk Railway, 1914, 8-9).

Interior Treatments and Room Layouts

The diversification of design evidenced by the exterior styling of the hotels is also reflected in the interior appointments. However, for the most part, actual room layouts and functions change little from the 1890s at most properties, with a few notable exceptions. Interior treatments can be broken into several categories reflecting the aspirations of the owners and the desires of the various market segments catered to by each hotel.



Figure 4:47. Monteith House Lobby, 1902. Source: Public Archives of Canada, PA 178368



Figure 4:48. Dining Room, Bluff Hotel, Lake Rosseau, c1910. Source: Vivian Rogers Collection.

One group of hotels attempted to replicate the Victorian styling of residential properties with a heavy emphasis on elaborate wallpaper, millwork, ornate furniture, and other plush accessories. The oldest of the Muskoka resorts tended to fall into this category, including the Summit House at Port Cockburn and the Monteith House at Rosseau (Figure 4:47). In contrast to these properties, others, such as the Morinus House and the Bluff Hotel both on Lake Rosseau, retained a rustic ambience (Figure 4:48). For example, the Morinus featured ceilings covered with fragrant green cedar and walls “not plastered but covered with cotton and then papered, rendering the rooms very cool” (Adams, 1894, 84). The Bluff Hotel featured board and batted rooms that were simply furnished as a “homely little camp” designed for “quiet people seeking a holiday of rest and recuperation in a spot eminently fashioned by nature and our simple tastes to meet those special needs” (*The Bluff*, 1921, 4).



Figure 4:49. Sitting Room, Ernescliffe Hotel, c1905. Source Ken Judd Collection.

The majority of Muskoka hotels can be positioned between the plush surroundings of Summit House and the rustic rooms of the Bluff, providing accommodations in keeping with the perceived wilderness setting of Muskoka but maintaining the home-like comforts of the city. Resorts from the small to the palatial fell within this category. Many of these hotels, as in the 1880s, featured wood-paneled rooms in local pine or hardwoods with simple wooden furnishings and rustic stone fireplaces, as can be seen in the lounge of the Ernescliffe Hotel, (Figure 4:49) or even in the rotunda of the much more opulent WaWa Hotel. The latter featured wicker furnishings in keeping with the “relaxed leisure atmosphere” that wicker furnishings symbolized (Menz, 1982, 63).

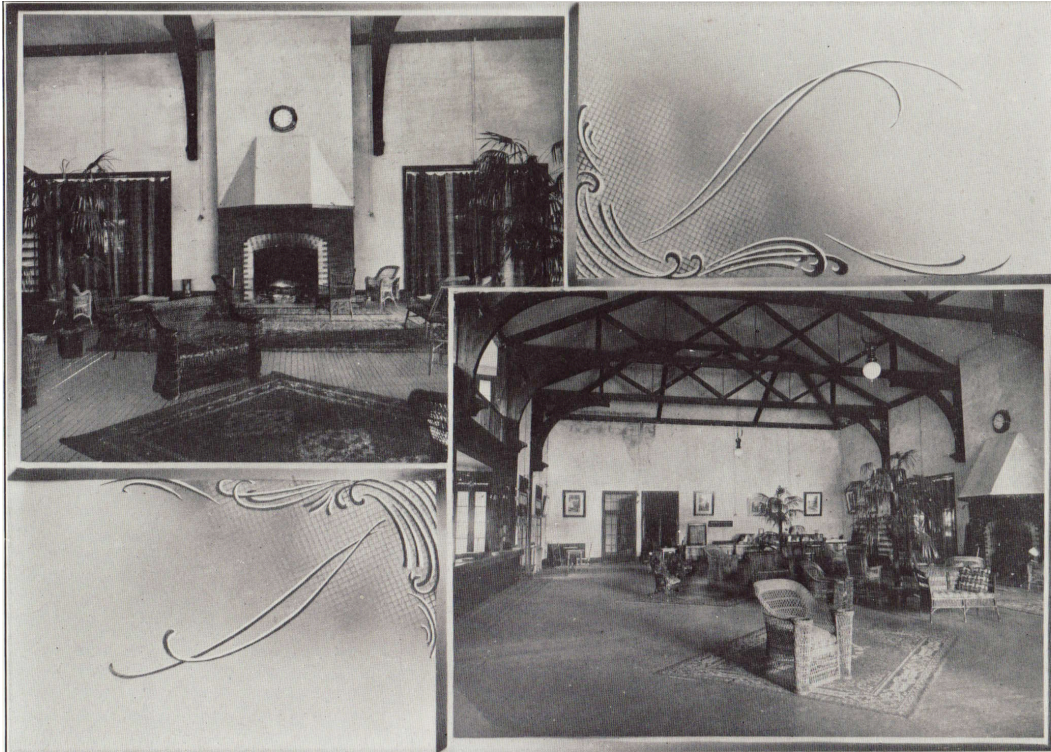


Figure 4:50. Rotunda, Royal Muskoka Hotel, 190-. Source: Bayne, *The Muskoka Lakes, A Place of Health and Pleasure, The Sportsman's Paradise*, 1903.



Figure 4:51. Lobby, Windermere House, c1905. Source: Author's Collection

The Royal Muskoka Hotel typified a further group of lodges that combined this relaxed leisure atmosphere with the luxury accompaniments demanded by their well-heeled clientele. Period descriptions of the Royal Muskoka Hotel describe the magnificent proportions of its public spaces and the artistic, soft but rough finishes and timbering of its interiors (*Royal Muskoka*, 1906, 7). Images of the Royal Muskoka's public spaces show that, unlike the plush decorations found in some other hotels, guests enjoyed simpler surroundings that featured painted plaster walls, simple light fixtures, wicker and hickory furnishings, and large potted palms that, with the high-timbered ceilings and French windows, had the effect of blurring the lines between indoors and outdoors. (Figure 4:50) This created an atmosphere, as one author astutely noted, of a hotel like the Raffles in Singapore or similar colonial hotels of the British Empire (Taylor, 1997, 110). The relative simplicity of the interior of the Royal Muskoka was echoed in the early twentieth-century interiors of resorts such as Windermere House, (Figure 4:51) which opted for a simpler unadorned approach to interior decoration.

The simplicity of the Royal Muskoka's interior treatments hid the sophistication of its amenities that included a barbershop, beauty salon, gift stand, and a café that served light meals between the formal meal times. These were new for Muskoka but would become standard at the larger hotels, though not for nearly two decades after the Royal's opening in 1901. Features such as the hotel's rotunda that combined lounge and office functions, electric lighting, and en-suite bathrooms would be copied sooner beginning with the region's larger hotels and trickling down to most establishments by the 1920s.

Grounds

Hotel grounds, with few exceptions, remained the same as in the 1880s. The new pastime of golf required the construction of golf courses but, with land already cleared for farming, their building was made easier. The first such course appeared at Beaumaris around 1900 (Ahlbrandt, 1989, 93) and another was opened at the Royal Muskoka in 1901, followed by one connected to the Monteith House at Rosseau. Horseback riding was another new recreation provided for guests at the Royal Muskoka and this required the construction of bridle paths and a rustic bridge connecting the hotel grounds to the mainland. These services were also heavily promoted to the area's cottagers.

As in the 1880s, many of the resort hotels sat on the edge of functioning farm homesteads and, thus, featured fields and pastures in their immediate vicinity. Where hotels were constructed away from farmland, the grounds were generally kept in a natural state with the forest coming right to the hotel building as at the Royal Muskoka when it opened in 1901. This general trend was broken by Lambert Love who envisioned park-like grounds surrounding his new Elgin House, similar to what he had seen at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. The manicured grounds of Elgin House were mimicked at many other hotels through the first decade of the twentieth century, including the Royal Muskoka Hotel where a grove of trees surrounding the main building were removed and replaced with a wide expanse of lawn punctuated with rock gardens, summer houses, and bark-lined paths, all providing vistas of the lake scenery beyond. An early postcard for the hotel showing this view of a well-trimmed lawn is titled "where natural beauty and culture blend" (Figure 4:52).



Figure 4:52. Grounds of the Royal Muskoka, c1920. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Maurice Smith, writing of the Royal Muskoka Hotel in the *The Canadian Magazine* in 1903, described the botanic surroundings of the hotel as follows:

A minute's walk is sufficient to pass from luxurious surroundings to pristine grandeur. I know of no place where two extremes are so closely allied. Creeping roots entwine ponderous rocks like serpents, forming a network about them well-nigh impenetrable. Shivering saplings force a way into existence through the many layers of leaves long decayed – the faded glory of past summers, now colorless pattern of earth's carpet. Ferns sport and thrive in every nook and corner, fresh-looking and green, living amid the dead and drawing sustenance therefrom. Foul fungi raise their mushroom heads near to the trunks of great trees – silently white, but indicative of purities unseen. And soft moss overspreads all, making the rocks assume the mold of age and lichening the trees with damp beauty. It is here one feels the heart of Nature throbbing (37).

Smith's statement is typical of the descriptions of the natural wonders of Muskoka.

These images were projected to entice visitors to experience the wilderness in safety and comfort.

The Projected Image 1895-1915

One of the primary attractions of Muskoka was that it was seen to be a wilderness destination, tamed and domesticated for tourist consumption. An undated photograph

from Rosseau taken in the early 1900s shows three well-dressed female tourists feeding two chained black bears (Figure 4:53). J. Edward Maybee writes of a stay at the Beaumaris Hotel where, instead of being under canvas “that night we slept beneath a friendly roof, but the trees rattled against the windows and the chipmunks chattered on the shingles and so we were content” (1897, 122). The relationship between the wildness and nature, and the comforts of civilization illustrated in the Rosseau photograph and hinted at in Maybee’s article, itself a thinly-veiled promotional piece, are a key theme in the projected image of Muskoka during the late development phase. The ‘unfashionable’ terminology and imagery of the 1880s is now absent from the projected image and is replaced by a focus on the thrill of the wilderness, natural beauty, and the health-giving benefits of nature, coupled with the presence of modern creature comforts and increasingly fashionable behaviours and dress within a landscape labeled the ‘Highlands of Ontario’.



Figure 4:53. Tourists feeding bears at Monteith House, c1900. Source: Rosseau Historical Society.

As if to counterbalance the new fashionable tourist in a modified landscape, a new character was added to the imaginary landscape and history of Muskoka. Native Canadians had frequented the region prior to European settlement and a fictionalized and romanticized version was introduced for tourists' consumption. Daniel Francis, in (1992) *The Imaginary Indian*, termed this particular caricature of the Native Canadian in the wilderness as the "noble savage". The 'noble savage' in this context was meant to imply the perceived innocence, virtuousness, and peace-loving nature of the native who was free of the "guile and vanity that came from living in contemporary society." (7). Like the chained black bear, the domestication and 'taming' of the once-feared Indian is further evidence of the view of Muskoka as civilized wilderness. This reproduction of Muskoka's past is also an early attempt to endow Muskoka with a marketable heritage, that could be combined with the accolades of health-giving benefits, inspiring scenery, and evocation of the highlands to form the key elements of the image created by Muskoka's promoters.

Natural Landscape and Health

Descriptions of Muskoka's natural beauty become more elaborate, often utilizing tongue-twisting adjectives such as 'rugged rock ribbed ridges' and 'rushing torrents over precipitous declivities' combined with statistical listings of the number of lakes and islands in the district to create a mental image of primeval forest (*Muskoka Lakes*, 1907). A typical passage is provided by Ed V. Sandys who wrote, "Wonderfully fair was the island-dotted breadth of calmest water, with its lichen-silvered rocks and masses of changeful greens; cool, restful and marvelously refreshing was that voyage" (1897, 326). The quietness of the lakes in an age before the motorboat and automobile was also

promoted as seen in, the 1913 Royal Muskoka Hotel brochure stating: “The blissful quiet, broken only by the rustling of the beeches and the soft sigh of the pines – for not the least attraction of Muskoka is its seeming remoteness from the noise, traffic and din of cities – falls upon the tired spirit like balm” (19).

The Shadow River, which was accessible near the village of Rosseau, receives top billing among the natural attractions of Muskoka. The Navigation Company guidebook of 1897 terms the river ‘a natural curiosity’, describing its Turner-esque effect with “the land, the water, the sky, harmoniously blended in varying shades of grey, presenting a most weird appearance” (15-16). The particular feature of the river that gave it fame was the stillness of the water that reflected with great clarity the forested banks on either side.

The description of natural scenery seldom exists on its own but is most often combined with some form of personal self-improvement or other physical benefit to the tourist. For example, in the description of an evening in Muskoka when “from behind some dark cloud the moon will burst, forth in all its glory, shedding its silvery halo over island and camp, over lake and river, as a glorious mantle of peace”, it is stated that at this time when removed from the bustle and strife of life, the full powers of contemplation are awakened in the tourist (*Muskoka Lakes*, 1906, 7).

However, the most common health accolade is, the lack of hay fever in Muskoka, a claim closely tied to the natural landscape itself. Muskoka’s freedom from hay fever is credited to the region’s high elevation, pine-laden air, and lack of damp with at least one source stating that, as a health resort, Muskoka is second only to the Adirondacks (Bayne, 1903, 2). The 1913 Beaumaris Hotel brochure promises complete freedom from hay fever, implying that this results from the proximity of large water bodies: “Standing a

thousand feet above sea level, it faces west, the direction of the prevailing wind. Breezes from Lake Superior and Huron, crossing the twelve-mile belt of pine forests between Georgian Bay and Muskoka Lake, bring to Beaumaris the most delicious and invigorating atmosphere, a great benefit to all who are run down” (Prowse, 1913, 4-5).

The choice of the phrase ‘to all who are run down’ hints at another primary health benefit lauded by the promoters of Muskoka tourism, the idea that a vacation in the North could revitalize one both physically and mentally. Jasen terms this the ‘rest cure’ and attributes it directly to the success of the Muskoka District as a site of tourism. While tourists have come to Muskoka for many reasons, health is one of the most prominent in the tourist literature. The ‘rest cure’, as defined by Jasen, is a form of ‘back to nature’ or wilderness holiday, the purpose of which was to compensate for the perceived effects of ‘over-civilization’ on health. Therefore the ‘cure’ for civilization was to rediscover the wild in oneself by seeking destinations that provided exposure to nature, thus “offsetting the debilitating effects of civilized life” (1995, 105).

The disorders brought on by ‘over-civilization’ originated in ‘bad nerves’, with businessmen and society women being particularly at risk (107). The symptoms, as summarized by Jasen, encompassed “dread, depression, loss of appetite, hypochondria, sexual disorders, anemia, and hysteria” with ‘paralysis of the will’ unifying them all. (108). ‘Brain-fag’ was an umbrella term for these various disorders and it makes several appearances in the promotional literature of Muskoka. The 1901 *Highlands of Ontario: Muskoka Lakes* folder issued by the Grand Trunk Railway begins with the passage: “The brain-fagged and tired businessman, the enthusiastic gunner, the patient follower of Izaak Walton, or the man who likes boat or canoe, should look up the Muskoka region” (3).

The benefits are made strikingly clear when the railway suggests that ‘one should go to Muskoka before they die’ as it will probably prolong their life (5). The 1897 Navigation Company guidebook also hints at the life-sustaining benefits of the Muskoka environment, promising the victim of overwork, brought to the verge of prostration, that he will find himself pulling an oar with the vigour of a voyageur (6). Another book places Muskoka as the premier resort for those with “tired nerves and feeble lungs” (Campbell, 1910, 184).

A much-repeated passage that appeared in pamphlets and was used in a booklet by the owners of the Royal Muskoka Hotel asked potential patrons: “Do you wish rest from the brain-fag of business, the exhausting demands of city social life or the diversified experience of intermingling social gayeties with rest, relaxation and sport?” The remedy was available in Muskoka with “clear skies, rarified atmosphere, healthy climate, placid waters where sunny days may be dreamed away in a dainty canoe, glistening stretches of sandy beach where one may disport himself in limpid waters, lover’s paths through the fragrant wood, or mountainous rocks to be climbed.” (*Royal Muskoka*, 1910, 3).

The key to this cure was that Muskoka possessed sufficient wilderness that could be accessed with comfort and leisure in order to achieve these health-revitalizing properties. The Navigation Company claimed this as Muskoka’s ‘secret charm’ where “contact with nature in her pristine beauty and under conditions of comfort and even luxury” could be enjoyed (1897, 4). It was claimed that Muskoka resembled the Swiss Alps or the Scottish Lakes, associations that were used increasingly as Muskoka was referred to as the ‘Highlands of Ontario’, ‘Trossachs of the North’, ‘Killarney of

America' and the 'Canadian Switzerland' as well as the 'Canadian Venice'. Of these regions, the Highlands of Scotland is the place that the promoters of the Muskoka Lakes latched onto the most to evoke positive place conceptions and enticing mental pictures for potential visitors to the region.

The Highlands of Ontario

The term 'Highlands of Ontario' was applied to much of the Canadian Shield by the Grand Trunk Railway in its promotional literature to, according to Jasen, nurture a north woods theme (Jasen, 1995, 121). However, the use of the term in reference to the Muskoka area considerably predates the existence of the Grand Trunk Railway. The first highlands reference to be found in connection with the Muskoka Lakes is in the 1875 Northern Railway of Canada pamphlet titled *The Direct Route to the Highland and Lake District*, advertising its northern route to Gravenhurst.

The Navigation Company's 1888 guidebook contains the most thorough explanation of Muskoka as a highland district in an article reprinted from the August 25, 1887 *Week* by J.H. Menzies. Menzies attributes the similarities between Muskoka and the Highlands of Scotland to the region's geography, including its landscape of woodland with lakes varying in size from the 'lakelet' to the 'miniature sea' dotting its "well timbered expanses" (29). The key difference between the two regions is that the relief of Muskoka and the Canadian Shield is less marked than that of the Highlands of Scotland. Menzies notes that "no majestic mountain keeps watch over the dark waters of these lakes; from no cloud-wrapt giant can we survey the scene of marvelous beauty that lies here" (29). However, he does frame the absence of mountains positively by equating their absence with the democratic ideals of Canadian society: "as becomes the domain of

a young democracy, no one hill there rears its proud top over others – all are on the same plane” (30). Menzies describes the character of the region as being peaceful and restful, rather than imposing or magnificent. Again, the English artist Turner is evoked to describe a foggy morning on the lakes, and the visual effect of the Shadow River.



Figure 4:54. Thorel House Plate, c1915. Source: Author’s Collection.

The association with the Scottish Highlands extended beyond descriptions of woods, rocks and mountains, extending to both the people of Muskoka and even to the material culture of the region. *The Northern Lake of Canada* (1886) evokes Scottish history and culture in describing the ways of the region’s residents. The “Muskokans” are “*clannish*” in their upholding of the special beauties of the vicinity in which they are settled (Cumberland, 129). Hotel operators certainly utilized the highlands theme in their choice of hotel logos that were often employed on the resort’s ceramics from cups and saucers to chamber pots. Surviving examples show a preference for the ‘strap and buckles’ and circlets adapted from Scottish clan badges or crests and crowns signifying a broader British lineage (Figure 4:54). The preference for modified heraldic devices reflects the predominant British origins of the region’s settlers and is also reflected in many of the region’s place names such as Windermere, Bala, and Beaumaris.



Figure 4:55. Muskoka Lakes Navigation & Hotel Company Plate, c1905. Source: Author's Collection.



Figure 4:56. Monteith House Plate, c1905. Source Author's Collection.



Figure 4:57 Royal Muskoka Hotel Caserole Dish, c1905. Source: Author's Collection

The logos and crests of the early hotels that survive on their hotelwares also hint at another theme in the image of the Muskoka lakes. Both the Navigation Company logo

(Figure 4:55) and the Monteith House logo (Figure 4:56) feature, along with the strap and buckle or circlet device of the clan badge, an Indian head. The crest of the Royal Muskoka features a bow and arrow and tomahawk at its centre (Figure 4:57). Even the literary references to the Highlands of Ontario insert connections to the Native Canadians: W. Campbell wrote in 1910 that the great Huron chief Musaquado used the Muskoka region for his hunting grounds “or deer forest, as it would be called in Scotland” (182), connecting the image of the Indian Chief with that of the Scottish Clan Chief.

Native Imagery and Evocation of History

In the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, references to the original inhabitants of the region prior to European settlement increase dramatically in the projected image of Muskoka. In order to understand the dramatic change in attitude towards Muskoka’s native heritage and its use, it is necessary to trace the changes from the beginning of Muskoka tourism.

Two conceptions of the ‘Indian’ are present in imagery used to promote Muskoka. One views Indians as objects of ridicule and pity, and the other is deferential and relatively positive. St. Michael Podmore wrote of the two types of ‘Indian’ in his (1904) *Ozunkein; A Story of a Muskoka Seneca Girl*. The first, sometimes referred as the ‘reservation Indian’, reflected many of the racial stereotypes of the period. In Podmore’s words: “The reservation Indian is generally a degenerated, lazy type of the worst form of a conquered people. They are often vicious and filthy” (114). In *Sporting Paradise*, Podmore adds that the Indians on the reservation “are generally found in disease, always undermined in physique, and lacking in the spirit of manly independence and courage”

(1904, 5). This depiction of the Indians is found in the early projected image of Muskoka with notable exception of places where the origin of the region's name is discussed. Even then, the negative tone is present, such as when Thomas McMurray wrote that *intelligent* Indians inform us that the meaning of Muskoka came from Musquoto, the first Indian to discover the district, (1871, 32) or the old Chief Yellowhead was an *honest* Indian, implying that these are unusual attributes (1871, 36-7).

The general trend in the early literature is to ignore the Native Canadians or to minimize them. McMurray notes that few Indians reside in the district, with only a few passing through on their way from Rama to the hunting grounds further north (36). Alexander Cockburn, in his 1874 guide, makes little mention of the Indian on the Muskoka Lakes except as guides from Rama (15) and that the railway line passes through an Indian settlement of Ojibway, stating that "there is not much to indicate the presence of the 'red man' or otherwise to interest the traveller" (8). Harriet King, in 1878, notes that "every trace of the Indian occupation" had long been effaced (1878, 265).

Generally, the impressions of travellers to the region are hostile toward the aboriginal inhabitants when encountered, especially in light of preconceived notions of the Indian garnered from the popular works such as those of Fennimore Cooper. Fanny Cox describes how the very thought of Indians as described in Cooper's novels caused her and her sister's 'blood to curdle' for fear of being scalped by the "savage Indians" (1904, 24). King described her disappointment with her first "real live Indians", having garnered her preconceived notions from Cooper's "enchanted novels." She describes them as "degenerate samples of the 'red men'", describing their undersized and sinister, appearance, calling the "squaws filthy and almost repulsive" (1878, 23-24).

Even when tourists used Indian guides, which was one of the few occasions when direct contact between tourists and Native Canadians occurred, negative portrayals were common. Beriah Andre Watson, in 1888, explains to his readers some of the pitfalls of hiring a Native guide for hunting expeditions to the region, as explained to him in conversation with an 'expert' on the subject: "They are generally lazy, filthy fellows, less desirable as companions and servants than the native Canadian trappers and backwoodsmen." Watson includes a description of their "long, unkempt hair, its numerous inhabitants, the effects produced by shaking and brushing it over food and blankets, with much of the same nature" (24). Podmore comments in *Sporting Paradise* that the "Indian has the mind of a child in the body of an adult" (1904, 49) and that, when contaminated by civilization, they lose both their truthfulness and honesty (50).

This negative imagery of the Indian begins to fade slowly in the 1880s as another version of the Indian begins to emerge alongside the 'reservation Indian'. The other version of the Indian is the 'Noble Savage' that embodied a more positive, romanticized, tone and could be used to attract tourists to the region. The *Northern Lakes* guide of 1886 contains the following passage:

Perhaps some of the writers to whom Canada is now giving birth will do for this territory what Fennimore Cooper did for those farther south, or Bulwer Lytton has done for Pompeii, and will re-people these ancient homes with the romance and story of their earlier Indian and French occupation. Once more shall the birch bark canoe, with its dusky occupants, steal through the waters between the silent islands, either in peaceful summer-bright journey, or on expedition of deadly internecine hate (1886, 101).

This marks a turning point in the changing image of the Indian and its use in the advertising imagery of the district. Led by the promoters and tourism operators of

Muskoka, through the 1890s and 1900s, the image of the Indian would be rehabilitated and the region's imaginary landscape would be repopulated with a native population.

While the 'reservation Indian' remains generally reviled and ridiculed by European observers, another type of Indian, the "woods Indian" emerged alongside this stereotype. According to Podmore, the 'woods Indians' are those that have not been contaminated by civilization. Thus, they are a rapidly decreasing race as they hasten to back away from its advance (*Sporting Paradise*, 1904, 5). The knowledge of such Indians is gained from constant association with their own elders who impart "the wisdom and learning of the old and wise men of his tribe who obtained their positions of precedence in the old days of war and hunting" (49). A later passage suggests, "he is the son of the soil, and his fallen greatness still lurks within"(54). The appearance of the 'woods Indian', as described in *Ozunquein*, is a stereotypical concept of the popular image of the Indian consisting of deer or moose moccasins, long hair, sash across the waist, and clothes decked with a "barbaric ornament" (Podmore, 1904, 113)

Mercer Adams first answered the call for an Indian legend suitable for Muskoka, in 1889. Using the historical conflict between the Iroquois and the Huron that saw the latter nearly wiped out, Adams loads his account with sweeping romanticized descriptions that depart markedly from the negative references to the native population appearing in earlier works. The story, Adams notes, is too tragic to account; yet scarcely any history is more sublime in its record of suffering, peril and death (3). Adams laments that the story is all but forgotten with the memory of terrible events passing from even the Canadian mind and nature herself also hiding it for "the forest has long since resumed its sway over the spot." While the settlers gave little attention to the story, "To the tourist of

to-day, the main reminders of the story are the presence here and there of lingering remnants of the great Huron nation by which the region was once peopled, and the names of the lakes and bays, the streams and villages of their district” (3).

Podmore in his (1904) *Ozunkein*, attempts once again to establish an Indian legend for the Muskoka Lakes along the lines of Fennimore Cooper. His work is a combination of guidebook and history that is presented as non-fiction, but is clearly fictional. Set at an unspecified date, but most likely sometime in the 1870s as features on the lake include the Port Sandfield canal constructed in 1871, in an era that incorporated both trappers and early settlers, the book uses real locations and people in its narrative. The story begins with a love affair between the narrator and Ozunkein that sparks a series of kidnappings and raids by her tribe who are unhappy with the arrangement. Podmore uses the most macabre means to describe the sadistic actions of the Seneca in their quest for vengeance, including executions and scalping, to the finale that features the complete massacre of the tribe at the hands of the settlers, including real life personalities such as Enoch Cox, and Michael Woods in an ambush at the Port Sandfield cut and, later, in a cauldron of fire on the shores of Lake Muskoka near the mouth of the Indian River. These were both locations that would be recognizable to tourists.

While the depiction of the native in *Ozunkein* is a terrifying mixture of sadism and vengeance, it is matched by description of settlers’ actions that are no less sinister. Unlike earlier depictions of the Indian, these people are not to be pitied and treated lightly but to be feared and, in a way, respected no matter how gruesome their actions. To reinforce his points, Podmore warns tourists to respect the Indian by including a footnote reference to an 1889 incident that suggests a group of English tourists dug up a burial

ground looking for artifacts. The incident nearly sparked “sanguinary revenge” with the Indians “threatening the settlements, and much anxiety resulting” (1904, 183). It is not possible to tell if this event actually occurred as the line between fiction and non-fiction in *Ozunquein* is blurred, but the message is clear, the Indian tribes are worthy of the respect of the tourists, a clear change from the message contained in earlier works.



Figure 4:58. On the Picturesque Shores of Lake Rosseau, 1901. Source: Author’s Collection.

For tourists themselves coming to Muskoka in the 1890s and 1900s, the presence of native people and the references to the legendary ‘Indian’ of old were becoming more pronounced both in the actual experience of visiting and in the projected image of the lakes. Tourist literature now mentioned walks to Indian burial grounds in the region of Port Carling (Smiley, 1895, 43) and the ability to buy quality Indian handiwork as souvenirs. Postcards featured depictions of the “original owners of our country” showing a background of two ‘woods Indians’ sitting beside a teepee with an inset photograph of a Muskoka scene. A souvenir stereo view card of the picturesque shores of Lake Rosseau dated 1901 shows a figure dressed in a feathered headdress looking out from the trees (Figure 4:58). In addition to eating off of dishes crested with an Indian head surrounded

by the strap and buckle motif of the clan badges of Scotland, guests of Monteith House could visit a room filled with Indian artifacts collected and assembled for their amusement. (Figure 4:59). Elsewhere, entire resort properties adopted Indian names such as the Minnewaska (c1897), Waskada (1906) and the WaWa (1908).

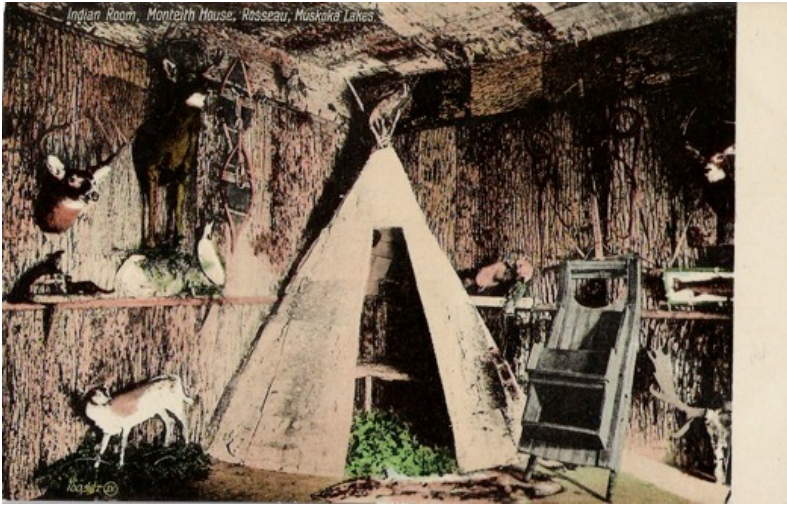


Figure 4:59. Indian Room, Monteith House, c1905. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Discrimination still occurred but even where it did, there was a hidden tinge of admiration such as in the account of the 1897 Rosseau regatta published in *The Globe* on August 3, 1897. It described two *noble* red-men, having been barred from the contest, lounging lazily in their canoes observing the proceedings (2). Poetry such as the following by C.Y. Warmon, appears in promotional materials:

To the highlands of Ontario, in the merry berry moon.
To the haunts of Hiawatha that are nigh:
By the banks of the Athabaska, where it's always afternoon,
I'm waiting for the WaWa to go by (1908, 969).

and in Fanny Cox's *Muskoka Memories*:

We will give the names of our fearless race
To each bright river whose course we trace;
And will leave our mem'ry with mounts and floods,
And the path of our daring in boundless woods;
And our works unto many a lake's green shore,

Where the Indians' graves lay alone before.
Mrs Hemans (1904, 40)

Taken as a whole, these references to the past and contemporary situation somewhat exaggerated habitation of the lakes by Native Canadians and is a sharp turn from the literature of the 1870s and 1880s that, if anything, assured that the era of the Indian in Muskoka was over.



Figure 4:60. Grand Trunk Railway, *Muskoka Lakes*, 1904. Source: Muskoka Lakes Museum.

The 1904 Grand Trunk Railway brochure for the Muskoka Lakes (Figure 4:60) features one of the most evocative advertising images ever created in connection with the region, one that hints at several of the changing elements of the projected image. The

cover features a fashionable woman standing on the shore of a Muskoka lake. We know she is fashionable from her white gloves, corset and hat, and she clutches a small purse. Below her, on a dock, young men in ties, jackets, and white pants help a group of female tourists, again elaborately dressed, into waiting canoes. On the opposite side of the lake, a large modern hotel looms with the Union Jack of the Dominion proudly flying while a Navigation Company steamboat passes in the mid-distance. The image suggests the fashionableness of the Muskoka vacation experience through the finery of clothes, the hint of romance between the young couples on the dock, and the comfortable lodgings suggested by the large modern hotel in the distance. To complete the image, an Indian chief is being carried like Icarus to the heavens on wings composed of teepees. This Indian is the personification of Podmore's 'woods Indian' with clothes made of animal hide, a feathered headdress, and war paint, clutching a bow. The message made clear is that in the land of the Indian, modern fashionable tourists could vacation in civilized comfort.

The image of Muskoka as a tourist destination, as embodied in its projected image, changed in many significant ways throughout the 1890s and 1900s. The marketing of the region's 'unfashionableness' and simple pursuits were, from the 1890s to 1915, dominated by a more fashionable image of Muskoka vacationing, yet one that still provided opportunities for those seeking a quieter vacation experience. The use of the concept of the 'Highlands of Ontario' became more pronounced during the period with its allusions to the Scottish Highlands. The idealized version of the Indian as a 'noble savage' or 'woods Indian' also emerged in advertising, providing a historical

narrative for the region. In addition, Muskoka was also advertised as a health resort for physical ailments that included mental health.

Summary of Late Development Phase 1895-1915

The attributes of the Late Development Phase are summarized in Table 4-6. The two decades stretching from 1895 to the outbreak of World War One are the focus of much of the modern nostalgia for Muskoka's past. Over the course of this period, Muskoka emerged as a fashionable destination that was popular with both Canadians and Americans. The prosperity experienced by the tourism operators of Muskoka can be seen in the expansion of resort properties from twenty-four hotels listed in the 1890 Navigation Company guide book, (14) to seventy listed in the Grand Trunk Railway Muskoka folder of 1914 (21). The resort hotels themselves were also expanding by adding accommodations and amenities while some differentiation within the marketplace began to emerge. The projected image of Muskoka also received imaginative tweaking through association to foreign destinations such as the Scottish Highlands, and the use of Indian images as a popular motif that gave the region a marketable heritage.

These changes, taken together, exhibit the fluidity of the meaning of Muskoka as a destination. The primary promoters of Muskoka remained the Navigation Company and the Grand Trunk Railway, along with the Canadian Pacific Railway after 1907. The region operated in many ways as a singular resort and the hotels operated as hubs of social activity for a network that included lodges and cottages. The advent of war in 1914 would change the make-up of the tourists but, more significantly, the use of the combustion engine in both automobiles and watercraft would diminish the role of the established transportation networks and break up the network of hotels and cottages. The

effects of these changes would be dramatic, requiring adjustments in both the form and function of lodgings and the nature of the tourists. It also brought in a new group of promoters that would consolidate and stabilize the meaning of Muskoka tourism for decades to come.

Table 4-6 Summary of Late Development Phase

Late Development Phase 1895-1914			
Historical Developments	The Tourist	The Hotels	The Projected Image
<p>Additional transportation access routes to region emerge.</p> <p>Founders of tourism pass on, making room for new tourist operators.</p> <p>Adjacent regions develop into tourist regions, often as destinations marketed as less fashionable or developed.</p>	<p>Wealthier tourists increasingly frequenting resorts, changing the nature of tourism in the region.</p> <p>Middle-class tourists still dominate.</p> <p>Average stays of at least one month.</p> <p>Large organized sporting and social events started: regattas, tennis, baseball, golf tournaments, balls and masquerades.</p>	<p>Hotels diversify.</p> <p>Luxury hotels opened catering to wealthy clientele, operated by transportation companies.</p> <p>Small boarding houses and mid-size resorts cater to middle-class consumers.</p> <p>Architecture and facilities become more elaborate and formal.</p> <p>Hotels are now more diverse with different styles and interior treatments catering to different markets with different expectations.</p>	<p>Extensive media coverage of district as a tourist destination.</p> <p>Region now ‘fashionable’ in marketing materials. Other areas take up ‘unfashionable’ mantra in comparison.</p> <p>Transportation companies still predominate as advertisers of the region as a tourist destination.</p> <p>Efforts made to establish a romantic history of the region for promotional purposes.</p> <p>Depictions of the native population adjusted to glorify pre-settlement period.</p>

Consolidation Phase 1915-1945

Tourist Developments 1915-1945

U Auto Come

The commotion caused by William Harker of East Liverpool, Ohio arriving at Summit House in the summer of 1909 was not a result of his business credentials as the owner of the Harker Potteries or as the President of the Potters Bank. Instead, it was the means by which he arrived, in a chauffeur-driven Stearns Knight automobile. The moment was captured by Toronto photographer Frank Micklethwaite whose series of photographs depicting various guests poised in and around the car survive today in the National Archives of Canada. A typical example of one of these photographs shows the hotel's owner, Alex Fraser, seated in the car with the chauffeur beside him and the Fraser family in the back seat with Harker standing in the background looking on (Denison, 1993, 150).



Figure 4:61. Automobile at Summit House, 1909. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Not content to relegate this particular photograph to the family scrapbook, Fraser had it reproduced in brochures and postcards often with the tagline “U Auto Come to Summit House”. (Figure 4:61) Fraser grasped that the image of the automobile in the Muskoka landscape provided an advertising opportunity, most likely utilized as a subtle way to highlight the social standing of the hotel’s patronage. While it is unlikely that this was Muskoka’s first automobile, it was the first to reach Port Cockburn, arguably the most isolated point on the lakes. The car, therefore, was still a novelty there. It was something new and exciting that was used in advertising literature and on souvenir cards to denote a degree of glamour to the hotel by association. Not surprisingly, the images of the car being loaded onto the *R.M.S. Sagamo*’s cargo hold for its return journey to Gravenhurst did not make it into any brochures. This was necessary due to the impassible roads.

The automobile would not remain a novelty in the Muskoka landscape for long. By the mid-1920s, resort operators began to view the car with increasing concern. In fact, the perceived seclusion of the lakes on the so-called ‘fringe’ of civilization, one of the cornerstones of the region’s identity, was being shattered. The *Border Cities Star* of August 8, 1927 notes that, already in Port Carling, there were rows of cars that “would have brought joy to a country town on market day”, as well as a nearby motor camp resembling a tented village full of high-end motor vehicles from several American states (1).

Combined with the effects of its sister technology, the gasoline-driven boat, the automobile brought a previously unknown freedom of mobility to the users of the Muskoka Lakes. This freedom would have profound consequences. No longer

constrained by the timetables of the lake steamers and trains, guests could now arrive and leave whenever they wished. The effect was a decrease in the average length of stay and an increase in transient tourism that changed the social dynamics of the hotels. Freedom of movement also fueled the increase in the number of cottages. Cottage sites were now easily accessible and, thus, became attractive as an alternative to the resort hotel.

Locations once deemed advantageous for resort development became isolated while new locations, previously off the steamer route but now conveniently close to roads experienced rapid development, seemingly at the expense of older hotel properties.

Location was not the only aspect of the resorts affected. The car also brought with it new and novel building types from the tourist camp to the cabin court, both appearing by the 1920s.

Up to the First World War, the Muskoka tourism industry developed along a more or less clear line of increasing patronage leading to an almost continuous growth in the accommodation sector, both in capacity and the quality of services provided. This was based on a fixed and relatively predictable transport infrastructure. The freedom of movement resulting from the car and gasoline-driven boat fundamentally shifted this trajectory of development, leaving many tourism operators, both large and small, struggling to adapt to a new more volatile market. The period from 1915 to 1945 was dominated by this transition and the efforts made to further develop the tourist industry in a market that moved away from the large resort hotel as the lodging accommodation of choice. The Muskoka that emerged from this period possessed many of the hallmarks of identity that exist today, not the least being a region primarily known as ‘cottage country’ rather than a destination dominated by resort hotels.

Development Stalled: The First World War

Muskoka was thriving in the summer of 1914. New hotels, such as Thorel House and Cedar Wild, had just opened for business, while others such as Elgin House continued to expand. On Lake of Bays, Bigwin Inn, which promised to be the largest and most luxurious of all the of the region's tourist accommodations, was under construction. On the Muskoka Lakes alone, 5,007 tourists could be accommodated with a further 2,380 on the Lake Bays and the north Muskoka Lakes. An estimated 30,000 tourists were visiting the region each summer in the years immediate to the war. (*Financial Post*, June 15, 1923, 10) One of these tourists in July 1914 was Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada, who stayed at the Royal Muskoka Hotel. Borden's vacation proved to be short-lived as political events in Europe quickly pushed several countries into a state of war. By late July and just days before he was scheduled to hand out the trophies at the Muskoka Lakes Association regatta, he was forced back to Ottawa (Boyer, 1987, 96). On August 4, war was declared in Europe.

The effects of the First World War on Muskoka tourism were mixed. There is little doubt that tourist numbers as a whole were down in the period of 1915-1918. The Grand Trunk Railway curtailed its service to Muskoka Wharf from three trains daily to two in 1917, while the Navigation Company itself cut its service from nine routes to seven, and then to just five in 1918. (Tatley, 1984, 58-9) A handful of hotels closed for the war, including Lake Rosseau's Hotel Waskada and Ferndale House. As a whole, the industry appears to have contracted but, amid the general pessimism of the era, important developments occurred that would have far-reaching consequences.

The registries of the Ernescliffe Hotel show a drastic change in clientele during the summers of 1915-18 (Table 4-7). The total level of patronage at the hotel remained much the same as in the pre-war years, with an average of 221 entries per year during the war compared with 222 in the years leading up to the conflict. What does change is the origin of the tourists themselves. In the summer of 1914, thirty-eight percent of registered guests were from the United States compared with just thirteen percent in 1915. Another calculation reveals that Americans accounted for twenty-nine percent of all hotel bookings from 1901-14 compared to just sixteen percent of hotel bookings from 1915-18. The American patronage slumped but Toronto patronage soared from twenty-five percent in 1914, or twenty-nine percent of all hotel bookings 1901-14, compared to fifty-four percent from 1915-18, and fifty-eight percent in 1915.

Table 4-7, Ernescliffe Registry Data 1915-1918.

Ernescliffe Registry Data											
Year	American Guests		Ontario Guests		Toronto Guests		Other Canadian Guests		International Guests		Total Guests
1915	33	13%	69	27%	147	58%	1	0%	3	1%	253
1916	36	15%	53	22%	142	59%	6	3%	2	1%	239
1917	50	25%	52	26%	92	46%	3	2%	3	2%	200
1918	25	13%	72	37%	95	49%	1	1%	0	0%	193
Total	144	16%	246	28%	476	54%	11	1%	8	1%	Avg/Yr 221

Three important facts can be derived from this data. First, the overall patronage did not slip over the course of the war. Secondly, Americans briefly stopped coming to the region in large numbers and, third, Torontonians increased their patronage of the lake system. The redistribution of the clientele appears not to have significantly affected

Ernescliffe's profitability. However, Ernescliffe always enjoyed a relatively diversified clientele, while other lodges that had a predominantly American clientele suffered more.

One such hotel was Fraser's Summit House. Including his use of the slogan "U Auto Come to Summit House", Fraser also favoured advertising the Summit House as the "only American hotel on the lakes" (*Summit House*, 1910, 12). Fraser took such pride in his hotel's American patronage that the booklet he produced is filled with references to either his American lineage or that of his guests: "The house is a favorite rendezvous for visitors from the United States who find in their host a fellow countryman, and their comfort is assured" (12). The reliance of Summit House on its the American trade would prove catastrophic by 1915. Brendan O'Brien, a young child living in a rented cottage next to Summit House recalls the period in (1999) *The Prettiest Spot in Muskoka*. O'Brien states that in the immediate aftermath of the war's declaration, the whole affair was treated much as a joke, with pranks being played on those at the hotel who took the war seriously. For example, the hotel's engineer, Avon Cook, took to standing on the shore with a telescope watching out for German raiders to emerge from the Muskoka night. As a prank, some guests placed under Cook's bed a bowling ball with a long rope attached which, upon discovery, was mistaken for a German bomb and an alarm was raised (7).

The following summer brought a new attitude towards the war, particularly among Americans. O'Brien's first-person perspective suggests that a turning point with the American guests was the sinking by a German torpedo of the British passenger liner *Lusitania*, off the coast of Ireland on May 7, 1915, killing a large number of Americans (9). For whatever reason, Americans stayed away from Muskoka in large enough

numbers that the once successful Summit House was forced to close early with not enough cash on hand to pay its suppliers (12). Weeks later, on the evening of October 6, 1915, Fraser sent the hotel engineer, Cook, home early and retired to the family's private quarters at the back of the building, lighting a fire in the kitchen stove to keep warm. What happened next is unknown but, for whatever reason, a fire started that destroyed Summit House. After the poor business of 1915, Fraser opted not to rebuild what had been Muskoka's leading hotel for much of the nineteenth century.

The financial strain that befell Summit House affected other large hotels that relied on a primarily American clientele. While many, such as the Beaumaris Hotel, the WaWa Hotel and the Royal Muskoka Hotel, would survive the war, others met similar fates. On October 15, 1916, just over a year after the Summit House burned, the Cox family's Prospect House at Port Sandfield caught fire and, within a matter of hours, the popular hotel was in ruin. As with Summit House, Prospect House would not be rebuilt.



Figure 4:62. Maplehurst Hotel, c1926. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

In the winter of 1917, an off-season fire also destroyed the Maplehurst Hotel, which was originally built as a replacement for the Rosseau House in 1886. Unlike the other two resorts, Maplehurst would carry on, but on a much smaller scale utilizing the old ballroom annex with its upstairs staff quarters as a decidedly less pretentious operation. (Figure 4:62) Together, the destruction of the Summit House, Prospect House and Maplehurst Hotel in three years removed 500 spaces of some of Muskoka's most prestigious accommodation stock.

Contemporary media downplayed the downturn in American patronage of the Muskoka Lakes and other Ontario resorts. The *Financial Post* of August 19, 1916, for example, quotes the Grand Trunk Railway as reporting increased passenger traffic worth \$1,236,989 for the week ending August 14, up \$232,577 from same time the previous year. Exceptionally heavy traffic from the United States was noted to points on the line such as Algonquin Park, the Lake of Bays, and the Muskoka Lakes. However, at the same time, it was conceded that Americans were increasingly coming later in season than in previous years (5). As in the period before the war, the success of the Muskoka Lakes tends to be measured by the presence of Americans, instead of domestic tourists. The attitude of the Navigation Company appeared, however, to be shifting in this period with increased focus on the domestic market, in particular the Toronto market. In a February 16, 1916 letter to Alfred Judd of Ernescliffe, William Franklin Wasley, Manager of the Navigation Company, indicated the intention of the company to distribute 25,000 copies of their 1916 promotional material to Toronto residents.

In 1922, the June 29 *Gravenhurst Banner* quotes the Navigation Company President, Hugh Cameron MacLean, stating that the primary market for the Navigation

Company was Toronto, even though the company continued to run advertisements in fifteen American newspapers, including three in New York City. MacLean also notes that Americans accounted for the majority of guests at the Royal Muskoka Hotel prior to the war, but, by the early 1920s, most guests were wealthy Torontonians. The difference between the primary target market for Ontario tourism between the railroads and the local tourism operators, such as the Navigation Company, is explained by MacLean as being the perception that ‘long haul’ traffic from the United States was preferable to just transporting Torontonians north by the railroads (1).

With the entry of the United States into war in the spring of 1917, the patronage of Americans appears to have increased. In the Ernescliffe registry, the percentage of Americans increased to twenty-five percent from hovering in the mid-teens throughout the previous three seasons. However, total patronage steadily decreased from year to year as the war dragged on. The boost in American guests was temporary, returning to 1915 levels the following summer. Even with increased Toronto patronage, the tourism industry on the Muskoka Lakes was increasingly stressed by 1918, highlighted best by the Muskoka Lakes Association’s decision to cancel the 1919 regatta because of the lack of participants attributed to the ongoing war effort. In the end, the 1919 regatta went ahead as originally planned but as a victory regatta with the armistice of November 11, 1918, bringing European hostilities to an abrupt end (Ross, 1994, 178).

The war years in Muskoka brought about several significant changes. Over the course of the war, Toronto emerged as the ‘natural market’ for Muskoka tourism (*Gravenhurst Banner*, June 29 1922, 1). In a sense, the long-held notion, dating from the nineteenth century that Canadians themselves were unaware of what they possessed and

that it was only Americans that fully appreciated the wonder of the ‘Highlands of Ontario’, was dispelled. On the supply side, several previously popular locales that had featured well-established lodgings were no longer present, reducing the supply of lodging accommodation capacity to 4,492 guests in 1918 from 5,007 guests in 1914. Beginning in 1919, demand for summer accommodations recovered and new tourist accommodations developed along different lines than those prior to the war. One of the first to open, Bigwin Inn, had been in the course of development for nearly a decade.

Bigwin Inn

‘Shaw’s Folly’, as visitors nicknamed the grandiose resort development that was slowly taking shape on Lake of Bay’s Bigwin Island, remained a construction site throughout the war. Once hostilities ended, the resort was quickly rushed to completion, opening in June 1920. Bigwin Inn represents the changes occurring in the Muskoka tourist industry during these years of transition. It was conceived in the pre-war years, as early as 1911, but opened and operated in the inter-war era.

Bigwin Inn was designed to utilize the old transportation routes that combined rail and steamship. To reach the island, guests needed to travel by rail past both Gravenhurst and Bracebridge, significantly further north to the Huntsville station. From here, they would backtrack south by steamer to North Portage station on Peninsula Lake, disembark and travel a mile overland on the Portage Railway. At this terminus they would again embark on another steamer heading south to Bigwin Inn. This journey was significantly longer than that taken to many other Muskoka resorts, such as the Royal Muskoka Hotel, which required one train journey to Muskoka Wharf and then a direct steamer to the hotel’s wharf. In an era when guests often came for a month or in some cases the entire

season, the length of the journey perhaps did not matter as much. However, for husbands sending their families to a resort for the summer while they commuted back and forth from the city on weekends, the time taken to reach Bigwin was a less practical option. At the time, no measures were taken to accommodate guests traveling by car, as there was no mainland parking available, or a fixed boat service from the island to the mainland. In light of the increasing popularity of the automobile, this design flaw would increasingly plague Bigwin Inn.

Bigwin also varied greatly in several respects from other hotel operations in the district. Up until the building of Bigwin Inn, one of the primary drives behind resort development was to make a quick profit by taking advantage of spikes in demand for summer accommodation. Hotels were built quickly during the winter months, often using relatively cheap and readily available building materials and featuring predominantly utilitarian designs. Even the leading hotels of the district, the Royal Muskoka and the WaWa that featured elaborate architectural designs, were built in a matter of months with wood on simple foundations. In contrast Charles Shaw at Bigwin embarked on an expensive building program that would have taken years to complete even without the delays of the war.

To begin, Shaw dictated that Bigwin Inn would not be constructed of wood but of poured concrete and, in place of one building housing most of the hotel's functions, he envisioned a series of self-contained structures. These decisions increased costs drastically to an estimated \$11,000,000 (*Toronto Daily Star*, October 9 1948, 2). Shaw's willingness to invest such a large sum into a seasonal operation suggests that, in building Bigwin Inn, profit and a quick return on investment were not his driving motivations.

Shaw's motivations are not recorded. However, several theories exist ranging from those already discussed, such as re-creating on Lake of Bays what the Canadian Pacific had accomplished in Banff with the building of the Banff Springs Hotel, and to gain revenge after being denied accommodation at the nearby WaWa Hotel. A third theory suggests that Bigwin was a means for Shaw to utilize his fortune earned in the tanbark industry to create a social environment where he could 'rub shoulders' with the American and Canadian elite through the provision of unique hotel accommodations (Boyer, 1987, 139).

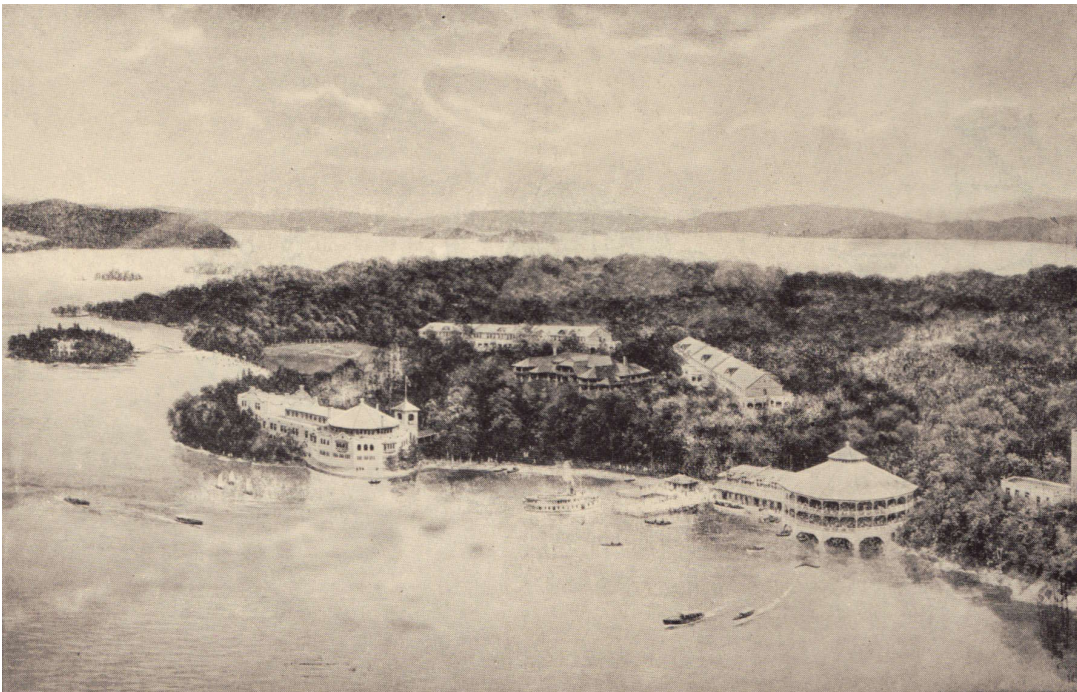


Figure 4:63. Artist Rendering of Bigwin Inn. Source. Bigwin Inn brochure, 1927.

It is certain that whatever combination of motivations drove Shaw to construct the Bigwin Inn, they were complex and combined personal and business elements. The end result was that Bigwin Inn would break several of the 'rules' of Muskoka hotel operation, beginning with its architecture. Working with Collingwood architect John Wilson, Bigwin was conceived as a complex of inter-connected buildings rather than one large

hotel building. There would be five primary buildings: a central administration building containing the rotunda and offices, a large dining room complex with the hotel kitchens directly on the shore, a large pavilion for entertainment again on the shore, and two large dormitory wings containing accommodations for 500 guests located behind the public buildings. (Figure 4:63) In addition to these primary buildings, separate structures housed the hotel staff, boat livery, golf clubhouse and power plant, with the hotel laundry located miles away in Huntsville.

Stylistically, Bigwin adhered to the predominant architectural idioms of the Edwardian era. Wilson chose not to dress the building in avante garde styles and, instead, chose a wide variety of revivalist treatments. For the hotel's most dominant building, the lakeside-dining complex, he opted to dress the concrete dodecagonal structure in the Italianate revival style that had been used nearly two decades earlier by the Royal Muskoka. For the pavilion, another dodecagonal lakeside structure, he used the Victorian stick-style of an even earlier era, the style's last use in a Muskoka resort hotel. The main administration building, referred to as the rotunda, contained the only truly contemporary styling: that of the arts and crafts inspired by the Prairie School of Architecture made popular by Frank Lloyd Wright. Lastly, the two dormitory guest lodges were given a Tudor-like half-timbered treatment, while the remaining buildings remained primarily undressed concrete structures.

While, stylistically, Bigwin Inn was primarily derivative, the arrangement of separate buildings is without precedence both in the immediate Muskoka market and also in the wider hospitality field. Like Shaw's motivations, the inspiration for this arrangement is a mystery. From a practical standpoint, by spreading the hotel functions

out into separate self-contained units, the possibility of a fire disabling the Inn's operation was drastically decreased. It also mitigated the discomfort from cooking odours and noise disturbing retiring guests. Interestingly, outside of resorts, this arrangement of separate structures can be found in the contemporary summer camps for children being developed in nearby Algonquin Park, although there is no surviving evidence to suggest any connection.

Shaw's unorthodoxy extended beyond design to the operation of the hotel itself. Remembered as a difficult employer who placed high demands on his employees, he was also sometimes a difficult host and extensive rules were placed on guests. Unlike other resorts catering to wealthy markets, Bigwin under Shaw's ownership, remained completely dry long after the repeal of Prohibition in Ontario. One story has Shaw refusing service to a large convention group who brought bottles of alcohol into the dining hall (*Toronto Daily Star*, October 21 1948, 5). Other points of contention included Shaw's strict no-smoking policy in the Inn's main dining room. Upon checking-in, a guest would be confronted with the hotel information sheet that listed an array of rules from not letting water run excessively and extinguishing lights, to when and when not to remove baggage from rooms.

Rules aside, Bigwin became Muskoka's largest and most opulent resort hotel. Shaw himself always claimed that the Inn turned a healthy profit, even stating that it paid for itself in the first seven years of operation (McTaggart, 1992, 35). The size of the Bigwin Inn meant that, for the time being, no other hotel in Muskoka could compete with it in terms of the nature of its physical plant. Instead, after 1920, Muskoka's other leading hotels begin to distinguish themselves based on service, rather than size and

grandeur. Shaw set the bar so high at Bigwin that it would be the last large hotel development in Muskoka until the 1970s, after Bigwin Inn, then woefully outdated, closed to the public.

With the opening of Bigwin, Muskoka had three truly first-class luxury hotels, with Bigwin and the WaWa both on Lake of Bays, and the older Royal Muskoka Hotel on Lake Rosseau. At this time, the districts of Lake of Bays and the Muskoka Lakes were still treated as separate destinations in many publications, placing the Royal Muskoka outside of Bigwin's immediate competition. One such publication is the Grand Trunk Railways (1921) *Playgrounds of Ontario* brochure that refers to Muskoka as the "most famous of Canadian resort districts", yet fails to mention the Royal Muskoka Hotel by name (7). The Lake of Bays receives its own description that is more introductory in tone and a reminder of the area's charms than that for the Muskoka Lakes. Both the WaWa and Bigwin here are listed as being famous with an invitation to prospective guests to write for the Bigwin Inn folder (9). The guidebook to Ontario, published by the Ontario Government in 1923, however, combines the two districts together. The Royal Muskoka Hotel is mentioned with no description, simply that it can be found on Lake Rosseau, assuming that the name would be instantly recognizable to the reader. The WaWa is said to be one of the best known and appointed summer hotels in Canada, while Bigwin is simply stated as being mammoth (55).

The long-term ability of the Muskoka region to support three top-rank summer hotels would become a mute point after just three seasons. Until the moment when a careless guest tossed a cigarette butt down a WaWa Hotel baggage lift, Muskoka had for the most part been immune from a true disaster related to its tourism market. The events

of August 19, 1923, would give Muskoka resorts one of their earliest cases of negative publicity, resulting from the realization of the long-standing fears associated with the risks of large wooden hotel buildings.

The WaWa Hotel Fire

Fire had claimed a handful of Muskoka resort hotels prior to 1923. The Rosseau House was the first to burn in the fall of 1883 and the Summit House, Prospect House and Maplehurst, all met the same fate between 1915 and 1917. However, most of these fires occurred in the off-season when often only a handful of people were in the buildings. No loss of life occurred and there was little media coverage after the fact. In contrast, the weekend of August 18, 1923, was at the height of the tourist season with 204 guests registered at the WaWa with an additional 106 staff on site (Hunter, 1923, 2). A large dance was held on the Saturday evening, after which many of the guests had retired to their rooms. A small group of younger guests, however, had decided to play a late-night game of bridge in one of the hotel's parlours. They realized that something was wrong around 12:30 a.m., the crackling of fire and smoke was noticed coming from the adjacent baggage room. Two hours later, with nine fatalities, nothing but collapsed chimneys and foundation piers were left of the hotel.

With the ruins still smouldering, the newspapers on August 20 went to print under headlines of the death toll caused by the Muskoka hotel fire; their columns filled with vivid and often gruesome accounts of the events that had transpired. Beyond the tales of dramatic escapes and heroic rescues, several disturbing points emerged in regard to the hotel's readiness for such an event. The majority of the victims of the fire were a group of female employees who became trapped in the fourth floor staff quarters located at the

top of the hotel's central tower. Since flames blocked their escape route their only escape was a rusted out ladder. The hotel's other ladders could not reach the roof. Other victims included those who had failed to be aroused by alarms or who succumbed to injuries received from jumping from the upper floors. Fortunately, the guest wings were only two stories in height, allowing for a quick exit. This was particularly important given that flames consumed the entire building in about fifteen minutes. Even in these wings, however, the main fire exits were locked, contributing to the panic in the smoke-choked corridors.

It was initially reported that the resort had passed a fire inspection in the preceding year but eyewitnesses claimed that, in addition to locked fire exists and rusted out fire escapes, fire hoses were filled with holes or blocked with debris. Further the water pressure was inadequate to fight the fire properly in the moments before it spread out of control (Seven Known Dead Following Fire at WaWa Hotel, August 20 1923, 2-4). The intensity of the fire set not only the main building ablaze but also the nearby tennis courts, staff cottages and hotel garages where several guest automobiles were lost. The more grizzly images conveyed by newspaper coverage included a woman perishing when jumping off a balcony and breaking her back, and another receiving facial injuries when getting entangled in fishing lures that had been left hanging out of a lower floor window. The hotel's surroundings were littered with masses of bleached bones fused to mattresses amongst charred steamer trunks, rusted pipes, and smashed bathtubs. The tragedy was witnessed first-hand when the wounded dramatically arrived on stretchers in Toronto (4).

Muskoka's reputation as a summer paradise was severely tarnished by the event. The old rambling wooden hotels that made up the region's accommodation stock came under suspicion for being fire-traps. First, the coroner's inquest and then the fire marshal's inquest revealed huge lapses in the fire safety, structural design and operation of the WaWa and questioned the safety of other similar operations, of which Muskoka had many. Out of this new discourse on the safety of summer hotels, several conclusions were reached and published in the October 5, 1923 edition of *The Globe*. Panic played a key role in the loss of life, which could have been mitigated if red lights marking fire escapes and exits had been complete. Also, no system had been in place to raise an alarm. No directions were posted in rooms on how to behave in the case of fire, including instructions on how to use fire ropes or how to find fire escapes. Further, there was no organizational plan to fight the fire or to evacuate the building. The hotel's fire fighting equipment was inadequate and the fire hoses had been allowed to deteriorate, through lack of maintenance, to the point of being useless in the event of an emergency. Finally the wooden construction of the hotel, called 'flimsy', contributed to the rapid spread of the fire (13).

The WaWa Hotel fire put an abrupt end to the building of the large wooden structures that had come to define the tourist landscape of Muskoka. As the editorial in the *Toronto Daily Star* of August 21, 1923, suggested, new hotels should be built of fire-proof materials (concrete) and, where this material was deemed too expensive, accommodation should be in the form of small one or two-story sleeping lodges or cabins arranged around a central common building containing the restaurant, common rooms and other amenities (4). In Muskoka at the time, the only hotel that matched this

description was the Bigwin Inn. However, as the decade progressed and other hotels expanded, it was not in the form of large wooden wings spreading out from the resort core but a move towards the campus style design of Bigwin Island, with separate annexes surrounding the older core.

Muskoka Beach Bungalow Camp

The Muskoka Beach Bungalow Camp, later Muskoka Beach Inn, on the south shore of Lake Muskoka was one of the few new resorts to appear on the Muskoka Lakes in the 1920s and 1930s. It followed the post-WaWa design recommendations with a cluster of cabins around a central building. However, the significance of Muskoka Beach Inn extended beyond its physical construction. From the beginning, the development was envisioned as being a combination of residential and commercial units, as well as a year-round resort destination.

As with other notable tourist operations in Muskoka, the inspiration for the Muskoka Beach Inn came from Florida and, in this case, the residential developments that were taking shape there during the first half of the 1920s. When the Muskoka development was announced to the public in the summer of 1926, the Florida real-estate bubble had already burst the year before, leaving many of the developments that Muskoka Beach was to be modeled on abandoned amidst falling real-estate values. Against this background, Frank Kent, the President of Toronto's Seaman-Kent Hardwood Flooring Manufacturers, announced in the August 27, 1926. *Financial Post* that, with the help of Detroit and Cleveland businessmen, Muskoka Beach was to be developed as an adaption of Florida real-estate methods in Canada (1). The scheme hinged on the idea of Canada being America's summer playground and that the Muskoka development would

be able to attract both Americans and Canadians to the resort, in addition to Canadians seeking sites for summer cottages.

The Muskoka Beach property consisted of a large wooded point stretching into Lake Muskoka with a wide sandy beach to the immediate west and property located along the Hoc Roc River stretching back from the shore. A large hotel was to be constructed on the point. From initial advertisements, it appeared to be a five to six storey structure with matching towers (*Toronto Daily Star*, August 24 1926, 13). The residential section of the development was to occupy the area surrounding the Hoc Roc River that, at night, was to be illuminated and equipped with gondolas to give the area the “Coral Gables touch” (1). An eighteen-hole golf course was to be built inland from the hotel along with cottages, a dance hall and a casino to be established on an adjacent island connected to the rest of the development by a bridge.

It is unclear what happened to the original scheme. When the hotel opened the following year, it was drastically different from what had been illustrated the previous summer. The Inn consisted of a central lodge built in a rustic style, containing a dining room, lounge, kitchen, offices and a handful of guestrooms in its two stories. The majority of guest accommodations were located in individual cabins or bungalows spread throughout the property. The golf course was constructed, though the dance hall and casino never materialized. Although several cottages were built on the adjacent lots that were offered for sale, no gondolas ever sailed down the river under the glow of electric lights.

Another discrepancy exists between the promotional materials of the Muskoka Beach property released in 1926 and the reality of 1927. Nowhere in the literature of

1926 is winter operation ever hinted at. In fact, it is consistently portrayed as a summer resort. However, when opened, the Muskoka Beach Inn was a year-round operation. Early postcards and brochures depict the Inn as a winter wonderland in what had traditionally been Muskoka's off-season (Figure 4:64). Activities planned for guests included a large illuminated toboggan run, sleigh rides, skiing, and skating parties. Muskoka Beach's winter operations proved initially unsuccessful, and the hotel was a seasonal operation by the end of the 1930s.



Figure 4:64. Sleigh Ride at Muskoka Beach Inn, Lake Muskoka, c1928. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

As a year-round resort operation with a residential component, the Muskoka Beach Inn was decades ahead of its time. The Muskoka Beach Inn would return to its original operating mandate nearly fifty years after opening, becoming Muskoka Sands and now Taboo Resort, a large all-season resort community anchored by a large commercial hotel skirted by residential development. The gondolas have not yet made an appearance!

Muskoka Beach also differed from previous hotel operations in another significant way, as it was not located on any of the Navigation Company's steamship routes. As such, it was only accessible by automobile. The old patterns of development that had been in place for nearly sixty years that saw resorts and cottages clustered around steamship landing spots or along their routes was broken once the automobile opened up parts of the lakes that were previously inaccessible and, therefore, underdeveloped. The automobile and motorboat also began to change the way that tourists spent their vacations in the region by providing recreational opportunities that were independent of the summer resort hotels.

The 100-Mile Cruise and the Creation of Tourist Attractions

More so than any other Muskoka enterprise, the rise of the automobile was initially a threat to the Muskoka Lakes Navigation Company. For some time, the Navigation Company was safe as its steamships were still the most convenient means to get around the lakes owing to the poor state of roads and the inaccessibility of many spots to the car. However, the car steadily eroded the company's revenues, creating a need for reassessment of the purpose of the Navigation Company. In the nineteenth century, under Cockburn, it had been primarily concerned with the transportation of passengers and goods between ports. In the early twentieth century, there was a small shift to sightseeing with new boats purposefully designed in a more palatial manner. Nevertheless, the movement of passengers and freight remained the company's primary concern.

By 1924, in order to augment their revenue, the Navigation Company inaugurated the 100-Mile Cruise (Figure 4:65). Passengers would board the *Sagamo* at Muskoka

Wharf in the morning, sail up Lake Muskoka, lock through Port Carling, then proceed through Lake Rosseau and Joseph to a small piece of property called Natural Park on Little Lake Joe. Passengers could disembark and walk up to a high bluff with a scenic lookout before returning to Muskoka Wharf by late evening (Tatley, 1984, 163-4). The cruise allowed individuals with only a couple of days of holiday and limited funds to enjoy a brief trip in Muskoka. Guests could board an evening train in Toronto, reach Muskoka Wharf in the late evening, and depart on the cruise in the morning, returning to Toronto the same day. The ability to take a short trip in Muskoka opened up the vacation experience to many Ontarians who were previously unable to spend time on the lakes. The cruise also allowed vacationers to experience the lakes without having to stay at a resort or private cottage.



Figure 4:65. Advertising Card for 100-Mile Cruise, 1925. Source: Author's Collection.

The 100-Mile Cruise was extremely successful. After the *Sagamo's* superstructure was destroyed by fire at the end of the 1925 season, she was rebuilt with fifteen state-room cabins that enabled guests to board the evening before the cruise. By the 1930s, the Navigation Company had added state-rooms to the *Cherokee* and had also begun offering a half-day Sunset Cruise and package tours that combined a cruise with an overnight stay at the Royal Muskoka Hotel (*Muskoka Lakes: This Summer*, 1935). Within two decades, the 100-Mile Cruise and the Sunset Cruise would become the primary business of the Navigation Company, with the 100-Mile Cruise alone accounting for eighty percent of the company's total revenue. Arguably, it was Muskoka's premier attraction by the 1940s (Fraser, 1946, 77).

In addition to cruising on the lakes, the 1920s saw the development of clusters of tourist attractions and infrastructure that existed apart from the hotels themselves. Port Carling had supported several tourist stores and ice cream parlors since the turn of the twentieth century. It was a transportation hub with its locks, and passengers of the lake steamers were allowed to disembark for up to half an hour to browse and shop. In the 1920s, Port Carling began to add additional tourist infrastructure, such as the Indian Village, a small collection of retail booths specializing in native crafts on lands that had been used for generations by the Ojibwa as a summer retreat.



Figure 4:66. Main Street Bala, c1940. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

No Muskoka community benefited from the automobile more than the small town of Bala. The town had a handful of resort hotels dating from the nineteenth century when Bala Falls itself was one of the few tourist attractions in the region. It was also the starting point for canoe trips along the Moon River to Georgian Bay. The arrival of both the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian Northern Railway in 1906 had spurred some development in Bala but, unlike Port Carling, the town was not central to the navigation routes of the lake steamers and lagged behind Port Carling in tourist development. This changed suddenly in the mid-1920s when the road through Bala from Gravenhurst was improved substantially. Hotel directories reveal that in the years immediately following the road improvement, the number of tourist accommodations in Bala rose from four hotel operations accommodating 240 people in 1923, to nineteen operations accommodating 632 in 1935. Development elsewhere in the region was, for the most part, stagnant at this time. These new hotel operations were not like the large boarding houses of old, but were small “mom and pop” establishments and cabin courts

catering to the automobile tourists. In addition to lodgings, the town developed a series of small gift shops, arcades, and luncheonettes along the main street, creating a new tourist landscape in Muskoka (Figure 4:66).

The beneficial effects that highway improvement brought to Bala were noticed in other parts of Muskoka. In November, 1927, Horace Crossley, the owner and operator of a tiny tourist establishment known as Sandy Farm, near Rosseau, wrote to Alfred Judd of Ernescliffe with the idea of petitioning for extension of the highway north from Bala through the heart of the Muskoka Lakes between Lake Joseph and Rosseau towards Parry Sound. Crossley argued that the ability of Muskoka's hotel operators to cater to the motor tourists, particularly the Americans, was pivotal for Muskoka to retain its position as a premier summer resort destination in competition with other destinations with more convenient highways. According to Crossley, the Navigation Company had abused its monopoly on the movement of passengers and freight with rates so high that it deterred many from holidaying or doing business on the lakes. Improved automobile access would allow local operators to overcome these charges through 'motor opposition' (Crossley, 1927, 2). He suggested that an improved highway should run north along the east rather than the west shore side of Lake Joseph, and between Lakes Rosseau and Joseph, as several resort hotels and numerous residents were already in place



Figure 4:67. Entrance to Cherokee Trail outside Port Carling, 1937. Source: Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre.

The main highway was eventually built parallel to the railway tracks along the western shore northward toward Parry Sound. For the tourist operators along Crossley's preferred route, now known as Peninsula Road, other options needed to be devised to attract motorists. In 1937, Arthur Minett of Clevelands House came up with the idea of marketing the Peninsula Road as a tourist attraction in itself. It served, along with his hotel, a handful of other resorts ranging from the famous Royal Muskoka Hotel and Elgin House, to smaller operations. He proposed branding the roadway as the Cherokee Trail to increase car traffic on the route and, thus, expand the transient tourist trade. In an August 2, 1937, letter to Judd, he explains that the name was chosen because it was Indian, had the benefit of being universally known and carried great symbolic weight with the travelling public. In order to create a physical presence, Minett collected ten dollars from each of the operations along the route and built a large lighted gate where the road turned off the highway connecting Bala and Port Carling. The gate consisted of two side panels that listed the summer resorts in order of their distance along the road with a large banner between them announcing the 'Cherokee Trail'. (Figure 4:67) It is

not known if the venture actually brought additional patronage to the hotels and the road reverted back to its previous name within a couple of decades. The only reminder was the small Cherokee Lodge that operated into the 1990s before being replaced by a private cottage that still bears the name 'Cherokee'. Nevertheless, the Cherokee Trail initiative indicates the increasing prominence of the automobile and the realization of tourist operators that car access was fast becoming the primary means of reaching and traveling in the district.

Muskoka and Religion

The resort experience evolved along numerous fronts during the 1920s. Hotel construction and their means of access have already been addressed. In addition, at some resorts the very purpose of the vacation experience also changed. Religion and spiritual growth are themes that stretch back to the very beginning of Muskoka tourism, starting with the 'Muskoka Club' in the 1860s and continuing through to the 1920s and beyond. These themes had never been dominant in the Muskoka experience, existing more as an undercurrent that is easily overlooked, but they were present, nonetheless. However, in the 1920s, two resorts emerge with the explicit purpose of serving this market.

The Canadian Chautauqua Association operated Epworth Inn, otherwise known as the Muskoka Assembly, on Lake Rosseau, from 1922 to 1931. The Muskoka Assembly occupied the former buildings of the Waskada Hotel on Tobin's Island. The Waskada closed during the war and was not reopened. The Canadian Chautauqua Association's origins can be found in the New York Chautauqua, which began in the 1870s, although the two associations were independent from one another. John Vincent established Chautauqua in 1874 as a retreat for vacationers who wished to combine their leisure with

the pursuit of knowledge and self-improvement (Aron, 1999, 111). In many ways, Chautauqua was born out of the unease with leisure that was common in the nineteenth century. The religious focus distinguished the unfashionable from the fashionable resorts and made a success out of selling experiences that upheld Methodist moralities, as the Elgin House had done. Here, however, the idea of combining leisure and learning mitigated the idea that leisure was immoral. By the 1920s, concerns about the immorality of holidaymaking had waned so that when the Rev. Charles Applegath purchased the old Waskada Hotel with dreams of turning it into a summer camp, it is unlikely that he consciously thought of it in these terms. Yet, the learning that was the underpinning of Chautauqua was certainly present.

In Muskoka, Applegath along with his board of directors, primarily composed of Methodist ministers, established a resort operation that was unique in the district. One investor, Toronto marketer George Martin, wrote years later that the founders of the Muskoka Assembly had a great sense of idealism but very little business sense, and that they were always handicapped by a serious shortage of capital (1952, 2). Their idealism is clear in their mission, as Martin states, to “give leadership in developing a Canadian culture and in assisting the people to become less, rather than more, American in their viewpoints” (2). To achieve this, the Muskoka Assembly attracted numerous luminaries from the worlds of theology, philosophy, theatre, literature, and music to give lectures and participate in Chautauqua programs. One of the more interesting facets of the Assembly’s operation was the ‘theatre in the woods’ where various pageants were staged to celebrate Canadian history and culture.

Sylvia DuVernet studied the Muskoka Assembly and published a comprehensive history of the Canada Chautauqua in Muskoka in her 1985 *Muskoka Assembly of the Canadian Chautauqua Association: Points of View and Personalities*. DuVernet emphasizes that the founding principles of the Chautauqua at the Muskoka Assembly stressed philosophy as opposed to theology (17), preferring the concept of theosophy as the predominant philosophy on Tobin's Island, which put "emphasis on the importance of ancient philosophies where truth had originally been identified with wisdom" (23). It was believed that the 'universalist idea of original truth', untainted by modern religious dogma and 'sectarian exclusivity', could be found within these ancient philosophies (23). However, religion did still play a role at the Muskoka Assembly where the 'Bible Hour' was an important component of the program (Applegath, 1925, 1), though it was presented as being inter-faith and was conducted outdoors, in a natural setting, rather than in a denominational church.

The 1925 edition of *Muskoka Breezes*, the Epworth Inn's newsletter, provides insight into the operation of the Inn as a resort hotel and the program it offered. The tiny newsletter outlines the summer program for the Assembly, including the stage productions it planned to mount, such as, *David Copperfield* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It also promised that some the season's guests would include the "foremost men on the continent in the religious field" some charged with delivering 'The Bible Hour', as well as leading authors to be attendance, including Bliss Carmen and Charles G. D. Roberts (1-3). Key phrases in the newsletter place the Muskoka Assembly firmly within the compass of the religious summer resorts, where moral behavior was the most important consideration. When the Ontario Government in the waning years of

prohibition introduced 0.44 proof beer, potential guests were assured that the beer, which would ‘flood’ Ontario, would not be sold at the Epworth Inn, making the Assembly “more popular than ever with people who want a quiet holiday free from *objectionable* features” (3). The Assembly also offered for sale a limited number of lots adjacent to the Inn for use as summer cottage sites, one of the selling features being the ‘fine type of residents’ that assured potential buyers of the ‘intellectual, moral, and social tone of the community’. The names were published, with the dominant group being church ministers (3-4).

While modern assessments of the Muskoka Chautauqua stress that it was not primarily religious in nature, the contemporary advertising of the Assembly clearly gives the impression that this was a resort for those concerned with vacationing at a place that upheld the moral tones of their faith, as the Elgin House had done twenty years earlier. For a vacation experience that had a stronger religious orientation, another organization, the Canadian Keswick, was established in 1924 at the old Ferndale House, on Lake Rosseau. Whereas much has been written about the Muskoka Assembly and the various philosophies and personalities connected to it in its brief ten-year existence, very little has been written about the Canadian Keswick, even though it operated into the 1970s. In many ways the resorts were very similar, albeit the latter was far more concerned with theology and evangelism than the Muskoka Assembly was, which focused on building a Canadian cultural identity. Like the Assembly, the Canadian Keswick offered the recreational pursuits of a summer hotel with education programs designed to stimulate personal, and in this case spiritual, growth. Celebrated Christian theologians and preachers participated in the Keswick program and key sermons were published at the

conclusion of each season. The popularity of Keswick outstripped that of the constantly cash-strapped Chautauqua. Ferndale House, under the Keswick's proprietorship, expanded to be one of the largest resort complexes in Muskoka, with accommodation for 245 guests in 1935. The Muskoka Bible Conference joined Keswick in the 1930s at the old Morinus House property and, later, the Muskoka Baptist Conference met near Rosseau in the 1940s.

The connection between the wildness of the Muskoka landscape and religious study was cemented in the 1920s and remained a theme in Muskoka tourism well into the second half the twentieth century, both at summer resorts and later at former resorts that were sold to become nunneries, such as the Glen Home Hotel in the 1970s. Jesuit priests took over the Ernescliffe Hotel in 1962. Summer camps for youth run by religious organizations, such as the Jesuit-run Camp Ekon at the former Stanley House, and the Christian faith-based Camp Frenda and Muskoka Woods continue to operate to the present day.

Restricted Clienteles

Coincidentally, as faith-based tourism took root in the 1920s, for the first time resorts actively and very publicly began to restrict their clientele. One of the earliest incidences that has been found is an advertisement for the Havington Farm Inn on the Indian River south of Port Carling, which, in 1928, clearly stated "No Consumptives or Hebrews taken" (Muskoka Lakes Navigation and Hotel Company [MLNH], 1928). By the 1930s, the phrase 'restricted clientele', meaning that no Jewish person would be accepted, was standard in the advertising literature from the smallest establishments to the largest hotels, such as Elgin House and Bigwin Inn. Even at the Royal Muskoka where, in 1903,

Ruby McQueston commented on the number of Jews present at the hotel, the 1940 brochure clearly states that the hotel was where ‘right-minded’ people come together, the spirit of the place eliminating ‘the wrong people’, which was a way of saying that Jewish people should not apply for accommodation (MLNH, 1940, 1). It is unclear when these practices started in Muskoka, whether they began with these published announcements in the late 1920s or existed previously as unwritten policy. Whatever the case, in the inter-war and immediate post-war years, it was problematic for Jewish vacationers to find accommodation in Muskoka as the resort owners blocked their patronage.

Restrictions against a Jewish clientele at resort hotels had begun in June 1877 at the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York. Wealthy New York banker Joseph Seligman returned with his family to the hotel where they had stayed previously, only to be told by the manager that the owner, Judge Henry Hilton, had decreed that no Jewish guests would be welcomed. The reason for this sudden change in policy was Hilton’s belief that a lack-luster season was the result of gentile guests avoiding the resort because of the number of Jewish guests (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007, 298). The incident did not go unnoticed and a letter-writing campaign between Seligman and Hilton was featured in the New York newspapers. The issue was debated publicly, leading to the conclusion, for the time being, that the matter was the personal choice of the hotelkeeper in a free-market economy (299).

The anti-Semitic policies introduced at Saratoga spread throughout the American resorts. Reservation inquiries signed with a recognizable Jewish name would be refused outright, while a letter would be sent requesting clarification of the religion of the applicant where it could not be determined. Lists of offenders were compiled (Aron,

1999, 218). Again, it is unclear at what point these practices reached the Muskoka Lakes, whether there was no perceived need for them prior to the 1920s, or whether they simply existed in the background. Perhaps Jewish demand for summer lodging in Muskoka prior to the 1920s was so small that it was not an issue, but no documents have survived to validate this possibility.



Figure 4:68. Monteith Inn, c1940. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

It is certain, however, that by the late 1930s, the anti-Semitic policies of resort hotels, combined with rising demand by potential Jewish summer vacationers for accommodation, combined to necessitate the founding of Jewish resorts in the district. The Shopsowitz family of Toronto operated the first such resort when they purchased the Monteith Inn at Rosseau in 1939. The town of Rosseau had not fared well with the rise of the automobile. Located at the northern tip of Lake Rosseau, Rosseau itself had benefited from being on the main route north to Parry Sound in the era when steamboats and railways were the primary transportation methods. With the improvement of the highways, the town was bypassed and its status diminished accordingly. The town's tourist infrastructure had decreased with its reduced prosperity, going from seven hotels

in 1914 to just three by 1935 with the largest surviving one being the once grand, but now outdated, one hundred and fifty room, Monteith Inn. Under Shopowitz's ownership, the Monteith Inn switched to a Jewish clientele with little change to actual operations. To ensure that it was clear that the Monteith Inn was now a refuge for Jewish clients in a discriminatory hospitality field, the Shopowitz family affixed a large Star of David to the hotel's tallest tower. (Figure 4:68)

The need for Jewish-friendly resort accommodations in Muskoka continued to grow after 1939 and well into the post-war period. In due course, the New Arcadia at Port Carling and Muskoka Lodge near Huntsville joined the Monteith Inn. The largest of the Jewish resorts in Muskoka would be the Gateway Hotel at Gravenhurst. It opened in 1949 in buildings formally used first, as a sanitarium for consumptives, and then as a German prisoner of war camp until 1945. During 1948 it was operated as a Leyland Holiday Village in connection with Butlin holiday camps of England but failed after several months (Porter, 1999, 143-4).

The discriminatory practices of the Muskoka hotel operators continued into the 1960s even after the Ontario Fair Accommodations Practices Act was enacted in 1954 to eliminate such practices in the Province. It would take the public humiliation of the Muskoka resorts by the noted author and television personality, Pierre Burton, to bring it to an end. Burton set out to test if the summer resort hotels were following the legislation. He reported his findings in a series of articles published in the *Toronto Star*. The research method was simple: two couples, each with two children, one Gentile and one Jewish, wrote to 106 Ontario resort owners inquiring about the availability of accommodation for the same period to see if the responses would be consistent. The

results were published beginning on June 16, 1960 and revealed a disparity among the responses. For the Jewish Cohen family, in eight instances where the Douglas family received responses, they received none, while at a further seven the Cohens were told they did not have the accommodations requested whereas the Douglas family were offered the accommodation of their choice. A further four offered the Douglas family rooms but told the Cohen family they were fully booked. (32) In all, 30 of the 106 hotels did not offer the same treatment to both families. The results attracted the attention of Alan Borovoy, the Executive Secretary of the Toronto and District Labour Committee for Human Rights, who followed up with 29 of the 30 resorts identified by Burton. Four resorts, three of which were located in Muskoka (Port Carling House, Aston Villa and Pinelands Lodge), were personally tested in July 1960, with the first two passing. Pinelands Lodge, however, showed discriminatory practices by offering inferior accommodation to the prospective Jewish guests. Of the others, twelve responded with explanations for the differences in responses, most falling under what Borovoy and Burton determined were “subconscious preferences rather than outright bigotry” (*Toronto Daily Star*, August 24 1960, 19).

Borovoy also challenged another aspect of discrimination at Muskoka resorts; their refusal to accommodate blacks. On the front page of the same August 24, 1960 edition of the *Toronto Star* in which Burton’s follow-up column is published, one of the stories is how Borovoy tested Bigwin’s practices by sending two couples, one white and one black, to Bigwin Inn to request accommodation for the night. The black couple did not even make it to the front desk before being approached by the Inn’s manager, Wilfred Sexton, to be told that there were no vacancies. Fifteen minutes later, the white couple

asked for accommodations at the front desk and was offered a choice. Sexton originally refused to comment on the situation but, after being ordered to do so by the hotel's owner, Frank Leslie, denied the accusations claiming that the black couple did not ask if they had accommodation, but instead asked if they had any room, which, apparently, was not the same thing (1,4). Regardless of the denials and explanations, over thirty-five years of blatant discrimination at Muskoka resorts came to an end in the summer of 1960, as a result of the public shaming in the columns of the *Toronto Star*. The end of discrimination also marked the end of Jewish resorts in Muskoka, with the final one, the Gateway Hotel, ceasing operations in 1965.

The Great Depression

The singular event in the inter-war period was the Great Depression, which was triggered by the stock market crash of 1929. The economic, social, and political implications of the crash spread from Wall Street to reach global proportions, repercussions of which would be felt for generations. It should be no surprise, then, that in the written history of Muskoka, great emphasis is placed on the Depression and its apparent effects on the tourism industry. Most authors pinpoint it as the beginning of the end for Muskoka's resort tradition. Contemporary sources, however, paint a different picture. Muskoka lost a few older hotels to fire in the first half of the 1930s. However, these were rare occurrences and no more prevalent than in previous decades. The general mood was optimistic, with existing hotels expanding and several new ones opening.

Part of the explanation for this discrepancy between the historical documentation and modern interpretation is that the health of Muskoka tourism in the first half of the twentieth century has often been tied to the fate of the lake steamships. In this regard,

two concepts of Muskoka tourism emerge. The first is “Old Muskoka” reflecting a romanticized image of traditional Muskoka tourism dominated by railways and steamboats, with guests arriving at grand lodges with steamer trunks and servants, to spend months relaxing on verandahs and paddling canoes in a landscape in which the steamboats of the Navigation Company play an iconic role. The second opposing concept is “New Muskoka” where the dominance of the steamer is diminished in an age increasingly dominated by automobiles, weekend vacationers, and private cottages or smaller-scale resorts, where the lifestyle has a faster pace with motorboats becoming one of the new dominant images.

As the finances of the Navigation Company eroded during the thirties due to the loss of freight and passenger receipts, and train patronage slipped in favour of increased use of automobiles, some have interpreted that Muskoka tourism declined with the fortunes of the Navigation Company. The fact that this occurred in conjunction with the Great Depression lent weight to the belief that somehow the two were related. However, ‘Old Muskoka’ had been declining throughout the prosperous 1920s, not into oblivion but in a steady transition to a ‘New Muskoka’. This trend did not start, or end with the Depression. From this perspective the Great Depression is not a central element in the development of Muskoka tourism that changed the trajectory of its evolution, but a backdrop to these changes.

The depression did have negative effects on the travel industry. As already mentioned, the Navigation Company was having financial difficulties in the early 1930s and the situation had deteriorated to the point that in 1934, the owner and manager, H. C. Maclean and W. F. Wasley, had to use their own property as collateral to secure

financing from the banks (Tatley, 1984, 207). The Canadian National Railway had not helped matters in 1931 by cancelling one of its daily trains to and from Muskoka Wharf in protest that the taxes it paid were spent improving roadways that diminished its trade (181). Hotels reduced rates to attract guests. At Clevelands House, the new annex built in 1924 with deluxe multi-room suites had to be reconfigured into cheaper single rooms (Hosking, 1988, 35). The registry books of Ernescliffe reveal that the lucrative American trade that had rebounded from wartime lows during the 1920s had again contracted from twenty-five to thirty-five percent of their patronage in the late 1920s to ten to fifteen percent in the first four years of the depression. (Table: 4-8)

Table 4-8, Ernescliffe Hotel Registry Data, 1919-1939.

Ernescliffe Registry Data 1919-1939											
Year	American Guests		Ontario Guests		Toronto Guests		Other Canadian Guests		International Guests		Total Guests
1919	33	14%	81	35%	113	49%	5	2%	0	0%	232
1920	55	24%	62	27%	108	46%	8	3%	0	0%	233
1921	44	22%	38	19%	112	56%	4	2%	3	1%	201
1922	34	18%	43	23%	109	57%	3	2%	1	1%	190
1923	53	29%	20	11%	101	56%	3	2%	3	2%	180
1924	49	33%	45	31%	51	35%	1	1%	1	1%	147
1925	24	15%	41	26%	88	57%	2	1%	0	0%	155
1926	49	31%	41	26%	63	40%	5	3%	1	1%	159
1927	63	34%	34	18%	88	47%	2	1%	1	1%	188
1928	57	37%	15	10%	78	50%	3	2%	2	1%	155
1929	39	26%	22	14%	89	59%	1	1%	1	1%	152
1930	33	14%	51	22%	138	59%	13	6%	0	0%	235
1931	30	14%	70	32%	107	48%	13	6%	1	0%	221
1932	22	13%	42	25%	91	54%	12	7%	0	0%	167
1933	23	11%	48	23%	121	57%	18	8%	3	1%	213
1934	38	24%	39	24%	74	46%	7	4%	3	2%	161
1935	51	34%	30	20%	69	46%	1	1%	0	0%	151
1936	23	18%	49	39%	51	40%	4	3%	0	0%	127
1937	36	20%	50	28%	79	44%	11	6%	2	1%	178
1938	37	26%	37	26%	58	41%	6	4%	4	3%	142
1939	20	17%	33	27%	63	52%	4	3%	1	1%	121
Total	813	22%	891	24%	1851	50%	126	3%	27	1%	3708

As with the First World War, however, Canadian patronage made up for the absent American trade to the extent that, overall, Ernescliffe was attracting more guests in the first four years of the 1930s than in the last four years of the 1920s. A 1934 letter to Alfred Judd from his niece in Vancouver comments on how well the Ernescliffe Hotel was doing during these supposedly tough times for Muskoka hotelkeepers. She comments that, in spite the terrible depression, Alfred was doing well enough that he was able to expand his operations and meet the increasing demands of his clientele (Speight, 1934, 1). The expansion referred to is likely the sixteen-room annex to the main lodge that provided en suite accommodations and private balconies for those who could afford the increased rates. Elsewhere, other hotels undertook expensive improvements. Windermere House, for example, rebuilt its kitchens in 1932 and added a large stone verandah in 1936, as well as a hair salon and coffee shop on the lower level (Figure 4:69). Even the Royal Muskoka Hotel, despite the weak financial situation of its owner, the Muskoka Navigation Company, underwent renovation and redecoration in the mid-1930s when bathrooms were added and the size of rooms was increased. By 1935, the *Financial Post* claimed that tourist patronage of the summer resorts was matching and, in some cases, exceeding levels not seen since 1929, with most hotels reporting bookings up fifty percent from previous seasons (July 13, 1935, 1).



Figure 4:69. Remodeled Windermere House, 1937. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Histories of Muskoka tourism written from the 1980s onwards often portray the hotels as being in financial desperation throughout the 1930s. This contradicts contemporary and first-hand accounts. For example, Tatley wrote that the Bigwin Inn was slipping during the thirties, becoming a liability (1984, 230). This is contradicted by then owner Charles Shaw's claim that Bigwin never once suffered a financial loss during the period in question (*Toronto Daily Star*, September 30 1948, 2). Boyer, likewise, claimed that the Elgin House experienced a rapid decline in business during the depression and later war years (1987, 66). The Love family counteracted this in *The Muskoka Sun* on August 25, 1988, by stating that Elgin House did not lose business in the 1930s as most of its clientele were of the professional class and relatively immune to the effects of the depression. As evidence, they pointed to the building of the North Lodge in the mid-thirties and, most importantly, the decision by Lambert Love to build an entirely new resort across the lake, the Glen Home Hotel, which opened in 1939 (34-5).

Wigwassan Lodge

The transformation of the Muskoka Assembly property on Lake Rosseau's Tobin Island during the course of the early 1930s demonstrates the mixed fortunes of Muskoka during the Great Depression. Even in a weakened economic environment, opportunity and prosperity still existed. The Canadian Chautauqua Association was never secure financially, even during the height of the 'roaring' 1920s. The demise of the Muskoka Assembly was one of the region's first and, arguably, most prominent tourism casualty of the era.

The financial woes of the Muskoka Chautauqua existed almost from the outset. George Martin, a newspaper editor in Oshawa and future advertising executive, and his wife, purchased shares in the new operation. They were valued at \$200 in 1922 when the Assembly was just beginning operations. In 1923, the Martins loaned the Chautauqua \$1,000 to help get the resort on stable footing, only to see the Assembly reorganize itself in 1924 to secure additional financing. At this point, Martin joined the directorate, becoming the organization's treasurer. The Assembly continued to lose money and, in order to remain operational, a \$15,000 bank loan, personally guaranteed by the directors, was secured (Martin, 1952, 4-5). The financial position of the Assembly became more strained in 1930, as the Great Depression commenced. For the time being, the bank was persuaded to not call in the loan, but the association was still forced to cease operations at the end of the 1930 season.

The 1931 season saw the Inn being operated rent-free by one of the directors, but business was so poor that the bank recalled the \$15,000. At this point, faced with losing anywhere from \$1,200 to \$1,500, the Martin's decided to purchase the resort property

outright from the other investors (5). As a result, the Muskoka Assembly, one of the most unique resort operations in the history of Muskoka, ceased to exist. A new resort, the Wigwassan Lodge, and its innovative owner George Martin, came onto the scene.

Martin brought new ideas of hotel operation and marketing to a tourist industry that was still, for the most part, dominated by family-owned lodges that lacked professional management and promotion. As a frequent contributor to the hospitality trade journals, Martin's opinions on summer hotel management provide invaluable insight into the tourism market of the 1930s through to his death in 1966. Martin was not to adhere to the common mantra of mid-sized Muskoka hotel operation that relied on the notion that hotel operators could "live on the reputation" of their hotels and wait for business to come to them. In contrast, he set out from the beginning to understand what consumers wanted in a resort hotel (Martin, 1935, 10). On November 28, 1931, mere days after taking control of the Muskoka Assembly, he wrote to former guests to inform them of the change in ownership. In the letter he ensured them that hotel operations would continue, albeit without the 'all-summer' Chautauqua program of old, although there might be a once-a-week program and Sunday services would be retained at the moderately-priced summer hotel (Martin, 1931, 1). Enclosed with the letter was a pre-stamped envelope and questionnaire inviting former guests to make suggestions concerning what they desired in a summer resort hotel, and what would entice them to return.

Taking stock in the spring of 1932, Martin found that he possessed a 200-acre water-accessible property on Lake Rosseau, with a failed sixty-room summer hotel composed of main lodge, boathouses, tuck shop, auditorium and annex, all in badly run-

down condition with neither private washrooms nor running water in the bedrooms (Martin, 1934, 413). In turning around the fortunes of the property, the first order of business was to change the name of the hotel and make a clean break from the past. The property had started life in 1906 as the Hotel Waskada but closed in 1916 only to reopen as the Epworth Inn in 1922. It was often referred to by its post office name, Muskoka Assembly or as the Muskoka or Canadian Chautauqua. These names were brushed aside and the native word Wigwassan, meaning ‘white birches’, was selected by former guests via a survey (Martin, 1952, 8). With a new name, the Martins began to create a new operational mandate for the lodge that took into account the limitations of the physical plant, the economic climate of the early 1930s and their knowledge of advertising and selling.

In the May, 1934, edition of *Hotel Management*, Martin laid out for the reader the fundamental policies of his hotel operation, policies he believed were instrumental in dragging the hotel out of the red ink that had plagued it since its days as the Hotel Waskada. He first identified the middle class as the preferred market, customers who did not desire ‘deluxe city hotel service’ or those who ‘sought lower priced service’ such as could be found at small resorts, cabin courts and farm houses. The second objective was to appeal to consumers who were not extreme in their viewpoints of what a vacation ought and ought not to be or, as Martin puts it, “those who wished dancing every night, those who wished too lively a time or those who wished too quiet a time” (414). For example, Sunday sports would be permitted but organized tournaments would not occur on the Sabbath. Wholesome food would be served but no attempt or promises would be made to offer gourmet fare. Guests would not be subjected to a continuous program of

activities; instead, they would be left to their own devices. However, the management would provide leadership in ensuring that they became acquainted with one another through organized events such as hikes, shore suppers, launch trips, stunt nights, masquerades, and bonfires, each offered weekly. Finally, Toronto was identified as Wigwassan Lodge's primary market with the majority of advertising energies being concentrated there (414).

By 1952, when Martin celebrated the hotel's twentieth anniversary with the publication of a commemorative booklet outlining its history, he had added a few more policies to the list. The notion was still present that Wigwassan did not cater to the luxury trade or family vacationers but, instead, focused on the middle-class market composed of "the better type of young business people" (10). He now recognized that comfortable beds were second only to the quality of meals, even when the rooms themselves were basic. He believed that advertising should understate rather than overstate and never promise something which cannot be fulfilled (10). The Martin's efforts paid off handsomely, with the first season of 1932 being as good as any in the hotel's history, resulting in a modest profit. The second season, 1933, showed a thirty-five percent increase over the previous year (Martin, 1934, 413). By 1952, Wigwassan Lodge had expanded to accommodate 225 guests in nine separate, well-kept and up-to-date buildings (Martin, 1952, 1).

While Martin's advertising efforts will be discussed thoroughly as they pertain to the image of Muskoka that was projected in the inter-war era, the success of Wigwassan Lodge demonstrates that tourism in Muskoka, even during the hardest years of the Great Depression, could still be profitable to operators. Wigwassan Lodge changed how

Muskoka hotels viewed themselves in terms of actively establishing markets rather than just relying on reputation. In the years that followed its opening, several hotels began to adopt its operational practices, in particular its weekly program of organized activities. The new Bangor Lodge, near Bracebridge, opened in 1934 by Robert J. Siberry, was a direct competitor as was the Milford Manor, the 1944 reincarnation of the Cedar Wild Hotel, near Beaumaris. Both of these could be accessed by road, whereas Wigwassan could still only be reached by launch. Other established hotels joined the list of those catering to young, middle-class markets, from Lake Rosseau's Clevelands House and Paignton House to the Island View House on Lake Joseph. Others catered to older well-heeled markets, such as the Beaumaris Hotel and Windermere House, while the Royal Muskoka Hotel and Bigwin Inn continued to cater to the fashionable crowd. Thus, hotels positioned themselves in niche markets during the 1930s to a greater extent than in any previous period, with the hotels failing to do so quickly beginning to lose patronage.

Cottages

While hotel growth slowed in comparison to previous decades, cottage growth on the Muskoka Lakes and the Lake of Bays remained steady throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Unfortunately, accurate numbers of cottages, unlike hotels, are difficult to determine prior to the contemporary era when better records were kept. John Roger's in his 1915 *Blue Book and Directory of the Muskoka Lakes*, lists 393 cottages on the lakes of which Canadians owned seventy-six percent, twenty-two percent were owned by Americans and, of the total, forty-eight percent were owned by Torontonians. From the 1920s through to the early 1960s, it is necessary to rely on the roster of the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) to gain insight into cottage development. The MLA data is limited in

that it only lists cottages that were owned by association members, leaving non-members unaccounted for. However, it still indicates the origins of cottagers. In 1936, the association had 638 members residing at 338 separate cottage properties with a ratio of Canadian to American ownership steady at seventy-seven percent to twenty-three percent respectively, with Torontonians accounting for fifty-five percent of cottagers.

Life at the cottages, especially the larger ones, bore a striking similarity to that of the resort hotels, albeit in a more private environment. Ruth Gaunt Bennett, in her 1979 memoir *Adventures as a Muskoka Maid*, provides insight into the life of a domestic servant in an average-sized Lake Rosseau cottage during the summers of 1932 and 1933. At her employer's cottage, Bennett was a uniformed maid, cook and nanny to a Toronto family. During the week, at the hotels, the women and children of the family predominated, while husbands commuted back and forth from the city on the weekends bringing business associates and other guests on the weekends. At the bigger cottages, a larger staff would be employed, including gardeners, caretakers, and chauffeurs for boats and cars.

It is apparent from descriptions of the cottage lifestyle that as late as the 1930s cottaging in Muskoka was still primarily undertaken by the well-to-do. The depression did affect the cottage lifestyle but, generally, cottagers were spared the worst effects of the period and summer life in Muskoka carried on through the 1930s relatively unchanged. At the other end of the spectrum were the modest cottages of the middle-class that did not have a staff of cooks and gardeners or occupy prominent points of land. These cottages are extremely hard to account for as many were built on land borrowed from early settlers or rented for the season. Even the line between some cottages and

hotels is blurred, with several resorts renting out cottages on their grounds for entire seasons and often to the same family year after year. While the construction of large cottages slowed after the 1920s, the growth in the smaller modest summer dwellings of the middle-class continued and grew steadily to a rapid pace during the post-war years.

Assuming the ratio of cottagers who belonged to the MLA remained the same over this period, the yearbooks of the association demonstrate this growth. By 1958 the number of members had increased from 638 people at 338 cottages in 1936, to 1,340 at 581 cottages in 1957, representing a seventy-two percent increase in cottages in just over two decades. By 1962, the MLA had 2,086 members at 807 cottages, a growth of thirty-nine percent in just five years, demonstrating the quickening pace of cottage growth. The ratio of Canadians to Americans did not vary greatly from 1936 to 1962 with Canadian ownership rising to eighty-three percent from seventy-eight percent, and American ownership decreasing to seventeen percent from twenty-two percent. Further, the proportion of Torontonians fell from representing fifty-five percent in 1936, to forty-seven percent in 1962. Beginning in the late-1930s and continuing through the 1960s, the growth of the middle-class cottage market combined with the increased middle-class patronage of the summer hotels to gradually shift Muskoka's identity away from the fashionable destination it had been throughout the twentieth century. Ironically, it brought the region as close as it ever had or has since been to Cockburn's 1880s vision of Muskoka as the playground for the middle-classes of Ontario. (Table 4-9)

Table 4-9, MLA Membership Data. Source: MLA Yearbooks, 1936, 1957, 1962.

MLA Membership				
Origin	Year	1936	1957	1962
Ontario	Members	127	422	654
	Cottages	72	197	277
	% of Cottages	21%	34%	34%
Toronto	Members	338	623	1056
	Cottages	185	262	378
	% of Cottages	55%	45%	47%
American	Members	156	271	336
	Cottages	76	108	137
	% of Cottages	22%	19%	17%
Other	Members	17	24	40
	Cottages	5	14	15
	% of Cottages	1%	2%	2%
Total	Members	638	1340	2086
	Cottages	338	581	807

The Second World War

Throughout the twenty-year period between the First and Second World Wars, Muskoka was transitioning into a vacationland with a striking resemblance to its contemporary form. The ‘Old Muskoka’ of steamboats and railways, canoes and rowboats, servants and balls, gave way to the ‘New Muskoka’ dominated by the motorboat and automobile, middle-class visitors, cottages and a faster-paced lifestyle. The transition was gradual and not uniform across all facets of the vacation experience, with the two concepts co-existing, as they still do today.

The Second World War, like its predecessor, disrupted the trajectory of developments in the region, redirecting them in ways that were unexpected in 1939. One striking difference between the two wars was that, unlike in 1914, the potential scale of the 1939 conflict was fully understood. Thus, it was not regarded as an irritant that

would quickly go away as was the case in the summer of 1914. Accordingly, the tourist officials and operators were better prepared for the potential business impacts. Two new emphases were incorporated into the advertising literature: one to convince Canadians that it was not only okay to travel during wartime, but that it was also their patriotic duty to do so; the second was to ensure Americans that travel to Canada was still safe, convenient, and free of hassles.

During WWI, there was no mention of the war effort in Muskoka tourism advertising. Alternatively, during WWII, tourism operators of Muskoka felt that the public needed to be assured that it was neither unethical nor unpatriotic to take a vacation during wartime when the resources of time, energy, and materials should be being used to help the war effort. In order to address such feelings, a promotional concept from previous decades, the rest cure, was revived with the anxieties of war replacing the anxieties of business and urban living. In 1944, Ann and Albert Nicholls wrote the following passage in their brochure for the Lantern Inn on Lake Joseph:

Yes – It's necessary to take a vacation holiday, even during wartime. But your holiday should be more than a mere vacation. Stress, overwork, and heavy demands on your time and ability in wartime rob you of the pep and energy. You're apt to stale on the job (*Lantern Inn*, 1944, 1).

Charles Minett of Clevelands used similar language in another brochure from the 1940s:

Holidays in wartime are common sense! Our leaders have officially stated that vacations in wartime are vital to morale, an essential ingredient of victory. The change, the rest, the freedom and relaxation of a holiday will build new energy with which to perform your everyday tasks better, quicker. It is important then, to plan your vacation within reasonable cost, bearing in mind the accessibility, the healthy climate, the rest and recreation facilities of the resort you choose. Clevelands offers you all four advantages – rates are moderate, this carefree playground is easily reached by railroad and steamer, you rest and play in a land of bracing healthy climate (*Clevelands House*, 1944, 1).

Often, as was the case with following passage from George Martin at Wigwassan Lodge, a degree of patriotism is attached to the Muskoka vacation experience:

All work and no play make Jack a dull boy. Never was this old saying of such importance as it is today. These are strenuous times and it is *our national duty* to keep fit. Your holiday this year must be a respite from war-time demands, yet a tonic to fit you for further and greater service (*Wigwassan Lodge*, 1944, 2).

The passages break down into one argument: the obligation as a citizen is to be in the most productive state possible and in order to achieve this, one must rest. A vacation in Muskoka was, therefore, marketed as the most efficient, if not mandatory, way to acquire the right kind of rest and play to re-energize for the war effort.

The greatest effort, however, was made to ensure that American patronage would not slip. The opening years of the First World War saw a drastic reduction in American patronage of the Muskoka Lakes, which proved particularly difficult for several of the larger resort hotels. American patronage had steadily increased through the last half of the 1930s. The Ernescliffe Hotel registry shows American patronage by 1934 returning to the levels experienced in the 1920s, averaging twenty-four percent from 1935-9, while a surviving registry sheet from the larger Windermere House dated July 22 and 23, 1939, reveals fifty-four percent of arrivals were American. The management of the even larger Bigwin Inn self-reported, in a 1937 edition of the *Bigwin Banter* that sixty-percent of their guests came from the United States (McTaggart, 1992, 94). Clearly a sudden decline in the American market had the potential to be disastrous, especially to the larger resort hotels of the district. (Table 4-10)

Table 4-10, Ernescliffe Hotel Registry Data, 1940-45

Ernescliffe Registry Data 1940-1945											
Year	American Guests		Ontario Guests		Toronto Guests		Other Canadian Guests		International Guests		Total Guests
1940	14	12%	35	30%	57	50%	7	6%	2	2%	115
1941	26	15%	63	36%	78	45%	5	3%	2	1%	174
1942	1	1%	29	35%	51	61%	3	4%	0	0%	84
1943	2	1%	43	31%	94	67%	1	1%	0	0%	140
1944	8	5%	58	36%	92	58%	1	1%	0	0%	159
1945	10	7%	52	35%	85	57%	2	1%	0	0%	149
Total	61	7%	280	34%	457	56%	19	2%	4	0%	821

In 1940 and 1941, before the United States officially entered the conflict, tourism authorities, made efforts to ensure Americans that they were still welcome. A small tri-folded leaflet published by the Canadian Government Travel Bureau entitled *Plan Your Vacation to Canada as Usual* was mailed with the Muskoka tourist literature to assure Americans that the same border procedures still applied when crossing into Canada for tourism purposes. For good measure, the Government also highlighted the favourable exchange rate on the American currency that reduced the cost of a Canadian vacation (3).

The message was repeated throughout the advertising for the district. In the generic Muskoka folder issued by the Muskoka Tourist Development Association of 1941, Ontario Premier Mitchell F. Hepburn indicated:

The war has made no difference to American travel in Ontario. Entry to and exit from this premier province of the Dominion of Canada is as free as in peacetime. No passports are required of United States citizens. The simplest form of identification suffices for border crossing purposes. Let none of the 'scare rumors' of which you may have heard last season interfere with plans for future holidaying (1).

Individual resort operators included similar statements in their own brochures. The management of Bigwin Inn assured Americans that with European travel now impossible,

Bigwin would still provide all the services that they had come to expect and that the Canadian Government had made assurances that none of the restrictions associated with a country at war would be encountered (McTaggart, 1992, 83).

During the summers of 1940 and 1941, while America was at peace before the attack on Pearl Harbor and after the beginning of hostilities for Canada, American patronage did not collapse as it had during WWI. Once the United States joined the war however, American patronage, at least according to the registry of the Ernescliffe Hotel, retracted to single digit percentiles for the first time since records had been kept. This is actually the reverse of the 1914 conflict that saw American patronage at its lowest in the years when America had not joined the conflict, rising only after the United States declared war on Germany. In general, however, the war was good to the Muskoka tourism industry, especially the Navigation Company and railways, which enjoyed increased patronage owing to gasoline rationing. The hotels themselves benefited from reduced competition from overseas destinations that were no longer a viable option. Even domestically, the large tourist resorts of the railways at Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper, Digby, and St Andrews-by-the-Sea closed due to labour shortages during the war. Further, numerous American resort hotels, from the Mount Washington in the White Mountains to the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, closed or were requisitioned for wartime use by the American military. This further reduced Muskoka's competition in the summer resort hotel sector. With steamboat and railway patronage, along with a rise in hotel occupancy, the period from 1940 to 1945 can be considered to be the last golden age for 'Old Muskoka'.

Nevertheless, the region was not immune to the shortages of materials and labour common throughout the period. The headline of a June 13, 1943, *New York Times* article read ‘Canada’s Beauty Unchanged’. The article explained that most of the luxury had been taken out of vacationing in Canada during the war but that Canada still provided “such peace as there is now in few places on this earth” (Philips, 1943, SR7). Wartime restriction had rationed food, making Tuesdays a meatless day, while gasoline rationing had decreased the number of cars on roads and created crowded conditions on trains and rural bus routes. The decrease in road traffic proved catastrophic for many motor camps and refreshment stands that relied on automobile traffic. For the Muskoka Lakes though, where water transport had ‘survived that of the road’ and trains could still bring tourists, gasoline rationing was actually a boon to business (SR7). However, the shortage of labour and materials had an effect on the services being provided by Muskoka’s top hotels. In the 1943 brochure for the Beaumaris Hotel, manager William Brennan explains that wartime Beaumaris was not up to the same standards as it had been during peacetime:

We begin the season faced with many new problems. Many of our hotel supplies are rationed. There is a definite shortage of capable helpers. Undoubtedly there will be some occasions when the hotel service is not as we would like to have it, nor all that you may expect, but we assure you that we will do all we can to make your stay at Beaumaris Hotel as comfortable, pleasant, and homelike as possible. The many demands on the management will prevent the personal contacts, which we have enjoyed in the past, but these will be resumed as normal conditions return. Some of the features you have enjoyed at Beaumaris in the past may be found lacking, but we have endeavored to provide other suitable forms of entertainment. Of one thing we are sure, and that is the slower tempo of life will help to build health and energies, so that you may return to your regular duties with the enthusiasm that today’s exigencies call for (*Beaumaris Hotel*, 1943, 2).

Normal operations would never resume for the Beaumaris Hotel. Just weeks before the official end of WWII, in the early morning hours of July 22, 1945, the Beaumaris Hotel received an arson attack by a disgruntled employee. Although nearly 200 guests were in residence, no fatalities were reported. However, the hotel was completely destroyed in the blaze. Decades after the hotel's demise, cottager Tom Hilliard, quoted by Patricia Ahlbrandt in (1989) *Beaumaris* stated that the loss of the hotel had little effect on the community because it burned at the end of the war when everything was in a state of hiatus. He added that after the war, Muskoka was different, the war had somehow changed things; attitudes were different as was the lifestyle and ambiance of the area (127). Certainly, the era of wealth and privilege in Muskoka, represented by the huge staff at both resorts and cottages, was over. It is notable that the destruction of the Beaumaris Hotel had little effect on the Beaumaris community. Previously the, hotel had been the social centre of the summer colony but now the traditional networks found within the Muskoka resort landscape had begun to erode (127). They were however, re-created to some extent within the cottage colonies. The process is discernable across the region where hotels began to operate in isolation from one another as well as from the cottage communities that had developed around them. Arguably, the process had started with the arrival of the automobile and was now reaching its conclusion where the cottage community and resort hotel industry proceeded towards different fates. The development of Muskoka and surrounding areas into cottage country would be fueled by the increasing prosperity of the middle-class in the postwar period. Cottages would now flourish along with the supporting industries needed to service these seasonal residents, while the resort hotel would begin a long period of

retraction, which continues to this day. To better understand the breakdown of the traditional summer network of hotel and cottages that began in the 1920s and extended into the 1940s, it is important to examine the tourists and cottagers themselves.

The Tourist 1915-1945

Although many changes occurred in Muskoka during the interwar period, the nature of the tourists themselves remained much as before. Victoria Langton Snow, who owned and operated the Bluff Hotel on Lake Rosseau along with her husband Thomas, discussed the guests and staff at their small hotel operation in her 1935 memoir *Sparks From a Kitchen Fire*. Snow describes the various archetypal guests at the Bluff. They included the honeymooners with wistful brides consumed with questions about how long the honeymoon would last and over-confident bridegrooms believing that they had done their part and now it was up to their new wives to make things last (62). Others included the permanently married couples, that Snow breaks down into categories, from those who are happy and contented, to the resigned, and others deep ‘in durance vile’ (62-3).

Many of the types of visitor motivations that had been a hallmark of the Muskoka vacation experience are still present. Snow describes the amorous widows looking for new husbands, seemingly unconcerned about whose husband they may be annexing in the process. She described the hardened old bachelors boasting how impossible it is for them to be caught, but with one eye open for an opportunity to meet a mature woman, claiming to be misunderstood, but in reality on the outlook for an understanding person. The idea of Muskoka as a place for regeneration is demonstrated by the presence of professors, teachers, and nurses, who Snow describes as worn out and much appreciating their well-earned rest. Rounding out the mix of guests are the little office girls trying to

week as much fun as possible out of their two weeks of holiday and Snow's favourites, the jolly boy students whose stays were always too brief in relation to the happiness they brought to the place (63).

Using a metaphor of currants in a bun, Snow describes how guests shared these currants with hotelkeepers and how greatly this added to the lives of Muskokans. Snow believed that much good could be gained from catering to tourists, aside from the financial benefits. According to Snow, the summer visitors brought "an atmosphere of culture, that shakes up or completely shatters our monotonous complacency" so that "one may see a marked difference in manner, dress and thought between the Muskoka-ites who live on the lake-shore and come into contact with city people, and those who inhabit the remoter parts where the summer tourist does not penetrate" (61). The relationship is two-way though, and just as the tourists shared financial and educational currants with the hotelkeepers, their purpose and desire, in Snow's words is the:

Exchange of currants; and we really have a few that are worthy of exchange – our almost parental solicitude for our patron's physical welfare and comfort; the good rich cream we provide for their morning porridge, cornflakes, bran etc.; the fresh vegetables, and the good home cooking. Surely these are desirable currants, not to mention that we are so anxious for them to get plenty of fresh air and sunshine that we feel quite responsible, almost guilty, when clouds obscure the sun, or a downpour of rain cuts them off from outdoor exercise (61-2).

This dynamic between tourists and tourist operators, with the exchange of not just money for accommodation but contact with a wider world in a still isolated region, is seldom expressed as pointedly as in Snow's little memoir. It is an interesting perspective on the relationship between staff and guests.

Snow's description of the operations of a small summer resort hotel is a unique contemporary account of a Muskoka tourist operation. Most contemporary accounts can

only be found by carefully reading promotional materials, including the brochures that were now being issued by individual resorts and the early promotional films that were produced by the larger hotels, and society columns of newspapers detailing the social happenings at some of the lodges. Unfortunately, these sources project images that may diverge from the reality.

The Royal Muskoka Hotel provides an example of the way in which the everyday life of the larger Muskoka hotels was depicted in this period. Beginning in the mid-1930s, the management of the Royal Muskoka adopted a new catchphrase in its promotional materials: ‘informal, intimate, and inviting’. According to the 1936 brochure:

Freedom is the keynote at the Royal Muskoka, freedom from formality, freedom from worry and responsibility, freedom to enjoy yourselves indoors and out. Here you may dress in the simplest attire and feel entirely comfortable, no formal evening dress is required, so bring along your most cherished outfits and revel in the full joy of an outdoor vacation.

The essence of this is repeated by A. P. Thompson, the manager, in a May 16, 1936, letter to a potential guest in which he states that the Royal Muskoka “is operated along the lines of a country club where everyone is made acquainted and dress is informal.” Both descriptions of the Royal Muskoka lean towards the less fashionable notion of the Muskoka holiday experience as promoted in the nineteenth century: prospective guests were assured that urban cares could be left behind in the city and one would be free to enjoy themselves without such concerns.

There is, however, a difference between how the Royal Muskoka was advertising itself and how it was being portrayed in the contemporary media, particularly in the social columns of the Toronto daily newspapers. Here, in articles outlining the dances,

concerts and sporting tournaments enjoyed by hotel guests, there is a fashionable depiction. The typical column begins with a description of a particular event being held at the hotel, usually a dance on Friday or Saturday night, followed by a listing of those present, most detail being devoted to what everyone was wearing. For example the August 11 *Toronto Star* contains the following:

We have rarely seen a more suitable evening wrap, when you have to cross water to go dancing, than the black wool number with a monk's hood worn by Alice Hamilton of Quebec City to the Saturday night dance at the Royal Muskoka. It was lined with checked taffeta and stunning as well as cozy. Alice was there with a merry party including Catherine Gaby, Fred Porter, Barbara Cardwell and Leslie Allan, Doris Petric and Buster Baker, Elizabeth McInnes. Tanned and lovely in a novelty white pique frock, Mrs. S. B. Saunders known in Bermuda as Clara Cooper was there with her husband in a party with Mr. and Mrs. B. B. Osler, Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Mockridge, John Osler, Oilillie Kerr in black stiffened organza with white chenille dots. Gerald Sullivan, Mr. and Mrs. Frankford Rodgers of Ottawa, Lieut. Ian Howden. Whirling by in a gay figured crepe with flowing scarf of melon chiffon, Nora Cutton and with her party Betty Pauline of London, Eng., with Jim Cutton. Mrs. Don Reid was being feted after a two months' visit in England and looked very Parisian in a brand new black model. In the party was Mrs. H. D. Hall wearing a glamorous white fox cape, partner Don G. Farquharson. Helen Gardiner and Margaret McLarly were bidding good-bye to their summer friends. Dancing by, Katherine Palm, debutante (1936, 10).

Thus, there is a noticeable difference between the advertising literature of the Royal Muskoka and the image being projected through social columns. On the one hand, the hotel was marketed as a place where one need not worry about formality and fashion in keeping with unfashionable sensibilities of what a Muskoka vacation ought to be. On the other hand, it was possible that what was worn to a dance or concert would be reported in a Toronto newspaper. For critics of the Royal Muskoka in 1901, who fretted that the hotel would create a dress parade at the region's leading hotels, articles such as the one above represent the realization of their greatest fears. The reality of the situation is

almost impossible to ascertain and it is possible that the informality of the day was counterpoised by nights when it was important to be fashionable. A cottager, as reported in Cameron Taylor's "Enchanted Summers", recalled the sight of ladies in long gowns and tiaras at one of the hotel's concerts, suggesting that the Royal Muskoka and other leading hotels continued to be very fashionable destinations in the 1930s (1997, 115).

The Sporting Tourist

Although fishing, and to a lesser extent hunting, were undertaken by visitors to Muskoka from the beginning of tourism, the interwar years saw increasing emphasis on other sporting activities. Prior to 1914, sporting activities were limited to the occasional game of tennis, bowls, or golf, and the vacation experience was marketed as restful and relaxing, broken only by the occasional regatta, ball game or dance. The benefits of a Muskoka vacation were then marketed as a revitalized body and spirit, and even a few extra pounds gained from the healthy food (*Muskoka: Land of Health and Pleasure*, 1897, 30). Now, a Muskoka vacation was marketed as being full of physical activity that would keep guests "slim and supple and full of pep" (*Royal Muskoka*, 1936). Images of canoes and shady verandahs were replaced in brochures by illustrations of divers, gymnasts, golfers and tennis players. The cover of the 1938 Wigwassan Lodge brochure contains cartoon characters undertaking a plethora of recreational pursuits, illustrating this new focus on physical activities with (Figure 4:70).

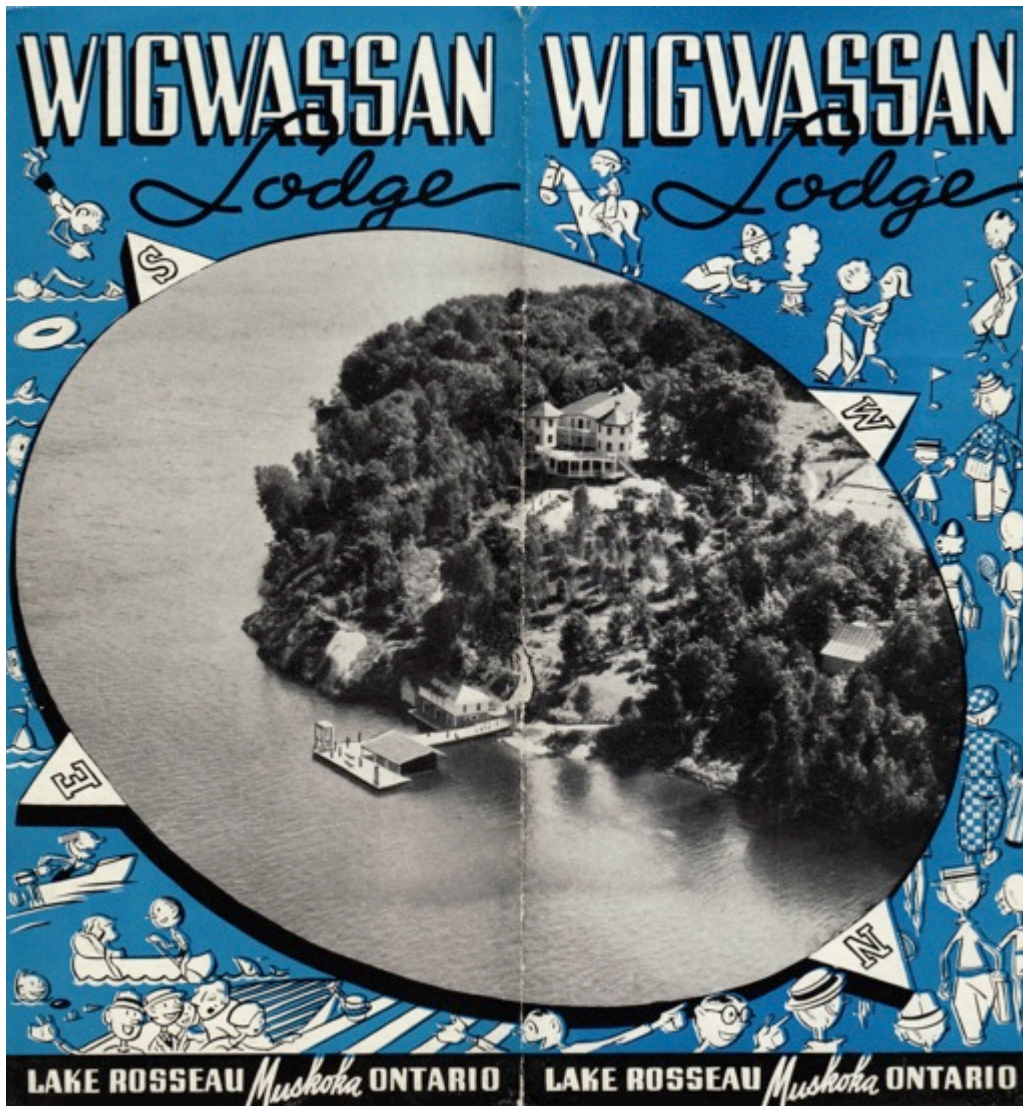


Figure 4:70. Wingwassan Lodge brochure cover, 1938. Source: Author's Collection.

Two promotional films made for Bigwin Inn can be used to demonstrate the changes in the daytime activities of Muskoka visitors. The first, produced between 1926 and 1929, is a silent film that uses the historical character of Chief Bigwin to portray the delights of a Bigwin Inn holiday. Bigwin Island, the viewer is told, is the former abode of Chief Bigwin and his mighty Mohawk warriors, whose dwellings, inaccurately referred to as teepees, have been replaced by the 'palatial palace of the white man.' The majority of the film is devoted to Os-ke-non-ton, the grandson of Bigwin, canoeing and

building a campfire by the lake before visiting the Inn, greeting guests and playing golf in a contrived costume composed of several stereotypes, from buckskin trousers and shirt to feathered headdress. Such depictions of indigenous history are a further development in its use in the promotion of the Muskoka Lakes district but, for now, the focus is on the activities of guests at Bigwin Inn. Only one section of the film is devoted to the activities that could be enjoyed at Bigwin. It begins with a text panel reading; “where dauntless Mohawk braves once matched wilderness skill, now summer folk revel in all manner of healthy outdoor recreation”. This is followed by a series of moving images featuring golf, tennis, horseback riding, canoeing, tilting, diving, motorboat racing and aquaplaning. Outside of this brief section, the film primarily depicts forest walks and nature scenes focused around the premise that this was the former haunt of the Indian, though it is now the white man’s playground.

The second film, made in the summer of 1936, features a voice-over narrative in place of the text panels of the 1920s version. The plot also changes, though the primary purpose of promoting Bigwin Inn remains the same. The 1936 film, titled *Pleasure Island*, focuses on one day of activities at Bigwin Inn, which promises to be full of new friendships, adventure and romance. The depiction of the Native, so prominent in the 1920s film, is confined to the words of the narrator in the 1936 version. References, however, are numerous such as the ‘palatial palace of the white man’ being replaced by the comfortable ‘pale-face Wigwam’. Numerous comparisons are made between the ‘red man’ of old and the ‘pale-faced’ occupants of 1930s Bigwin Island. While many of the same activities are depicted in both films, the focus of *Pleasure Island* is firmly on the

recreational pursuits available at Bigwin Inn whereas, in the 1920s film, the emphasis is on scenic solitude.

Pleasure Island provides a representation of a day for an active guest of Bigwin Inn in the mid-1930s. Morning activities include the terrestrial pursuits of golf, tennis and lawn bowling. The golf course is acclaimed as retaining the sylvan beauty of the virgin forest, which it was cut through, while the sharp swish of rackets, it is said, is a reminder that tennis is a popular pastime. Lunch saw all guests in the dining hall followed by a brief siesta on the porches and decks to chat and read the daily news bulletin before proceeding to the sun terraces to drink lemonade and make social acquaintances. Afternoons at Bigwin are the time for water pursuits, the film highlighting canoeing, sailing and aquaplaning with a large portion showcasing water acrobatics off of the Inn's diving platforms. As gymnasts perform stunts on the dock, the narrator informs us: "the topsy-turvy antics of the pale-face would leave the Indian brave speechless and amazed. But the pale-face knows that summer is the time to tone up muscles, to acquire physical fitness." Still images taken from *Pleasure Island* were later used in the hotel's brochures accompanied by similar tag lines extolling the virtues of slenderizing physical routines (*Bigwin Inn*, 1938). The concept of a Muskoka rest cure was being updated, moving away from relaxation, to a cure that relied on physical exertion to improve the physique.

Thus, both films use an idealized version of the Native embodied by Chief Bigwin to advertise the Inn and to use as a source of comparison with inter-war travelers. The 1920s film makes more use of this image by actually showing Os-ke-non-ton in full ceremonial regalia visiting and interacting with guests at the Inn, while *Pleasure Island*

only references the Native in the audio commentary. Both present the same range of activities, yet the treatments are very different. The general tone of the 1920s film is one of a quiet holiday interspersed with some activity, and when activities such as tilting and aquaplaning are shown, the visitor is a passive observer. In contrast, *Pleasure Island* depicts a more active holiday where the visitor is invited to participate in all the activities and, in the case of aquaplaning, is challenged by the narrator to show ‘iron nerve and (a) keen sense of balance’.

The Tourist and the Automobile

The greatest difference between the two films, created roughly a decade apart, is how the arrival of guests at the Inn is portrayed. The first shows guests arriving by train in Huntsville, transferring by steamer up the Muskoka River and on towards Bigwin Inn. It neglects to show that passengers had to transfer from the boats to the small Portage Railway before boarding another boat for the remainder of their journey. *Pleasure Island* shows the journey to Bigwin being undertaken by automobile and there is no reference to the possibility of arriving by train. Shaw had purchased the former WaWa property on Norway Point as a mainland point of access to the Inn shortly after the WaWa Hotel had burned down in 1923. It was not until the mid-1920s that he built wharf facilities and purchased a small steam yacht to provide access to Bigwin Island for customers arriving by automobile. It is these facilities that are shown in *Pleasure Island* with guests pulling up to the little steamer, *Bigwin*, and transferring from their cars for the ten minute sail across the lake to the hotel. The narrator assured the viewer that the cars would be taken to fireproof garages until needed again.

As discussed earlier, the automobile quickly became the primary means of getting to and from Muskoka and it greatly changed the operation of the hotels themselves. At the same time, motorboats quickly transformed tourists' relationships with the water. In addition to ushering in new recreational opportunities, the motorboat removed reliance on the schedule and routes of the steamboats. The hotels benefited from the old system because, as nodes of the steamer routes, they were the social centres of the lakes and the sites of casual rendezvous, dances, concerts, tournaments, and regattas. Each of these activities had long attracted a mixture of resort guests and cottagers, creating a unique social environment for seasonal patrons of the region. The combination of the automobile and motorboat created the opportunity for some of these events to happen in venues other than the resort hotels. As more and more of these alternative social venues emerged, the social dynamics of the hotels as the settings where tourists and cottagers could intermingle, with all the attendant opportunities for social engineering and courtship, began to break down.

The annual Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) regatta, the region's premier tourist event of the early part of the century, was the first to separate from the hotels. Prior to 1919, the regatta and the At-Home Ball that followed it, were held at various resort hotels, including the Royal Muskoka Hotel, Prospect House, Windermere House, and Beaumaris Hotel. The event drew massive crowds from all over Muskoka and from as far away as Toronto. In 1920, the MLA decided to host the regatta permanently at the newly-founded Muskoka Lakes Golf and Country Club on Lake Rosseau. The private golf club had been founded by a group of MLA members on the site of a proposed children's hospital that never came to fruition (Pryke, 1990, 111). When held

independently of the hotels, the regatta became the social event of the cottage summer season and had less impact on the summer activities of resort guests. The golf club also provided a venue for cottagers to socialize outside of the constraints of the resort hotels, further diminishing the hotels' roles as the social centres of the lakes.

The Bala Golf and Country Club and the Beaumaris Yacht Club soon joined the Muskoka Lakes Golf and Country Club as gathering sites for the region's cottagers. The success of these operations that, unlike hotels, did not benefit from a fixed group of patrons, can be attributed to the new mobility available to cottagers resulting from the increasingly reliable motorboats and automobiles. Also the movement of guests between hotels for competitive ball games and other competitions seems to have declined during this period judging from contemporary newspaper accounts. The hotels became more insular with guests tending to stay on the property instead of venturing out to visit other operations, at least during the day.

Evening activities, for the time being, remained centered at the region's larger hotels, particularly those that featured dance halls, such as the Royal Muskoka Hotel and Bigwin Inn, as well as mid-sized operations, namely Cleavelands House and Monteith Inn. Through the 1920s and 1930s, the Royal Muskoka Hotel continued to be the centre of social life on the Muskoka Lakes, and accounts of activities there filled the social columns of the Toronto newspapers. As already discussed, these newspapers contain numerous accounts of who was at the Royal Muskoka and what they were wearing as well as who they were socializing with. It is also apparent from these articles that the hotel was attracting a large contingent of cottagers to celebrate anniversaries, entertain guests, and to attend its dinner dances and concerts. The July 22, 1935 *Toronto Star*

contains a description of one of the hotel's 'Sunday Night at 9' concert programs. It had started out at the beginning of the season as an entertainment option for house guests but grew in popularity, attracting cottagers and guests from other hotels to the extent that the crowds poured out of the hotel's lounge into the dining room and onto the verandahs (19). Other articles describe the flotilla of launches tied to the wharf up to four or five deep on Saturday evenings for the dances (*Toronto Daily Star*, August 6 1935, 22).



Figure 4:71. Twenty-One Club, Port Carling, c1935. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

By the mid-1930s, independent dance halls also begin to appear on the lakes, further attracting numbers of revelers away from the hotels. The '21 Club' dance hall opened in Port Carling in the 1930s, providing another alternative to the summer hotels. (Figure 4:71) Dunn's Pavilion in Bala began with the purchase of Langdon's Ice Cream Parlour by Gerry Dunn in 1932. This would become Muskoka's foremost nightspot throughout the 1940s and 1950s, with headline performers including Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie (Petry, 1998, 28; Taylor, 1997, 125-133).

These offerings at first supplemented and then superseded the entertainment provided by the resort hotels. By the late 1930s, the resorts were being pushed to the periphery of the Muskoka summer experience. As increasing numbers of former hotel guests took advantage of the freedom of the automobile and opted to stay at private cottages or purchased cottages themselves, they no longer utilized hotel facilities and were not concerned about their future. After the Beaumaris Hotel fire of 1945, local cottagers took action to prevent a new hotel being built by purchasing the property and annexing it to the Beaumaris Golf and Country Club (Ahlbrandt, 1989, 127-8).



Figure 4:72. Motor Entrance to Pinelands House, Lake Joseph, c1935. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

As cottagers no longer patronized the hotels, the automobile also changed the social dynamics of the hotel guests. Norman Hayner, in (1936) *Hotel Life*, speaks about this in the resorts of the White Mountains. He describes the plight of a mid-western professor, a Professor Colby who, having spent thirty summers at a large mountain resort at which many guests stayed for at least a month, had developed a large social network. He communicated with these guests through Christmas cards and other correspondence

over the winter before meeting them again the following season. After 1915 or so, the automobile brought a new type of hotel guest, the transient tourist, who only stayed for a few days, thus, disrupting the social network that Colby had enjoyed (137-8). By the 1930s, hotelkeepers in Muskoka were actively catering to the profitable transient tourists and hotels along the roads, such as Pinelands House, erected signs welcoming them. (Figure 4:72) Bigwin Inn, through its promotional film *Pleasure Island*, suggested that guests should leave the city for a short break to the north woods and shows them arriving at Norway Point by car with little more than weekend suitcases in place of the old steamer trunks. Even the Royal Muskoka Hotel which, as late as 1930 still used its island status as a selling point, by 1936 had constructed a causeway to the mainland and invited guests to ‘come along any time, we’ll look after you’ (*Toronto Daily Star*, July 11 1936, 20).

The increasing popularity of private cottages, the separation of hotel life from that of the cottagers, and the increase in transient tourists contributed to the contraction of the summer lodging sector in Muskoka that would occur after the Second World War. These trends were complemented by changes in the needs and desires of the tourists themselves. In the 1920s and 1930s, new travel patterns associated with the automobile resulted in the creation of new types of tourist accommodation from campgrounds, and cabin courts to roadside motels, thus providing alternatives to the resorts. By examining the physical characteristics of the region’s tourist accommodations, the impacts of these developments on the Muskoka lodging sector can be seen.

The Hotels 1915-1945

After 1915, the development of new resorts on both the Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays occurred more slowly. By this time, the settlers who controlled the majority of the large lakeside land holdings and desired to enter the hospitality sector had already done so. By the 1920s, the generation that had founded many of the operations was passing on, opening opportunities for new arrivals to purchase existing operations, rather than establishing new ones. Both the 1915 and 1918 editions of the *Muskoka Blue Book Directory and Chart* published by Capt. John Rogers contain advertisements for hotel properties that were for sale (1915, 74, 104). Several hotels came under new ownership in the years immediately following the armistice, including the Beaumaris Hotel, Monteith House, Rostrevor, Fife House, Ferndale House, and the Hotel Waskada. For those desiring to start new operations, the barriers to entry into the hotel market had never been higher in terms of construction costs. Major Hugh Cameron Maclean, regarding the Royal Muskoka Hotel, claimed that the demand existed for expansion of the hotel but high construction costs prevented any new additions. He indicated that once these costs decreased, expansion would proceed but it never happened (*Gravenhurst Banner*, June 29 1922, 1).

Consumer demand would push the barriers to entry into the Muskoka hospitality sector even higher. The grand facades, elegant lounges and dining halls of the Muskoka hotels hid relatively basic guest accommodations. Corridors were narrow and guest rooms were unheated, modest in size with minimal furniture, small windows and communal washroom facilities. Although the larger hotels often featured a sink with running water, smaller hotels often provided just a washbasin and a chamber pot tucked

under the bed. Private facilities could only be found at the largest hotels and, even there, were only attached to the most expensive rooms. In 1928, the Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays had 130 resorts but only 12 featured private facilities. Put another way, there were 5,057 rooms available to guests of which 596, or twelve percent, had washrooms attached (*Ontario Playgrounds*, 1928, 37-9). While deemed adequate by the previous generation of guests, a growing number of consumers desired more.

Dorothy Wilson, a former employee of Alfred Judd at Ernescliffe, describes the nature and increasing demands of guests in Florida in a March 25, 1927 letter. She describes the warm winter in Florida, the amenities of the Belleview Biltmore Hotel and offers advice to Judd on the running of his newly installed laundry and compliments him on his hot water heating system and new golf course. She mentions that the upcoming summer season should be a good one for Muskoka, noting, “Yankees seem to be going up or at least speak strongly of it” (2). Wilson states that she is looking for a position for herself as an assistant manager ‘somewhere in the north woods’ but admits that she may be disappointed as there are few hotels in Canada that can compare to the resort hotels in the States that cater to the Americans, who expect the best accommodation. This is an important point for her because, wherever she goes, she expects to take a large group of guests with her and, thus, needs to be employed at a hotel that would meet their high expectations. She then betrays a touch of Canadian superiority by stating, ‘but after all the number of bathrooms in a house does not mean anything compared with the charm of its surroundings and Canadians seem quicker to realize that’ (2).

We have seen this attitude before in regard to the amenities deemed appropriate for Muskoka resort hotels. The same sentiment is apparent in nineteenth-century

criticisms of hotels as they became more fashionable, particularly the criticisms published about the building of the Royal Muskoka Hotel and its owners' decision to cater to every 'fad' of the guests, primarily the inclusion of private bathrooms (*Orillia Packet*, May 9 1901). The interwar years saw Muskoka hotels divide into two attitudinal camps that would have far-reaching, often dire, consequences. The first group of resort properties adapted and tried to keep pace with the evolving market place and higher consumer demands. A second, equally large, group of properties would take Wilson's attitude believing that the scenic setting compensated guests who were willing to forego some modern comforts. Within this group of hotels, owners relied on an existing clientele whose loyalty brought them back season after season. The result was that these hotels' facilities remained unchanged for decades, slowly fading and slipping into obsolescence. They were among the first to fail in the post-war era. The hotels of the 1915-1945 period will be described in three groups: new resort hotels, older properties that adapted, and new forms of lodging accommodation that catered to the new, more transient, automobile tourist.

New Resort Hotels

The first new large hotel to be built in the Muskoka district, as already mentioned, was Charles Shaw's mammoth Bigwin Inn, in 1920. Breaking with nearly all the pre-conceived notions of what a Muskoka summer hotel ought to be, John Wilson, the designer, created new features. The tall vertical massing of the wooden Victorian hotels of earlier decades was replaced with separate poured concrete structures that stretched along the lakeshore and were connected by a network of covered walkways. At the heart of the complex was a two-story rotunda that served as the Inn's main administrative

centre. This building was dominated by a central lounge with a timbered ceiling that was surrounded by a mezzanine with eight stone fireplaces. The airy wicker furniture and cool plaster walls of other hotels, such as the Royal Muskoka, were replaced with heavy wooden tables and benches, dark wood paneling and trophy moose heads. The front desk, post office, barbershop, beauty salon, gift shop, doctor's office, and a series of bedchambers used by officers of the hotel, opened off this grand space. (Figure 4:73)



Figure 4:73. Rotunda, Bigwin Inn, c1920. Source: Bigwin Inn Brochure, 1924.



Figure 4:74. Dining Hall, Bigwin Inn, c1920. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The guestrooms were contained in two, three-story barrack-style buildings, known as the East and West Lodges, that stretched out from the rear of the rotunda into the woods. Each building contained 142 guestrooms with a 'private' washroom for roughly every two rooms. Unlike the main rotunda building in an Arts and Crafts style, Wilson finished the dormitory wings in a subtle Tudor half-timbering. The lakeshore of the Inn featured Bigwin's two most unique buildings: the dining hall and dance pavilion, both dodecagonal structures. While the dance pavilion was a wooden two-story structure set over the lake with covered boat slips underneath the dance floor, the dining room complex was constructed purely of concrete. Of the entire complex, the dining hall was the most distinctive containing at its heart the two-story Indian Head room surrounded by three fireplaces and overlooked by a minstrel's gallery, covered by a loggia on the outside. To the rear, the kitchen wing contained separate dining spaces for hotel officers and children while lower staff of the Inn dined in a space originally designed as a guest grill

room. In *Pleasure Island*, this building is referred to as being like the seat of a great Moorish king, and more real than many castles in Spain itself. (Figure 4:74)

In addition to these interior spaces, guests at Bigwin Inn had a full array of outdoor recreational facilities at their disposal: bowling greens, tennis courts, croquet lawns, sun terraces, diving piers, an observation tower, boat livery, riding stables, and an eighteen-hole golf course designed by Stanley Thompson. As previously mentioned, Bigwin Island had the appearance of a summer camp for adults, in the manner of Algonquin Park's Camp Ahmek and other summer camps that were established in the first decades of the twentieth century for children of the wealthy clientele to whom Bigwin catered. For all of Bigwin's grandeur, and all the innovative design elements from fireproof construction to the campus layout of its principle buildings, it was essentially obsolete when it finally opened its doors in June 1920 after nine years of planning and construction.

Shaw created a world of privilege and prestige deep in the north woods on Bigwin Island. Guests were expected to travel by train and take the long route to its main dock with full steamer trunks for stays of at least a month and often the entire season. No planned provision was made for guests to arrive by automobile. This made Bigwin an inconvenient destination for the transient tourists who were arriving in Muskoka by the time that it opened. The presense of guests arriving by automobile in the early-1920s is evidenced by the number of automobiles destroyed in the WaWa Hotel fire (*Toronto Daily Star*, August 22 1923, 1). In an era when other new hotels of the 1920s, such as Muskoka Beach Inn and Limberlost Lodge, were making the first forays into winter tourism, Bigwin Island's location also made it entirely inaccessible during the winter

months. These planning oversights became increasing challenges for Bigwin through its forty-eight years of operation. The inability to transition into a four-season destination was one of the key reasons for its ultimate demise in the late-1960s.



Figure 4:75. Bigwin Inn Information Booth on Highway 11, 1936. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The destruction of the WaWa hotel and the subsequent decision by the Canadian Railway News Agency not to rebuild, gave Shaw the opportunity to address one of these drawbacks by purchasing Norway Point. There he erected parking and docking facilities, which, by the summer of 1926, connected Bigwin Inn to the mainland via a short ten-minute ferry ride. In an apparent attempt to attract transient tourists to Bigwin, a series of information booths in the form of teepees was erected along Highway 11 that connects Muskoka to Toronto, in the late-1930s (Figure 4:75). The island experience combined with the more convenient ferry service was a marketable novelty that helped to make Bigwin profitable until the end of the Second World War.



Figure 4:76. Muskoka Beach Inn, c1928. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Other new hotels that opened during the 1920s and 1930s were accessible by car. The developers of the Muskoka Beach Inn opted in 1927 to situate their new operation away from the steamer network on Lake Muskoka, instead orientating it to the rapidly improving roadways. Like Bigwin, Muskoka Beach featured a campus-style layout with the public areas concentrated in a low, rustic-style, central building and, notably, replaced the covered verandah, one of the key features of all other Muskoka hotels, by an open-air terrace. (Figure 4:76) Unlike Bigwin Inn, guest rooms were not concentrated in a series of dormitory buildings but, instead, consisted of individual cabins.

Few new hotels appeared in the first half of the 1930s, a time of global economic challenge. Bangor Lodge is an exception. Founded by Robert Siberry in what had been his cottage on Cedar Beach just north of Bracebridge, Bangor was expanded to become one of the larger mid-priced Muskoka hotels. Its origin as a cottage explains some of its architectural characteristics, including its very traditional styling with simple clapboard trim and little architectural ornamentation. Guests arriving at Bangor entered through

what appeared to be a back door since, even though the hotel relied solely on the automobile tourist, it was orientated towards the lakeside. As Bangor Lodge expanded, it took on more characteristics of the modern Muskoka hotel with new guest accommodations concentrated in cabins and annexes dotted across the property.



Figure 4:77. Tamarac Lodge, Lake Muskoka, c1950. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.



Figure 4:78. Aston Villa, Lake Muskoka, c1941. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Bangor Lodge was located off the road connecting Bracebridge and Port Carling and, throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, it was joined along the same route by other similar properties, including Lakeland Lodge, Patterson-Kaye Lodge, Tamarac Lodge, and the Aston Villa. Each was modest in size and mid-priced, catering to the middle class tourist arriving by automobile. The lake steamers did not service these places. Architecturally, there was some variation between these hotels. Lakeland and Bangor, both adapted from cottages, were similar to the small hotel operations of a previous era and featured plain clapboard buildings with no distinctive architectural features. Both Patterson-Kaye and Tamarac Lodges utilized a rustic theme with open timber log construction, and large stone fireplaces, giving both a woodsy theme and keeping with their settings. (Figure 4:77) The Aston Villa of 1941 differed considerably from these other four hotels in its design, opting for a very modern Art Deco treatment. (Figure 4:78)



Figure 4:79. Elgin House Boathouse, c1940. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The use of Art Deco in the design of Muskoka resorts is limited to just three properties and, with the exception of Aston Villa, the other two were owned by the same family. Lambert Love of Elgin House pioneered the use of the style in the mid-1930s lakeside boathouse and coffee shop he had constructed at Elgin House (Figure 4:79). The building featured a flat roof on a crescent-shaped footprint that thrust out into the lake. The upstairs eating area was surrounded by floor-to-ceiling windows on three sides, contrasting sharply with every other resort property in the district. The striking modern architecture of the Elgin House boathouse contrasted with the predominantly rustic structures on the shores of Lake Joseph. This mimicked the architectural impact of the Italianette Royal Muskoka Hotel and the dining room complex of Bigwin Inn, which both created visual impact by providing the unexpected in a ‘wilderness’ setting,



Figure 4:80. Glen Home Hotel, Lake Joseph, c1950. Source: Author's Collection.

Love must have been pleased with the effect because, in 1939, he opened a new resort directly across the lake, employing the same modern architectural style on a much larger scale. Designed by the architectural firm of Horwood & White and featuring steel frame supports, the Glen Home Hotel was a two-story structure with a basement at one end. (Figure 4:80) In keeping with its modern style, roofs were kept flat and architectural ornamentation was minimal, yet the hotel did feature a large corner tower that echoed its Victorian predecessors. Interior innovations included private washrooms for every room as well as separate porches attached to each guestroom to increase privacy. As with other new resorts of the 1930s, the Glen Home was not a stopping point for the lake steamers and relied exclusively on the roadway connecting Port Carling to Bala to bring in tourists.

Further north on Lake Joseph, the small Sherwood Inn was established in the early 1940s. It was distinguishable because of its use of colonial revival architecture and its year-round operation. With the exceptions of Bigwin and Muskoka Beach, each of these new operations catered to the middle-class, car-borne, visitor by offering comfortable accommodations and limited services. None of these hotels featured ballrooms or dance halls and, with the exception of Bangor Lodge, they did not provide golf courses or extensive outdoor facilities aside from the occasional tennis or shuffleboard court. Instead, they relied on adjacent public facilities that were accessed by road. These hotels constitute a new form of Muskoka accommodation, when compared with the older resorts of the early twentieth century in their location and architectural form. At the same time, in terms of amenities, they are very similar to the small ‘mom and pop’ lodges already operating across the lakes, though offering more convenience and more up-to-date amenities that enabled them to replace the older, increasingly

outdated establishments. In addition to these new resort properties, a new group of smaller operations that provided limited services and privacy to the transient tourist, also emerged. However, before examining these, it is important to look at how the larger hotels of Muskoka adapted to the new consumer marketplace.

Adaptation of Older Hotel Properties

The opening of Bigwin Inn created a dilemma for the previously leading hotels of Muskoka. Bigwin Inn's physical plant, both large and expensive, raised the bar so high in terms of tourist accommodation in Muskoka that its competitors found themselves unable to compete in terms of the quality and grandeur of their facilities alone. These hotels were also challenged to attract automobile tourists to locations that had not been selected for this purpose. Furthermore, the 1923 fire at the WaWa Hotel raised concerns about the safety of these often-rambling wooden structures, while increased consumer demands called for more private washrooms, better lighting and heating systems, and other often-expensive upgrades to be made. Taken together, the process of modernizing these older properties became a burden that some hoteliers chose not to pursue, while others managed the transition with varying degrees of success.

The Royal Muskoka Hotel, Bigwin Inn's closest competitor in terms of target market, found itself in a difficult position after the Inn's opening. Bigwin Inn had advantages over the Royal Muskoka in most aspects of its physical plant and recreational facilities, with the Royal Muskoka's sole advantage being its more central and convenient location within the well-established Muskoka Lakes district, an already fashionable destination for the clientele that both hotels competed to attract. Lacking the resources to bring its facilities up to Bigwin's standards, the management of the Royal Muskoka had

to look to other aspects of its operations to build a competitive advantage. No longer able to claim reasonably to be Canada's largest and finest summer hotel, a new strategy appeared in the hotel's marketing program from the 1920s onward. The impression was conveyed that the hotel's smaller size allowed the Royal Muskoka to offer a more intimate environment, better service, and a more select clientele than its larger competitors.

The owner, Hugh Cameron MacLean of MacLean Publishing, spoke of the advertising and marketing strategy of the Royal Muskoka Hotel in 1922. He noted that getting back to nature and to 'rough it' were just 'high falutin talk' since most tourists really desired as many creature comforts as their means would allow. Therefore as "lonely pines, secluded beaches, primeval forests, boundless lakes, cool nights and balmy air" were all well and good, Maclean believed that most "nature lovers" also required 'a well equipped hotel or boarding house within hail, with ballroom, golf course, chef (French preferred) comfortable beds and lots of deep arm chairs on spacious verandahs'. Also, it was necessary to have good transportation links to a large population centre. He thought that businessmen and their wives looking for a summer vacation full of fishing, canoeing, bathing, hiking, golfing, playing tennis, bowling, dancing, eating, lounging, and sleeping, would be drawn to a hotel that offered the "conveniences of a city hotel" from iced water to jazz orchestras. In MacLean's own words, "dear old Dame Nature must go arm in arm with modern Miss Civilization during June, July and August" (*Gravenhurst Banner*, June 29 1922, 1).

The Royal Muskoka's amenities thus took on a modern appearance. This was not a change from the hotel's previous mandate or a variation on what Bigwin Inn or other

top summer hotel's offered. Rather, the differences were in the details, such as tea and coffee service in silver vessels as compared to Bigwin's vitrified hotelware. The adoption of the French style of table service, whereby food was placed on the plate at the table rather than in the kitchen, provided a heightened level of luxury to the Royal Muskoka's guest experience. At the Royal Muskoka, the position of dining hostess was replaced by the more impressive, maître d'hôtel, and this distinction was highlighted in some of the hotel's advertising through naming the person in this position, such as Pedro (no last name given) in 1936 (Muskoka Navigation and Hotel Company, 1936). As previously discussed, the hotel no longer referred to its large size in advertising and now used the term 'intimate', comparing its operations and social programming to those of a private country club rather than to a large summer hotel.

Such distinctions are subtle but, taken together, enabled the Royal Muskoka to distinguish itself from the competition based on service quality, conveying the impression that it offered a more refined vacation experience. Another key difference between the two operations is that once Prohibition was lifted, Bigwin stayed dry while the Royal Muskoka resumed alcoholic service. It employed a wine steward and reopened its basement bar, adjacent to its new dance hall, "the Rustic Room", in space formally occupied by a grill. To add a cosmopolitan flair, the hotel instigated and heavily advertised its cocktail hour in addition to the ritual of afternoon tea. The Royal Muskoka became known for its evening activities, one local remembering the hotel building almost jumping as guests and cottagers danced the night away in the Rustic Room (Hind and Da Silva, 2011, 175). Another guest account complained that everything at Bigwin Inn closed at midnight (*Toronto Daily Star*, July 26 1949, 3).

Nevertheless, the Royal Muskoka Hotel shared one troubling feature with Bigwin Inn: they were both located on islands and, thus, inaccessible to automobiles. Where Bigwin was able to acquire land and establish a ferry service to a mainland property adjacent to a road that connected Baysville and Dorset, the Royal Muskoka was located at the end of a peninsula. The temporary fix was to have guests drive to Windermere from where a launch service was provided to the hotel. In spite of the gleaming boats and the smart uniforms of the vessels' chauffeurs, this was an inconvenience that was only resolved with the building of a causeway to the island in 1936. The road became known as the 'Cherokee Trail' in the summer of 1937.



Figure 4:81. Elgin House, 1944. Source: Postcard (detail), Author's Collection.



Figure 4:82. Motor Entrance, Elgin House, c1940. Source: Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre.

The Royal Muskoka Hotel was the terminus of the ‘Cherokee Trail’. The same road passed two other resorts that were not as luxurious as the Royal Muskoka and Bigwin. The first of these, Elgin House, established in 1900 and adhering closely to the Methodist practices of its founder, was to become south Muskoka’s largest resort operation during this period. It retained its conservative operating mandate that included banning the playing of any sports on Sundays, and the serving of alcohol at any time. Guests were even notified in the Elgin House booklet that they were “not expected to arrive or depart on Sunday except in case of necessity” (*Elgin House*, 1929, 12). In spite of these restrictions (or perhaps because of them), guests flocked to Elgin House in increasing numbers, necessitating the almost continuous addition of rooms and auxiliary services. Up to 1915, with the exception of the East Annex, these additions were constructed in the form of large wings attached to the main lodge. The wings contained small rooms with communal washrooms. When expansion resumed in the mid-1920s, Love decided, possibly in light of developments on Lake of Bays at Bigwin Inn and the fire at the Hotel WaWa, to construct new additions in the form of self-contained buildings. The first of these, the West Annex, was a long two-story building containing fifty larger rooms with private balconies, many with private washrooms or a washroom shared between two connecting rooms. As at Bigwin, the new annex was connected to the main lodge by a covered walkway. In 1934, the North Lodge was opened, featuring a three-story structure with larger carpeted guestrooms, separate lounge rooms and private washrooms (*Elgin House*, 1938, 8). The additions begin to transform Elgin House into a campus style resort, similar to Bigwin Inn. (Figure 4:81) Elgin House prospered, in part due to its fortunate location in proximity to the region’s developing road network. Other

1920s modifications to the resort included the construction of an automobile entrance at the back of the hotel property. (Figure 4:82)

Clevelands House, located to the north of Elgin House, was owned and operated at the time by Arthur Minett and was another resort that adapted quickly to the new market demands. It was one of the oldest resort properties, originating in 1878, but had remained a typical mid-range hotel up until the First World War. Many of these non-descript mid-range hotels of the earlier era languished and eventually closed. However, Minett transformed Clevelands House into one the region's most popular lodging operations. He was the leading advocate of the creation of the 'Cherokee Trail' that he hoped would attract transient automobile tourists to the area. Clevelands House embraced the car earlier than other properties by installing a separate entrance, garages, and a small gas station on the property. These were featured in the hotel's brochures as an attraction of the resort (*Clevelands House*, 1931, 3). Other 1920s improvements included the opening of a separate annex providing modern accommodations for discriminating guests.



Figure 4:83. Clevelands House Casino, 1930. Source: Clevelands House Brochure, 1931.

Clevelands House's greatest claim and possibly the key to its continued success was Minett's decision, made in the mid-1920s in collaboration with business associate

Fred Newton, to expand the hotel's facilities to include a lakeside refreshment stand and dance hall. The lakeside complex, started in 1924, with the opening of the refreshment stand, offered guests a soda fountain and snack counter (Figure 4:83). However, Minett began to notice that an increasing number of guests were being drawn to other resorts, such as the Royal Muskoka Hotel, to dance in the evenings. Therefore, in 1928, he expanded the refreshment stand to include a casual dining space and a dance floor, together known as the Casino (Hosking, 1988, 37). This would prove to be one of the hotel's greatest assets. It was featured heavily in advertising literature for the hotel and attracted both cottagers and guests from rival hotels to its evening dances. Lakeside snack shops became popular at many lodges. Recreation and dance halls, often located in the second story of boathouses as Shaw had done at Bigwin Inn, increased in number, as at Cedar Wild Hotel, Wigwassan Lodge, and Monteith Inn, though they were unable to rival the popularity of the Casino at Clevelands House.



Figure 4:84. Lone Star Coffee Shop and Cabins, Minett Lake Rosseau, c1945. Source: Postcard (detail), Author's Collection.



Figure 4:85. The Hedges, Minett Lake Rosseau, c1950. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Two small lodging properties located immediately inland from Clevelands House represented a new face of Muskoka tourism. After the opening of the Clevelands House Casino, Newton established another snack bar and gas station to provide late-night service to guests departing from the Clevelands House dances, which always stopped at 11:00 p.m. (Pryke, 2001). The Lone Star Coffee Shop also featured a small number of cabins available to tourists traveling through the district by car. (Figure 4:84) Between the Lone Star Cabins and Clevelands House, another small operation known as the Hedges Tourist House was opened by Viola Ferguson in 1947 (70). (Figure 4:85) Located away from the lake and with limited services, the Lone Star Cabins and the Hedges Tourist House are typical of the new, small operations, aimed towards the transient market. They offered a very different guest experience than the larger hotels and were extremely attractive to a growing consumer base that desired thrift, convenience, and privacy.

Tourist Houses, Cabin Camps and Motor Courts

Like many tourist innovations in Muskoka, including the idea of the summer resort hotel itself, the concept of accommodations for the automobile tourist originated in the United States, before spreading northward. John Jakle's (1996) *The Motel in America* documents the development of motels in the United States through an analysis of the transition from downtown and country hotels to auto camps, tourist houses, and motor courts, leading to the eventual creation of the motel in the 1940s. Jakle notes that these accommodations did not develop uniformly across the continent. Rather, tourist houses gained popularity in the east while cabin courts gained favour in the west (35). However, both developed out of the need to have inexpensive overnight accommodations conveniently located to highways (23). Hayner explains the attraction of the auto camp, through an owner of one of these new operations, as being the ability for the traveler to immediately park his car, enter his cabin, and feel at home. This contrasts with the resort hotel, where the guest would feel uneasy standing in the lobby in rumpled clothes, having to deal with parking and unpacking, not to mention the cost would be three times as high as the auto camp (1936, 26-7). These camps, with their proximity between tourist, car, and baggage, as well as the ability of the guests to make their own meals, greatly challenged the owners of second and third-rate hotels. This informant claimed that first-rate hotels were able to avoid the competition since their clientele, not as concerned with cost, tended to choose the 'line of least resistance', opting for an environment of porters and bellboys to handle luggage, a doorman to look after and park the car, and facilities that freed women from having to look after a house or cook meals (27).

Muskoka, as a popular holiday destination, exhibits a mix of tourist accommodations, from hotels of various grades, both seasonal and year-round, to other new types of accommodation including auto camps and tourist houses, with different distributions. It is more difficult to examine the smaller auto camps, tourist homes and later motor courts than the summer hotels of the region. These operations were small and often not included in hotel directories. Owing to the transient nature of their clientele, they seldom produced advertising literature or took out advertisements. Thus, there is little evidence of their existence, except for the occasional photograph and postcard. Tourist homes are particularly difficult since the line between the tourist house and the summer boarding house or small hotel is blurred and relies on arbitrary factors such as road access and the lack of certain services, such as dining rooms, to separate the two. Compounding the difficulty with tourist homes is their tendency to switch back and forth from private residence to commercial establishment with the changing circumstances of their owners and annual variations in supply and demand generated by the needs of the tourist and levels of competition. Taken together, these factors make it difficult to determine accurately the number of tourist homes and auto camps, as well as the number of tourists they could accommodate. However, the number of tourist homes and auto camps increased steadily through the 1920s, 1930s and well into the 1940s.



Figure 4:86. Wiltown Lodge, Bracebridge, c1945. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Ideally, tourist houses should be divided into those developed to serve the auto tourist and to those catering to the general Muskoka tourist. The difficulty in separating the two lies in the fact that many of Muskoka's hotels, from the small operations to larger ones such as Clevelands, Beaumaris and Windermere, all started as tourist houses. They were the homesteads of settlers who decided to let out one or two rooms to the traveling public. Therefore, the tourist homes that opened during the 1920s and 1930s are, in many ways, a continuation of a trend dating back to the 1870s that continues today in the form of bed-and-breakfasts. On the other hand, these new operations were essentially different owing to their reliance on transient tourists, now arriving by automobile rather than by rail, and choosing this mode of accommodation out of convenience rather than necessity. Jakle describes the typical tourist home as being a private house, located near the downtown area on a major thoroughfare, where one or more bedrooms were let out for the night (35). This definition limits tourist houses to those located in an urban area and

accessible primarily by automobile. Applying this definition, Muskoka's tourist homes were concentrated in the region's urban centres of Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, and Huntsville, with one or two in the smaller settlements of Bala and Port Carling. Larger establishments issued postcards allowing us to identify Fern Glen, Garner Lodge, Bartwood Manor, Hart House, and Wiltown Lodge (Figure 4:86) as examples of tourist houses. Each of them were developed out of private houses, located within the urban grid of their respective communities, conveniently close to the region's highways. Architecturally, as private residences, these structures are small, offering fewer facilities (such as lounges, dining halls or recreation facilities) than their larger hotel counterparts.

Auto camps and motor courts, unlike tourist houses, are easily identified owing to their distinctive architecture. However, like tourist houses, the exact number in operation at any given time is hard to determine as they seldom appeared in summer hotel directories and they had a tendency, owing to the limited investment required in their construction, to appear and disappear rather quickly. Of the three new types of tourist accommodation, the auto camps were rare in Muskoka, although examples existed in Port Carling on the Indian River and outside of Bracebridge along the Muskoka River. Their scarcity is partially explained by Muskoka's distinction as being, for the moment, a destination area rather than an en route staging post (Hayner 1936, 26). However, as roads were improved in the 1920s and, particularly, into the 1930s and beyond, new districts further north and west of Muskoka and Lake of Bays were opened up, increasing the number of transient tourists funneling through Muskoka, past the lakes and local centres, and onwards to destinations further afield (Tatley, 1984, 239). However, most

such travelers passed by the cabin courts that were primarily located in the vicinity of Highway 11, from just south of Gravenhurst, through Bracebridge to Huntsville.



Figure 4:87. Tourist Cabins Outside Gravenhurst, 1936. Source: Author's Collection.



Figure 4:88. Joe Gawa Hotel, Gravenhurst, c1950. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Small, unpretentious, convenient and economical cabin courts expanded rapidly. Some, such as Drumkerry Cabins in Bracebridge, offered highly picturesque settings

overlooking scenic attractions such as Bracebridge Falls and offered large cabins that were the size of small private cottages. (Figure 4:87) Others provided much smaller units in mundane settings immediately adjacent to the highways, such as Diocloff Cabins and Roc View Tea Room and Cabins, both located in the vicinity of Gravenhurst. The eventual evolution of the cabin court into the motor court, or motel, is marked by the linking of individual rooms into a single building under one roof, usually containing a coffee shop or restaurant as part of one structure (Jakle, 1996, 43). Joe Gawa Hotel in Gravenhurst, in spite of the name, was one of the first motels in Muskoka. Opened in the late-1940s, the Joe Gawa was a long low stucco structure with an office in the centre, with individual rooms that opened onto the parking lot on either side, and a restaurant and lounge located on either end of the building. (Figure 4:88) The Joe Gawa was joined by other motels along Highway 11, providing cheap and convenient accommodation to travelers and, by doing so, put further pressure on the region's summer hotels.

The concentration of these new tourist operations in the southern regions of the district shifted the tourist landscape of Muskoka. Traditionally, summer tourists chose accommodations in the northern reaches of the lakes, far away from the trains and lumber mills of the south. Starting with the opening of Muskoka Beach Inn, the development of tourist accommodations in the form of small lodges, cabin courts and motels rapidly transformed Gravenhurst and, especially, Bracebridge and Huntsville, into tourist hubs that took tourists along Highway 11 and away from the more northern and less accessible resorts hotels on Lakes Rosseau and Joseph. This trend placed further pressure on the region's older properties, particularly the less prestigious hotel properties that had to contend with the convenience and privacy of the new operations, as well as the cheaper

rates they were able to charge. Jakle explains that owing to their limited facilities and, thus, lower operating costs, tourist homes and cabin courts were able to offer drastically reduced rates to travellers, forcing hotel operators to lower their own rates to remain competitive. Reduced rates shrunk profit margins, thus reducing the funds available to improve facilities, and creating a cycle of decline that was difficult to escape (1996, 31).

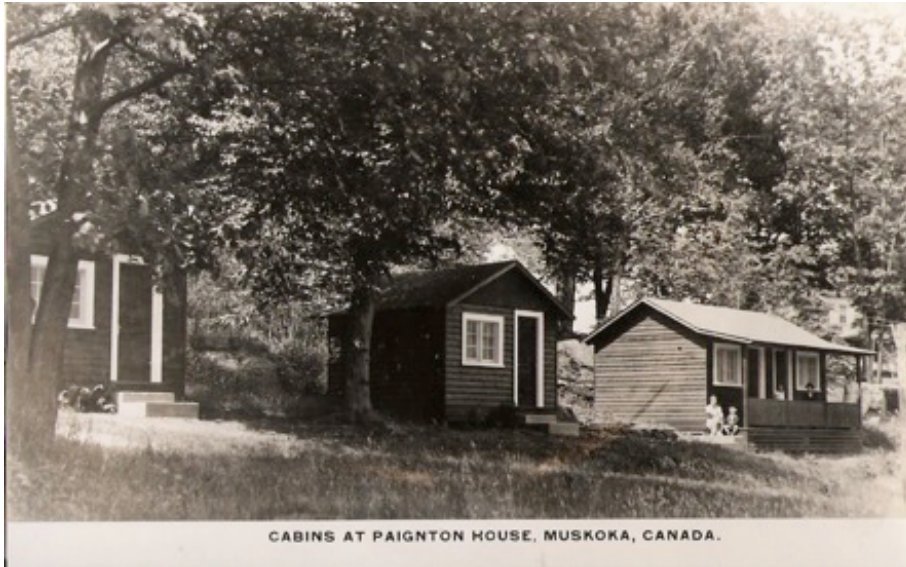


Figure 4:89. Cabins at Paington House, Lake Rosseau, c1944. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

Some of Muskoka's more moderate hotel properties were able to adapt to changing consumer demands for more convenient and private accommodation by adding cabins to their properties. Lake Rosseau's Rostrevor Lodge and Paington House (Figure 4:89), as well as Lake Muskoka's Milford Manor were transformed in the 1930s and 1940s into cabin resorts with a main lodge at their centre providing dining and entertainment facilities. Later still, many lodges expanded their guest accommodations with motel-style units in an attempt to remain up-to-date and competitive.

These changes provided the stimuli for a protracted contraction of the Muskoka summer hotels. No longer an essential part of the vacation experience of non-hotel guests, the hotels were peripheral to the emerging cottage culture that syphoned off their

clientele. Higher consumer demands placed increasing pressure to modernize facilities on owners who were often unwilling or unable to implement the necessary improvements. At the same time, new competition from cheaper lodging options cut into profit margins. The economic challenges of the small Muskoka hotels spread to the region's largest operations in the postwar years, further transforming the tourist landscape of the Muskoka Lakes. While the projected image of Muskoka hid these challenges, Muskoka was altered to reflect changes in the market so that the Muskoka tourism environment that emerged by the late-1930s was strikingly different from that of the previous generation.

The Projected Image 1915-1945

Whether marketed as fashionable or unfashionable, Muskoka had always been portrayed as a destination where one could escape and get back to nature in some form of 'rest cure'. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Muskoka lost much of its 'wilderness' identity in favour of a more domesticated image. Muskoka's scenic charms and rugged landscape continued to be promoted but, where previously there had been a balance in the region's advertising and image between 'wilderness' and domestic comforts, the emphasis began to change. Now, more weight was placed on Muskoka as a modern destination, with up-to-date hotels catering to those who wished urban comforts in addition to picturesque scenery. MacLean observed this in 1922 recognizing that while tourists often claimed a desire to get back to nature, their actual behaviours suggested otherwise (*Gravenhurst Banner*, June 29 1922, 1). Two concepts of Muskoka would emerge: "old Muskoka", represented by a slower, and quieter form of tourism, and "new Muskoka", presenting faster, busier and louder forms of recreation. If old Muskoka was the canoe, then new

Muskoka was the motorboat. The struggle between adherents of these two perspectives underpins the region's course of development to the present day.

Muskoka's Reputation Transformed

Muskoka, as an administrative district, encompasses three resort areas, including the Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays that are often combined into one area while, at other times, they are referred to as south and north Muskoka. The third tourist district, which has been intentionally left out of this discussion thus far, is Georgian Bay, lying to the west of the Muskoka Lakes. Unlike Lake of Bays, Georgian Bay has never successfully been incorporated into the collective imagination regarding Muskoka, partly due to its slightly different landscape and development history and, more significantly, its far more rugged image. In comparisons of the regions dating back to the nineteenth century, Georgian Bay is consistently portrayed as providing a more authentic nature experience than that found in Muskoka. Harry Symons' (1946) *Ojibway Melody* describes the life of summer residents on the Bay, particularly in the vicinity of the famous Ojibway Hotel at Pointe-au-Baril, and reiterates the common stereotypes of Muskoka in comparison to Georgian Bay. The Ojibway Hotel is the focus of the third chapter entitled 'Summer Hotel' in which the atmosphere of the hotel and the bay are contrasted with other nearby destinations and summer hotels, likely Muskoka. Symons writes: "Georgian Bay has not, as yet, quite caught up to the summer hotel situation" (44) with "cocktail bars, and syrupy music, and Chanel 66, or Houbigants 32" and "the sad cries one attributes to the golf course, or even the heartrending wails of the dancer at dawn" (44-5). None of these things are found in the Bay's hotels where resort life offers "more rugged, and two-fisted, and third-helping sort of things" (45). Symons dismisses the competition, adding that:

...if it does come to pass that you can call room service, and order your iced orange juice, or your seidlitz powder, or cold capon, or feel at home and not a little self-conscious on wearing ties and collars, and a lot of trick clothes ... well, if that ever does come to pass, then the olden Georgian Bay will have changed, so far as we are concerned, into something that has lost its savour and its real desirability (44).

This argument has been previously examined and at its root lies the question of fashionable versus unfashionable resort life. The difference here is that there is a role reversal, with Muskoka portrayed as the fashionable destination, to be avoided in favour of the more 'authentic' and less-fashionable Georgian Bay.

Symons was not alone in publishing this comparison of Muskoka and Georgian Bay. The same year that *Ojibway Melody* was published, a revised edition of Katherine Hale's travel guidebook (1937) *This is Ontario* was published containing similar observations. In comparison to the wild and primitive Georgian Bay, Hale refers to Muskoka as a modern fairyland where everything appears in miniature compared to the wonders of the bay. Hale describes the lakes as smaller, the islands wooded, the water darker and softer in the Muskoka district. The latter is also described as a residential tourist region owing to the number of cottages. Hale describes Muskoka as a place of "cottages and canoes, of fir trees, rocks, water gardens and modern hotels" where once life was primitive, but where now vestiges of these older days are disappearing (1946, 193). At the Royal Muskoka Hotel, despite all the comfortable modern amenities, Hale still finds a lingering feeling of 'old woodland Muskoka' remaining (195). Not so with Bigwin Inn where she finds every art of up-to-date summer entertainment. Hale laments:

All this may seem alien to the untamed woodland about us. What has such a magnificent inn to do with the feeling for a natural outdoor life which one supposes has led all these people over Ontario highways? ... To come close to nature without suffering from its disadvantages – this must be their aim (197).

Both Hale and Symons felt that Muskoka's modern domestic comforts had advanced to the degree that they now stood between the tourists and the wilderness, preventing an authentic interaction between the two. As an alternative to the Muskoka experience, Symons recommends Georgian Bay, while Hale suggests the Algonquin and Temagami areas where, claiming that, "luxury would never dare to raise its head" (197).

In 1888, fifty-eight years earlier, Alexander Cockburn published a pertinent cartoon in his Muskoka Lakes guidebook. It depicts a recreation-seeking, middle-class, family passing up 'Dame Fashion' (seaside resorts), in favour of unfashionable Muskoka. (Figure 4:23) Nearly six decades later, the cartoon would need to be reconstituted with 'Dame Fashion' standing for Muskoka and other destinations, such as Georgian Bay or Algonquin Park, offered as the desirable alternative. The shift in perception is also evident in the advertising imagery used to promote the district.



Figure 4:90. Canadian Pacific Railway, *Pointe au Baril*, 1926. Source: Author's Collection.



Figure 4:91. Canadian Pacific Railway, *Muskoka Lakes*, 1926. Author's Collection.

Two 1926 brochures issued by the Canadian Pacific Railway illustrate how Muskoka was being portrayed visually in comparison to other destinations. The first brochure is for Pointe-au-Baril and features a father and daughter fishing out of a canoe, while, in the background, a third person tends a campfire outside a small cottage. The forest and rocks are treated in a stylized manner but still retain a rugged character. (Figure 4:91) In comparison, the Muskoka folder presents a very different version of a summer vacation. A tennis match between a man and woman, with a small group of well-dressed guests off to one side huddled under a large umbrella to the side, dominates the foreground of the brochure's cover. The entire scene is overlooked by a palatial hotel that rises in the background while just a snippet of lake can be seen with two sailboats. The scenery is not rugged for the trees are rounded and there are no rocks. The whole image conveys a sense of glamour rather than an outdoor adventure. (Figure 4:92)

New institutions created new images of Muskoka. Previously dominant promoters were limiting their coverage of the area and new organizations were entering the marketing mix. They did not necessarily share the same goals and values as previous promoters and they further modified the rapidly solidifying image of Muskoka that had been some ninety years in the making.

The Traditional Promoters of Muskoka

At the beginning of WWI, there were two primary advertisers of the Muskoka Lakes district; namely, the Muskoka Navigation and Hotel Company and the Grand Trunk Railway. The Canadian Pacific Railway was also present though it contributed substantially less promotional output. Each of these profit-driven corporations shared the same primary objective in promoting the district in that they wanted to increase traffic on their boats and trains and in the Navigation Company's case, to fill the Royal Muskoka Hotel to capacity.



Figure 4:92. Grand Trunk Railway, *Muskoka Lakes*, 1915. Source: Author's Collection.

Of the railways, the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) had the longest relationship with Muskoka, dating back to 1876. As such it produced the greatest volume of advertising materials for the district, ranging from guidebooks and brochures, to print advertisements and souvenir booklets. The GTR also started the trend of treating the Lake of Bays as a self-contained district with a separate collection of advertising materials. Each season, the GTR produced a new folder for each region, often with evocative colourful covers. These covers exhibit a consistent theme, with female travelers in the centre and grand vistas of lakes and islands in the background. (Figure 4:92) The brochures up to 1920 contain minor variations on the descriptions found in the pre-war travel literature.

The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the other major railway serving the area, also produced brochures for the region though they combined the Muskoka Lakes and Georgian Bay into one folder, supplemented by a further folder covering the resorts of Ontario. However, compared to the GTR brochures, surviving examples of the CPR brochures are rare suggesting that they were produced in smaller quantities. Most CPR advertising was directed elsewhere namely to its own resort destinations in the Canadian Rockies and the Maritimes.

A series of bankruptcies plagued the railway sector, resulting in an abrupt change in advertising in the late-1910s and early-1920s. The Canadian Government began a process of nationalizing certain railroads into a new company, the Canadian National Railway (CNR) into which the GTR was folded in 1923. The CNR, for the time being, continued the advertising strategy of the GTR, albeit with some modifications. Muskoka and Lake of Bays continued to each receive their own separate folders as did other

Ontario tourist regions, including Algonquin Park, Georgian Bay, the Kawartha Lakes, and Temagami. The CNR also continued the GTR practice of combining all these regions into a 'Playgrounds of Ontario' folder (CNR, 1921, 6). Also, in the early-1920s, the CPR began to produce a separate folder of its own for the Muskoka Lakes, in addition to its general 'Resorts in Ontario'. The CPR advertising campaign differed from the CNR, excluding the Lake of Bays because the region was not serviced by any of its lines.

The treatment of Lake of Bays in relation to Muskoka changed significantly throughout the 1920s. While the district did receive its own CNR literature, in the railway's 'Playgrounds' folders, the autonomy of the region is less clear. The last GTR-issued *Playgrounds of Ontario* folder (1922) describes the Lake of Bays as 'surpassingly beautiful, comprising some of the loveliest water stretches in this country of lakes' but makes no mention of the Muskoka Lakes (9). The 1929 *Ontario Playgrounds* issued by the CNR introduces the Lake of Bays region as a series of lakes "lying to east and north of the Muskoka Lakes" (26). The following summer, the CNR chose to issue a combined Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays brochure for the first time. Afterwards, no separate brochures for the Muskoka Lakes or Lake of Bays would be issued by the railway, ending almost 35 years of tradition. Instead, both regions would be covered in the general Ontario folder. In these *Playgrounds of Ontario* folders, the two tourist districts continue to receive separate billing though the 1934 edition states: "lying to the north and slightly east of the Muskoka Lakes *and in reality a part of the Muskoka District* (emphasis added), is the beautiful Lake of Bays region" (9). The two districts were quickly becoming one and, by 1939, the *Playgrounds in Ontario* folder finally combined the two regions (6).

The CPR continued to issue its own Muskoka Lakes folders until at least 1931, at which point it combined all Ontario destinations into a more general *Eastern Canada Resorts* brochure covering Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. The reason for curtailing their advertising of the Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays is not known but it likely resulted from diminishing returns on investment brought on by a combination of economic factors related to the Great Depression and the rise of the automobile. The latter was transforming the Muskoka Lakes into a driving destination, rendering the trains redundant to tourists. The railways had done much of the work in terms of advertising and promoting the Muskoka Lakes through the key years of the region's tourist development. Without this promotion, Muskoka could have lost market share as more destinations were opened up for tourism. It was now left to Muskoka's tourist operators to promote their district in an increasingly competitive market.

In addition to the railroads, the Muskoka Navigation and Hotel Company had been a major driving force in the promotion of the region, particularly under Cockburn's leadership in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century saw the Navigation Company continue to produce annual brochures for the region. They contained a lengthy description of the lakes, along with advertisements for hotels and the schedule of the lake steamers. Under MacLean, in the mid-1910s, the company had tried to build a co-operative advertising campaign with the local hotel operators with little success, leaving the onus and cost of advertising with the Navigation Company (*Gravenhurst Banner*, June 29 1922, 1). Thus, the primary purpose of the Navigation Company's advertising was to fill the Royal Muskoka Hotel during the summer months. A handful of hotel operators, however, did work with the Navigation Company by sharing the cost of these

brochures in exchange for advertising space. A February 16, 1916, letter from Navigation Company manager William Wasley to Alfred Judd of Ernescliffe, outlines one of these agreements. Wasley proposes that a twelve-page folder be produced and mailed to 25,000 residents of Toronto. It would contain full-page ads from five of Muskoka's larger hotels; Monteith House, Elgin House, Clevelands House, Ernescliffe and the Beaumaris Hotel, in addition to the Royal Muskoka Hotel, with the six outside pages being devoted to descriptive matter. Each of the five hotels was asked to contribute \$75.00 towards the total cost of \$550.00 for the campaign, with the Navigation Company covering the rest of the cost. Still, with never more than a small handful of hotel operators contributing towards the cost of the Navigation Company's promotional efforts, MacLean's decision to focus solely on attracting guests to the Royal Muskoka Hotel is understandable.

The advent of the 100-Mile Cruise changed the direction of the Navigation Company's advertising and provided an additional focus for their promotional efforts. From around 1926 onwards, the Navigation Company literature increasingly becomes more of a vehicle for the promotion of its cruises and the Royal Muskoka Hotel rather than general promotion of the district, although a handful of smaller hotel operations continued to run advertisements in its folders. As the Navigation Company pulled away from providing general descriptive tourist literature on the lakes and the railroads curtailed their advertising efforts, an advertising vacuum formed, leaving the district lacking in general advertising starting in 1930 at a time when it arguably needed it the most. A large number of hotel operators in the district did not advertise at all, relying on coverage in the transportation company's literature and their inclusion in the attached

hotel directories to attract guests. However, new promoters of the district would emerge with different objectives than those of the transportation company and, for first time, leadership was taken by hotel operators.

The New Promoters of Muskoka

Prior to 1930, most Muskoka hotels did not do much promotion beyond running a small advertisement in a few brochures or hotel directories. Literature for specific hotel properties is rare with the exception of the larger operations. When information was provided, it was often in the form of a small booklet containing a small picture of the property, accompanied by descriptive wording on the scenery, the rates charged and little about the hotel itself. Many of Muskoka's lodges, particularly the small ones, relied on the loyalty of an established clientele, word-of-mouth and the advertising of the transportation companies to attract new guests. An increasingly competitive environment during the early 1930s, combined with reduced general advertising by larger companies, led more hotels to advertise, thereby increasing the number of voices shaping the region's image.

George Martin of the newly established Wigwassan Lodge was an innovator in Muskoka promotion. A marketer by trade, Martin was aghast at what he saw as the very poor quality of the advertising of his fellow Muskoka hotel operators who were uncertain of the product that they wished to sell and the markets they wished to reach (Martin, October 1935, 6). In his opinion, the situation developed out of the manner in which resort hotels in Muskoka and other areas had been established a generation before. In October 1935, Martin wrote:

Canadian resorts grew up without having to sell their services. A few years ago, all a resort owner had to do was to feed and house his guests,

and business just came to him. They never had to sell, because they didn't have to do it to live. But motor cars and the attraction of other resort sections have provided a complication that has changed this, and resort operators must sell today (6).

He was perplexed that many of the local hotel operators had spent their entire lives living in the region in which their properties were located and, thus, lacked knowledge of what city dwellers expected out of their holidays. In turn, out of ignorance, they made the dangerous and erroneous assumption that what was good enough for them, personally, was good enough for their guests (7).

As a newcomer to the Muskoka hotel trade, Martin was full of ideas on how to run and promote a summer hotel operation successfully. He shared his insights in a series of trade journal publications stretching from the 1930s through to the 1950s. They are preserved in the Muskoka Lakes Museum in Port Carling. Together they show how Muskoka hotel operations, large and small, were modernizing operations and promotion, moving away from an industry dominated by novice hotelkeepers to one dominated by professional and standardized practices. Articles cover topics from the creation of profit-graphs (1935) and reservation charts (1944), to developing an attractive food service program (1964) and training staff (1940). While Martin wrote about many facets of the summer hotel business, as a marketer he spent the most time writing on different ways to improve business through developing proper and effective promotional strategies.

Martin believed that a proper sales promotion was important to the success of a hotel and he used his experience at Wigwassan Lodge to justify his statements (1941, 24). He compared the operation of a summer hotel to the running of a large corporation, such as General Motors, and in October 1935 he outlined the functions they shared. He identified the administrative function of supervising and managing that includes the

planning and creation of a product around three services: lodging, meals, and recreation facilities. The production function covered the hiring of staff to deliver the product and the buying function secured the necessary materials such as food. Finally, the key function was selling these services through effective advertising to potential guests. This selling function required owners to consider realistically what exactly they had to sell and to determine the market they wished to reach, based on both geography and the type of tourist that best fitted their offerings (6-7).

Part of developing an effective advertising campaign for Martin was to build an identity for the hotel. Today, it would be referred to as brand identity, but in 1935, Martin called it personality and explained it as follows:

Just as you as an individual have a personality, so your resort has a personality. You must endeavor to build up a personality for your resort that will click with your guests. None of us can satisfy everyone, but we can each develop our resort, and its personality, to satisfy enough to make our business a success (7).

The hotel folder was the 'salesman' that was charged with conveying all of this to the public. As such, Martin believed that it needed to be carefully and, in most cases professionally designed, containing current pictures, clear type, up-to-date information and printed on appropriate paper in a size convenient for mailing and display on brochure racks (18). At Wigwassan, Martin spent ten percent of the revenue from room and board on advertising the resort through brochures, newspaper ads, and elaborate folders prepared for travel agents (April 1935, 24). This included 7,000 brochures and a further 7,500 rate cards to be distributed to travel agents and to a targeted mailing list composed of former guests, business and club acquaintances, and recent graduates of commercial schools that had been working for at least three years (1934, 415-6). Under Martin's

management, Wigwassan Lodge expanded to become one of Muskoka's most famous resorts within its category, as an unpretentious place catering to a youthful, middle-class consumer.

Martin was also actively engaged in nurturing communication amongst Muskoka hotel operators. In an August 27, 1937, letter to Alfred Judd, he invites the Judds, along with other resort operators, to a dinner at Wigwassan Lodge, creating the opportunity for people in the resort business to become better acquainted with each other and to discuss topics of mutual interest. He assured Judd that the purpose of the gathering was not to 'formulate any co-operative advertising plan, just to have an informal get together without a definite program' (1). The clarification was likely necessary since Martin was also heavily involved in the promotion of the district through his position as the person in charge of advertising and promotion for the Muskoka Tourist Development Association (MTDA).

The origins of the MTDA are not entirely clear. However, a notice in the April 1935 edition of *Canadian Hotel Management* states that the Association had recently formed and was preparing to launch an advertising campaign extolling the region's virtues as a summer and winter playground to every part of North America using funds received from every municipality in the district (26). As the traditional promoters of the region began curtailing advertising in the early 1930s, the need for an organization such as the MTDA grew and although the MTDA was not the first such organization, it would prove to be the most successful.



Figure 4:93. Muskoka Billboard in Toronto, c1935. Source: Muskoak Lakes Tourist Association, *Muskoka Lakes*, 193-.

Another organization, the Muskoka Lakes Tourist Association (MLTA), sometimes referred to as the Muskoka Lakes Tourist Bureau, preceded the MTDA by about five years, erecting a large back-lit sign (Figure 4:93) in Toronto featuring the district and opening an information office just south of Gravenhurst that would be taken over by the MTDA. It is possible that the MTDA was created out of the old MLTA in the form of a name change when the Association's focus was broadened beyond the Muskoka Lakes to include the Lake of Bays. However, there is evidence that the MLTA was composed of hotel operators whereas the MTDA was an organization that was funded by the municipality. An undated brochure for the MLTA from the early-1930s lists S. A. Minett of Cleveland's House as President with J. H. Forbes of Pinelands as Secretary. It also contains a listing of hotels with certain ones highlighted, suggesting that these operations were contributing funds to the organization while others opted not to participate.

One of the known promotional activities of the MLTA was running a contest to estimate the number of vehicles entering Ontario from the United States in the first six months of 1931. There were twenty-five prizes, ranging from week-long stays at

Muskoka resorts, to one-day cruises on the *Sagamo*. In the advertisement, the MLTA lists the thirteen hotels that it ‘embraces’, suggesting that these operations were the ones involved in the MLTA. The list included Beaumaris Hotel, Chautauqua Inn, Cedar Wild, Clevelands House, Elgin House, Ernescliffe, Nepahwin, New Windsor, Paignton House, the Royal Muskoka Hotel, the Hotel Swastika, Windermere House, and Woodington House (June 11 1931, 23). The advertisement for the contest ran in one of a series of annual multi-page promotional pieces that appeared once each June in the *Globe and Mail* from 1926 through to 1931. These sections contain numerous articles on the scenic charms of the area, accompanied by advertisements for many of the region’s hotels, suggesting that the piece was commissioned by an outside group, perhaps the MLTA itself.



Figure 4:94. Gravenhurst Arch, c1925. Source: Postcard (Detail), Author’s Collection.

In addition to the MLTA, business bureaus were created across the region in Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, Huntsville, and other smaller communities in the 1920s. While these boards of trade had numerous objectives, the development of tourism in their towns and regions was always high on their lists. The Gravenhurst and South Muskoka

Board of Trade placed advertisements in newspapers announcing the town of Gravenhurst as the gateway to the Muskoka Lakes where tourists could rest and rejuvenate while taking in glorious sunsets, wooded islands, and tree-bordered lakes (*Globe and Mail*, June 10 1930, 7). The Bracebridge Board of Trade issued booklets announcing the town as the “The Hub of Muskoka” where all the places of chief importance and points of interest were made easily accessible by roads branching out from the town centre (Bracebridge Board of Trade, 1931, 2). Likewise, the Huntsville Board of Trade issued its own literature announcing Huntsville and the Lake of Bays as Ontario’s premier summer and winter resort, framing the region as the terminus of travel by railway and car (Huntsville Board of Trade, 1935, 1). Both Gravenhurst and Huntsville expressed their commitment to being tourism destinations by erecting archways across the roads leading into the towns from Toronto. Gravenhurst built its arch in 1925 featuring the slogan “Gateway to the Muskoka Lakes” across the top and side panels extolling the benefits the town offered tourists and investors. (Figure 4:94) Huntsville soon followed with its own sign, proclaiming it and the Lake of Bays district as a “Summer & Winter Vacation Land”.

A Generation of Wanderers

George Martin, a few years before retiring from the hospitality field, wrote that the car had made tourists a “generation of wanderers” (1964, 1). The automobile transformed the way people vacationed at and used the Muskoka Lakes. The era when tourists could be expected to arrive by train and steamboat for at least a month’s duration was over and replaced by a new era dominated by a more mobile tourist staying for a week, or sometimes just a night, while en route to other destinations. Muskoka’s ability to market

itself as a primary destination on the cusp of the Northern hinterland was challenged, forcing a re-contextualization of its place within the broadening Ontario tourism market.

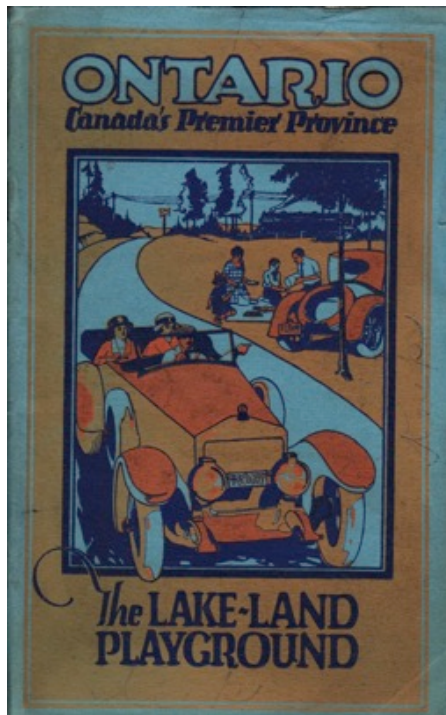


Figure 4:95. Ontario Government, *Ontario, Canada's Premier Province*, 1923. Source: Author's Collection.

The advertising efforts of the Government of Ontario that were designed to increase the number of motor tourists arriving from the United States would inadvertently and irreversibly change the image of Muskoka as a northern 'wilderness' vacation destination. Commencing in the early 1920s, the provincial government began to issue booklets promoting the province to potential tourists. The target market of each of these publications is clearly the American motor tourist, as can be seen in the 1923 edition, which features a tourist party traveling by car on its cover. (Figure 4:95) Coverage of Ontario's tourist offerings is split almost evenly among the tourist regions, providing the possibility of a number of resorts being visited in one vacation in the manner of a grand tour of the province. The Muskoka district that had been given top billing as the premier destination in Ontario in the railway advertising was now just another destination in the

province. Of more significance, destinations far north of Muskoka were treated extensively, including Temagami, the north shore of Lake Superior, French River and Lake-of-the-Woods. In comparison to these true wilderness destinations where there was very little human development, Muskoka is portrayed as being more settled, easy to reach without complicated routes, and “with you, even at your doors” (*Ontario Lakeland Playground*, 1923, 51). By 1932, the Ontario Government suggested an itinerary north from Severn Bridge on the Ferguson Highway (Highway 11), through the Lakeland playground of Muskoka and the Lake of Bays, to the mines and mills further north (18).

The pictures chosen to illustrate the various destinations also changed the context in which Muskoka vacations were framed. Muskoka is illustrated with photographs of steamboats, regattas, and grand hotels, with well-dressed people either lounging on lakeside recliners or participating in sports such as golf, tennis, and lawn bowling. Images of the rugged, back-to-nature, type of vacation with camping, fishing, and grand scenery, are now used to illustrate other regions, Algoma and Temagami in particular. Muskoka, traditionally advertised as a northern destination, far removed from the city and abounding in natural splendour, was now being portrayed as a comfortable, picturesque region with modern hotels and amusements that is centrally-located within the province. Now the destinations where the full splendour of nature could be experienced first-hand were portrayed as being north of the Muskoka lakes.

The road guides published by the Ontario Motor League and various petrol companies, wishing to stimulate travel on the province’s roads, reinforced this new portrayal of Muskoka as a stopping place on the way to other destinations. The McColl-Frontenac Co., in its 1924 booklet *Let the Red Indian be your Guide*, suggests a road trip

around Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron and Georgian Bay, then onward from Gravenhurst north and northwest up to Lake Superior (5). Just two features are highlighted for the Muskoka Lakes, namely the One-Hundred Mile Cruise and a launch trip from Bala Falls to the Moon Chutes (15). Lake of Bays is noted for steamboat and launch trips around the north Muskoka Lakes and as a gateway to Algonquin Park (17). The 1947-8 Ontario Motor League *Road Book* treats the Muskoka region as an area to pass through on the way northwest, making no mention of the district in its list of “some place of special interest”. (9)

The new reality of Muskoka as a stopping point as opposed to a primary destination is even acknowledged in the 1940 Muskoka Lakes Navigation Company brochure. It suggests the Royal Muskoka Hotel as an appropriate stop for travelers heading north to Callander to see the Dionne Quintuplets. The change in public perception of the Muskoka Lakes was not entirely negative, for tourists numbers to the region were still healthy and the hospitality sector rebounded quickly from the Great Depression. The broad image of the region was adjusted, especially its spatial relationship with other destinations in Ontario. Changing scale, in advertising specific to the region, and the descriptive language and images conjured by tourism promoters of Muskoka were fundamentally unchanged. However, a close examination reveals that the image of Muskoka that was projected in these advertising materials was being changed and adapted even though the broad themes of previous periods persisted.

Scenic Descriptions and the Benefits of a Muskoka Vacation

The term ‘Highlands of Ontario’ continued to be used in the 1920s to describe the Muskoka region, particularly in the advertising of the CNR. By the 1930s, however, as

the perception of Muskoka shifted from being on the edge of civilization in the northern reaches of Ontario to a conveniently situated district in the central part of the province, the term ‘highlands’ began to be reserved for other regions such as Haliburton. In its place, in the promotional literature of the MTDA as overseen by George Martin, the ‘vacation paradise’ of Muskoka was compared to the English Lake District, noting that Muskoka with its matchless beauty was many times larger than its English counterpart (MTDA, 1941).

Since Muskoka remained a nature-based tourist destination, the primary promotional descriptions of the region continued to refer to the region’s scenic credentials and the clarity of its air. The cumbersome poetic descriptions of this scenery, as found in the early brochures of the 1900s, are condensed in the 1920s. The 1926 CNR brochure for the Muskoka Lakes still describes the ‘rugged natural beauty, invigorating climate’ and connecting these natural assets with health:

Yes, even though you spend but a day on these matchless lakes, you feel the magic of the sunny skies, shady pines and balsam woods, shimmering blue lakes, sparkling sand beaches, bare jagged rocks and fresh bracing air. And it is marvelous how quickly this pure, dustless, northern ozone dispels hay fever and other summer ills, whets the appetite, induces sound dreamless sleep at night and seems to tone up the entire system (2).

These same natural qualities are lauded heavily in the brochures produced for individual hotels, often taking up more space than the description of the facilities and operation of the resorts themselves. The 1931 Windermere House booklet gives two primary reasons for coming to Muskoka - its beauty and its bracing climate.(3). Elgin House claims in its 1927 booklet to offer the summer of poets and lovers among the sparkle of blue waters, fleecy clouds, sun-warmed rocks, and the spicy scent of hot pine-needles (3). The Royal Muskoka Hotel continued to promote itself as rising amidst the primeval forest in a

woodland world, removed from the hustle and bustle of city life (1928, 1), while the Monteith Inn claimed the dust-free lakes of Muskoka were “probably the most picturesque on the American Continent” (1925, 3).

The descriptions of Muskoka’s scenery reference the sparkling clear lake, woods, rocks, and bracing pine-scented air. However, the descriptions of the region’s natural attributes become shorter as the 1930s progress in favor of increased emphasis on what there is to do in the district. “Getting back to nature is a wonderfully restful, rejuvenating and all-round delightful process” claimed the 1930 Cedar Wild booklet, very much in keeping with the values of the rest cure. However, the traditional view of a ‘rest cure in a canoe’ was being replaced by a more activity-oriented ideal of a healthy vacation. The calming of nerves to avoid ‘brain fag’ is no longer the goal of a rest cure in Muskoka. Instead, the key phrases refer to firming and toning up the body through physical exercise.

These two versions of the Muskoka vacation are not portrayed as mutually exclusive. The 1928 CNR Muskoka Lakes brochure lists a variety of attractions to be found in the region. For guests content to be the “hermit hidden away in the pine woods”, there is still the attraction of shady verandahs and good books. For those more actively inclined, a “constant round of gaiety” awaited, including swimming, paddling, golf, tennis, and bowls during the day, with evenings filled with dancing and boating (1-2). The Muskoka vacation experience is promised to provide everyone with a “rollicking good time” where “days fly by as if by magic” (1). Such statements had never appeared previously in the region’s advertising and are a new emerging idea of what a Muskoka vacation ought to be.

The visual imagery used to advertise the region also began to portray a more active holiday ideal. The use of brochures in place of guidebooks to promote the region began in the late-1890s with the GTR whose lead was followed in the early-1900s by the Navigation Company. The first brochures used photographs of Muskoka landscapes on their covers, sometimes with images of campers and steamboats. The 1904 GTR Muskoka Lakes brochure departed from this trend with a cover created by an artist that featured fashionably-dressed women on a cliff side overlooking a large summer hotel with various recreational activities occurring on the lake below. Various incarnations of this motif dominated Muskoka travel literature for the first two decades of the twentieth century.



Figure 4:96. Canadian National Railways, *Ontario Playgrounds*, 1921. Source: Author's Collection.

The late-1910s and 1920s saw this standard version of cover art change. The 1917 GTR brochure for the Muskoka Lakes retains the image of the female overlooking lakeland scenery but replaces the cliffside with a porch containing two female tourists

accompanied by golf clubs and a tennis racket. The 1921 GTR *Playgrounds of Ontario* places four figures on a lakeside, each representing a different recreational opportunity, specifically, swimming, paddling, golf, and tennis. (Figure 4:96) The 1923 CNR Muskoka folder returns to the image of women at a high vantage point overlooking a lake scene but adds a man carrying golf clubs. The women are either wrapped or carrying beach towels.



Figure 4:97. Canadian Pacific Railway, *Muskoka Lakes*, 1924. Source: Author's Collection.

The CPR differed slightly from the CNR in its cover art related to the district by showcasing the glamorous elements of a Muskoka vacation. For example, the 1924 CPR brochure depicts on its cover a group of fashionable young travellers lounging on a beach. (Figure 4:97) The 1925 cover again features fashionable tourists taking tea by the lakeside. Both brochures present a highly domesticated ideal of the Muskoka vacation experience when compared with older representations. By the late-1920s and into the

1930s, the CNR promoted Muskoka through its general *Playgrounds of Ontario* folders and often used Muskoka scenes on its covers, presenting a version of Muskoka dominated by recreational opportunities and a landscape featuring numerous cottages and hotels, such as seen on the covers of the 1929 (Figure 4:98), 1934 and 1935 brochures.

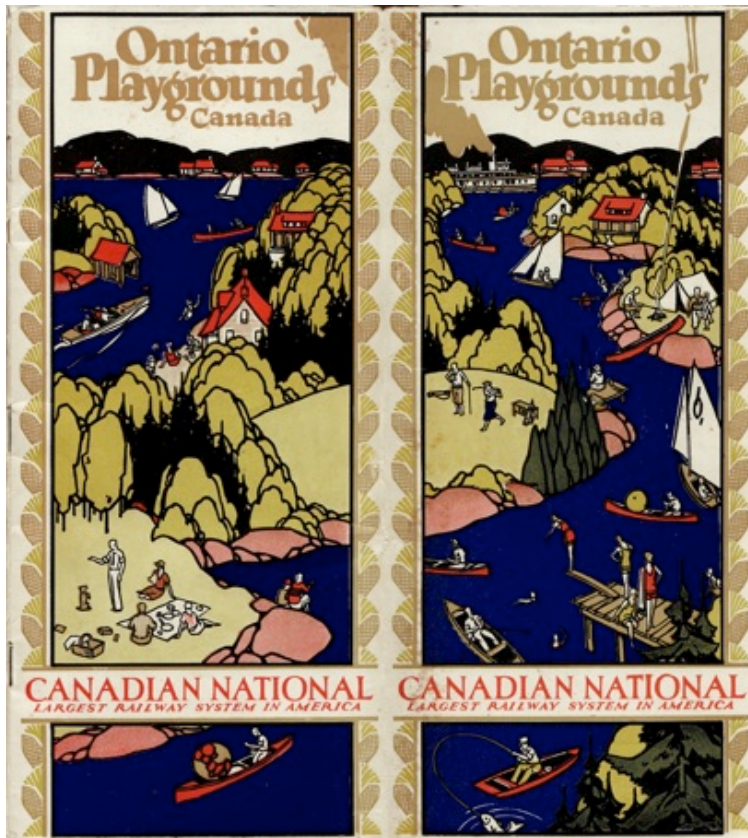


Figure 4:98. Canadian National Railway, *Ontario Playgrounds*, 1928. Source: Author's Collection.

Hotels were also adjusting the focus of the pictures in their brochures. Traditionally, photographs had been used sparingly in favour of textual description. Where they were included, they often consisted of a general shot of the hotel and one or two showcasing some of the interior spaces and the surrounding scenery. As new brochures replaced these early folders, images of outdoor recreation appear more frequently, placing physical activities at the centre of the Muskoka vacation. A comparison of the 1922 Bigwin Inn booklet with its 1938 brochure reveals the extent of

this change. The 1922 folder contains fifteen images, eleven of which are general views of the exterior and interiors of the buildings, and one each of guests either on the verandah, bowling, swimming, or playing tennis. In comparison, the 1938 brochure contains seventeen photographs of which just six are of the exterior or interior of the Inn. The rest are comprised of three photos of boating, two of swimming, two of golfing, and one each of guests sunbathing, canoeing and playing tennis. The same trend is evident in brochures from the Royal Muskoka which, in 1928, consisted of thirteen images, five of which focused on activities compared to twenty-four in 1937 of which seventeen were activity-focused.

The above evidence from hotel brochures exhibits a change from functional images of the physical features of each resort to an emphasis on activities, reflecting a new symbolic emphasis on lifestyle. In fact, it is the lifestyle of the Muskoka tourist that changed during the 1920s and 1930s more than setting. The automobile played a major role in the transformation, changing the way Muskoka was both viewed by, and portrayed to the general public. The car transformed Muskoka from a primary destination where people stayed for extended periods of time to sojourn quietly with nature, to a destination visited for a week or so for the diversion of an action-filled vacation. In some cases, the region became a short stopover on a sightseeing trip through Ontario. These short stays undermined the social life at the lodges, which had been one of their key functions prior to the automobile age. Shorter stays did not provide the time needed to solidify new relationships, develop courtships, or generate the gossip and intrigue that had been synonymous with the summer resorts from the nineteenth century. The summer colony of cottagers drifted away from the hotels to the private preserves of golf and yacht clubs,

leaving the resorts to become more insular and peripheral to the summer life of the district. The change did not go unnoticed and nostalgia for the past begins to emerge in the 1930s and would grow into one of the key elements of the district's image and identity.

Changing Interpretations of Muskoka's Past

The Indian Chief was the central figure that was evoked to endow Muskoka with a sense of history. The image of the woods Indian, as described by Podmore, gained predominance in the 1890s and was used throughout the 1900s to advertise the district as northern woodland full of mystery and intrigue. The Indian image in this era was conveyed primarily in text with an occasional illustration in a brochure or hotel logo. The 1920s saw this imaginary character turned into real people through contrived opportunities, which brought the curious tourist into direct contact with these supposed survivors of the region's pre-settlement period.



Figure 4:99. Bigwin Inn Plate, c1920. Source: Author's Collection.

Charles Shaw at Bigwin Inn was prominent in the promotion of Indian connections. He was inspired by the fact that Bigwin Island was one of the few genuine sites in Muskoka with a direct connection with the First Nations through Chief John

Bigwin and the presence of burial grounds on the island. It is uncertain at which point Shaw decided to use the history of the island in the promotion of the Inn. The architecture of the buildings initially did not incorporate any Indian motifs with the exception of a series of wall sconces in the dining room featuring the profile of Indians in headdresses, causing the room to be known as the Indian Head dining room. In addition to the name, the hotel's logo, featuring a teepee and canoe, was branded on dinnerware, linen, and stationary. (Figure 4:99)



Figure 4:100. Bigwin Inn, 1928. Source: Author's Collection.

Shaw's use of Native Canadian heritage to define the Bigwin Inn became increasingly more pronounced in the hotel's promotional materials. The 1922 brochure

notes that the island had been the “favorite camping ground of the Iroquois when the red man was a power in the land” (3). The 1927 brochure changed this slightly, claiming that the island “not more than fifty years ago, was the hunting ground of Chief Bigwin and his Indian band” (3). The 1928 booklet adds considerably to Bigwin Inn’s Indian association with a cover depicting twenty-eight teepees (Figure 4:100) and the 1930 edition of the booklet contains numerous woodcuts of an Indian in a canoe shooting an arrow at a deer.

As has already been discussed, the promotional movies made for the Inn use Indian images prominently. *A Region of Romance*, created in the late-1920s, opens with Chief Bigwin building a campfire and canoeing around Lake of Bays. Text panels tell of the ‘red-man’ inhabiting the district. Shots of Bigwin Inn follow, noting that “where once dwelt Chief Bigwin and his Mohawk warriors lies beautiful Bigwin Island” while “the teepees of the Indians are gone; in their stead stands the palatial palace of the white man”. The film ends with Chief Bigwin’s grandson, Os-ke-non-ton, actually visiting the Inn and mingling with guests.

Tribes are interchanged in the publicity materials. The 1922 brochure says they were Iroquois while the film claims them to be Mohawk, confirming that the actual historic record and authenticity were of little concern to the 1920s promoters of Muskoka. Like the earlier Bigwin Inn film, *Pleasure Island* (1936) also references the past inhabitants of the island through the narrator’s voiceover. Chief Bigwin would never have dreamed of the comforts of the ‘pale-faced wigwam’ claims the narrator, nor would the ‘red-skins’ have understood the “pale-faces” recreational pursuits. Even the “Indian’s great Manitou” is said to still brood over the property.

The guests of Bigwin Inn were not alone in being able to interact directly with Indians. Port Carling featured the ‘Indian Village’, which was described in the 1921 *Port Carling Ripple* as follows:

As we wend our way along the trail and enter the camp, we see the changes years have wrought. This spot, where years ago, the Indian hunted the moose, deer and wolf and made their skins into clothing; where one tribe waged war on the other; where they fought and conquered –lost and won, we now see the tribes mingling together as brothers –the tomahawk buried and all worshipping the ‘One Great Spirit.’ True –many of the old customs still exist. The squaws, as in old days are seated at the door of their wigwams weaving baskets. The Indian still roams the forest –hunts and fishes, and in the early morning one can hear the pound, pound of his mallet, as he prepares the long strips of black Ash, of which they make their baskets (16).

The ‘Indian Village’ at Port Carling was one of the top tourist attractions on the Muskoka Lakes throughout the 1920s, with the main attraction being Chief War Eagle’s Store. In the mid-1920s, Chief War Eagle himself published an advertisement for his shop outlining the range of ‘authentic’ goods that could be had there, including moccasins, baskets, bows and arrows, and fancy bedroom slippers.



Figure 4:101. Archery demonstration at Indian Village, Port Carling, 1936. Source: Author’s Collection.



Figure 4:102. Indian Wigwams at Port Carling, c1925. Source: Postcard, Author's Collection.

The shops were not the only attraction at the Indian Village. Tourist photographs reveal archery demonstrations. (Figure 4:101) The mere presence of Native Canadians led a tourist in the summer of the 1936 to note on a snapshot that ‘real’ Indian boys operated the locks adjacent to the village. Chief War Eagle and his family set up camp on the island park opposite the village where they posed in front of wigwams for tourist snapshots and the occasional postcard. (Figure 4:102) The Navigation Company, noting the success of the Indian Village, created a similar attraction within its own Natural Park at the head of Little Lake Joseph, the final destination of the 100-Mile Cruise. At Natural Park, visitors arriving on the Sagamo could see real Indians in their native costumes living in typical Indian wigwams, complete with their very own resident Chief, Chief American Horse (Io Hon Wa Ke Ra), who greeted visitors in full headdress

The pervasiveness of these Indian associations muddled the actual interpretations of Muskoka's past. When Katherine Hale wrote of the Royal Muskoka Hotel in 1937, she noted incorrectly that Indians still frequented the area when it was built and

considered the hotel a place of wonder (195). Elsewhere in Hale's guidebook, a new aspect of Muskoka's history begins to emerge. Hale chose to write about the old dwellings of Muskoka, though it is not the lakeside wigwam or teepee to which she refers. Instead, she writes about an old cabin, "that still tells a dramatic story of pioneer life in Muskoka" (193). She notes that when the cabin was built, the district was worthless. The value came years later when campers first discovered the area and went on to build cottages on the islands. Hale's farmhouse survived these changes, including the incursion of the automobile; its owners simply watching the swift progress of the modern era, content with their simple life (194). Eventually a cottager bought and restored the cabin, to preserve its natural beauty so that it would not fall apart "in a losing battle against time and the elements" (194-5).

The image of the early homesteader, as romanticized as that of the Indian, begins to appear in the image of Muskoka, eventually completely replacing the Indian as the preferred representation of Muskoka history. As the rate of modernization increases in the 1930s with improved roads and more facilities, the interest in the earlier days of settlement and tourism took root. Much of this interest stemmed from the holiday visitors and cottagers, such as the one who restored the cabin described by Hale. The last survivors of Muskoka's early years of settlement were passing on, taking with them the last vestiges of the region's pioneering experience. Barclay Shaw wrote to Alfred Judd on July 18, 1944, to inform him how much he appreciated their quiet chat and suggested a biographical sketch should be written to give expression to and preserve the pioneering spirit of early Muskoka settlers and their 'philosophy of life', a philosophy, he believed,

Judd personified (1). Unfortunately, no biographic sketch was written before Alfred Judd's passing the following year.

Others began publishing short histories and reminisces of their lives in Muskoka. Frederick De La Fosse wrote *English Bloods* under the pseudonym Roger Vardon, in 1930. He outlined his experience as one of the region's early farm hands telling what life was like for him in the pioneering period. Captain Lee R. Fraser published the first general history of Muskoka in 1942 under the straightforward title *History of Muskoka*. Fraser's history differs from that of the common image of Muskoka's past in that it does not include the Native Canadian inhabitants of the region at all, calling Muskoka prior to the middle of the nineteenth century a "no man's land" (5). His stated purpose in writing the book was to "depict the lives and work of the ordinary men and women who changed Muskoka from a wilderness to one of the foremost tourist resorts of America" (3). Fraser focuses on prominent individuals in Muskoka history from Cockburn to McMurray and Shaw, believing that the "true history of a country lies in the forgotten stories of the foresight, courage and tenacity that our pioneer men and women gave to the development of the country" (3).

The publication of Fraser's book corresponds with a period of growing interest in the history of early Muskoka settlement. Even the local newspapers began to publish old photographs of "Muskoka as it was", acknowledging that the region had drastically changed in the period between the taking of the picture and the year of publication which, in some cases, was as little as thirty years. New tourist attractions in the 1950s and 1960s were developed to celebrate the lives of these early pioneers, such as the Muskoka Lakes Museum in Port Carling and Huntsville's Pioneer Village. Recognition that the 1930s

and 1940s, in particular, were fundamentally different than the Muskoka of thirty or so years previous marks the split between modern, or ‘new’, Muskoka and ‘old Muskoka’.

Summary of Consolidation Phase 1915-1945

The attributes of the Consolidation Phase are summarized in Table 4-11. Muskoka, in 1945, shared more of these characteristics with the present-day tourist landscape than with the region prior to 1915. It can be argued that Muskoka changed more in the short span of just three decades between 1915 and 1945 than it has in the nearly seven decades since. The change began with the automobile that mobilized the summer visitors, granting them the freedom to come and go as they wished. The increased mobility shortened the vacation stay, disrupting the social life of the summer hotels, and ending the era of Muskoka as a primary travel destination. Toronto was finally acknowledged as Muskoka’s primary market. Advertising efforts designed to attract Americans increasingly focused on an Ontario-wide tourism package, placing Muskoka in a new context, and no longer the ‘wilderness’ hinterland. Increasing numbers of visitors ignored the hotels, instead choosing to acquire a cottage of their own, creating a private social scene that disengaged increasingly from the lodges. The hotels of pre-war Muskoka faced new pressures from competition provided by automobile camps and motor courts, as well as increased demands for more and better facilities by an increasingly sophisticated traveling public no longer content with ‘roughing it’ at facilities that lacked the amenities that they were becoming accustomed to.

In contrast, one constant through every era of Muskoka, is a reluctance to accept change by established Muskoka tourists and tourist operators. The members of the Muskoka Club took issue with the building of Rosseau House in 1871, questioning why

such a modern hotel was needed. Late-nineteenth century critics lamented the fashionable elements brought in by the 1901 construction of the Royal Muskoka Hotel, while 1920s hotel operators were reluctant to upgrade aging facilities, believing that true lovers of Muskoka would not care about sharing washrooms. When one of the last 'grand' old hotels to survive, the Windermere House, burned to the ground on an icy February night in 1995, locals and cottagers gathered a few days after to hold a funeral for the hotel to mark its passing. Even today, long-time guests of Clevelands House, fearing future renovations, make requests to management that, if their favourite cabin is demolished, then, rather than something new, they have first refusal on the building materials to preserve summer memories. Thus, the past is a powerful force in Muskoka and a cornerstone of its image. This image was solidified in the interwar years and has remained fundamentally unaltered since.

A reluctance to change would hamper the Muskoka tourism industry during the decades immediately following the end of the Second World War. Then, the trends established during the 1920s and 1930s reached their conclusions. Owners were reluctant or unable to update resort properties in the face of increasingly diminished returns based on a rising cottage culture and a more transient tourist brought about by the widespread adoption of the automobile as the primary means of transportation to and from the district.

Table 4-11 Summary of Consolidation Phase

Consolidation Phase 1915-1945			
Historical Developments	The Tourist	The Hotels	The Projected Image
<p>External events such as two world wars change consumption patterns.</p> <p>New modes of transportation such as the automobile reduce influence of traditional forms of transportation such as the train and steamboat.</p> <p>Railway companies reduce service to the region.</p> <p>Navigation companies increasingly reliant on tourist excursions for revenue.</p>	<p>Market for tourist being recognized as domestic rather than international.</p> <p>Duration of vacations being cut from months to weeks and increasingly just weekends.</p> <p>Exclusionary practices of denying accommodation to certain groups leads to founding of resorts catering to these tourists.</p> <p>Popularity of private cottages increases.</p> <p>Tourists' choice of recreation becoming more active from water-skiing to water aerobics.</p>	<p>Hotel construction slows.</p> <p>Several older properties burn down and not rebuilt.</p> <p>Smaller operations fail to keep up with increasing demands for improved facilities and stagnate.</p> <p>Other properties adapt and renovate retaining previous levels of success.</p> <p>New, cheaper, accommodation forms developed to cater to the motor tourists looking for privacy and convenience gain popularity.</p>	<p>Role of transportation companies in advertising district decreases.</p> <p>Individual resorts increasing advertising output.</p> <p>Business associations form between resort operators to undertake combined advertising initiatives.</p> <p>Various levels of government begin tourist advertising. On the municipal level tourist associations are formed and on the provincial level province wide advertising initiatives are undertaken.</p> <p>History of early tourist development replaces mythic history of early inhabitants as tourist narrative.</p>

Postscript

Postwar Muskoka 1945-

The headline of the July 12, 1970 *Globe and Mail* reads ‘Muskoka Decayed’, claiming that the trend to cottaging created economic problems. Frances Russell summarized a governmental report on the decline of Muskoka tourism throughout the 1960s. The key finding of the report was that the tourist facilities of Muskoka had been allowed to become outdated, posing a major threat to the region’s economy with tourists turning to destinations that provided more up-to-date facilities. It suggests that the decline is directly attributable to the state of the region’s hotels. Tourists deemed the hotels unsuitable because of deteriorated and outdated facilities. As roads improved, middle-class tourists increasingly turned to cottages as their preferred choice of accommodation. Hotelkeepers chose to forego costly renovations, instead reducing rates and attracting a younger, rowdier market that put them at odds with the established cottage community who eventually pushed transient tourists out by the mid-1960s. The loss of transient tourists forced the closing of many of the auxiliary tourist facilities, from souvenir shops to short-order restaurants, as well as the bankruptcy of many hotels (1).

Russell notes some of the interesting figures contained in the report. In the late 1960s, Muskoka had a permanent population of 250,000 residents with an additional 50,000 cottagers and 2,000,000 tourists. The tourists are further broken down with ten percent being guests of cottagers, thirty-five percent campers, forty percent day-trippers and just fifteen percent overnight hotel guests (2). Increased automobile usage in the 1920s and 1930s had created a situation where the largest group of tourists coming to the

district were day-trippers driving back and forth from the city, constituting a fundamental change in the use of the region as a recreational destination.

The decline of Muskoka's lodging sector began from the end of the Second World War in a period of initial enthusiasm for the future of the region's tourism industry. The late 1940s saw optimistic reinvestment in the region's two largest summer hotels. Both ultimately failed. Under new ownership, the Royal Muskoka Hotel received extensive reinvestment beginning in 1947 but after a disastrous fire on May 18, 1952 its island property was subdivided into cottage lots. Toronto papers lamented the passing of the "elegant queen of the north" (Fire Razes 50-Year Old Royal Muskoka Hotel, 1952, 1), unanimously agreeing that it was the end of an era on the Muskoka Lakes, leaving Bigwin Inn as the region's sole remaining high-class hotel (Famed Royal Muskoka Hotel Destroyed by Weekend Fire, 1952, 1).

At Bigwin Inn, the family of Charles Orlando Shaw continued to operate the Inn after Shaw's death in December 1942 selling it in 1947 to Vernon Cardy the operator of a series of Ontario hotels under the Cardy Hotels' flag. Cardy sold in just one year to Frank Leslie of Toronto. Vacancies rose and Leslie's efforts to revive the aging hotel failed (McTaggart, 1992, 124). In the early 1960s, Leslie sold Bigwin and the hotel switched owners several times before being renamed Bigwin Island Resort in 1967. Cuts in staff undermined the service that had made Bigwin famous and a series of negative reports further tarnished the resort's reputation. Finally, in the fall of 1968 after forty-eight seasons, it was announced that Bigwin would cease operations (127). A condominium project was initiated but failed. Over the next thirty years the Inn sat abandoned until, in the early 2000s, the island was transformed into a private golf club

with the former dining room complex as its new clubhouse. The remaining buildings were demolished.

Less prestigious resort hotels did not fare any better. The Ernescliffe Hotel operated until 1960 when it was sold to a seminary before being abandoned and subsequently burning down in the 1970s. The property became a private estate. Wigwassan Lodge closed in 1965 shortly after the death of George Martin. An affluent American family purchased the site to keep it from being developed. Elgin House operated until 1992 but was demolished and replaced in the mid-1990s by the private Lake Joseph Club. Most public resort properties were simply closed and demolished, their land privatized. Of the significant pre-war hotels only Clevelands House and the rebuilt Windermere House operate today in a manner that reflects their pre-war form.

The decline in the accommodation sector of Muskoka is not matched by a decline in Muskoka tourism in general. James Knight (1965) reconfirms the longstanding stereotype of Muskoka as being the domain of the fashionable set. For Knight, Muskoka is “the biggest, oldest, richest, loveliest, and most expensive playground in the country” (4). Since it is all privately owned, Knight laments that there is no place for the common man to take his family, with the exception of the hotels (4). For this reason Knight asserts that “no area in Canada promises so much to a city-weary population as Muskoka, and delivers so little” (4). When published there were 13,498 private cottages on the lakes up from 8,071 in 1955 demonstrating the continued growth of Muskoka as cottage country (6). ‘Old’ Muskoka appears to be under threat with the big old cottages of the previous generation being torn down or allowed to slip into sentimental ruin (7). The site

of the Navigation Company's former steamers *Segwun* and *Sagamo* laid up at Gravenhurst was "enough to break a nostalgic heart" (7).

The lack of public access to the lakes was becoming an issue. The Ontario Government is said to have been looking to establish a public park somewhere on the three lakes (4). Muskoka cottage owners feared this, claiming that people with no stake in the place would sully it with litter, untended campfires, and poor sanitary conditions (4). Freedom of movement brought about by the car led to increased demand for public accessibility either through increased cottage ownership or public parks. Increased affluence and availability challenged the old privacy and exclusiveness of Muskoka (7). Knight summarized: "The area is one of the last places in Canada where entrenched wealth has some sort of sanctification, but the 20th century is creeping up and Muskoka can't hold it at bay forever (8).

By 1988 the struggle to preserve the exclusivity of the region by cottage-owners was still being fought. Peter Gorrie (1988) looks at the struggle between the promoters of development in Muskoka and those "who want to slow the pace of change" (14). Little has evidently changed since the mid-1960s in terms of the perceived risks and benefits to development. The one notable difference being where Knight focused on the risks to the social environment, Gorrie frames the struggle as one over the natural environment. Local residents saw development as a boon to the region's economy while established seasonal residents felt the price of popularity was too high, fearing a despoiling of the environment. Gorrie equates the demise of the grand hotels of old Muskoka with the "subsequent scarring of the natural beauty by uncontrolled development" the result being that "the region lost its international reputation as a resort par excellence" (19). Muskoka

was now the unflattering image of a frenzied playground (19). Gorrie echoes the earlier article of Knight in his closing comment: “The push for change appears to be irresistible with so many people wanting a piece of Muskoka. The question remaining is whether change can be managed in a way that saves enough of the qualities that make it such a special place” (22).

Valerie Hauch (2007) writes a lament for the lost small resorts and ‘old’ Muskoka in general. Hauch notes the continued tendency for old cottages, both rambling and modest, to be torn down and replaced by “ostentatious, sprawling compounds with satellite dishes, skylights, multiple decks, and all the comforts of the city reproduced in meticulous, predictable detail (1). The social makeup of the lakes has dwindled from the mixed to the monied (1). In particular Hauch laments the passing of the resorts and with them a rite of passage for the generation of seasonal resort staff who ventured north from the city to spend the summer months working at one of the lodges (1). She hopes that the remaining world of the Muskoka resorts will somehow survive “so other generations not born of the silver paddle can know Muskoka” (1).

Knight, Gorrie, and Hauch all reach a similar conclusion. The established summer environment of Muskoka is under threat from outside forces of development, money, and demand. Each identifies a perceived conflict between ‘old’ Muskoka and ‘new’ Muskoka. This conflict is fundamentally over what the Muskoka vacation experience ought to be. While each identifies the conflict as something recent, this conflict has been present throughout the century and a half of Muskoka tourism history. Within this conflict lies the meaning of Muskoka, which will be discussed, in the next chapters.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The development of tourism in Muskoka reveals underlying continuities in people's engagement with the recreational landscape. This is not to say that change did not occur. As has been shown, many elements of the Muskoka vacation experience changed dramatically between 1860 and 1945. However, the core of the Muskoka vacation experience was and remains a form of the back-to-nature movement that was practiced by the earliest tourists to the region. Changes, both real and imagined, have been perceived by some to challenge the back-to-nature ideal. The ideal has been revised to accommodate modifications in the interpretation of the aesthetics of nature, as providing a restorative experience, a return to the innocence of a lost time, and an escape from the complexities of the modern world.

Key findings pertaining to the tourists, the hotels and the projected image will first be reviewed and then the three will be combined to reveal the changing meanings of Muskoka and the Canadian Shield as a tourist destination. Differences and commonalities with the established literature on summer resort history will be highlighted throughout with a focus on the relationship between American and Canadian destinations. Finally, the framework itself will be critiqued as to its effectiveness in guiding and organizing research in historical tourism studies.

Analyzing the Tourists, the Hotel and the Projected Image

The Human Landscape: The Tourists

Tourists' underlying needs and motivations can be seen in their interactions with the Muskoka landscape. The key question to ask is "Why were tourists choosing to spend their holiday time in Muskoka?" For many it was, and still is, a tradition-based tourist migration to the lakeside hotel, cottage, or camp in the name of escape from civilization. Some families have been doing this for several generations. For others, it was more of a social experience and less about escape. However, the first tourists were 'pioneers' and came when there was no tradition of holidaying in the Canadian Shield.

In the American literature, the wilderness regions of the United States were first explored by tourists seeking romantic landscapes in keeping with the picturesque and sublime elements embodied in the Romantic Movement of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century (Sears, 1989, 3-4). In Muskoka the term picturesque is often used to describe the landscape. However, the term sublime, the real motivator of early nineteenth century tourists, is seldom seen in the region's tourist literature. McMurray used sublime elements in conjunction with the Grand Muskoka Falls (1871, 30). However, the term has been used in Ontario more frequently to describe Niagara Falls and the north shore of Lake Superior (Jasen, 1995, 81-104). While certain elements of the romantic, picturesque and sublime appear in the primary source literature on the Muskoka Lakes, there is little evidence that they were driving forces in attracting tourists.

The back-to-nature and the anti-modern movement that inspired it are of more relevance to the Muskoka tourist experience and, by extension, to the larger Canadian Shield region. Both the Canadian and American literatures credit the works of Thoreau

with nurturing the back-to-nature movement in the mid-nineteenth century (Nash, 2001, 84-95; Jasen, 1995, 105-6). However, there is little evidence in the primary sources that links Thoreau's writings with the motivations of the first tourists to visit Muskoka. An alternative interpretation is to view the intentions of the first tourists as similar to those of current adventure tourists, but this also does not seem to be satisfactory. While the decision to travel to the then isolated Muskoka Lakes might be viewed as being a form of adventure tourism, the surviving journals of the early tourists suggest otherwise. The members of the Muskoka Club did not hunt or take part in strenuous activities associated with adventure. Instead, the accounts indicate a more leisurely holiday experience composed of writing, drawing, fishing, canoeing and communing with the natural environment. These activities are far more in keeping with nineteenth century anti-modern ideas and the back-to-nature sensibilities of Thoreau, suggesting that possibly both were influential in inspiring the first tourists to leave the cities of 'the front' for the Canadian Shield and suggesting the recuperative activities that should be done while there.

In this period, the lakes were visited predominantly by young, urban, middle-class males. The provision of transport and accommodation infrastructure changed this. Hotels attracted a wider range of tourists. Visitors to the lakes in the 1870s, after the opening of the resort hotels and the arrival of direct rail connections, were more diverse with families, women, and older guests joining the young visitors who had previously been content to camp out in the region. Proportionately more Americans came to the district at this time. These new visitors possessed the same urban middle and upper-middle-class backgrounds as the early visitors. However, they were no longer visiting a

pristine environment, for lumbering, the clearing of land for farming, and fires sparked by the railways soon left their marks.

While the anti-modern movement probably motivated early visitors to ‘escape’ civilization, social incentives soon became a driving force in attracting new demand. For example, the earliest tourists formed the Muskoka Club within their first five years of visiting the region. The Club, as a social organization, attracted the peers of the original members to the region and provided an example of how they should conduct their vacations. Early visitors to the resort hotels may have initially come for the same back-to-nature aesthetics, but they practiced it in a less pure form since they spent most of the time in the domesticated hotel environment. This is supported by the early adoption of the term ‘unfashionable’ to describe the Muskoka vacation.

The term ‘unfashionable’ is a particularly American descriptor that emerges frequently in American tourism history literature. Its use to describe Canadian Shield experiences suggests that American attitudes played a significant role in the creation of the Muskoka tourist landscape. The term, as evidenced by Aron (1999, 98-100), described primarily the social atmosphere and behaviours of guests at particular resort destinations rather than the physical attributes of the destination itself. Sterngass (2001, 116-121) describes the social atmosphere of the fashionable American resorts of the nineteenth century, suggesting that a key function of the American resorts was to create a suitable setting for the social activities of the age. These activities were not universally accepted as being a benefit to society at large (Aron, 1999, 95-96). Issues of deception, sexual impropriety, and rampant social engineering became associated with the fashionable resorts.

Muskoka, initially labeled as an ‘unfashionable’ destination, attracted visitors who placed the back-to-nature mentality ahead of social networking. However, social functions gained increased importance during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1895, the *Canadian Summer Resorts* reported that the chief attraction of the lakes was their “life and gaiety, the meeting of friends from distant parts, and the renewing of acquaintanceships around some bonfire, or at some of the numerous pretty cottages, or in the more cosmopolitan hotel” (Smily, 1895, 39). The increased focus on social atmosphere rendered the landscape ideals of the back-to-nature movement less outwardly relevant, marking a turning point in the transference of the Muskoka Lakes from an ‘unfashionable’ to a ‘fashionable’ destination. Sandoval-Strausz connects the size of the resort hotel to the creation of a community of guests (2007, 88). As the Muskoka tourism sector increased in size, it was perhaps inevitable that the social dynamics created by a large community of visitors would create a ‘fashionable’ environment.

The tourist experience shifted accordingly. New, more intensive activities such as tennis, golf, bowls, tournaments, balls, and regattas augmented the quieter activities of fishing, canoeing, informal dances, and communing with nature. The attractiveness of the region’s social atmosphere relied on several factors. Jasen partially credits Muskoka’s popularity to the attractiveness of being part of a homogenous social group (1995, 123). According to Jasen, Muskoka allowed guests to cast off many of the burdens of civilization and some of the superficial signs of class distinction knowing that they did not risk a demotion on the social scale (123). Jasen, however, stops short of explaining how this homogenous social environment was created and maintained.

At first, the ability to take a vacation in a destination such as Muskoka was limited to the few who could afford both the time and expense of doing so. This guaranteed that only a certain socio-economic group could frequent the destination, and this closely parallels the American experience. Pressures on the maintenance of this homogenous social class of visitors increased as more citizens of lesser social status gained the resources necessary to vacation. In the United States, this led to the adoption of exclusionary practices in the 1870s to discourage patronage by minority groups (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007, 299). By the 1920s, these practices were being employed by Muskoka hotelkeepers. The lag between Canada and the United States can be attributed to a corresponding lag in economic development that also explains, in part, the larger proportion of American guests in the period leading up to the First World War.

In addition to clientele restrictions, hotel operators used other means to ensure a homogenous clientele. Aron describes resort hotels in the United States that closely adhered to Methodist practices of temperance, restriction of card playing, and dancing, as well as all sport activities on the Sabbath (1999, 109). By implementing such practices, these resorts ensured a clientele that was free of the vices associated with the 'fashionable' resorts. In Muskoka, Elgin House opened in 1900 and adopted these practices suggesting that anxieties related to the negative effects of leisure were also felt in Canada.

The key social function of courtship made the importance of maintaining a desirable clientele paramount to the success of nineteenth-century resort hotels (Aron, 1999, 83-84). American literature focuses a great deal of attention on this activity, yet it does not appear as frequently in the Canadian literature. Allusions made to courtship in

the primary source data for the Muskoka Lakes region suggests that it was just as important north of the border. Both guidebooks and advertisements depict young couples falling in love while on holiday. Personal letters announcing courtships and engagements confirm that the advertisers were not simply spinning a tale to attract more patronage. Resort hotels, by providing a uniform group of guests of the same socio-economic standing, assured that suitable matches could be made at a time when the mingling of sexes was limited in the urban middle-class world.

The complex social environment of Muskoka suggests that the attractiveness of the destination extended far beyond the simple pursuit of picturesque scenery. It was an environment where social connections could be made with confidence that other guests were of a similar class. The maintenance of this social environment was key to the region's success in the development phase. There was an element of xenophobia in the means carried out to achieve this. Technological and socio-economic changes occurred in the consolidation phase that upset the delicate social structure of Muskoka rendering many of the social functions redundant in the inter-war period.

As shown in the findings, the automobile had profound effects on the nature of vacations. In the American literature, the automobile is hailed as the great democratizing agent transforming the vacation experience by opening recreation areas to all (Jakle, 1985, 146). Personal mobility and shortened vacation stays disrupted the social community present at most resorts by bringing in increasing numbers of transient guests. Traditional resort guests, in turn, eventually retreated into the seclusion of privately-owned cottages and country clubs where a continued sense of exclusivity could be maintained. This left the middle class to inherit the resort hotels that were formally the

abodes of the well-to-do (Jakle, 1985, 53). A similar assessment of the effects of automobiles on the social dynamics of Ontario's resort hotels has yet to be undertaken.

The automobile's effect on tourism in Muskoka was less drastic than evident at American resorts. The region was already the summer home of many middle class families, leaving the overall socio-economic composition of guests unchanged. There is evidence, however, suggesting that a similar process of privatization occurred within Muskoka as described by Sterngass (2001, 182-228) in Newport. This change began as a movement to private cottages by wealthy resort guests. For example, the cottage community of Beaumaris was primarily composed of wealthy Americans from Pittsburgh who originally summured at the Beaumaris Hotel (Ahlbrandt, 1989, 71). Next came private venues for the social functions that were previously held at the hotels. The Beaumaris Yacht Club, for example, was established in 1921 and provided the setting for the summer community's social gatherings in place of the Beaumaris Hotel. Resort guests soon found that the social scene at the lakes was increasingly inaccessible to them. Hotels became socially more insular, while private cottage-ownership soared.

Lastly, the advent of motor tourism coincided with increased patronage of the lakes by Torontonians as opposed to American tourists. Americans played an important role in establishing Muskoka as a summer resort destination. However, the outbreak of World War One saw American patronage dip to all time lows. The war atmosphere partly accounted for this, as recreational pursuits were frowned upon. Another view is that the 'See America First' campaign in the United States was successful in convincing American tourists to travel domestically (Shaffer, 2001, 27). Either way, the outcome was the same. The results could have been disastrous for Muskoka, had it not been for

the increased patronage by Torontonians. By the 1920s, Toronto was clearly established as Muskoka's primary target market. Residents of Toronto continue to dominate the Canadian Shield tourist landscape today.

A number of important conclusions can be drawn in relation to the work of other academic authors. While the Romantic Movement probably played an important role in initially encouraging tourists to seek out wilderness destinations, the back-to-nature ideal, proposed by Thoreau, had a greater impact on the opening of the Canadian Shield for tourism. Resort hotels created the social community that necessitated the adoption of the adjective 'unfashionable' to complement the 'back-to-nature' or anti-modern attraction of the region. However, social functions gained prominence as the size of the resorts increased, making the region more 'fashionable' and exclusionary practices were adopted to maintain a clientele that would be attractive to desirable guests. The motor tourist disrupted the social dynamics by creating a more transient hotel population. As a partial consequence, many families chose to summer in private cottages away from the bustle of the hotels. Here, in the privacy of their cottage, a greater control over social interactions could be maintained through an increasing array of activities held away from the resort hotels.

The Canadian Shield experience parallels American tourism history closely albeit with a slight delay in the adoption of certain practices. For example, the establishment of the region as a tourist destination occurred roughly twenty years after similar regions in the United States. While the use of the fashionable and unfashionable terminology coincides with their use stateside, the establishment of Methodist hotels in Muskoka occurred about twenty years after those in the United States. The same twenty-year lag is

also apparent in the effects of the automobile and the transformation of the region from a resort to a cottage community with both occurring in Muskoka in the 1920s. Many American resorts began to experience these changes as early as the 1900s.

What accounts for this developmental lag of approximately two decades? One explanation is that the Canadian population was small and unable, economically, to enjoy recreational pursuits as early as Americans. Wolfe acknowledged this, stating “everything that came before 1890 was little more than a prelude” (1977, 134). Only with the economic boom of 1896 was it witnessed that Ontario residents joined American visitors “making intensive use of their own wilderness for recreation” (134). Owing to the dominance of Americans in the prewar developmental phases of the industry, it is possible to consider Muskoka up to 1914, and possibly until 1945, as part of the American summer resort system. In this system, Muskoka occupies a peripheral position in relation to the core resorts of the seacoast and mountains. As ideas about recreation formed in these core resort areas; they later spread to the periphery, explaining the lag in their emergence in Muskoka. This is also consistent with the notion that Muskoka seldom was a source of tourism innovation, but a location for the adaption and modification of ideas stemming from the United States. This can be further seen in the built environment and promotion materials of the Muskoka summer resorts.

The Built Landscape: The Resort Hotels

For the first tourists, resort hotel accommodations were not an option. The rough worn floor of a settler’s cabin passed for tourist accommodation at this time (Small, 1866, 138). Tourists camped on the shores of the lakes under canvas. It was the perfect embodiment of the back-to-nature aesthetic that they pursued. The economic impact of

these tourists on the region was limited to the procuring of supplies and the possible hiring of a local guide. Direct interaction between tourists and settlers was also limited. Tourists and settlers did not share the same space; tourists chose island properties to set up camp while settlers confined themselves primarily to mainland properties where they struggled to set up homesteads. As tourism developed, its impact on the local economy increased as tourist and local spaces overlapped.

From American literature, we learn that the period surrounding the Centennial in the 1870s was one of immense expansion and mobility (Limerick, 1979, 45). New wealth generated a world of “private clubs, societies, schools, residential developments, and organizations of all sorts, complete with elaborate settings and rules of behavior” (45). The resort hotel was one element of this world of the wealthy (45). The expansion of rail networks opened the entire continent to this new segment of the population (45) and Muskoka and began its transition into a resort region at this time.

William Pratt, an American, opened Muskoka’s first resort hotel in 1870 at Rosseau. Another American, Hamilton Fraser, opened Muskoka’s second resort hotel in 1871 at Port Cockburn. Both Pratt’s Rosseau House and Fraser’s Summit House catered primarily to American tourists and sportsmen. Pratt’s, in particular, played to the American desire for novelty by providing luxurious accommodations in a remote wilderness setting in line with the operational style of the Catskill Mountain House in New York State. Together these two establishments comprised the entirety of Muskoka’s summer resort hotel accommodations until the 1880s. Other tourists who could not afford or did not desire the domestic comforts of the two large resort hotels continued to camp or build small seasonal cottages.

Jakle notes that at the heart of every prominent resort stood at least one dominant resort hotel, usually built to stimulate travel by a railroad or steamship company (1985, 60). While Alexander Cockburn, founder of the Muskoka Navigation Company, played a role in attracting both Pratt and Fraser to the region, neither Rosseau House nor Summit House was truly in this mold. The Lake Couchiching Hotel, financed by the Northern Railway on Lake Simcoe, did. Opened in 1874, the Lake Couchiching Hotel was both larger and grander than either of the Muskoka resort hotels. Located at the terminus of the railway, the Lake Couchiching Hotel, for a brief time, formed the core of the tourist area near Orillia with the Muskoka Lakes serving as a peripheral excursion destination for its guests. This dominance ended with the extension of the railway north to Gravenhurst in 1876, the same year it was destroyed by fire. With Orillia diminished, the Muskoka Lakes quickly developed into its own tourist region.

Demand for hotel accommodation increased dramatically after the arrival of the railroad. Many settlers met the increased demand by entering the tourism industry. Homesteaders converted their homes and, in some cases, their barns into tourist accommodations. Most started small, just taking in a handful of guests, but some soon grew to large resort operations. The process of local inhabitants converting their properties into hotels and boarding houses would continue throughout the development phase until the First World War when new hotel construction tapered off. The convergence of the space of the settler with the space of the tourist for the first time brought some prosperity to the region's local inhabitants where as previously, the growth of tourism benefited only a few.

Jasen links the settlers' entry into the tourist industry with the opening of the first resorts by Americans, stating "Cockburn's links with American entrepreneurs helped to accelerate the pace of change" (1995, 122). While this statement is true, Jasen neglects to acknowledge the nearly decade-long gap between the opening of the first hotels by Pratt and Fraser, as well as the effects of the nearby Lake Couchiching Hotel. The expansion of hotel accommodation had little to do with the first resort hotels and more to do with the establishment of direct rail connections and the consequent growth in demand for tourist accommodation.

If this is the case, then Muskoka differs from its American resort counterparts, especially as Muskoka's initial hotels had very short lives. Instead of one or more large hotels generating demand, the desire to visit the region's landscape itself generated the demand. The hotels developed after this demand was established. It is a subtle distinction but one that sets the tone of the Muskoka holiday vacation and differentiates it from other destinations. Muskoka lost its preeminent hotel with the 1883 destruction by fire of Rosseau House. Lacking a core hotel that centralized the social gatherings of the region, the entire lake system began to serve the resort hotel function. While accommodations were arranged in various nodes, the hotel verandah described by Sterngass (2001, 117) as being the arena for observation and the stage for the theatre of social life at American resorts was replaced in Muskoka by the lakes themselves that served the same function. Resort guests frequently travelled between hotels to make acquaintances and seek out chance encounters. The parlours and dining rooms of individual hotels and, in some cases cottages, were not the exclusive domain of resident guests but became the gathering places of people from all of the hotels. Balls, regattas,

and sporting tournaments were designed to attract everyone on the lakes regardless of where they were staying.

This congeniality between hotel operations can be traced to the owners themselves. As original settlers, many hotel families were intermarried. This perhaps explains the noticeable lack of competitive spirit and the few attempts to outdo other lodging operations in Muskoka. In comparison, such competition was rife in many other resort regions, where a spirit of one-upmanship prevailed (Limerick, 1979, 45). This is also evident in the relative uniformity of Muskoka's lodgings in terms of design, operation, amenities and price throughout the early development phase. It should be noted that the Summit House, which advertised itself as the 'only American Hotel on the Lakes' (*Summit House*, c1910, 12), was much more insular in operation than other hotels in the area.

The uniformity and social homogeneity of the hotel operators influenced the tone of the Muskoka vacation experience. Many of the original settlers shared an Anglo-Saxon ancestry, and were religious, particularly Methodist. They personally practiced a culture of simplicity, supported temperance, and were weary of the social pretenses of the era. Their style of hotel operation followed these conventions. The unpretentious manner of their hotel operations matched the 'unfashionable' desires of a large middle-class group of American and Canadian consumers who worried about the ill effects of 'fashionable' society and 'fashionable' resorts. This affirmed the idea that the Muskoka Lakes were a destination where one could truly get back-to-nature.

These dynamics begin to shift as the Muskoka region transitioned into the later phases of development. The competitive spirit that emerged between operations is

evidenced by a diversification in design and decoration, as well as the size of operations and variation in room rates. Owners, through advertising, began to distinguish the unique characteristics of their properties and, particularly, the clientele to which they catered. This competitive spirit can be traced to the increased supply of accommodations and steady demand. New outside investors were attracted by the success of the Muskoka Lakes as a tourist destination. The hotel operations they founded in the closing decades of the late development phase took renewed inspiration from American models of hotel development that favoured large, exclusive, high-priced, resort hotels that centralized social functions within their properties and operated in a more insular manner than those of the settler families.

The Muskoka Navigation Company was the first to build a large corporate hotel with the opening of the Royal Muskoka Hotel in 1901. The Canadian Railway News Company followed in 1908 with the WaWa Hotel on Lake of Bays and, finally the American Charles Shaw, through his Lake of Bays Navigation Company, opened Bigwin Inn in 1920. These hotels were large and luxurious, designed by architects who modeled their designs on American operations. Professional managers strived to ensure that these hotels were filled with ‘fashionable’ society, with most guests originating from the United States. A key difference between the operating styles of these new hotels, compared to older properties, was that the settler families entered and expanded their operations to cater to existing demand while the corporate operators of the new ‘fashionable’ hotels strived to induce demand through the provision of this type of accommodation.

While the introduction of huge core hotels to the region cemented Muskoka as a prominent resort, there was a backlash. Both operators and tourists expressed dismay at what they deemed the superfluous and unnecessary amenities enjoyed by guests of these new hotels. Most importantly, the fashionable dress and behaviour of these new guests challenged the 'unfashionable' notions of visitors who had been vacationing in the region for decades. A difference in opinion re-emerged as to what exactly the Muskoka holiday experience should be. The Royal Muskoka, in particular, succeeded in centralizing the social gatherings of the lakes, disrupting the delicate social network that had developed between the various hotels and cottages in the late-nineteenth century.

For a brief period, the wider social connections of the lakes survived but, as the consolidation phase of development began, this social matrix began to break down. In theory, the introduction of the automobile and motor launch should have aided the ability of guests to travel from one hotel to another. As we have seen, however, the result was almost the complete opposite with the cottage community, in particular, retreating into increasingly private spaces that were inaccessible to the resort hotel guest. Transient tourists challenged the social dynamics developed in the hotels through the prolonged residency of guests, while newcomers often presented a challenge to long-held assumptions of who should be vacationing in Muskoka. Restrictions imposed on the clientele failed to dissuade minority groups, such as Jews, from vacationing in the region. To avoid the prejudices of the existing community, Jewish visitors frequented hotels operated to cater solely to their needs. New ownership of existing hotels also broke many of the family bonds between hotel owners that had been paramount in creating the social dynamics of the lakes.

Hotel operations and design adjusted accordingly to reflect the diminished role of social gatherings and increased patronage by transient guests. Operationally, hotels became more independent of one another, focusing the organization of amusements on the pleasure of their own house guests. In the past, the season at most Muskoka resorts featured annual events, such as regattas and balls. These events were reorganized to occur weekly in light of the shorter average stays of guests. Guest rooms grew in size with the addition of private facilities, including washrooms and balconies. In many cases, cabin accommodations were added to the lodging options, affording guests increased privacy, similar to a private cottage.

Public spaces, such as lounges and verandahs, decreased in popularity, as privacy became an increasingly important factor in choice of accommodation. The introduction of cabin courts and motels to the tourism landscape supports the findings of Jakle (1996, 29-43). These cheap and convenient accommodations located along the roads gained huge popularity with the transient motor tourist who did not wish to bother with the expense and fraternity of the resort hotels. As Jakle noted in the United States (1996, 30-31), the cheap and convenient accommodations provided by motels deeply eroded the profit margins of traditional resorts, crippling their financial ability to reinvest in facilities. In Muskoka, this pattern is evident in the deterioration of much of the older resort infrastructure due to a lack of reinvestment. The situation was compounded by an attitude among certain operators that improvements were not needed. They believed that tourists only required the bare creature comforts to fully enjoy the Muskoka vacation experience. As a consequence, the stage was set for the retraction of the hotel industry on the Muskoka Lakes towards the end of the consolidation phase and into the stagnation

phase of development. This was as a direct consequence of the rising popularity of private cottages and cheap motel accommodations.

A pattern emerges when changes to accommodation infrastructure on the Muskoka Lakes are summarized. Outside investors, mostly from the United States or Canadians adopting American prototypes, built resort hotels to attract consumers, creating a demand for such accommodation. Local residents entered the hospitality sector as demand exceeded the initial hotel supply. Local hotelkeepers operated these lodgings initially in a non-competitive marketplace that was not conducive to the adoption of innovative practices or pretentious design and decoration. These hotels operated within a community spirit that saw fit to share the responsibility of providing amusement to guests. As demand was met in the late development phase, competition emerged between hotels to attract consumers through the adoption of more innovative design and unique operating styles. As the popularity of resorts was assured, outside investors returned to the market to build larger, grander hotel operations designed to target new lucrative market segments that older properties were not able or did not desire to attract. These new corporate hotels operated outside of the community atmosphere of the homegrown lodging stock. This created conflict between established hotelkeepers and newcomers with regard to the nature of the vacation experiences that should be provided. Long-time visitors, no longer content with the public atmosphere of the resort hotels, began to retreat into an increasingly private vacation landscape that was inaccessible to resort guests. This process was accelerated by transportation innovations that increased freedom of movement. The introduction of the automobile created new forms of lodging not compatible with the operating style of the older lodges. Strained

financially and outdated, many hotelkeepers chose to close operations and private cottages took over as the accommodation of choice.

The advertising of the region reflects developments in both the nature of tourists and the lodging infrastructure. Changes in both the tourists and the hotels reveal a conflict over what the vacation experience ought to entail. Local operators strived for continuity through the maintenance of an unpretentious tourism environment, while external investors desired change by creating a more pretentious vacation landscape in line with competing destinations. The reaction of the region's promoters is revealed in the image that they projected. They adjusted the image to fit with expectations and, in doing so, reflected the meanings of the destination.

The Imagined Landscape: The Projected Image

The wilderness concept is an appropriate place to start a discussion of the projected image of the Muskoka Lakes as it relates to both the wider Canadian Shield and other tourist areas. The wilderness status of the Muskoka Lakes is a highly contested subject both in the past and in the present. This is not altogether surprising as wilderness as a concept itself is highly contested; it has many different meanings, meanings that have further changed with time. Not surprisingly then that some sources suggest the region was a wilderness while others depict the region as exhibiting the perfect balance of wilderness and civilization. Some propose that the region has never been a true wilderness, at least from before the first days of commercial tourism development. All three viewpoints are present in the tourism literature.

Academic research on wilderness reveals a difference in attitudes between Americans and Canadians. In the American mindset, wilderness is coupled with the

frontier, a symbol of future prosperity and a national asset to be celebrated (McGregor, 1985, 59). For nineteenth-century Americans, a trip to the continent's various wilderness destinations took the form of a pilgrimage, an almost religious experience (Sears, 1989, 5-6). Canadians, on the other hand, recoiled from their wilderness: as it was something to be feared, a liability and a threat to survival (McGregor, 1985, 59). In Muskoka, as a tourist destination that attracted both American and Canadian consumers, one finds both concepts present. For the American market, the region's wilderness credentials were celebrated; for the Canadian market, the picturesque descriptions of the lakes undermined the wilderness notion.

In the early years of development, in the exploration and the involvement phases, the advertisers of the Muskoka Lakes gave priority to agricultural settlement over tourism. The landscape and climate of the region were described as being more productive and temperate than they really were. McMurray's *The Free Land Grants of Canada* (1871) describes the bracing yet mild climate, the grandeur of the scenery, and claims that two-thirds of the terrain was suitable for farming (16-17). No allusions are made that the region was a wilderness or even remote. As the promoters of the region began to focus on the tourist trade in anticipation of direct rail connections to the 'front', two dialogues emerged. The first was designed to encourage permanent settlement by emphasizing the commonalities with the settled regions of the province. The second was to encourage tourism, highlighting the differences in climate and scenery compared to the settled regions of the 'front'.

Both viewpoints are present in much of the early literature. Cockburn's *Tourists' Guide to the Muskoka Region* (1874) presents an image of pretty, attractive lakes dotted

with well-wooded islands where it was safe to venture out in small boats (6). While Cockburn describes dramatic granite formations, he also stresses the presence of fine farming land and wide stretches of arable country being rapidly “peopled by thrifty settlers” (10). Cockburn was the owner of the local steamboat company and had an invested interest in both tourism and settlement. Descriptions of rugged scenery combined with domesticated landscapes would define the image of the Muskoka landscape throughout the nineteenth century.

A more rugged description of nature emerged as the focus of advertising moved away from encouraging settlement to attracting tourists in the early and late development phases. By the turn of the twentieth century, landscape descriptions featured passages about ‘rugged rock ribbed ridges’, torrents of water, and primeval forests’ (Grand Trunk Railway, 1907). As tourism gained importance in the regional economy, descriptions of wilderness landscape increased. Concurrently, the physical landscape began a long stage of renewal at this time after initial economic activities, such as lumbering and farm clearing, had modified it substantially.

Different descriptions were also employed to attract American and Canadian consumers. Canada, as a whole, was advertised to Americans as a new area and the difference between the two countries, in both people and language (Cumberland, 1875, 3), were equated to those experienced when crossing a European border. Muskoka, along with the Canadian Shield as a whole, is described as “a new and popular resort, presenting a pleasant and economical way of *penetrating* the interior of Canada” (4). By using the phrase ‘penetrating the interior of Canada’, the writer implies a sense of adventure in the Canadian Shield vacation experience. A different tone is taken in the

same publication to attract Canadian guests: the “beautiful varieties of scenery, bold outline of form and graceful grouping of islands fringed with fresh green foliage, grant a charm to our inland waters, which makes them well merit being chosen as the scene of our summer ramble” (5-6). Where Americans are encouraged to travel north to experience the adventure and excitement of a foreign land, domestic tourists are invited to pass time in pleasant non-challenging surroundings. The difference in tactics can be linked to differing attitudes towards wilderness where we understand that Americans enjoyed its challenges while Canadians shied away from direct encounters.

There is another interpretation of the differences in depiction of both terrain and climate. Landscape descriptions can be categorized as unpretentious and pretentious or ‘unfashionable’ and ‘fashionable’. The picturesque descriptions imply an unpretentious landscape while the grander wilderness depictions lend themselves to more pretentious associations. It has already been suggested that local tourist operators favoured ‘unpretentious’ means of operation and promotion in comparison to outsiders, such as the railways and external hotel investors that became primary tourism suppliers at a later date. The description of the ‘unfashionable’ nature of Muskoka in the travel literature of Cockburn was compared with the rhetoric produced by the railways. The railway literature implies a more prestigious destination suitable for a more ‘fashionable’ tourist. The difference in opinion can be attributed to local desires to maintain the destination as it was, while outside forces saw the destination for what it could become. Through the early development phase, internal operators were instrumental in determining the projected image while, in the late development phase and beyond, external stakeholders had more control over the destination image.

Who were these external stakeholders? Chief among them were the railroad companies who profited by increasing traffic on their lines. Hotel investors and professional managers that opened and operated increasingly grand resort hotels joined them. Finally, journalists, novelists, and travel writers created a more exciting image of society to enliven newspaper columns and books. Both internal and external tourism stakeholders primarily sought profits and gained from increased visitation. However, local operators represented a bottom-up approach to identity formation, stressing the region's uniqueness, as opposed to external operators who favoured a top-down process of image formation. Local operators framed Muskoka as an alternative destination, while external operators were prone to focus on similarities with other noted destinations in terms of society and amenities.

The opening of the Royal Muskoka Hotel provides an example within the broader context of Muskoka tourism development. To recap, the hotel was a corporation proposed by a group of Toronto investors, owned by the Muskoka Navigation Company, and constructed with finance from the Grand Trunk Railway. Early promotional material envisioned the hotel becoming to the summer tourist industry what the famed Royal Ponciana was at the time to the winter tourist industry in Florida, the most fashionable resort (*Boston Daily Globe*, April 7 1902, 10). As discussed previously, the reactions from local operators were negative. They criticized that this particular hotel changed the cultural landscape by introducing luxurious amenities and a fashionable clientele into a tourist industry that for decades had been positioned as an alternative to such pretentious destinations. The late development phase is marked by the transition from a locally-controlled tourism industry to one that was shaped primarily by outside stakeholders.

The projected image shifted accordingly. Increased involvement by outside marketers allowed the image to both crystalize and become more contrived. The period from about 1895 until 1914, when this occurred, is the focus of Jasen's work on the Muskoka Lakes. Jasen places emphasis on the concept of the 'rest cure', an advertising term that was common at the time. A 'rest cure' was in many respects a re-interpretation of the back-to-nature movement of a generation before, albeit with an increased focus on physical health. If anything, the increased focus on well-being articulated many of the vague health associations found in older guides and brochures. There is increased detail concerning the specific ailments that could be cured by the health-giving benefits of the region. Brochures produced by the Grand Trunk Railway claimed that a Muskoka vacation relieved various nervous conditions, including 'brain fag', which were considered symptomatic of urban living. The cure centered on relaxation and recuperation in the bracing air of the Canadian Shield. The promoters of most summer resorts in Canada and the United States promoted the health benefits of their climates in a similar manner. Advertisers, therefore, had to use additional means to differentiate Muskoka and the Canadian Shield from other resort areas.

One strategy was to brand the entire Canadian Shield region as the 'Highlands of Ontario'. In chapter four, the origin of the term was traced back to the mid-1870s and it was shown how the Scottish theme was adapted to brand many different aspects of the vacation experience, particularly through imagery. Jasen claims the term was meant to foster a north woods theme (121). While this is true, the terminology implied much more than that. Advertisers, by applying the label 'Highlands of Ontario' to the Canadian Shield, referenced a wealth of associations touching all facets of the projected image,

from the nature of the landscape to the cultural characteristics of population. For Canadians, the term diminished the negative associations of the Shield's unforgiving wilderness by identifying it with the less threatening natural regions of the 'old country'. For Americans, it heightened the sense that in the Canadian Shield a landscape and culture that differed from those of the United States could be encountered without the difficulty of long-distance travel. These tactics presented the familiar to Canadian consumers, while the same terminology heightened the sense of the other for Americans.

An historical narrative was sought to add depth to the image of the Muskoka Lakes. While Niagara Falls had the War of 1812, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence had the Upper Canada Loyalists, and northern Ontario had the fur trader, the central sections of the Canadian Shield lacked a dominant historical figure. To ease the minds of potential settlers, early guidebook writers denied the presence of Native Canadians. They claimed emphatically that Indians were not present in the Free Grant Lands. McGregor notes that, for the early colonists of Canada, the Indian represented not merely nature, or man-in-nature, but "a phenomenon even more disquieting to contemplate than the naked face of the wilderness" (1985, 216). Therefore, the Indian was largely removed from consciousness (217) and, when mentioned, the Native was derided and depicted in highly negative terms. The rehabilitation of the Native image in Muskoka began with the appropriation of Indian symbols for advertising purposes in the late development phase. The image was just as contrived as the former negative one, neither being an accurate reflection of reality. Through the work of Podmore, the reintroduction of the Indian into the recent past of the lakes has already been described. The image of the 'Noble Savage' became the preferred image of the Indian that was used for tourism purposes.

The promoters of the southern Canadian Shield were, in their use of the Indian, operating in conjunction with marketing initiatives that were employed across the continent. The image of the Indian became one of the most powerful icons of consumer society (Francis, 1992, 175). As such, the image carried an array of meanings and cues that transmitted a clear message to consumers. The idea of the 'Noble Savage' gained popularity through Rousseau's 'children of nature' and is expressed in the characters of author Fenimore Cooper (Atwood, 1972, 109). The 'Noble Savage' came to be viewed as more primitive than the white man, closer to nature, and thus "closer to certain instincts and moral values that the white man has lost: courage, loyalty, the ability to relate to his surroundings, and so forth" (109). In advertising, the image of the Indian was used to associate products with the out-of-doors, strength and courage, or with the simplicity and innocence of nature (Francis, 1992, 174). The addition of the Indian to the imaginary landscape was an attempt to restore a sense of wilderness to the Muskoka vacation experience. It has been argued that the Indian image is a pure embodiment of the back-to-nature movement (Jasen, 1995, 132), the Native Canadian being the antithesis of the white urban dweller. In the consolidation phase, tourists could both consume the image and also interact directly with 'real' Indians in a variety of increasingly contrived settings.

In the 1920s, promoters increasingly portrayed a more active vacation experience. Strenuous physical activities designed to strengthen and tone the body replaced the repair of strained nervous systems. Motorcars and speedboats transformed the pace of the vacation.

The introduction of the automobile led to a change in the projected image through a change in the promoters. Up to the late 1920s, the railway companies had been the primary promoters of the ‘Highlands of Ontario’. The success of the automobile came at the expense of the railroads, which eventually began to curtail operations and advertising. Local operators once again took more control of the message directed to tourists to counter the decreased coverage provided by the transportation companies. The image created by the railway companies, however, remained the basis for most projected images. Both local operators and non-local transport companies shared a common goal: to increase visitation in order to increase revenues and profits.

The image did not change much until various levels of government began to design broad promotional campaigns with a different purpose. Government agencies were not narrowly profit-driven, even though they wished to stimulate economic growth through tourism development. They also promoted Ontario’s resorts as being equally attractive. This was a departure from early efforts that compared, contrasted and highlighted certain locales. As previously discussed, these campaigns diminished the status of the Muskoka Lakes. They challenged the image of Muskoka as a wilderness destination by inviting direct comparison with wilder destinations to the north. They also removed the Native Canadian from the imaginary landscape of the promotional material. In comparison to other regions of the Canadian Shield, Muskoka appeared to be too domesticated and urban, opening the door for other destinations to position themselves as the unpretentious alternatives. The perception persists today that Muskoka is domesticated and does not provide a ‘true’ nature experience, particularly in comparison with regions further north that developed afterwards.

It has been shown that the projected image of Muskoka was continuously adjusted and fine-tuned, yet it maintained at its core a back-to-nature ideal. Initially, in the exploration phases of development, the image that was projected had little to do with tourism. Advertising focused on developing what were deemed core economic activities, such as agricultural settlement, over peripheral activities, such as tourism. This involved suppression of certain destination features that, while potentially attractive to tourists, would be deterrents to potential settlers. Primary among these were elements denoting wilderness and the presence of a native population. As tourism increased in importance, these same elements began to appear and gain greater prominence in the image. Local operators held the balance of control over the projected image through the early development phase, favouring an unpretentious identity in keeping with their own lifestyles. The late development phase brought in external operators and the increased marketing attention of the railroads. These profit-driven external stakeholders took control of the image and brought it in line with other competing resort destinations. The result was the projection of a more pretentious image of the region's lifestyle. Health cures, wilderness motifs, and native identities were all appropriated for the creation of a highly contrived image that was quite different from the reality. Finally, in the consolidation phase, external agents that were not driven directly by profit motivations took over the marketing of the region, placing the resorts in the context of other regional attractions. These agencies simplified the image by downplaying the contrived elements of the image but, in doing so, denied the region much of its uniqueness and attractiveness.

The projected image may not have always been an honest assessment of the actual tourist landscape. Local operators, for the most part, put forward a more honest image

than the outsiders. This can partly be explained by proximity to the landscape itself. Regardless, these images had a profound effect on the idea of the destination and shaped the physical landscape. Through the combination of the human landscape of the tourists, the built landscape of the resort hotels and the imaginary landscape embodied in the projected image, an understanding of the meaning of the destination emerges.

The Meaning of the Muskoka Vacation Experience

In chapter three, the meaning of a destination was discussed as a combination of what a destination is and represents at a particular moment, as well as the historical and present practices transforming it (Saarinen, 2004, 169). Study of the tourists as well as the built environment (discourse of development) and the projected images (discourse of region) reveals that the meanings attached to destinations can be complicated. Themes of morality, exclusivity, accessibility, and landscape change are a few of the items that contributed to meanings. Wilderness, however, was the essence of the meaning of nature-based destinations similar to the Canadian Shield.

Whether Muskoka could be considered as wilderness or not matters less than the fact that the very idea of wilderness was important to the region's meanings. Kline proposed that land is the geographic reality, while nature, and by extension wilderness, are metaphors for the land (1970, 4-5). Thus the 'real' land of Muskoka is overlaid with various human constructs of nature, natural, wild and wilderness that are fluid and change with time. Tourists required at least a semblance of nature and the wild to fulfill and authenticate their desires for a 'back-to-nature', or anti-modern, experiences. To satisfy the demand, tourist operators evoked it in the built environment and projected image. Without the semblance of wilderness, the Muskoka vacation experience would have been

hollow. The need to preserve its last vestiges remains essential to how Muskokans see themselves and others even today.

The Gold Coast outside of New York City stretches along the north shore of Long Island with the mansions and summer getaways of some of the wealthiest families in North America standing on its high bluffs. It also served as the setting for F. Scott Fitzgerald's (1925) *The Great Gatsby*, near the end of which is the following passage:

Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for the Dutch sailor's eyes – a fresh, green beast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity to wonder (1925, 136).

This passage is included for two reasons. First, it introduces the theme of awareness of the loss of a pre-settlement landscape. Secondly, it shows that the notion is not new or recent and has been attached to North American landscapes for a long time.

Fitzgerald identifies a time of enchantment when the unspoiled landscape forced an aesthetic contemplation, when the future lay ahead in an uncharted land of infinite wonder. Time had soiled the landscape, robbed it of its wonder and dotted its surface with the inessential embodiments of human folly. The loss of wilderness here is associated with a loss of hope and the wonders of innocence. This time of transition between wilderness and civilization, as described by Fitzgerald, is a moment to be cherished. An equivalent moment occurred in Muskoka in July 1860 as Bain and

Campbell stood on the shores of Muskoka Bay and took in the scene of Lake Muskoka that was then unspoiled by human activity.

Within a few years of Bain and Campbell's visit to Muskoka Bay, the stands of virgin forest were cut, land was cleared for farms and the shoreline was despoiled with wharfs and sawmills that spewed smoke into the formerly clear skies. The landscape of Bain of Campbell became a utopian image that has been heralded as a lost ideal ever since. Bain and Campbell, themselves, became the embodiment of the perfect tourist: appreciative of and in harmony with the landscape. At the opposite end of the spectrum were the developers who exploited the landscape and ruined it out of ignorance and greed. The idea of the appreciative insider, as well as the dangerously ignorant outsider, originated here. The insider represents continuity while the outsider represents change.

A Reinterpretation of Landscape Change

Initially tourism did not have much affect on the landscape. The early tourists watched as the landscape around them was transformed by agricultural and lumbering sectors. The forests were decimated by the lumberman's axe, while their log booms clogged the waterways. Settlers cleared swaths of land for farms and homesteads. The wilderness was replaced in places by charred stumps and exposed rocks. Islands were generally spared, which partially explains their early adoption as cottage sights. On the other hand, the shoreline presented a mixture of untouched forests and cleared land. Lumbering retracted once the forests had been cut and agriculture diminished once it was realized that the soil could not sustain a decent harvest.

Jasen identifies two changes in both the natural and human landscape that transformed the meaning of the destination. "Muskoka's meaning was not static, and

during the period considered here it changed in two important respects. Muskoka became more than ever the playground of the well-to-do, but it also became rather more domesticated than many tourists liked” (Jasen, 1995, 126).

The domestication of landscape is acknowledged by Peter Stevens who writes, in reference to cottaging, that ultimately vacationing in the Canadian Shield “was less about getting *back* to nature than it was about domesticating, colonizing, and conquering nature” (2010, 72). All three terms imply that the landscape was becoming urban or civilized through tourism. This domestication challenged the ability of the landscape to meet the back-to-nature functions desired by the visitors. Therefore, paradoxically, tourism modified the landscape in a manner opposite to the natural ideal that was sought by many tourists.

Such arguments build on the common assumption that the impact of tourism had a net negative effect on both the natural landscape and the culture of the region. Landscapes lose their natural character, while the culture also loses its unique qualities or becomes contrived. The general conception is that Muskoka progressively lost its natural wilderness attributes, becoming more domesticated, less natural, and less authentic with time. There is, however, another interpretation that counters this argument.

Tourism in Muskoka did not develop in a pristine natural setting. Rather, it grew in a landscape that was already transformed by development. In fact, there were few natural elements left for tourists to despoil. The culture of the original inhabitants had long been denied and effectively erased from the collective image of the region. An empty landscape was easier to sell to the potential settler. However, instead of degrading the landscape further, tourism instead acted as a catalyst for the restoration of the natural

scenery of the lakes. Tourism reintroduced wilderness not just into projected image but also into the landscape itself.

The same process is evident in a number of regions where tourism led to a re-naturalization of the landscape. Van Slyck, writing about the architecture and landscape of American summer camps for children, proposes that these camps were active contributors in the process of reshaping the landscape (2006, 4). She states:

While parks were the result of well organized and state-sanctioned efforts to preserve the wilderness, children's summer camps (along with Chautauquas, resort hotels, family camps, and summer cottages) were part of a widespread but largely uncoordinated process – what we might consider a vernacular process – by which private enterprise reclaimed large tracts of productive land, transforming them into a version of the wilderness and rededicating them to recreational use (4).

These productive lands were primarily former farms. A similar process commenced in Muskoka at the beginning of the early development phase as various settlers began converting even successful farmsteads into small resorts. It is best, then, not to think of tourism domesticating the Muskoka landscape over time by removing its wilderness characteristics, rather, the possibility of the opposite occurring.

Why is this rejuvenation absent from the projected image? To acknowledge that the landscape was rejuvenating would have required an admission that it had been compromised in the first place. This would have hindered the ability to attract tourists and, accordingly, the true state of the landscape was hidden by the prose and images emanating from the region's promoters. Writings unrelated to tourism, such as the biographical accounts of settlers, presented a more honest image. These works are typical of Canadian material related to early settlement as they focus on the perils and unrelenting nature of wilderness (Atwood, 2004, 144-151). Nature crept back in as

farmland and mill sights were either abandoned or repurposed, erasing the handiwork of the early pioneers. The harsh environment undermined the hoped-for agricultural potential but could still support recreational activities. The landscape and its perceived domestication can be understood from a cultural perspective centering on the insiders' and outsiders' differing perceptions of space.

Insiders and Outsiders

Bain, Campbell, and the other members of the Muskoka Club arrived before the waves of settlers and lumbermen. Thus, these tourists became the original 'insiders' and, to them, the settlers were the 'outsiders'. Settlers were the destroyers of the natural paradise enjoyed very briefly by the members of the Muskoka Club. Considering their impacts on the landscape, it is not surprising that when the narrative history of Muskoka was put forward in the late development phase, the settler and lumberman were nearly erased from the image. They were replaced by the 'Noble Savage', the ultimate insider who was in complete harmony with, even a part of, the natural landscape. The image that was projected implied that the white tourist directly inherited the vacationland unmolested from the Indian. Operators of American summer camps used similar methods to establish narratives creating a myth of land untouched by white settlement (Van Slyck, 2006, 4).

In the context of tourism, insider and outsider roles switched several times according to the temporal and spatial positions of place and perceiver. For example, it is suggested that members of the Muskoka Club viewed cottagers and resort guests as outsiders who really did not understand the back-to-nature elements of the Muskoka vacation. Settlers, branded originally as outsiders, became insiders as they entered the tourism as hotelkeepers. Similarly, repeat hotel guests became insiders, just as cottagers

quickly became insiders. Insiders generally adopted aspects of the back-to-nature ethos of the Muskoka Club. Outsiders, on the other hand, represented the ‘civilizing’ elements of society. Many of the themes encountered in this research can be framed from an insider-outsider perspective. For example, unpretentious forms of holidaying were a hallmark of the insider perspective; the outsider being thought to prefer social pretention. Both can be seen as socio-economic constructions with the insiders being possessors of ‘old’ money and the outsiders possessors of ‘new’. Equally, they could be racist at a time when Jews were considered outsiders and Gentiles insiders. They could be associated with technological differences: rowboats were more representative of insiders and speedboats of outsiders. Overall for the insider, the vacation ideal was rooted in conceptions of ‘old’ Muskoka with sleek mahogany launches and hammocks while, from the outsiders’ perspective, ‘new’ Muskoka is linked to cigar boats and Hollywood starlets. With time, even the homesteader and lumberman were reintroduced as insiders as they lived in the midst of a predominantly natural environment. Their hardships were romanticized while the extent to which they altered the landscape has been largely overlooked and unacknowledged.

The ultimate outsider was and, in many cases still is, the external investor in tourism who entered the market to make a profit but has been perceived to lack an understanding of tradition and precedence. No group has generated as much unease and suspicion as these investors. Cockburn began his career in Muskoka as one of these investors, encouraging and then profiting from the lumbering and the settlers’ exploitation of the region’s natural resources. He became an insider only when his company turned to tourism, though, he never really escaped suspicion of the possession

of ulterior motives. These suspicions reached their peak with the construction of the Royal Muskoka Hotel, which embodied the notion of the outsider with its emphasis on social pretention and perceived disjunction with the natural landscape. The Grand Trunk Railway, as an external operator, focused on transforming the region into a fashionable destination through careful advertising. Profit motivations encouraged the attempt to attract fashionable, particularly American, guests who were thought to be more wealthy and free with their money. The creation of increasingly pretentious facilities and accompanying advertising that emphasized social functions over natural elements had a direct effect on the number of fashionable guests frequenting the resort. The overall image of Muskoka certainly became more fashionable as a result. However, unpretentious visitors, and the facilities they preferred, remained and thrived outside of the spotlight. When the pretentious world of the resort hotel faded in the postwar era, back-to-nature aesthetics re-emerged in the third quarter of the twentieth century, only to be subverted again to the cultured pretensions that favoured a more fashionable mode of vacationing at the turn of the twenty-first century. Such modifications can easily be mistaken for change. However, instead, they constitute a fundamental continuity of the wilderness resort experience.

The 'meaning' of Muskoka is, thus, rooted in a highly fluid dialogue between insiders and outsiders, and the internal and external forces associated with them. The tensions between the two are a constant throughout the history of the tourist region. At various times, the ideals of the naturalist have outweighed those of the civilized outsider. While at other times, the domesticated comforts of the outsider have outshone the culture of simplicity practiced by the insiders. Both are present in the landscape and it is not the

intention here to imply that one has a greater claim to it than the other. Nor are these emphases mutually exclusive with certain places, organizations, rituals, and individuals embodying elements of both. In fact, it can be argued that it is not possible for either to exist without the other, as each is defined in relation to each other, in the present as well as in the past.

Meanings

The more fashionable representations are the most removed from the actual landscape of the Muskoka Lakes. This is not surprising because outsiders' have long portrayed the region as a 'fashionable' destination. This stereotypical view is revealed in academic works on the lakes. For example, Julia Harrison studied cottaging in the Haliburton region. She discusses Muskoka as part of her rationale for the location of her case study. Harrison states, "Muskoka has taken on an iconic status in reference to the idea of Ontario cottaging" (2008, 46). She uses one of Muskoka's key stereotypes as a reason why it would be a difficult case study to use in the context of her research:

It was one of the first areas where cottaging had developed in Ontario and it has an ongoing legacy of being an enclave of the wealthy, if not very wealthy. As research subjects, this demographic is historically hard to access. I do not move in the circles that could give me any personal access to this group, and pushed by a desire to make certain that I did locate willing subjects, I turned my attention to the middle-class cottage experience in Haliburton (46).

The assumption here is that Muskoka is an inaccessible world of the privileged in comparison to more middle-class destinations.

The notion that Muskoka was too domesticated, too fashionable, and too wealthy to provide an authentic nature or truly therapeutic experience originated in comparison with Georgian Bay. Perceived attitudinal differences between cottagers on Georgian Bay

and Muskoka remain strong to this day (Stevens, 2010, 66). Georgian Bay cottagers believed that the Bay “was so much *wilder* that it constituted a more authentic wilderness experience than Ontario’s other cottaging areas” (66). Claire Campbell, studying Georgian Bay, discovered the same sentiments that Georgian Bay was the antithesis of the domesticated comforts of Muskoka (2005, 151-152, 199). Stevens suggests that:

Such assessments tended to exaggerate the differences between Georgian Bay and Muskoka – after all, both regions tapped into the same urban malaise and attracted a similar, elite class of tourist – but they nevertheless underscored an important point: Ontario’s cottaging communities were (and still are) very diverse, and the difference between them were mental as well as physical (2010, 66).

Again we see the connection of Muskoka with an elite class of tourist, hinting at the typical outside perspective that Muskoka is an overtly pretentious destination. This stereotype is advocated throughout historical documents, especially in promotional materials produced by outside interests as well as outside media portrayals of the region. The Muskoka Lakes is also a place against which other Canadian Shield destinations define themselves.

Internal perspectives are not as commonly stated. Metcalf’s article *Provence Profound*, provides a context in which to discuss the insider’s perspective. The ‘old money’ Canadian family members hosting Metcalf are the ultimate insiders. They scorn the new urbanite cottagers (outsiders) as “despoilers and effete poseurs” and take pride in labeling them dismissively as “Rich. White. Trash” (2008, P). Metcalf notes that these traditional cottagers are “all acutely aware, however, that a way of summer living was fading” (2). The matriarch’s assertion that newcomers “didn’t know how to cottage” (2) is a telling summation of these attitudes. The relationship between old (insider) Muskoka and new (outsider) Muskoka is well explained in the following passage:

The cherished pretense of Old Muskoka is that it, like all rural getaways, is a haven from the social distinctions of the city. Nowhere is this pretense stretched more amusingly thin than on the waters of the lake. On my first day in a motorboat with the patriarch, we passed a Jet Ski. “We call them ‘lake lice,’” he said with heartfelt malice, then added, “No one knows the rules of the road anymore. A woman flying the American flag passed me on the wrong side the other day, and she flipped me the bird.” (2).

The fundamental undercurrent of these passages highlights the contrasting notions of how visitors should interact and participate in the Muskoka vacation landscape.

What does this do for the understanding of meaning? When research commenced for this thesis, it was expected that changes would be found in the meaning of Muskoka and the Canadian Shield. Within the component parts of meaning, the tourist, the resort hotel, and the projected image, drastic changes have been observed in who came to the region, how they arrived, what they did, the environments in which they stayed, and the projected images designed to entice more of them. When meaning is considered, the implications of these changes are reduced. Instead, meaning is found in the dialogue among perceivers of the region. Two viewpoints of nature and civilization interact to create a spectrum of understanding concerning the domestication and natural characteristics of the region and how the visitor should behave in such an environment. Meaning, at any given time or location, reflects a balance, even tension, between internal and external conceptions of place. To state that one version of the tourist meaning dominates at any one time or another would be an oversimplification.

The insider’s perspective of meaning fundamentally looks backwards to a perceived paradise lost at the hands of development in the misguided pursuit of innovation. For the insider, their mode of vacationing has always and likely will continue to be under threat from outsiders. For outsiders, development will be restricted by the

attitudes of overly-nostalgic insiders. The outsider looks forward to what the region might become while the insider has always fought back with exclusionary tactics designed to keep the outsider at bay. Bain and Campbell founded the Muskoka Club which, through membership, determined who was in and who was out. Gentile operators and tourists perceived the wealth and lifestyle of Jewish guests as a threat, leading to restriction of their patronage in the early twentieth century. Exclusionary practices remain for there still is very little public access to the lakes, no convenient public transport from the city, and former public resort space is frequently privatized through redevelopment, further reducing accessibility. The automobile was to be the great equalizer and an instrument of the outsider. The car was, therefore, a threat to the insider's notion of restful seclusion. However, its effects on the actual meaning of the destination were mitigated through the struggle between and actions of the insider and the outsider. The back-to-nature ideal of the first tourists survives as a constant through every phase of development, historical event, and technological innovation to the present day. This construction of meaning is the unchanging and unifying constant, not easily changed and decoupled from the temporal elements of historical developments.

Fitzgerald ended *The Great Gatsby* with the following line. "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (1925, 136). It is an appropriate metaphor for the Muskoka experience. The rower represents the outsider in the environment pushing forward in the name of progress, taming and domesticating the landscape. Pushing back against this change is the ceaseless current of older ideals of human relationships with nature and the landscape. Nature itself is embodied in the current.

Nature is the ultimate internal force in the Canadian Shield while civilization is the external force. The insider and the outsider are aligned with these two polar positions. As society mingled and danced in the ballrooms of the old resort hotels, outside, the forest grew thicker and darker, slowly reclaiming its lost territory. The return of wilderness was welcomed by those with an insider mentality, but is denied and pushed back by those of the outside persuasion. Time, it appears, is now on the side of the internal forces of nature and, by extension, the insider, as it steadily erases the civilizing efforts of external forces. This tension between nature and civilization, insider and outsider, is the essence of tourist meaning in the Canadian Shield. The changes in the tourist, the hotels, and the projected image are the varied manifestations of this power dynamic. As we have seen through the works of Atwood and McGregor, this interpretation of nature and its threat to human actions is fundamentally a Canadian concept that speaks to the meanings of the Canadian Shield region as they relate to that of Canadian identity itself.

Effectiveness of Framework

This thesis demonstrates the value of using an explicit framework to guide the systematic collection, analysis, and presentation of data, especially when tackling a subject as broad and multi-dimensional as the history of tourism in a large area over the course of many years. The framework developed for, and applied in this thesis, facilitated the decoupling of historical events from broader processes of change and continuity, leading to the discovery of insights that, otherwise, may not have been as evident. By studying the tourists, the resorts, and the projected images separately but in tandem, it was possible to highlight important elements of the discourses about them and the relationships between

them, leading to a greater understanding of the meaning, indeed the very essence, of the destination itself.

A geographical or historical study that focused on just one of these factors would fail to provide a complete picture and would overlook the complexities of meaning. For example, a narrative focusing solely on the development of the resort hotels in the case region would likely have stressed change and overlooked the continuities. The same can be said for both the tourists and the projected images. A study of the evolution of meanings, in the absence of attention to the tourists, the hotels, and the projected images would have been partial and probably misleading. Thus the ultimate strength of the framework is its usefulness in guiding the organization of information, encouraging exploration of a number of features of the tourism landscape, and highlighting the connections between them.

While the framework was designed specifically for this research investigation, it could be applied to guide research in other regions. It could be adapted to study destinations on almost any scale from the individual resort to the nation. Its utility is not limited to historical studies. With an appropriate modification of research methodology, it could be used to study destination in the present. However, it is not predictive. The intent is to build an understanding of place, rather to provide a novel growth model. It might, however, be used as a tool to compare the development of tourist regions over time.

The framework does have some limitations. Consideration of a wider assortment of accommodation types, in addition to the resort hotel, would enrich future studies of resort regions. It proved impossible in this study to avoid discussion of private

accommodations along with public ones, although they were not given equal attention here. The inclusion of a more detailed account of the evolving style, amenities, and landscape of private accommodation in tandem with public accommodations could have further enriched the analysis. It would also be useful to broaden the scope of the study by including other participants in tourism such as staff, owners, and other individuals present in the resort region but not necessarily there on holiday.

The self-contained nature of the framework does under-represent the effects of external historical events. This is both a strength and a limitation. While it is difficult in the context of the framework to account for the influence of major events such as war and recession, it does allow the interference of their established narratives to be reduced for current purposes. Also, the self-contained nature of the framework does not allow the effects of other destinations to be fully represented.

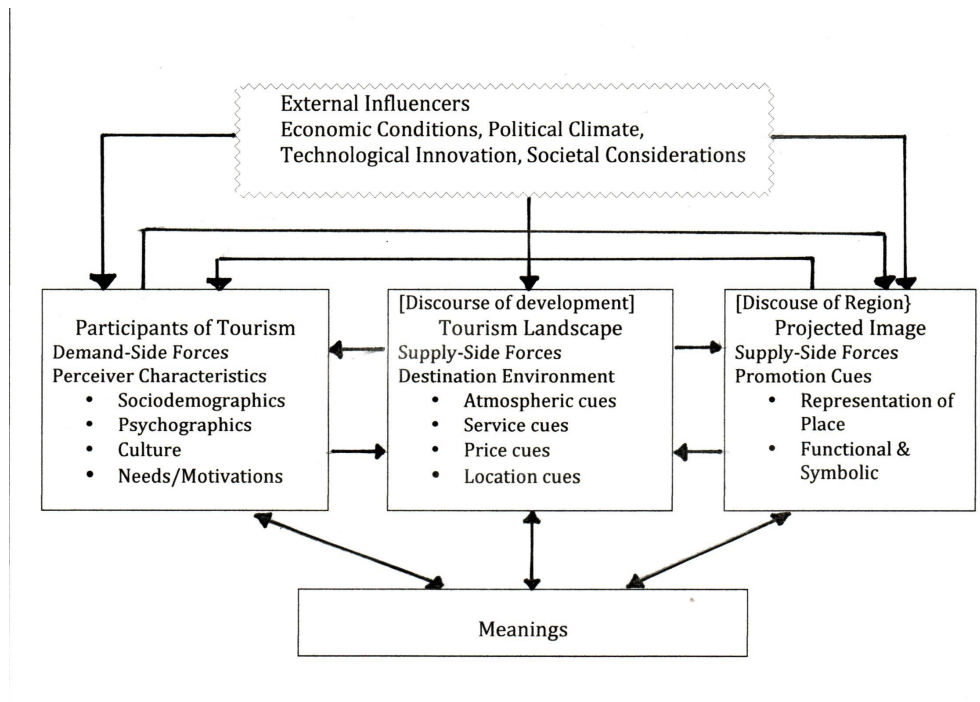


Figure 5:1. Revised Framework. Adapted from: Knudsen ed. et al 2008, Saarinen 2004, Sirgy and Su 2000, Tasci and Gartner 2007.

With these limitations in mind, a modified version of the framework presented in chapter three is proposed (Figure 5:1). This framework addresses some of the challenges encountered in this research and increases the framework's utility for future studies. In particular, the 'tourists' has been broadened in the revised framework to include a wider range of participants in tourism, including staff and owners of facilities. To account for the wide variety of tourist accommodations available in addition to the resort hotel, it is suggested that the resort hotel landscape be considered as a tourism landscape that is focused on the built environment, including other tourist facilities such as camps, motels, and boarding houses, as well as dance halls, tourist shops and other tourist infrastructure. This revised framework allows for the inclusion of both cottagers and campers in the study as well as the cottages and camps that they utilized.

The greatest modification, however, is the addition of a fourth indirect influence on meaning. This item is composed of a wide variety of external influences, including economic, political, technological and societal factors that influence the participants in tourism, the tourism landscape, and the projected image, and interact with them to produce meaning. The effects of broader historical events that are external to the study area but impinge upon it, such as changes in the economy, war, broad social movements, and new transportation inventions, are now acknowledged and incorporated into the framework. This increases the utility of the framework by acknowledging additional factors that shape the development of the tourist destination.

The utility of the framework ultimately depends upon the wealth of resources that are used in its implementation, as well as different perspectives that are drawn upon to explain developments. Resort regions are not isolated landscapes. Tourists bring in

outside ideas and expectations that may otherwise be foreign to the destination. The results of the interaction between such external and internal forces determine meaning. It is necessary, then, to identify the origin of these forces and to include them in the discussion of landscape. In the case of the Canadian Shield, which attracted a large number of influential American visitors, it is necessary to look towards American resort regions and their influencers on the Canadian landscape. A survey of secondary works that were published outside of the case region was undertaken to identify external influencers. The incorporation of this secondary literature also allowed the inclusion of ideas and conclusions from other disciplines, in addition to geography and tourism. The inclusion of external influencers in the revised framework aids in the ability to account for the origins of ideas that shaped the destination.

Within the case region itself, the assimilation of a wide and varied body of primary material was assembled to fully utilize the framework. This study benefited immensely from the ability to access materials held in both public and private collections. Analysis would have been hampered in the absence of an adequate depth of material. The range and limitations of sources has already been discussed. Public collections are excellent sources of information; however, many important documents only exist outside of these collections. The willingness of researchers to venture outside of these collections and immerse themselves into the study region in order track down privately-held resources is rewarded in a more complete analysis.

Historians have a keen awareness of the nature and importance of primary source data. The key to original interpretations often relies on the introduction of new sources into the historic dialogue. Awareness of the importance of sources helped to forge links

with other historical literature on the Canadian Shield region. However, the approach of historians sometimes lacks a clearly articulated research methodology and systematic form of analysis. The adoption of a framework such as the one used here addresses this methodological gap. Its adaptability to the study of other regions and time periods on a variety scales demonstrates its potential to provide structure to future work.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Summer cottage country landscapes are never truly abandoned. Lofgren notes, that even in the darkest and coldest months of winter they are densely populated with daydreams, fantasies, images, and memories of past summers (1999, 2). These ‘mindscape’ are based on the experiences of summers past and are heavily weighted with emotional attachments and a keen awareness of the threat of change on this particular way of life. In Muskoka the image of ‘old Muskoka’ is just such a mindscape or imaginary landscape. This particular mindscape is a place of tradition, continuity, and belonging. One of the central features of this past landscape is the resort hotel. The era of resort hotel dominance in Muskoka is now over. We have seen how and why the hotels of Muskoka lost their prominence in the tourist landscape from decreasing patronage, transportation change, lack of investment, and changing modes of vacationing. Although their era is passed this study of the historical development of lodging infrastructure on the Muskoka Lakes reveals insights into the nature of change and continuity in cottage country.

This thesis set out to explore the themes of continuity and change in the Canadian Shield tourist landscape through the development of the region’s tourist infrastructure in the form of lodging operations. A historical study of the nature of tourists, the hotels themselves, and the projected image was undertaken in order to find the essence or meanings of the Muskoka vacation experience. A primary objective was to design a framework to facilitate this analysis of change combining the tourist, resort hotel landscape, projected image, and meanings. This chapter summarizes the key findings of

this research beginning with contributions of the framework itself, followed by brief summaries of the developments observed in the tourists, hotels, and projected meaning, and how they contribute to the literature on each respective topic. Finally, we will return to the findings related to understanding of the meanings attached to the Muskoka vacation experience.

This thesis has contributed to understanding of the development of resort regions through development and application of a framework to analyze the Canadian Shield vacation experience. The insights into the origins and dynamics of meaning that have been revealed through application of the framework are not limited to the case region. The framework may be applied to other destinations to generate insights in a clear and structured manner. It compels the researcher to consider the interactions between the tourists, the hotels, and the images of place, rather than focusing on a series of changes that are evident when each is studied in isolation.

As research progressed, limitations with the initially proposed framework were noted and a revised framework proposed that provides a greater degree of utility. The category of the tourists was expanded to include a greater number of participants of tourism including the summer staff of the resorts and the owners. The landscape of the resort hotel was also broadened to incorporate the built environment of the tourist including recreational landscapes and other tourist infrastructure not necessarily accommodation related. Lastly a fourth category composed of external influencers was added to the framework to account for broader influences of economics, society, technology, and politics originating outside of the tourist destination and not necessarily related to tourism at all. These changes reflect the process of research that saw a wider

range of factors influencing the development of the Muskoka Lakes being studied then originally conceptualized.

In Muskoka, the case region, meaning has been proposed as resulting from a dialogue between the internal forces of nature and the external forces of civilization. These are embodied in the nature-conscious insider and the society-conscious outsider. The influence of these two opposing perspectives stretches beyond the cultural landscape of tourist meanings. Fears of threat to and loss in, the cottage country landscape, introduced in chapter one, are rooted in this dynamic. They are also evident in the development of the human landscape of the tourist, the built landscape of the resort hotels, and the imagined landscape of the projected image.

Each component of the analysis provides a novel contribution to the literature on the historical development of tourist and recreation destinations in North America. It has been suggested that the anti-modern works of Thoreau and the back-to-nature movement he inspired, within the context of the Romantic Movement, first attracted tourists into the wilderness regions of the continent. It is proposed that Thoreau's writings played a similar role in the development of Canadian Shield tourism, albeit a role that was less direct than in the United States. The back-to-nature movement is reflected in the nature-conscious insider perspective as it both accepts and celebrates the forces of nature and wilderness present in the Muskoka landscape.

The first hotels that were built by external investors introduced elements of civilization and society into the tourism landscape. The socially-conscious guests of these hotels were outsiders and represented the external forces of civilization. Of course, not all visitors were socially-driven and those who preferred a back-to-nature aesthetic,

and the hotels that catered to them, reflected an insider perspective. The tension between the two was articulated in the adoption of the terms ‘fashionable’ and ‘unfashionable’ to describe two very different motivators for travel.

As hotel culture expanded with the addition of more pretentious facilities, the dynamics between the two modes of vacationing became more complicated. Exclusionary tactics were employed to discourage certain groups from seeking accommodation, based on class, race, and economic position. In time, the gap between insider and outsider perspectives was expressed through an increasing diversification of uses and eventual privatization of space. The followers of fashion, society and civilization retained the landscape of grand hotels and elaborate cottages, while the back-to-nature followers retreated into more isolated pockets of locally-owned hotels and less-pretentious cottages. Both still occupied the Muskoka landscape, as they do today.

The term ‘unfashionable’ may have lost its nineteenth-century meaning but the unpretentious ideals, and the acceptance and respect for nature, still set a segment of the summer community against those who seek the domesticating elements of civilization and society. This interpretation of the dynamic relationship between ‘fashionable’ and ‘unfashionable’ complements the mainly American literature on the subject by giving it a Canadian context and demonstrating its ongoing importance in the tourism landscape.

The tension between civilization and nature is also evident in the landscape elements that were constructed to accommodate tourists. The first hotel, built with external investment, introduced a domesticating element into the landscape that previously provided experiences in and of nature. This put the ‘urban’ landscape of the hotels fundamentally at odds with the experiences of the original tourists. As demand

increased, local inhabitants established their own hotels. These ‘internally-operated’ hotels did not mimic the pretensions of the first commercial lodgings. Vernacular designs, local building materials, and a relaxed operating style combined to create an unpretentious lodging experience. The guests of such places still communed with nature even though this relationship was mitigated by an element of domesticity.

Increasing popularity of Muskoka and the formation of a social community and reputation attracted a new class of guests among whom the external ideals of civilization and society were more important than communion with nature. Some hotel operators embraced this change and transformed their resorts into more pretentious establishments. Others resisted, resulting in a diversification of the lodging sector. External investors returned to build elaborate luxurious hotels to both cater to and attract a more wealthy ‘fashionable’ market. Their hotels used exotic designs and non-local building materials that stood out in the landscape. Some branded these operations and owners as outsiders who did not understand what the Muskoka tourists needed or desired.

These pretentious establishments came to embody the external forces of civilization. The same attitude can be seen today whenever a new resort or palatial summer residence appears on the lakes. Construction towards the end of the development phase precedes a period with little resort development. Accommodation growth then occurred primarily in the form of private cottages and small operations that featured private cabin accommodation. This reflects the general move towards private accommodations by those who no longer wished to participate in the social scene of the hotels. New hotels, when built, can easily be divided into those that referenced the forces of nature through rustic, unpretentious design, and those that drew upon external forces

through stylish architecture and improved amenities. As a whole though, the hotel industry began to retract by the end of the consolidation phase, marking a turning point in the perception of the region as a resort centre into ‘cottage country’.

Understanding of resort hotel architecture is enriched by introducing the internal and external ideals of nature and civilization into the discussion of the built environment. Literature on the subject tends to treat design as being a by-product of architectural taste and technological innovation. It is proposed that architectural form is a function of the tourists’ motivations, as well as a possible motivator in attracting tourists.

The dynamics of power between the internal forces of nature and the civilizing elements of external forces are most in evident in the imaginary landscapes that were created in the projected images of the tourist region. Suggestions of civilization overwhelm those of nature in the first images that were projected to entice settlement and economic development. Back-to-nature ideals were only incorporated when tourism gained standing as a viable economic sector.

There is a noticeable difference in the evocation of wilderness in insider and outsider projections of the landscape. For example, local promotional efforts shied away from the portrayal of wilderness while, at the same time, espoused a back-to-nature aesthetic. External promoters were far more likely to emphasize wilderness motifs while, at the same time, displaying a tendency to stress the civilized elements of society and pretention. Thus, the promotion conducted by outsiders was more extreme and more dissonant than that of insiders.

A number of different explanations can be proposed for this. First, the term wilderness denoted pretention by evoking grand scenery. The use of less pretentious

terms associated with the picturesque was preferred by local promoters who attempted to create an unpretentious image. Secondly, insiders put forward a more honest description of the landscape that was greatly modified by lumbering and agriculture and could no longer be identified as wilderness. Finally, an alternative, and perhaps complementary, interpretation is that Canadians were apprehensive of wilderness when compared to Americans who embraced uncivilized, or 'wild' landscapes. Thus, local promoters, who primarily targeted a domestic audience, downplayed wilderness in contrast to external promoters who sought an American clientele and emphasized 'wild' natural characteristics of the landscape. Similarly, external promoters rehabilitated the image of the Indian in order to denote further notions of wilderness and otherness.

There are numerous interpretations of the meaning of wilderness. One of which is, that wilderness can be considered a civilizing element, opposed to a naturalizing setting. This association between wilderness and pretension is a different interpretation. It changes and enhances understanding of "unfashionable" and "fashionable" vacationing. Furthermore, the wilderness motif was evoked differently for Canadians than for Americans. The promotion of tourism on the Canadian Shield supports the idea of difference in wilderness associations between Canadians and Americans.

A more complete picture of Muskoka as a tourist destination is achieved when the tourists, the resort hotels, the destination image, and their meanings are examined together. Many studies of tourism and cottaging in Ontario utilize Muskoka as a standard for comparison. The region is widely regarded as being the pre-eminent Canadian Shield recreational area that, for better or worse, other destinations are compared to and compete with. Many of these destinations base their identities on how they compare to and

contrast with Muskoka. Thus, a more clear understanding of the tourism industry in Muskoka can better inform other studies that examine tourist destinations that developed after Muskoka. The dialogue between nature and civilization is not confined to Muskoka and it is an excellent perspective through which to view other destinations. The framework developed for, and applied in, this study can be adapted to guide such studies.

In the introduction to this thesis, the sense of threat and loss was discussed in relation to cottage communities. In Muskoka, this loss can ultimately be attributed to the destruction of the natural landscape in the name of settlement in the first phases of development. The wild, unsettled landscape encountered by the earliest tourists, including Bain and Campbell, was an image of the landscape denied by early promoters. Tourist developers only evoked wilderness as an ideal image after it was gone. The back-to-nature aesthetics of the few early tourists who witnessed the pre-settlement landscape of Muskoka has become the lost ideal that is heralded as the truest and most authentic form of Muskoka tourism. The agents of settlement, domesticity, and civilization have been villainized and feared ever since. Some resort designs have attempted to recover this lost ideal through landscape and architecture. Self-styled insiders have never trusted the perceived outsiders who introduced pretensions that were at odds with their back-to-nature sensibilities. From the insiders' perspective, they destroyed nature and would erase any progress made to restore the landscape to its pre-settlement form. The tension between insiders and nature, counterpoised against outsiders and civilization, is the constant that has survived a century and half of change and has shaped the development of tourism in Muskoka.

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