



Historical Vignettes

ELDON MARPLE, whose columns on the historical background of our area appeared in THE VISITOR for over a decade, grew up on a pioneer farm near Round Lake, worked in logging camps as a youth, graduated from Hayward High School and the University of Wisconsin. He was a teacher, employee in several government agencies in the United States and overseas, and returned to Sawyer County upon his retirement to make his home. He was a student of the history of Indian and European settlement of America, was the official Sawyer County Historian, and a tireless leader and worker in the Sawyer County Historical Society. Eldon died of a massive stroke on December 17, 1990, at the age of 86 years, but his infinitely-researched chronicles are timeless.

SPIDER LAKE . . . The Jewel That Jake Christie Found

THE SPIDER LAKE ROAD

Let's begin this story of Spider Lake and its development by tracing the history of the Spider Lake Road (actually Highway 77 since about 1918) and the alternate routes before it was built, for its changes have reflected the needs of the people who have lived along it for these many years.

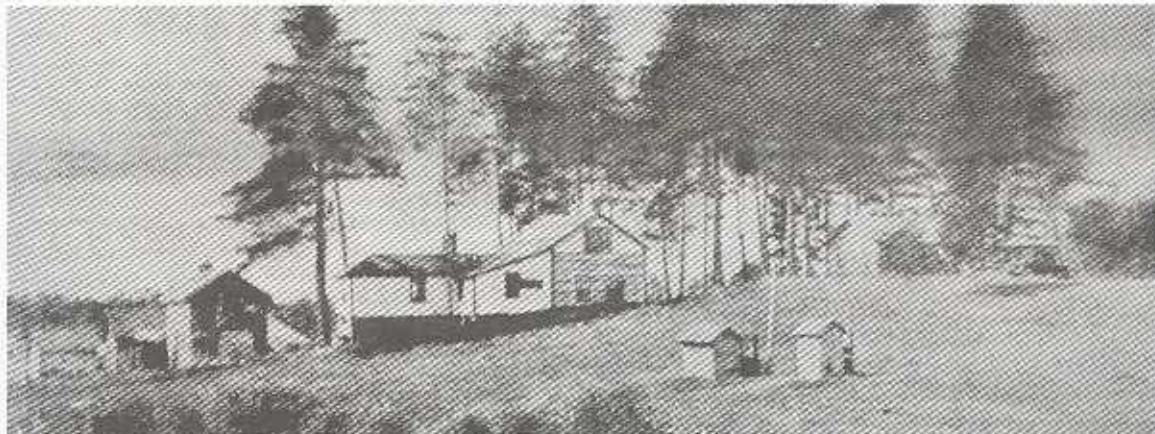
The Chippewa Road from Hayward to Goodrich Dam on the West Fork via Kavanagh's (now Sisko's Pine Point Resort) was completed and accepted by the County Board in September, 1884, and the distance reported was 28 miles. Built at the insistence of the Hayward businessmen and the loggers who used it, its purpose was to serve those loggers who were then cutting heavily along the upper reaches of the Chippewa near Moose Lake. But this was a long haul for the tote-teams and the loggers looked for a shorter route as they started the cut around Spider, Lost Land and Teal Lakes. In October, 1883, the local paper stated that the lumbermen were talking of cutting a twenty-mile road from Doran's Crossing, which was three miles above Phipps, to the West Fork. This must have been done, since mention of travel to Spider Lake from Hayward by way of Phipps was common for several years. I have traced this road across the hills, some of it now

abandoned with trees fifty years old [in 1967] growing in its tracks, and it can be followed westward from the north bay of Twin Lakes down into the Namekagon Valley at the Thannum farm on Highway 63. However, there is some doubt that this road was satisfactory to all concerned since in May, 1886, a petition was made to the town board to lay out "a road from Hubbard (Phipps) to Ghost Creek." In June a town crew was building a bridge over Tea Creek so the town must have taken it over.

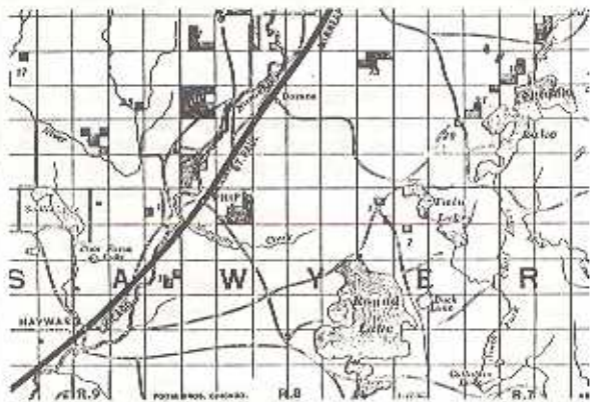
In November of 1889 a road was cut from the railroad crossing above the site of the depot in Hayward to the "head of the pond" where a bridge was being built. From here it was continued up O'Brien's Hill to the "old road which connects with the Chippewa Road," obviously the old Phipps tote-road which was a shortcut from the Chippewa road, leaving it near the Round Lake School, to Phipps by way of Mosquito Brook.

In September of 1890 a new petition was received by the county board to build a road directly from Hayward to the Clam Lake area. There were rumors that Glidden was going to build one to the upper Chippewa and the merchants of Hayward wanted to keep their trade. This new road was to

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Cornick's Resort, the first resort on Spider Lake, built on the lakeshore near the site of Jake Christie's resort.



This map, dated 1905, shows the roads to the east of Hayward at that time. It was reproduced from an advertising brochure entitled, "Opportunities Along the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway," extolling the virtues of this area's agricultural future. Little did these visionary pioneers (and they were good salesmen!) realize that a half-century later the real future would be as a Vacationland. Incidentally, at the time this was printed, the Railway had about 85,000 acres of land to sell at a minimum price of \$5.00 per acre.

intersect the Phipps-West Fork road to the north tip of Twin Lakes; it was mentioned that there were two roads to the area then, apparently meaning the one to Phipps and the Chippewa road to Hayward by way of Kavanagh's. County Surveyor Dick Hubbard laid out this route shortly and work was begun in the field at the top of O'Brien's Hill with forty men working under the direction of John Nelson. Completion of the road was reported in September of 1891 and it was opened to the public, its route essentially the same as it is today.

On July 15, 1892, a correspondent reported his trip to Spider Lake thusly: "the road was very rough with stumps and rocks — through unbroken pine forests — only two houses, a land claimant's and a stopping place." The stopping place was that of Frank Lavelle's and its foundations are still in place just west of Twin Lakes. This is also the site of Ole Emerson's camp, one of the last big loggers of the old times.

When I first walked the Spider Lake Road as a settler's child, I was nine and the road was old then (this was 1914); I was barefooted and the mud was cold, but at the little hill just beyond the west end of the present grade of O'Brien's Hill there was sand — clean warm sand for bare toes on a cold day. The roadbed was still rough and stony, with grass lined

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between the two wheeltracks . . . how times have changed!

THE LAKE AND ITS EARLY SETTLERS

A look at the terrain from a plane today over the Spider Lake region will make it obvious why early mapmakers gave the complex of lakes, bays and wetlands that name. It is stretched out in myriads of shapes and contours, and has a shape of a giant, many-bodied spider spraddled among the forested hills — the needle-like peninsulas and blocky bluffs accentuating its flowing lines.

Spider Lake is at the headstreams of the Chippewa River, its eight-mile long parade of lakes and creeks spread along the southeastern edge of the end-moraine highlands in northern Sawyer County, catching the runoff from the elevated water tables deep within these hills in numberless springs along their western shores. East and south of this chain is the ground moraine of the last glaciation, generally level, with hummocks and rolling hills and a touch of kettle-moraine and outwash plain to vary the contours. The sandy hills along the lakes and the heavier-soiled highlands to the north and west once supported a prime stand of the best white pine, shortly to be devastated by the hand of man.

The landlooker and the settler probed early into the wilderness that was around Spider Lake, searching for profit and, perhaps, solitude. Some found for a time the remoteness they sought, but soon the hills echoed with the sound of steel on wood and the crash of trees as the loggers slashed out roads and hauled the timber away to the mills. The settler and the "sport," the fisherman or the more adventurous of those days, mingled with the departing lumberman; one to populate the raped forest lands and the other to seek his diversions on the lakes and in the hills.

Activity by man within a community is followed by roads for he cannot stand the hindrance of rough

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travel. Conversely, roads show the presence of man in a new country and the historian searches the maps which may show the routes of the migrations so he can better understand their course. Sometime, to hurry the settlement, the road comes first. The latter seems to be the purpose in the action of Ashland County on July 3, 1867 when they ordered "a good winter road cut through from some point on the lake shore (near Ashland) to Long Lake; from there to Packwayuwang Indian village." Perhaps this road was built, for on an 1876 map it is shown to the present location of Cable from whence it threaded the hills to the vicinity of the Spider Lake church. This road was actually cut through, either at that time or within a few years — it is the road from Cable to the junction west of the old CCC camp. From there to the church its course is more obscure (there are so many alternates left by the loggers) but I have been able to trace most of it. Logging did not become prevalent west of Spider Lake before 1890 . . . the question arises — who needed this road before then?

Eccentric Jake Christie — he must have had a pioneering spirit — may have followed this road in to Spider Lake. The tale is told that Jake "was the first to blaze out a trail from Phipps" but there is no date for this feat (probably in 1881 when a warehouse was in use there). The *North Wisconsin News* reported on April 4, 1885 that Christie had "been building a summer resort hotel out on Spider Lake." This was the first place in the area put up with the announced intention of being a resort, although stopping places and homes probably had been taking in boarders during the hunting and fishing season.

Christie's new resort was built on land which had been homesteaded by Currie G. Bell, who had filed his claim in 1883; in 1886 he quitclaimed the forty (SW SW S34-42-7) to Jacob M. and Mary A. Christie for \$50. Jake's summer resort became primarily a stopping place much used by the loggers who were cutting on the upper Chippewa by this time. It was located on the knoll northeast of the junction of Hwy. 77 and Heineman's road behind the several large pines there now, about a quarter mile from the south end of the lake. The old log barn burned in 1902 and the unused hotel tumbled down over the years.

In 1886 Jake subdivided this forty and named it "The Village of Clyde" (after his son). Not a lot was ever sold from this plat but it is still No. 1 on the Sawyer County record of subdivisions. The Spider Lake school, now the Town Hall, was erected in the southeast corner of this forty in 1915.

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The story on Spider Lake is much too long to be covered in one issue. So, we will continue Eldon's account of the development of the resort industry and its pioneers in the next issue.