

Prince Edward County

HERITAGE



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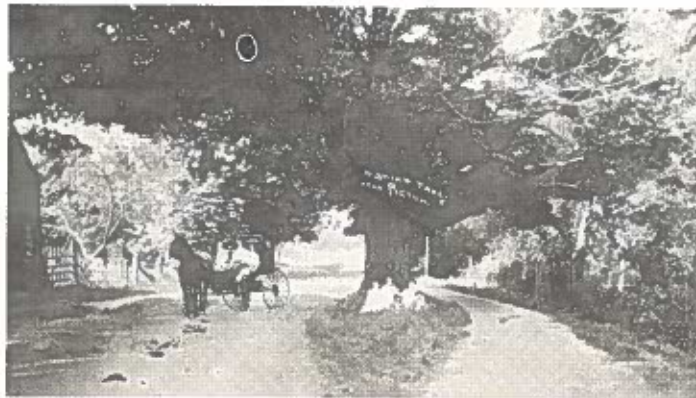
42. Wishing Tree Lodge

On West Lake Road stands a house, rich in history, elegance and beauty. In front of it, in the centre of the road, was the site of the famous "Wishing Tree", a sugar maple estimated to have been seven centuries old when it was removed in 1941.

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Musgrove now own this magnificent house which over the years has changed hands a number of times. The land on which the house stands was acquired in 1801 by James Blakely, a member of Butler's Rangers in the American Revolutionary War. He sold the property to Daniel Hicks, whose son Jacob built a Regency-style cottage on the site in 1826. Jacob died in 1881, leaving the property to his son-in-law, Steven Lake, an apple merchant, who enlarged the house in the 1870's, adding a second floor and a wing on the north side. His son, Angus Lake, later operated the place as a tourist resort, Wishing Tree Lodge.

The present owners cherish the old house and decorated some of its many rooms with their collection of antiques, including early furniture made by the Gibbard Company of Napanee and a set of chairs from G. P. Walter & Company, Bowmanville, Canada West. There is also a sofa which once belonged to former Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden.

The 700 year old Wishing Tree was thought to have been the largest tree in the world, having a branch spread of 120 feet, and measuring 7 feet through at the base. In 1925 lightning struck the tree damaging its branches. The main trunk was removed in 1941 much to the regret of most Prince Edward County residents. It had been customary for many a year for passers-by to stop underneath the tree and make a wish. Legend has it that the Indians too did come here in ancient times to smoke their pipes, dance and make their wishes.



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Wishing Tree



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Wishing Tree Lodge

Courtesy Lloyd E. Thompson

43. Sandbanks Provincial Park

Sandbanks Provincial Park is one of the county's most popular areas for camping, picnics, swimming or fishing. Even back in the old days, when there was no actual park, the Sandbanks were a favourite site for outings.

The hills of soft, fine-grain sands, shifting with the slightest breeze, have always held a special fascination for people. Water currents, long ago, are believed to have slowed as they crossed the mouth of the bay and deposited the silt which they carried. As the level of Lake Ontario dropped over a period of many years, the sandbars became exposed.

At the entrance to the present park once stood "Evergreen House", a hotel, built of wood. Here people would spend their holidays or weekends, enjoying a pleasant atmosphere and excellent late evening meals. Directly behind the hotel, however, was a huge sandbank, which gradually over the years moved toward the house. Nothing could stop the movement of the sand and eventually the hotel had to be abandoned, and the house was torn down.