

“Enjoying the lake breezes”:
Excursions, Tourism, and Dwelling in Resort Landscapes
at Cooking Lake, 1894-1938

by

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Abstract

This study explores the history of excursions, tourism, and resorts at Cooking Lake from 1894 to 1938. Cooking Lake was considered Edmonton's favourite resort for summer recreation and tourism in the early 1900s, yet its recreational landscape history is largely obscure. Analysis centres the questions: why was Cooking Lake the site chosen for these activities and what drew people back to the lake for repeated visitation? The thesis addresses these questions related to private and public views of the landscape. I argue that recreation and leisure on Cooking Lake allowed individuals to feel connected to the place and to each other, encouraging them to dwell in the landscape as a living community of relationships that then formed a land ethic in the Beaver Hills.

Cooking Lake's tourism and resort offerings developed to promote excursions for regional visitors. Local business owners, the Grand Trunk Pacific railway, and resort developments facilitated the transformation of the lake into a favourite destination for summer amusement and entertainment. The Koney Island Club initiated early hunting and boating on the lake followed by cottage sales. With families and visitors of various classes spending weekends, holidays, and summers at the lake, Cooking Lake gained a seasonal tourism identity that was influenced by the rise of weekend excursions, train tourism, and a carnivalesque 'anti-culture.' These practices were also seen in the expansion of private cottages and subdivision communities where visitors enjoyed the lake and experienced the local leisure and recreational culture. Clubs and camps emerged to provide activities for groups, including the YMCA, military regiments, and Girl Guides, that fostered belonging and further enforced place identity ideals of the lake. The

development of the Lakeview resort and dance hall at South Cooking by 1930 was the culmination of a recreational tourism node.

Archival newspapers provide a basis for engaging with the historic context of Cooking Lake's popularity. Additionally, the voices and perspectives of visitors to the lake are brought into analysis through the use of archived oral history interview transcripts and popular community histories.

The interdisciplinary analytical framework of this study incorporates concepts from history, philosophy, and anthropology. The production of place identity and landscape commodification is examined through understandings of place and recreational development. Martin Heidegger, Tim Ingold, and Catherine Palmer's conceptions of dwelling within a landscape form the theoretical basis for understanding social interaction at Cooking Lake. The study aids in understanding excursions, landscape commodification, tourism nodes, society and communities of resorts, and place identity in a central lake district east of Edmonton, Alberta.

Keywords: Cooking Lake, tourism, resort, excursion, place identity, dwelling theory, weekend, cottaging

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------|--|
| CGIT | Canadian Girls in Training |
| CNR | Canadian National Railway |
| EYC | Edmonton Yacht Club |
| GTP | Grand Trunk Pacific |
| PPP | Peel's Prairie Provinces, Bruce Peel Special Collections, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. |
| YMCA | Young Men's Christian Association |
| YWCA | Young Women's Christian Association |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Summer is with us; hot and strong. The question of holidays and summer resorts is now up for consideration. Edmonton is fortunate in having ample choice of cool and healthful woodland lakes, large and small, lying east, west, north and southward from the city, and easily reached by train or automobile. Cooking Lake is Edmonton's first summer resort: selected because of its beauty and accessibility. It is at least 20 years ago since the first summer campers established themselves there.¹

1.0 Introduction

In March 2019, I visited Elk Island National Park for a picnic with family and friends to enjoy the beautiful topography of prairie lakes, but also to discuss the naturalist and philosopher Aldo Leopold, whose influential work had inspired our visit. We met to share elk chilli and corn bread in an open cookhouse while reading passages from *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*.² On a bright and crisp day, a dozen of us sat together on cold benches in -5C as a breeze blew off of Astotin Lake. We shared food and perspectives on nature, reading Leopold's passages about the spring return of the wild geese.

Our weekend lunch in the Beaver Hills followed an established historical pattern in a region of many lakes. It was not only a social gathering, but a meeting between human and environmental history. As we sat talking, it became clear that we were meeting in a region that held a deep history of gathering for sustenance and enjoyment.

¹ "Edmonton's Summer Resorts," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 June 1919, 10, AR01002, Peel's Prairie Provinces, Bruce Peel Special Collections, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (Subsequently abbreviated as PPP, in replacement of complete archive information).

² Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1968), 223.

Conversations and thoughts like those that had been found during our lunch at Astotin Lake made me curious about the histories of lake landscapes in Alberta and how these lakes became tourism and recreation destinations. The focus of this thesis was inspired by the lunch at Astotin Lake and looks to understand how and why these lake landscapes, specifically Cooking Lake, first became a destination for modern recreation and tourism.

Cooking Lake belongs to a geographical region of Alberta called the Beaver Hills that is characterized by its ‘knob and kettle’ terrain, an indication of the glacial moraine that resulted from the period of Wisconsin glaciation.³ This region of Alberta holds a longstanding history. Maps and toponymy remind us of how eighteenth-century European cartography began the process of mapping and renaming a rich region, well-known to many Indigenous Peoples and their land use that is sustained into the contemporary period.⁴ Many different nations have lived in and travelled through the Beaver Hills throughout the past millennia, including Nehiyawak (Cree), Tsuut’ina (Sarcee), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Nakota (Stoney), and Métis people.

The name ‘Cooking Lake’ is derived from the Nehiyawewin name for the lake, ‘the place where we cook’, indicating its role as a known stopping-place.⁵ The greater Beaver Hills region has been known as *amiskwaciy* in Nehiyawewin, *chaba hei* by Nakota peoples, and *kaghghik-stak-etomo* among the Niitsitapi people, with beaver

³ Research Council of Alberta. *Surface Geology of the Edmonton District, Alberta*, L.A. Bayrock and G.M. Hughes, ed. (Edmonton, Alta: Research Council of Alberta, 1962), 11.

⁴ Graham MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country: A History of Land and Life* (Edmonton, Alta: Athabasca University Press, 2009), 3, 31-38.

⁵ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 113.

highlighted in many of these names.⁶ The Beaver Hills—as it is known in English—has been a traditional hunting ground for beaver and waterfowl because of its geographical attributes.⁷ The high number of lakes and marshes throughout the region serve as a reminder of a glacial past, indicated by the glacial moraine and imprints of ancient Lake Edmonton.⁸ More than just indicating the ancient past, however, these lakes and marshes have contributed deeply to characterizations of the region in the more recent past.

While Indigenous peoples have been on the land for thousands of years, the colonial nature of dominant Canadian historiography emphasizes how the Beaver Hills region was central to imperial economic pursuits in Western Canada. Into the eighteenth century, European manipulation resulted in the Beaver Hills becoming a highly disputed territory. During the mid- to late-eighteenth century, European traders and missionaries first made their way into the region, commencing the incursion of Europeans in the area.⁹

As an admixture of European, Indigenous, and Métis fur trade communities and livelihoods became more entrenched within the Beaver Hills, the character of the area underwent additional changes. Into the era of Canadian history, colonial travellers of the 1880s likely stopped at southern Cooking Lake when travelling along the Carlton Trail (later known as Cooking Lake Trail) that was a key overland trade route between Fort Edmonton and the Red River Colony from early fur trade days.¹⁰ A longstanding Métis

⁶ Rebecca Ellis, “*amiskwacyi-wâskahikan* (Edmonton) History,” *Edmonton & Area Land Trust*, February 3, 2020, <https://www.ealt.ca/indigenous-connections-blog-list/amiskwacyi-wskahikan-edmonton-history>.

⁷ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 7.

⁸ Research Council of Alberta. *Surface Geology of the Edmonton District, Alberta*, 13.

⁹ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 29.

¹⁰ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 112; and “An Introduction to Our History,” *Strathcona County*, 1 December 2017, <https://www.strathcona.ca/council-county/history-and-heritage/at-a-glance/an-introduction-to-our-history/>.

community existed in the area of the lake, having been established prior to the arrival of homesteaders in the 1890s. The proximity of Cooking Lake communities to Edmonton allowed those at Cooking Lake to obtain supplies and engage with the changes taking place in the city as it expanded.¹¹ Cooking Lake became the host of settled communities. As recorded in the 1891 census, the sub-District of Edmonton had a population of 6,875.¹² The turn of the century marked a key period in the population growth of the city. The *Edmonton Bulletin* republished an article from *The Winnipeg Free Press* discussing the growth of western Canadian cities; the article states that by October of 1906 the Edmonton area—including the, then-separate Strathcona— had 11,534 citizens, with many new citizens having arrived by rail.¹³ By 1931, Edmonton had a recorded census population of 79,197.¹⁴

A major landmark feature from its geological history, Cooking Lake has also held an important position for an extensive period of human history. For the city of Edmonton the lake gained a role as a tourism destination for recreation and leisure. Between 1894 to 1938, the lake was redefined to fulfill the tourism, recreation and leisure desires of a visitor populace, predominantly those who travelled from Edmonton. Through this redefinition, Cooking Lake came to be included in the ‘world’ of Edmonton recreation and leisure and became “a favorite with Edmonton holiday makers.”¹⁵

¹¹ Dwayne Trevor Donald, “Edmonton Pentimento: Re-Reading History in the Case of the Papachase Cree,” *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, 2, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 43.

¹² Department of Agriculture and Statistics, “Table II - Population, Families and Dwellings” in *Census of Canada, 1890-91, Recensement du Canada* vol. 1. (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1893), 112.

¹³ “Western Cities in the Making,” *Edmonton Bulletin*, 30 October 1906, 6, PPP.

¹⁴ Ministry of Trade and Commerce, *Population, 1871-1931: Seventh Census of Canada, 1931*, vol. II (Ottawa: J. O. Pattenaude, 1934), 6.

¹⁵ “One Hour From City,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 July 1918, 4, AR00410, PPP; “Many Holiday Seekers Throng Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 July 1914, 10, AR01006, PPP.

1.1 Research Question

When my grandfather invited family, friends, and me to lunch on that cold day in March, I did not have a favourite passage in *A Sand Almanac County* because I had not actually heard of naturalist Aldo Leopold. Nor had I heard of his famous book that is centred around land ethics, based on his time spent in the post-glacial terrain of lakes and wetlands in rural Wisconsin. I did not realize until then that Leopold came from the same region of Wisconsin as my grandparents, who had then settled and raised children and sheep on their 1970s acreage in the post-glacial terrain of the Beaver Hills in Alberta. After seeing the impact that Leopold's work and ethic had on others, I wanted to read the book myself.

In *A Sand County Almanac*, I found a compelling idea that has led to my developing interest and understanding of what connection to landscape can mean:

It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.¹⁶

This perspective on the value of land encompasses the belief in the inherent importance of the land, not because of what can be obtained *from* the land, rather the value of the land through its own existence.

Spanning a half-century of modern tourism, recreation, and leisure activities at Cooking Lake, this study is most centrally concerned with why Cooking Lake was the site chosen for these activities and what drew people back to the lake for repeated visitation. Secondary questions are: 1) how and why did people 'go to the lake' during

¹⁶ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 223.

the past century?; 2) what did they do once they reached the lake?; 3) who were the people that made up the groups of visitors?; and, 4) what were the relationships that were formed between people and the land? The purpose of the thesis research is to study an instance of historical lake recreation spanning from 1894 until 1938 and to discuss some of the sentiments about land and tourism and recreation that may have influenced, and developed out of, this experience.

Cooking Lake has been known in different ways and one of its identities has developed from the recreation that it has fostered, therefore studying the period of 1894 until 1938 will allow for a microhistory of social interactions on this landscape. The time frame of this study is determined by the beginnings of tourism to Cooking Lake and the beginning of Canada's involvement with the Second World War, the impacts of which would warrant its own independent study. I argue that recreation and leisure on Cooking Lake allowed individuals to feel connected to the place and to each other, encouraging them to dwell in the landscape as a living community of relationships that then formed a land ethic in the Beaver Hills.

1.2 Thesis Structure

Chapter One offers an introduction and background to the thesis as well as a literature review and methodology. Chapter Two and Chapter Three focus on studies of the commodification of landscape and the rise of popular tourism at Cooking Lake. In these chapters, investigations probe the private and public spheres of interactions with landscape.

Chapter Two discusses the development of a tourist perception of Cooking Lake. The different forms of tourism and their roles in shaping recreation at Cooking Lake form

the basis of analysis for this chapter. In this chapter, I argue that the rise in tourism and associated recreation and leisure between 1894 and 1933 resulted in a landscape that was commodified and curated for visitors. It examines the development of landscape imagery as it relates to tourism and recreation. This then connects to the rise of excursions to Cooking Lake and the experiences and activities of visitation. The pinnacle of the commodified experience was the Lakeview Pavilion and Dancehall at South Cooking Lake. Ideas of place, landscape identity, and carnivalesque culture are engaged to demonstrate how and why Cooking Lake became the favourite lake resort for Edmontonians.¹⁷ The public perception of the Cooking Lake landscape is examined through analysis of tourism advertisements, newspaper articles, ephemera, and other mass circulation print and visual media.

Chapter Three addresses the different experience and forms of giving “an air of permanency to [one’s] holiday habitations at the city’s watering place.”¹⁸ This chapter underscores the role of habitations, clubs, and camps in facilitating personal connections with the landscape. Analysis draws on dwelling theory and how dwelling contributes to land relationships.¹⁹ Land use records, community histories, newspapers, advertisements, and related literature (e.g. poems) are the key sources for this study. Analyses will be focussed on dwelling and the formation of places and the position of specific landscapes — such as those of cottages, clubs, or camps — in contributing to a dwelling relationship.

¹⁷ Dale Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach: Leisure and Courtship in a Resort Town, 1900-1967* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), 6; and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (The M.I.T. Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1968), 1-10.

¹⁸ “Cooking lake Summer Report,” *Strathcona Evening Chronicle*, 8 May 1907, 4, PPP.

¹⁹ John Gray, “Open Spaces and Dwelling Places: Being at Home on Hill Farms in the Scottish Borders,” *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999): 452.

Chapter Four provides a conclusion and final analyses in response to the research questions. While each chapter contains its own line of analysis, the overarching discussion is redirected toward understanding the reasons for lake visitation; what were the identifying features and impulses of visitors to this lake, and how the lake functioned in forming these visitors' identities; and what the activities of recreation and leisure at Cooking Lake were. Finally, analysis is intended to provide insights into how the lines of inquiry intersect to document and illustrate the role of the recreation and leisure in shaping historical views of landscape.

1.3 Historiography and Literature Review

This literature review explores the existing historiography of the Beaver Hills and greater Edmonton region as well as lake life and recreation in Canada. The purpose is to contextualize the study and illustrate its relevance to better understand how tourist communities have developed connections to lakes on the Canadian prairies. The literature introduced illustrates some of the concepts relevant to outdoor and lake recreation; landscape study and historical geography; and tourism development.

1.3.1 Histories of Alberta and Edmonton

Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies* discusses the apparent 'development' of the Western Canadian Prairies. This text contextualizes Alberta's history as an emergent province within the history of the greater geographic region. Friesen posits that the binding agent between the western interior territories is not merely topographical, rather Friesen believes that they are linked by unifying prairie economies and similar economic

histories.²⁰ Friesen asserts that this economic unity resulted from the cultural history of these western territories as they held similar experiences of fur trade and subsequently, three distinct eras of cultural and economic history.²¹

Friesen traces the history of the western prairies from the perspective of “a single human society through more than three hundred years of dramatic change.”²² Throughout this narrative, Friesen makes primary use of political, economic, and environmental histories, using these three perspectives to situate his analysis deeply within the prairies. This book covers an expansive range of history, from the deep history of the pre-European settlement eras in the Americas, until the 1940s. As this narrative is developed, Friesen illustrates how Alberta’s political choices in the mid-twentieth century led to a political culture that differed from the other Prairie Provinces, thereby situating twentieth-century Alberta in its own political and cultural context.²³

Cooking Lake exists on the boundary of the Canadian Prairies region, but it is also situated on the ecotone of the boreal forest and aspen parkland. The glacial moraine that resulted in the Beaver Hills’ ‘knob and kettle’ characterization and had obvious impact on the botanical nature of the region’s terrain. Graham MacDonald’s *The Beaver Hills Country* follows environmental, cultural, and political lines of inquiry in developing a narrative for the Beaver Hills. MacDonald contextualizes the region’s human history within the ancient formation of the land, as it is now known. MacDonald’s purpose in writing *The Beaver Hills Country* recounts some of the stories of the people that have

²⁰ Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1984, 409.

²¹ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 4.

²² Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 5.

²³ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 409-410.

impacted the culture of the hills, and “to see the hills when they were part of more distant theatres of human action.”²⁴ This history includes a concise discussion of the recreational activities that grew around Cooking Lake, however the narrative is largely focussed on the early development of Koney Island and how it foreshadowed the later resort development in the area.²⁵ MacDonald’s discussion of recreational land use in the Beaver Hills predominantly focuses on uses of Elk Island National Park—one of the landscapes encompassing Astotin Lake—which was established as an elk preserve in 1906. Elk Island served many different functions as a park, including as a “pleasure ground.”²⁶ Elk Island’s “dual purpose” as a conservation *and* recreation site resulted in the operation of church camps, camping facilities, refreshment booths, and boating concessions on Elk Island lands.²⁷

Outside of MacDonald’s history of the Beaver Hills and popular local histories, few publications have been written regarding the region. Two important, non-scholarly resources for this area are a collection of community histories and an archival survey and report for the Strathcona County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Culture by Juliette Champagne. The two relevant community histories are *Land Among the Lakes: A History of the Deville and North Cooking Lake Area* by the Deville-North Cooking Lake Historical Society, and *A Fond Look Back from the New Millenium [sic]* by the South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee.²⁸ Both of these community histories provide

²⁴ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 7.

²⁵ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*.

²⁶ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 158.

²⁷ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 159.

²⁸ Deville-North Cooking Lake Historical Society, *Land Among the Lakes: A History of the Deville and North Cooking Lake Area* (Deville, Alta: Deville-North Cooking Lake Historical Society, 1983); and

reflective life history and community histories from an insider's perspective.

Additionally, *Land Among the Lakes* includes submissions by community members, thereby allowing the book to function as a form of primary source material. Both of these publications were published as commemorative community histories.

Conversely, Juliette Champagne's archival survey and report examine an era earlier than the settlement eras discusses within *Land Among the Lakes* and *A Fond Look Back from the New Millenium*.²⁹ This survey was focussed largely on the pre-settlement and fur trade-era histories of the Beaver Hills region. The above works do not provide significant discussion or analysis of recreation and tourism in the region, although they cumulatively offer valuable context for the history and community development in the region.

1.3.2 Tourism, Recreation, and Leisure in Alberta

As settlement expanded across Alberta, so too did new recreational and leisure pursuits in various diverse communities both urban and rural. Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet follow the history of leisure in Alberta in *Useful Pleasures: The Shaping of Leisure in Alberta, 1896-1945*. This text provides an overview of themes and topics related to the history of settlers and leisure in the region.³⁰ Some of the forms of leisure discussed by Wetherell and Kmet include concerts, dances, and outdoor picnics often in parks or the countryside. All of these were different assortments of community-based leisure

South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, *A Fond Look Back from the New Millenium* (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Print & Copy, 2000).

²⁹ Champagne, Juliette. *Archival Survey: Strathcona County Heritage*. Sherwood Park: County of Strathcona. 2017.

³⁰ Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet, *Useful Pleasures: The Shaping of Leisure in Alberta, 1896-1945* (Regina: Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism/Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990).

practices. Wetherell and Kmet further contextualize leisure pursuits within a broader framework of hegemonic cultural workings. Through this framework, the leisure pursuits considered normative were influenced by a variety of social factors;³¹ however, as is the case of hegemonic relationships, the norm had varied manifestations and also resulted in forms of leisure that intentionally resisted the norm. Popular leisure in Alberta was defined overall by a certain ‘Britishness’, characterized by an adherence to culturally British social and political ideals.³² Into the twentieth century outdoor leisure and holidays to nearby destinations became a key element of popular leisure. The rise of this leisure activity encouraged belief in the benefits of holiday retreats for health and community.³³ While Wetherell and Kmet outline the expansion of Rocky Mountain destinations as a result of this trend, lake holidays also rose from similar popular desires.³⁴

As discussed by geographers John Marsh and Geoffrey Wall, in their chapter, “Themes in the Investigation of the Evolution of Outdoor Recreation” in *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on its Evolution in Canada*, as the population increased in Canada, so too did both participation in outdoor recreation and opportunities for varied forms of outdoor recreation. Additionally, they discuss how urbanization and developments in methods transportation have also fostered new forms of rural outdoor

³¹ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 3.

³² Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 5.

³³ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 190-194.

³⁴ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 198-209.

recreation.³⁵ Recreation on Cooking Lake followed this overarching trend, although environmental impacts also led to subsequent changes in the practices of this recreation.

1.3.3 Canadian Context for Lake Recreation

Canadian lake recreation, leisure, and tourism have been longstanding components of the Canadian leisure landscape. Implicit in the study of lake recreation is the acknowledgement that the landscape on which recreation occurs is fundamentally important to experience. By recognizing the ways in which landscape shapes experience, one must also engage with the reciprocal relationship between the formation of landscape and the formation of experience. An individual's perception of the landscape will often shape their experience upon it, and, subsequently, one's experience will then shape perceptions of the landscape.³⁶ Both experience and landscape are formulated concepts that interact with each other to inform perceptions of each other.

Lakes and recreation are better studied in other regions of Canada, especially Ontario, than Alberta. In *Shaped by the West Wind*, Claire Campbell follows the history of Georgian Bay, focussing on the various ways in which that influential landscape has been envisioned and experienced.³⁷ Campbell tells the story of how people became passionate about a specific place. Centering on the iconic shores and waters of Georgian Bay, Campbell maps and situates the landscape through the eyes that have seen the Bay across the centuries, suggesting that canoeing and other forms of boating played a central

³⁵ John Marsh and Geoffrey Wall, "Themes in the Investigation of the Evolution of Outdoor Recreation" in *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on its Evolution in Canada*, John Marsh and Geoffrey Wall, eds. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 2-3.

³⁶ Keri Cronin, *Manufacturing National Park Nature: Photography, Ecology, and the Wilderness Industry in Jasper* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 104-105.

³⁷ Claire E. Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind: Nature and History in Georgian Bay*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

role in shaping a landscape perspective from the water of the Bay.³⁸ On the land side, cottaging on the lake offered one of the early ways of engaging with a “rustic ‘wilderness’ escape.”³⁹ Additionally, hiking, camping, and “casual environmental appreciation” offered additional methods of engaging with the landscape.⁴⁰ Campbell’s history is not one of recreation specifically; instead, *Shaped by the West Wind* speaks to the “cartography, art, and photography [that] offer different visual portraits of the landscape. Literature includes a vernacular record in voyageur, logging, and shipwreck ballads; personal memoirs; fiction and poetry, in which landscape acts as setting and symbol.”⁴¹ As Campbell acknowledges, her exploration of Georgian Bay encompasses a broad view of its history, with a thematic focus on “the relationship between culture and environment.”⁴² This focus on culture and the environment is bound to landscape study, as landscape study is about the creation of place within the personal and cultural psyche. Campbell highlights concepts of regional identity, place-making, and ideas of wilderness and nature in her analysis.

Landscape is bound by its physical components, but these components are made to exist within spatial confines by the people and communities that identify with it throughout time. Nancy Bouchier and Ken Cruikshank illustrate in *The People and the Bay*, that the landscape of Burlington Bay (Hamilton Harbour) was shaped across

³⁸ Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 42, 45, 138, 147, 198.

³⁹ Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 14.

⁴⁰ Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 87, 180

⁴¹ Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 5.

⁴² Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 8.

time by different groups or individuals to serve changing interests.⁴³ Recreation and leisure activities on land and water are central to Bouchier and Cruikshank's illustration of life along the Bay. Burlington Bay hosted the Burlington Beach Garden Pleasure Grounds, where visitors engaged in a variety of leisure activities from the 1820s into the 1950s.⁴⁴ Excursions to and around the Bay began in the mid-nineteenth century and remained part of the leisure landscape into the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁵ Of utmost importance was legislation and practices of swimming in the Bay.⁴⁶ Other key leisure activities that faced controversy on the Bay were fishing and gambling.⁴⁷

This work is an environmental history in the sense that it is focused on the movements and transitions of land and environment; however, it is also a social history because the stories of the land are told from their interactions with the human.⁴⁸ Therefore, the analysis frames the environment through the lens of human activity; the focal point of chapter studies are the natural components of the landscape while analysis discusses the human interaction and impact on the Bay. It is clear that Campbell and Bouchier and Cruikshank blend the history of landscape with culture and society.

Both of these works address the ways in which the human shapes the landscape, while the landscape shapes society. *Shaped by the West Wind* is primarily focussed on the

⁴³ Nancy B. Bouchier, and Ken Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay: A Social and Environmental History of Hamilton Harbour* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 6.

⁴⁴ Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 30.

⁴⁵ Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 29, 111.

⁴⁶ Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 86-91.

⁴⁷ Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 24-28, 88-89, 104.

⁴⁸ Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 5.

activities carried out on Georgian Bay and how these activities then influenced an understanding of nature, specifically the Bay. *The People and the Bay* follows a clear timeline that traces and analyzes the fluctuations of landscape use and understanding. Both of these works assist in providing a framework for analysis of human perceptions of landscape and how these perceptions then result in changes to that landscape.

In a similar vein, Dale Barbour's *Winnipeg Beach: Leisure and Courtship in a Resort Town, 1900-1967* discusses land use and approaches to a specific landscape, however his landscape is one explicitly cultivated for leisure experiences.⁴⁹ Barbour's focus on Winnipeg Beach encompasses a larger scope of recreation and leisure than Bouchier and Cruikshank's.⁵⁰ Winnipeg Beach is a townsite that developed on Lake Winnipeg and was connected to the city of Winnipeg by a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) line—and the corporate CPR played a key role in fostering recreation at this site.⁵¹

Barbour's approach to the landscape of Winnipeg Beach is focussed on social and cultural history. His interests concentrate on the relationship between leisure, courting, and a resort landscape. Barbour breaks his discussion into three key chapters, each focussing on a different element of beach life. A dancehall was present even in the early days of the resort town, and leisure pursuits were built on this first infrastructure, along with the addition of permanent cottages, tenting sites, boating, and public entertainment which all provided new leisure and courting opportunities for visitors.⁵² The spatial

⁴⁹ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*.

⁵⁰ See Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, ex. 23-26, 93-96, 165-166.

⁵¹ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 59.

⁵² Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 58-63, 100-102.

component of the beach landscape is not ignored; rather, Barbour acknowledges that this landscape “was a place where rules and boundaries could be challenged.”⁵³

Tracing almost seventy years of leisure history at Winnipeg Beach, the book follows the ways in which this landscape was used to deviate from normative culture and expectations, as well as how these norms were developed and encouraged. Interestingly, Barbour places Winnipeg Beach within a greater context of carnival traditions, tracing back hundreds—if not thousands—of years. Barbour draws on the religious roots of the carnival, describing how the carnival setting allowed for an accepted form of deviancy, as the carnival was separate from normative life and so it had its own rules and expectations. Furthermore, Barbour proposes a timeline from the carnival, connecting it to amusement parks and World’s Fairs, then finally to the beachfront amusement and recreation area. Barbour points to Brighton Beach, England, and New York’s Coney Island, United States, as two popular examples of beachfront amusement and recreation areas. Conceptually, Barbour ties Winnipeg Beach to the commercialization of carnivalesque holiday and weekend experiences at the turn of the twentieth century, and to the development of cultural and regional identities.⁵⁴

All three of these explorations focus on the ways in which the human interacts with the environment, demonstrating how these two elements are not separate or distinct. Rather, both the human and the environment influence and impact the development and perception of the other and the meanings of landscape. Key concepts that are derived from these studies are: how landscape identity is developed and how this relates to ideas

⁵³ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 3.

⁵⁴ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 4-6, 16.

of nature, wilderness, and human identity; ideas of escapism and the role of recreation in forming societies; and the depth of the histories of both recreation and perception of wilderness. These books provide a historiographical basis on which to develop analysis of recreation and leisure at Cooking Lake during the early twentieth century.

1.3.4 Place and Landscape Theory

The ‘wilderness appreciation’ that I saw represented by my ‘Leopoldian’ family and friends at Astotin Lake was not something that I had the vocabulary to discuss at the time, but, through reading, my understanding of this appreciation resonated with ideas of ‘place attachment.’ This concept refers to the ways in which individuals may find a connection with specific locations, or places; more clearly, the bond that people or societies may develop with places has a deep influence on connection or action.⁵⁵

Among academics, various terms exist for this kind of concept depending on the discipline and field of study. The term ‘place attachment’ has been discussed largely within the context of environmental psychology, while the same concept is referred to as ‘sense of place’ within the field of cultural geography. Both of these terms refer, broadly, to the positive bond that an individual develops to their environment. Related to this concept are the similar concepts of ‘place identity’ and ‘place dependence’; the first refers to the varied feelings—inclusive of thoughts and personal, associated meanings—that one may have about a specific setting, while the latter refers to the connection between place and a specific setting.⁵⁶ Applied to the situation of lake leisure activities,

⁵⁵ G. Brown and C. Raymond, “The Relationship Between Place Attachment and Landscape Values: Toward Mapping Place Attachment,” *Applied Geography*, 27, no. 2 (2007): 90; and Nikita A. Kharlamov, “Sense of Place” in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, ed. George Ritzer, (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2016), 1.

⁵⁶ Brown and Raymond, “The Relationship Between Place Attachment and Landscape Values,” 90.

lake leisure holds a ‘place dependence’ on the lake because the recreational pursuit could not be enjoyed in the same way without the lake. Sense of place, and its affiliated concepts, arose from phenomenological philosophers’ critiques of how human subjects exist and associate with the material world.⁵⁷

Initial scholarship on place attachment concluded that there is a key difference between the ideas of *space* and *place*. Space is considered by humanistic geographer Yi-fu Tuan as a vague and abstract conceptualization of an area, formed through the naming of distinctive and meaningful places within it; in this way, place is a component of space.⁵⁸ Place, then, is the distinctive components of space to which humans have assigned meaning, whether those meanings be abstract concepts such as *home* or *recreation*.⁵⁹ Place, as a simplification, is a connection point between landscape and the identified human experience. The goal in studying place attachment is to understand the emotional bond that people and communities hold with a specific location.⁶⁰

In the case of recreation and leisure, one of the prerequisite necessities for recreational and leisure fulfillment is an individual’s perceived freedom in choosing the conditions under which the experience takes place; a prime component of these conditions is the location.⁶¹ Therefore, if the place of recreation or leisure activity is a

⁵⁷ Kharlamov, “Sense of Place,” 1.

⁵⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), as cited in Kharlamov, “Sense of Place,” 1.

⁵⁹ D. L. Patriquin, *Landscapes of Hope: The Influence of Place and Social Capital on Collaborative Action in Sustainable Management* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta. 2014), 42.

⁶⁰ Roger Moore and Alan Graefe, “Attachment to Recreation Settings: The Case of Rail-Trail Users,” *Leisure Sciences*, 16, no. 1 (1994): 18.

⁶¹ Moore and Graefe, “Attachment to Recreation Settings,” 17.

fundamental piece in determining the apparent success of an experience, then recreation and leisure are inherently tied to the landscapes on which they occur.

1.3.5 *Theories of Dwelling and Landscape*

Landscapes are often assumed to be a place, but, rather, places are seen as specific locations that make up a landscape, while landscape may also serve as markers of world making and dwelling.⁶² Kolen and Renes' biography of landscape study cites an early scholarly definition of a landscape as "a usefully ambiguous concept, [where] the concept stands for both (part of) the outside world and for its representation or depiction in a two- or three-dimensional form – notably the painted landscapes that decorate our interiors."⁶³ Significantly, Kolen and Renes also acknowledge that landscape is defined and understood differently across cultures.

Neither has 'landscape' always been a stable term. In the Medieval period, landscape was conceptualized as a composite "trinity of land, people and territory."⁶⁴ Later, into the Romantic period, with the emergence of landscape as an artistic genre, landscape came to be the 'outside world' that was viewed from a specific perspective and could be represented visually. After developing greater ambiguity and nuance, a contemporary understanding of landscape encompasses both the 'real' components—geological, ecological and those studied in natural history—as well as the components of landscape that relate to nature, culture, and human experience. Kolen and Renes illustrate the inherent, and fundamental, connection between landscape and Heidegger's concept of

⁶² Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 12-13.

⁶³ Jan Kolen and Johannes Renes, "Landscape Biographies: Key Issues" in *Landscape Biographies*, eds. Jan Kolen, Johannes Renes and Rita Hermans, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 28.

⁶⁴ Kolen and Renes, "Landscape Biographies," 29.

dwelling. Dwelling is a method through which people “turn their world into a home,” thus landscape holds a potential for dwelling and dwelling is made within landscape.⁶⁵

In anthropology, dwelling theory is relevant to understanding how individuals may form a specific bond to the place in which they pursue recreation and leisure activities. As discussed above, a component of leisure is the necessity of choice. Leisure is described as such because individuals have the freedom to choose the activity and the location in which it occurs. In a similar sense, dwelling has been described as “being at peace, preserved from harm, and to be free.”⁶⁶ Nicole Eckert-Lyngstad makes use of dwelling theory in an anthropological analysis of park wardens and their families in the history of Jasper National Park. Eckert-Lyngstad approaches dwelling as a method of engaging with wardens’ experience of home while temporarily living in backcountry cabins and front-country bungalows as staff in a national park. This temporality of a warden’s home, while fulfilling a distinctly different purpose than a summer cottage or cabin, poses a similar question of how individuals place their homes and their comforts within a new landscape.

Originating with Heidegger’s discussion of dwelling as an act of being,⁶⁷ dwelling encompasses more than merely the act of living within a space, rather it is an act of “world-making.”⁶⁸ Tim Ingold then expands upon this interpretation of ‘world making’

⁶⁵ Kolen and Renes, “Landscape Biographies,” 29-31.

⁶⁶ Nicole Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home: Park Wardens, Families, and Jasper National Park’s District Cabin System, 1952-1972* (Unpublished Master’s thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta, 2013), 9.

⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) 149, as cited in Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 9.

⁶⁸ Tim Ingold, “Building, Dwelling, Living: How Animals and People Make Themselves at Home in the World” in *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge*, ed. Marilyn Strathern, (London: Routledge, 1995), 59.

by questioning the nature of the built environment and how it differs from the non-built environment. Ingold asserts that “human beings are the authors of their own [built environment].”⁶⁹ Humans construct and co-opt materials and their environments to fit their needs:

Indeed it seemed that the history of things—of artifacts, architecture and landscapes—could be understood in terms of successive, alternating steps of co-option and construction. We press into service what we found around us to suit our current purposes, we proceed to modify those things to our own design so that they better serve these purposes, but at the same time our objectives, or adaptive requirements, also change so that the modified objects are subsequently co-opted to quite other projects for which they are perceived to come in handy, and so on and on.⁷⁰

This underscores the belief that human desires both shape and are shaped by the landscape. Additionally, Ingold suggests that: “human beings do not construct the world in a certain way by virtue of what they are, but by virtue of their own conceptions of the possibilities of being.”⁷¹ Just as human desires shape and are shaped by landscapes, attachments to place and place dependency function together to formulate place within a space. There is no specific way of physically or abstractly constructing the world that is inherently human; rather humans construct the material and conceptual world through their desires.

Eckert-Lyngstad relates John Gray’s discussion of Scottish shepherding to the experiences of the Park wardens. Central to this relationship is the idea that the development of personal knowledge contributes to the potential for dwelling.⁷² Gray

⁶⁹ Ingold, “Building, Dwelling, Living,” 60.

⁷⁰ Ingold, “Building, Dwelling, Living,” 62.

⁷¹ Ingold, “Building, Dwelling, Living,” 63.

⁷² Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 84.

follows the daily lives of the shepherds, wherein they interact with a specific place and have intimate knowledge of the workings of that place. Through addressing this knowledge, Gray “consider[s] the ways in which shepherds encounter the hills, perceive them, and invest them with significance.”⁷³ Gray’s discussion of place attachment and dwelling in this context differs from the experience of tourists and summer visitors to Cooking Lake, as these individuals did not have extensive, daily interactions with the landscape at Cooking Lake. Therefore, Gray’s study provides a valuable basis for understanding a near-opposite from that of visitors to Cooking Lake, but might also suggest the outlook of local residents like farmers and others displaced from the land, such as Nehiyawak and Niitsitapi communities.

Catherine Palmer, on the other hand, discusses the relationship between tourism and dwelling. Palmer situates tourism as a method of world-making, and therefore place-making, in itself.⁷⁴ Dwelling is a form of engagement with the world and tourism functions to foster new forms of engagement. Just as Heidegger asks, “do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that *dwelling* occurs in them?”; how can a location of leisure be such a place unless it is conceived as such by the visitors and population as a whole?⁷⁵ Palmer argues that, “tourism can be conceptualized as a veil, the uncovering of which is capable of illuminating the intimacies of life along with the values, attitudes and beliefs by which people dwell.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, the new opportunities available in the altered form of dwelling—the dwelling away from home—foster possibilities for

⁷³ Gray, “Open Spaces and Dwelling Places,” 440.

⁷⁴ Catherine Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism: An Anthropological Perspective* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 20.

⁷⁵ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 146, as cited in Ingold, “Building, Dwelling, Living,” 75.

⁷⁶ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 21.

engagement in different activities and behaviours, thereby allowing an individual to make and remake their spaces and places.⁷⁷ Additionally, touristic dwelling allows for a freedom of remaking, which can foster leisure and recreation opportunities. Once one has a form of knowledge of a landscape, are they then capable of seeing a landscape as one of leisure and recreation and can one then have the freedom to formulate places of leisure within and on the landscape?⁷⁸

The relationship between place and recreation and leisure has been studied by a wide variety of scholars from contemporary case studies to historical works.⁷⁹ I pursue similar analytical outcomes to the scholars discussed. Place meanings are a component of the cultural history of landscapes, which may then be connected with contemporary place attachment and land ethic.⁸⁰ Place attachment, dwelling theory, and land ethics relate to how individuals give meaning to the world in which they lived, recreated, and carry out leisure activities, while also reflecting on their place within this world.

1.4 Methodology

The research methods being used for this thesis reflect the norms of historiographical research, therefore research and analyses stem from the norms of historical research and archival research. These methods are used in connection with each other for a joint analysis, to provide deep insight into the histories of Cooking Lake.

⁷⁷ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 22.

⁷⁸ Ingold, "Building, Dwelling, Living," 76.

⁷⁹ Examples from this research being: Moore and Graefe, "Attachment to Recreation Settings"; and Brown and Raymond, "The Relationship Between Place Attachment and Landscape Values."

⁸⁰ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1995); and Kolen and Renes, "Landscape Biographies," 21-48.

1.4.1 Historical Research

Historiographic norms dictate an iterative research process of in-depth analysis of both primary and secondary resource materials. Following a qualitative framework, these materials provide a basis to engage with past human experiences through the preserved records of these experiences.⁸¹ Primary sources refer to materials that were produced contemporarily to the study, by those with ‘first-hand’ experience of the event under examination.⁸² For this study, the documents included within the primary source categorization researched are newspaper articles, advertisements, photographs, postcards, and other correspondence. Newspaper articles, advertisements, and circulated photographs—various ephemera—fall into the category of publicly consumable materials, which influence public perception and opinion. Private photographs, postcards, and personal correspondence are not created to play the same public role, however, it is important to reference a wide variety of perspectives with sources, as all sources are created with political and social orientations.

1.4.2 Archival Research

As has been discussed, a method of obtaining data for this study will be through archival and document-based research. A collection of archives, museum holdings, and libraries throughout the Beaver Hills region and Edmonton region hold archival fonds pertaining to the histories of the two regions of study. Archives included, but were not

⁸¹ Lynée L. Gaillet, “Archival Survival: Navigating Historical Research,” in *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*, ed. Alexis E. Ramsey, Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L’Eplattenier and Lisa S. Mastrangelo (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 30.

⁸² John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 5th ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2010), 91.

limited to, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Bruce Peel Special Collections, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, and the City of Edmonton Archives. These collections provided ample opportunity for primary source research, with a focus on archival research. In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting closure of archives and libraries necessitated a pivot to predominantly online materials.

As is the case with archival and document-based research, interaction with a document is not limited to analysis; instead the interpretation of the document is of primary consequence.⁸³ This interpretation includes exploring the apparent meaning of the documents as a publication or source, but also exploring potential reasons as to why the source may have been written and what the source may have meant to both writers and consumers of the source. As Liz Stanley demonstrates in her discussion of the archival method, interpretation and analysis are clearly intertwined.⁸⁴ The processes of archival research outlined by both Lynée L. Gaillet and Helena Zinkham informed my approach to archival sources.⁸⁵ Gaillet's steps for accessing archival information and processing of that same information were the basis for my approach to the archives.⁸⁶ Thus, a history studying different forms of lake-based recreation that makes use of both primary and secondary source material requires the placement of the various subjects' interpretations alongside my own interpretations.

⁸³ Liz Stanley, "Archival Methodology Inside the Black Box" in *The Archive Project: Archival Research in the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2016), 59.

⁸⁴ Stanley, "Archival Methodology Inside the Black Box," 63.

⁸⁵ Gaillet, "Archival Survival: Navigating Historical Research," 28-39; and Helena Zinkham, "Finding and Researching Photographs" in *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*, eds. Alexis E. Ramsey, Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L'Eplattenier, and Lisa Mastrangelo (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 119-134.

⁸⁶ Gaillet, "Archival Survival," 35-36.

While ethical considerations of the archival research component may not be of utmost importance to this study, there are still political factors that must be acknowledged. As mentioned above, the reality of much archival and document-based history is that the words and works of privileged groups have been prioritised in the conserving of historical documents and artefacts. As discussed by Martin Johnes, the archive plays a role in shaping history, archives are central to “determin[ing] what we know about the past”; therefore, the politics of preservation play a central role in historical research.⁸⁷ In this way, potential omissions of the archive must be acknowledged.

As stated, research was pivoted to predominantly online resources because of COVID-19 and related closures of archives and libraries to in-person visits for much of the year. For this reason, the Bruce Peel Special Collections at the University of Alberta became a key database. Digitized newspapers and ephemera held by the Peel underpin much of the analysis in this thesis. I, like many, made use of home work spaces and online materials to carry out research and writing. During this time of elective confinement, many people turned to outdoor exercise and pastimes. Though the results of the COVID-19 pandemic may have been highly undesired, they served as a reminder of the value of health and fresh air, a value that recalled that which motivated many to visit Cooking Lake at the turn of the twentieth century.

⁸⁷ Martin Johnes, “Archives and Historians of Sport,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32, no. 15 (2015): 1795.

CHAPTER TWO

In the Public Eye: Commodification of Landscape and Popular Recreation at Cooking Lake, 1894-1933

All preparations are now completed for the reception of the influx of visitors which Monday next, the 24th long—the inaugural day of the tourist season—is expected to bring to the ‘lake’. Boats are painted, launches overhauled, engines refitted, sails trimmed, stores re-stocked, refreshment rooms cleaned up and renovated, in a word everything that will make for the comfort and pleasure of the visitor is attended and nothing is needed—but the visitor.⁸⁸

2.0 Introduction

From the early settlement period to the age of automobile travel, lakes in the Beaver Hills, east of Edmonton, attracted visitors seeking leisure and sport. Cooking Lake’s summer months were characterized by an influx of newcomers as the district emerged as an attractive destination for popular tourism. In 1894 lakeshore recreation began for regional visitors who could travel along the trails to Cooking Lake. As the years proceeded, tourists taking trains and automobiles began to flood into the lake district. This chapter examines popular recreation at the lake and how it contributed to commodification of the landscape for holidays and tourism. Popular recreation was influential in forming and contributing to particular landscape identities at Cooking Lake. How did Cooking Lake take shape as an early summer resort? Although obscured by time and declining water levels, Cooking Lake’s early history as Edmonton’s most popular lake resort for summer visitors for more than four decades warrants closer study as a leisure and recreation landscape.

⁸⁸ “North Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 May 1915, AR00804, PPP.

Lake resort tourism was initiated by a private Edmonton hunting club in 1894. Between 1900 and 1914, tourism at Cooking Lake began to thrive, with subdivisions cropping up all around the lake. Referred to as resort areas, these subdivisions were devoted to cabins and cottages for summers at the lake. Among these resort areas were Oban Beach, Crescent Island, Saratoga Beach (later called Wellington), and White Sands, which all developed between 1910 and 1913. Military Point and Stephens Beach were also developed prior to the First World War. After the war, Plover Point and South Cooking Lake expanded as resort areas in 1918.⁸⁹ Land in these subdivisions was advertised in Edmonton newspapers. For example, lots at Oban Beach were advertised throughout both 1907 and 1910; these lots boasted that “Cooking Lake [was] the most popular of all summer resorts around Edmonton.”⁹⁰ In 1911, lots at Military Point were advertised for their proximity to the North Cooking Lake Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) station and, because of this, owners would have “no lost time travelling to or from [their] camp when [they] may only have a couple of days to spend on the week-end.”⁹¹ Although many lots remained unsold, the region became a popular place for, predominantly, upper- and middle-class urban visitors to have a summer home.

⁸⁹ South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, *A Fond Look Back from the New Millenium* (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Print & Copy, 2000), 5.

⁹⁰ Advertisement, *The Edmonton Capital*, 22 June 1910, 3, AD00302_8, PPP.

⁹¹ Advertisement, *The Edmonton Capital*, 13 May 1911, 4, AD00407_1, PPP.

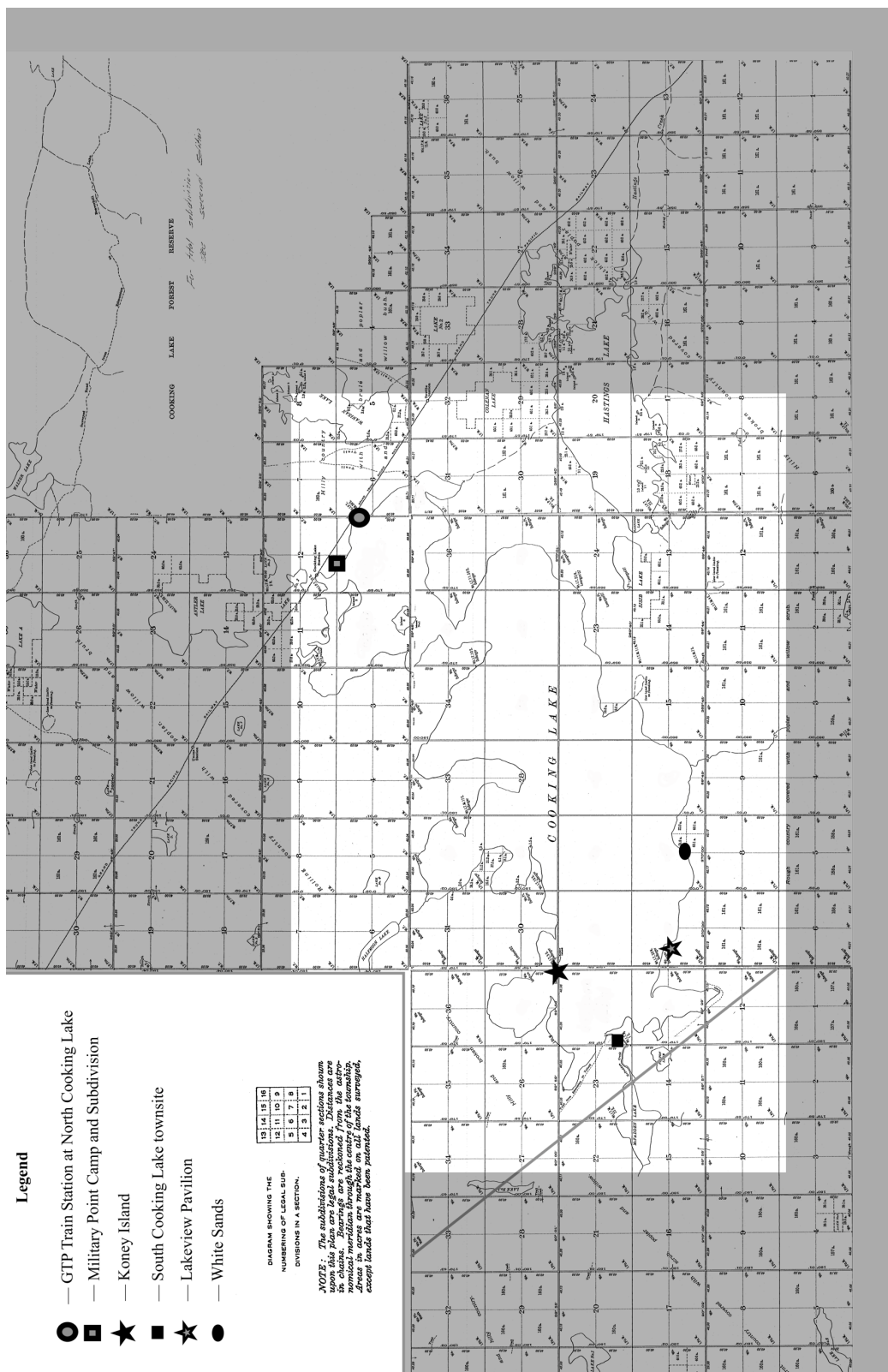


Figure 1 A composite map of the Cooking Lake region developed from land survey. Key points are indicated for reference. The GTP line to Edmonton and the approximate path of the Carlton Trail (now Highway 14) are at the North and South ends of the lake, respectively. ("Plan of Township 51, Range 21, West of the Fourth Meridian," 31 May 1916 [421051-1] by the Department of the Interior. Courtesy of Spin2 by the Provincial Government of Alberta; "Plan

of Township 52, Range 21, West of the Fourth Meridian,” 16 July 1915 [421052-1] by the Department of the Interior. Courtesy of Spin2 by the Provincial Government of Alberta; Plan of Township 51, Range 20, West of the Fourth Meridian,” 15 December 1916 [420051-1] by the Department of the Interior. Courtesy of Spin2 by the Provincial Government of Alberta; “Plan of Township 52, Range 20, West of the Fourth Meridian,” 6 July 1915 [420052-1] by the Department of the Interior. Courtesy of Spin2 by the Provincial Government of Alberta; and Plan of Township 51, Range 22, West of the Fourth Meridian,” 18 August 1916 [422052-3] by the Department of the Interior. Courtesy of Spin2 by the Provincial Government of Alberta.)

The advertising of these lots was indicative of the level of familiarity that Edmontonians already had with Cooking Lake; advertising the location as ‘the most popular’ of the resorts speaks to a desire for potential buyers to participate in, and reinforce, the popularity of this location. In a 1907 advertisement for Oban Beach, potential buyers were enticed by suggestions that they too could “be in the swim at Cooking Lake, [with] the three hundred or more people who will spend at least part of the summer at Oban Beach, [and participate in] the sports that will take place at Oban Beach, the boating, the fishing and shooting will make a holiday most enjoyable.”⁹² Advertising for Military Point also circulated ideas of weekend excursions, highlighting how commodified leisure and recreation at Cooking Lake was meant to be accessible. This attention to popularity encompasses ideas of socially-produced space and place-dependant leisure, also highlighting how the Cooking Lake landscape was identified and familiarized as a recreation destination for tourists.

Theoretically, the tourist functions within a particular role when entering a space. An individual may be seeking a particular experience, view, idea, or some other specific pursuit; a tourist—much like anyone else moving across a landscape—arrives with an outcome in mind. According to sociologist John Urry, the outcome is dependent on a

⁹² Advertisement, *Saturday News*, 3 August 1907, 2, AD00204_2, PPP.

wide variety of influences and variables, each factor coming together to influence and determine reasons for the act of tourism.⁹³

Scholarship on the history of tourism indicates that tourism is encouraged by the promotion of iconic experiences and as visitors participate in those experiences, they contribute to the mythology of a destination. For example, Keri Cronin writes about how popular thinking and representations of Jasper National Park as a landscape worked together to promote an image that reinforced the same ideas for subsequent tourists and future developments in the park's tourism industry.⁹⁴ Similarly, new visitors to Cooking Lake were encouraged by ideals of recreation and leisure that were promoted, then reinforced, by advertising and retellings that boosted the region's nascent tourism industry.

The history of tourism in Alberta has focused on railways and events concerning specific destinations, such as the Rockies and Calgary Stampede. From discussion of early Jasper tourism and imagery, to the development National Park tourism industries, or the integration of education and tourism at the Banff School of Fine Arts, scholarship on tourism in the Alberta Rockies has had diverse foci.⁹⁵ Rodeo recreation and tourism have also been an important focus of tourism, recreation and leisure studies in Alberta history. With the rodeos often came agricultural fairs and carnival attractions, fairs often

⁹³ John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 145.

⁹⁴ Cronin, *Manufacturing National Park Nature*, 4.

⁹⁵ See: Collen Skidmore, *Searching for Mary Schäffer: Women Wilderness Photography* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2017); Cronin, *Manufacturing National Park Nature*, 33-70; E.J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada: The CPR and the Beginnings of Canadian Tourism* (Banff, Alta: Altitude Publishing, 1983); and Karen Wall and PearlAnn Reichwein, "Climbing the Pinnacle of Art: Learning Vacations at the Banff School of Fine Arts, 1933-1959," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 92, no. 1 (March 2011): 69-105.

combining amusement and education.⁹⁶ Don Wetherell and Irene Kmet give an overview of leisure development as a “useful pleasure” in Alberta history that functioned both as a pleasurable distraction but also as a method of serving personal or social interests.⁹⁷ This thesis steps outside the park and event boundaries to discuss one of the more commonplace forms of recreation in Alberta that was directly reliant upon the landscape. Cooking Lake used the landscape to fulfill societal interest in tourism, recreation and leisure pursuits.

Landscape commodification led to the development of a carnivalesque atmosphere at Cooking Lake, wherein social and cultural norms were transcended for visitors. As historian Dale Barbour describes in his study of lakeside tourism development and practices at Winnipeg Beach, Manitoba, in the early-twentieth-century: “fun was commodified, tweaked, and sold to the masses in a tug-of-war between giving the people what they wanted and telling what they were supposed to want.”⁹⁸ Tourists arrived at Cooking Lake looking for a form of amusement—defined in part by class and gender—which was built on carnival traditions of celebration and festivity. Barbour writes that a carnival tradition extends back thousands of years with deep connections to religious festivals in Europe and a more contemporary relationship to nineteenth-century exhibitions and fairs.⁹⁹ As discussed by philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, the carnival was a

⁹⁶ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 309-341. See also: Max Foran, “The Stampede in Historical Context,” in *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Stampede*, ed. Max Foran, (Edmonton: AU Press, 2008), 1-19; Donald Wetherell, “Making Tradition: The Calgary Stampede 1912-1939” in *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Stampede*, ed. Max Foran, (Edmonton: AU Press, 2008), 21-45; and Fiona Angus, “Midway to Respectability: Carnivals at the Calgary Stampede” in *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Stampede*, ed. Max Foran, (Edmonton: AU Press, 2008), 112-145.

⁹⁷ Wetherell, and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, xvi-xxiv.

⁹⁸ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 6.

⁹⁹ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 4-6.

site of spectacle and ritual with its own rules. The carnival functioned as a form of idealized anti-culture that reflected and challenged the norms of daily life.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, understanding the lake and ideals of recreation led toward the early-twentieth century development of a social world that commodified and popularized outdoor recreation and a carnival atmosphere on Cooking Lake.

The predominant focus of lakeshore recreation in Canadian historiography has been on the development of Ontario lake tourism. Historian Claire Campbell analyzed Georgian Bay and its fluctuating landscape identity related to the ways in which a landscape is understood by those who interact with it, particularly summer cottagers and lake goers.¹⁰¹ Similarly, historians Nancy Bouchier and Ken Cruikshank carry out an environmental and social history of Hamilton Harbour (Burlington Bay) from the 1820s into the 1950s. This history posits that “the material world [...] provided the setting for very human conflicts.”¹⁰² Thus, the relationships between people and landscape are analyzed, which includes histories of industry and shoreside. Historian Patricia Jasen argues that the act of tourism requires an imaginative state of mind, with each form of tourism revealing elements of the “romantic sensibility” of the tourism industry.¹⁰³ With her focus on Ontario tourism from the late-eighteenth century until 1914, Jasen discusses the role of water recreation in the development of a Canadian tourism identity that put

¹⁰⁰ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 1-10.

¹⁰¹ Campbell, *Shaped By the West Wind*.

¹⁰² Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 6.

¹⁰³ Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 4.

connections between wilderness, health, and canoeing at the forefront.¹⁰⁴ These themes arise within Cooking Lake tourism and recreation history.

Studies of lakeshore recreation, commodification, and identity exist for certain regions of Canada, but few focus on western Canada and little is available specific to Alberta's lakes. Barbour's book on Winnipeg Beach is one of few to analyse lake tourism on the prairies. Graham MacDonald's *Beaver Hills Country* provides an overview of some of the early tourist attractions at Astotin Lake in Elk Island National Park; though the popularity of Astotin Lake was later than the peak of Cooking Lake. With similarities to Cooking Lake recreation, tourists were drawn to Astotin Lake because of the dancehall, cottages, recreation facilities, and golf course built in the 1930s.¹⁰⁵ MacDonald refers to the tourism and recreation of Cooking Lake; however, his regional focus is the Cooking Lake Forest Reserve, which gained designation in 1899 and then became an official game reserve in 1906.¹⁰⁶ By focussing on a history of Cooking Lake, this chapter looks to address how lake recreation and tourism interacted with landscape in a particular context in Alberta.

This chapter focuses on the world of leisure landscapes and emerging commercial tourism at Cooking Lake. Public perceptions of the Cooking Lake landscape are examined through historical analysis of tourism advertisements, newspaper articles, ephemera, and other mass circulation media. Varied experiences were available to Cooking Lake visitors, whether they were cottagers, excursionists, or other mass tourism participants. Together, the experiences, promotions, and offerings at Cooking Lake

¹⁰⁴ Jasen, *Wild Things*, 66-73, 105-132.

¹⁰⁵ MacDonald, *Beaver Hills Country*, 142-144.

¹⁰⁶ MacDonald, *Beaver Hills Country*, 95, 99-116

formed a leisure landscape that was identified as an escape from the everyday boundaries of early Edmonton. Cooking Lake tourism was placed at the crossroads of leisure and landscape. This chapter argues that the regional landscape of Cooking Lake was commodified through its place identity as a destination of tourism, recreation, and leisure. This identity defined the lake as a world of tourists and tourism by the mid-twentieth century.

2.1 Imagery of Cooking Lake Tourism

Understanding what brought visitors to the region is essential to understanding how Cooking Lake tourism commodified lakeshore leisure and formed a landscape identity that encouraged tourism. At the turn of the century, formal leisure was becoming accessible to varied socio-economic classes in Canada. Transportation and advertising encouraged the popularization of excursion leisure that attracted recreationists from day-trippers to cottagers. Intertwined with the rise of the weekend excursion, anti-urbanism, and contemporary health narratives, Cooking Lake developed to become a top summer tourism destination for the Edmonton area.

In the late 1880s and 1890s hunting parties characterized the region as an autumn hunting destination, with Edmonton newspaper mentions of the lake referring to expeditions related to hunting and fishing. The Beaver Hills offered an abundance of habitat for migratory waterfowl on the central North American flyway. Winter hunting excursions looked for large game such as deer.¹⁰⁷ The first sheriff of Edmonton, Sheriff Walter Scott Robertson, initiated private leisure use of the lake by Edmontonians when

¹⁰⁷ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 January 1897, AR00105, PPP.

he and his family purchased land for a cottage on the south-western shore in the 1880s.¹⁰⁸ Popular use of this site was reinforced in 1891 when a group of Edmonton men, including Sheriff Robertson, travelled to the lake “for the double purpose of exploring the lake in a sail boat and shortening and improving the road leading to it from Edmonton, in the interests of sporting and pleasure.”¹⁰⁹ With this simple statement about the area’s potential, the social understanding of Cooking Lake began its transformation toward tourism, although the transition to a resort destination did not happen overnight.

Within the article recounting Sheriff Robertson and company’s expedition purpose there was a description of Cooking Lake:

Cooking lake is situated in the heart of the Beaver hills about 15 miles a little south of east from town. It is some ten miles long and three wide with beautiful heavily wooded banks, sandy beaches, and many deep bays. As a place for duck shooting, in season, sailing, bathing or camping it is unequalled in the country.¹¹⁰

Through the improvement of the Edmonton-Cooking Lake road to the south-west shore, the Sheriff’s party increased the level of accessibility to the lake and publicly developed an association between the lake and diverse recreation. This 1891 expedition may be seen as the earliest turning point in the leisure landscape of Cooking Lake. The transition appears to have taken some years, however, in 1893, a survey was carried out to report on the potential of the lake and surrounding lands “with a view to its becoming a summer resort.”¹¹¹ The inaugural commercial development occurred on July 26, 1894, when the

¹⁰⁸ Cooking Lake Study – Site Data Form B-83 H. H. Robertson Cottage, November 1974, ARCH 1864, Binder 2, Cooking Lake fonds, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada.

¹⁰⁹ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 July 1891, 4, AR00404, PPP.

¹¹⁰ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 July 1891, 4, PPP.

¹¹¹ “Local,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 September 1893, 1, AR00103, PPP.

founders of the Koney Island Sporting Company Ltd. purchased what had been known as Pine Island, renaming it Koney Island.

The initial attraction of Cooking Lake was relatively straightforward, while others like Sheriff Robertson had been using the landscape for recreational activities in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the first tourist to the region was popularly credited as being Mr. St. George Jellett, a widely recognized figure in Edmonton society, and his hunting group.¹¹² The first reports to mention Cooking Lake in Edmonton-area newspapers referenced the names of recreational hunters, all of whom visited the lake on shooting parties.¹¹³ However, it appears that Mr. St. George Jellett did not actually visit the lake until August of 1895, when he participated in a boat race against the Koney Island sailboat Mudhen.¹¹⁴ There is the possibility that St. George Jellett was credited as being the first tourist to the region because he may have been one of the first non-landowners to travel to Cooking Lake for recreation and leisure purposes.

¹¹² "Cooking Lake: Edmonton's Oldest and Nearest Summer Resort," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 June 1918, 15, AR01506, PPP.

¹¹³ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 September 1890, 1, AR00103, PPP.

¹¹⁴ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 19 August 1895, 1, AR00103, PPP.



Figure 2 Members and guests of the Koney Island Sporting Company on boats, including the gaff-rigged sloop, the Mudhen, ca. 1900. ("Cooking Lake from Koney Island, 20" [Ernest Brown fonds, B6543], by Ernest Brown. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta.)

All of these initial leisure pursuits by settlers were focussed on what the lake could provide as entertainment and enjoyment opportunities. Hunting and fishing were popular for men who were able to carry out these activities for recreation or sport, rather than subsistence.¹¹⁵ During the mid- to late-nineteenth century there was little regulation of fishing or hunting for settlers in Alberta. By 1903, however, an official hunting season was established as a *Game Ordinance*.¹¹⁶ Success of sporting expeditions to the lake was reliant on the available waterfowl populations. This recreation pursuit began to shape the

¹¹⁵ Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, *Sports in Canada: A History*, 4th ed. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2017), 30-3, 38-41.

¹¹⁶ Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Fish and Wildlife Historical Society, *Fish, Fur, and Feathers: Fish and Wildlife Conservation in Alberta, 1905-2005*, (Alton, Man.: Friesen's Printers, 2005), 5-20.

landscape of the lake when, in April 1894, the Edmonton Gun Club began sowing wild rice seed at Cooking Lake to attract ducks.¹¹⁷ Attraction to the wildlife habitat and the lake environment itself was the essential element that started Cooking Lake on its track to becoming a resort. Later on, once the resort had established an identity, public representations of recreation built on the initial draw of the landscape to reaffirm that the natural area of Cooking Lake was as much a draw as the amenities that the resort provided. Central to the development of tourism at Cooking Lake was the promotional image of the lake as a sporting and boating site, which encouraged and facilitated recreational development.

The Koney Island Sporting Co. was started by ten Edmonton men of various occupations and positions. They were Alexander Hooper Goodwin, dentist; Hedley Clarence Taylor, lawyer; Nathan George Flater, architect; Edward Ainsley Braithwaite, physician; Frank Alfred Osborne, contractor; Kenneth Archibald McLeod, contractor; Frederick Stanley Glover, agent; Emanuel Raymer, jeweller; Sidney Stockton Taylor, lawyer; and John Darley Harrison, physician.¹¹⁸ Started by men of the professional and business class, the Koney Island Sporting Co. entrepreneurs were explicitly focussed on the commodified expansion of Cooking Lake recreation.

A club house was the first structure erected on Koney Island, but the company looked to provide new recreationists and tourists to the area with a complete lake experience. In addition to this club house, the company had aspirations to expand their enterprise to include:

¹¹⁷ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 23 April 1894, 1, AR00103, PPP.

¹¹⁸ "Notice," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 September 1894, 3, AD00303_1, PPP.

The building, owning and maintaining and selling, incumbering or disposing of boats, steamers, yachts and other vessels and all sporting apparatus, plant and articles and the leasing and renting of said island and other lands, and said boats, steamers, yachts and other vessels, houses, hotels and erections for hire or remuneration, and the selling, incumbering and disposing of said Pine Island and other lands and all houses, hotels, structures or erections thereon, or to be placed thereon [*sic*].¹¹⁹

Explicit was the understanding that Koney Island's purpose was to be a site of leisure and to contribute to the expansion of leisure activities at Cooking Lake. While the initial ownership of the Koney Island Sporting Co. was limited to ten Edmonton men, the intent of their company was to develop leisure business and experiences beyond what already existed at the lake. Instead of hotels, the island became a well-known camping site and some cabins were available for rent, however the island remained predominantly a private club.

Little documentation could be found that detailed how Koney Island expanded its ventures, but the company did not entirely fulfill its initial projections for tourism on the island. Publicity for the company and location was published in Edmonton newspapers. During the early years, significant detail was given to the boats procured by the club and the activities of the club members.¹²⁰ Still, the Koney Island Sporting Co. formalized the rise of commercial tourism at Cooking Lake and remained a part of the recreation landscape well into the 1920s.

The Koney Island Sporting Co. facilitated carnivalesque seasonal and weekend resort recreation within a sphere that straddled the boundary between commercial and

¹¹⁹ "Notice," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 10 September 1894, 3, AD00303_2, PPP.

¹²⁰ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 June 1895, 4, AR00406, PPP; and "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 4 July 1895, 1, AR00102, PPP.

private spheres of leisure. As the company was relatively open to the public as to its actions and activities, each news article that detailed its purchases and developments contributed to familiarity of Cooking Lake for readers of Edmonton-area newspapers. By hosting dances for the community that had begun to frequent Cooking Lake—Sheriff Robertson and his family included—the company built a public identity for carnivalesque activities.¹²¹ Beginning with the construction of a 125 foot-long pier in the winter of 1899, the Koney Island Sporting Co. held an essential position in determining the infrastructure and expansion of tourism at Cooking Lake as well as generating a visible tourism landscape.

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the Koney Island Sporting Co. explicitly advertised its ventures. However, regular newspaper coverage detailing the company's activities indicates that it, and the area, were considered newsworthy and relevant to Edmontonians. By 1900 the company formally announced the 'opening' of the season at Cooking Lake.¹²² This meant that townspeople were able to travel to the island for weekends and vacation time filled with camping and boat rides on the company's various pleasure crafts.¹²³ By 1906, the island had a summer boarding house to house visitors, in addition to campgrounds and privately-owned summer cottages.¹²⁴ This twelve-year period of development resulted in a shift in the desires of recreation goals of visitors. With these announcements, the seasonality of Cooking Lake recreation shifted from

¹²¹ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 5 September 1898, 1, AR00103, PPP.

¹²² "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 18 May 1900, 6, AR00608, PPP.

¹²³ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 May 1900, 1, AR00104, PPP.

¹²⁴ "At Cooking Lake," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 July 1906, 3, AR00309, PPP.

autumn hunting to summer resort tourism. By 1919 Koney Island became one of the best-known recreation sites on the lake.¹²⁵

Koney Island's position as the initial site of commodified leisure on the lake led it to become a part of the iconic imagery of Cooking Lake. Named for the high number of coniferous trees on the island, the location was known for its beautiful growth of trees and its beach access.¹²⁶ This focus on its appealing landscape led to the production of promotional materials and imagery using Koney Island as an identifiable, ideal landscape. One of the first circulated images of Koney Island was published in 1902 in the Winnipeg magazine *The Nor'-West Farmer*. The image appears to be taken from a perspective on the water and frames three wooden boats with sails and a lumber building, foregrounding the Koney Island landscape with a caption reading: "Coney Island [*sic*], a very pretty wooded island in Cooking Lake, Edmonton District."¹²⁷ *The Edmonton Bulletin* re-published the image from *The Nor'-West Farmer*, indicating that the magazine was drawing attention to Cooking Lake. *The Nor'-West Farmer* was a Winnipeg magazine that had readership across, largely, western Canada. Though no article accompanied the image, for readers of the popular *The Nor'-West Farmer*, Cooking Lake and Koney Island were tied together through the image and its picturesque framing of the region.

¹²⁵ "Cooking Lake Boasts Many Pleasure Spots," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 June 1919, 9, AR00908WSB, PPP

¹²⁶ "Cooking Lake Boasts Many Pleasure Spots," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 June 1919, 9.

¹²⁷ "Coney Island [*sic*], a very pretty wooded island in Cooking Lake, Edmonton District," *The Nor'-West Farmer*, 20 August 1902, 743.

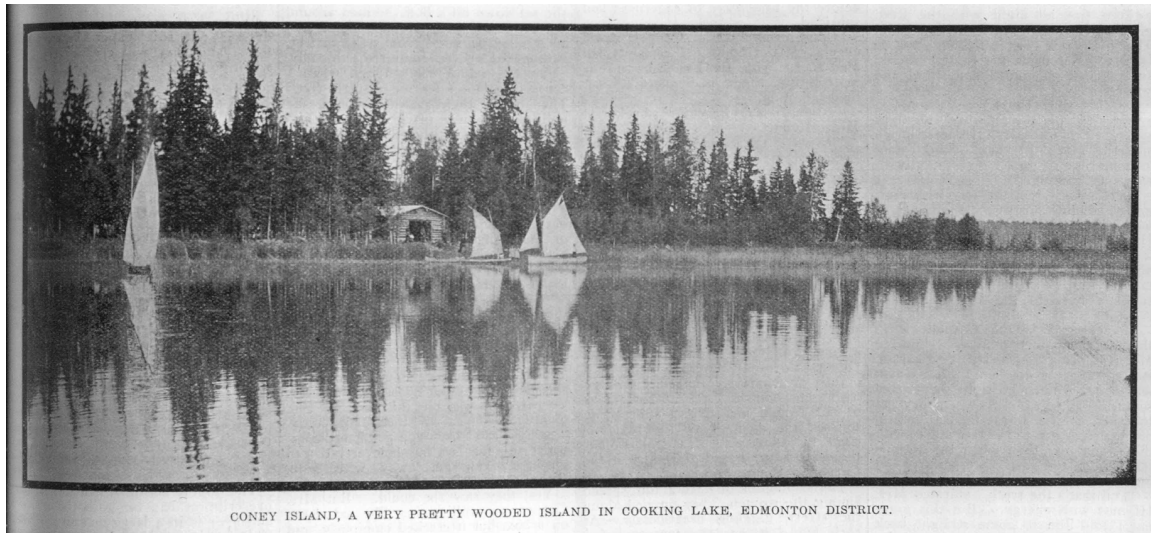


Figure 3 The shoreline of Koney Island published in the *Nor'-West Farmer*, 1902. ("Coney Island, A Very Pretty Island in Cooking Lake, Edmonton District," August 20, 1902, *Nor'-West Farmer*, 743. Courtesy of the Research & Collections Resource Facility, University of Alberta.)

Further circulation of the natural attractions of Koney Island occurred with postcards produced by Stedman Bros., Ltd., based in Brantford, Ontario depicting the island. One of these postcards, used in May of 1909, frames the natural and recreational attractions of Koney Island.¹²⁸ This postcard, which shows a woman seated in a canoe holding a paddle on the water by a wooded shoreline, depicts Koney Island from a different perspective than that shown in *The Nor'-West Farmer*.

¹²⁸ Post card of Koney Island, Stedman Bros. "Coney Island, Cooking Lake, Strathcona," ARCH 2361, Box 1 File 1, Cooking Lake fonds, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta.



Figure 4 A woman in 'Gibson Girl' attire canoes on Cooking Lake near Koney Island, 1909. ("Coney Island, Cooking Lake, Alberta," 1909, [Cooking Lake fonds, box 1, file 1, ARCH002361] by *Stedman Bros.* Photograph courtesy of Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park.)

The central figure of the postcard, a woman, is sitting alone in the canoe, holding a paddle and looking directly at the camera, on tranquil waters and with a deciduous wooded shoreline in the background. The woman depicted within this postcard appears to be clothed in 'Gibson Girl' attire, an aesthetic intended to pair idealized femininity with modernity. This trend, however, also held implicit messages of perceived Anglo-Saxon racial superiority and eugenicist ideologies,¹²⁹ thereby encouraging a message of an Anglo-Saxon culture at Cooking Lake. Furthermore, the middle-class nature of the original Gibson girls meant that the *Stedman Bros.* postcard elucidated a middle-class connection to Cooking Lake. Celebrating modernity, accessibility, recreation, and Anglo-

¹²⁹ Jaleen Grove, "Bending Before the Storm: Continentalism in the Visual Culture of Canadian Magazines," *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 34, no. 5 (2019): 790-792.

Saxon culture, the *Stedman Bros.* postcard positioned Cooking Island within familiar landscape tropes.

Women paddling canoes held an exalted position as a Romantic image of nature holidays and were a common advertising trope on postcards and in corporate advertising, such as that of the CPR and GTP at this time.¹³⁰ A connection between canoeing and camping was then cultivated during the 1880s, wherein ideas of anti-urbanism and escapism posited that the canoe and its related recreation were essential to Canadian summer activity. The Stedman Bros. postcard built on this known relationship between canoeing and outdoor leisure to impart an experience of camping and recreation on Koney Island.¹³¹ Instead of the buildings and material assets of the Koney Island Sporting Co. being a main focus of the image, as was seen within *The Nor'-West Farmer*, the postcard focusses on the woman paddling the canoe. Though different in their foci, the two images demonstrate attention to the aesthetic appeal of the natural features, as well as two forms of recreational boating.

As the Stedman Bros. postcard promoted iconic summer recreation in Canada, Stedman Bros. produced a variety of postcards in the early 1900s, many of which depicted Romantic scenes from the prairie provinces.¹³² The Cooking Lake postcard also illustrates how the Cooking Lake tourist was framed and commodified in postcard

¹³⁰ Hart, *The Selling of Canada*, 90-94.

¹³¹ J. Benidickson, "Paddling for Pleasure: Recreational Canoeing as a Canadian Way of Life," *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on its Evolution in Canada*, G. Wall and J. Marsh, eds. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 323-326.

¹³² Postcards depicted various scenes and buildings. Recreation and tourism included: an image of bathers at Banff hot springs, "Bathing, Hot Sulphur Springs, Banff, Alta." *Stedman Bros.* ca. 1910s-1920s; the City of Edmonton steamboat on the North Saskatchewan, "St. City of Edmonton, Edmonton, Alta" *Stedman Bros.* ca. 1900-1909, Canadian Pamphlets Collection, University of Saskatchewan Special Collections, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada.

scenes.¹³³ As the central figure in the photograph, the canoeist stares directly at the viewer, functioning both to identify herself and the viewer. By addressing the viewer with her gaze, the woman identifies the viewer as a consumer of the image and its associated messages.¹³⁴ As well, the woman wears fashionable sportswear of the period and presents herself to the viewer. She is positioned as a highlight of the scene, as much as her surroundings. A woman in a canoe challenged late-nineteenth gender ideals in that she presented herself as a ‘bohemian’ outside of cultural norms and followed a rising trend of women as figureheads for outdoor recreation.¹³⁵

This trope of a beautiful woman in a canoe held a place within imagery of Canadian leisure and landscapes, something also used to popularize Rocky Mountain resorts.¹³⁶ On another level, the subject of the image is not only the woman, rather it is the landscape and activity in which she is immersed. The gaze of the viewer—and therefore the potential tourist—objectifies both the woman and the landscape.¹³⁷ The postcard makes Cooking Lake attractive as a scenic beauty spot accentuated by such an image and moves it into a vocabulary common to tourism advertising in its era.

The two circulated images of Koney Island depicted different representations of an imagined pristine landscape, though neither showed an untouched landscape. The photograph in *The Nor'-West Farmer* adheres to a form of pristine landscape in that

¹³³ A popular history collection of Stedman Bros. postcards has been compiled however access to this text was not possible at this time; Mike Smith, *The Stedman Bros. Picture Postcard Handbook, 1905-1930s*, 2nd ed. (Goderich, ONT: Mike Smith, 2011).

¹³⁴ Urry *Consuming Places*, 145.

¹³⁵ Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 140-142.

¹³⁶ Hart, *The Selling of Canada*, 90-94.

¹³⁷ John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 2011), 2.

it did not focus on any people, though trappings of recreation are present. The Stedman Bros. postcard holds a similar focus on the landscape and its flora; however, the image also depicts a woman carrying out a seemingly recreational activity, canoeing. Within this difference lies a central similarity in that the landscape of Koney Island is directly and visually connected with summer recreational pursuits and perceptions of social interaction. The human/landscape interaction encouraged and reinforced through these two images was one of recreational activities, specifically boating, within a scenic natural area.

This initial imagery of Koney Island was then reflected in the public perception of Cooking Lake as it moved to the forefront of Edmontonian summer recreation and tourism. An iconic image of the landscape fostered a commodified connection with the land through the recreational and tourism activities that visitors carried out at the lake. As the popularity of the lake expanded, so too did its imagery and commodification. As demonstrated through the production of iconic Koney Island imagery, the visual experience of the landscape was a central component of the recreation experience.

By 1930, Cooking Lake continued to use its novel landscape as a promotional feature, however the characteristics of this promotion had changed to indicate the lake's popularity. Where before the *Nor'-West Farmer* and the *Stedman Bros.* images had visually focussed on the secluded nature of Koney Island as a feature point of Cooking Lake, The postcard "Yachting at Cooking Lake, near Edmonton, Alberta" depicted a large group of sailboats, indicating a popular presence of recreationists at the lake. Sailing had become one of the essential images of Cooking Lake's character, being both

a visual attraction for spectators, as well as a feature activity for those able to participate.



Figure 5 Ten sailboats on calm waters of Cooking Lake, ca. 1930. ("Yachting at Cooking Lake. Near Edmonton, Alberta," ca. 1930, [Peel 3334] by Fred. J. Spalding, *The Camera Products Co.* Image made available through Peel's Prairie Provinces (peel.library.ualberta.ca), a digital initiative of the University of Alberta.)

Keri Cronin's analysis of the imagery of Jasper National Park may provide some insight into the significance of circulated images in the development of place and landscape identity. Specifically, Cronin outlined the ways in which circulated landscape images contribute to "the visual mythology that defines wilderness as tracts of uninhabited (and therefore untouched and pristine) land."¹³⁸ Cronin's discussion of postcards and imagery in the production of Jasper National Park speaks to the development of landscape identity in Alberta, though Cronin contextualizes Jasper National Park in a federal context rather than provincial. Photography has played a role in the commodification of wilderness in Jasper National Park, as well as Canadian

¹³⁸ Parentheses in original, Cronin, *Manufacturing National Park Nature*, 98

wilderness overall. The sharing of images formulated iconic imagery relating to wilderness, outdoors, and outdoor recreation, and this, in turn, functioned to create an identity for Jasper National Park.¹³⁹ Implicit within this identity is a message about the human/landscape interactions that are to be expected or anticipated when visiting a park in the Rocky Mountains. In this way, the promotion of images and place-based imagery, particularly related to tourism, impact dwelling. By expanding the visible world, photographs work like a bridge, by gathering spaces and landscapes to the sphere of possible dwelling.

Early recreationists at the lake visited for the natural assets that the landscape could provide in the way of large game, waterfowl, and fish. Hunting for furs was an established element of Albertan society prior to settler activities at Cooking Lake.¹⁴⁰ Hunting trips to Cooking Lake differed from fur trapping because the focus of these trips was on the sporting component of hunting and fishing. Just off the eastern shore of the lake the Cooking Lake Forest Reserve was established in 1899, the lands for which had been nearly cleared as a result of six years of sustained fires. This initiative was intended to maintain the region's forest and provide habitat for game. As part of an interest in preserving large game, such as elk, the Forest Reserve was designated and then in 1906, a section of the Reserve was used as a game reserve.¹⁴¹ The Cooking Lake Forest Reserve remained on the landscape, just off the north-eastern shore of the lake, throughout the resort period.

¹³⁹ Cronin, *Manufacturing National Park Nature*, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Fish and Wildlife Historical Society, *Fish, Fur, and Feathers*, 9-13.

¹⁴¹ MacDonald, *Beaver Hills Country*, 99-101.

When tourism ventures began to expand, the intrinsic value of the natural vistas and landscape exploration came to be a central draw. However, this is not to say that the natural value was not still something to be exploited and marketed for touristic consumption. By 1905, Koney Island owners and property owners on nearby Crescent Island were concerned about the protection of the forests on the islands. As discussed, one of the features of Koney Island that was heavily marketed was its “beautiful growth of spruce trees,” and the maintenance of these wooded islands was necessary to uphold the visual and excursion experience of Cooking Lake.¹⁴² By 1910, a coniferous tree nursery was established at North Cooking Lake, which contributed to the wooded appeal of the region.¹⁴³

This visual appeal was represented as a central draw for visitors; the lake was consistently referred to as a “beautiful resort,” and subdivision advertisements extolled the virtues of “this magnificent stretch of water ... [where] the soil is sandy, and the ground has a natural slope towards the lake which makes it an ideal camping ground.”¹⁴⁴ Promotion of these natural attractions sometimes invoked ideas of ocean destinations, while also reaffirming the proximity of the destination to the twin cities of Edmonton and Strathcona.¹⁴⁵ When Canada joined the First World War, the draw of the lake did not appear to diminish. Even in the midst of the war, Cooking Lake was presented as a “large and picturesque expanse of water ... contain[ing] several

¹⁴² “To Protect the Island Timber,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 March 1905, 7, AR00703, PPP.

¹⁴³ MacDonald, *Beaver Hills Country*, 108-109.

¹⁴⁴ “City News,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 August 1906, 10, AR01003; “Fullam Park: The Cooking Lake Summer Resort is now on the Market,” *Strathcona Evening Chronicle*, 26 June 1907, 3, AD00302_6, PPP

¹⁴⁵ Advertisement for subdivision lots at Balmy Beach, Cooking Lake, “Balmy Beach ...” *The Edmonton Capital*, 24 June 1911, 3, AD003023, PPP.

fertile and beautiful wooded islands” that was ideal for Edmonton holidaymakers because it was “situated almost at their very doors.”¹⁴⁶ While these claims about the landscape indicated an appreciation for the region’s natural beauty, an inherent message within these descriptions was about the region’s potential for human use and outdoor holiday experiences.

Images of Koney Island began the initial circulation of an iconic lake landscape and the resort experience was further reinforced as the destination’s popularity grew. One of the key groups that began to visit the lake were visitors who were only able to spend a weekend at the resort. A 1914 article published in *The Edmonton Capital* provided a narration of the Cooking Lake experience. The writer illustrated an ideal Cooking Lake vacation for a first-time visitor:

You leave the C.N.R. depot at six in the evening or eight-fifty in the morning, and it is only an hour’s run, through the very prettiest piece of country. You think you would not care to. Others have thought the same and believe it, but let us start this evening and see what impressions we get. The train is well filled with week-end pleasure seekers, and everything is merry, the weather is ideal, and one should but form the best opinion. The train has slowed up and there on the platform bronzed faces and burnt arms are in evidence, as campers crowd forward for the expected visitors. After hilarious greetings the different parties are disposed of in the many launches, little and big, which are waiting to take them to the respective parts of this pretty lake, which is almost twelve miles long, irregular in shape, with three islands to enhance it. As we are going to the extreme farther end we have excellent opportunity to observe the many cottages and cluster of camps scattered along on either side of the lake. A flock of black duck circle about, and a sail in the distance makes the pulse throb quicker with keen delight. Small boats and canoes are idly drifting up and down, lights are beginning to twinkle here and there and we are aroused from the reverie to find that we have arrived at our destination and are quite ready for a belated and generous meal, for this is the environment which makes for appetite.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 May 1916, 2, AR00216, PPP.

¹⁴⁷ “A Trip to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 13 July 1914, 6, AR00605, PPP.

This passage outlined the ways in which Cooking Lake recreation was marked by the desires of urbanites. Weekend visitors became common as the train provided accessibility. These visitors participated in both a seasonal and weekly cycle of leisure that informed the resort cycle of the lake.¹⁴⁸ Implicit within the promotion of specific landscape imagery and commodification was a specific experience of the landscape.

Poet Robert Thompson Anderson presented the natural beauty of Cooking Lake—specifically White Sands Beach—as an ethereal and Romantic image. Nevertheless, these natural merits were bound within the context of consumption and commodified leisure.

Blue waves lap on the long low shore,
And the dark clouds cast their quivering shade;
The dancing launch leaps lightly before
The heaving swell that the wind hath made;
And over the rushes bending green,
Reaching outward across the strand
We look to the beach so white and clean,
And are welcomed in on the silvery sand.

The nodding poplars stretch beyond,
And the long hay-meadows skirt their edge,
The white spume falls in the grass-girt pond,
And the boats lie rocking among the sedge;
A straggling spruce tree here and there
Looks over meadow and broken land.
O, sweet is Nature and wondrous fair
By Cooking Lake at the beach, 'White Sand.'¹⁴⁹

Clear within Anderson's focus was a narrative of the interaction between recreation and landscape; the motor launch and the waves and the boats among the sedge position recreation and landscape as intertwined. Similar to

¹⁴⁸ Witold Rybczynski, *Waiting for the Weekend* (Markham, Ont: Penguin Books, 1991), 10-15.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Thompson Anderson, "White Sand," *Canadian Born and Other Western Poems* (Edmonton: Esdale Press, 1913), 26.

Anderson's description, Barbour's exploration of leisure at Winnipeg Beach illustrates how resort patrons' activities and advertisements worked together to form the resort town as an experiential product. Barbour highlighted the influence of a lake landscape as a liminal space 'between land and sea' that transcended the normative experience of city life.¹⁵⁰ Anderson positions Cooking Lake in a similar liminal space. Straddling the position between land and sea, Cooking Lake as a destination was dependent on its physical nature as qualities to ensure the human experiences of recreation that were promised to tourists.

2.2 The Commodified Excursion

As the popularity of Cooking Lake flourished, new forms of entertainment and tourism came to be offered at Cooking Lake. Edmontonians were expanding their recreational experiences to encompass more than hunting at the lake; groups of campers began travelling to the lake and dances were hosted by cottage owners.¹⁵¹ This began to redefine the recreational activities that were pursued, provided, and promised by the newly developing Cooking Lake tourist experience, for example: beaches, a carnival ride, dance halls, and a Sailing Club. Train cars filled with visitors were carried to the Grand Trunk Pacific rail station at North Cooking Lake with the promise of an excursion experience.¹⁵² As the tourist population rose, so too did the consumable elements of the Cooking Lake landscape.

¹⁵⁰ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 58.

¹⁵¹ "Local," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 July 1895, 1, PPP.

¹⁵² Strathcona County, *Strathcona County Heritage Inventory* (Sherwood Park: Heritage Collaborative, 2014), 26.

When the GTP railway arrived at North Cooking Lake in 1909 transportation to the lake was changed entirely. Where before visitors made the three-hour trip by mostly horse-driven transportation—it was also possible to have walked, but this would have been a long trek—the GTP line decreased travel between Edmonton and the lake to just over one hour. The plan for this railway originated in 1904 and was intended to connect the Beaver Hills region with Edmonton and Strathcona. The debut passenger train to run between Edmonton and Tofield went on 27 July 1909, and later came to connect Edmonton, and Cooking Lake, with both Winnipeg and Calgary.¹⁵³ This connection was lauded for its bridging of the gap between Edmonton-Strathcona and the populations' favourite summer destination.¹⁵⁴ The effects of the train line on the landscape were multifaceted. While the GTP was given an allowance to divert one-sixth of a cubic foot of water from the lake, its other impacts on the landscape were more indirect.¹⁵⁵ This was one of the first actions resulting from Cooking Lake's touristic success that would lead to declining water levels at the lake over the course of the next sixty years.

¹⁵³ "Arranged Details of G.T.P. Agreement," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 March 1906, 1, AR00112, PPP; and "G.T.P. Runs East From Edmonton," *Western Globe*, 27 July 1909, 2, AR00234, PPP.

¹⁵⁴ "Branch from Camrose to Strathcona," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 March 1907, 1, AR00104, PPP; and "Plans Filed for Clover Bar Bridge," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 30 October 1906, 1, AR00114, PPP.

¹⁵⁵ "Notice," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 November 1910, 7, AD00702_7, PPP.



Figure 6 An unknown woman poses at the train station at North Cooking Lake, ca. 1925. The sign behind her states

requirements for suitable bathing costumes for bathing at the wharf by the station. ("Cooking Lake" ca. 1925, [CA EDM MS-1195-EB-31-42] by Jean Schneider. Courtesy of the City of Edmonton Archives.)

The proximity of Cooking Lake to the municipalities of Edmonton and Strathcona was used as a promotional point for the cities. The Strathcona Board of Trade explicitly promoted the municipality of Strathcona by advertising this train connection with Cooking Lake and described some of the activities that could be found there, including fishing, bathing, and boating.¹⁵⁶ A nearby summer resort would have added draw for potential settlers in the region, particularly the business and professional classes who were more likely to summer at cottage resorts.

The GTP railway connection with Cooking Lake allowed for an expansion of the tourism industry throughout the lake, but its predominant effects were on the development of train excursions and the rise of North Cooking Lake as a key tourism node of the 1910s. Though the GTP offered regular service between Edmonton and its eastern regions—Cooking Lake, Tofield, Camrose, and Mirror—in 1911 the railway explicitly catered to summer camping trips by offering ‘Saturday Camper’s Trains’ that left at 1p.m. and returned on either Sunday evenings or Monday morning. In 1911, a return ticket to Cooking Lake was 90 cents.¹⁵⁷ Advertisements for fares ran in *The Edmonton Capital*, *The Edmonton Bulletin*, and *Le courier de l’ouest*, indicating that Cooking Lake tourists were likely not only Anglophones but also Francophones who were predominantly Roman Catholics in Canada at this time.¹⁵⁸ Moreover towns like

¹⁵⁶ Strathcona Board of Trade, *Strathcona: The University City of Alberta* (Strathcona, Alta.: Strathcona Board of Trade, 1911?), 9

¹⁵⁷ Advertisement for Grand Trunk Pacific Fares, Edmonton, “‘Daily Limited’,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 7 Jul 1911, 3, AD00302_7, PPP.

¹⁵⁸ French advertisement for Grand Trunk Pacific Fares, Edmonton, “‘Daily Limited’,” *Le courier de l’ouest*, 3 August 1911, 5, AR00504, PPP.

Vegreville and Beaumont were predominantly Francophone Alberta settlements near the region of Cooking Lake. This would have likely resulted in both Anglophone and Francophone communities at the lake.

The train became the key transit method for large group excursions and campers who wished to spend time at the lake. Across time, some of the ‘crowds at Cooking Lake’ were made up of summer school attendees, the 101st Fusiliers, industry picnickers, and holiday visitors, all using the train for leisure excursions to the lake.¹⁵⁹ In 1914, however, there was an apparent decrease in excursion trains to Cooking Lake. Newspaper advertisements do not indicate exactly what the decrease in service was though they indicate that the GTP was only running “Campers’ Specials” to Wabamun and Fallis, west of Edmonton, while those looking to go east and to Cooking Lake had to inquire about “‘Summer Tourist Fares’ to eastern points.”¹⁶⁰ This decrease in service was perceived as a poor decision that resulted in overcrowded trains and danger for women—a woman was said to have fainted from the crush of the summer crowds, in contrast to the relaxation promised in advertisements for the lake.¹⁶¹

As a response to the GTP’s folly, an organization was formed to advocate for both the interests of Cooking Lake property owners, as well as excursionists. The first point of business for the Cooking Lake Property Owners’ Association was to address the

¹⁵⁹ “Camp at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 June 1912, 18, AR01806, PPP; “Edmonton Fusiliers in Camp at the Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 18 July 1910, 1, AR00113, PPP; “Heads of City Print Shops in Annual Outing,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 June 1913, 8, AR00806, PPP; and “Crowds at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 3 July 1914, 9, Ar00905, PPP.

¹⁶⁰ Advertisement and notice of change in G.T.P. train service, Edmonton, “Change in Train Service,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 12 June 1914, 10, AD01005_7, PPP.

¹⁶¹ “Many Holiday Seekers Throng Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 July 1914, 10.

‘inadequate’ train service between Edmonton and Cooking Lake.¹⁶² The intent behind this advocacy was “not only to meet the convenience of the campers and residents, but also help to swell the number of people who patronize[d] the resort in the summer months.”¹⁶³ The results of this were that trains began to run from the city for excursions every Wednesday and Saturday for the remainder of the 1914 summer, indicating the relevance of weekend recreation and leisure.¹⁶⁴

Special trains began to cater to specific tourism groups. By 1915 extra trains became an established part of the tourism schedule, so much so that businessmen became the target consumer for these trains. Special excursions left at 6:30pm on Saturdays, which enabled “business men to join their families at the lake and spend the weekend with them.”¹⁶⁵ This marketing demonstrates how Cooking Lake excursions were gendered for men of a certain class. At Winnipeg Beach a similar train catering to businessmen was fondly called the “Daddy train” or “Husband train”.¹⁶⁶ Not only highlighting gendered expectations of work and family, these trains indicated that long-term visitors would have been woman and children, with “business men” dividing their summer time between the city and the beach. Finally, by 1918, contrary to what might be expected within the war years, two trains were running daily to Cooking Lake for the

¹⁶² “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6 July 1914, 3, AR00303, PPP.

¹⁶³ “Property Owners at Cooking Lake Seek Improvements,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 July 1914, 12, AR01205, PPP.

¹⁶⁴ Advertisement for Cooking Lake train excursion, Edmonton, “Special Excursion to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 July 1914, 12, AD01202_6, PPP; and “Special Wednesday and Saturday Train for Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 21 July 1914, 12, AR01206, PPP.

¹⁶⁵ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 17 July 1915, 3, AR00304, PPP.

¹⁶⁶ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 37-39.

summer season.¹⁶⁷ The steady family pattern of class and gender at the cottage also highlights Edmonton's success as a city for the business and professional middle class.

Trains were a significant part of the western Canadian landscape because of their role in connecting urban and rural communities. For Cooking Lake, the landscape was a point of seasonal integration between urban and local communities. As with other railways in Alberta, tourism and consumption of experiences was encouraged through seasonal fares and special railway excursions.¹⁶⁸ Cooking Lake leisure was not, however, defined explicitly by corporate railway tourism, as other prairie beach destinations had been.¹⁶⁹ The origin of Cooking Lake's resort landscape was that of local, private enterprise rather than promotion and development by the GTP. Likewise, the expansion of tourism at the lake may be credited to the Property Owners' Association and individuals, such as Mrs. McMenemy and Chris Sacks, to a greater extent than the GTP. Although the GTP may have offered cheap fares and strong service by 1915, this appears to have been the result of community pressure, rather than company interest.

Commodification of the Cooking Lake landscape through imagery and tourism ventures resulted in the physical commodification of subdivision and the selling of lots, however, recreational experiences were being advertised at the same time. Some of the principle attractions were swimming, camping, and boating, all of which were advertised in newspapers.¹⁷⁰ A recurring venture within representations of Cooking Lake leisure was the 'excursion', with the purpose of removing oneself from the city

¹⁶⁷ "One Hour From City," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 July 1918, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 13-15.

¹⁶⁹ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 15.

¹⁷⁰ Advertisement for camping at Cooking Lake, Alberta, "Free Camping Ground at Fullham Park, Cooking Lake..." *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 July 1910, AD00602_13, PPP.

to the countryside for enjoyment. As the 1914 promotional article for first-time visitors demonstrated, Cooking Lake was a sight and experience to behold. The article drew attention to some attractions of the lake— “hilarious greetings,” “small boats and canoes [...] idly drifting up and down,” twinkling lights, and reverie—while also showing how “bronzed faces and burnt arms” demarcated who had had the opportunity to visit.¹⁷¹ Visitors were promised a getaway that truly removed oneself from the landscape and lifestyle of the city. Cooking Lake’s position as a destination of fun-filled departure from city life was reinforced through popular discourse and advertising.

Boating tours and trips on the lake were considered to be a quintessential aspect of the lake holiday or excursion. The description of an ideal Cooking Lake holiday illustrated some of the attraction of a boat excursion: “a dip and a row along the most settled part of the shore holds delights unknown, much fun and merriment prevails.”¹⁷² The Pioneer Boat Company, of Misterys R. A. Jerolamy (Gerolomy) and R. Denham, was responsible for the construction of much of the Cooking Lake fleet.¹⁷³ During the company’s operation, between 1915 to 1926, Gerolomy and Denham constructed boats for individuals, such as the ‘Twin City’ for John McNeill, as well as boats for the Edmonton Sailing Club—operating out of South Cooking Lake.¹⁷⁴ In addition to pleasure crafts, boats like the Twin City or the ‘Neptune’ were used as relatively cheap

¹⁷¹ “A Trip to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6.

¹⁷² “A Trip to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6.

¹⁷³ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 May 1917, 4, AR00408, PPP.

¹⁷⁴ Cooking Lake Study – Site Data Form C-21 Gerolomy Boat Works, November 1974, ARCH 1864, Binder 2, Cooking Lake fonds, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada.

transportation from the North Cooking Lake train station to resort points across the lake.¹⁷⁵

A company that contributed to an integrated excursion experience was the Twin City Transfer Co. owned by Mr. John (Jack) McNeill of Edmonton. McNeill was a well-known member of the Cooking Lake summer community, as well as an Edmonton businessman. The Twin City Transfer ran taxis in Edmonton and then expanded their business to offering a Saturday bus service to Cooking Lake in 1915.¹⁷⁶ In the early summer months of 1915, when the GTP decreased the train service to Cooking Lake, McNeill guaranteed special trains on Wednesdays and Saturdays for the summer weeks.¹⁷⁷ Subsequently, McNeill commissioned the construction of the Twin City motorboat. The boat was used to transport visitors from North Cooking Lake rail station to points across the lake, provided pleasure boat tours, and participated in motorboat races and exhibitions.¹⁷⁸ The Twin City Transfer facilitated excursions for Edmontonians and used the activities of these excursions as an opportunity for further advertising. Just as the Koney Island Sporting Co. developed a complete recreation experience in the early days of Cooking Lake recreation, McNeill and the Twin City Transfer are an example of how the packaged and consumable excursion was staged and expanded for recreationists.

Central to the excursions facilitated by the Twin City Transfer was the experience of a seasonal and weekend-oriented structuring of leisure time. The rise of Cooking Lake

¹⁷⁵ Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 21 May 1915, 3, AR00305, PPP.

¹⁷⁶ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 May 1915, 3, AR00305, PPP.

¹⁷⁷ “Special to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 10 July 1915, 6, AR00604, PPP.

¹⁷⁸ North Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 May 1915, 3, AR00306; “Aquatic Sports at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 August 1917, 3, AR00306, PPP.

popularity and its tourism opportunities reflected the expansion of the weekend as a formalized period of the week for Canadians.¹⁷⁹ During the early years of Cooking Lake recreation, leisure time was limited to the upper-middle and professional socio-economic classes. The 1880s labour movements that pushed for eight-hour workdays had not yet brought about the shortened day for all workers, so limited numbers could travel after the end of the workday, and few had more than Sundays off work.¹⁸⁰ The careers of the Koney Island Sporting Co. founders and their ability to depart the city for sporting and leisure excursions is unsurprising, however, these men were clearly not representative of the majority of the Edmonton and Strathcona populations. Likewise, when Koney Island developed into a camping site for city visitors, these visitors likely would not have been of the working class because most campers remained in camp for periods longer than a week. In 1908 Edmonton newspapers reported the first use of the term ‘weekend’ for visiting Cooking Lake.¹⁸¹

The redistribution of leisure time on with the weekend allowed some people one and a half days—half Saturday and all Sunday—in which they could participate in recreation or leisure. The weekend became an opportunity for travel and recreation and Cooking Lake was an ideal location, with the ‘season’ starting on the civic holiday in May. Witold Rybczynski examines the ‘weekend’ and its role in leisure and as he illustrates the temporal nature of retreat, how weekend communities and activities are impermanent. The people and activities of retreat might only be present in a region for a

¹⁷⁹ Rybczynski, *Waiting for the Weekend*, 20.

¹⁸⁰ Craig Heron, “Arguing About Idleness,” *Working Lives: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History*, ed. Craig Heron, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 205.

¹⁸¹ “The Mirror,” *Saturday News*, 8 August 1908, 9 AR00903, PPP.

weekend or season as transient visitors with separate communities and societies. Meanwhile the infrastructure of leisure created by these visitor communities often remains on the landscape longer than the people.¹⁸² Excursions to Cooking Lake catered to this periodic community by capitalizing on seasonal and weekend visitors and placed the lake within a greater context of Romantic regard for natural and shoreline landscapes, as was seen at Brighton Beach, England or Muskoka, Ontario.

Excursions to Cooking Lake, by train or other methods of transportation, were varied in their activities and presentation. Most visitors to Cooking Lake appear to have been urbanites coming from Edmonton-Strathcona to escape “heat and glare of the city.”¹⁸³ Not only was an excursion to Cooking Lake desirable because of the pleasant natural attractions it offered, it was also a site of recuperation and recovery. For example, according to Edmonton newspapers in 1915, a man who had been ill for many months may have reaped more benefit and health from a stay at the lake than a stay in a city hospital.¹⁸⁴ This narrative of the healing qualities of nature and the waterfront could be seen through references to the region as a ‘retreat’ from city life, where “touches of natural beauty import a feeling of rest and comfort.”¹⁸⁵ Articles detailing the conveniences available at the lake spoke of an Edmonton populace that was “eager to shake the dust from their feet, forget their business worry and indulge in waterside recreation.”¹⁸⁶ Recuperation and retreat in these descriptions reflects ideals associated

¹⁸² Rybczynski, *Waiting for the Weekend*, 165-171.

¹⁸³ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 August 1915, 3, AR00306, PPP.

¹⁸⁴ Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 17 July 1915, 3, AR 00304, PPP.

¹⁸⁵ “City News,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 August 1906, 10, AR01003; Advertisement for lots at Balmy Beach, Cooking Lake, “Balmy Beach,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 24 June 1911, 3, AD00302_3, PPP.

¹⁸⁶ “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 15 June 1914, 3, AR00317, PPP.

with other iconic Alberta tourism destinations such as the Banff Hot Springs. The lake was a location of healthful and positive recreation, where one was allowed to simply rest and relax because of the benefits that could be received from the landscape.

As the amenities and offerings of Cooking Lake expanded through the burgeoning tourism infrastructure and developments, the leisure identity of the landscape became a stronger draw. In 1914, tourism offerings and amenities expanded. Chris Sacks (Saks) of Edmonton purchased land on the north shore on which he erected an ice cream parlour, tea house, and hostel rooms, as well as a dance pavilion. Popular local resident, postwoman, and shopkeeper Mrs. E. McMenomy expanded her North Cooking Lake grocery to include a second story with rooms for rent. Meanwhile, the ever-popular North Cooking Lake camping site, Fresh Air Camp, was available for tenting. Visitors had all their needs catered to, from a lumber yard to blacksmith services, and grocery delivery.¹⁸⁷ The summer of 1914 was considered to be such a successful season that the crowds visiting for Dominion Day were so vast that articles likened the scene to a “western resemblance [...] of the annual Ganges river baptismal in India”—a comparison that evoked the colonial white Canadian face of the local Alberta tourists even as it exoticized and implied the carnivalesque.¹⁸⁸

Some of the more casual activities of daily leisure at the lake included swimming and picnics. Many day excursions from the city were for organizations to hold picnics and amusements. Excursions for Dominion Day were particularly popular with crowds,

¹⁸⁷ “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6 July 1914, 3, AR00303; PPP; “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 15 June 1914; Harold Collinge, “Collinge, Harry and Emily,” in *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 51-52

¹⁸⁸ “Crowds at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 3 July 1914, 9, AR00905, PPP.

much like in the rest of the province.¹⁸⁹ Popular summer tourism at Cooking Lake came to be bookended by Dominion Day and Labour Day excursions to the lake.¹⁹⁰ The program of such a day might have held a barbeque, foot races, and swimming races.¹⁹¹ Sunday excursions crowded the beaches and picnic areas, to the point that locals would not swim on Sundays.¹⁹² Motor boat rides and row boats for rent brought the lake to life with people enjoying these types of water recreation.¹⁹³ Cooking Lake had a multitude of experiences to offer and many people were able to engage with new forms of leisure, whether they were single-day or repeat visitors.

2.3 Lakeview Resort as the Ideal Location of Leisure

In 1930 the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort opened on the southeast shore of Cooking Lake. Accessible by a gravel country road, near today's Highway 14 about ten kilometres east of South Cooking Lake village,¹⁹⁴ it became one of the most prominent and enduring resorts on the Cooking Lake landscape. Lakeview was a regional recreation node for tourism and commodified leisure, where summer days seemed endless and dance music played long into the night. Emerging out of a 1929 business plan, Lakeview had a long-term impact on the tourism landscape of Cooking Lake.

¹⁸⁹ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 26.

¹⁹⁰ "Last Big Outing Will be Held by Reserve Militia," *Edmonton Journal*, 17 August 1916, 3, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

¹⁹¹ "Heads of City Print Shops in Annual Outing," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 June 1913, 8, AR00806, PPP.

¹⁹² "Hays, Barbara nee (MacQuarrie)," *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 108-109.

¹⁹³ "Crowds at Cooking Lake," *The Edmonton Capital*, 3.

¹⁹⁴ The road that previously led to Lakeview still remains and the 'Lakeview' turnoff is marked on Highway 14 at Range Road 220; Michael G. Boyd, *A History of the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort at South Cooking Lake, Alberta 1929 to 1995* (Dec. 2019, Under revision), 1.



Figure 7 An aerial photograph showing the Lakeview hall and Cooking Lake shoreline in the background, 1956. Also shown are two rides, one being the swings, and another building on the shore, likely changing rooms. ("Lakeview Inn at Cooking Lake, from the south, 1956", 1956, [315-133-130] by Homestead Aerial Photos Ltd. Courtesy of Homestead Aerial Photos Ltd.)

Edmonton investors were prime actors in the development of the Lakeview Pavilion and resort shoreline. Mr. Harry H. Weeks headed the corporation to establish this new resort at the lake, which was proposed to cost approximately \$50,000, though it appears to have incurred more costly expenses. Other investors were landowner Robert Robertson, financier Ralph Trouth, general contractor Hans P. Madsen, and investor Roy L. Sutherland. This profile of investors was similar to that of the Koney Island Sporting Co. Other businessmen were likely involved either directly or indirectly through the purchasing of shares.¹⁹⁵ A central attraction of the prospective resort was its "choice location on the lake shore," specifically the shallow waters and potential to host a sandy

¹⁹⁵ Boyd, *A History of the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort*, 2.

beach.¹⁹⁶ The intended infrastructure was to include: a large pavilion with a 9,000 square-foot dancefloor, cottages, tennis courts, baseball and football fields, as well as, picnic sites. The Lakeview resort commissioned the building of fifteen row boats and a motor launch able to carry between seventy-five and one hundred passengers for boat excursions.

Initial plans for Lakeview intended it to be a complete packaged experience of summer resort leisure. “It’s Too Early to Start Packing for Your Vacation Plans but...” prompted commercial advertisements in the *Edmonton Bulletin* in March 1930, encouraging the purchasing of built-to-order summer homes on the site.¹⁹⁷ In February 1930, the name Lakeview was chosen for the resort site, as a result of a contest run by the Harry H. Weeks Corporation—coincidentally the same name had been given to a Wabamun Lake village west of Edmonton fifteen years earlier. Advertisements for the contest promised a resort filled with popular amusements.¹⁹⁸ The call for names described the site and its foreseen potential:

Some 152 acres of land with lake frontage [...] a mile beyond the present village. There is a good beach of hard white sand, with shallow water, making bathing safe for children.

A pier is projected, with a pavilion 80 by 170 feet for dancing and entertainments. The pavilion will be porched and screened, with glass windows in addition, ensuring comfort even in stormy weather. Boats, canoes and a large launch will be provided, and a ball park, tennis courts, nine-hole golf course, children’s playground, etc. are included in the plans.

Ample parking space for cars and a complete catering service will make it easy for the visitor, while the all-weather gravel road from Edmonton will be an additional factor in attracting the pleasure-seeker.

¹⁹⁶ “Spending \$50,000 on Summer Resort,” *Edmonton Journal*, 25 March 1930, 9, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

¹⁹⁷ Advertisement for summer homes at Lakeview, Cooking Lake, “It’s Too Early to Start Packing for Your Vacation Plans but...,” *Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 March 1930, 15, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

¹⁹⁸ “‘Lakeview’ Chosen Name of Resort,” *Edmonton Journal*, 21 February 1930, 13, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

A 50-locker bathing house will be provided at the swimming beach; 25 summer cottages remote from the music of the dance pavilion, and an auto bus line from Edmonton are included in the plans for next season.

A 400-foot pier will be required, and it is hoped to secure the co-operation of the dominion government in this matter as the company has offered acreage for offices and buildings for a proposed sea-base for hydroplanes with deep-water harbourage, etc.¹⁹⁹

While this article indicated some of the natural attractions to be had at this coming resort, the majority of the focus was on built infrastructure and amenity development on the proposed site, along with potential to leverage a new federal government air harbour.²⁰⁰

Later advertisements made little acknowledgement of the landscape, only the name of South Cooking Lake was used to illustrate the lakeshore location.²⁰¹ As an illustration of the popularity and extensive renown of Cooking Lake, name submissions for the resort had been received from as far afield as Nova Scotia. Just as Koney Island had celebrated the recreation potential of the Cooking Lake landscape thirty-six years earlier, the Lakeview Pavilion and resort followed the same pattern of speculation and promotion. Subsequently named the Lakeview Summer Resort and Amusement Park, the site was intended to be the ultimate recreation destination for Cooking Lake visitors.

Lakeview's rise to popularity came with increases in visitation to Cooking Lake as a local tourism region. Lakeview carried out extensive advertising for its Grand Opening on Victoria Day, 24 May 1930, and 10,000 Edmontonians made their way to the

¹⁹⁹ "S. Cooking Lake Summer Resort to Cost \$30, 000," *Edmonton Journal*, 15 January 1930, 9, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

²⁰⁰ An 'unofficial' airport used by bush pilots was operated from 1926 in the bay at the lake's south-west end, near South Cooking Lake and some pilots would land in the northern end of the lake. The official airport was opened in 1933 at Wellington Beach. Lakeview opening day flights would have likely been run by pilots from the 'unofficial' airport.

²⁰¹ Advertisement for resort-naming contest, "\$10.00 for a Name....," *Edmonton Journal*, 29 January 1930, 6, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

lake for the holiday.²⁰² The Lakeview developers planned to accommodate parking for up to 2,000 cars, indicating a belief that the resort would host its own sizeable crowds.²⁰³

Overall the opening of the resort was a mixed success. While the weather did not enable swimming, the resort's opening-day program was well received. With the parking lot filled to its intended capacity and offers of "boating, dancing, air-sightseeing rides, picnicking and a baseball game," the day was filled with opportunities especially as a draw on the first long weekend of summer and set in contrast to the troubles of the Great Depression.²⁰⁴ It also had offerings typical of rural fairs and leisure in Alberta with many attractions held in the countryside all day long.²⁰⁵

As the resort became a more established, it changed hands and began to offer new and different features. In 1932 the Lakeview Summer Resort and Amusement Park was purchased by Wes McKernan and renamed Lakeview Inn. This change led to retiring some of the original plans; for example the lakeshore promenade was never built.²⁰⁶ Regardless of some of the plans that failed to materialize, Lakeview drew visitors and grew its reputation as a destination,

the young people were singing a-bo-o-de-do and bringing their banjos and portable wind-up gramophones to listen at the lake. A paddle wheeler plied the lake and still offered excursions to the public. Cooking Lake was 'THE' beach in those days.²⁰⁷

²⁰² This was of the approximately 79,000 people living in Edmonton as of the 1931 census; "Big Crowds Attend Programs in City and at Beaches," 12.

²⁰³ Advertisement for shares in Lakeview resort, "Final Offering on the Open Market..." *Edmonton Journal*, 19 May 1930, 11, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

²⁰⁴ "Lakeview Greet Thousands As New Playground Opened," *Edmonton Journal*, 26 May 1930, 15, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

²⁰⁵ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 15.

²⁰⁶ Boyd, *A History of the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort*, 19-20.

²⁰⁷ Louise Hicks, "South Cooking Lake History: O-ni-mi-now-w-sioo-Sakyakn," *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 6-7.

The resort's reputation was based on its many attractions and entertainments on the lakeshore. "During the 1930's and 1940's, Lakeview was known as having the best dance floor in Alberta. Well known orchestras, Mart Kenny and Guy Lombardo played, and later The Mums & Dads"; all of this was coupled with a strong aesthetic appeal and spectacular carnival atmosphere.²⁰⁸

From the mid-to-late 1930s the area surrounding the pavilion had a greater number of cabins and tenting sites. The lakeshore of Cooking Lake had been consistently dotted with second homes and camping parties, and Lakeview followed this trajectory from its inception as a resort. The sale of cottages was not overly successful until Wes McKernan owned the property and he built cottages for children's summer camp use. Specifically, cottages were used by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT). Later, boys and girls church camps made use of the same location.²⁰⁹ Such camps were part of an institutional culture at the lake, as examined further in Chapter Three, illustrating that Lakeview was also a setting for children's recreation and entertainment as part of its business and amenities.

Just as the initial expansion of lake tourism and railway excursions on the GTP had fostered greater physical and social connection between Cooking Lake and Edmonton, so too did Lakeview. The Koney Island Sporting Co. had assisted in the building of a new road to access the Island. Stakeholders such as John McNeill of the Twin City Transfer Co. and Chris Sacks, business owner and taxi operator, had

²⁰⁸ Violet Nasichuk, "Lakeview," *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 12-13

²⁰⁹ Boyd, *A History of the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort*, 23-24.

maintained the physical connections between the city and its favourite lake. The Cooking Lake Property Owners' Association facilitated both train access and boat excursions. Like all of these, Lakeview contributed to transportation lines that made mass lake tourism possible for a broader range of Edmonton's social-economic classes.

The primary form of transportation was private automobile by the time Lakeview emerged on the tourism landscape, but visitors were also able to take a weekly bus from Edmonton on both Wednesday and Saturday nights.²¹⁰ For private automobile owners, a large-format touring map produced by the Alberta Motor Association was issued in 1929 to show routes to South Cooking Lake and Lakeview, highlighting its presence on a local highway tourism circuit.²¹¹ Consistently represented as an accessible and affordable tourism opportunity for Edmontonians, Cooking Lake was part of the cultural landscape of Alberta tourism. Lakeview's accessibility was indicative of period trends toward private holidays within mass tourism attractions.²¹² While Cooking Lake tourists had made use of roads and trails to the region since the beginning of the lake's popularity, Lakeview's promotion of private cottages and automobile tourism followed with the expansion of the independently mobile tourist.

Courtship was subtly encouraged, on the shores of South Cooking Lake where Lakeview ran dances until midnight, and there was late-night swimming, and moonlight boat rides.²¹³ It attracted young men and women who danced until midnight and

²¹⁰ Boyd, *A History of the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort*, 8.

²¹¹ "Auto Association Makes New Map," *Edmonton Journal*, 26 July 1930, 12, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

²¹² Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 8-9, 15, 21-22.

²¹³ Robert Aitchison, interview by Louise Hicks, 5 November 1985, transcript, Oral Histories Collection, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta.

participated in courtship—some even met their future spouses.²¹⁴ The simultaneously exciting and relaxed image of Lakeview evoked a party atmosphere that had not been as consistently evident throughout the early development of Cooking Lake tourism.

Lakeview's entertainment and scale of recreational offerings shifted away from its antecedents' concentration on nature-based leisure like fishing and hunting toward the activities of popular culture. Rather than advertising "beautiful heavily wooded banks" Lakeview's development included clearing the shorelines of reeds.²¹⁵ Other resorts had altered the landscape to some extent, but the promotional image of Lakeview featured a beachfront amusement park and recreation rather than natural attractions as its most prominent feature.²¹⁶

Lakeview's legacy was longstanding; after changing hands by the end of its second season it would have been feasible to project the resort as having a failed future. This was not the case. Though the resort continued to change ownership at a relatively rapid pace, changes in attractions and entertainment managed to keep the site attractive to visitors.²¹⁷ Amusement rides, an outdoor stage, holiday parties, miniature golf, and film screenings all became a part of the Lakeview recreation landscape.²¹⁸ It also expanded its markets from summer to year-long recreation. After over forty years of dances and live music, Lakeview held its final performance in 1978 and then fell out of the popular

²¹⁴ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 11; Collinge, "Collinge, Harry and Emily," 52; and Gladys Lillian Gill, "History of South Cooking Lake Area," ARCH020850, Box 1, File 1, Fond A61.

²¹⁵ "Cooking Lake," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 July 1891, 4.

²¹⁶ "Beautiful Summer Resort Planned at Cooking Lake," *Edmonton Journal*, 29 April 1930, 13, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

²¹⁷ Boyd, *A History of the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort*, 18-21.

²¹⁸ Boyd, *A History of the Lakeview Pavilion and Resort*, 30-32.

recreation circuit. It was demolished in 1987 and only a fireplace and memories remain on the site that was the largest tourism node on Cooking Lake prior to the decline of lake water levels.

2.4 The Carnivalesque

The creation of Cooking Lake's consumable beach landscape was developed within a context of other Canadian beach resorts that followed, many times conspicuously, a pattern set by destinations such as Coney Island, New York, or Brighton Beach, England.²¹⁹ During the late 1800s, many recreational pursuits on Canadian beach landscapes had been focused on the Romantic ideals of connection with nature and nature-based activities.²²⁰ Early recreation at Cooking Lake and the imagery of Koney Island reflected these ideals. At the turn of the century, many popular beach sites began a transition towards the carnivalesque. The commercialized midway and amusement park were a method of catering to the desires of popular tourism and sites such as Brighton Beach and Coney Island were primary examples of locations where the Romantic natural ideal was joined with the carnivalesque amusement.²²¹

The naming of Koney Island by the Koney Island Sporting Co. is a simple indication of how the success of Coney Island influenced tourism development in the context of Alberta lake recreation. This early example, however, was not the only allusion to the success and renown of other beach amusement sites. As early as 1916, newspapers compared Cooking Lake to both Brighton Beach and Blackpool, England, as

²¹⁹ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 4-6; Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 93-95; and Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 87-89.

²²⁰ Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 44.

²²¹ Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 4-5.

both a cultural allusion and a method of measuring the popularity of Cooking Lake.²²²

Culturally, these recreation sites were of importance because they marked a location wherein attendees were provided with a diversion, and allowed to be distanced from the social norms of city life.²²³ Barbara (MacQuarrie) Hays would visit Cooking Lake during the late-1920s to early-1930s as a child and during these visits she and the other children would “get together in gangs and play all sorts of games. [Or they] would have a circus or a show and the south side gang would go over or vice versa.”²²⁴ Cooking Lake and its kind were sites of leisure where work and play could be distinctly separate for visitors because the lake was presented as a space for vacationers.²²⁵

In 1926 bush pilots had come to use the northern waters of the lake as a base for float planes. The lake’s natural amenities had made it an ideal location for this form of transit.²²⁶ The airport functioned as a connection point between the Edmonton-area and northern Canada. Though it was predominantly only cargo planes using the space, some passenger flights went through.²²⁷ Hays recollected how, as a child in the late 1920s, Judge Dufuc of Edmonton took her on an airplane ride with pilot Clennell Haggerston ‘Punch’ Dickinson.²²⁸ Dickson and famed pilot Wilfrid Reid ‘Wop’ May were familiar

²²² “News of the District,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 August 1916, 2, AR00206, PPP.

²²³ “Victoria Day Passes Quietly; Thousands Visit Beaches,” *Edmonton Journal*, 26 May 1930, 14, ProQuest Historic Newspapers; Barbour, *Winnipeg Beach*, 4.

²²⁴ Barbara (MacQuarrie) Hays, interview by Louise Hicks, 10 September 1987, transcript.

²²⁵ Cronin, *Manufacturing National Park Nature*, 73.

²²⁶ Cooking Lake Airport, “Cooking Lake Airport – History,” 2014, retrieved May 20, 2019 from <https://cookinglakeairport.weebly.com/history.html>.

²²⁷ Newspaper advertisement for Commercial Airways Ltd. flights leaving from the Cooking Lake Airport, “Airplane Leaving South Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Journal*, 2 July 1930, 10, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

²²⁸ Barbara (MacQuarrie) Hays, interview by Louise Hicks, 10 September 1987, transcript.

faces to the summer communities and the pilots landing and unloading the planes, or offering rides for amusement, was an element of spectacle. When the official airport was opened near South Cooking Lake in 1933, Charles Upright who owned Upright's Tearoom at South Cooking Lake would drive aircrews and their passengers between the lake and Edmonton. Through this relationship, Upright's Tearoom became a popular recreation site for aircrewmen.²²⁹ Fluctuations in the water level throughout 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s resulted in the airport changing locations three times, with the final site being established in the 1980s.²³⁰ Regardless of the airports position, watching the aircraft or visiting the floatplane pier were popular activities that contributed to the novel experience at Cooking Lake.

²²⁹ Faulkner, *Wheels, Floats, and Skis*, 8.

²³⁰ Cooking Lake Airport, "Cooking Lake Airport – History."



Figure 8 Noel MacDonald and unnamed members of the famed Edmonton women's basketball team, the Edmonton Commercial Graduates, posing with an airplane at the Cooking Lake airport, ca. 1935. ("Edmonton Grads At 'Airport' -

South Cooking Lake,” ca. 1935 [CA EDM MS-604-EA-715-98] by Edmonton Grads Club. Courtesy of the City of Edmonton Archives.)

With the rise of Lakeview and its promotion and development, Cooking Lake’s tourism trajectory and landscape identity was focussed on popular recreation experiences. As Lakeview came to hold an influential place within the nodal tourism network of the Cooking Lake resorts, including North and South Cooking Lake, Koney Island, Wellington Beach and others—and the greater network of Edmonton-area beaches like Seba and Alberta Beach to the west—Cooking Lake’s identity was refocussed on experiential tourism and carnivalesque leisure on the lakeshores of a new weekend party-land and summer playground.²³¹

Boats and boating on Cooking Lake became an element of the region’s sensory attraction. While demonstrations like the 1917 Aquatic Sports boating event were sure to raise a viewer’s heartrate, the experience of a simple boat ride allowed for the viewing of new vistas made “the pulse throb quicker with keen delight.”²³² Likewise the sounds and visuals of boats created a sensory experience that united Cooking Lake’s recreational offerings with boat excursions. Moreover, sensory experiences may have allowed visitors to have a deep engagement with the place.²³³ Watching the planes or sailing regattas, travelling to interesting spots on the landscape, picnicking, or attending any of the dances that happened throughout the period of Cooking Lake tourism were ways in which

²³¹ “Big Crowds Attend Programs in City and at Beaches,” *Edmonton Journal*, 2 July 1930, 12, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

²³² “Aquatic Sports at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 August 1917, 3, AR00306; “A Trip to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6.

²³³ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 July 1915, AR00307, PPP; and Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 30-36.

individuals were able to participate in the departure from the normal activities of daily life.²³⁴



Figure 9 A lakeside excursion and picnic with a main course of roast calf, 1914. ("Esdale printer's picnic, roasting calf, Cooking Lake, Alberta," 1914, [NC-6-1160] by McDermid Studio. Courtesy of the Library and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary.)

Other deviances could be found in the way party activities, like drinking wine on a boat during the day, were accepted.²³⁵ These recreational and leisure activities allowed Cooking Lake tourists to experience new or different ways of being that challenged visitors' normative activities. Through these new experiences, visitors could think of life and experience through a different lens.²³⁶

²³⁴ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 5-6.

²³⁵ "The Lounger," *Saturday News*, 10 August 1907, 3, AR00302, PPP.

²³⁶ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 130-131.

Social and occupational divisions were temporarily blurred at the beach, through the sharing of landscape and excursion experiences. This blurring may be described as having allowed for carnivalesque recreation. Carnival folk humour and spectacle define the carnivalesque, these being the humour and spectacles desired by popular culture.²³⁷ The offerings of Cooking Lake followed a pattern of beach holiday tourism activities that fell within the realm of social acceptability while also challenging the norms of everyday life. Socialization appeared to have often been between friends or acquaintances, but sharing a camp, activities, clubs, and public sites of leisure opened social boundaries.²³⁸ With the seasonal and weekend-based character of Cooking Lake resort communities, this departure from the norm became an almost scheduled retreat from urban society. Thus, Cooking Lake—by being both the anti-culture of Edmonton society and a place where the days were filled with fun and relaxation—was an extension of Edmonton society.

2.5 Conclusion

From 1894 until 1933, tourism at Cooking Lake had diverse and changing influences on landscape interactions for visitors. Ideas of the landscape's identity were imparted to visitors from Edmonton through urban-centric perceptions of the value of that landscape. As Cooking Lake's tourism and recreation offerings expanded the lake was not defined by a narrow identity; rather Cooking Lake was positioned as a leisure

²³⁷ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 4-6.

²³⁸ Margaret Lemieux, "Wind in the Sails Chapter One," *Edmonton Yacht Club*, Accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.edmontonyachtclub.ca/history-chapter-1.html>.

counterpart to Edmonton city life, wherein the landscape and tourism developments formed a visitor's desired experience.

Excursion activities encompassed a wide range of possibilities. Hunting trips had been the norm of 1890s visitors, but Koney Island and Sheriff Robertson's summer home also became sites of dances and social gatherings for summer visitors.²³⁹ As the lake began to gain popularity, dances expanded beyond these two sites to regions across the lake.²⁴⁰ Recreation blossomed from dances to dinners and whist parties for the summer residents.²⁴¹ The dances began to expand outwards; while private dances were still held at some visitor's summer homes there were soon public dances with entry fees and famous bands performing, as was seen at Lakeview.²⁴² Such a transition may be seen as a reflection of much of the recreation at Cooking Lake.

Moreover, with the carnivalesque and amusement park identity associated with Cooking Lake, Edmontonians affirmed their place as leisure consumers. Visitors to the beaches shared an experience of popular culture at Cooking Lake, whether they were upper, class, or working class. While Koney Island may have drawn visitors for its offers of coniferous vistas, the island, like Lakeview, provided a landscape for amusement and fun. The landscape was commodified and consumed, whether it was by nature-lovers or motorboaters, or both, rendering a modern tourism landscape within the radius and cultural sphere of the city.

²³⁹ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 5 September 1898, 1, AR00103, PPP.

²⁴⁰ "City News," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 August 1906, 10, AR01003, PPP.

²⁴¹ Sheila Abercrombie, interview by Louise Hicks, 31 October 1987, transcript; Barbara (MacQuarrie) Hays, interview by Louise Hicks, 10 September 1987, transcript, Oral Histories Collection, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta.

²⁴² Advertisement for attractions at Lakeview, Cooking Lake, "Lakeview South Cooking Lake Sunday Attractions," *Edmonton Journal*, 12 July 1930, 20, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

CHAPTER THREE

Giving an Air of Permanency: Private Cabins, Clubs, and Camps at Cooking Lake, 1894-1938

Our family first came to Lakeview on South Cooking Lake in the summer of 1930, on doctor's orders. The baby of the family had whooping cough during the winter and seemed unable to recover from it. The doctor prescribed country air. My parents rented a cottage and brought along their four children, the maid and the family dog. My mother loved it. After that first summer, she never missed another summer at South Cooking Lake for the next 38 years.²⁴³

3.0 Introduction

William Hicks reflected on the annual summer holidays that his family spent at Cooking Lake from 1930 to 1968. His parents Cedric Oliver Hicks and Mary Jane (née Wood) Hicks lived in Edmonton and holidayed at the lake every summer. Cedric and Mary Hicks came to Edmonton in 1912 for Cedric to fill a teaching position at Victoria High School. Mary Jane Hicks became enamored with the landscape as she hiked the paths and trails surrounding the lake.²⁴⁴ As regular visitors, the lake landscape became a familiar place cherished as their summer home—a respite for health, recreation, and a growing middle-class family that included their hired maid and a dog. Getting away to the lake for a prolonged period was a common attraction for people in central Alberta and summers at Cooking Lake were a favourite for many Edmontonian cottagers and recreationists. Resort sites emerged around the lake to form summer communities, such

²⁴³ William Hicks, "Hicks, William F. and Louise," in *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 117.

²⁴⁴ William F. Hicks, interview by Louise Hicks, date unknown, transcript, Oral Histories Collection, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta.

as the subdivisions of Calling Wood Cove, Plover Point, and Military Point, and the expanding of the villages of North and South Cooking Lake, from 1894 to the 1930s. As commercialized mass recreation was being carried out on Cooking Lake, so too were more private activities. This chapter explores the characteristics of dwelling through acts of leisure in the summer cottages and camps of Cooking Lake. Holidaying at Cooking Lake allowed individuals to dwell deeply and create a connection with the landscape, and their experiences as seasonal visitors reinforced a sense of belonging to a distinct landscape.

The rise of tourism at the lake was driven by the commodification of the landscape for recreationists, but it was also influenced by the expansion of the Edmonton region's leisure landscape to include Cooking Lake. The region included the twin cities of Edmonton and Strathcona, which merged in 1911. As the Hicks family settled into summers at the lake, how did they come to know the landscape of Cooking Lake? Why did certain Edmontonians like them feel a connection to recreation experiences at the lake? Cooking Lake became the summer recreation hub for Edmontonians because the urban sphere of dwelling required a natural leisure destination to juxtapose with the experience of city life and fulfill the leisure desires of an urban populace in the western Canadian city.

Dwelling and place-making are relevant to recreation and leisure because the choice of location for recreation is of central importance to the recreationist.²⁴⁵ In this chapter, the theoretical framework for analysis of cottage, club, and camp recreation on

²⁴⁵ Roger Moore, and Alan Graefe, "Attachment to Recreation Settings: The Case of Rail-Trail Users," *Leisure Sciences*. 16, no. 1 (1994): 17.

Cooking Lake stems from German philosopher Martin Heidegger's theory of dwelling. British anthropologist Tim Ingold further expanded this theory by relating the acts of dwelling to the conceptualization of landscapes and the inscription of meaning onto land. Dwelling is a state of being or a mentality wherein one feels 'at home' on a landscape. This state can then contribute to place-making, within which a location becomes a place with a specific identity, for example a place identified for the pursuit of recreation. Familiarity with a space—familiarity formed through active engagement with the space—fosters the development of *places*, thereby facilitating dwelling.²⁴⁶ As Cooking Lake became one of the most popular identified lakeside resort locations for summer tourists in the Edmonton region, the lake became clearly identified as a familiar place of recreation.

Tourism accommodations underwent changes as Cooking Lake became more deeply ensconced within the Edmonton region's tourism sphere. Interest in privately owned cottages began to expand even before the arrival of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway running to North Cooking Lake. In 1907, the *Strathcona Evening Chronicle* reported that some repeat summer visitors had been leasing cottages for their vacations, but that summer a high number of visitors also looked to give "an air of permanency to their holiday habitations of the city's watering place."²⁴⁷ While the leasing of cottages gave temporary residences a more public character—as new families could take over a lease at the end of a season or the following year—the purchasing of lots on the lake and

²⁴⁶ Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 84; and Gray, "Open Spaces and Dwelling Places," 443.

²⁴⁷ "Cooking Lake Summer Report," *Strathcona Evening Chronicle*, 8 May 1907, 4, PPP.

erecting permanent family cabins and cottages formed the basis of a new lakeside tourism and leisure at Cooking Lake.

The Cooking Lake area was also the site of organizations that operated on the side of private membership and collective ownership. Among these organizations were clubs and camps such as the Koney Island Sporting Company, the Edmonton Sailing Club, and camps held by the Army Cadets, Girl Guides of Canada, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Implicit within these organizations was the function of a membership, either to a club or organization. Membership defined the reach of said organizations and formed exclusive institutional recreation communities.

The image of Cooking Lake was shaped by a variety of social and political factors and the popularization of the region can be traced by the growth of developments across the lake that were intended to fulfill distinct leisure desires of tourists and vacationers, both local and regional, with even an international draw for some Americans.²⁴⁸ The region was deemed a recreational waterfowl hunting and leisure site by the Koney Island Sporting Co., and, from this beginning, cabins, clubs, camps, and holiday-making arose along the shores of Cooking Lake.

How did visitors perceive the environment? Landscape is perceived from a mutable perspective that is indefinite and impermanent. The identity that a landscape develops at a specific period is shaped by social and political factors, specifically, the

²⁴⁸ Automobile guide for tourists to Alberta, Canada, "Mundy's Auto Road Guide to Alberta, with Large Folding Map of the Peace River country, Map of Western Canada & Northwest States," (Edmonton: Mundy's Map Company, 1928), 7, 11 Peel 5271, PPP; and Brochure of Alberta tourist attractions, "Alberta, Canada, for an exhilarating holiday," (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 1937), 8-10, Peel 10534, PPP.

actions, desires, and beliefs of the people who inhabit or frequent the landscape.²⁴⁹ As Cooking Lake underwent development and expansion of its recreational and leisure ventures, the area gained a reputation of being a site for pleasure and leisure.²⁵⁰ Therefore, at the turn-of-the-century, and into the twentieth century, Cooking Lake's identity was shaped by the leisure pursuits of its visitors.

Waterside and summer recreation have been understood from a variety of perspectives. Historian Claire Campbell outlines how Georgian Bay, Ontario, developed and the role of its natural attractions in determining the Bay's identity. Campbell also illustrates the experiences of summer cottaging on the landscape, focussing on how and why cottagers engaged with this form of recreation at Georgian Bay.²⁵¹ As discussed by Jessica Dunkin and Sharon Wall, both historians of children's summer camps in Ontario, summer camps were often situated in the countryside and by lakes where they functioned both as the site of community development, but also as locations that helped form particular identities.²⁵² Moreover, Wall indicates how the summer camps and the ideologies they fostered contributed to cultures of commodification and broader social developments such as health, hygiene, and recreation regimes.²⁵³ These authors illuminate how semi-private institutional entities functioned within the creation of regional cultures

²⁴⁹ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 153.

²⁵⁰ MacDonald, *The Beaver Hills Country*, 118-119.

²⁵¹ Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 139-160.

²⁵² Jessica Dunkin, "Manufacturing Landscapes: Places and Community at Glenn Bernard Camp, 1924-1933," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 45, no. 89 (2012): 84; and Sharon Wall, *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-55* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 178-215.

²⁵³ Wall, *The Nature of Nurture*, 5.

and places, however little research has examined this process in the case of summer lakeside cottages and camps in Alberta.

Dwelling theory is significant to this study of how identification and familiarity with the landscape may have contributed to longstanding land relationships at a central Alberta resort.²⁵⁴ The cabins, clubs, and camps at Cooking Lake were both products of, and reinforcements in, developing a landscape of recreation and leisure at Cooking Lake at the turn of the century. In turn, the world of Cooking Lake came to be known as a site of recreation through its use and popular perception that it was a recreation space for users who ascribed meanings to its landscape and interactions. Amid this cultural landscape, the formal built structures and institutions of recreation, such as cottages, cabins, or denominational camps, developed. And, as the built environment and seasonal practices were developed into a cultural landscape, they reinforced and re-circulated recreational dwelling at Cooking Lake for decades. Through touristic dwelling, seasonal visitors to Cooking Lake fostered independent but interconnected relationships with the landscape that identified the lake as a place of recreation and home for seasonal communities.

3.1 Theories of Dwelling and the Cultivation of Home Places

Dwelling theory differentiates between the *act* of dwelling and the *built* environment. Dwelling refers not to homes or other accommodations but to “the creation of meaningful places that together form a surrounding world.... It entails people’s relationship to the world, motivated by concern and consequent involvement.”²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Gray, “Open Spaces and Dwelling Places,” 452.

²⁵⁵ Gray, “Open Spaces and Dwelling Places,” 449.

Heidegger demonstrates that ‘to dwell’ is an active state, rather than a form of passive existence, and leads to care and cultivation. According to Heidegger’s theory, “the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.”²⁵⁶ In this way, dwelling encompasses far more than just residing within a space, to dwell is to be ‘at home’ and to feel at peace in that space.²⁵⁷

Tim Ingold expanded upon Heidegger’s dwelling theory by further exploring how dwelling and place are intertwined. Ingold reiterates the division between building and dwelling, specifically the perspective that dwelling is a prerequisite for building.²⁵⁸ Dwelling is fundamental in creating the identifiable landscape, wherein building may occur. A landscape is formed through the gathering of places into a holistic entity. Through dwelling, ‘landscape’ is not a separate entity from the human, it is not a pictorial setting that is merely viewed from afar; rather, Ingold asserts that landscape is as much a part of humanity as humanity is of it. And, central to this thesis, is the understanding that places are formed through familiarity and activity.²⁵⁹

Heidegger affirms that the built environment plays a role in dwelling. Building does not mark the beginning of dwelling; rather, to build is to bring a space into connection with humans and with other places, which may then allow further dwelling to occur.²⁶⁰ This may then be paired with Heidegger’s assertion that: “space is in essence

²⁵⁶ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 147.

²⁵⁷ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 146-147.

²⁵⁸ Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, 173.

²⁵⁹ Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, 191-193.

²⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 145, 154.

that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds. That for which room is made is always granted and hence is joined, that is, gathered, by virtue of a location, that is, by such a thing as the bridge. *Accordingly, spaces receive their being from locations and not from 'space.'*”²⁶¹ Thus, the act of dwelling is one in which places are created through familiarity, conscious proximity, and regard for one’s surroundings. Dwelling works to form places and give these places identities.

Across Heidegger and Ingold, dwelling is defined through discussion of, predominantly, the activities of daily life. What, then, is the role of dwelling within the experience of tourism and holidaying? Anthropologist Catherine Palmer argues that dwelling holds a place in tourism, rather than being relegated only to defining daily experience, however, a difference exists between these two experiences of dwelling.²⁶² Dwelling through tourism denotes a period of life that is an interruption from the norm, wherein a person is introduced to new opportunities, cultures, encounters, and potential for atypical behaviours. These differences allow people to re-contextualize themselves in the world, thereby allowing for a new interaction with the world.²⁶³ New experiences with cultures and landscapes through tourism allow for new ways of dwelling.

Implicit within the act of tourism is travel. Heidegger’s discussion of the role of built environments uses the bridge as an example of creating connection between landscapes and people. Just as the bridge *gathers* the surrounding landscape to itself, or a cabin and yard includes spaces around it, the infrastructure of tourism—particularly that

²⁶¹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 154.

²⁶² Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 23.

²⁶³ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 21-22.

of transportation—gathers destinations into the world of the dweller.²⁶⁴ As individuals are transported to new places, the sphere of belonging is expanded with new interpersonal and inter-landscape interactions, therefore the world of dwelling is expanded.²⁶⁵ Through the action of travel, the sites that are travelled between become spatially and temporally linked as sites of recreation and socialization.

Anthropologist Nicole Eckert-Lyngstad's application of dwelling theory to the experience of National Park wardens in Jasper National Park illustrates some of the ways in which individuals have made a 'home' on the landscape and, so, have been able to dwell in this landscape. By cultivating a garden, travelling the trails of the park, and identifying the location as *home*, park wardens and their families are able to dwell in a transient space.²⁶⁶ Some of the forms of engagement discussed include activities such as walking or traversing a landscape, however these activities may also include building. Eckert-Lyngstad relates wardens' experiences to anthropologist John Gray's discussion of Scottish shepherds and the relationship between familiarity with place and the ability to dwell. In his analysis of Scottish shepherds and associated place-making, Gray discusses how the Scottish border hills, specifically the shepherd's *hirsels*, characterize the lives, work, and identities of the shepherds. The shaping of individuals' experiences by the landscape illustrates the process in which a landscape becomes a *place* to which individuals are able to form an attachment.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 95.

²⁶⁵ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 22.

²⁶⁶ Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 84.

²⁶⁷ Gray, "Open Spaces and Dwelling Places," 440.

In accordance with place-making, a place is made through its association with specific activities, experiences, thoughts, or memories. A tourism and recreation landscape becomes a place for touristic dwelling by being conceived as such and by contributing to experiences of tourism, leisure, and recreation. Heidegger's example of a bridge illustrates how built structures contribute to a mentality of dwelling. The bridge represents an implicit desire to bring together separate regions in the same way that a park warden's patrol trail and a shepherd's *hirsels* unite places and people through desired connection and connecting activity.²⁶⁸ A space gains its identity through the locations that are distinguished within it.

3.2 Home-Away-From-Home at Cooking Lake

During the early days of modern tourism at the lake, the majority of visitors camped at various locations along the lakeshore. Access to the lake from Edmonton was along the Cooking Lake Trail, a longstanding Indigenous and fur trade route also known as the Carlton Trail between Fort Edmonton and Fort Gary, which connected south Edmonton with southern Cooking Lake.²⁶⁹ While a summer cottage had been built by Edmonton's sheriff, Walter Scott Robertson, in the 1880s, summer cottages were not a

²⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 152; Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 84-85; and Gray, "Open Spaces and Dwelling Places," 447.

²⁶⁹ By 1911, Cooking Lake Trail connected with Edmonton by way of Whyte Avenue. This route came to be referred to as 'Y Road' and by the twenty-first century is titled 'Wye Road'. This road provided an additional connection by way of North Cooking Lake, Henderson Directories Alberta, Ltd., *Henderson's Twin City, Edmonton and Strathcona, Directory 1911*, vol. VII (Calgary, Alta: Henderson Directories Alberta, Limited, 1911), 447, Peel 2962.6, PPP; and "Beaver Lake Trails," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 April 1895, 2 AR00203, PPP.

major component of the built landscape until the early 1900s.²⁷⁰ While Sheriff Robertson's wife, Harriette, and family hosted guests and dances, public newspapers referred to his cabin as both a "cottage" and a "shooting lodge," indicating two purposes of the Robertson's property: both a family's second home and a hunting property.²⁷¹ Camping was the precursor to a built community of leisure. The family of Sheriff Robertson even hosted camping on the property surrounding their cabins in the summer, though family guests stayed in the cottage and attended indoor dances in the winter.²⁷² A resort location joined the Robertson's family summer property in 1894, with the advent of the Koney Island Sporting Co. Ltd. and its so-called Koney Island. Koney Island was a club site that catered to popular recreation at the lake by offering camping on the island.

The different forms of private or rental accommodations at Cooking Lake represented different forms of dwelling. As Heidegger explained, the building of a residence was no guarantee of the creation of a home.²⁷³ In accordance with Heidegger's concept of dwelling, there is the idea that dwelling includes "'staying with things,' that is, in preserving, cultivating and constructing"; but if the individual is not living, or at least not permanently living within the location, how does dwelling function?²⁷⁴ Do the same concepts apply? While temporary residences are exactly as their descriptor demonstrates,

²⁷⁰ Cooking Lake Study – Site Data Form B-83 H. H. Robertson Cottage, November 1974, ARCH 1864, Binder 2, Cooking Lake fonds, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada.

²⁷¹ *1911 Canada Census*, Alberta, 2 Edmonton, Sub-District 51, (enumerator) 8 (compiled) 845, family 64, line 35-37, entry for "Robertson," Walter Scott.; citing Library and Archives Canada, Statistics Canada Fonds, LAC Film no. T-20327; "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 August 1901, 1, AR00105, PPP; and "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 30 August 1901, 1, AR00106, PPP.

²⁷² "Home and Society," *Saturday News*, 13 July 1907, 10, AR00903, PPP; and "Home and Society," *Saturday News*, 23 February 1907, 14, AR00802, PPP.

²⁷³ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 149.

²⁷⁴ Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 145.

‘temporary’, Heidegger, Palmer, and Eckert-Lyngstad all illustrate how a mentality of dwelling is not necessarily reserved for those spaces and places that are permanent residences.

Early promotion of the region in Edmonton newspapers noted that the lake boasted an “unequalled” site for camping.²⁷⁵ One of the first camping parties noted by Edmonton newspapers was that of a Reverend G. W. Dean, Mrs. Dean and children, Miss Osborne and Miss Taylor in 1895.²⁷⁶ The next weekend, their party was augmented with an additional four campers. The site for this trip was not recorded, however it is likely that they visited either Koney Island or Sheriff Robertson’s property. Early lakeshore camping and camping parties hosted by the Robertsons and the Koney Island Sporting Co. initiated the lake as a camping destination for nearby city dwellers. By the 1890s Cooking Lake was being brought into the leisure sphere of Edmonton-Strathcona for those who wanted a retreat from the city.

²⁷⁵ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 July 1891, 4, AR00404, PPP.

²⁷⁶ Reverend Dean was the Wesleyan-Methodist pastor of McDougall Church, having started his appointment in the summer of 1894; Rev. J. E. Hughson, D. D. of Hamilton, special preacher, *Diamond Jubilee of McDougall United Church, Edmonton, 1871-1931: Sunday Oct. 18th, Sunday oct 25th, and Intervening Days* (Edmonton, Alta: McDougall United Church, 1931), 11; Miss Osborne may have been Lillian Osborne, first female teacher of Edmonton, as she was a popular figure in Edmonton newspapers; “Local,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 July 1895, 1, Ar00103, PPP.



Figure 10 Activities and relaxation under a handmade structure, 1912. ("Sand Bar beach, Cooking Lake, Alberta," 1912, [NC-6-410] McDermid Studio. Courtesy of the Library and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary.)

The identities of early visitors were usually discussed in Edmonton papers, indicating that they were often members of familiar society. Parties to Cooking Lake in the early 1890s were most often made up of men going on shooting trips.²⁷⁷ This resulted in a predominantly masculine face for visitors to Cooking Lake, especially during the hunting seasons. The Robertsons, however, often visited as a family group with men and women. The mention of the 1985 camping party to Cooking Lake included the Dean and Henry families and four other women of Edmonton society, Miss Osborne, Miss Taylor, Miss Battrick, and Mrs. Grierson.²⁷⁸ As the popularity of visitation to Cooking Lake rose, it is possible that the lake became a place wherein urban women and families could find

²⁷⁷ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 23 October 1893, 1, AR00103, PPP.

²⁷⁸ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 July 1895, 1, AR00104, PPP.

themselves ‘at home’ away from home as these early examples and return visitors seem to suggest.

New transportation developments contributed to Cooking Lake’s popularity as a camping site and brought more of the region into the recreational landscape. By 1897 the Koney Island Sporting Co. had experienced enough success as a sporting and camping destination that it proposed to assist in the building of a new road, known as the “Coney (Koney) Island Trail,” that would connect the Koney Island lakeshore landing to the northern region of Cooking Lake. As well, Koney Island was used as a point through which club members could access other areas in the region, such as Beaver Lake.²⁷⁹ This improved over-land accessibility to destinations around the lake and into the surrounding region, fostered familiarity, and allowed for dwelling on the south-western shores of the lake.

By 1901 a new trail to Cooking Lake had been cut to prepare for summer campers. This trail decreased the distance from Edmonton to southern Cooking Lake to a mere thirty-two-kilometre journey, which suggests that travelers from Edmonton communities were able to become more familiar with the landscape.²⁸⁰ This in turn allowed for the later expansion of the tourist industry between the city and Cooking Lake. Through early camping and small group outings by recognized community members, Cooking Lake was gathered into the sphere of possible seasonal and touristic dwelling for people from nearby Edmonton and Strathcona.

²⁷⁹ “Koney Island Sporting Co.,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 April 1897, 4, AR00406, PPP.

²⁸⁰ “Local,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 8 March 1901, 1, AR00104, PPP.

Camping at Cooking Lake was not reserved only for those acquainted with landowners, nor those willing to pay for a camping site at Koney Island. By 1908, an advertisement in the *Strathcona Evening Chronicle*, shared the availability of free camping at Fullam Park, equipped with boats and a sandy beach.²⁸¹ Once the GTP train line reached North Cooking Lake in 1909, a new and more convenient ‘bridge’ was created between Edmonton and the city’s favourite resort destination. Furthermore, in the same year, improvements were made to the Koney Island Trail, which allowed for better accessibility to the island.²⁸² In 1914, an area near North Cooking Lake was referred to as “Fresh Air Camp” because it, among other locations, promoted tenting in the fresh air in keeping with broader ideas of nature, health, and the outdoors during this era.²⁸³ Into 1921 camping remained popular; for example, Mitchel Camp, a summer ‘tent city’ with full amenities at North Cooking Lake, marketed itself to families looking to spend the summer at the lake.²⁸⁴ While it is difficult to know exactly how many people made the decision to take the trail or train from the Edmonton region to Cooking Lake for a camping trip, visitors were indeed making the thirty-two kilometre journey for a camping trip and were supported by small business operators like the Mitchels.

As Cooking Lake developed its reputation as a site for leisure and recreation at the turn of the century, various cabins and residences built up in subdivisions and resorts around the lake. These buildings became a central component of the built environment

²⁸¹ “Free Camping Ground,” *Strathcona Evening Chronicle*, 8 July 1908, 2, AD00202, PPP.

²⁸² Department of Public Works, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Works of the Province of Alberta, 1909* (Edmonton, Alta: Jas E. Richards, Government Printer, 1910), 30, Peel, 9536, PPP.

²⁸³ “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 15 June 1914, 3, AR00317, PPP.

²⁸⁴ “Mitchel Camp at Cooking Lake is Ready for Guests,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 18 June 1921, 6, AR00609, PPP.

that contributed to leisure pursuits at the lake. Since the 1880s, Sheriff Robertson's cabin had been the first known second home to be built by a settler on the shore of Cooking Lake. From there, the Koney Island Sporting Co. expanded this built environment with a clubhouse in 1897.²⁸⁵ After this, the number of cabins and resorts grew in the early- to mid-twentieth century.

In the early 1900s, a sign of an attractive city was the availability of nearby summer cottages for the affluent, business, and professional classes. As Edmonton's population grew and sought out destinations for summer holidays and fun, Cooking Lake's proximity was a highlight for the city. One of the first Cooking Lake subdivisions began in 1907 at Fullam Park on the southwest shore, prior to the arrival of the GTP railway at North Cooking Lake.²⁸⁶ "Fullam Park: The Cooking Lake Summer Resort is Now on the Market" headlined the *Strathcona Evening Chronicle* in June 1907. This subdivision boasted a location on the west end of the lake, "right on the main trail," with "the best bathing and boating shore on the lake" and "ABSOLUTELY NO MUD," making it a good site for camping or cottaging.²⁸⁷ Mud was common for small pot-and-kettle lakes in the Beaver Hills. The purveyors of this subdivision were listed as Elmslie and Monypenny; William Erskine Blackwell Monypenny was a respected hired man on a family member's land in the Cooking Lake community.²⁸⁸ With the expansion of these

²⁸⁵ "Koney Island Sporting Co.," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 April 1897, 4.

²⁸⁶ Michael G. Boyd, "'Tracking the Footprints of the Past,' Photo Memories of Cooking Lake 1890 to 1950" (public presentation, Strathcona County Library, Sherwood Park, Alta., January 25, 2020).

²⁸⁷ Advertisement for properties at Fullam Park, Cooking Lake, "Fullam Park: The Cooking Lake Summer Resort is Now on the Market," *Strathcona Evening Chronicle*, 26 June 1907, AD00302_6, PPP.

²⁸⁸ The Monypenny family was popular in the Cooking Lake region. William appears to have left Cooking Lake for British Columbia shortly after subdividing this land. Research did not determine a known identity for Elmslie; "Notices Gazetted," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 July 1906, 6, AR00602, PPP; and *1906 Canada Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta*, Alberta, Strathcona, Sub-District 90, p. 18,

residences, the built environments of the communities surrounding Cooking Lake began to take on the character of a second-home setting.

As with the expansion of Fullam Park in 1907, the arrival of the GTP railway to North Cooking Lake in 1909 assisted in the expansion of built recreational communities at various locations across the lake. In 1911, the area of Military Point was subdivided by property owner Mr. E. W. Fowler. Realtors for the sale were William C. Inglis, Charles E. MacDonald, and Mr. Thom of Edmonton.²⁸⁹ Fowler had homesteaded and farmed the area of Military Point since about 1903. The subdivision did not appear to sell a vast quantity of properties, however George Parslow, an Edmonton business man, and Carl Henningsen, owner of the Edmonton Pantorium and Dye Works, both purchased lots with the intent of building cabins.²⁹⁰ With the tourism boom at the lake, subdividing property was a method for local property owners to capitalize on the expanding industry.

With the inaugural passenger train from Edmonton arriving at North Cooking Lake in 1909, the people of Edmonton and Strathcona had heightened access to the lake and the character of tourism and small business began to change. These new tourists required accommodations, and lake visits expanded from predominantly social visits and camping. Just as the Hicks family rented a cottage during their first summer at the lake, so too did many others. Rental cottages were available from a variety of hosts, such as the Uprights and Werners. By 1914, the Robertson's property boasted not only the campsites

family 200, line 23, entry for "Monypenny," Broeket K.; citing Library and Archives Canada, Statistics Canada Fonds, Item no. 514865, Image no. e001213710.

²⁸⁹Henderson Directories Alberta Ltd., *Henderson's Alberta Gazetteer and Directory*, vol. XXVIII (Calgary, Alta: Henderson Directories Alberta Limited, 1911), 400, Peel 3591, PPP,

²⁹⁰ "Cooking Lake," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 June 1915, 11, AR01104, PPP.

that had initiated its popularity, but thirty cottages for summer renters.²⁹¹ In late July 1914, *The Edmonton Bulletin* ran the story “Many Holiday Seekers Throng Cooking Lake.” Those visitors who overnighted could have stayed a rental cottage or have rented rooms from Mrs. E. McMenemy above the North Cooking Lake store.²⁹² In 1930, when the Lakeview Summer Resort and Amusement Park opened, cottages were available for private ownership and by 1933 cottages were available for rent.²⁹³ The possibilities of a campsite, a rented room or cottage, or a private cottage ensured a variety of possible accommodations—and varied ways for visitors to interact with the landscape.



Figure 11 The Sache family, with members of all ages visited the lake, 1925. Three rows of family members sit by a tree with two cabins in the background. (“Family Gathering at Cooking Lake,” July 1925, [CA EDM MS-56-EA-10-1833] by Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers’ Association. Courtesy of the City of Edmonton Archives.)

²⁹¹ “Many Holiday Seekers Throng Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 July 1914, 10.

²⁹² “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6 July 1914, 3, AR00303; PPP; and Cooking Lake Study – Site Data Form C-17 North Cooking Lake Store, November, 1974, ARCH 1864, Binder 2, Cooking Lake fonds, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada.

²⁹³ Advertisement for shares in Lakeview resort, “Final Offering on the Open Market...,” *Edmonton Journal*, 19 May 1930, 11, ProQuest Historic Newspapers; R. F. Aitchison, “Aitchison, R.F.” in *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 20.

William Hicks' reflections on his mother spending all her summers at the cottage was indicative of a dwelling perspective voiced by a repeat cottager at Cooking Lake. The Hicks family began their summer visitations at the lake on the advice of a doctor. From there the act of travelling to the cottage for the summer became one of habit and tradition for the next thirty-eight years.²⁹⁴ This sustained choice and seasonal cycle of visiting the lake maintained it as a location of dwelling for the Hicks family. While initially the family rented a cottage, they made this cottage into a 'home' through acts such as bringing the family maid and pet dog. Bringing along the maid and pet dog indicate homemaking and a desire to prolong a comfortable middle-class presence at the cottage. After two years of renting at Lakeview and then another period of renting from the Uprights, Mary Jane Hicks encouraged the family to purchase a dilapidated cottage—previously called Killarney—and renovate it into a family cottage. In 1936, the family cottage was completed.²⁹⁵ As Heidegger discussed, caring for and cultivating place within a landscape is an act of dwelling, one that indicates a conscious choice to dwell in that place.²⁹⁶ By traversing the landscape and choosing a site that required maintenance and care, the Hicks family made a choice to dwell at Cooking Lake each summer season.

The story of the Hicks family's choice to come to Cooking Lake, on the recommendation of a physician, demonstrates health was one of the various reasons that families and individuals had for their decision to summer at the 'city's watering place.' While William Hicks did not state whether or not the baby recovered from whooping cough after that first summer, the family's continued visitation implies that the initial

²⁹⁴ Hicks, "Hicks, William F. and Louise," 117.

²⁹⁵ William F. Hicks, interview by Louise Hicks, date unknown, transcript.

²⁹⁶ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 147.

visit had been successful and pleasant, warranting many repeated summers. Positive health benefits and enjoyable activities resulted in a familial connection to the landscape.²⁹⁷

The Hicks family's experiences at the lake also suggest some of the typical activities that cottagers and other visitors engaged to familiarize themselves with the lake. Visiting the Lakeview Pavilion dancehall, taking tea at the Upright family's tea room, "play[ing] and [singing] the Bo-o-de-do songs," swimming at the beach, riding the Merry-maker paddle wheeler between beaches, and watching "the pontoon planes land and take off from the seaplane base."²⁹⁸ With this variety of amusement opportunities visitors were able to associate enjoyment and leisure activity with the landscape. By identifying the Cooking Lake landscape with amusement, visitors held expectations for the landscape but also fostered their own sense of place and dwelling.

Where before the majority of cottaging visitors had leased their summer residences, Cooking Lake's popularity led many to "add an air of permanency to [their] holiday habitations" and purchase land with the intent to build summer cottages.²⁹⁹ Examples of these communities included: Koney Island, Oban Beach, Military Point, Crescent (Brown's) Island, along with the communities at North and South Cooking Lake; there was a boom for these subdivisions—as with much leisure across the province—from around 1907 until the start of the First World War.³⁰⁰ Though these

²⁹⁷ Moore and Graefe, "Attachment to Recreation Settings: The Case of Rail-Trail Users," 18-20; Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 27-33, 105-110.

²⁹⁸ Hicks, "Hicks, William F. and Louise," 117.

²⁹⁹ "Cooking Lake Summer Resort," *Strathcona Evening Chronicle*, 8 May 1907, 4, AR00405, PPP.

³⁰⁰ Les Faulkner, *Wheels, Skis & Floats: A History of the Cooking Lake Seaplane Base* (Edmonton: El-Ef Enterprises, 1993), 6.

subdivisions did not experience massive economic success and sales,³⁰¹ perceptions of the region's popularity projected that the summer cottage subdivisions would be in demand.³⁰² And, indeed, permanent, private cabins for individuals and families looking for leisure experiences at the lake were a result of this change at Cooking Lake.

The rise of second homes and summer properties illustrated a level of landscape familiarity that visitors cultivated through dwelling. As the subdivisions at Cooking Lake began to expand, primarily between 1907 and 1914, then again in 1918, Edmontonians further encouraged dwelling at the lake. These properties, whether owned or rented, were personalized by the individuals using them. Some cabins were equipped with stoves, boats and docks, or even enough space to host a party of over fifty.³⁰³

From the position of one's cottage, a visitor could explore the area, engage with other visitors, and participate in wide variety of activities available. Lois Eskelson (née Field) of Edmonton visited her grandparent's cottage on the lake as a child during the 1920s and 1930s. Eskelson's grandfather, Dr. Clarence William Field, had been a doctor for the north-Strathcona region and purchased the family cottage prior to 1916.³⁰⁴ When Dr. Field died in 1918, his wife, Mabel Clover Field (née Robertson), and family appear to have relocated to Edmonton but continued to summer at Cooking Lake.³⁰⁵ Mabel Field

³⁰¹ Boyd, "Tracking the Footprints of the Past."

³⁰² "Survey of Summer Resort," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 December 1908, 8, AR00815, PPP.

³⁰³ Viki van Hogeand, "Stove in kitchen of cabin at South Cooking Lake, Alberta," 1945, A14167, Box 1, van Hogeand, Viki fond, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; Lois Eskelson, "Eskelson-Field" in *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 67.

³⁰⁴ "Alberta's Lakeside Resorts," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 July 1916, 6, AR00609, PPP.

³⁰⁵ *1911 Canada Census*, Alberta, 7, Sub-District Vegreville, (enumerator) 3 (compiled) 153, family 34, line 36-40, entry for "Field," Clarence Walter.; citing Library and Archives Canada, Statistics Canada Fonds, LAC Film no. T-07526714; Gladys Lillian Gill, interview by Louise Hicks, date

was a social leader and hosted groups and events at the cottage, for instance inviting the entire University of Alberta Outdoor Club to visit. Overall Eskelson's childhood experience of cottage life at Cooking Lake featured days of relaxed enjoyment and summer rituals growing up in central Alberta, with particular cultural practices of cottage life amusement:

Volleyball, horseshoes, boating and bonfires all were on the list of fun. The water was in better condition then and swimming was also on the list. The time for that was 3 p.m. - no invitation, no reminders - everyone just appeared at the largest dock (ours) for a dip. After dark, and our walk around the loop, to see the stars and to scare one another, we got into bed by the fireplace and listened to the radio. On Saturday nights at 11 p.m. we got 'Stardust Serenade,' big name bands from the roof tops in New York. Some nights we might play 'sweep the bat'. People on either side of the cottage with brooms and whichever side made the noise the bats would head their way.³⁰⁶

This experience was clearly influenced by class and affluence, as seen stemming from Eskelson's recollection of the size of the family dock and her grandmother's ability to host large parties for university students and other friends, as well as the ability to play and relax without concern.

Eskelson's cottage was a site of community building and dwelling for those who visited. Her experiences also reveal cultural indicators of life in central Alberta linked to a geography as immediate as the lakeshore, night sky, and bats, yet also a social geography of cultural practices and a world of radio extending music from New York into the summer home east of Edmonton. Indicative of a leisurely experience at Cooking Lake, Eskelson's reflection follows with narrative of the *escape* that Cooking Lake was

unknown, transcript, Oral Histories Collection, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta.

³⁰⁶ Eskelson, "Eskelson-Field," 67.

for many Edmontonians. Like the activities of the park wardens described by Eckert-Lyngstad or Gray's shepherds, Eskelson found a routine at the cottage, which created a sense of familiarity and connection. This routine of tourism or recreation differs from the routine of daily life but brings forward new opportunities for engagement with landscape.³⁰⁷



Figure 12 Smiles and swimming outfits on a group on the beach, 1912. ("Swimmers at Cooking Lake, Alberta," 1912, [NC-6-411] by McDermid Studio. Courtesy of the Library and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary.)

Not only might Lois Eskelson's recollection speak to the ways in which Cooking Lake became a get-away, it also demonstrates how some communities were formed and reinforced by the formation of this leisure landscape. Visitors were able to create a community with one another, but also cottage owners or renters were able to bring their

³⁰⁷ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 21.

own visitors, thereby expanding the community and dwelling potential of Cooking Lake. Bringing guests to one's cottage was a manner of bringing the Edmonton social network into Cooking Lake society. Furthermore, visitors to Cooking Lake had a network for family and friends at the lake. When guests were invited into the lakeshore network, the ties between Edmonton social networks and Cooking Lake holiday networks were reinforced. Cottages were able to fulfill the position of a 'home' by creating a central position and point of reference for individuals while they were away from home.

As cottagers and other visitors spent time at the lake, they explored the various resorts and experiences that were on offer all around the shoreline. Of particular importance to the development of their sense of place was the popularity of passenger boats for function and fun. The trail running from North Cooking Lake to the south resorts was not always reliable in the early-twentieth century, so passenger boats would collect visitors from North Cooking Lake after they had arrived by train and bring them to the resorts spread across the lake.³⁰⁸ As well, these boats were available for pleasure cruises around the lake. Especially popular for touring were personal boats and a paddle-wheeled boat called the Merrymaker.³⁰⁹ Through the use of boats, both for transit and for pleasure, Cooking Lake's accessibility to visitors was expanded beyond that which the train and trails provided. Palmer's discussion of touristic dwelling demonstrates that as tourists familiarize themselves with new regions, they expand their world of dwelling, particularly through experience of new sensation.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Olson, "North Cooking Lake," 564; Louise Hicks, "South Cooking Lake History: O-ni-mi-now-w-sioo-Sakyakn" in *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 5.

³⁰⁹ Hicks, "Hicks, William F. and Louise," 117.

³¹⁰ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 27-30.



Figure 13 Seven people ride on a steam boat off the shore of Cooking Lake, ca. 1900. The man sitting fourth from the right appears to be attired in a Royal Canadian Mounted Police uniform. ("Cooking Lake, Alberta" ca. 1900 [4757] by Joseph Majakey. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta.)

Locals in the area expanded their economic benefit by tapping into the potential of catering to visitors. Mrs. E. McMenomy started a grocery business at North Cooking Lake in 1910, capitalizing off of the proximity of the train station.³¹¹ McMenomy then expanded her business ventures to include a hotel, thereby directly encouraging further visitation to the area.³¹² In 1918, the Collinge family moved into the area and, when unable to live off of farming, provided services for summer visitors to the lake. The Collinge family "delivered milk, cream, butter, chickens, ice and wood to the cottagers. [They] also hauled boats, lumber, stoves, etc. from Edmonton. [They] also put in piers for

³¹¹ "One Hour From City," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 July 1918, 4.

³¹² Florence Olson, "North Cooking Lake" in *Cherished Memories*, ed. Women of Unifarm, (Ardrossan, Alta: Ardrossan Unifarm, 1972), 564-565.

the cottagers.”³¹³ These ventures facilitated an economic tourism sector for small-business operators and a leisure-based economy at Cooking Lake by fulfilling the needs and holiday desires of regular seasonal visitors. By allowing for an experience of ease and comfort, local businesses contributed to visitors’ ability to dwell on the landscape. Visitors were able to buy groceries, find accommodations at hotels, or contribute to the built landscape by building their own cottage at Cooking Lake.

More subtly, the division between visitors and locals can be seen from the difference in their actions and activities. The purpose of Mrs. McMenemy’s primary business was to provide accommodations and amenities for tourists, but she held a different role as a local community member. As hotel-owner, grocer, postmistress, and restaurateur, Mrs. McMenemy held a social position between that of local and visitor.³¹⁴ Community is a social process in which different communities may function within a single location. As such, each community may hold the location as a different place on the landscape.³¹⁵

A community of tourists developed and expanded across Cooking Lake’s popular development. Into the 1910s and 1920s, Cooking Lake’s tourism society became predominantly a reflection of Edmonton society, with cottagers and excursionists often visiting as part of a social or professional group. The Hicks family visited for many decades and yet remained a part of the visitor community, having little interaction with the local community.³¹⁶ Gangs of roving children appear to have had only minor social

³¹³ Collinge, “Collinge, Harry and Emily,” 51-52.

³¹⁴ Olson, “North Cooking Lake,” 564.

³¹⁵ John C. Walsh and Steven High, “Rethinking the Concept of Community,” *Social History* 32, no. 64 (1999): 255-274.

³¹⁶ Hicks, “Hicks, William F. and Louise,” 118.

divisions. Resort children from the north side of the lake would unite with those from the south to play games on either end of the lake, yet they remained within the confines of the visitor-local dynamic.³¹⁷

The local Collinge family provided many resources to visitors as local farmers and hired outfitters, but they were not within the same social circle as those they assisted. Nevertheless, this class difference did not mean they were without leisure or could not interact socially. The Collinge family hosted barn dances for locals and young Ed Collinge recounted taking a “resort girl” on dancing dates to the Lakeview resort, while enjoying the chance to drive her father’s motor boat across the lake.³¹⁸ Cooking Lake locals held a popular spring Bachelor’s Ball, organized by single farmers, to bring the community together after a long and often socially-isolated winter, in contrast to the long hazy days of summer and dancing at resorts.³¹⁹ At the peak of Cooking Lake’s popularity, the locals were quickly outnumbered by visitors in the summer and locals would not swim on Sundays because the beaches were overcrowded.³²⁰ Tourism was seasonal dwelling at the lake and so held an impact on local dwelling; each had a different community and form of dwelling that overlapped but was not entirely shared due to differences of identity, status, and rural-urban geographies.³²¹

³¹⁷ Barbara (MacQuarrie) Hays, interview by Louise Hicks, 10 September 1987, transcript.

³¹⁸ Ed Collinge seemed to have enjoyed using the girls’ family boats as much as going on dates; Collinge, “Collinge, Harry and Emily,” 52.

³¹⁹ Hicks, “South Cooking Lake History: O-ni-mi-now-w-sioo-Sakyakn,” 6.

³²⁰ Barbara (MacQuarrie) Hays, interview by Louise Hicks, 10 September 1987, transcript; Hicks, “South Cooking Lake History: O-ni-mi-now-w-sioo-Sakyakn,” 7.

³²¹ Bouchier and Cruikshank, *The People and the Bay*, 6.

Cooking Lake played host to hundred, if not thousands, of visitors, yet the peak of the region's popularity for cottagers eventually subsided. The initial tourist communities were those composed of Sheriff Robertson and Koney Island social circles.³²² Between 1917 and 1929 the lake level had dropped by approximately eight feet, resulting in a shallower lake that was less conducive to some of the favourite summer recreations, like sailing and fishing.³²³ As well, as automobile ownership became more widespread, potential visitors could travel greater distances to more destinations, and so Cooking Lake did not have the same pull that it had had in the past.³²⁴ In the period of between the 1930s and 1960s the lake level underwent additional fluctuations which impacted both the Cooking Lake Airport and various recreational activities.³²⁵ The shift of Cooking Lake's popularity for cottagers demonstrates that many people did not go to Cooking Lake because of a particular affinity for the specific landscape of Cooking Lake itself; rather, visitors were drawn by the experiences and activities that the lake provided. In this way, Cooking Lake encouraged place dependent activities for its early visitors, but as the landscape changed and water levels fell, so too did the number of visitors.

Cooking Lake's role as a pleasure ground for visitors from the Edmonton region provided a new identity for the landscape, one wherein visitors were able to dwell on the landscape through acts of homemaking and recreation. The trains, trails, roadways, and

³²² "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 5 September 1898, 1.

³²³ Alberta Environment, Planning Division, *Cooking Lake Area Study: Water Inventory and Demands*, vol. II, (Edmonton: Alberta Environment Planning Division, 1976), 26.

Hicks, "South Cooking Lake History: O-ni-mi-now-w-sioo-Sakyakn," 5.

³²⁴ Olson, "North Cooking Lake," 565.

³²⁵ Lemieux, "Wind in the Sails Chapter One;" Alberta Environment, Planning Division, *Cooking Lake Area Study*, 25-27; Cooking Lake Airport, "Cooking Lake Airport – History."

comforts developed by visitors and locals created an air of accessible recreation and leisure. As individuals travelled to the lake, either by train or private vehicle, explored new places around the lake, and experienced new interactions with different people and new landscapes, the sphere of belonging was expanded, therefore the world of dwelling expanded for these visitors.³²⁶ Moreover, through the action of travel, the sites travelled between became spatially and temporally linked as sites of recreation and socialization. By travelling paths and trails at Cooking Lake, recreationists visited places that, in turn, worked to form a specific recreation experience.³²⁷ Overall, Cooking Lake's history as a resort area demonstrates that seasonal visitation created a place for touristic dwelling, which generated a socially-produced space for recreation and leisure.

3.3 Membership and Belonging

While dwelling may seem inherently tied to the idea of home and creation of home, dwelling theory illustrates that dwelling does not only apply to home-spaces. Eckert-Lyngstad explores the connection between dwelling and the cultivation of space.³²⁸ Just as cottages and second homes were personalized to facilitate comfort for vacationers, clubs and other membership entities at Cooking Lake contributed to dwelling. These clubs included the Koney Island Sporting Co. and the Edmonton Yacht Club

Early recreation at Cooking Lake often involved hunting as a leisure pursuit. Koney Island, off the western shore, was the site of the first leisure club to be established

³²⁶ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 22.

³²⁷ Gray, "Open Spaces and Dwelling Places," 452.

³²⁸ Eckert-Lyngstad, *The Backcountry as Home*, 145.

at Cooking Lake. The primary purpose of the company and the island was to encourage and facilitate summer leisure at the lake. While it began with hunting, the dream of touristic ‘improvements’—hotels, yachts, and rental properties promoted by the developers of the Koney Island Sporting Co.—foreshadowed the future of Cooking Lake’s tourism and recreation industry.

The Koney Island Sporting Co. existed at an intersection between personal and commercialized leisure experiences. The company held interest in developing a leisure and tourism industry at Cooking Lake and facilitated tourism to the region. As discussed, the company contributed to the development of roads around the lake and assisted in opening other areas of the Beaver Hills for hunting trips. On a basic level, the Koney Island Sporting Co. functioned as one of the earliest ‘bridges’ between Edmonton and Cooking Lake. The company gathered the lake into the tourism world for many Edmontonians.

From its commercial roots, Koney Island itself became, predominantly, a site of membership-based leisure and recreation. The founding members of the company were ten Edmonton men of various occupations and positions.³²⁹ These men came from Edmonton’s business and professional classes and viewed Koney Island, previously Pine Island, as a site with profit potential. The club had a longstanding impact on the landscape through the renaming of Pine Island to Koney Island, and the implications of the new name helped to redefine the island in a way that valued the landscape and the island’s recreational draw. The landscape was a selling point for the island, through which the landscape was directly associated with profit and the tourism industry. By

³²⁹ “Notice,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 September 1894, 3, AD00303_1, PPP.

equating Koney Island's natural offerings with a touristic experience, the sporting company commodified Cooking Lake for consumption by urbanites.



Figure 14 Koney Island Sporting Co. members and guests on the Koney Island shore with the Mudhen and three canoes, one with a sail, ca. 1900. ("Cooking Lake from the Boat House, Koney Island, 19" [Ernest Brown fonds, B6542] by Ernest Brown. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta.)

The island's recreational development went along with the expansion of the company. In 1899 the company began curating the landscape to fulfill visitors' leisure expectations. A 125-foot-long pier was built "for use in the boating season," other buildings were erected, and the underbrush cleared as "improvements" in "preparation for the coming camping season."³³⁰ In 1900, club member Kenneth McLeod brought out a

³³⁰ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 February 1899, 1, AR00103, PPP

boat, the Princess Helen, to be used as a pleasure craft for the club.³³¹ Other club and club member boats on the water that season were the Mudhen, the Witch, and the Jean. Some Edmontonians had also driven out to lake to launch their own boats and prepare for the camping season.³³² Boating appears to have been one of the more popular activities during the early days at Koney Island, or perhaps the most novel and exciting. The great resort dreams of the company were never realized, however, and newspaper mentions of the company declined between 1901 and 1918.

Regardless of this decline, the Koney Island Sporting Co. and its members influenced the development of the lake's tourism landscape. By 1906, family cottages on the island had been built by members and a summer boarding house provided indoor accommodations for summer visitors.³³³ The island remained a consistent name and marker on the landscape.³³⁴ In 1918, a lot on the island was being advertised in the *Edmonton Journal*.³³⁵ While little advertising appears to have promoted visitation to the island, a 1919 article describing the city's lake resorts referred to the island as a known, and recommended, site for camping.³³⁶ That same summer, however, another article headlined "Cooking Lake Boats Many Pleasure Sports" also indicated that, while the site was a favourite resort and had three summer homes, no regular boat service went to the

³³¹ "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 18 May 1900, 6.

³³² "Local," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 May 1900, 1.

³³³ "At Cooking Lake," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 July 1906, 3, AR00309, PPP.

³³⁴ "The Witch and Istalena Win Yacht Races," *Edmonton Journal*, 26 August 1924, 12, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

³³⁵ Advertisement for property on Koney Island, Cooking Lake, "South Cooking Lake, For Sale – Good Site for Summer Cottage..." *Edmonton Journal*, 24 January 1918, ProQuest Historic Newspaper.

³³⁶ "Edmonton's Summer Resorts," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 June 1919, 10.

island.³³⁷ In 1920, the Koney Island Sporting Co, contributed two lots for a War Veterans' Association and Navy League of Canada fundraiser. A man from Edmonton, Mr. G. Waite, and Mr. A. W. Burrell of Strathcona were the winners of the lots, located on Koney Island Beach.³³⁸ Interestingly, the Koney Island Sporting Co. remained an incorporated company into the late twentieth century. In 1961, one of the original owners, Dr. Alexander Goodwin was still alive and able to reflect on the history of the company.³³⁹ Through its function as the base for sporting, Koney Island and the Koney Island Sporting Co. expanded the initial numbers of Cooking Lake visitors. Into the peak years of lake tourism, however, the Island and company appear to have experienced a relative decline in importance.

Meanwhile another sport club promoted the landscape through a different lens. As train and transportation boats gathered the Cooking Lake landscape into the realm of tourism and leisure dwelling, so too did the sailboats that raced across the lake. The Edmonton Yacht Club (EYC) was founded at Cooking Lake in 1923 because of the lake's popularity and position as an easily accessible venue for Edmonton sailors.³⁴⁰ Sailing was a popular form of leisure, regardless of whether or not one was a member of the Club. With races occurring almost weekly, "white sails became a familiar sight on the lake every summer as they prepared for or raced in their regattas."³⁴¹ The *Edmonton*

³³⁷ "Cooking Lake Boasts Many Pleasure Spots," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 June 1919, 9.

³³⁸ "Winners of Lots on Koney Island Beach, Cooking Lk." *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 June 1920, 14, AR01407, PPP

³³⁹ "Formed to Develop Tiny Island, Company is Province's Oldest," *Edmonton Journal*, 22 March 1961, 44, ProQuest Historic Newspaper.

³⁴⁰ Lemieux, "Wind in the Sails Chapter One."

³⁴¹ Faulkner, *Wheels, Skis & Floats*, 7.

Bulletin promoted some of these regattas and reported on the results, though the coverage was predominantly focussed on the first year of the club.³⁴² Regattas at the lake continued until 1939.³⁴³ The EYC was highly popular, partially because sailors were able to compete for many different Cups; but also, sailing appears to have been a popular pastime for boat owners and renters overall.³⁴⁴ Some cottage owners commissioned boats from local boat builder, Roy Gerolomy, who ran the Pioneer Boat Company at North Cooking Lake from 1919 until 1926.³⁴⁵ During this time, he built boats for cottagers and EYC members, including the winning boat of the 1925 Hudson's Bay Cup.³⁴⁶ Sailing allowed recreationists to engage with the landscape in ways that could not be done from land.

The topography of Cooking Lake allowed for a dynamic regatta, with sailors travelling across the entire lake. These yacht races were an experiential highlight for many visitors, "they would start from South Cooking Lake, sail through the narrows to the north end of the lake and return to the buoys and back to the south side."³⁴⁷ The races covered the whole area of the lake, forcing sailors to navigate the difficult passage known

³⁴² "Yacht Race at South Cooking Lake on Sept. 16," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 15 September 1923, 7, AR 00708, PPP; "Yacht Race on Cooking Lake on Labor Day," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 4 September 1923, 6, AR 00609, PPP; and "Close Finish Cooking Lake Yacht Races," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 17 September 1923, 5, AR 00519, PPP.

³⁴³ "Bert Field Heads Yachtmen's Club," *Edmonton Journal*, 21 April 1939, 10, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

³⁴⁴ The Godden Cup, the Hudson Bay Cup and the Gas Company Cup; South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, "Aitchison, R.F.," in *A Fond Look Back from the New Millenium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 19.

³⁴⁵ "Cooking Lake," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 May 1917, 4.

³⁴⁶ Cooking Lake Study– Site Data Form C-21 Gerolomy Boat Works, November 1974, ARCH 1864, Binder 2, Cooking Lake fonds, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada.

³⁴⁷ Olson, "North Cooking Lake," 564.

as the ‘narrows’ and respond to Cooking Lake’s inconsistent winds, taking advantage of natural conditions and challenges. These races resulted in some key memories for individuals, like Robert Aitchison Jr., who were able to witness them:

‘There was one long weekend we had a race[.] I [Aitchison] think there was sixteen boats involved and after we got started a real big storm came up and there were boats scattered all over Cooking Lake. We struggled over, we got almost to the island and tipped over there but there was only one boat out of sixteen that finished the race and that was Bill Field. In those days they didn’t have any such thing as a rescue boat so, I know, Mr. Hegler was out on that sandbar in the middle of the lake for three or four hours until somebody decided to go out and catch him, you know, he was quite old and it was quite an experience for him. We swam in the lake all the time. We had a diving board out in front of the Field’s place we used to swim off of all the time. It was deep enough to dive. That was out in the twenty foot channel.’³⁴⁸

The Aitchison family took up a summer residence in a South Cooking Lake cottage in 1926. The family would spend two months of the summer watching the regattas and swimming. Through memories such as these, the sensory components of sailing at the lake may assist in demonstrating how the sailing regattas and boats of the EYC fostered dwelling.

Through this leisure boating industry, a connection was created between locals and visitors. The introduction of the Aitchison family to the landscape of Cooking Lake came through a shared interest in sailing between Robert Aitchison Sr. and Edmonton City Claims Agent, Sid Gosling, who had a boat at Cooking Lake. Such a large number of boats were seen on the lake that they became a quintessential part of the lake’s visual appeal.³⁴⁹ Not only did cottages and EYC members contribute to the business of the

³⁴⁸ Aitchison, interview by Louise Hicks transcript.

³⁴⁹ “A Trip to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6.

Pioneer Boat Company—also known as Gerolomy’s Boat Works— operated by Roy A. Jerolamy (Gerolomy) and R. Denham, but the weekend regattas were a spectacle that was viewed by visitors and locals across the lake. While the crowds of visitors often detracted from locals’ lake recreation, the regattas were an event that brought together an audience of both visitors and locals further shaping a tourism landscape.³⁵⁰

Boats and boating on Cooking Lake became an element of the region’s sensory attraction. Sailing races and a 1917 Aquatic Sports event was a sensory thrill for spectators,³⁵¹ but boating as a novel experience was not isolated to exhibitions. Boat rides characterized much of the experience of going to the lake, both for transportation and enjoyment.³⁵² Boats were the connection point between locations throughout the lake. While roads had been constructed to circumnavigate the lake by automobile or horse, the majority of people were still arriving by train or other communal transit. This meant that many people would have not been able to visit all of the beauty spots without a boat. Crafts able to carry between fifty or sixty people were promoted as an affordable tour opportunity, with boat owners offering tours of the ‘interesting spots’ for those who did not own a boat.³⁵³ Leisure boating follows a deep history that can be contextualized within designed landscape recreation and entertainment. The boat was not only a physical

³⁵⁰ Barbara Hays, “Hays, Barbara nee (MacQuarrie),” in *A Fond Look Back from the New Millennium*, ed. South Cooking Lake Heritage Committee, (Sherwood Park, Alta: Sherwood Park Print & Copy, 2000), 108-109.

³⁵¹ “Aquatic Sports at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 August 1917, 3, AR00306; “A Trip to Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6.

³⁵² “Yachting at Cooking Lake, near Edmonton, Alberta,” ca. 1930, by Fred J. Spalding, *The Camera Products Co.* Postcard 3334, PPP; and “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 July 1915, AR00307, PPP.

³⁵³ “Cooking Lake Notes,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 6 July 1914, 3, AR00303, PPP.

connection between spaces but also a form of removing oneself from the immediate, designed recreation landscape into other areas for exploration and pleasure.³⁵⁴

In 1940 the EYC moved from Cooking Lake to Seba Beach at Wabamun Lake, west of Edmonton where it remains. This decision was influenced by the declining water-levels of Cooking Lake.³⁵⁵ The club's move away from Cooking Lake demonstrates how landscape identity and dwelling did not result only from the desires and pursuits of human activity; instead, landscape changes also impacted how individuals dwelled within a landscape. Prairie sails on Cooking Lake were a prime indicator of this relationship.

The early rise of clubs and membership-based organizations along the shores of Cooking Lake was indicative of the draw that the landscape held for individuals and social groups. Each of these organizations facilitated ways of interacting with the landscape that encouraged dwelling. The Koney Island Sporting Co. offered both a place of commercialized recreation and camping, while also creating an air of exclusivity by adhering to a club structure. The EYC and associated regattas offered a different form of sensory and recreational engagement with the landscape. As well, the proliferation of boat excursions on the lake that the club both encouraged and contributed to, formed new paths across the lake. These paths opened the landscape to include the water itself within the world of reactional dwelling.

3.4 Camps for Function and Fun

³⁵⁴ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 22; Felus, "Boats and Boating in the Designed Landscape 1720-1820," 33-34.

³⁵⁵ Lemieux, "Wind in the Sails Chapter One."

At the intersection of home and club were formal camps that encouraged recreation and membership on the shores of Cooking Lake. Similar to the dwelling of temporary tenting campsites of visitors to the lake, camps fostered familiarity with the landscape, but their element of semi-permanency created an additional element of land ownership. Moreover, camps included a membership component, like that of clubs, which formulated identities for camp members.

Clubs and camps of a formalized nature—rather than simply referring to camping sites—found a place on the landscape. In 1910, Edmonton’s 101st Fusiliers were hosted by the peninsula that was to become known as Military Point, as a result of their weekend training on that site.³⁵⁶ Summer schools began to hold camps for Sunday School teachers as Cooking Lake was regarded as an ideal site for learning and amusement.³⁵⁷ Other camps were run by the Girl Guides of Canada, Boy Scouts, Canadian Girls in Training, the Y.M.C.A., and by the Edmonton City Mission.

One of the first camps to make its place at Cooking Lake was a military camp that was held at North Cooking Lake in July of 1910. On July 15, 1910 a camp for the 101st Edmonton Fusiliers was erected on the north shore of the lake. As a spot that was already popularized for camping and swimming, it is unsurprising that the goal of the outing was not purely for training. Rather, “in addition to the pleasure derived from the outing it [was] calculated to give members of the regiment some practical experience in camping.”³⁵⁸ The group of approximately 120 men travelled from Edmonton on the GTP

³⁵⁶ “Edmonton Fusiliers in Camp at the Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 18 July 1910, 1, AR00113, PPP.

³⁵⁷ “Summer Schools,” *The Calgary Daily Herald*, 11 June 1912, 9, ProQuest Historic Newspapers.

³⁵⁸ “101st Fusiliers,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 2 July 1910, 2 AR 00314, PPP.

train to North Cooking Lake.³⁵⁹ Twenty-one tents and three marquees were pitched to host the soldiers in the popular meadow across from Crescent Island.³⁶⁰



Figure 15 A group photograph of the 101st Fusiliers at their camp on Cooking Lake, 1910. ("101st Fusiliers, Cooking Lake, Alberta," 1910, [PA-4076-302] by Rogers. Library and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary.)

Upon arrival, the regiment, unsurprisingly, held a variety of drills but also devoted time to swimming and bonfires. After a “sham battle,” accompanied with “small spurts of smoke followed by the sharp crack of the rifles,” the men told stories around the bonfire, had a party, took boats out on the lake, and held an impromptu concert.³⁶¹ During the bonfire, Colonel-Sergeant J. Wilson told stories of his experiences in South Africa during the Boer War and Major Carstairs regaled the troop with stories of his command in West Africa. Stories of men wearing sugar bags and Carstairs’ alleged escape from

³⁵⁹ “101st Fusiliers,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 July 1910, 3 AR 00319, PPP.

³⁶⁰ “Fusiliers had Work and Fun in the Camp at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 18 July 1910, 1 AR 000107, PPP.

³⁶¹ “Fusiliers had Work and Fun in the Camp at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 18 July 1910, 1 and 4 AR 000107, PPP.

“cannibals” were positively received by the Fusiliers. This bonfire and the tales told around it affirmed their colonial perspectives and efforts as part of an imperial British force on the Canadian prairies.

On camp Monday, an open-air service was held that further reflected the ideological perspectives of the Canadian Military during the Edwardian period. The sermon, preached by Dr. Ridell, spoke of the nature of man, in terms familiar to muscular Christianity:

‘Man’s nature has three parts, body, mind, and spirit. Each part has its function to fulfil and if each is to properly function certain things are necessary. The body must be fed and exercised and the mind educated. The spirit is that part of a man which forms his ideas: it is that in him which loves, hates, hopes and aspires. It is with this part of the man that religion is concerned. [...] Religion is that which feeds and encourages the growth of ideals. It is not denominationalism. It is not ritualism, though ritualism has its place.’³⁶²

This sermon and its location on the shore of Cooking Lake falls within a greater history of the intersections of recreation, religion, and the outdoors.³⁶³ While this camp was short-lived as an official venture—occurring for only one weekend in 1910—the camp was one that moved to locations surrounding Edmonton and then returned to Cooking Lake, though at a different site, in 1923.³⁶⁴ This military camp on the north shore became

³⁶² “Edmonton Fusiliers in Camp at the Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 18 July 1910, 1 AR 00113, PPP.

³⁶³ Stuart Blythe, “Open-Air Preaching: A Long and Diverse Tradition,” *Perichoresis* 16, no. 1 (2018): 61-80; for similar services at camp see PearlAnn Reichwein, *Climber’s Paradise: Making Canada’s Mountain Parks, 1906-1974* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2014), 104-06; Courtney H. van Waas, *Muscular Christian Edmonton: The Story of the Edmonton Young Men’s Christian Association 1898-1920*, MA thesis (University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, 2015), 72-107.

³⁶⁴ Boyd, *A History of the Military Camp Held at North Cooking Lake, July 1910*, 8.

a piece of the identity of the landscape; the site that played host to the training, bonfires, and sermon became known as Military Point.

Religious services and stories of war, empire, and othering told at camp contributed to a cultural identity that identified the Point as white, colonial, and Anglican—which was then preserved through the toponymy of the location. Through the toponymous presence of the fusiliers at the so-called Military Point, the space gained an identity of dwelling connected to white colonial identity of the idolized Canadian military in the lead up to the First World War. Though only a single weekend of military camp, the 101st Fusiliers marked a place at Cooking Lake, an action and a history of place-use was inscribed upon the cultural landscape of Cooking Lake. By the start of the summer season the following year, subdivision advertisements were already building upon the name Military Point, with explicit reference to the camp of the 101st Fusiliers.³⁶⁵ This weekend of military “work and fun” has been preserved within the lake’s toponymy.

Similarly, Girls Guides and Boy Scouts used Cooking Lake as a site of intermittent recreation and camping. More information about the Girl Guides’ activities at Cooking Lake can be found than for the Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts appear to have visited the lake prior to the first Girl Guide camp in the area, but the Guides had a larger impact on visitation to the region and the built environment of Cooking Lake camps.³⁶⁶ The existence and promotion of both Boy Scouts and Girl Guides camps at Cooking Lake are indications that the lake was considered a site for gendered socialization, education,

³⁶⁵ Advertisement of properties for sale at Military Point, “Inglis, MacDonalad & Thom, Realty Brokers,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 13 May 1911, 4 AD 00406_1, PPP; and “Military Point Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Capital*, 14 June 1911, 3 AD 00302_2, PPP.

³⁶⁶ “Scouts at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 August 1915, 10, AR01006, PPP.

and recreation.³⁶⁷ Moreover, both Boy Scouts and Girl Guides played a role in encouraging an imperial place identity.³⁶⁸

From the 1920s into the late 1940s various Edmonton Girl Guiding units held camps at Cooking Lake. A logbook for detailing the 1935 Girl Guides District camp followed a unit of guiders from 1925 until 1936. The district camp held from June 30 to July 6, 1935, had Guiders from the Edmonton District spend a week at White Sands Beach on the south-eastern shore of the lake. About sixty-five Guides attended this camping trip—although two girls were sent home with measles and another was sent home with a broken wrist.³⁶⁹ While it rained intermittently throughout the week, the Guiders' days were spent with tent inspections, meals cooked on the beach for badge testing, and short hikes around the lake.³⁷⁰ Evenings were then filled with bonfires, cocoa, short plays and performances, and campfire songs.³⁷¹ One particularly fitting anecdote from 1935 told of how “some of the girls rowed over to Lakeview but a storm came up & and they couldn't get back so Captain had to go for them in her car.”³⁷² As the girls hiked, swam, and rowed around the area of White Sands, the location became one of importance to Edmonton-area Guiding.

³⁶⁷ Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 175-215; Kristine Alexander, *Guiding Modern Girls: Girlhood, Empire and Internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 109-139.

³⁶⁸ Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 117-144.

³⁶⁹ “Girl Guides Log Book: Begin on Wednesday, May 27 1925,” 187, 1925- 1936, Girl Guides of Canada – Edmonton Area Archives Collection, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

³⁷⁰ “Girl Guides Log Book: Begin on Wednesday, May 27 1925,” 185.

³⁷¹ “Girl Guides Log Book: Begin on Wednesday, May 27 1925,” 184.

³⁷² “Girl Guides Log Book: Begin on Wednesday, May 27 1925,” 187.

The 1935 camp was the first camp that the particular unit took part in at Cooking Lake, but it was not the last. The following year, District camp was held again at White Sands Beach, from late July into early August.³⁷³ The 1936 District camp was not archived as thoroughly as the 1935 camp, however campers appear to have enjoyed some of the same activities, as well as a masquerade and some sporting competitions. The week before this District camp, a training camp for older girls had been held at the same location, meaning that of the eighty girls who attended District camp, some spent two weeks at the White Sands Guiding camp.³⁷⁴ Through the 1935 camp, Girl Guides of Edmonton became familiar with the area of Cooking Lake, bringing the lake into the world of Canadian Girl Guides.

During the 1933-34 Guiding season, the Alberta Commissioner of Guiding reported that interest in summer camps had grown. According to the Commissioner, this increase did more than just raise the number of girls who hiked or cooked on the beach, the Commissioner also asserted that “camping brings Guides and Guides together as nothing else does and develops an understanding between them that is invaluable.”³⁷⁵ This increase in Guiding participation seems to have continued into the later 1930s, as its effects were seen at Edmonton District camp. Between the first and second district camps to be hosted at White Sands beach, the increase in attendance was by more than fifteen girls, sixty-five Guiders having attended in 1935 and eighty girls in 1936. While the Commissioner’s statement spoke to the value of comradery and shared experience among

³⁷³ “Girl Guides Log Book: Begin on Wednesday, May 27 1925,” 207.

³⁷⁴ “Girl Guides Log Book: Begin on Wednesday, May 27 1925,” 208.

³⁷⁵ “Provincial Commissioner’s Report, 1933-34” in *Alberta Council Annual Reports: 1931-41*, 18, D2020.99.18.0001, Girl Guides of Canada – Alberta Provincial Archives Collection, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

girls in shaping community, camping also entails an experience within a natural area. Through Guide camp, girls were able to socialize outside of their normal social setting and participate in shared experiences within a safe, yet adventurous, location. These nature-based activities promoted a Guiding experience of ‘natural spirituality’ and played into beliefs training in imperial and Christian activity.³⁷⁶ White Sands Beach was the site of shared Edmonton Guiding experience and community development for many years. This was indicative of active outdoor life among girls and women during this period; as well, during their hikes and rowing excursions the girls were able to expand the area of their camp dwelling to encompass more of the region.

Subsequently, the 10th Edmonton Rangers held a Division campsite at Cooking Lake, which they visited during the 1938-39 Guiding season, again in 1940, and in the 1941-42 season.³⁷⁷ The *Alberta Council Annual Reports: 1931-41* also indicate that Northern Alberta Guides held a camp at South Cooking Lake in the summer of 1937, and eight other camping excursions by various Edmonton Guiding groups were held at South Cooking Lake throughout the 1937-38 Guiding season.³⁷⁸ By 1937, the site at Cooking Lake was commonly known as ‘South Edmonton Campsite’, and then by 1939 it was officially listed as the ‘Division Campsite’ within annual reports.³⁷⁹ Finally, in a 1943

³⁷⁶ Alexander, *Guiding Modern Girls*, 115-122.

³⁷⁷ “10th E’ton Rangers 1940 Annual Report,” Girl Guides of Canada – Edmonton Area Archives Collection, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

³⁷⁸ “Province of Alberta: Report of Provincial Camp Advisor 1937” in *Alberta Council Annual Reports: 1931-41*, 37, D2020.99.18.0001, Girl Guides of Canada – Alberta Provincial Archives Collection, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

³⁷⁹ “Province of Alberta: Report of Provincial Camp Advisor 1938” in *Alberta Council Annual Reports: 1931-41*, 111, D2020.99.18.0001; Alberta Council, *I Promise... A History of Girl Guides in Alberta* (Edmonton, Alta: Girl Guides of Canada, Alberta Council, 1984), 253, Girl Guides of Canada – Alberta Provincial Archives Collection, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

report, a hut at the Division site is mentioned as having been built during the previous two years, however Guide camping in Alberta had decreased because of the onset of the Second World War.³⁸⁰ In contrast to the decline of sail boating, Guiding at Cooking Lake has remained a part of the landscape, with camps occurring at Birch Bay Ranch on the wooded western shore, into the twenty-first century.³⁸¹

The camps of the 101st Fusiliers and the Girl Guides demonstrate how social groups dwelled within the landscape. The 101st Fusiliers made Military Point a base for their training and recreation for a single weekend in 1910, but their fleeting presence remains tied to the location through toponymy reiterated in popular memory long after the camp was gone. The 101st Fusilier's training camp was an isolated experience at that location and was not marked by any permanent infrastructure, yet it made a lasting impact upon the landscape of Cooking Lake. Into the twenty-first century, the point on which the Fusiliers camped is known officially as Military Point. This adherence to imperialistic camp history overwrote a pre-existing toponymy of Indigenous dwelling and place making, instead forming this point near North Cooking Lake as a place that explicitly acknowledges and reinforces a military camp history. More and separate study is needed to appreciate the Indigenous landscapes and toponymy.

Conversely, the Girl Guides were repeated visitors to their site at White Sands Beach; as well, they appear to have built structures that fulfilled some desire to mark their place and activities at White Sands. The recreation and activities of the Girl Guides did

³⁸⁰ "Camping in Alberta 1943," in *Alberta Council Annual Reports: 1941-45*, D2020.99.18.0002, Girl Guides of Canada – Alberta Provincial Archives Collection, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

³⁸¹ Birch Bay Ranch having opened as a children's summer camp in 1967 with connections to The Christian Camp & Conference association, *Birch Bay Ranch*, 2014-2020, <https://www.birchbayranch.com>.

not impact the cultural and popular memory of White Sands in the same manner as the Fusiliers, however their recreation was more consistent and recurring than that of the Fusiliers. The Girl Guides were able to solidify their place through recurring visitation and, later, a contribution to the built environment. As illustrated by Heidegger and Ingold, the built environment is not dwelling in itself, rather it is a product of the dwelling process that Girl Guide culture continued intergenerationally for decades.

The relative impermanence of the 101st Fusiliers and Girl Guide camps is indicative of the ways in which recreation may become built into a landscape without having a large impact on the built environment of that landscape. However, through the building of a hut at White Sands, the Girl Guides may have strengthened the experience of dwelling for future Guides because a permanent structure can be a marker on the landscape to indicate past dwelling, which may then encourage successive dwelling. Other camps did have a more substantial impact on the lake's built environment. Both the YMCA and the YWCA hosted camps at Cooking Lake as gendered institutional means of health, recreation, and social engagement in the outdoors. These organizations interacted with that landscapes in different ways but encouraged similar outlooks on dwelling within the lake landscape for women and for men respectively.

The YWCA contributed to the built environment of the lake and encouraged lake experiences through their infrastructure. In the early 1910s, the organization erected a 'log cabin' at Military Point, which was considered to be a pleasant and convenient location as it was "very prettily situated on a knoll on the lake side—about ten minutes walk west of the station. Boating and bathing were the amusements part of the time, while relaxing on the shaded verandah enjoying the lake breezes was a favorite

pastime.”³⁸² This cabin was not only used by YWCA members, they rented it out to various groups, such as the Business Women’s Club, and advertised the space within Edmonton newspapers.³⁸³ By renting out this property and its amenities—which included a row boat and swimming area—the YWCA facilitated visitation to the lake as well as a sense of community spirit and active living among women.³⁸⁴ Linkages between business women and support for the YWCA also suggest an influence of women’s organization networks that were mutually supportive.³⁸⁵

The YMCA may have had a cottage at Cooking Lake—only one reference to such a building was found—however, land owned by the organization at Oban Beach was used to provide camping opportunities for boy members and other associated groups.³⁸⁶ The camp hosted by the YMCA at Cooking Lake occurred in 1915, with boys paying their way to attend this camp that promised “an infinite amount of good [to be] received” from attendance.³⁸⁷ Indeed, the camp was advertised as able to make the boys into “new lads,” with particular reference to the “hundreds of needy, and physically run down boys in the city,” in need of recreation and a camp in the woods.³⁸⁸ City children, particularly boys, had been the focus of many different social gospel initiatives.³⁸⁹ This boys’ camp was

³⁸² “Over the Tea Cups,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 Jul 1916, 2, AR00203, PPP.

³⁸³ “Over the Tea Cups,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 Jul 1916, 2, PPP; and “Plan to spend your holidays at Y.W.C.A/ Summer Cottage North Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 7 July 1916, 7, AD0070_10, PPP.

³⁸⁴ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 July 1916, 5, AR00510, PPP.

³⁸⁵ Diana Pedersen, “‘Building Today for the Womanhood of Tomorrow’: Businessmen, Boosters, and the YWCA, 1890-1930,” *Urban History Review /Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 15, no. 3 (1987): 227–229.

³⁸⁶ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 12 September 1916, 2, AR00215, PPP.

³⁸⁷ “Y.M.C.A. Boys’ Camp at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 June 1915, 11, AR01105, PPP.

³⁸⁸ “Y.M.C.A. Boys’ Camp at Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 June 1915, 11, PPP.

³⁸⁹ PearlAnn Reichwein, and Baldwin Reichwein, “Robert B. Chadwick’s ‘Gospel of Citizenship’: Alberta’s First Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children,” *Canadian Social Work Journal*, 18,

popular as a location for swimming, boating, and its proximity to the Cooking Lake railway station.³⁹⁰ By 1917 a two-week camp remained under the direction of the YMCA but was opened up “to all boys of the city who are over twelve years of age and physically fit enjoy an outing.”³⁹¹ In 1918, the YMCA did not have its regular camp, instead the grounds and equipment were loaned to the girls groups and the boys were able to attend weekend camps instead of an extended stays at the site.³⁹² Of particular interest was the lack of fee for attendance at the 1918 boys’ camp; instead the boys had to pay for only their GTP transportation fee and the boat trip to the camp site. As well, the boys had to bring their own “grub” and blankets.³⁹³ The inclusion of non-members into the YMCA camp, which occurred simultaneously with the regional organization’s decline, places the camp within a greater context of fresh air camps for a social benefit.

By establishing camps for particular organizations, the YWCA and the YMCA fostered a similar form of dwelling as that facilitated by the 101st Fusiliers and the Girl Guides. The YWCA and the YMCA opened their cabin doors to a wider populace than the other organizations; this act, however, may have had intentions beyond just that of good Christian generosity. Use of both the YWCA cabin and the YMCA campsite by non-members followed a social gospel trend that contributed to the commodification of

no. 1 (Autumn 2016): 69-80; Paulina Retamales, and PearlAnn Reichwein, “‘A Healthy and Contented Band’: The Gyro Club and Playgrounds in Edmonton Urban Reform, 1921-1944,” *Sport History Review*, 45 (2014): 96-122.

³⁹⁰ “Cooking Lake,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 30 June 1917, 5 AR 00506, PPP.

³⁹¹ “News of the Boys’ Clubs of the City Churches,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 30 June 1917, 9, AR00907, PPP.

³⁹² “Y.M.C.A. Boys Not to Hold Regular Camp This Year,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 June 1918, 8, AR 00907, PPP.

³⁹³ “Y.M.C.A. Boys Not to Hold Regular Camp This Year,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 June 1918, 8, PPP; and “Hotel Arrivals,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 June 1918, 2, AR 00215, PPP.

the natural landscape and reinforced the position of these denominational organizations on the landscape.

In 1913, the Edmonton City Mission proposed running a camp for patients of the city's hospitals because such a camp would be beneficial for "those broken down in body and spirit [so they] may be restored to health and vitality by the life-giving breezes of the lake."³⁹⁴ Little information can be found about the actual activities of this camp, however the apparent focus of the camp followed with overt health ideas about the Cooking Lake landscape similar to those expressed by physicians and also early commercial promoters. While likely that the City Mission relied upon pre-existing infrastructure at the lake, the landscape identity promoted by the City Mission followed with that represented by the Girl Guides, and the YMCA and YWCA. The widespread prevalence of tuberculosis and other respiratory ailments were a historical background to similar missions and efforts across Canada. Cooking Lake was an escape from the unhealthy air and living conditions of Edmonton emerging as a modern city with social welfare needs.³⁹⁵ Being in a natural setting was believed to allow children and the infirm to be revived and to gain kinship with those that shared this experience.

In the mid-twentieth century in Ontario, 'fresh air camps' were a recreational opportunity for children that also played a social welfare role for many inner-city children, and the case was similar in Alberta.³⁹⁶ Ontario fresh air camps were positioned

³⁹⁴ "Summer Camp for Unfortunate Convalescents of Hospitals," *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 19 June 1913, 5, AR00507, PPP.

³⁹⁵ Mariana Valverde, "The City as Moral Problem," *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2008), 129-154.

³⁹⁶ Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 103-139.

as a recreational ‘cure’ for city children.³⁹⁷ Edmonton children had been offered a similar experience by the Gyro Club from 1922 until 1950, which promoted fresh air and activity.³⁹⁸ This trend was seen at Cooking Lake as the Hicks family found their family cabin on the advice of a family physician and the Edmonton Mission extended opportunities of healing and recreation to the poor and infirm. “Camps promised the healing power of fresh air,” which then encouraged a specific perception of the natural landscape: as an escape for urbanites that reflected some of the anti-urban ideals of the period.³⁹⁹ The formation of semi-permanent and permanent membership-based camps along the banks of Cooking Lake placed the summer recreation within a greater context of Canadians making use of the non-urban landscape to remedy perceived and real weaknesses, as well as inequities. Additionally, many camps were available to children and young adults, which expanded the demographic of visitors to the lake. Camps expanded opportunities to visit Cooking Lake to those who may not have previously been able to do so and encouraged purposeful dwelling wherein campers reaped proposed benefits of the natural landscape.

3.5 Conclusion

The primary purpose of travel to Cooking Lake between 1894 and 1938 was leisure and recreation. Those who travelled to the lake as tourists looked for particular experiences through which they could connect with the recreation potential of the

³⁹⁷ Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 109.

³⁹⁸ Paulina Retamales, *Gyro Club Playgrounds and Children’s Recreation in Edmonton, Alberta: Outdoor Play, Civic Life, and Urban Reform, 1922-1950*, MA Thesis (University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta, 2013), 14-16.

³⁹⁹ Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 29.

landscape. By reaching for these experiences and engaging with recreation and leisure offerings, visitors participated in the formation of Cooking Lake as a leisure landscape. Leisure-based communities at Cooking Lake held multifaceted experiences of dwelling. Dwelling was developed through the gathering of the Cooking Lake region to tourists' places of origin and a mentality that approached the landscape for a specific purpose, leisure.

Dwelling at Cooking Lake reflected the leisure desires of urban Edmonton regions and reinforced the ideologies of visitors from the city. Instead of removing visitors from city life, travel expanded the world of urban society to encompass Cooking Lake, shaping Cooking Lake leisure communities into those that celebrated the dominant ideals and practices of leisure in Alberta.⁴⁰⁰ As campers and cottagers made their places on the lake shore, individuals found their position on and with the land. When clubs and camps developed, so too did the lake's cultural insiders—hunters, sailors, cottagers, and campers of all descriptions. Through the relationships between the lake and the city, lakeshore resorts, and the people coming to the woods and water, Cooking Lake was formed as a social world and recreational dwelling as it was known from 1894 to 1938.⁴⁰¹

In the twenty-first century, this former landscape identity is known only through retrospection and reflection, as the landscape has been reconstructed and re-imagined by those who visit it, underscoring as Ingold writes that: "Environments are never complete but are continually under construction."⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Wetherell and Kmet, *Useful Pleasures*, 40.

⁴⁰¹ Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 21-22.

⁴⁰² Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, 172.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Summer cottage and white-walled tent,
 Wide verandahs and boat house low—
 Idle days that were pleasantly spent—
 They will soon be lost in the long ago.
 But over all when the years have flown
 And sights we have seen that are rich and grand,
 Our hearts will cherish a scene well known
 Cooking lake and the long white sand.⁴⁰³

4.0 Introduction

This thesis explores the expansion of tourism and its related recreation and leisure at Cooking Lake between 1894 and 1938. The purpose of this research was to shed light on a history that has fallen out of the broader popular memory. I aimed to understand how and why Cooking Lake developed as the favourite lakeshore destination for Edmonton area tourists at the turn of the twentieth century during the early settlement period to the Second World War. I also addressed the ways in which visitors became familiar with the lake landscape through dwelling and regional tourism, which held a mutually reinforcing relationship.

As discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, the commodification of Cooking Lake as a tourism and recreation landscape paired with personal connections to the landscape that visitors experienced led to Cooking Lake fulfilling the tourism and recreation desires of the urban Edmonton populace. First, Cooking Lake tourism was a product of landscape commodification and was identified as an ideal landscape for

⁴⁰³ Anderson, "White Sand," 27.

particular tourist outcomes. Landscape commodification emerged with the rise of popular tourism and culture at the lake. Images of the landscape, tourism ventures, and packaged excursions formed a basis for a landscape identity that, for visitors, was tied directly to summer tourism outcomes. Second, tourism provided a social and personal experience of leisure and recreation at the lake that allowed for connection with the landscape. Visitors were given access to the landscape in ways that encouraged dwelling and seasonal occupation. Subdivisions and cottages created a *home* for visitors, which allowed for the development of summer communities and tourism. Clubs encouraged visitation through membership and inclusion, while camps allowed for a similar experience but broadened the social draw and redefined the landscape for visitors. Through social and personal interactions with the landscape visitors were able to cultivate connections with the lake that allowed for feelings of belonging and meaningful dwelling.

Between 1894 and 1938, Cooking Lake was publicly perceived as a destination that reflected and fulfilled the tourism desires of urban visitors from Edmonton. Tourism experiences cultivated a seasonal routine wherein visitors engaged with the landscape through personal experience, shaped by the ideals of a commodified experience. The analyses of Chapters Two and Three address the key questions of this thesis: Why did people ‘go to the lake’ during the past century? What did they do at the lake? Who were the people that made up the crowds of visitors? And, what relationships were formed between these people and the land? The conclusions below suggest and integrate new understandings in response to these questions.

4.1 The Draw of Cooking Lake

Recreation and tourism to Cooking Lake underwent changes in its experiential offerings, and these changes then reflected transitions in the modern leisure experiences promised to visitors. The Koney Island Sporting Co. offered the first excursions to Cooking Lake, which relied upon the natural assets of the lake landscape in the late nineteenth century settlement era. Into the early twentieth century, Cooking Lake began to gain popularity, and the subdivision of lakeshore properties catalyzed to accommodate cottagers and visitor communities. While camps still lined the beaches and shores, cottages began to form the built environment. After the arrival of the GTP trainline to North Cooking Lake in 1909, cottaging increased and so did marketed excursions from the city. Tourists were taken to the lake on “camper’s special” excursion trains that allowed them to stay for a weekend of boating, camping, dancing, and swimming. In 1930, Lakeview Pavilion was a part of the Cooking Lake summer scene. This resort was the ultimate destination for Cooking Lake visitors as it was intended to fulfill every aspect of the touristic experience; with a beach, dances, cottages, ice cream, baseball, and boats, Lakeview was the climax of the nodal tourism industry at the lake.

Popular Cooking Lake tourism was demarcated by seasonality and the rise of holiday and weekend excursions. Excursions for Dominion Day often marked the beginning of the tourism season at Cooking Lake, with Labour Day picnics as the finale. Within this summer season, however, holidays and weekends allowed excursionists to visit the lake for short periods of time. Many individuals who owned or rented cottages had the freedom to visit for weeks or months, but excursions opened visitation to individuals and groups that were only able to stay for short periods.

Once visitors reached the lakeshore, they had a wealth of recreation and leisure opportunities. Initial visitors took part in hunting excursions, but even in the early days parties and dances were hosted by cottage owners. As tourists began to flock to the lake a tourism economy developed wherein dancehalls hosted weekend dances and pleasure crafts transported visitors to locations all across the lake. The activities and amenities offered allowed Cooking Lake to have a multifaceted identity. While the lake and water recreation were a central focus, the communities and social elements of tourism provided an additional draw. In 1930, Lakeview became the cumulative destination, offering most of that which had attracted visitors throughout the previous thirty-six years. Across all of these attractions, a carnivalesque atmosphere developed that challenged the norms of urban Edmonton society and catered to the recreation and leisure desires of the visiting populace.

The transitions that occurred within Cooking Lake's tourism industry are indicative of what drew visitors to the lake and how this draw changed over time. Beginning as a nature-based recreation site, the lake came to offer a complete tourism experience wherein a visitor could find nearly any element of lakeshore amusement that they might desire. For visitors to the lake, the seasonal, weekend, and holiday attraction allowed for the development of a lakeside routine. While parties and social diversions were a common part of popular leisure in Edmonton, the lake allowed for a different world of leisure that reflected recreation, sport, health, and tourism ideals from influential regions across Canada and the world. The result of the focus on amusement was a carnivalesque atmosphere that drew visitors through its place as a rural experience contrasting with daily life in the city.

4.2 *People and Place on the Lakeshore*

At the heart of tourism are its participants. A general face of Cooking Lake tourists is difficult to discern, however individual stories and narratives provided insight into who made up the visitor communities, clubs, and excursionist trains. Through the advertising of Cooking Lake excursions and newspaper narratives, it is clear that the majority of tourists came from Edmonton. Typical to values of the era, one of the draws of the lake was its promise of a healthful retreat from the woes of urban living—an attractive perspective to those who were not otherwise able to spend significant time outside of the city. This association between health and outdoor activity positioned Cooking Lake tourism, recreation, and leisure within a greater context of Canadian ‘culture of nature’ values from the nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁰⁴ Many Cooking Lake visitors hoped to reap the health benefits of lakeshore air and water.

Weekend excursionists and those who spent long periods at the lake were from various social groups. Many of the Edmonton area families who visited the lake belonged to the business and professional classes. Economically, long-term rentals appear to have been exclusive ventures, open to those who were able to spend weeks or months at the lake, or those who stayed at a private cottage periodically throughout the summer months—sometimes travelling back and forth to attend events. Interestingly, this division was not limited to socio-economic class divisions. Weekend “daddy trains” allowed men to work in the city while their wives and children—and sometimes extended families—remained at the lake. Though it would be inaccurate to say that weekdays at Cooking Lake were for female and juvenile visitors, middle-class fathers in the business and

⁴⁰⁴ See: Jasen, *Wild Things*, 76-79 106-112; and Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 27-33, 102-118,

professional classes may have been at the lake in higher numbers on weekends and holidays. These movements contributed to the temporary state of dwelling at the lake and reinforced the routines of recreation and leisure that developed.

Outside of socio-economic and gender divisions, ethnic divisions did not appear to have been significant as the majority of visitors seem to have been of Anglo-Saxon background. However, French-language advertisements of rail fares in at least one Alberta newspaper indicate an excursion market existed for francophones; however, this study was limited to primarily English source material and further exploration of French-language sources, as well as other languages, might expand understandings lakeside leisure in region. Overall, the people who frequented the shores of Cooking Lake were those who had the opportunity to participate in tourism activities, either as occasional or repeat visitors. Cooking Lake's proximity to Edmonton was a consistent source of its popularity since it entered the tourism and recreation bounds of the city. This led to high levels of visitation and the rise of a tourism and recreation industry that further encouraged visitation.

Economic and social divisions influenced visitation and the visitor communities of Cooking Lake; however, interactions between people and the landscape were the essential element that underpinned Cooking Lake's popularity. Club members attending a party at a Cooking Lake cottage or dancers hearing the orchestras at Lakeview may have visited the lake for a multitude of reasons. Although all of these reasons were not dependent upon the natural attributes of the region, the basis of the connection fostered between people and the landscape of Cooking Lake was entirely reliant on the initial draw of the natural area. As obscured as this connection may have become for some over

the period of tourism and recreation development, this connection formed the base upon which all of the development was built.

4.3 Cooking Lake as a Post-Resort Landscape

By the 1970s, drastic changes in the water levels at Cooking Lake changed the face of the lake and, consequently, the recreation that has taken place there. By 1971 the depth of Cooking Lake had decreased nine-feet compared to the lake depth in 1897.⁴⁰⁵ A 1976 Alberta Environment report on these water level changes indicated that the majority of lakes in the Beaver Hills area had undergone significant decreases in water level since at least 1900 and human impact on the landscape was one of the leading causes.⁴⁰⁶ As early as 1976, an Alberta Environment study of outdoor recreation in the Cooking Lake area indicated that “the progressive deterioration of water resources ... almost certainly resulted in long-term negative effects on water-oriented recreation developments and participation levels;” in essence, the report reflected that water recreation had characterized the Cooking Lake area in earlier times and it made recommendations for its reinvigoration for recreation.⁴⁰⁷

The decreased water levels did not diminish the Government of Alberta’s interest in maintaining Cooking Lake as a public recreation area.⁴⁰⁸ Both private and public land use has shaped recreation in the area, and in 1988 a new outdoor recreation concept plan

⁴⁰⁵ Alberta Environment, Planning Division, *Cooking Lake Area Study, vol. II Water Inventory and Demands* (Edmonton: Alberta Environment Planning Division, 1976), 25.

⁴⁰⁶ Alberta Environment, Planning Division, *Cooking Lake Area Study, vol. II*, 35.

⁴⁰⁷ Alberta Environment, Planning Division, *Cooking Lake Area Study, vol. III, Outdoor Recreation* (Edmonton: Alberta Environment Planning Division, 1976), 4.

⁴⁰⁸ Alberta Environment, Planning Division, *Cooking Lake Area Study, vol. III*, 1.

emerged for the South Cooking Lake and Lakeview areas, developed for the Strathcona County Department of Recreation and Parks. The concept plan reported on the planning and design process proposed for development at the South Cooking Lake and Lakeview areas and proposed a fifteen- to twenty-year development process.⁴⁰⁹ The developments proposed included, but were not limited to, construction of trails and a floating deck to connect South Cooking Lake with Lakeview, redevelopment of a natural beach and picnic area, a nine-hole golf course at the shuttered Lakeview site, and a long-term lease campground.⁴¹⁰ This proposed re-invigoration of recreation and sport at South Cooking Lake had been encouraged by various stakeholders, including a sailing club that began at South Cooking Lake with an interest in revitalizing tourism to the region. The report noted that South Cooking Lake was largely made up of permanent residents, though many residences were seasonal. As well, some families had lived in the region for long enough to recall the “festive lakeside resort atmosphere of earlier years.”⁴¹¹ Implicit within this plan was a desire to unite tourism experiences with nature interactions.⁴¹²

Currently, the Cooking Lake area is a site of recreational land uses formalized by the provincial government, in the form of the Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Grazing, Wildlife and Provincial Recreation Area. As has been a part of the deep history of the Cooking Lake landscape, hunting is a popular activity at the recreation area. While settler hunters may use the recreation area for that purpose during hunting season, Indigenous hunters

⁴⁰⁹ Marie Kippen, Kippen and Gibbs Landscape Architects, *South Cooking Lake/Lakeview Outdoor Recreation Concept Plan* (Sherwood Parks: Strathcona County, Recreation and Parks, 1988), i, ARCh002700, Box 2, File 6, Cooking Lake fonds, series 2, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Sherwood Park, Alberta.

⁴¹⁰ Kippen, *South Cooking Lake/Lakeview Outdoor Recreation Concept Plan*, ii.

⁴¹¹ Kippen, *South Cooking Lake/Lakeview Outdoor Recreation Concept Plan*, 4.

⁴¹² Kippen, *South Cooking Lake/Lakeview Outdoor Recreation Concept Plan*, 1-2.

may exercise their right to the land in all seasons. Cooking Lake has remained a location for subsistence living throughout human interactions with the landscape.⁴¹³ One of the explicit goals in the establishment of this recreation area was to foster outdoor recreation.⁴¹⁴ Also, many formal Natural Areas were designated around the Cooking Lake to draw nature-based recreation and local tourism. Clearly, Cooking Lake has a profound history of human use, but the lake's recreational draw has become one of its disappearing qualities.

At the rise of the twentieth century Cooking Lake was the most popular resort destination for Edmonton's populace. The lake drew tens of thousands of visitors from the Edmonton region for vacations throughout the summer months. The peak of this tourism and recreation destination came with the arrival of Lakeview as the ultimate lakeside resort. By the latter half of the twentieth century, however, Cooking Lake no longer drew crowds and instead, as the water levels dropped, resort life vanished from the shores.

4.4 Final Reflections and Conclusions

Edmonton tourism desires redefined the social and cultural interpretation of Cooking Lake from 1894 to 1938 to affirm and encourage experiences of recreation and leisure for visitors by amalgamating Cooking Lake into the recreation world of early Edmonton. The focus of this historical study of Cooking Lake was to analyze a

⁴¹³ Alberta Parks, "Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area, Rules & Safety Tips," *Alberta Parks*, 21 December 2018, <https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/central/cooking-lake-blackfoot-pra/rules-safety-tips/>

⁴¹⁴ Government of Alberta - Alberta Environmental Protection, "Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Grazing, Wildlife and Provincial Recreation Area Management Plan," (Sherwood Park, Alta: Alberta Environmental Protection, Natural Resources Service, 1997), 16.

microhistory of a recreational landscape within its own historical context within a set time period.

The tourism and recreation history at Cooking Lake obscured a pre-existing and ongoing history of Indigenous dwelling and place making. More and separate study is needed to appreciate the Indigenous landscapes and toponymy of the Cooking Lake area. No place is found within a singular temporal context; instead a landscape or place is created through its histories and through social and cultural re-imaginings.⁴¹⁵ This thesis fills a gap in the historiography of lakes in modern recreation and tourism in Alberta prior to 1950, however, I recognize that it is not a complete history of the landscape because landscape meanings are diverse and polyvocal. Sources used in writing this study drew on local newspapers in the English language and a few in French, tourism ephemera, and local histories. Reaching into historic newspapers allowed for engagement with popular interpretations of the landscape for Edmontonians. Local histories, particularly oral histories, complimented newspaper accounts with more personal narratives of interaction with the Cooking Lake landscape.

A history of lakeshore recreation is significant because it tells a story about the meeting of human and non-human agency, but it also acts as a marker of environmental change and aspirations for land ethics in what has become a UNESCO Beaver Hills Biosphere. In addition, studying histories of recreation and its relationship to land ethic may contribute to valuing of landscape and growth of knowledge about some of the impacts of environmental change.

⁴¹⁵ Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, 199; and Palmer, *Being and Dwelling Through Tourism*, 33.

This project contributes to the literature on recreation and tourism history in Alberta, and, in particular, the little-studied topic of lake and beach recreation that animated the shores of earlier times. The face of recreation at Cooking Lake has changed immensely since the late-nineteenth century and the catalysts behind this change are broad, however changes in the physical landscape had perhaps the largest impact. Therefore, by investigating early recreation on the lake and how it was impacted by both changes in human activity and environmental factors, it is possible to highlight how human recreation on landscapes can both increase and decrease connections to the land.

Heritage conservation of cultural landscapes and the environment for humanity is the focus of UNESCO. The environmental protection of the Beaver Hills is currently highlighted, but its cultural landscape is less known as a heritage resource. Moreover, the integration of human and non-human elements at Cooking Lake illustrates a cultural landscape and heritage. Studying the correlation between Cooking Lake and recreation as a cultural movement, or moment, allows an enhanced understanding of the ways in which a landscape formulates the experiences and communities that are formed on, and within, it.

A goal of this study is to understand how changes in the landscape have impacted the ways in which people have interacted with the landscape. Additionally, this study looks to understand how these changes in interaction then may shape individual's relationships with and perception of landscape. In a period of world history that is coming to see the deep and all-encompassing effects of climate change, individuals and societies are facing changes in the way that they perceive the earth and the land that they live on. These massive changes will undoubtedly impact the ways that we, as

communities, understand our place on the land. Therefore, a goal of this research is to contribute to knowledge of past land use and land ethics with a view to enhance public appreciation and care for the environment as a community and home.

Currently Cooking Lake is situated near the centre of the UNESCO Beaver Hills Biosphere. While the lake no longer plays host to crowds of tourists, many of the subdivisions that developed in the early twentieth century are still inhabited and some heritage structures still exist, standing as dwellings. Interpretive signs at South Cooking Lake note the resort history of the region, though little of this history can be discerned from the lakeshore and less is said of the heritage structures around the village of this quiet, yet lively community.

Since starting this thesis, I have had the opportunity to appreciate the landscape of Cooking Lake. On April 4th, 2020 my partner and I drove out to South Cooking Lake with the dog to explore the lakeshore. Though just over a year since the Aldo Leopold lunch at Astotin Lake, the experiences brought similar sentiments of connection to a deep history. We brought snowshoes as the lake was still thick with ice and had a heavy snow covering. As we snowshoed around the wide and reedy shorelines, we watched biplanes take off from the Cooking Lake Airport and saw the peninsula that was once well-known as Koney Island. The cold spring air was brisk, but the sun shone and made our exploration a pleasant adventure. Later, we stopped at the Lakeview's stonework chimney—all that remains standing of the popular pavilion. Though perhaps not the ethic that Leopold had written about, these traces of Cooking Lake's resorts were reminders of

the ways in which people had loved, respected, and admired the land on which they had played.⁴¹⁶

While we did not get to picnic on a sandy beach, as ten thousand visitors had done on a typical Dominion Day in the 1920s, Cooking Lake remains a natural attraction for those who live in the area or stop by for a visit. And it has a new face of nature-based recreation within the UNESCO Beaver Hills Biosphere today that can further introduce the history of place and dwelling to visitors and residents alike.

⁴¹⁶ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 223.

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