

Bluebird Landing

Written by Alvera Pierson and Evelyn Lukkonen for an earlier Township publication, "Landmarks", December, 1971 and provided here thanks to Helen Hendrickson

There are many sites along the shore which have a place in the area's past and in the memories of many residents. The years when BlueBird Landing was a well known spot do not go back very far, yet all that remains today is a dock which is hardly noticed when going along North Shore Drive only a little east of the Shorecrest Motel and Restaurant (Ed: now the former Nokomos Restaurant).

Tim and Evelyn Lukkonen based their commercial fishing and charter boat service at BlueBird Landing for about 15 years. Evelyn Lukkonen wrote the following recently from Arizona.

Deep sea fishing on Lake Superior seems so remote from Arizona, but I will attempt to recall some of the highlights of our operation of BlueBird Landing.

"We started on a "shoestring" in the spring of 1940 with \$1,000 of borrowed money. In the early days we operated the "Anna S." and "Evvy", a Norwegian sailing boat with a set of sails for fun, and a Briggs Stratton motor for trolling. The following year we build "Uno", "Duo" and "Tres", and "Skel" was left with us. We rented it out when the owner didn't plan to use it and our other boats were out.

We added a speedboat "Corona" and the "Lark" built in Larsmont by Rueben Hill. Then as business expanded, we felt the need for larger boats. During the mid-forties, we started to build "BlueBird", which was a major project. With the help of Adolph Reiersen, John Sandberg and Tim, Rueben Hill built the 35 foot boat during the period of about two years.

We launched her late in June with much hope and pride. She served well, furnishing many good times to our parties. Tom Strom, Alvie Anderson, and Merle Norgren, who still live in the community (in 1971) took parties out from the landing.

Business and fishing continued to be good and we felt we could use another large boat, so Tim and John Sandberg went to Marinette and picked up the "Blue Jay" to augment the sport fishing fleet and to use for commercial fishing in the off season. They rode her back up through Lake Michigan and locked through the Sault into Lake Superior and had a rather stormy trip up the lakes.

We were kept rather busy for the next few years as more and more people felt the urge to try for trout. Sport fishing on Lake Superior reached its height in the late forties and early fifties and then became less and less each year. Everyone kept talking about the lamprey that had invaded the Great Lakes on the bottom of ocean-going ships, with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway; but no one had any idea just how soon the lamprey would deplete the trout. Many lake trout caught during this period would either have a lamprey attached or it would have the lamprey scar showing that it had survived the attack of the predator.

A few "diehards" still kept trying for the non-existent trout, but for the most part, the fishing boats languished along the shore for want of clients. Those were difficult years for the fishermen and it is

gratifying to know that the Coho Salmon being planted in the lakes are taking hold and sports fishermen are again trying for trout on the big lake”.

The diner, “The Flagship”, was a streetcar purchased from the City of Duluth in the early forties. A galley was added to one end, and a counter and booths for seating 16 were installed. Blue and white carried out the nautical theme and Arlene Strom (Sandberg then) painted sailboats on the menus and on the curtains. Ev’s delicious home-made pies brought “The Flagship” much publicity. Tourists from as far as New York are known to have stopped in on the recommendation of their friends.

The Landing was the hub of summer activity for many years and many area teenagers worked there as waitresses, cooks, boat boys and boat drivers.

Now all that is left of BlueBird Landing beside memories, is the sturdy dock which has withstood many years of pounding storms. It too is showing signs of deterioration and if not repaired soon, will be lost to the relentless northeasters. If that happens, the North Shore will lose the only dock for small craft between Duluth and Knife River; and BlueBird Landing will only be a beach again (Ed: the dock has deteriorated but McQuade Harbor now exists!).