

The Iron River Reporter
February 17, 1966
Iron County

Hagerman Development Traced Back To Indians

By Jack Hill

There is something very alluring about large bodies of water to most people. Proof of this is the unusually rapid development of our lakeshore lands into summer and year-round homes during the last forty years when they became available. Prior to this time, these lands were mainly parts of our virgin forests, held by lumber companies and timber speculators, and were thus unobtainable.

Many factors that were practically unheard of at the turn of the century have, of course, aided or contributed toward this movement. Good roads, fast transportation, services like electricity, telephones, mail delivery and even water in some areas, have all played a part.

One of these lakes thus favored is Hagerman lake which lies some eight miles southwest of Iron River. This body of water is believed to have been named in honor of John J. Hagerman, and early mining executive of the lower Menominee Range who had considerable land holdings in the surrounding areas. This lake is spring-fed, is of moderate depth with maximum sounding of fifty-five feet near its east central part, and covers 551 acres.

The first brief notes on the history of the lake were recorded by the Land Office Surveyors William A. Burt and his son, John, who surveyed most of the Town and Range lines in the Upper Peninsula. Their field notes of the area reveal that William Burt terminated his survey of the Town line for the year when it intersected the east shore of the lake on September 12, 1846, and the survey was carried forward from the west shore of the lake by John Burt on June 2, 1847

Four years later in 1851 came Deputy Surveyor Martin M. Hall who subdivided the Towns into Sections. From the maps of these surveyors, it appears that Indian activity was rather extensive during this period, for many of their trails, brush fences, a sugar-making camp, a canoe ferry over the lake, etc. are recorded. Interesting points on the shore of the lake are the century-old meander marks scribed into a pine tree on the extreme north shore of the lake by surveyor Hall.

The earliest land transaction in the area was the purchase from the government of all the lands along the west shores of the lake by John Mulvey in 1873. These lands were subsequently sold, the north half going into the possession of the P. C. Fuller Company and the southern half to the G. Baldwin Estate. No further land sales were made by the government until the year 1880, when all the lands on the north end of the lake were purchased by James Mix. Mr. Mix increased these holdings in 1891 with the purchase of most of the lands along the east and south shores. All of the Mix lands gradually came under the control of William J. Blair of Iron River, after the year 1898.

The first settler on the lake was Emil Benson who built a small cabin on the main island about the year 1905. Upon the death of Mr. Benson, this tract of eight and three-tenths acres fell to the heirs who secured possession under a homestead patent of August 13, 1918.

The first actual homesite development was begun in the year 1919 when Charles Lindstrom of Stambaugh purchased and platted the G. Baldwin Estate lands on the southwest quarter of the lake. Mr. Lindstrom built the first summer home on what later became familiarly known as Covenant Point. The second home on this plat was built by Walter Dowsey of Iron River. Access to this area was gained over a rutted trail from the southwest corner at this time.

In the year 1921, William J. Blair also began a subdivision of his lands for homesites along the along the southeast shores of the lake. The road leading from M-73 into this plat was constructed in 1922, and in December of that year, Blair sold 800 feet of lake frontage to Stambaugh Township for park purposes, for the sum of \$1,500. Two years later, an additional thirty acres were purchased to the south of the

park. Due to a lack of maintenance funds, the park lands were later given to the County Park Commission and were subsequently released by this authority to its present owners, the United States Forest Service.

The next to enter the field was the J. W. Wells Lumber Company of Menominee, which began the purchase of the hardwood stands over a wide area surrounding the lake, about the year 1920. This culminated in the establishment of a large headquarters logging camp on the northwest of the lake in the year 1922. The company built their own railroad for the removal of the logs, with one branch extending southeast from the head of the lake to the Brule River and into Wisconsin, and the other branch struck west to Brule Lake and thence north into the Lake 17 area. The main line took a general northeasterly course from the camp to a railroad spur on the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad near Hazel.

This company also divided some of their lakeshore lands into residential lots and following their sale, the plat was officially recorded in 1927. Most of the beautiful hardwood stands encircling the lake were logged during this decade by this company. Upon the destruction of a company mill in Menominee and faced with the economic depression after 1929, the company ceased operations. In 1933 the camps were leased by the State for a relief haven for transient unemployed woodsmen and others until the year 1942 when the inmates were moved to a vacated Civilian Conservation Corp camp near Gibbs City.

Beginning about the year 1937, the Wells Lumber Company began disposing of their lands and remaining timber holdings with some of them, including the campsite lands. Going into the possession of the Lindahl Company of Iron River. The latter company also platted their lands along the lake in 1943, thus making the entire west shore available to homeseekers.

In the intervening years, Blair had extended his platting to the north along the east side of the lake until they reached the boundary of Lot 6 which was formerly owned by W. J. Crane. By the year 1947, Guy M. Cox of Iron River had secured possession and platted this tract to complete the present extension of homesites on the east side of the lake.

The first homeowners on the lake were constantly annoyed by the fluctuations of the lake level. This condition appears to have prevailed since the turn of the century when the Menominee River Lumber Company tapped the waters to flush their pine logs down the Brule River during low water years. Mr. Benson had tried to stabilize the levels with some success in 1914 by the construction of a small log dam. The matter was, however, brought to the attention of the County Board about the year 1944 when a permanent lake level was established at the present concrete dam constructed at the outlet. By the time of the hard years of the thirties, most of the area lands had been denuded of their timber value and thousands of acres reverted to the state for nonpayment of taxes. Thus, all the lake with the exception of Lot 2, Section 2, came into the possession of the State and were subsequently transferred through exchange to the U. S. Forest Service. Lot 2 of Section 2 went into private ownership and the east half thereof was platted for homes to Matt Today of Caspian, about the year 1955.

The lake now has approximately 160 summer and permanent homes along its shores and has become one of the favorite recreation areas of the district.