

A home away from home at Grand Beach, Manitoba

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Abstract: From its inception, Grand Beach, Manitoba, quickly became one of Western Canada's foremost recreational, cottage resort localities and it has regained that position despite many years of neglect and abuse. Dominion government surveyors were the first to recognize the recreational possibilities of the beach, but this potential was not realized until the Canadian Northern Railway extended a line up the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg. Under a leasing arrangement with the provincial government, the railway company developed Grand Beach peninsula into an extremely popular lakeside resort and camping area, which during its heyday, was visited by countless thousands of excursionists and longer-term vacationers. This paper focuses on the development of the 'Campsite', an area initially created for temporary summer campers, but which was soon converted to leasehold lots available for long-term cottage development. Although the area is now part of Grand Beach Provincial Park, the cottages built in the old campground still remain. However, they are now being progressively upgraded, converted into more permanent fixtures, and many adapted for year-round use. Surveys of cottagers identify some interesting ownership patterns and reveal the strength of attachment that many of the predominantly urban residents have for their cottages or second homes, as they are commonly referred to in the academic literature.

Introduction

Although it is best known as a popular day resort area, Grand Beach is also one of Manitoba's more important areas of cottage development, having been developed nearly a century ago during the First World War. The cottages at Grand Beach were a significant factor in the creation of the province's first series of Provincial Parks, dating back to 1961 (Lehr 2001). Some of the story of Grand Beach has already been told (Lemoine and Barnfather 1978; Lehr, Selwood and Badiuk 1991): Grand Beach resort was established by the Canadian Northern Railway to complement

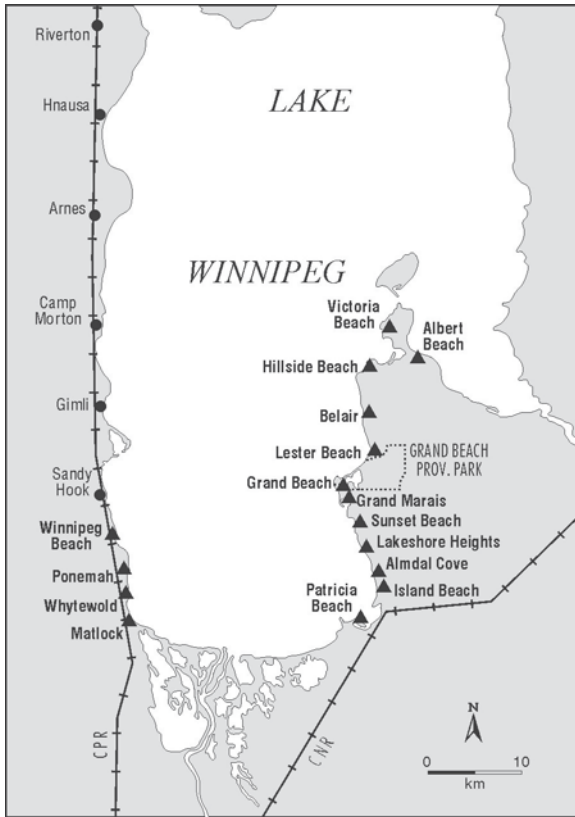


Figure 1: Southern Lake Winnipeg Resorts.

its interests at the relatively exclusive Victoria Beach some 25 kilometres to the north (Selwood, Badiuk and Lehr 1983) and to compete with Winnipeg Beach, the Canadian Pacific Railway's popular resort on the west side of Lake Winnipeg. Grand Beach thus became one of a number of similar purpose-built cottage communities ringing the southern end of the lake, serving a population drawn largely from metropolitan Winnipeg located some 90 kilometres to the south (Figure 1) (Lehr, Selwood and Badiuk 1991). In many ways, Grand Beach is typical of the many cottage communities described in the growing literature on second homes in Canadian cottage country (Wolfe 1951; Lehr, Selwood and Goatcher 1984; Jaakson 1986; Stadel and Selwood 1996; Halseth 1998). There are also many parallels that can be drawn from the international literature (Coppock

1977; Selwood, Curry and Koczberski 1995; Galent and Tewdwr-Jones 2000).

This paper has two primary objectives. The first is to examine the history of Grand Beach, filling in hitherto missing details of how its distinctive cottage landscape has emerged. The second objective is to capture the strong sense of attachment, or sense of place, cottagers have developed for their community through the more relaxed nature of cottage life and through reinforcement of kinship and friendship ties. Previous work (Boholm 1983; Selwood, Curry and Koczberski 1995; Russell 2000) has indicated that cottagers can develop extremely strong ties with their vacation property that are reflected in length of residence, kinship ties, and potential conversion of the vacation home into the principal residence. As Jaakson (1986, 371) states: "There is a culture centred on the cottage. The cottage has a deep, almost mystical meaning to many Canadians". However, these aspects of cottage life are relatively overlooked topics in the academic literature on second homes. Archival research into newspapers and corporate records, supplemented by informal interviews with long-term cottage residents, reveals much of the development history; whereas the informal interviews and a structured survey of the cottagers at Grand Beach investigates their feelings about life at the cottage and the importance of the second home in fostering kinship ties.

Beginnings

As soon as it became accessible by rail, Grand Beach, at the northernmost end of Grand Marais (Figure 2), quickly developed into one of the earliest and most popular summer vacation spots in Manitoba. (Stadel and Selwood 1996). Grand Marais (Big Marsh) was named by La Verendrye in 1783 (Lemoine and Barnfather 1978) and Mills (1997) indicates that the critical areas of the wooded headland in the eastern half of Section 24, Township 18 Range 6E, now generally known as Grand Beach, were homesteaded at the beginning of the twentieth century, with one Gilbert Dennett receiving his patent for the southern portion in 1901 and Charles Henry Powell obtaining his patent for the northern portion in 1911. By 1909, dominion government surveyors had targeted the sandy beach enclosing the lagoon in Section 19 to the east of the headlands as a potential vacation spot and they subdivided the area into villa lots. However, a plan of subdivision was never registered at the Provincial Land Titles Office. Just how the area came to the attention of William Mackenzie and Donald Mann, principal owners of the Canadian Northern Railway, is not known, but in 1912, the government withdrew its plan for the beach in

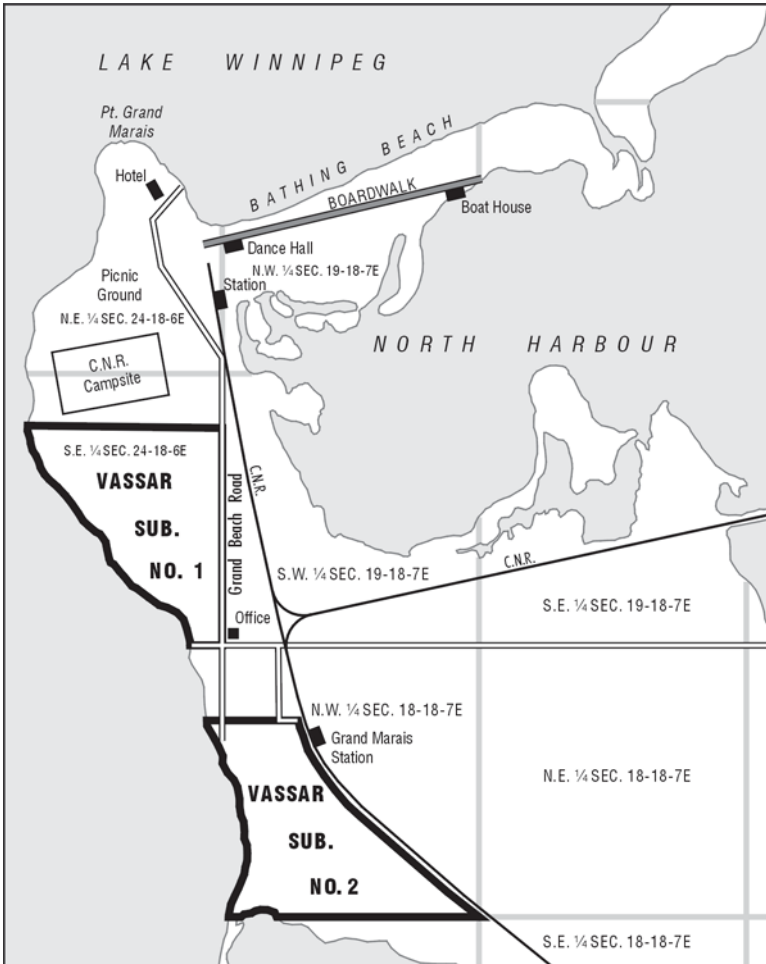


Figure 2: J. Vassar's subdivisions at Grand Marais.

response to the railway company's proposal to develop the area as a major summer resort. Through their company, Mackenzie, Mann & Co., the partners secured control over all of the property in the area, leasing the land in the more immediate vicinity of the fine, sandy shoreline at Grand Beach from the government (Mackenzie, Mann & Co. 1915; Lynch, 1919).

Even before its line from Winnipeg to Grand Beach officially opened on 17 June 1916, the Canadian Northern Railway began to hold picnics there for its employees (*Manitoba Free Press* 17 June 1916; Lemoine and

Barnfather 1978) and during the height of the first official operating season, excursion trains were already taking up to 4,000 people a day up to the beach. Since there was no built accommodation, the railway had to return them to Winnipeg on the same day, except for the few diehards who camped in the sand dunes. However, shortly thereafter, the company installed a couple of sleeping cars, with berths available at \$1.00 per night, along with a dining car supplying food for 50 cents a meal. A tenting area was also prepared for campers and they were informed that: "Pending the completion of plotting the land, campers will be allowed to pitch their tents free of charge on sites of their own choosing" (*Manitoba Free Press* 19 June 1916, 4).

These temporary arrangements provided the railway company's executives with time to clarify the land ownership situation and to prepare development plans for the property. The company had been involved in a complex series of dealings in gaining control of their landholdings. Their interests in the land had been accumulated over a period of years and, by 1918, extended as far south as Balsam Bay, some four miles to the south of Grand Beach. In July 1916, R.G. Mackenzie, William Mackenzie's son, General Manager of the Canadian Northern Railway, who had been delegated the responsibility for developing the area, visited the site with the company's architect, Charles W. Leavitt of New York. In instructing his architect, Mackenzie argued that the land sales be restricted to a subdivision in the neighbourhood of Balsam Bay, where there was a fine, sandy beach. The rocky sections were to be cleared of stones and these used to build cottages of quality. According to Leavitt, Mackenzie's position was that the headland at Grand Beach should not be sold. Instead, his vision was:

For a huge picnic ground with a hotel on the northmost point and perhaps a row of cottages along the western part of the land overlooking Lake Winnipeg. He then wished to carry out our scheme for a boardwalk, fakir shows, bathing pavilions, baseball, boating, etc., etc., on the sand beach running out to the east from the land which is now owned by the railroad and he is endeavoring to make a lease of this land from the Government. (Leavitt 1916a)

After going over the ground with Mackenzie, Leavitt was assigned to draft up a plan of the proposed layout for the area, produce a concept plan for the hotel and its associated cottages, and provide detailed plans for the boardwalk, which Mackenzie saw as the top priority. Leavitt (1916b) sent his plans to R.J. Mackenzie in December 1916. By mid-1917, the company had secured its lease with the government, had assumed control

over all the lands at Grand Beach, and was in possession of the transfer documents (Mitchell 1921).

The development plans proceeded, although complications arose over issues of land ownership and control, the complexities of which are unclear. The parent company retained its controlling interest. However, the southern portion of the landholding had been acquired partly in R. J. Mackenzie's name, partly in the name of the Canadian Northern Railway and partly by the Grand Marais Development Company, controlled by J. S. Vassar, a realtor who appears to have acted on behalf of the railway company (Mills 1997; Coyle 1917; Mackenzie 1917). The southern portions of the property, identified as Grand Marais, were subdivided and developed by the Grand Beach and Balsam Bay Summer Resorts Limited, and marketed as the Vassar Properties, with J.S. Vassar as the principal agent (Figure 2) (Vassar 1922). These subdivisions were laid out in conventional suburban form, containing larger, freehold lots, unlike the adjacent significantly smaller, leasehold lots designed for tenting that were laid out on the Grand Beach promontory by the Canadian Northern Railway. The latter subdivision was commonly referred to as the Campsite, denoting its original purpose (Figure 2). There were brief delays in the expansion program caused by the bankruptcy of the Canadian Northern Railway, its takeover by the Canadian government in 1916 and the transfer of its properties to the Canadian National Railway (CNR) in 1918 (Fleming 1991). Some controversy also arose between the partners over building agreements. For a short while, the campground improvements were jeopardized because Vassar insisted that his arrangement with the Canadian Northern Railway had been that no campsites would be leased once the Vassar property had been readied for market. In return, he had committed to selling lots only for residential and not commercial purposes (Warren 1920). Vassar's objections were obviously over-ruled and the Campsite stayed.

Grand Beach developed rapidly during 1918, beginning with the season's opening on Arbor Day (4 May). The beachfront was improved, with bath houses provided for rental. The railway company also built a modest "sleeping house" and made significant improvements to the Campsite. Special trains to the lake were dubbed "Greater Production" trains in expectation of "hundreds of campers [fixing] up the gardens and potato patches at their summer cottages" (*Winnipeg Tribune* 4 May 1918, 8). Already, by 1918, many of the campers were holding on to lots that they had leased in the previous year. By that time, all the camping sites had been pegged with white markers, with avenues and blocks signposted. Electric lighting had also been installed, adding to "comfort of the campers, as well as adding beauty to the scene." (*Manitoba Free Press* 17 June 1918, 4). Walter Pratt, General Superintendent of the Canadian Northern

Railway's Sleeping, Dining and Parlor Car, Hotel and News Department, in reviewing the year's operations at Grand Beach, noted that the excursion traffic had been very profitable, urging that future expenditures be directed towards developing that market. Significantly, he recommended against construction of the grand hotel, arguing that the weekend holidaymakers would not warrant the expenditure. However, he stressed that the campsites had been most popular, with the 300 sites the railway had made available all being rented or sub-let. He therefore suggested that weekenders should "look for their accommodation as guests of the campers, or ... experiment with a few camp cottages which would be partly furnished and which we could rent for periods during the summer months" (Pratt 1918).

The Campsite's immediate acceptance can be inferred from the veritable absence of space devoted to its promotion in Winnipeg's newspapers. A detailed search revealed only a small, single column advertisement in the *Winnipeg Tribune* (31 May 1919, 2) as follows:

GRAND BEACH IDEAL FOR CAMPERS

Beautifully treed, high and dry camp sites may be secured at this popular summer resort on application to Tourist and Travel Bureau, Canadian National Railways, corner Portage and Main. There are a few left at \$5.00 per month, \$10 per season. They are electric lighted. Water supply. Groceries supplied at standard prices. Ice free. Fruit at reasonable prices.

—Advt

Evidently, campers and the tens of thousands of excursionists provided a ready market for the campsites

The Grand Beach Campsite subdivision was located on the promontory west of the railway station and divided into a series of rectangular blocks that eventually contained five hundred or so lots in total (Figure 3). The lots were small, most of them only 35 feet wide by 75 feet (10.686 X 22.872 metres) deep because of their originally intended use as temporary, seasonal tenting sites. However, more permanent structures were quickly erected. An interim structure was the 'Donaldo', basically a tent on a wooden platform, with a timber frame and partial cladding on the sides (Figure 4). Leases were for the summer season, generally running from May to September, although due to the War and civil unrest, the season varied. The Winnipeg General Strike, for example, severely disrupted the opening in 1919 (*Manitoba Free Press* 29 May 1919). Because leases became renewable annually, the temporary structures were soon replaced with more substantial, but still modest timber framed structures, a few of which survive, although they are now fast disappearing (Figure 5).

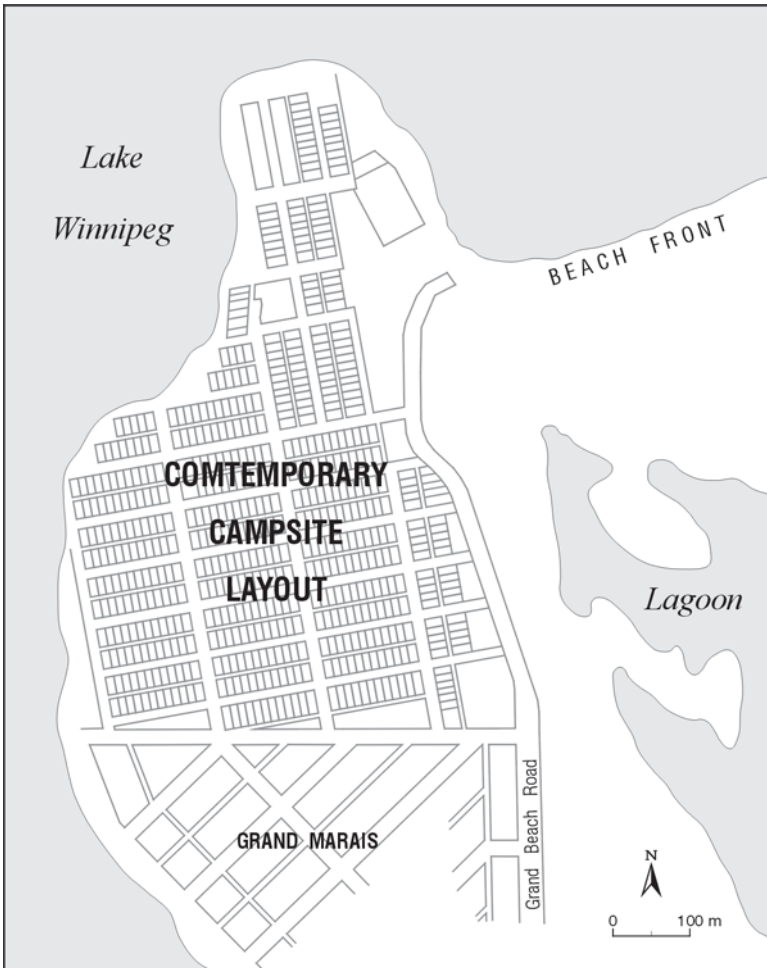


Figure 3: Plan of Grand Beach Resort and 'Campsite'.

Much to the annoyance of CNR officials, in promoting his subdivision at Grand Marais, Vassar featured virtually all of the amenities and facilities that were actually located on the railway's property at Grand Beach. Vassar's promotional material indicates why holidaymakers so readily accepted it:



Figure 4: An early 'Donaldo' at Grand Beach. Source: Public Archives Canada #88035



Figure 5: Older, original cottage on right. Note replacement cottages on left.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE A SITE FOR THE
SUMMER HOME IN THE HIGHEST CLASS SUMMER RESORT
IN WESTERN CANADA

You all know the property, and have no doubt spent many pleasant hours strolling down the shady dells, bathing in the clear lake water, or taking sun baths on the wonderful sand beach.

Here you may partake of every form of summer recreation to your heart's content. There are ample grounds for baseball, tennis, football, etc., the finest bathing beach in Western Canada, excellent boating and sailing facilities in the land-locked lagoon or on the open lake.

The ardent follower of Izaak Walton will find conditions to suit his taste, while the Nimrod will be at home in the duck marshes scattered at intervals along the lake shore, or later in the season, back in the deep woods after the big game. (*Manitoba Free Press* 4 August 1920, 20)

Life at the Campsite

Life at the cottage during the summer months at Grand Beach had a style of its own. The season's opening day at the Campsite was an auspicious occasion:

About 2,000 people were taken to Grand Beach on Victoria Day, where the opening of the camping season was ushered in with a great deal of pioneer activity. Two trains were run from the Union Depot, arriving at Grand Beach at 11 a.m. and 11.20 a.m. respectively. A single train brought the majority of them back to Winnipeg in the evening, the remainder staying over the week-end.

There were few or no ordinary day excursionists. The cool weather and a fringe of pack ice inshore discouraged the beach fans, pure and simple. The woods absorbed the crowds as soon as they left the train. The beach, with its bath-houses, dancing pavilion, lines of beached row-boats and other hall marks of a conventional summer resort was practically deserted. Occasional explosions of fire-crackers and shouts of celebration woke the echoes.

In the shelter of the woods a scene of industry presented itself. Camps of every description, from the folding tent of the Arab, gipsy wigwams and marquees, up to smart frame cottages were undergoing construction, extension, or house-cleaning. A jovial camping spirit, tempered with the earnestness of immigrant home-builders, was everywhere in evidence. Business men in bright, new overalls hammered their thumbs industriously, while daughters, in breeches and sweaters, sawed lumber

and laid refractory flooring. Towards noon a great deal of water was carried – and not a little was spilled: smoke began to rise from fires, both in and out of stoves, and a sniff to the leeward of each camp gave appetizing intelligence of menus in course of preparation. Stores, boldly proclaimed as such by many finger posts and copious placarding, did a brisk trade in forgotten items, and arranged on shelves the nucleus of a summer's stock. (*Manitoba Free Press* 26 May 1924, 4)

This lyrical description effectively sums up the atmosphere at the beginning of summer 1924. Another passage from the *Manitoba Free Press* (2 July 1918, 4) suggests that the more relaxed life at the cottage led to more egalitarian behaviour between the sexes:

It is probable that in camp is the only place where husbands do a fair share of the housework. There they are literally hewers of wood and drawers of water, besides sometimes assisting at truly feminine tasks. One hapless benedict was cheerfully performing that job which is so often a bone of contention, "dish washing." The very vigorous method in which he polished them left no doubt that they would be well done, and from the smiles with which he favored the passers-by it was evident that he harbored no rancour for "wifey," who had left him to his fate.

Life at the Beach was not always idyllic for 'wifey.' One early resident, when recently interviewed, recollected how reluctantly she spent her summers at Grand Beach, wishing she were back in Winnipeg where she had her modern conveniences (Anonymous(a) 2002). While her husband was away, working on the trains as a brakeman, she was marooned at the cottage for the entire summer, looking after her two young children and an infant, still in diapers. She recalled hauling water from the communal well, living with the rain, trying unsuccessfully to light the wood stove, freezing cold, and washing the diapers in frigid water while trying to keep the kids occupied. Her refrigerator was a secondhand store cooler, kept cold by a 25 cent block of ice, which by the time it reached the cooler, after being hauled in on a two-wheel cart over the rough road, 'had shrunk to the size of a chocolate bar.' Roads in the Campsite were then mere footpaths, winding through the bush and around large rocks. Everything for the cottage had to be carried in from the train station. However, there were stores at Grand Marais, just outside the Campsite, which stocked most necessary supplies for an extended stay. During peak season, it was common practice for families to live in the rear of their cottage and rent out the verandah, an arrangement that helped with the expenses, but which

contributed to the intensity of activity in keeping with the communal atmosphere of the resort.

In its heyday, Grand Beach boasted a range of facilities and entertainments that went some way towards meeting the railway company's ambitions of making it the "Western Coney Island" (*Manitoba Free Press*, 14 June 1916, 10) and which also contributed to the variety of activities available to the cottagers. In high season, there were two 'Moonlight Special' excursions from Winnipeg each evening, running trainloads of young couples up to enjoy a flirtatious, romantic, or downright sexual evening at the magnificent dance pavilion or a stroll along the boardwalk into the sand dunes (Broadfoot, 1973). There were many other, more innocent entertainments enjoyed by the tens of thousands who visited Grand Beach each year. Along with a host of other company and institutional picnic excursions, the Caterers' Association, whose members were mostly drawn from the small grocery store owners of Winnipeg, put on the Caterers' Picnic on a Wednesday in July. It was the biggest social event of the season at Grand Beach, a festive occasion when up to eight, twenty-car trainloads of people from Winnipeg took their picnic lunches to the beach to enjoy an afternoon of parades, beauty pageants, races, free drinks and general carousal on the picnic grounds. The celebration wound up at the dance hall, before the excursionists took the train back to town. Of course, these events added zest to the life of the cottagers, many of whom were also active participants. (Anonymous(a) 2002).

However, changing fashions in recreation and regional improvements to the transportation system eventually undermined the popularity of Grand Beach. After the Second World War, growing automobile ownership led people to abandon the railway as their preferred transport mode. Although intrepid travelers had been able to reach Grand Beach via logging roads as early as the 1920s, the going was very rough until the 1950s when road surfaces were improved. By then, highway improvements in other parts of the province had opened up many new resort areas, leaving the beaches of Lake Winnipeg to wallow in declining popularity as the railways allowed their facilities to deteriorate and car owners used their new found mobility to motor further afield. The dance hall at Grand Beach was not rebuilt after it burned down in 1950; the trains finally stopped running in the late 1950s and the lines were torn up in 1963 (Lemoine and Barnfather 1978). Grand Beach also garnered a reputation as a gathering spot for rowdies, notorious for drunkenness, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour, giving the resort a very negative image (*Winnipeg Tribune* 9 July 1955; *Winnipeg Tribune* 4 June 1956). Fortunately for those who remained committed to Grand Beach, its reputation began to be restored after the provincial government took over the area in 1961, converting it into a

Provincial Park and beginning a long term and extensive program of improvements that are still underway (Lehr 2001).

Most of the improvements were designed to conserve and provide for better and wider public enjoyment of the park's natural features, along with the restoration of a broader range of activities than had become available with the resort's decline. The cottagers benefited from many of these general improvements and they were also affected by changes in administration of the Campsite. By and large, services and infrastructure have been upgraded, although at the cost of increased leasing fees. Leaseholds are progressively being extended to twenty-one years and more stringent rules have been introduced pertaining to sanitation, wherein refurbished cottages are now required to have internal plumbing and to be hooked up to septic tanks. Other aspects of development are also more heavily regulated, with cottagers now being subject to provisions of *The Cottagers Handbook*, a 30-page booklet produced by the provincial government (Manitoba Conservation 2001). Many of these regulations stem from the trend towards the cottages being adapted for a longer season, or conversion into year-round, winterized habitation. Given these changes and their reflection in the cottage landscape, it was deemed appropriate to examine the effects they may have had on the cottagers' lifestyles and appreciation of their community.

The Cottager Surveys

During the summer of 2002, the authors undertook a systematic questionnaire survey of cottage owners at the Grand Beach Campsite and interviewed several residents in greater depth. These enquiries were designed to flesh out our understanding of the cottagers' appreciation of their holiday environment and to gain a better sense of their strength of attachment to the community. Space does not permit an exhaustive analysis of the questionnaire survey. However, some of the results can be highlighted. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a comprehensive listing of the leaseholders from the province; therefore survey forms were deposited in the mailbox of every other cottage in the subdivision. Out of the 250 survey forms circulated, almost 70 usable responses, or nearly thirty per cent, were returned. The completed surveys reveal a number of significant observations, especially when taken in conjunction with the extended personal interviews and field inspections. Virtually all of the cottage owners are from Winnipeg, coming from a range of localities within the city (Manitoba Conservation 2003). Despite the modest size and the relatively low prices of cottages in the Campsite, their owners are not

drawn primarily from lower middle income suburbs as one might expect. Moreover, since more than 50 per cent of respondents indicated that they spent virtually all of their time at the cottage during the summer months and almost all spent at least a week there, Grand Beach can be truly understood to be a community of second homes, especially since many of the cottagers used them well into the fall (Table 1).

Table 1: Usage patterns.

	Fall 2001		Winter 2001		Summer 2002	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Someone stays nearly every day	5	7.2	1	1.4	35	50.7
At least one stay of 6 nights or more	7	10.1	1	1.4	26	37.7
Frequent short stays	36	52.2	1	1.4	6	8.7
Occasional use	17	24.6	22	31.9	N/A	N/A
Not used	3	4.3	43	62.3	N/A	N/A
Rented to others	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1.4
No response	1	1.4	1	1.4	1	1.4
Total	69	100.0	69	100.0	69	100

Many leaseholders also claim a longstanding commitment to the Campsite, with over fifty per cent of families having owned their cottage for more than fifteen years (Table 2). Furthermore, some families boast multi-generational attachments to the area. For example, one interviewee told how she first went to Grand Beach on long weekends back in 1932 to stay with a group of young girlfriends (Anonymous(a) 2002). She later introduced her husband to Grand Beach, which they continued to visit periodically during the 1930s and through the Second World War. Those were quiet times, but as life returned to normal in the late 1940s, after a season of renting a cottage there, they bought a place in 1949. In 2001, the original cottage was removed in a ceremonial 'tear down' attended by relatives, including nieces, grandchildren and friends who had enjoyed holidaying at the place through the years. However, the lot is still in the family, now owned by the daughter, who has built a new fully winterized cottage with all modern conveniences. But the old cottage symbolically lives on, because when it was torn down, some of the boards were deliberately used to decorate the daughter's home. Ironically, after living most of her life in Winnipeg's south Fort Rouge and the east side of the lake, she is now back on the other side of the lake in a retirement home, but she still regularly visits the new cottage at Grand Beach, even during the winter.

Table 2: Length of ownership of property.

Period	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1921-1959	5	7.2
1960-1969	8	18.8
1970-1979	8	30.4
1980-1984	7	40.6
1985-1989	10	55.1
1990-1994	12	72.5
1995-1999	14	92.8
2000-2002	5	100.0
Total	69	100.0

Other extended families possess several properties in the area. For example, one family group now has a total of six cottages in Grand Beach and Grand Marais (Figure 6). This five generation ‘dynasty’ of cottagers originated in the 1930s when a CNR patrolman at the beach met and married a young woman working as a cook at the hotel. They did not acquire a cottage at the beach, but a daughter and her husband purchased a cottage in 1950. They later acquired another cottage, eventually knocking that down and building anew in 1960. They still occupy this cottage. One of their children and four of their grandchildren also now own cottages in Grand Beach or Grand Marais. Due to the marriage of one of this family into another Campsite cottage owning family, there are currently six cottages owned by the extended family. Given that all family members, whether owners or not, have access to one or other of these cottages, when the youngest generation of children are included, there are now more than thirty family members who on occasion vacation in the community. At least one of the newer cottages is fully winterized and is used throughout the year for weekends and more extended stays. Its owners fully intend to retire at Grand Beach, converting their cottage into their principal residence (Anonymous(b) 2002).

Most cottages in the Campsite are occupied more heavily during the summer months. However, the majority are used at least occasionally through the fall and a goodly number into the winter months (Table 1). Overall, the cottagers feel very positively towards their cottage getaways and the beautiful natural surroundings. They are reasonably happy with the level of maintenance as well as the security provided by the park administration. They are generally well disposed towards their community and acknowledge that their relatively inexpensive lease on a modest sized

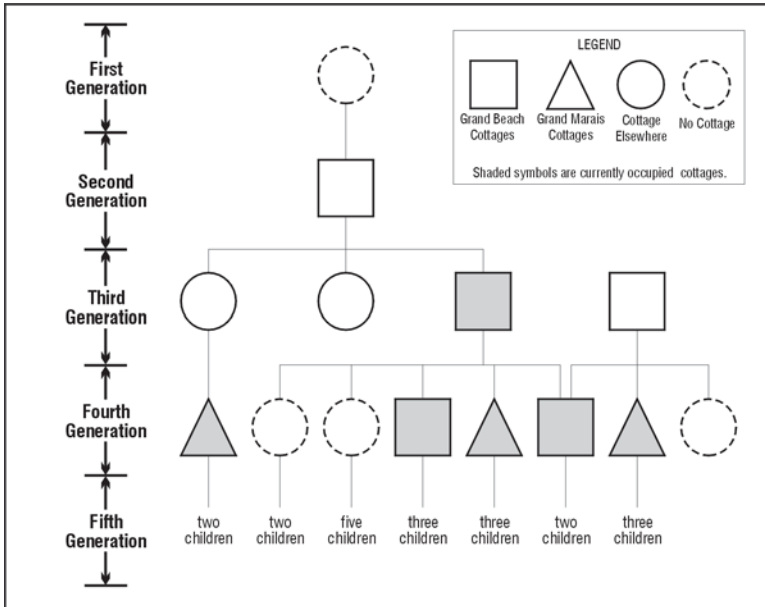


Figure 6: Multi-generational links within an extended family and their cottages.

lot provides them with an economical holiday home. However, these positive attributes are partially offset by a number of concerns.

To some, the high density of the settlement and the constraints imposed by the leasehold generate resentment. A common complaint is that there are too many restrictions on cottage expansion, patio construction, and parking space. These complaints are fairly widespread and aggravated by allegations that the regulations keep changing and have not been applied uniformly. Although many of the cottages are being upgraded and winterized, there is little indication that they are being converted to principal residences. Many people still have qualms about the limitations imposed by the leasehold tenure, the additional levy on converted properties, and the special provisions imposed by the Manitoba Conservation Department (Manitoba Conservation 2001).

Survey respondents differed widely in their opinions as to what kinds of activities should be acceptable at Grand Beach. Some cottagers cherished the natural environment and the tranquility of their vacation home and were vehemently critical of beachgoers, neighbours and visitors who became rowdy, or partied well into the night. Others countered that such people were 'party-poopers' who needed to 'loosen up' and enjoy the

relaxed atmosphere of the holiday community. Several cottagers felt strongly that there was not enough to do at Grand Beach and that a wider range of non-beach related activities was needed. These sentiments correspond with those of an earlier survey conducted among Grand Beach cottage owners, when a high proportion of them expressed their support for a luxury, four-season resort being established there (Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism 1989). It is evident that there are contradictory notions about what a cottage vacation environment should provide.

Conclusion

Cottaging at Grand Beach now goes back almost a century and during that time the community has enjoyed periods of heightened activity, then languished in disfavour as other, alternative vacation spots became available. Nevertheless, some cottagers have retained an allegiance to the locality through several decades. The recent resurgence in the popularity of Grand Beach cottage community is reflected in the large numbers of people now upgrading the older cottages, bringing them into line with the more restrictive regulations imposed by the provincial Department of Conservation. Many of the older cottages are becoming 'tear downs' and being replaced by brand new structures. Although many cottagers acknowledge that the small lots and leaseholds make their property more affordable, they nevertheless recognize the disadvantages, chafing at the limited extent to which they can expand their living space. However, given the smaller lot sizes, the restrictions appear reasonable, so as to maintain vegetation cover, protect the amenity and privacy of cottagers, and retain the distinctive, compact nature of the community.

Numbers of the cottagers have close relationships with each other, through kinship ties and friendships, with many of them having very longstanding connections with the Campsite, often going back for generations. Now, even the hard times are recalled with some fondness and it is obvious that the sentimental attachment to the cottage at Grand Beach is still strong. Grand Beach therefore offers another example of the deep roots that can be put down in cottage country. Complex sets of family linkages demonstrate the strong affiliations that people can develop with their summer home away from home. They also illustrate how strong can be the ties that bind people both to place and to family. The length of these attachments is also striking and not atypical. Similar associations have been identified both locally and in other, more distant cottage communities (Russell 2000; Selwood, Curry and Kozberski 1995; Boholm 1983). In a

world in which change of residence is increasingly common, the cottage acts as an anchor, giving people a sense of place, of identity and relative permanence. The progressive upgrading of cottage properties is another indication of the need to cultivate such roots. Should property values rise dramatically as they have done in other locations with high scenic amenity, this situation might well change. However, this enquiry into the development of Grand Beach and the sense of place generated in the cottage community confirms the notion of the cottage being truly a home away from home.

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