

A Brief History of McKay Lake



A hundred years ago in the 1920s, McKay Lake was on the radar to be discovered as a lake for recreational and vacation purposes.

The first properties that were developed were accessed from the Fraserburg Road on the north shore of the lake; originally by laneways now named Rainbow Lane, Old Cottage Road, Shady Lane, and other private driveways. The original property owners were coming from various areas of the province and even from outside of Ontario. News was getting out that McKay Lake would be a nice place to buy, build and enjoy lakefront property!

Imagine a vacation getaway to enjoy swimming, boating, campfires, and fishing. **Keep in mind to travel to the area was not a quick trip to the cottage.** Highway 400, that most of us use to get out of the GTA, was not built until 1952. So, the trip from the Toronto area would mean that Yonge Street and the old Hwy 11 would be used. For the trip north, you would travel through all the small towns such as Thornhill, Richmond Hill, Oakridges, Aurora, Newmarket, Barrie, Orillia, Gravenhurst, and Bracebridge.

Family of some of the original owners still have property on the lake, but many have changed ownership over the years. Several of the original structures remain standing today.

Back at the turn of the century, and even in the 1890's, **the trees were being harvested for lumber.** McKay Lake was one of the many lakes in the region where logs were dragged across the lake in the winter over the ice by teams of horses to what we know as Rainbow Lane. Logs were loaded onto wagons or sleighs, and then transported into Bracebridge. Muskoka was the transportation hub of goods between other towns: Huntsville, Baysville, and Dorset. Since the use of automobiles and trucks was still in the very early stages, the main means of transportation of people and goods was horses, boats, and the railway. At this time, the Bracebridge and Trading Lake Railway had surveyed a route, and had the funding come through, the railroad would have followed the north shoreline of the lake alongside the Fraserburg Road and cottages on its route potentially would not exist today as it would be a railway bed.

Over the years, **the lake was opened to further development** and the total number of cottages is now approximately 105. Numerous cottagers have now made McKay Lake their year-round place of residence.

To this day, McKay Lake remains a refuge, where one can listen to the call of the loons, watch herons and turtles and frogs and beavers and otters, float in canoes and kayaks, gaze at the stars, and enjoy family and friends.