

THE HISTORY OF DRAG LAKE, SPRUCE LAKE AND OUTLET BAY

First known as Kasquashibook or Kashquashibioh on early handwritten exploration maps, the indigenous translation of these names means “where the lakes meet”, “where the waters meet” or “where the waves meet”. Known as Porcupine Lake in the early 1800’s, maps started to use Drag Lake by the late 1850’s. It was believed in the past that the name originated from pulling logs over the shallow area that almost divided the lake between Sand Point and Harris Beach, however, the Drag Lake name predates logging by about a decade. Drag Lake may refer, instead, to dragging canoes/boats over the shallow area.

The first European seasonal resident of Drag Lake was David Sawyer, a hunter, trapper and fisherman as early as the 1850’s. The first settlers on the lake were the Phillip Gliddon and Joshua Paul families who farmed lands at the north end of the lake. Tom Roberts, famous bear hunter was born in 1871 and Uncle Tom’s Cabin (NE shore) was named after him. The whole of the lake was purchased by the Canadian Land and Emigration Company in 1865. By 1868, the first wooden Drag Lake Dam was built to aid logging and logs were floated down the Drag River to mills in Haliburton. Provincial legislation in 1906 established Drag Lake as a “reservoir lake” to maintain water levels on the Trent-Severn Waterway through adjusting the wooden stop logs. The existing concrete dam was built between 1920-1925. The generating station at the dam was completed in 1928. The first hydro connections were in 1946 to Ernie Fee and Fred Jones. Hydro connections were first concentrated around Drag Lake Lodge and Outlet Bay. Mossom Boyd undertook the first logging on the lake in 1869-1870. After him, it was the Boyd Smith Co and its related companies until around 1890 when the large pine was gone. Other trees were lumbered in the early 1900s. The last log drive on the lake was undertaken by the William Laking Lumber Company in 1926.

Cottaging/recreational activities began as early as 1880, concentrated initially around Outlet Bay including the Dean, Latchford, Arbuckle, Thayer, Hadley, Beamish, Andrews, Clarke, Lucas, Gorrie and Edwards’ families followed by cottages on Spruce Lake. Seven children’s camps were historically operated on the lake. Two major resorts were operated namely Drag Lake Lodge (Fred and Anna Jones 1925-1977) and Haliburton Lodge established by Dr. L.H. Carrol in 1927 which became the Domain of Killien owned by Count Edouard de Moustier (1981-2013). The lakes have always been prime fishing country. They were stocked from 1922-1984 and were closed to winter fishing from 1987-2001. Lake trout flourish in the deeper waters and in 1978, Robert Tirilis caught a 38 lb, 8 oz lake trout. Art Oulette caught a 38 lb, 4 oz trout in 1980.

In 1919, Dysart et al recognized that the lumber industry was dying and that tourism was the future of the area. Drag Lake cottagers met and organized in 1936 to submit a petition to the Trent Severn about low water levels that impacted access to water access only cottage lots. The first cottage association meeting (Kennaway East Bay Property Owners Association) was held in 1949 to discuss unreasonable tax assessments. In 1976, as a result of the significant efforts of Murray Balkwill, the Drag Lake Property Owners’ Association was formed which became the Drag and Spruce Lake Property Owners’ Association (DSLPOA) in 2006.

