

THE LAKELAND TIMES Extra

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Beaumont's
Island on
Stone Lake

Memories of a forgotten island

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Editor's Note: Memories fade, but some are captured to be renewed. This was the case of Beaumont's Island on Stone Lake in Manitowish Waters. The following appeared in The Lakeland Times in July 1978. We thought our readers would enjoy a piece of forgotten history.

My Sweet Little Miss at Manitowish

I've got a sweet little miss at Manitowish, Wisconsin
With golden hair and blue eyes – blue as the sky
When the moonlight shines on those Northern pines
She'll be waiting there for me.
On that island of Bliss – I'll steal a little kiss
That will send me in ecstasy.
We'll find romance galore – on the shores of Beaumont's Island

I'm in love – so in love with my sweet Little Chick-a-dee

I'll take her into my arms – with all of her charms
and her beauty and love for me

Gee – but I miss – my sweet little miss

At Man-Man-Manitowish

At Man-Man-Manitowish.

Last week the strains of the above song, written in 1948, echoed across Stone Lake in Manitowish Waters for the last time when Mitzi Beaumont again sat at the piano in the now deserted bar on Beaumont's Island to knock out a little "honky tonk" jazz.

For those who heard it, memories of an era that spanned the years from 1932 to 1960 flooded back.

Those were the years when the bar and resort on the island really "swung" – the years it was under the ownership of Maude Belter – and after her death – her daughter Mitzi Beaumont.

Beaumont's Island sits in the middle of the Manitowish chain. Many, many years ago it was part of the mainland. No one is sure which year it split off – or why – but one day there it was: six acres of land topped by some 2,000 trees; sitting in Stone Lake.

Records do show that in 1904 the United States Government, under Theodore Roosevelt, deeded the island to Edward McQuire. We also know that a boy's camp operated on the island at one time and that the Koerner's owned the island for a period.

Apparently, five cabins had been constructed on the island prior to 1904, but there is no information as to whether they were built while it was part of the mainland or after it split off. We also know that, prior to



Mitzi Beaumont straightens the flag on the antique lighthouse that greets the visitors to the island.

1932, the Hungers had operated Cedar Lodge Resort on the island, but it had laid dormant for some four years before Maude Belter saw it.

In 1931, Maude was vacationing in the area – visiting Mrs. Walter Mewes of Milwaukee at their resort, Mewes Lodge, on Spider Lake. Mrs. Mewes was the world champion in the women's division of national fly and bait casting, a title she won in 1934.

Maude decided she would like to spend her summers in Wisconsin's Northwoods, so set about looking for something to purchase. She found the island that summer, and the moment she saw it she knew it was for her.

At that time, the island held eight buildings: a homestead cabin, six rental cabins, and a large cabin that served as a dining area. The cabins were rented on a weekly basis, with some of them rented for the entire summer season. All were built of hand-hewn logs, chinked to fit. There were refrigerators and kerosene stoves in the cabins, linoleum on the floors, and the ever present out-house behind.

Maude Belter applied for, and received the first liquor license for the island. She then converted the dining area into a bar and dining room, and in the summer of 1932 opened for business.

Getting the customers to the island was another matter. A great bell was stationed on the shore, directly across from the island. The bar customers would be picked up at this point. They merely rang the bell and boats would go and pick them up. After drinking their fill, they were returned to the mainland. Resort guests were picked up at the Rest Lake Landing.

Belter's Bar became known throughout the north. Known as a place where there was always a little music and dancing. A place where you could "sit in" and play a set or two; where there was always fun and companionship. At one time, it was known as the "showplace" of the north. Now it was known as the "fun place" of the north.

Maude ran the resort and bar each summer until her death in 1949. She even spent several winters living on her island. After her death, her daughter, Mitzi Beaumont, bought the island and continued the operation – adding a few innovations of her own.



Beaumont's Island

Mitzi loved to play the piano and sing, and one could always be sure of good entertainment on Beaumont's Island.

Guests from far and wide continued to flock to the island. Now, when the bell rang, customers would be picked up by a big war surplus inboard launch that Mitzi and her husband had purchased.

Mitzi had also added another innovation. Directly over one of the stools at the bar, they drilled an opening of about 10 inches. When young men brought their dates to the bar, they tried to sit right under the opening – then, after a few beers – would give Mitzi the nod.

Mitzi would go outside, climb the stairs to the second floor, position herself over the opening and drop a fox skin (with the head still intact) through. This never failed to bring a piercing scream, a wild jump and a round of laughter.

Mitzi ran the bar and resort from 1950 to 1960, but just during the summer season, returning to her home in Milwaukee each winter.

"There's no way you'd get me to live up here in the winter. It's just too cold, and I'd be isolated," she said.

In 1960, Mitzi shuttered the entire operation. "It got to be just too much work and I wasn't getting any younger." Mitzi turns 80 this year, although one would never know it to look at her, and one would never believe it if you watched her play the old piano and sing. She's still full of fun, has a love for people, and a deeper love for her island.

She now spends her summers puttering around the island, and travels to her daughter and son-in-law's home – directly across from the island – for breakfast and a little conversation – each morning. Her grandson and son-in-law rake the grass that fronts on one side of the island – but other than that, the island is quiet.

The furnishings remain in most of the cabins and there are still many wonderful pieces in the bar. Now, Mitzi has made a decision. This year, each of her children will choose the section of the island they wish to own and Mitzi will deed it to them.

"I may come back next summer and spend some time on the island, but I'm concerned I might trip over a root, for walking isn't that easy on the island. I think though that the time has come for my children to take it over.

"They may restore some of the cabins, or they may tear them down. Whatever they wish to do with their part of the island is fine. However, there will be no trees cut down. The trees on this island are so beautiful – and breath-taking in the fall. I'm just happy to see the island remain in the family."

So, its hey-day now past, Beaumont's Island remains isolated, tranquil and beautiful. The bell still stands on the mainland, its peal silenced for the most part – but when it does sound – the memories of the island linger on.

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This cottage on Beaumont's Island was built prior to 1904.