

Dr. and Mrs. E. A. Flancher
and
The Peggy Line

When the wave of summer residents around the Manitowish chain began to arrive by car, early in the decade of the Nineteen Teens, it brought Dr. and Mrs. Edwin A. Flancher and his wife Louisa from Milwaukee where Dr. Flancher had a dental practice. They acquired land on the teardrop shaped peninsula on the south side of Manitowish Lake with a cover of balsam trees that was so impressive that they called their place Balsam Point, and their house was almost hidden from the water by their inviting shade.

Their land was so remote at the time that they had to lay out a narrow lane from Powell Road, stretches of which were later improved as Alder Lake Road. The most interesting stretch of the road on their land was a section on the narrows leading to the point, for it was low and bordered by the lake on each side.

When they set about building a house, some of the materials came from Buswell or Papoose Junction and could reach the site only by water. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad had a track at the time which extended from Boulder Junction to Papoose Junction, with a stub up to Buswell. Where the branch crossed Rice Creek the St. Paul had laid a sidetrack down to the edge of the water, just up from Island Lake and some people on the chain had scows that they could load there and tow with their launches, and many of the building supplies arrived that way. Guests could, too.

The house amid the trees was frame, not logs and was set on blocks rather high above the ground, high enough ^{that} ~~the~~ a variation of a root cellar was an unusual feature, but a valuable one before the era of refrigeration to keep food cool or, in winter, to keep things from freezing. A fireplace was made of fieldstones and on the front the masons had left a flat rectangle on which the building date was inscribed.

There was^a three stall white frame garage with a sliding door over the stalls and a room where the man stayed who came up with them in summers^{as} a sort of handyman. In the stall would usually be a black Buick and having the run of the place there was always a springer spaniel; one or all of them they called Laddie.

The logistics of summer home life were more complex than they were in the Thirties when the LaPortes had established their market and improved highways made it possible to drive to Minocqua or Ironwood to shop. Old Highway 10 had been upgraded and renumbered US 51.

The Flanchers had a close relationship with the Koerners who had taken over the old George Buck resort at the channel between Spider and Manitowish lakes. They depended on the resort for their meat and groceries since American Plan resort kitchens usually were well supplied and were willing to help the Flanchers. They also got their mail at Koerners' and they usually went by boat. I remember their boats. They were clinker built or strip built rowboats powered by the old two cylinder Evinrudes, and because they used the boats for fishing as well as transportation, the seats like legless chairs of the type with^{were} a curved back that circled around from side to side and had lots of spindles. Railway conductors used them in their cabooses. The boats were white. as were the house and garage. The lakes of course were one of the main attractions that drew people to the North Woods at the time.

The appeal of this setting rubbed off on Mrs. Flancher's family. A brother built a cottage near the narrows of the^{the} lane and the two sisters, Elsa and Hilda Gruettner, bought Woodchuck Hollow, a part log and part frame cabin which our parents rented while carpenters were building our family's cottage in 1937.

2/3/2

It was always a treat when our parents would take us to visit at the Flanchers'. We would sit on the porch that looked out toward the lake, probably with the dog there too, and we would chat. I especially enjoyed Mrs. Flancher's reminiscences, since of course they went far back by then.

One particular memory from her remembrances was her mention of the Peggy Line. I've never heard any other explanation of it, but it was a long-abandoned logging railroad right of way that stretched toward Alder Lake from the long straight roadbed across the marsh from the Chicago & North Western Railway main line; that line stretched from the main line to the narrow stretch of Powell Road that separates Little Star and the Stepping Stones. (That long track across the marsh made it possible to shepherd logs to a hoist there where they could be hoisted onto train cars for a ride to the Flambeau Lumber Company's sawmill at Flambeau.) The Peggy side track off of it appears as a dashed line on the USGS topographic maps of the 1930s but has been obliterated by the changes the DNR made to adapt the marsh for wildlife refuge purposes. The track led up to the main crossing of the marsh and must have been a feeder for log trains.

Since Mrs. Flancher's mentioning it made me curious I finally was able to explain it. There is no mention of the term "Peggy" in local lore, and Peggy was a nickname for a style of locomotive that was especially designed for logging--the technical name is Shay Geared locomotive. Shays were not used by Flambeau Lumber Co. here, but the nickname came to be synonymous with logging railroading anywhere.

The Flanchers and Mrs. Flancher's sisters all lived in Milwaukee in an old Victorian cream city brick house that originally stood in the midst of several acres when Milwaukee was young. Dr. Flancher retired

from his dental practice but one of the sisters stayed on as the assistant for his dental partner--I still remeber^m ^W fondly. Mrs. Flancher died in February, 1955 and Dr. Flancher died some time later in a Milwaukee n^vrsing home.

Michael Dunn

2017.