

SPARROW LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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First Christmas on Sparrow Lake

by Frank Stanton

My memory goes back to one of our first Christmas seasons about 1880, when our family lived in our new Pioneer hewed log home on Shanty Bay Point where now stands the Sparrow Lake Camp dining rooms. Santa brought me a “wood horse” mounted on a wide board with four wood wheels under, when I was about three years old, and how I played with that horse for many happy hours.



We always had a Christmas tree. Our Santa would come up an outside ladder and through a hinged gable end window to fill our stockings, which he found hanging over the foot of our bed. We of course left this window unlatched and the ladder in place before going to sleep. We never failed to find our stockings full in the morning. We were very happy in our room, which was a loft with a

hinged window at each gable end. Sometimes we would find a snowdrift alongside our bed in the morning. We would rejoice, dress, and find our way downstairs through an opening in the floor to a crude stairway. Downstairs we would find a well decorated Christmas tree. Our parents were always good to us. They endured many hardships and did not have any luxuries. We did have a large family bible, and our father never failed to read a portion to us when home on Sundays. When he was away, mother would read a portion. We thank God in our “sunset years” for the portions that were read to us in our sunrise years.

Grandad and Bertha Stanton, 1963.

Stanton Bros Store in the 1940s

by Albert Stanton
(son of Edwin Stanton)

During the summer, we lived upstairs over the store since the cottages that Ed and Flo owned were rented to tourists. The two cottages, one called Sunrise Lodge along with a converted garage-one bedroom, were located on the road leading to the Church of the Good Samaritan and Stanton House. We only lived at Port Stanton

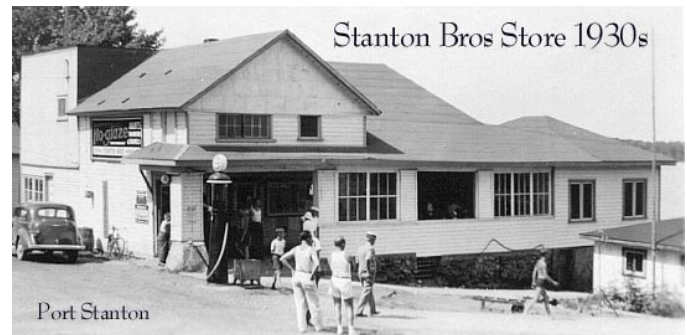
during the June-September months, then moved into Orillia for the winter. During this time, mail arrived by train at the station once a day and required a postmaster, namely Edwin Stanton.

I remember waiting for the train to arrive as highlights of the weekdays. Since the trains were pulled by steam locomotives, there always seemed to be cinders and fine dust present when trains went by. There was a station agent at the station during the summer only. I remember we rented the converted garage to the agent, Larry Woc and his wife Jean. I remember the smell of the station—it had an old smell from buildings closed up most of the year.

Exact details of the Stanton Bros Store are not remembered since I was 7 or 8 years old and didn't pay much attention. It was summer, and there were too many things to do such as swimming and fishing or bicycle riding. One of the things I remember well was the arrival of delivery trucks each day. Kist beverages were delivered from Hinds Beverages in Orillia. The brown ripply Orange Crush bottles were fondly remembered as well. Milk, cream, and ice cream were supplied by the Orillia Creamery. Ice cream came in steel containers packed in felt-insulated canvas bags and were viewed with anticipation to see what brand of ice cream would show up each delivery. Milk and cream were delivered in glass bottles and kept in a refrigerator in the office area of the store. Cheese was bought in a large wheel and cut to customer needs.

I remember that pop cost 5 cents plus 2 cents bottle deposit, chocolate bars were 5 cents, bread was 10 cents, popsicles were 5 cents as well. Newspapers were 3 cents or 5 cents, and I remember tourists from the local hotels coming to the store after dinner to buy either the Toronto Star or Telegram. Bread was delivered daily from Orillia, and cigarettes, chocolate bars and gum were purchased from Knowle's Bailey, a wholesaler in Orillia. I remember the salesman,

Mr. Stubbs, arriving periodically to take an order to be shipped the next week. Cracker Jack was a favourite snack.



When Ed was a young man growing up, he had taken typing and bookkeeping in Owen Sound during the winter, which benefited him as a storekeeper and postmaster. I am not exactly sure when Ed took over as postmaster and when we moved from Bonheur Lodge to the store, but I think it was around 1945. Besides looking after the mail and other things at the store, Ed also did electrical and carpentry work at local summer resorts, camps, and cottages. He did a lot of work in Deep Bay when it was opened for cottager use, and he took the lumber down by boat since there was no road to the bay at that time. He did a lot of work at Torpitt and Grandview Lodge as well as the Sparrow Lake Camp.

Jack Martin looked after the grocery side for a number of years in the early 1950s, and Flo Stanton (Ed's wife) looked after the ice-cream parlour and day to day operation. Gasoline was supplied by B-A Gas and initially was dispensed from hand-pump gasoline tanks. There was one on the dock to refuel boats, and one at the store. I remember them being replaced by electric pumps around 1950.

Boats from Orillia made frequent visits to the government wharf and the store on their tours through the Trent-Severn Waterway. The arrival of the "Miss Orillia" owned by the Rolland Boat

Lines during the weekday afternoons was a highlight of the day.



Miss Orillia

Cottagers and tourists who lived downriver or on nearby islands frequented the store as well for supplies and sundries. Some had inboard engines while others had “putt-putts.” Sunset cruises made by Grandad Frank were quite popular as well as day cruises to the Big Chute and Deep Bay. George Stanton, who owned the Glyde, made trips for his tourists. Both boats were moored in the boathouse beside the store, which provided an excellent fishing area when they were away.

The first truck I can remember my dad owning was a 1948 Dodge pickup which he bought from George Stanton. He had “Stanton Electric” painted on the doors. Edwin built two or three flat-bottom boats in his shop in Orillia during the winter and rented them to fishermen who provided their own outboard motors.

The post office was a busy place in the afternoon while the mail from the train was being sorted. Cottagers and hotel owners had boxes accessible from the outside, and tourists awaited any mail on the veranda and collected it at the mail wicket. Sundays were usually quiet days since the store was not open—although I can't remember if the ice-cream parlour was open at that time or not.

Quite often we would attend the morning service at the Church of the Good Samaritan. Visiting ministers would conduct the service. Some, such as Rev. Hunnisett, had a cottage at Currelly Island as well as one in Duck Bay. He brought young people up from Toronto throughout the summer and took them on outings to Bala, High Falls, and other places for picnics. I often accompanied these outings since his son Paul and I were the same age and were friends.

The ice-house which was restocked during the winter was used as a deep freeze for fishermen to preserve their catches until they returned home. Cottagers and campers also purchased blocks for their own icebox coolers. At one time, the ice-cream parlour had a pop cooler which used ice for cooling.

Albert Stanton, 1996



Port Stanton Plaque Dedication - August 22, 1999

Ann Stanton (shown far right in this photo) passed away April 14, 2023 at 90 years of age. The two handwritten letters that make up this issue of the Sparrow Lake Historical Society Newsletter were found in a box in her attic.

Donations to the Sparrow Lake Historical Society can be made from the link on our website at sparrowlake.ca.