



Herbst's Pond - 1922

“BRIGHTON LAKE”

a little history

By Paulette A. Skolarus

Before Homearama and Pine Creek Ridge, the property being developed along Brighton Road was known as the Charles Howell Scout Reservation. But even before that, it belonged to the Herbst family. In 1926 the Herbst Family owned all but 60 acres in Section 36 in Genoa Township. An earlier map dated 1885 does not even register Brighton Lake. Pictured (below) is a small pond located on the Herbst Farm. The photo is dated 1922. This spring fed pond, after completion of the dam, would become today's Brighton Lake. The pond was familiar to early residents because of the death of a man who drowned there.

In 1926, 280 acres of the Herbst property was purchased by Charles Howell for \$28,000.00. Howell was a land developer and investor, who after building the dam and creating the lake, meant to sell cottage sites on the New Brighton Lake. However, the depression hit and his dream faded.

During the depression, thousands of trees were planted by members of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The scouts planted an additional 100,000 trees. Pines were planted because of their rapid growth. At that time, pines were also thought to be filters for the air.

In 1937 Howell's property (now about 320 acres) was deeded to the Boy Scouts for \$1.00. The conditions of the deed were that the dam located on Ore Creek would be kept in good repair, and that the property would always be known as the Charles Howell Scout Reservation and would be used as a camp for boys. If these conditions were not met then the property would revert to Howell's heirs.

The Boy Scouts acquired, in smaller parcels, another 320 acres and subsequently sold the entire 640 acres to the Stroh family in a transaction arranged by Ken Cheyne. Ken then acquired 60 additional acres from Wilbur and Betty Herbst and the total site now comprises over 700 acres.

After obtaining all of the above facts from our local historian, Lyle Herbst, Mr. Ken Cheyne, who is a consultant to and partner with Abbey Homes of Michigan, continued the saga of the Pine Creek property.

Ken just happens to be the grandson of Janet Howell who was the sister of Charles. During the early 1900's it was not uncommon for a single woman to adopt a child. Janet had adopted Ken's mother Marian, and they lived with Janet's brother Charles. They owned a little summer cottage on Brighton Lake Road. Ken's mother used to come out to Brighton with the Howell's and other family members to spend the summer. Marian used to catch frogs and snakes near the old dam and later young Ken enjoyed visiting and camping at the site as a boy scout.

Ken met Bob Katzman, owner of Abbey Homes of Michigan, in early 1988. They joined forces to continue to develop Pine Creek. Ken is happy to be involved in the development of Pine Creek, not only because of his family heritage and connection with the property but because he knows that, properly done, much of it can be preserved in all its natural beauty. A quality development that saves the trees, ponds and animal habitats has been one of his primary goals. He and Katzman feel that they have accomplished this task.

Another of Ken's dreams had to be modified somewhat. The large log cabin/lodge that served the scouts was not only in poor repair but was located poorly for the planned development. Since it was unsuitable, Ken and Bob and their associates decided to build a new log structure on the shore of Brighton Lake to act as a sales office and later a community center for Pine Creek. It has been decorated beautifully in keeping with the rustic nature and history of the site. It offers a beautiful view across Brighton Lake and retains much of the good feeling many youngsters and others associated with the Charles Howell Scout Reservation remember.

Difficulty in affording the upkeep of the property was one of the reasons the scouts sold the property. The money that River Place paid to the scouts was set aside by them to earn interest. That interest is now used to maintain the other scout facilities in Michigan. This fund helps insure that the scouts will not have to again sell other much needed and beautiful camp sites.