

## Other Massasauga Attractions

### Wreck Island Trail

This is a 1.5 km loop of moderate difficulty that can be accessed from the Wreck Island Day-Use site. The trail takes you on the scenic terrain of one of the last communities of islands before open Georgian Bay. It was named after the infamous wreck of a ship named the Waubuno. Interpretive stops along the trail explain the 1.1 billion year history of this area and the unique geology in the intricate patterns of rock out-crops. This trail is marked with carved rock trail markers.

### Moon Island Trail

This is a 4 km loop trail of moderate difficulty that can be accessed from the Wood's Bay Day-Use site. The trail traverses various terrain and forest types, with great views onto Georgian Bay. It provides excellent opportunities to view waterfowl, a heron rookery and heaver pond. Along the trail you can see signs of wildlife including moose, deer, bear and grouse. An interpretive guide helps identify the rich biodiversity of Moon Island.

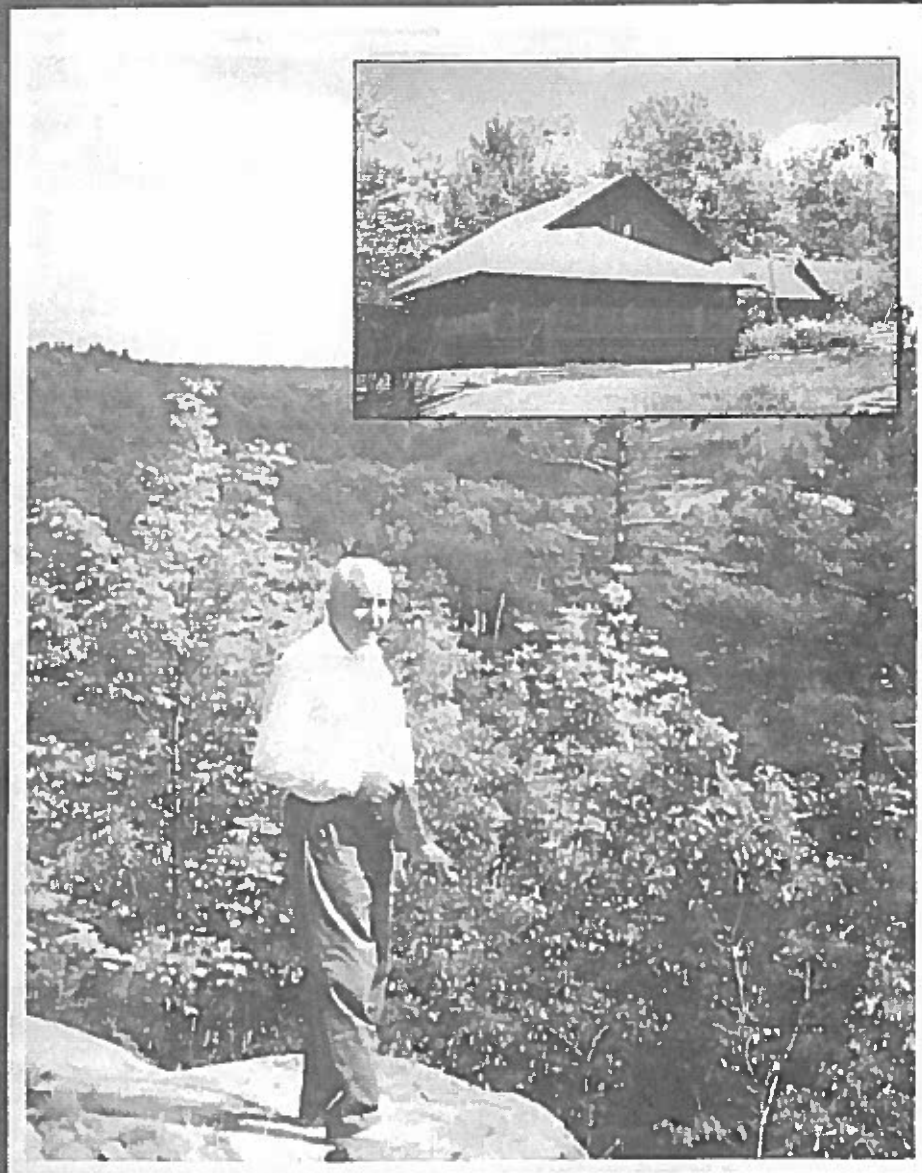
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Cover Photo: Judge Calhoun and  
Calhoun Lodge, circa 1940s

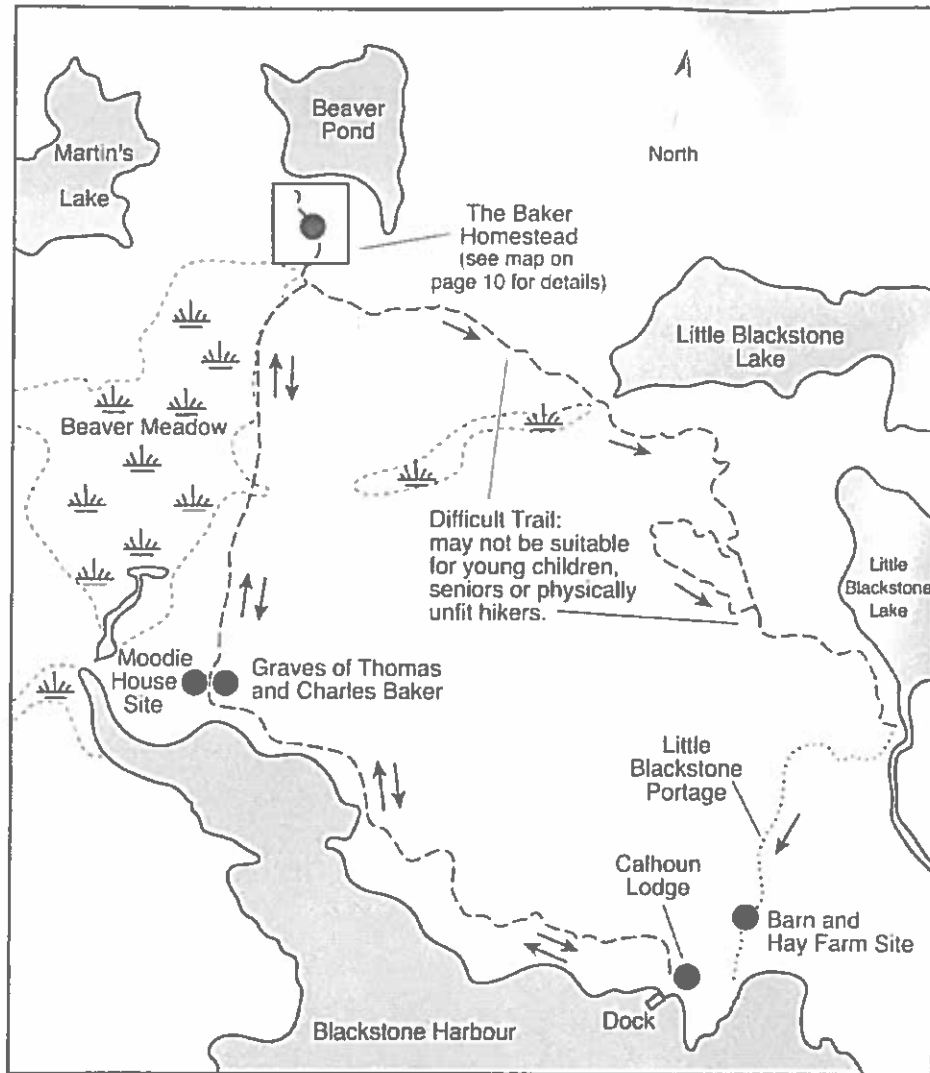


# Calhoun Lodge and the Baker Homestead

The Massasauga Provincial Park



## The Baker Trail



Calhoun Lodge and the Baker Homestead are the focal points of the Baker Trail. You will be travelling back in time, learning about cottage life in the mid-1900s, early pioneer settlement and lumbering.

This 6 kilometre hiking trail takes about 3 hours to walk in its entirety. The trail to the Baker Homestead is moderate to

easy walking. Insect repellent and good hiking shoes would be advisable for walking this trail. The return trail from the Baker site has very steep hills and rough terrain. This section may not be suitable for young children, seniors or those not physically fit. It is suggested that the latter return to Calhoun Lodge on the same trail that they travelled out to the homestead.

## Joseph Chester Calhoun

It was in the 1920s that Joseph C. Calhoun, a lawyer from Cleveland, Ohio first came to the Georgian Bay area to camp, fish, and hunt. His love of the area led him to purchase 300 acres on the shores of Blackstone Harbour in Conger Township in 1939.

"Judge" Calhoun, as he was often called, hired some local residents to build the main lodge for him. Included in the crew was William Cascanette, father of Jerome, who would later be hired as a caretaker for Calhoun Lodge. All of the materials used for the buildings on the site came from local sources.

The Calhoun estate was named "Willebejobe" which is a combination of the names of his children, William and Betty Jo, and his wife Betty Dean. Every summer, the family would spend weeks at the lodge enjoying the Blackstone Harbour area.



Mrs. Calhoun in the vegetable garden

Judge Calhoun was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed both hunting and fishing. He was also an ardent gardener



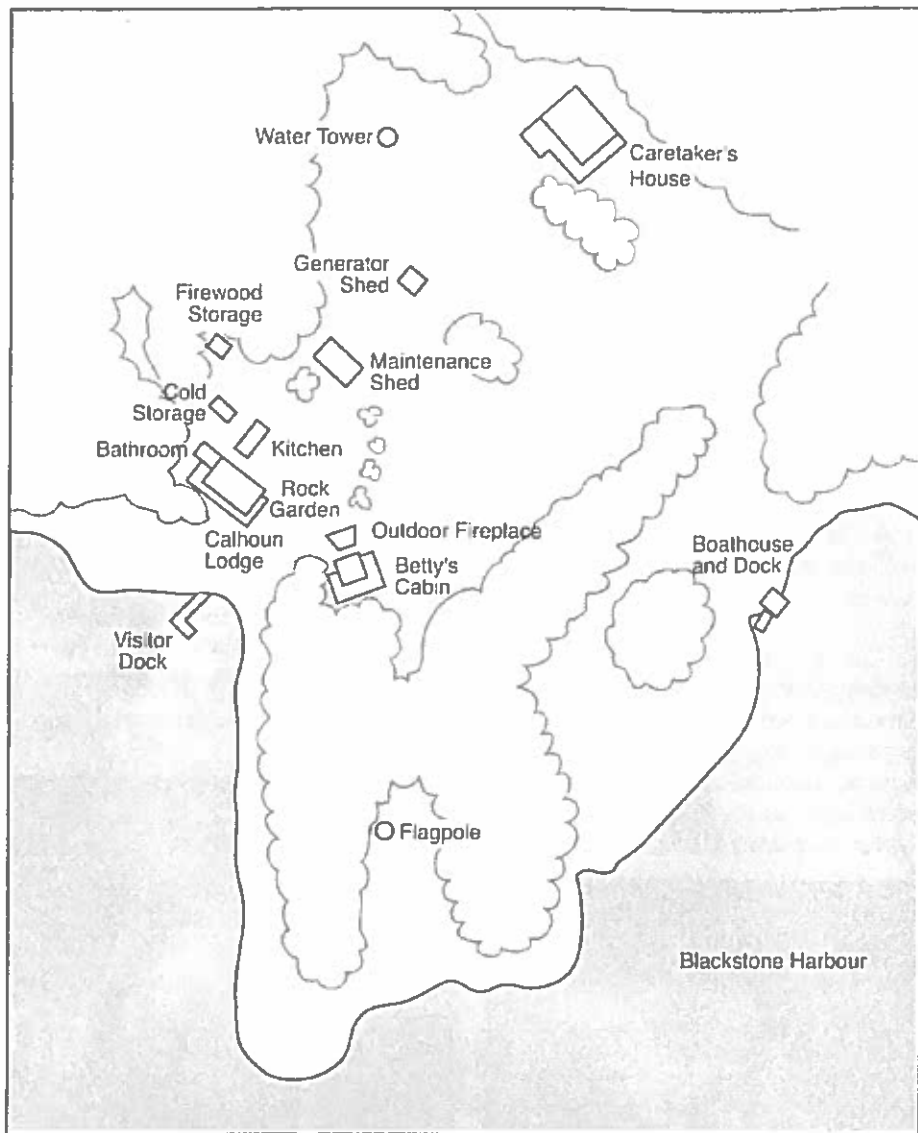
"Judge" Calhoun, an avid outdoorsman

and created many beautiful beds of annuals around the buildings. At the front of the main house are the wild rose bushes and lilac trees that he planted. All of the stone work for the gardens and walkways was done by friends invited to the lodge and then put to work.



Mr. Calhoun by the flower garden

But the "Judge" was a generous and hospitable man. He was known to give away his vegetables to those who needed food and he helped anyone who stopped at his door for assistance or just to visit.



The Calhoun Lodge Area

### Calhoun Lodge

The first building on the site was the main room and the attic. The front and side porches were added separately as future summer projects.

The building was constructed of white pine logs harvested locally. The logs were treated with creosote to protect them from the elements. Creosote is the same substance that was used to preserve railroad ties.

The original chinking between the logs was made of horse hair. Chinking helps to keep the logs in place and provides a seal to insulate the building. When restoration work was carried out on the main building in 1993, the original horse hair chinking was replaced with oakum. Oakum is made of very thin slivers of oak mixed with oil.

The Judge's friend, George Washington Brown, built the stone fireplace and chimney in the main building. Mr. Brown was a renowned stonemason and builder in the Cleveland, Ohio area.

Most of the furniture inside this building and others has been donated by cottagers and residents in the local area. It is typical of what might have been found at Calhoun Lodge in the 1940s and 1950s.

- The room to the left of the main room was a bathroom originally. The outside door leads to the foundation of what used to be a bedroom. These two additions to the main room were built of poplar logs. Unfortunately these rooms became infested with anobid beetles which destroyed the hardwood logs. When the house was restored, the



Stone fireplace built by George Washington Brown

bathroom was rebuilt using pine and the bedroom was left as a foundation only. During the time that the Calhouns stayed here, the bedroom wasn't often used for sleeping. They preferred to sleep on the large front porch.

The building directly behind the main room is the kitchen. It was separated from the main building by a vestibule with doors at either end. This would ensure that the heat remained in the kitchen. The counter, sinks, floor and cupboards in the kitchen are all original.



The bedroom in Calhoun Lodge

A large icebox sits where a stove used to be. It is typical of what was used in cottages at that time. A large block of ice would be put in the compartment at the top and the food would be stored on the shelves below. The icehouse, dismantled some time ago, has been overgrown with raspberry bushes and ferns. Ice would have been cut in the winter with a special saw and stored in this shed which was insulated with cork or sawdust to keep the ice from melting.



Cutting ice at Blackstone Harbour in front of Calhoun Lodge.



Old Mikey pulling blocks of ice to the front of the icehouse.

In the kitchen, you can see some of the wiring for electrical lights that was added in the 1940s and 1950s by Mr. Calhoun. This type of wiring is referred to as "knob and tube wiring" and it was typical of wiring in the 1920s and 1930s. Electricity was supplied by a generator and the switch on the wall was used to turn it on. A cottager had to be self-sufficient in those days.

The little room attached to the kitchen was for the laundry. Laundry was probably first done with a washboard and later, when electricity was available, a wringer washer.

Over the years, Mr. Calhoun constructed many buildings on the property. Directly out the back door you will see a green building which was used for cold storage of food. To the left of it is a wooden shack in which dry firewood was kept. To the right of the cold storage building is where the icehouse once stood (see site map on page 4).



Joseph Calhoun's tractor hauling a load of firewood. Note the water tower in the background.

## Betty's Cabin

When Betty Jo was 16, a cabin was built especially for her to stay in when she visited from Cleveland. This cabin, which now houses some interpretive displays and the Park Store, is referred to as Betty's Cabin. Look for the flagpole just southwest of Betty's Cabin. Hand-painted by Mr. Calhoun on the rocks are pictures of a fish, boat, a star and a ring.



Betty's Cabin (Photo by Doug Hamilton)

## The Boathouse and Dock

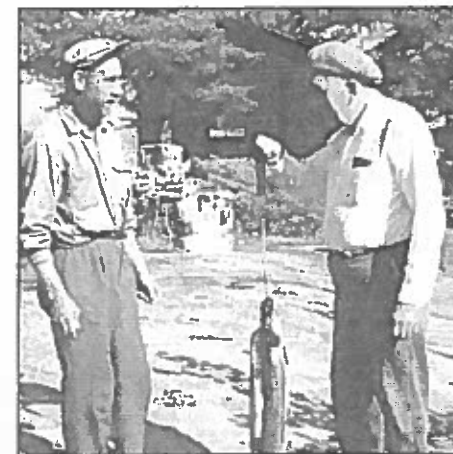
On the shores of Blackstone Harbour in front of Calhoun Lodge there was, and still is, a dock for visitors with a stone walkway leading up to the lodge. To the east there was a boathouse and dock which provided boat storage and a work area for the Calhoun family. Although the boathouse no longer stands, the stones from the cribbage are still visible in the water.



Boats at the dock by the boathouse

## The Maintenance Shed

The original Maintenance Shed was built in 1949. It was destroyed by fire and later rebuilt. The building was used to store Joseph Calhoun's tractor and other equipment needed for maintaining the property. Jerome Cassanette was hired by Joseph Calhoun in 1963 to look after the property, help with the gardening and care for the animals kept in a barn nearby. Most of the time he lived in the Caretaker's House but he also had a cabin on Conger Lake. Jerome was a boat builder, trapper and guide. He liked to play the fiddle and was known to have an occasional drink. On May 24, 1968, dressed in his best clothes, and with a bottle of the Judge's finest scotch, Jerome went to the maintenance shed. He closed the shed door and started the tractor and then lay on the work bench until he succumbed to the fumes. The Judge, arriving the next day from Ohio, discovered his body. It is said that Jerome's ghost haunts the property even to this day.



Jerome Cascanette and Mr. Calhoun

## The Caretaker's House and the Generator Shed

The building originally built as living quarters for the caretakers of the property is presently used by park staff and volunteers and is not open to the public. Building took place in stages: the first part being the room with the fireplace, the attic bedroom and part of the basement. This was followed by the porch, the kitchen, the back room and then the rest of the basement. The building was restored to its present state in 1990. At the back of the house is an even-aged stand of poplar and birch trees. This was the location of the Calhoun's vegetable garden.

The Generator Shed is the smallest building on the property. It was used to house the generator that supplied electricity to all of the buildings on the site. The generator was built by Hobart Brothers of Troy, Ohio in 1931. The generator is still in working order. Behind the generator shed you will see the water tower. Water was pumped to the tower and then gravity-fed to all of the buildings.

## The Barn and Hay Farm

The barn and hay farm located along the portage to Little Blackstone Lake are long since gone. The hay farm has been overgrown with Staghorn Sumacs, raspberry bushes and grass. Hay grown here would have been cut and stored in the barn which was located on the other side of the portage. The barn also housed Old Mikey, the horse, as well as cows, chickens and pigs.

Throughout the Calhoun property you will see equipment used by Jerome



Generator Shed and Water Tower

Cascanette and other caretakers to maintain the vegetable garden and the hay farm. Some of the items include a hay rake, a two-man plough, a "come-along" for pulling stumps, a blower from a blacksmith's forge and a lawn mower. Jerome Cascanette also built boats and you can see the form that he used to bend the wood (it looks like a drinking trough) near the Maintenance Shed.

## A Change of Ownership

In 1972 the Judge was in poor health and no one in the family was interested in retaining the property. Joseph Calhoun died later that year. In 1974, the property was bought by the Ministry of Government Services for the purposes of a provincial park to be named Blackstone Harbour Massasauga Wildlands. The property lay idle until the 1990s when clean-up and restoration work took place. This project was a co-operative effort of the Ministry of Natural Resources and The Parry Sound Nature Club.

## The Baker Trail

The start of the Baker Trail is located behind and northwest of Calhoun Lodge. The trail winds for 2.5 kilometres through the forests of The Massasauga Provincial Park to the remains of the Baker Homestead. It will take you over an hour to walk to the homestead. The trail follows the shoreline of Blackstone Harbour and then skirts the edge of a beaver meadow towards the Baker site.

The return trail is more rugged and will require more effort and time to walk. This section may not be suitable for young children, seniors or those not physically fit. It is suggested that the latter return to Calhoun Lodge on the same trail that they travelled out to the homestead.

## The Baker Homestead

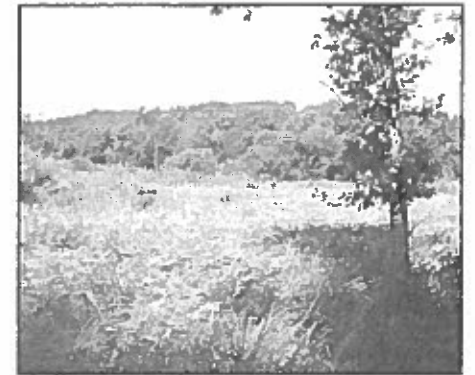
In the early 1900s, Thomas Baker settled on this piece of property in Conger Township with his new infant son Charles. It's hard to imagine what it was like for him when he first walked on to his land. Logging had already removed much of the mature pine forests so the land would have been much more open. But he would still be faced with making a living from a land riddled with rock and swamps, far from civilization.

Mr. Baker first built a sod house followed some years later by a wooden structure up on a ridge. Those early years must have been very difficult as he struggled to till the earth on this small scale farm with a team of oxen. He planted potatoes, cabbages, turnips and carrots. He also had cattle that he butchered and people came to the farm to purchase beef.



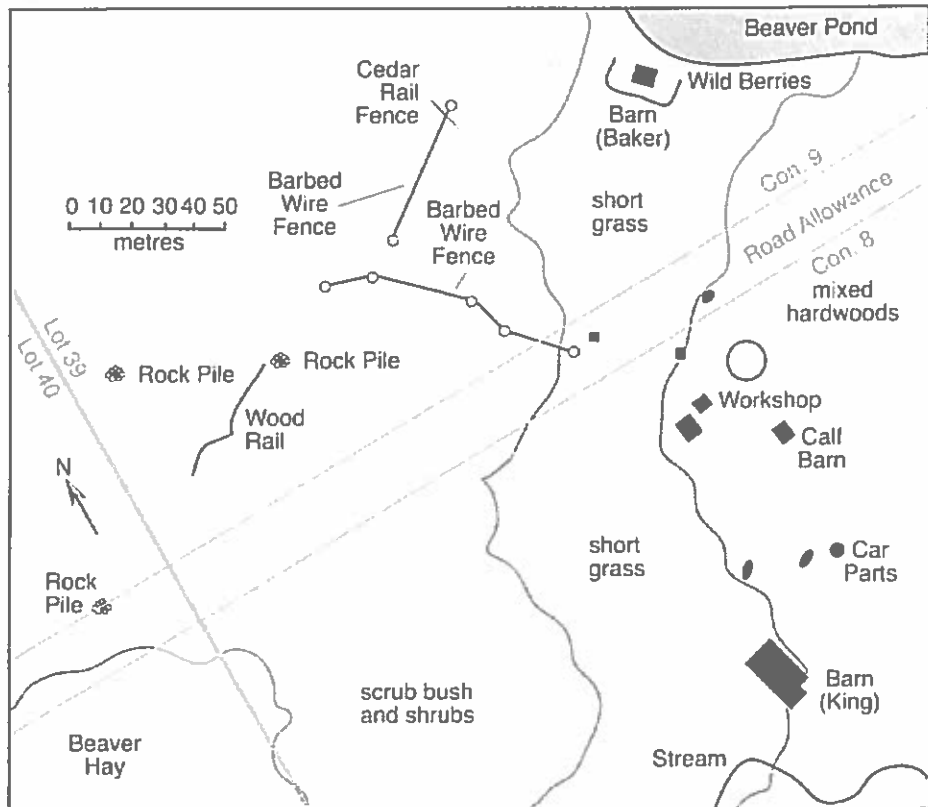
Old Shed at the Baker Homestead

To feed the animals, hay was cut from the beaver meadow and stored in a large barn. Thomas Baker sprinkled salt over the "beaver hay" to make it more appealing to his animals.



The Beaver Meadow

Thomas and Charles Baker continued to farm the property for about 30 years. In 1932 however, Charles Baker died when he broke through the ice on Grop's Marsh. He was taking school district records to a meeting when the accident occurred. His body and the records were recovered shortly after.



Map of the Baker Homestead

With the death of Charles, Thomas found it very difficult to work the farm by himself. A man by the name of Edward King came to help him. Mr. King tried to plough some new areas of the farm but the soil was too sandy for growing crops. This field was abandoned and soon became colonized by wild raspberries. A non-native species of cherry tree growing here is a reminder of Mr. King's attempts at farming. When Thomas Baker died in 1944, Edward King took over operation of the farm himself. Thomas was buried along side the trail to the Baker homestead next to his son Charles. Two white crosses were erected by Peter Grisdale, a longtime resident of Blackstone Harbour, to mark their graves.

Mr. King attempted to expand the farm operation, using a horse for ploughing and trying to raise dairy cattle. He started to build a large barn for this purpose but it was never finished. He did however build a shingle mill on the site as well as a frame house, a calf shed and a workshop. As you can imagine, it was difficult for Mr. King to get his product to market and he abandoned the farm site in 1946.

Some years later, a man by the name of Mr. Moodie tried to work the land. He started to build a house along the trail that you walked to the Baker Homestead. However, the home was never finished and Mr. Moodie, too, abandoned the site.

## Early Logging History

Up until the mid-1800s, this part of The Massasauga Provincial Park was covered with large stands of White Pine with some Hemlock and hardwoods.

The Conger Lumber Company and the Parry Sound Lumber Company were the first to harvest White Pine in the area before the turn of the 20th century. In the early 1900s, the Conger Company had a logging camp along the Little Blackstone River at Horseshoe Falls. They logged over 9 million board feet of White Pine over the years. That's a lot of trees!

Jack Lovem, a "jobber" for the Conger Lumber Company, established a camp along the Blackstone River just above Little Blackstone Lake. This camp was in operation until 1908.

Martin's Lake, at the end of the Baker Trail, was the site of another logging camp (Martin's Camp) set up in the late 1890s. The jobbers were contracted to extract White Pine that had not previously been destroyed by forest fires. About 25 men worked at this logging camp along with 6 teams of horses. The camp consisted of a bunkhouse, office, cookhouse and stable. Timber that was cut was taken across the lake and dragged to Catfish Bay and finally to a mill in Parry Sound.

In 1903, the Breithaupt Leather Company started harvesting Hemlock from the area. The hemlock bark was used to produce tannin for tanning leather. The company continued operation until 1915 when a synthetic substitute for tannin became available.



Squaring timber

Logging in the area was extensive from the turn of the century until the 1920s. The last logging company in Parry Sound (Conger) closed down in 1921 due to a fire.

## The Return to Civilization

As you leave the Baker Homestead and return to Calhoun Lodge, think about life here in the 20th century. Imagine the large White Pine stands that the loggers cut, the fields that Thomas Baker and Edward King cleared and tilled and the summer days spent at Calhoun Lodge. Times have certainly changed.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to this part of The Massasauga Provincial Park and have learned about some of its unique history.