

## The Taylor/Hutchinson Cottage

In the summer of 1919, Tom Taylor built "The Wee Neuk", a 600 + square foot cottage using hand tools, ingenuity, and a little help from his friend, the Reverend David Marshall. Tom and David were contemporaries having grown up on neighbouring farms in Chinquacousy Twp. near Cheltenham, attending the University of Toronto at the same time. David became a pastor in Huntsville, and Tom, a civil engineer for the city of Toronto. They met again by accident when Tom attended St. Andrew's Presbyterian church in Huntsville. When Tom visited Rev. Marshall's lot on Peninsula lake he was so impressed that he decided to purchase the lot around the point from him. The area was unofficially called "All Saints Cove" because the cheap land was a favourite retreat for a number of protestant ministers.

Tom Taylor was 43 when he started building the cottage. He was married to Minnie Dolson, age 42 and longtime friend whose family knew his from the farming community near Brampton. They were very worried about their only child, Mary now age 8, who had been hospitalized several times for severe asthma. They thought that by escaping the environmental triggers of city and farm she would decrease the severity of her attacks. Muskoka seemed the most logical place to go as there was no ragweed and it could be accessed by train and boat. Tom, a compact, muscular man, cleared the land of timbers and boulders in 1918 incorporating them later into the foundation of the cottage. Timber and tools were floated in by barge from Huntsville. That summer the two men built the cottage, aiding and cajoling one another when the construction got tough. Tom used the tent, left over from his prospecting days in northern Ontario and added a substantial cookstove outside so that Minnie could manage the cooking. For supplies, Tom bought a rowboat to get staples from the North Portage store and Minnie and Mary would row to local farmers on the lake for milk and eggs. The outdoors became home to the three of them during Tom's two-week vacation. One wonders how Minnie's year at the "Ladies College" in Milton, prepared her for this.

The Marshalls and the Taylors became close summer friends. On rainy days, Minnie and Mary would take cover at Marshall's cottage. Mary played with the Marshall boys, Doug and Don, a mischievous, inventive tag team who were not accustomed to playing with girls. One day they left Mary tied to a tree while they went off in pursuit of another game. When her farm cousins came to visit, Mary soon realized that she wasn't their only target. Their



*Wee Neuk then*



*and now*

favourite game was called "Yard Off". It was reserved for newcomers and involved a stick about a yard long. The object of the game was to have Doug or Don hold one end of it out and one of the new kids run up to it, grab the other end and run off with it. Sounds innocent enough until the kid realized the other end had been dipped in the outhouse.

The tiny cottage eventually morphed into its present form to accommodate a growing family, thanks to Ed Hutchinson and electricity. The Marshalls and the Hutchinsons continue to be good friends and helpful neighbours.

The Hutchinson Family are planning an open house 1 - 3 pm, Tuesday, August 6th, and welcome our friends and neighbours on Pen Lake to join us as we celebrate 100 years of family history and fun that this wonderful cottage has provided us.