

The Land and people of Landon Bay

By: T.E. "Terry" Moran

**A Condensed History that begins with United Empire Loyalists
Pioneers settling on Land Grants located west of Landon Bay
on lots 6 & 7, Front of Lansdowne Township. The stories
cover some of what has happened in this small part of the
Canadian wilderness between the years**

1804 – 2017



View from Landon Bay's Lookout Rock



Landon Bay, a Condensed History, July 1, 2017

Written as a contribution to the celebration of Canada's 150th Birthday

A brief history of the 1804 crown grant given to united empire loyalist, Asahel Kyes. The lands eventually became known as the Cross farm, then in 1965, Landon Bay Vacation Centre and finally in 2015, the property was returned to the people of Canada becoming part of the Thousand Islands National Park.

A few items about the people and organizations that have owned, worked and protected this land for well over two centuries.

A, British Crown following the conclusion of the French and Indian War 1763

B, United Empire Loyalist Asahel Kyes received the property as a Crown Grant in 1804

C, United Empire Loyalist John Cross purchased much of the south section of the property in 1819 following his participation in the War of 1812.

D, 146 years later, (1965) the Cross Farm was sold to a group of 6 men who formed The Landon Bay Vacation Centre Ltd. and operated a camping facility.

E, The Barbara Heck Foundation was also formed in 1965, to facilitate fund raising for a proposed rebuild of a U.E.L. 1790 historically significant homestead. As things turned out, the Foundation primarily dealt with programming on the property until 2015.

F, At the time this document was written (2017) the land has been deeded to Parks Canada and will become part of the Thousand Island National Park.

WITH SPECIAL THANKS

Mary Ellen Cross Matthew graciously furnished many Cross & Kyes family facts and photographs for this history lesson. Asahel Kyes (*letter B above*) was the Great, Great, Great maternal Grandfather of Mary Ellen and John Cross (*Letter C above*) was Mary Ellen's Great, Great paternal Grandfather.

For the last half century, both Charlie Donevan and John MacLeod have overseen and protected the acreage that operated as Landon Bay Vacation Centre. Their thoughts and historical recollections have been most helpful in producing this report.

Thanks also to the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Foundation who assisted with printing costs of this publication.

The story begins with the history of two original Township lots situated along the St. Lawrence River and 3 homes built by the pioneer ancestors of the Cross family. As of this writing (2017) two of the homes are still standing. The family maintained and worked the land for the next 146 years, 1819 until 1965.

❖The Crown first surveyed this land in 1792. It was set aside for United Empire Loyalists moving north following the American Revolutionary War. The land was originally referred to as Front of Lansdowne Township Lots 6&7.

❖Lots 6 & 7 were granted to United Empire Loyalist, Asahel Kyes in 1804. Mr. Kyes built his first cabin on a northern portion of the grant along a wilderness trail that has become Highway #2. Eventually, the lands included a settlement named Ebenezer. Asahel Kyes married Sarah Mosher and together they cleared and worked the property. Asahel and Sarah Kyes are buried in the Ebenezer Cemetery west of Lansdowne.

❖U.E.L, and War of 1812 veteran, John Cross purchased the south part of Lot #6 from Asahel Kyes in 1819. Much of the history described in the following pages took place on the south section of Lot #6,

HOUSE #1 First home built on property



John Cross built a log cabin in 1819, just east of two structures that are standing today, (a white frame house and the Barbara Heck Hall). He lived in the cabin until his death. The cabin was enlarged and renovated over the next 100 years. The last known tenant was the family of local fisherman Allan Cook. The Cooks lived there during World War Two. The

cabin fell into disrepair and was torn down in the early 1950's.

JOHN CROSS JR. HOUSE

The white frame house next to Barbara Heck Hall was built circa 1870 by U.E.L. John Cross's family. In 1965 the house became the property of the Landon Bay Vacation Centre. It was used as a guest house for camp managers, and rented as a year round family home for several years. The house has also been used by the Biosphere Nature Camp councilors during summers.



Photo with permission; C. Wedge

John Cross Jr. 1848 – 1925



House #2 and it's barn (far left) are shown here in a photo circa 1935. Of interest is the barn shown in center of photo. It once stood across the road from the Benjamin Cross home on Cross Cemetery Road. Both barns in photo were destroyed by fires..

❖ John Cross Jr. also lived for a time, in a larger home at the end of Cross Cemetery Road. He moved back into this smaller home with his divorced daughter Margaret and lived there until his death in 1925. Margaret lived on the property until 1943. During these years she helped farm a small part of the property. John had built a barn and kept cows and chickens.



Margaret Cross circa 1935

Milk and eggs were sold to summer people who had camps along the river. John and then Margaret would carry milk and eggs to the river, they hung them on a branch of an oak tree near the bay. Summer people would pick up what they needed and leave money for the milk and eggs on a nearby stump. Following Margaret's death the house was rented to a cousin, William Cross and his family. William was a hired hand and did not own the property. In the early 1960's the house was rented to Mr. Beattie (hence the local name in common use, Beattie House). Mr. Beattie never owned the house and rented until the property was sold in 1965.

(House #3) HOUSE AT END OF CROSS CEMETERY ROAD....

CROSS FAMILY GATHERING ... Photo circa 1904



❖ In the mid 1800's, the Cross family built another home on the farm at the end of Cross Cemetery Road. Rubin Cross lived here and passed the house and farm to his son John Cross Jr. and he in turn passed the property to his youngest son Glen Cross when he married in 1927. Glen Cross took over the farming operation as his father aged. Following Glen's purchase of this home, a fireplace and bay window were added and the entire home was sided with stone and stucco. The house was originally a wooden frame structure. Glen Cross was Mary Ellen Cross Matthew's father, she was born in this house.

Cross House #3 circa 1945. (enclosed porch added)



CROSS CEMETERY ROAD FARM HOUSE TODAY (summer 2017)



The farm home at the end of Cross Cemetery Road has been vacant for several years. When owned by the Barbara Heck Foundation, it was used to house academics, students and visiting clergymen. Several local families enjoyed renting the old place until it finally wore out. The Heck foundation could not justify expenditures for major upgrades and repairs. .

It has been vacant for the past 8 or 10 years and sadly, is showing her age. Today, the enclosed front porch and south facing bay window look out into an densely treed overgrown bush. Parks Canada is in the process of deciding what to do with this once fine old home.

THE BARN AT THE END OF CROSS CEMETERY ROAD

photo summer 2017



The sturdy old barn stands firm and continues to serve an important roll in maintaining the property. A wood burning furnace is housed in the small building to the left, to heat a section of the workshop on the ground level. Provincial Job Creation Programs hold workshops and training sessions here . The workshop is used for a host of ground maintenance projects. The barn houses a sign shop and maintenance equipment repair shop. Much of the grass cutting equipment is stored here in the off season. Provincial Chain Saw certificates are earned here during two day, hands on training classes.

Mary Ellen Cross childhood years include the following memories;

Hay was cut and stored in the barn loft using ropes pulled by horses.

Alfalfa was grown in the field behind the house and a sugar bush was located north east of the barn close to where the 401 highway now runs.

The hay and alfalfa fields have not been worked in years and have grown over. South of the creek there was a large hay field and another big field ran north toward what became Hwy. 401. . There was a steel windmill at the spring; it was used to draw water to a cement trough in the barnyard.

The water was used for the cows and horses and storing full milk cans waiting for the milk truck pickup. Milk was sold to Mr. Colebrook's cheese

factory on Highway #2. There were two large vegetable gardens, raspberry and strawberry patches and an apple orchard in front of the house. We had Holstein cows, 2 work horses, pigs, turkeys and chickens.

Beef cattle were grazed until the 40's. There was mail delivery 5 days a week except in the winter when the secondary roads might not be plowed

for several days. There was telephone service by the late 1930's and electricity in the early 1940's. Until then refrigeration was ice. Blocks of ice

were cut from the river, drawn by horse and sleigh to an ice-house at our cottage on Landon Bay. The ice was stored in sawdust until needed in the summer. I walked 2 ½ miles to the Wilstead School on Hwy.2, this was long before the 401 was built. I had neighbor friends to walk with. Marilyn and Ann Kyes and Madge Snider. Once a month or so the family would shop in Gananoque. The Dominion Grocery Store was very popular during the 1930's & 40's. On Tanner Street there was a store named Scott's Frozen Foods. . Actually it was a big freezer building filled with blocks of ice and featuring walls and doors that were a foot thick. You could rent space in this facility to hang fresh butchered beef and game until they were needed. We had no electricity at the farm until the 1940's and used an ice-box to keep things cool. After the Scenic Parkway was completed, a bread truck would stop regularly at the farm offering fresh baked bread and pastries. My family built a summer cottage on the west shore of Landon Bay and so did several other relatives. Many of the original cottages have been rebuilt and several of the original structures may be found on John Cross Lane west of the Landon Bay Bridge.

Original Cross family cottage on Landon Bay ... circa 1930's



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We all enjoyed the refreshing river breezes and easy access to fishing. Several boat houses were added along the Bay's shoreline. My mother and I would be there most of the summer and my father arrived after his work day was finished.

The cottage has been rebuilt by Mary Ellen and her husband Doug Matthew. It is situated just behind the old cottage site and enjoys the same Landon Bay Views

CROSS CEMETERY



John Cross Jr's uncle, Benjamin Cross farmed along the road known today as Cross Cemetery Road. The cemetery is located just northeast of the Benjamin Cross farm house which is still standing but no longer occupied. Benjamin donated plots for burials beginning in 1861. Benjamin's daughter Charlotte Cross (known as Chat) owned the land until 1945, at that time she sold the land containing the unofficial cemetery to a few of the plot owners. They established a Cemetery Company with a Board of Directors. Cross Cemetery was now official. The house on Benjamin's farm was never part of the John Cross Jr. farm, they had separate operations. As of this writing (2017) Cross Cemetery is well kept and continues to be in regular use.

Prior to building the Parkway and Landon Bay bridge, Cross Cemetery Road was known as River Road and ran all the way North to Highway #2. River Road continued generally East along today's Hwy. #2 then turned South where today's Reynolds Road exists. River Road turned East again at Selton Road. From near Rockport, the Old River Road winds its way East in exactly the same location as it did 150 years ago. It's gravel surface and sharp curves take travelers through the same thick woodlands as years ago. 401 Highway construction and land expropriation resulted in two separate roads each with it's own name, Cross Cemetery and Old River Road.

Benjamin Cross Home on Cross Cemetery Road



Benjamin Cross had originally homesteaded on a riverside property known locally as Horse Block Point. In the mid to late 1800's, he built this home on Cross Cemetery Road. Benjamin had a large barn directly across the road from the house. If you look closely at the 1935 photo of John Cross Jr. home below, you can see his Uncle Benjamin's barn center rear of the photo. In later years this farm was owned by the Snider Family, finally much of the land was expropriated for building the 401.

Today (2017) the barn is gone and a Osprey Nest Viewing platform has been built near where the barn once stood.



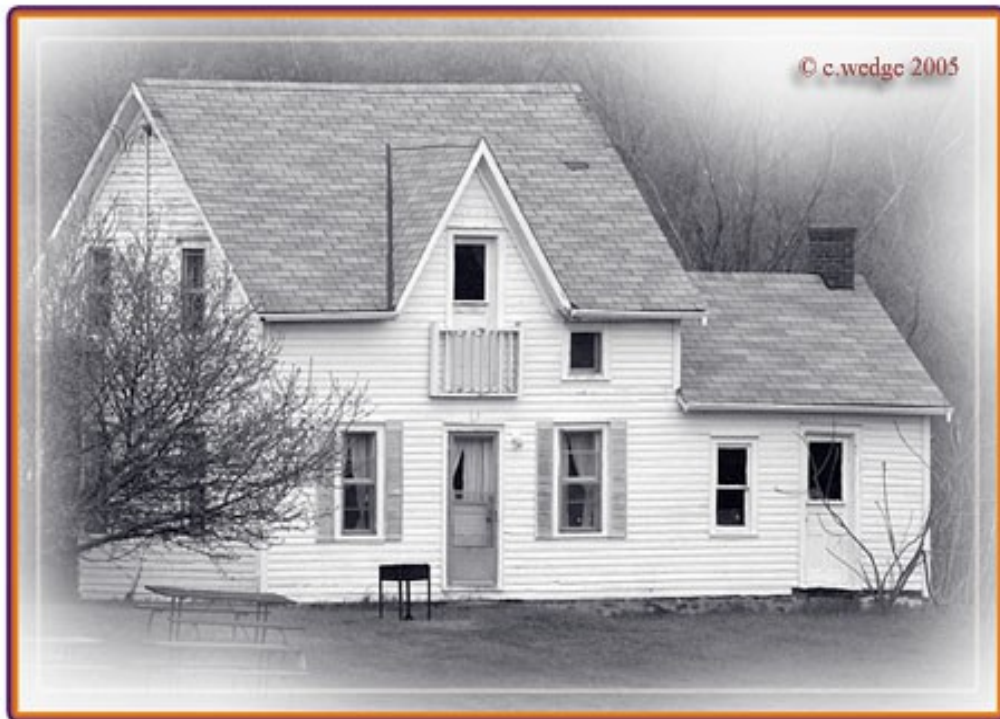
NEARLY IDENTICAL HOMES BUILT BY U.E.L. DECENDENTS



Circa 1870
Two of the many families who were related directly to U.E.L. John Cross, built these homes on adjoining farms .



Looking at the two homes, they appear very similar .The Cross men like most pioneer settlers were all capable carpenters so the home building was in all likelihood a family affair, brother helping brother. The bottom photo shows how the houses looked when they were still being occupied. Sadly both homes are nearing the end of their useful life.



SUMMER PEOPLE

Mary Ellen recalled that some of the summer people became like family to her family. One couple who lived in Naples N.Y. had a rustic summer camp called Quack Quack set up on what was then called Sand Bay. Before the Parkway was built, there was a beautiful sand beach between Halstead Bay and Mainshore point. “Local people often joined the summer people at camp Quack Quack for pot-luck suppers and sing a-longs. Campers also joined the neighbors and performed pageants up on what was called **THE MOUNTAIN**. That is how we referred to the granite ridge overlooking Landon Bay. In 2017 it is referred to simply as “The Lookout.”

Quack Quack Camp, circa 1935. located on the north shore of the St Lawrence River at Landon Bay.



Another structure at Camp Quack Quack.



This camp building was damaged during blasting while building the Scenic Parkway. The man kneeling on the left is holding a chunk of granite that was accidentally blasted through the camp wall.

Camp Quack Quack was set up along the river with handshake agreements between the Cross family and the Summer People. The attraction to this particular location was the large natural sand beach that rimmed Landon Bay prior to the Landon Bay Bridge construction.

This natural attraction drew bathers from the entire area. The bay waters were warm and much of the bay shoreline was lined with soft sandy beaches and smooth bottoms.

Before the Parkway Bridge was completed, swimmers coming from Gananoque and further West would drive along a riverside dirt road that ended at Cross Cemetery Road. They would park their cars and walk to Landon Bay for picnicking and bathing.

A few adventurous folk followed a farm track that ran from Ben Cross's home overland through the John Cross property ending up where the Cross family cottage stood. The track was used regularly by the Cross Families but over the years it has grown over and disappeared.

BUILDING THE 1000 ISLAND SCENIC PARKWAY

❖ The 1000 Island parkway was built during the 1930's. Originally slated to be a divided highway between Gananoque and Butternut Bay, west of Brockville. It was used as a gravel road until 1948 when the north lane was closed to traffic and paving began.

❖ While the parkway construction was proceeding, a construction crew tent camp was established in a field on the west side of Landon Bay, near the sandy beach.

Mary Ellen Cross Matthew recalled some of the stories of Parkway Construction Days;

When the parkway was being built, there was much activity near our summer cottage. . A construction crew camp was set up in a nearby field. Some of the original construction material still rests in this area.

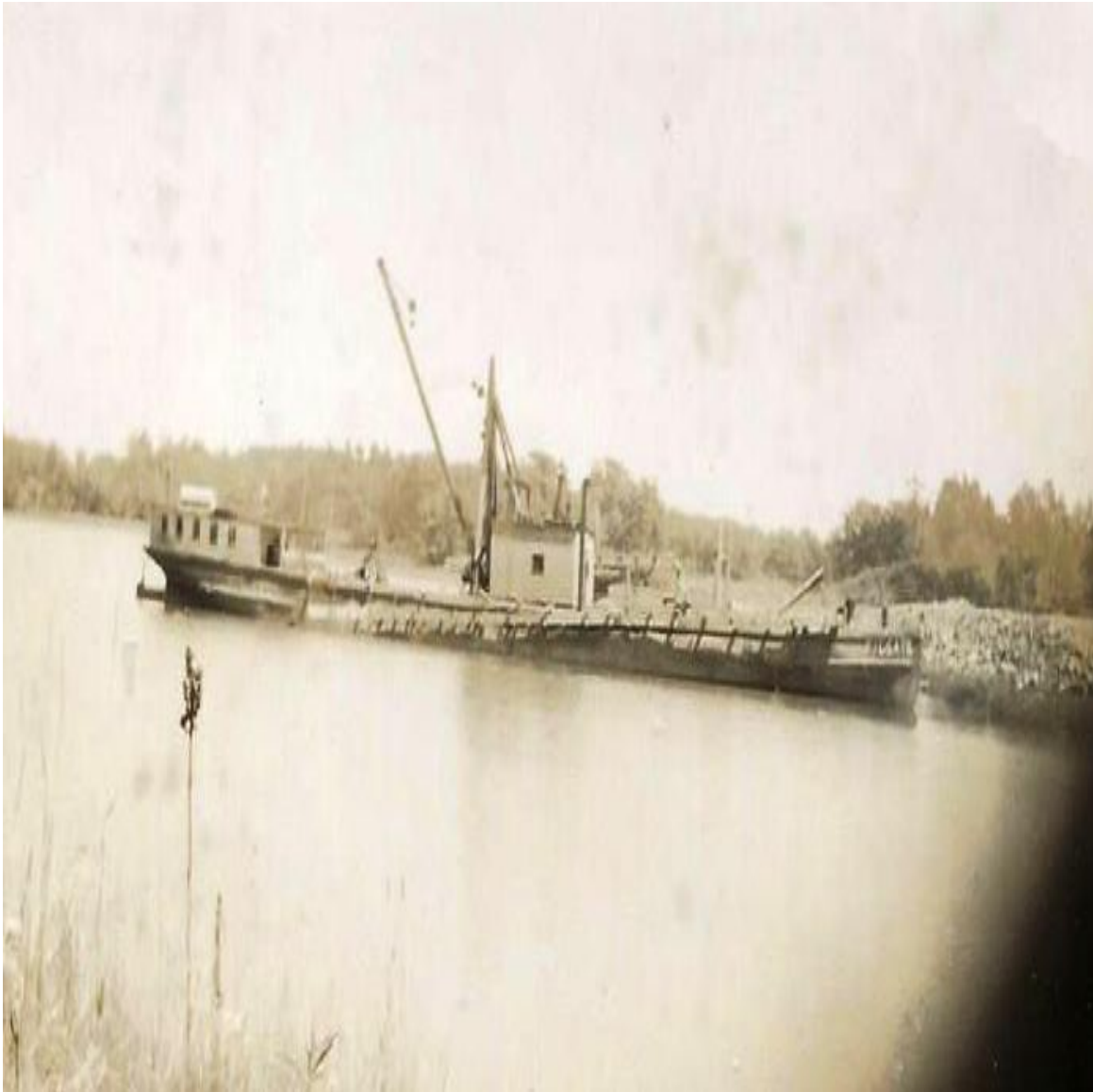
Construction Rubble along Bay Trail July 2017



Too heavy and clumsy to move to another job site. It has been gathering rust and moss for the past 75 years. Using tents and one large old wooden frame building for sleeping, the crew did regular dynamiting as they blasted a granite ridge that ran from the farm to the river. Much stone was also harvested from an outcrop located just west of today's Landon Bay Bridge.

Many tons of granite rubble were poured in the bay preparing supports for each end of the bridge. The rubble just kept disappearing into the silty bottom of the bay. The ridge was blasted, rubble loaded and dumped, day after day. At one point a dredge worked the bay attempting to find a hard bottom.

Dredging Landon Bay circa 1938



As was the custom, my mother and I spent most of the summer at our cottage on Landon Bay. My mother prepared meals for some of the men from the construction camp who were working on building the road in the Landon Bay area. My uncle's cottage was located on Halstead Bay Lookout Point. That point was expropriated to become a wayside park. The cottage was moved on the ice to its present location on Landon Bay and is still in use. A sloping, west facing granite rock is still there surrounded by a natural sand bottom. It continues to attract swimmers all summer.

Parkway History (circa 1937) by Grant Haskins

Edited for length & reprinted with permission of the Haskins Family

Campbell Construction built camp #1 at Landon Bay. It consisted of sleeping units, dining and cooking shack, blacksmith shop, horse stable, garage and other facilities.. The automotive fleet consisted of red Ford trucks and black Ford cars. The wood cutters, clearing the right of way complete with axes, crosscut saws and horses, led the way. There was a long waiting list of people looking for jobs. The pay rate was thirty-five cents an hour for a nine hour day, including Saturdays. The culvert course came next. This included the underpass for the town line road between Lansdowne and Escott. George Darling of Darlingside refused to sell the land unless they built an underpass at this point large enough to accommodate a wagon load of hay. At the same time work was proceeding on the bridge at Landon Bay. The fill had been extended toward the bridge site from each side, crossing a small island, making it mainland. The bridge was built on the fill on the west side and supported by scows as it was slid across into position. The influx of workers caused a shortage of houses and most that were rented were divided for two or more families. Some built small (living) units that could be taken apart in sections and be moved away.

LANDON BAY VACATION CENTRE and THE BARBARA HECK

FOUNDATION 1965 to 2015

In 1965 six local men led by Gananoque merchant Charlie Donevan, purchased the Cross Farm. They also formed a charitable foundation that was supported by the campground built along the parkway on the west side of Landon Bay. The foundation was named to honor United Empire Loyalist Missionary Barbara Heck, who is acknowledged as the Mother of Methodism in North America. For the next 50 years the Cross Farm underwent considerable changes. As things developed, the Foundation primarily did program planning for the Vacation Centre.

Postcard campground view circa 1970



Camping sites were established along the dirt and gravel road system that ran through the former farm fields. Modern washrooms were constructed along with a managers residence and small store/office building. An Olympic size pool was installed in the mid 1960's. The pool was rebuilt with assistance from the Township and is currently used for the Township Swim Program. Over the years, thousands of local children have learned to swim in this pool. A handicapped accessible garden pavilion was added over the years, and a large meeting hall was designed and constructed to serve the various camp programs.

HALL CONSTRUCTION (1970's)



In 1965 , DuPont Canada built a modern factory on a site in Maitland Ontario. The new factory site included a historic 1790's home that had once belonged to Methodist Missionary Barbara Heck. Mrs. Heck is recognized as being instrumental in founding the Methodist Movement in Ontario. Working in partnership with the United Church of Canada, Landon Bay Vacation Centre was identified as a location to move and store the Heck House for reconstruction. The Barbara Heck Foundation was organized and certified to assist in funding the Heck home project. DuPont Canada arranged to have the Heck House carefully taken apart, each piece was labeled and the entire U.E.L. Homestead structure was shipped to the Landon Bay Vacation Centre. Included with the shipment was a box of photographs showing step by step dismantlement as well as blueprints of the original structure.

Barbara Heck's home built circa 1790



The plan was to have the Heck house rebuilt on the Scenic Parkway facing the river. The Landon Bay Vacation Centre arranged funding to purchase an additional 90 acres just west of the Landon Bay Bridge and north of the parkway. They proposed to use the home as a historical tourist attraction. Toronto Architect, B. Napier Simpson Jr. (a recognized authority in restoration of old buildings) was commissioned to supervise reconstruction of the home. In 1976 a barn being used to store the Heck home timbers, interior pine walls and trim, burned to the ground. The rebuilding project was abandoned, however, using much of the stone from the Heck home foundation, a dry stone bridge and several other stone structures have been built on the property.

As a memorial to this United Empire Loyalist missionary, the hall seen below was named Barbara Heck Hall. Today the hall is used extensively by the Biosphere Nature Camp.



(Below) Kay's Bridge built using some of the Heck Home foundation stone



At the Landon Bay Vacation Centre, a series of hiking trails were established and all trails and back country trail intersections were identified.



Several years ago, a **U.N.E.S.C.O. Man in the Biosphere Plot** was laid out along the trail system to study the biodiversity of the forest. 16 species of mature trees were found on the plot. Colleges, Universities, High Schools, Churches, Senior Citizen groups, Scouting organizations and the Biosphere Nature Camp have made excellent use of the property for study and recreation during the past half century. Many trails and bridges are named after long time volunteers who helped create the hiking trails in use today. Trail intersections often have names of wildlife found on the property.



The Frontenac Arch Biosphere Nature Camp

The F.A.B. Nature Camp has operated successfully on the property since 2004, camp children enjoy the trails, swimming pool and when needed, a warm dry place to gather in Barbara Heck Hall..



Each summer hundreds of children get a taste of environmental education and a better understanding of many of Mother Natures wonders, while attending the Biosphere Nature Camp.



LANDON BAY TRAIL SYSTEM

With thanks to literally hundreds of volunteers the property has become a wilderness experience for visitors from around the world



THE NAME CHANGE

BARBARA HECK FOUNDATION BECOMES

THE FRONTENAC ARCH BIOSPHERE FOUNDATION.

Some time ago, The Barbara Heck Foundation opened talks with Parks Canada concerning a transfer of their property to the Thousand Island National Park. Canada Revenue Agency accepted a name change request from The Barbara Heck Foundation which seamlessly became the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Foundation on February 18, 2014. The Heck Foundation Directors all took the same positions within the new organization. The newly named F.A.B. Foundation agreed to continue operating several of the established summer programs as well as maintaining the trail system under a Parks Canada License of Occupation, which is renewed annually. In 2015, the Landon Bay Vacation Centre camping facilities were shut down. Presently (summer 2017) the Nature Camp, Township Swim Program and Trail systems are all operational under the F.A.B. Foundation guidance in cooperation with Parks Canada.

The property today (summer 2017)



When John Cross Jr. passed away and his daughter moved on, the house he built was used by the Cross family as a rental property until the Heck Foundation took over. The Foundation used it for special events as well as a guest house for Landon Bay Vacation Centre and Barbara Heck Foundation visiting dignitaries . It too has fallen into disrepair. It was taken “off the grid” a few years ago and for safety reasons is now

officially closed and secured. This home is also awaiting its fate while Parks Canada plans for the future.



This photo looks north from the center of what was the Landon Bay Vacation Centre, note John Cross Jr. home in the center background, next door to the Barbara Heck Hall Nature Camp. Modern washroom facilities are located in the building on the right and a pool used for Township Swim programs is on the left. Across the fields behind the Hall, the cemetery on Cross Cemetery Road, is still accepting burials, 156 years after Benjamin Cross allowed the first on the sandy hill near his home.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Parks Canada continue to plan on which buildings will stay and what will disappear over the next few years. Several million dollars have been budgeted for a complete makeover of the property. Some of the photos and stories I have included on these pages will hopefully, serve as a reminder of what became of Asahel Kyes original 1804 crown grant. The Cross Family farmed and cared for the property until 1965 when Charlie Donevan formed the Barbara Heck Foundation and turned things from farmland to a vacation center for the next 50 years.

Over the next few years, Parks Canada will put their stamp on the property. The people of Canada will have the use of Asahel Kyes Crown Grant for the rest of eternity. I think Asahel Kyes and John Cross would be pleased.

Osprey nest viewing platform on Cross Cemetery Road

built on the former site of Benjamin Cross Barn

