

RUTH MARTIN PAPERS

Ruth Campbell was born in 1908. She was a teacher at Eastern High School of Commerce in Toronto. She had the summers off and thought it would be ideal to work at a summer resort. She applied for a position at Bigwin Inn. Charles Orlando Shaw interviewed her.

Mr. Shaw asked Ruth Campbell if she could type. She responded, no. Mr. Shaw said don't worry, we will find you something. He asked if she had waited on tables – and again her response was an apologetic no. Mr. Shaw reassured her he would find something. The inquiries continued and Ruth's response continued to be, I am sorry but I have no experience.

Mr. Shaw recognized her graceful demeanor and said I think I have something for you. I need a Hostess for the Marine Dining Room. Ruth's modest response was "I am not elegantly dressed". She is remembered as being dressed in flowing chiffon ball gowns each evening.

Ruth Campbell was the Bigwin Dining Room Hostess from the mid-thirties until 1941. She was elegant, charming and a wonderful conversationalist. She was the quintessential Bigwin hostess; tall and thin, perfect carriage with premature grey hair styled in a french roll.

Ronald Martin was a Canadian born, insurance executive. He and his first wife had a son and daughter and they resided in Connecticut. Each summer they spent a month at Bigwin for their holiday. After Ron's first wife passed, he returned to Bigwin alone where he met Ruth Campbell. They were married in the early forties.

In 1944 the Martin's purchased a lot at 1012 Bigwin View Lane and built a home oriented to capture the sunrise and sunset from their living room and dining room windows. The open concept interior has wood panelling, a stone fireplace in the living room and an enclosed porch facing the lake. Stone pathways were built from the boathouse to the cottage. The Martin's spent six months in Connecticut and six months at Lake of Bays. Ron Martin was a keen gardener.

One summer Bill Hamilton, next door neighbour at Tyree Cottage decided to cut down a tree on his property. He carefully measured and calculated how the tree would fall. Bill proceeded to saw the tree, and contrary to his plan, the tree pivoted and landed right in the middle of the Martin's beautiful flower garden – decimating it. Bill Hamilton, practically in tears, went to profusely apologize to the Martin's. Ron Martin matter of factly said, Bill accidents happen. The garden was getting a little too much for me to manage anyway. Nothing more was said about the incident.

Mary Findlay and Ruth Martin were good friends. They both were interested in history and decided to document the history of Lake of Bays. Mary Findlay agreed to record the history of the south shore and Ruth Martin would do the north shore. Mary Lynn Findlay, published *Lures and Legends of Lake of Bays* in 1971. We owe Ruth Martin and Mary Findlay a tremendous debt of gratitude that they had the foresight to pursue their interest and document the pioneer stories.

Ruth Martin's research encompassed 900 typewritten pages of the history of Lake of Bays in four volumes written between 1966 and 1974. She also conducted 55 taped interviews and drives with children and grandchildren of the first settlers in the Township including: Boothby, Robertson, Cunnington, Chevalier, Birk, Dale, Corbett and Tapley descendants.

Illness prevented Ruth Martin from publishing her labour of love. The Papers were put in safekeeping with her stepdaughter, Annette Benson.

Former staff and guests of Bigwin often stopped Ruth Martin on the street in Huntsville to recollect about the 'glory days of Bigwin Inn'. She was always delighted to speak to people about Bigwin Inn.

In 1995 Mary Findlay's daughter Jane Tate and her nephew Lee Van Ormer were gifted the four precious loose-leaf notebooks and priceless interviews of early descendants of the first settlers of Lake of Bays Township. They entrusted the material to the Lake of Bays Heritage Foundation for publication. The original transcripts are now archived at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room, Roberts Library, University of Toronto.

The Ruth Martin Papers have been photocopied unedited and are available for viewing at the Dorset, Dwight, and Baysville libraries. Each set comprises four books of textual material and one book containing 186 photographs of residents including Chief Bigwin and early buildings.

Ruth Martin sold the beloved cottage in 1980. Ruth Campbell Martin died in Toronto in 1996.