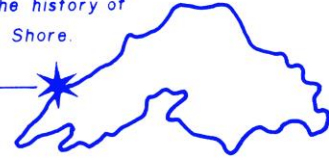


**BAY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 33  
Silver Bay, Minnesota 55614

*Preserving and  
recording the history of  
the mid-North Shore.*



Volume 39

Issue 2

Fall 2023

As this newsletter is being written, it is a lot less like fall and more like midsummer. Our fall annual get-together, however, is scheduled and the details are below.

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BAY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Wednesday, October 4, 2023**

**\$25.00 Chicken Alfredo Luncheon (tax and tip included)**

**11 am Check-in, Noon meal, 1 pm Program**

**Silver Bay Golf Clubhouse**

**Reservations must be made by Wednesday, September 27, 2023**

To reserve, call Ruth Koepke (218-226-3887) or Marge Jorgenson (218-226-3032)

**Guest Speaker: Howie Sulheim**

**“A Little History of East Beaver Bay”**

**THE PUBLIC IS INVITED!!**

**Door prizes! Rocky Taconite merchandise will be for sale!** We hope you can join us. Center visitation and sales numbers will be presented from the 2023 season.

Thank you to our paid staff and volunteers who kept the Center open Tuesdays thru Saturdays each week.

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## Website News:

The new website for the Bay Area Historical Society has been launched. We invite you to visit us at [bayareahistoricalsociety.com](http://bayareahistoricalsociety.com). Our intention is to add collected stories and photos of our history as time goes on.

Of course, YOU are the source of our history. Our website can only be as good as the content you provide. We invite you to scan your photos and email them to us with your stories.

Our email address is: [info@bayareahistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@bayareahistoricalsociety.com)

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## Silver Bay News:

**School Renovation** - You can't help but notice all the work being done and the changes taking place in Silver Bay. The **William M. Kelley School project** is well on its way. The project will add a new Art/Band/Choir wing, a new secure entrance on Banks Blvd, replace deteriorating exterior features and add many interior upgrades.



This is the first major renovation of Kelley school since 2003. At that time, a \$1.3 million upgrade was approved in a county wide referendum that also included a new high school for Two Harbors and the subsequent closing of Mary MacDonald and John A. Johnson elementary schools. George Starkovich, principal of Kelley at the time, described the school remodel as complicated with one phase needing to be done before another phase could be started. "It's like looking for your tackle box in the garage when you want to go fishing and then you end up cleaning the whole garage before you can go." Major changes to Kelley school in 2003 included a new elementary gym, new bus drop off on Banks Blvd, remodeled locker rooms and pool area and an updated exercise room. The student designed playground was also part of the overall project. The MacDonald school closed at the end of the 2003 school year.

**Library Renovation** - Flags marking the expansion of the **Silver Bay Public Library** are up and its great to see the fruition of a 20-year campaign to add to and upgrade the library. Expansion plans (expected in

2024) include a new entrance, creation of meeting rooms and other interior elements, improved ADA accessibility and a new roof. Back in 2002, the architectural firm of Stanius Johnson had come up with three different options for a library expansion. On August 5, 2002, the middle option (for \$829,642.00) was approved but was dependent on grant money being found to finance it. Evidently, that plan did not come to fruition.

**Golf Course Housing** – Up to 40 lots could become available for housing near the Silver Bay Golf Course if all goes well. The golf course was built by Reserve Mining Company in the 1950's on Reserve property. In 1993, Cyprus Northshore Mining, then owners of the golf course, agreed to sell the property for \$130,000. The IRRRB okayed the grant application for the purchase. By 1999 Silver Bay was looking to expand the course from 9 holes to 18 and also, to build up to 130 housing units around the course. This was to be an \$8,000,000 project. While that project never took place, the current project looks more promising.

The **Silver Bay Industrial Park** has been around since 1985 when Reserve Mining Company agreed to sell 77 acres to Lake County for \$38,500. Reserve Vice-President, Doug Carlson, said "the property was transferred to the county free and clear with no strings".

By the late 1990's, the industrial park had grown to 110 acres with additional purchases of property. In May of 1997, 24 representatives from city and state organizations met to discuss the future of the business park. Former County Commissioner, Lloyd Houle, stated "We've been spinning our wheels. Now we hope to get something moving." In 1998, Silver Bay "sold" it's first parcel of 17.2 acres in the industrial park to the Minnesota Department of Transportation for a highway 61 realignment. The business park property sold to the state for \$123,000. Park property had been purchased from the county for \$78,000 in the early 1990's but payment to the county was deferred until parcels were sold.

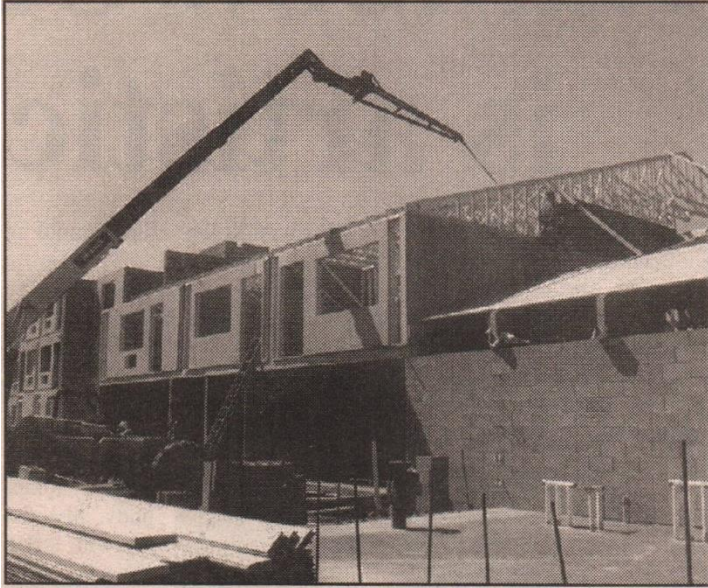


RESERVE MINING CO. vice president Doug Carlson passes the deed to 77 acres of property in Silver Bay to county commissioner Lloyd Houle (right). The land was purchased for \$38,500 for development into an industrial park at Silver Bay.

DEC 25 1985

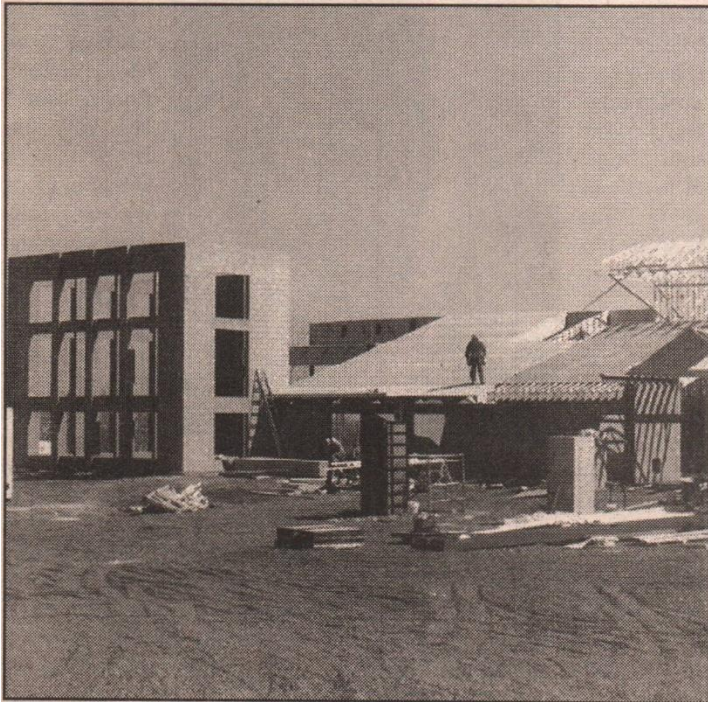


## SILVER BAY AMERICINN



Submitted photos

The new AmericInn under construction in the business park at Silver Bay is coming along nicely as these photos show. Though no firm date for the grand opening has been set, the target date is Aug. 1. "We are doing things now to button it up and make it weather resistant. Once it's closed in, the weather won't be a factor," said Peggi Potter, vice president of Superior View Properties, the owner of the AmericInn. The water slide area is located in the tower. The Splash Adventure enhanced pool area is a trademark of AmericInn.



The first "real" investment in the industrial park occurred when Superior View Properties LLC broke ground in October of 2002 for a 61-room hotel (an AmericInn). Superior View Partners LLC investors were primarily area business owners: Chuck and Peggi Potter, Dan and Donna Knaffla, Bob and Jean McCurdy, Bob and Paula Ross, Bernie and Brian Zupancich, Gary and Betty Zinter and the LeBlanc's (Wade, Pat, Mark, and Norb Jr). The Silver Bay AmericInn converted to Black Beach Inn by GrandStay on August 1, 2023.

Black Beach for years was known only locally but as its presence became known, visitation increased. Black Beach Park and Campground officially opened in May of 2020, but it wasn't without a bump in the road to opening. Northshore Mining attempted to close off the area with no trespassing signs in 2013 citing liability issues. Black Beach also includes two other beaches: Agate Beach and Peach Beach. In 2016, Northshore Mining agreed to a proposal in partnership with the State of Minnesota and the City of Silver Bay for the property that paved the way for the city owned, \$2.5 million Black Beach Campground which has proven enormously popular.

# What happened to the old fish house in Beaver Bay?

After seeing a Facebook posting of the fish house property, I, Ed Maki, had to take a drive down there to see for myself. The following is from an article Maggie King had written for the summer 2017 issue of the Tofte Historical Society newsletter:

## NORTH SHORE COMMERCIAL FISHING MUSEUM JOURNAL *Published by the Tofte Historical Society Incorporated, a non-profit corporation*

VOLUME 26

SUMMER 2017

ISSUE 2

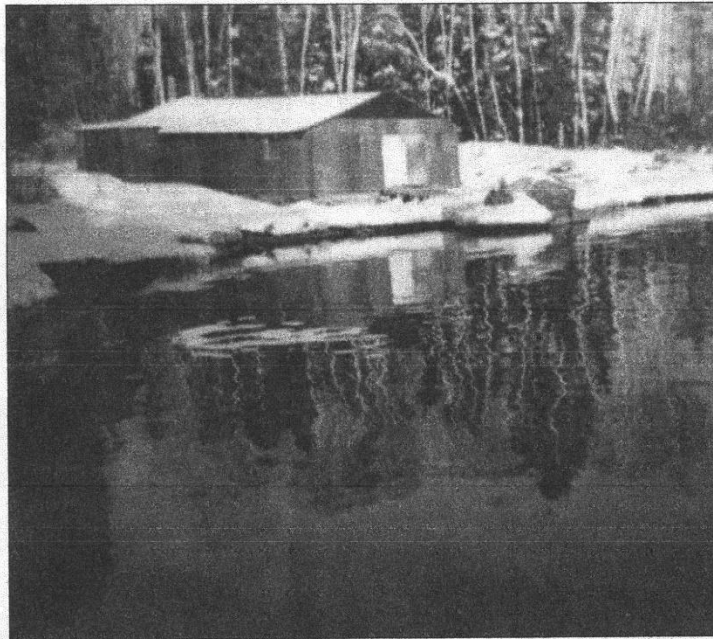
### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DISPUTE OVER AN OLD FISH HOUSE IN BEAVER BAY?

by Maggie King

In August 2017, the Tofte Historical Society received a request from the Beaver Bay Club for a 5-year easement on the north side of the club's property to install the use of an access road to the shore. Unless something changes, the case will be decided in 2018.

In an attempt to work out a more amicable resolution, the case was set aside when the Beaver Bay Club got a 5-year easement on the north side of the club's property to install the use of an access road to the shore. Unless something changes, the case will be decided in 2018.

A short history of the fish house seems appropriate here. Interviews with both Mickey Lornntson and Marga-



Old fish house, year unknown.

ret Lornntson Carlson gave more clarity to the story. Mickey (Martin) and Margaret are the children of Conrad Lornntson, a son of an early fisherman-pioneer to the North Shore, Martin Lornntson. Grandfather Martin first came to America with other Norwegians to work on corporate farms in North Dakota in the 1880s. There he met his future wife, Hannah Hansen, whom he married in 1886. They returned to Norway because

substantial construction because the men just wanted a shelter from rain and snow. Caught in the power of a Nor'easter in 1911, Martin tragically was drowned on his 25th wedding anniversary, while pulling his trout nets into his boat. He was only 50 feet from shore, with another fisherman in the boat trying to help him. Martin, Sr., and his fish house were lost, but the helper survived.

"he didn't like working for others", Mickey said, and while there worked to get a stake. They returned to America by way of Superior, Wisconsin, and then to Two Harbors, where their third child, Conrad, was born in 1896.

Martin and Hannah arrived in Beaver Bay in 1896, with a boat and ready to fish. He built a fish house on the Beaver River side of the point in East Beaver Bay. The fish houses were not made with







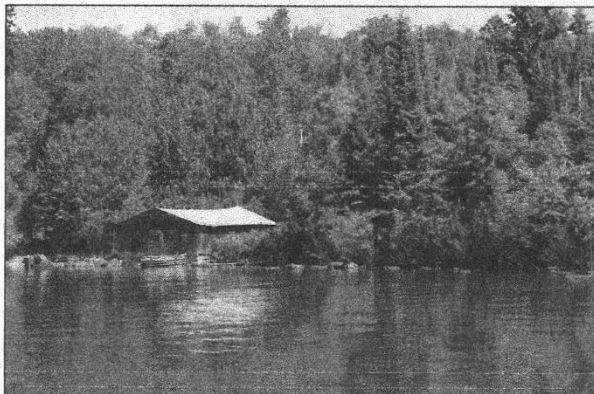
Conrad Lortson with his boat

According to Mickey, in the early days fishermen squatted on land close to shore, not needing a license nor in fear of losing their houses and gear to lumber companies cutting there. The loggers would not go that close to the lake. Conrad and his brother, Louis, built a typical fishing shelter made of log after their father drowned in 1911. The fish house that is in contention between the Andersons and the Beaver Bay Club was built by Conrad with his brother Louis and his son Mickey in 1944 (at the same location) after a powerful Nor'easter in 1943-44 blew into the open doors of their log fish house, taking the building and everything with it. The Lortson fish house standing now was allowed to be built on Club property with a hand-shake agreement between the Club officials and a Lortson family member for a 99-year lease. As a gesture of good will and support, the Club officials wanted the Lortsons and other local fishermen to fish from there.

In 1973, Conrad leased the 1944 fish house to Bob Midbrod. Bob stored fishing gear and boats there while fishing. In an interview with Midbrod's daughter, Sandy, and with the Lortsons, it was learned that the contents of this Lortson fish house were bought after Bob died, by Steve Hurd, whose mother was a cousin of Bob. Steve died a year later which sent the contents back to the Midbrods. Sandy said there are some hand-made treasures they want to remove from there in the near future.

According to Mickey, additions were made to the contested fish house: a winch built in the NW corner, along with electricity added to run a scaler. A long-time Beaver Bay resident, Herbie Clow, put a lean-to on one side of the building.

If this 69-year old fish house could talk, there could be some interesting tales to hear, don't you think?



Old fish house 2017

On October 5, 2021, Clifton Hull from Mendota Heights filed the paperwork on behalf of the Beaver Bay Club to have the fish house removed. The paperwork went before the City Council on October 12, 2021. In the fall of 2022, Brandon Olson, caretaker of the Beaver Bay Club, tore down the old fish house at the end of Fish House Road (Edith Street).

I (Ed) have my own memories of the fish house growing up in Beaver Bay which included many hours down on the fish house beach and Lake Superior shoreline.

Sometimes a walk would get me there but occasionally I would ride my bike down the steep road. At age 10 or 11, I was riding down the road with a pair of open toed shower sandals on when the brakes gave out on my bike. It was a fast wild ride while dragging one foot trying to stop. The stop at the end was abrupt and the result was a lost toenail.

With friends, I would explore the shore in both directions but on the Beaver Bay Club beach we would keep a sharp look out for Roy Hangartner who was the caretaker of the club property. We would sometimes try to dam up the small creek that ran through Beaver Bay to Lake Superior near the fish house not giving any thought to John Slater's outhouse which was built over the creek. On really hot days we would try swimming in the lake, but most swimming was in the Beaver River which seemed warm as bathwater compared to the lake.

Written by Ed Maki, Jr.

