

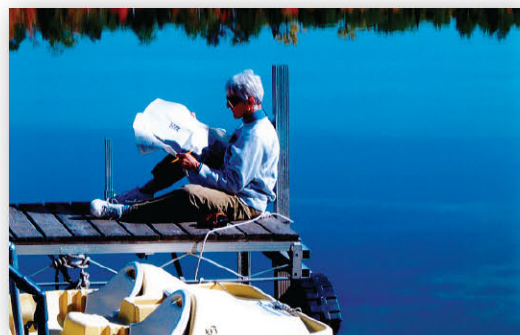
Lake Placid: A Place of Peace

By Sister Theresa Spinler

Lake Placid (its original name was Lake Sayer) has been a lovely, quiet, heavenly place for all of us since 1962. It has been a vacation place and also a spiritual retreat sanctuary for many of us. We have had many years to enjoy it, but as of this past August it is no longer our special getaway place. We sold it because too few Sisters were able to use it and the upkeep in both expense and human energy grew too costly.

The original acreage was 342 acres, purchased by Mother Athanasius Braegelman, Sister Mercedes Ryan, and Sister Monica Simon. The deed says it was purchased in October 1962, probably from the U.S. Steel Company. Already in 1961, lumber had been ordered from the Sather Company in Two Harbors to construct the cabins. The main and secondary cabin had room to sleep sixteen people. In November of 1962, a transformer and meter were installed, and by the end of December the construction of the two cabins and a small storage shed with a lean-to for firewood was finished.

An attempt was made to dig a well, but was abandoned when it was still dry at a depth of sixty-five feet. Instead, a pipe extending into the lake with accompanying filter and pump provided water for the cabins. In 1998, the pipeline to the lake failed and a new well reached water at a depth of one hundred sixty-five feet.



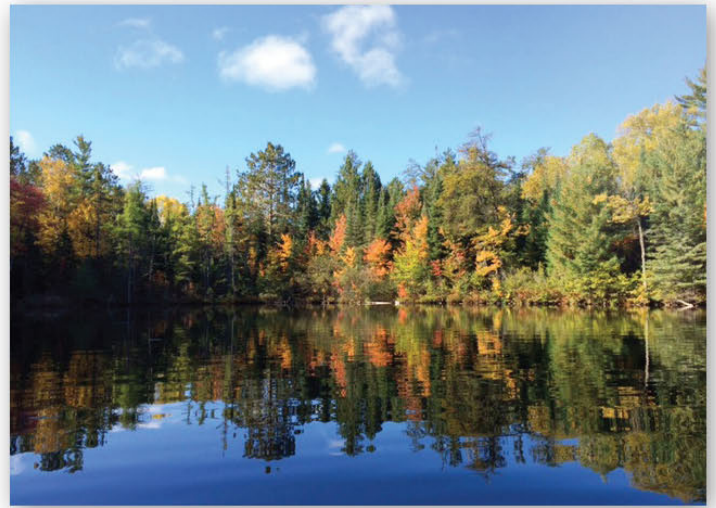
In 1999, I was asked to chair a committee to remodel the Lake Placid buildings. We reinforced the 72-foot-long roof of the main cabin, put in air chutes and insulation, remodeled the bathroom, rebuilt the fireplace to make it usable, put in new floor tiles, and replaced the shingles and ceiling tiles. The small cabin had become a home for mice, so we repaired and shingled the roof, installed double entry doors, and turned it into a storage shed for equipment. We also built a gazebo, a most welcome addition. There we spent many hours enjoying the serenity, the beauty and songs of birds, and the whispering wind in the pines while we prayed, reflected, visited with one another, enjoyed a meal or read a good book.

In 2008, we purchased a small pontoon that was easy to operate. The next year we were challenged by mischievous beavers who chewed the wires on the pontoon and sharpened their teeth on the rudder of the paddleboat. That was not good news for us – or the beavers! Lake Placid has always required a lot of upkeep, including mowing the grass, clearing the road of snow and fallen trees, making sure the beavers did not dam up the road – which they tried to do every fall and spring – keeping the heat functioning and pipes unfrozen, and so on. The beauty of this peaceful place made the time and effort spent in upkeep all worth it!

So many memories are connected with this dream place. It offered opportunities for hiking, swimming, fishing, and biking, and rides around the lake by paddleboat, pontoon, rowboat, or canoe. It was indeed a place of welcome renewal for soul and body. In the beginning, so many Sisters wished to enjoy Lake Placid that each person could enjoy it only one week a year. Two Sisters lived there throughout the summer to prepare meals for everyone who came and to keep the cabins clean.

Every season had its special beauty. The deciduous trees in their autumn glory, intermingled with the evergreens, were mirrored in the quiet waters. Our hearts filled with both wonder and sadness as we watched formations of geese begin their journey south, listened to their honking calls, and anticipated the departure of a beloved pair of loons each fall. Deep blankets of snow and the ice-covered lake offered skiing and snow shoeing. Spring brought the excitement of watching the break-up of ice, welcoming the return of birds enjoying the feeder filled with seed, and rejoicing in the appearance of a pair of loons who would make Lake Placid their home for another season.

Summer bathed us in its warmth and gentle breezes, its abundance of wild flowers and fruit, and the loons caring for their young and hearing their haunting calls throughout the day and into the night.



We have all had a variety of experiences at Lake Placid. I remember hiking the trails in the woods and getting lost twice. Once it was in the winter and another time in the fall. I climbed the highest spruce tree available in order to see the lake but I only saw more treetops! Eventually my sense of direction or my Guardian Angel helped me find the way. Sister Eugenia Daly was not as fortunate. While picking blueberries one summer, she became lost and spent the night in the woods, viciously attacked by mosquitoes. We had to call in the sheriff with a search party to rescue her.

I remember the excitement and struggle of pulling in a big Northern pike, then leaving some Northerns on a line tied to the dock and finding them all eaten by snapping turtles. In the spring, the snappers dug holes on the sandy road leading into the cabin to lay their eggs. They were not quick to leave the road as we drove or walked near them. Once I put a thick branch near the head of a snapper and with one *snap* the branch was in two pieces!

I remember one frightening night in the cabin. It sounded like someone was trying to open the locked door, so we crept to the kitchen and armed ourselves with the sharpest knives we could find for protection. When the rattling subsided, we peeked out the window and behold there was a huge black bear circling the cabin. To our great relief, he or she spotted the bird feeder and enjoyed its contents before lumbering back into the forest.

I vividly remember the beauty of the night sky, especially on cloudless nights. In the midst of the deep stillness all around, one could clearly see the stars in their constellations, a wonder not possible to behold in the city full of lights. The Northern Lights would perform with awesome flashing colors, and the sounds of night in the midst of such encircling stillness filled one with a profound sense of peace and wonder at this vast expanse of God's presence and greatness.

Our hearts are filled with a mixture of great joy, gratitude, and sadness as we say good-bye to Lake Placid. We rejoice that we could enjoy the beauty and wonders of creation with which Lake Placid blessed us. We give thanks for the wisdom and foresight of our community and its leaders as well as for God's Providence that led to its purchase. Now we find comfort in knowing that we can draw inspiration and renewal from this holy place of peace at any time, for the gift of Lake Placid now lives in our hearts' memory.

Lake Placid was purchased by a Northland resident and his family who have great respect and appreciation for this beautiful place. They plan to preserve its unique beauty and honor the story it tells.