

A SHORT HISTORY OF CASTLE ISLAND

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PHOTOGRAPH 1 (PICTURED ON COVER): AERIAL VIEW OF CASTLE ISLAND,
1979

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In June 1987 I was contacted by Gordon Mowat to investigate the possibility of writing a history of Castle Island; is there anything worthwhile to write about, he asked. I began researching his proposal by visiting the island; I am not sure what I was looking for - I just felt that if something about the island appealed to me, then I would pursue this project.

I must say that the island was immediately intriguing. It had about it an air of mystery and a sense of the past. So many communities in Alberta seem to be devoid of history because their past has been physically destroyed. Castle Island, on the other hand, appeared different. Perhaps it was Castle Lodge or the steps of the lodge leading to the lake, perhaps it was the landscaping of the island with the park in the center which spoke of community and history, perhaps it was the name of the island itself, or a combination of all these factors - in any case I was enticed by the island. My research about the island's many and interesting residences only strengthened these initial feelings. I hope that the reader of this short history will be as delighted by the people who once lived on the Island and who subsequently gave the island its character as I am.

Most of the research for this project was done at the Provincial Archives of Alberta and the Archives of the City of Edmonton and I am indebted to the archivists at both institutions for their kind assistance. I would also like to thank Gordon Mowat whose interest and support made this project possible and who looked through the office records of the Summer Village of Castle Island for materials relevant to this history. Special thanks to Isabel Bull for sharing her writings and reminiscences with me; they really enlivened this history.

Photographs 3, 4 and 5 and Map 1 were obtained from the Provincial Archives and are published with their permission. Photograph 2, 5, 6, and 8 were provided by Isabel and Frederick Bull and Photograph 1 appears by courtesy of Ron Helland. Map 2 was obtained from the files of the Summer Village of Castle Island, and was drawn by L.O. Olsen.

I. INTRODUCTION

From the late nineteenth century, Castle Island has been a summer playground, at times for the nobility and well-to-do of Edmonton, at times for the average citizen and local population. The island looks and feels like a world apart, and it does have a unique and most interesting history, a history that changed and evolved as the people who owned the island changed.

Castle Island may have been a place of importance to the Wood Cree who first lived in this area, but we cannot be certain of this. What we do know is that while the surrounding area was being settled by Metis and a few English settlers in the late nineteenth century, Castle Island - then Isle Constance - was being developed by Count Charles de Cazes, a nobleman of French ancestry, who initiated the construction of a great stone house, a house which came to be known as the castle and after which the island eventually took its name.

After de Cazes's death this great project was abandoned and for a few years the island passed through several owners until Ben Berths (Benoit Berthoux), a local small businessman bought it and rented it out as a summer picnic and boating area for tourists from Edmonton and the surrounding area.

It was not until the island was bought by Shorty Martin, a prosperous businessman from Edmonton, that once again the island entered a period of refinement and splendor. Martin had the island completely landscaped and had an Edmonton architect design a large lodge for his private use and a couple of smaller cabins for his guests; because of the dangerous state of the "castle," Martin had the house dismantled.

When Shorty Martin died, the island became the property of his widow, Brownie Martin, who maintained it until old age forced her to sell. She was very concerned to sell it to what she considered "proper people" - people who would maintain the island as it was and who knew how to do things right. In 1951 she found the proper people in the persons of Frederick and Isabel Bull and she sold them the island with the request that they try to maintain its character.¹

After several years the Bulls were forced by financial circumstances to subdivide it into smaller lots and in 1953 the island was divided into 16 lots (two of these lots were later divided into two and three lots making 21 lots in total). In 1955 the island received the status of a summer village.

¹. According to Mrs. Bull, Brownie Martin hoped that the Island would be controlled by one owner who would prevent its commercialization and would maintain it as a secluded summer resort.

II. CASTLE ISLAND AND LAC STE. ANNE

Castle Island is located just off the edge of the northeastern shore of Lac Ste. Anne, a lake that is and was known as a mysterious place that can suddenly change from a peaceful lake to a stormy sea, a lake that can be suddenly obscured by waves of mist that come as quickly as they disappear. It is a place that has been known by different names to different peoples at different times. Originally, to the Wood Cree,² Lac Ste. Anne was known as the Lake of the Spirits.³ David Thompson, the first surveyor to come through this area in 1801, recorded its original name - Manitou (meaning Spirit) Sakahigan (meaning Lake). This was a sacred place for the Cree, as it is today for their descendents and the Metis. Manitou Sakahigan was first known as

²The first people of the Lac Ste. Anne area were the Wood Cree, most of whom resisted signing any treaty with the Canadian government that would place them on reservations and as a result became supporter of the Big Bear revolt which they joined in 1875. In response they were isolated and reduced to starvation; eventually in 1879 the Wood Cree signed a treaty with the Canadian state and were placed on reservations in the Lac Ste. Anne area. Archives Committee, Lac Ste. Anne Historical Society, West of the Fifth: A History of Lac Ste. Anne Municipality (Edmonton: The Institute of Applied Art, 1959), p. 8.

³Vi Davidson (editor) and Ava Stephenson (co-editor), Spirits and Trails of Lac Ste. Anne (Alberta Beach, Alberta: Alberta Beach and District Pioneers and Archives Society, 1982), p.28.

IV. CASTLE ISLAND: ITS OWNERS

A. Count Charles de Cazes and Constance de Cazes

From the 1890s to late 1940s, Castle Island was the playground of Edmonton's upper crust; even today, when it is the summer home of average citizens, the Island has about it a decidedly romantic and aristocratic air. One source says that it was first a stopping place for native fishermen.¹⁵ But whatever its use originally, its most outstanding use was as a summer resort for the Count (or Viscount) Charles de Cazes and his family.

The Count (for this is how he preferred to be addressed) decided to built a large stone house on this island, a house which was to serve as his summer villa. "To grasp the true significance of the Count's idea, it must be realized that his castle, as he planned it, would have been taller than any building then standing in Alberta. It was to be four stories high. Edmonton was then a village of perhaps fifteen hundred people, with no building better than three stories and most of them built of wood. There was no bridge at Edmonton, and the railraod had just pushed into old Strathcona from the south. Out on his island at Lac Ste.

¹⁵Spirit and Trails, p. 118.

Anne, the Count de Cazes was planning a four-story castle."¹⁶ De Cazes was a huge man - six feet tall and weighting over 250 pounds - who was known for his drinking, flamboyant manner, lavish receptions, saskatoon wine and saskatoon vineyard and French manners. It is also rumored that at one time in his career de Cazes was tarred and feathered, but we do not know for what reason.¹⁷

Information about Count Charles de Cazes is sketchy and contradictory. It is known that Charles de Cazes was born in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France in 1853, that he and his family came to Canada in 1858, that he was the youngest son of Count Charles de Cazes, and that he had one brother and two sisters.¹⁸

There are two versions of why the de Cazes came to Canada. One version tells us that the de Cazes family found itself isolated after devotion to the republican Italian nationalist Garibaldi.¹⁹ Another version tells us that the family feared republicans and

¹⁶Tony Cashman More Edmonton Stories (Edmonton: Edmonton Institute of Applied Art, 1958), p. 80.

¹⁷More Edmonton Stories, pp. 77-80; Spirit and Trails, p. 118-120; Conversation with Margaret Greer, Doug Babcock, Historic Sites Service, June 1984; Barnett, Vicki, "A Viscount's Dream Now Just Pile of Stones," Edmonton Journal, 27 May 1975.

¹⁸Canadian Men and Women of the Time, 1898 (University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 257-258; "Viscount C. de Caze," Edmonton Bulletin, 11 July 1898, p. 85; Spirit and Trails, p. 118; More Edmonton Stories, p. 77.

¹⁹"Saga of the North," Notes on Viscount Charles de Caze and the Bird Family, #83.184.

revolution in France in the mid-nineteenth century, recalling the fate that had befallen their family in the Great French revolution (some of the family's ancestors had been beheaded).²⁰ For whatever reason, the family - the father and his four children - came to Canada in 1858 and settled in Quebec. The father became a wealthy landowner - he owned large tracts of land in the eastern townships - and was elected first to the old Canadian Assembly and later to the first Canadian parliament; in fact he was the first Frenchman by birth to be elected to parliament.²¹

Charles's brother, Paul de Cazes, was a prominent barrister, journalist and civil servant for the Quebec and Canadian governments. Paul was born in Brittany in 1841 and studied at L'Institution Lorient and the Polytechnic in Paris before coming to Canada. Later he owned and edited La Nation and was a contributor to Le Monde in Paris. He practised law in St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, with his brother-in-law, the Honourable H. Mercier, who was also a member of parliament. Paul de Cazes represented Canada in Paris from 1874 to 1879. Upon his return he began a lengthy and distinguished career as a Quebec civil servant in various departments. During his lifetime he was honored by the French, Canadian and Quebec governments, both for

²⁰More Edmonton Stories, p. 77 and Spirit and Trails, p. 118.

²¹ Canadian Men and Women of the Time, 1898, p. 257-258.

his service and for his writing - he was the author of a number of articles and books about Canada.²² Paul, as the oldest son, inherited the title Count from his father. A staunch Liberal, he did not use his title.²³

Charles, whose rightful title should have been Viscount, became a westerner and a Conservative. Since he came to Canada as a young child (he was five years old), he was educated at St. Hyacinth's College in Quebec. In the early 1870s he served as a lieutenant in one of the provisional battalions in Winnipeg.²⁴

In Winnipeg Charles married a wealthy widow, Elizabeth Margaret Bird Griffin, with whom he had one daughter - Mary Constance. One account says that Eliza Margaret was young when Charles married her;²⁵ another account says that she was born in 1839 which would have made her 14 years older than her husband.²⁶ Eliza Margaret Bird Griffin was the daughter of a Hudson's Bay Company chief at York Factory and was educated in England at a girls' boarding school. Her first marriage was to Charles Griffin, a newspaper man from Eastern Canada, with whom she had

²²Canadian Men and Women of the Time, 1898, pp. 257-258.

²³More Edmonton Stories, pp. 77-80.

²⁴"Viscount C. de Caze," Edmonton Bulletin, 11 July 1898, p. 85.

²⁵More Edmonton Stories, p. 78.

²⁶"Birds Point, Round Lake Saskatchewan," Notes on Viscount Charles de Caze.

two sons. One of the sons, a lawyer in Northern Alberta, married his cousin, Mary Bird, a newspaper woman; this created a family scandal.²⁷

After the military forces were disbanded in Winnipeg, Charles de Cazes used his wife's money to establish a development company in Winnipeg, one of whose purchases was some farm land in the Qu'Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan, and a colonization and agricultural syndicate which operated in the Whitewood, Assiniboia area. For a time Charles de Cazes and his family lived in Paris. When his development companies collapsed, all that remained of Charles de Cazes's holdings was the farm in the Qu'Appelle Valley and the family moved there in the mid-1880s to take up farming.²⁸ Shortly thereafter, in 1888, through his connections with the Conservative party and his personal friendship with Jules Royal, the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, the Count was appointed Indian agent in Alberta.²⁹

The Count was the first Indian agent in Alberta and he was responsible for five reservations in and around Edmonton: one reservation was located in what is now the south side of

²⁷More Edmonton Stories, p. 78; Edmonton Bulletin, p. 85; "The Alberta Story", Notes on Viscount Charles de Cazes.

²⁸Edmonton Bulletin, p. 85, and More Edmonton Stories, p. 78.

²⁹More Edmonton Stories, p. 78.

Edmonton, just south of the present University avenue (the old reserve's boundary was made into University avenue which explains why the avenue curves as it does); the other reserves were the Winterburn, Alexander, Wabumum and the Lac Ste. Anne reserves.³⁰

The position of Indian Agent was one of prestige and influence; moreover, it was also extremely well paid. Charles de Cazes's initial salary was \$125.00 a month plus rations for himself, his wife and daughter.³¹ The rations included a quarter of a beef once a month, plus adequate tea, lard and flour for the family. When the Liberals came into power shortly after his appointment, the Count's salary was cut to \$98.00 per month and rations were supplied only for himself. Nonetheless, this was still an extremely generous salary.³²

Charles de Cazes set up his home in Winterburn; Castle Island was to be his summer place. It is said that next to his house he planted rows of saskatoon bushes from which he made wine (there was a wine cellar in his house). He also made use of the area's black currants, raspberries and gooseberries in his winery which was legendary during his lifetime. It appears that the count entertained often and lavishly, treating his guests to roast

³⁰Notes on Viscount Charles de Cazes and the Bird Family, #83.184, Provincial Archives of Alberta; Spirit and Trails, pp. 118-120; Canadian Men and Women of the Time, 1898, pp. 257-258.

³¹Spirits and Trails, p. 118.

³²More Edmonton Stories, p. 78.

pheasant, duck, prairie chicken and buffalo.³³

Charles de Cazes officially purchased Castle Island (then Isle Constance) on 28 June 1896 for three dollars an acre. It is not clear when construction of the island house began, but it is known that he hired a stone mason, by the name of Hill, to construct the walls of the house which were said to be three feet thick and which were made of stones found on the shore of Lac Ste. Anne. Lumber for the floors, windows and doors was hauled from Edmonton from Walter's Mill. It was projected that the house was to be four stories high and that it was to be crowned with a stone battlement that ran around a flat roof.³⁴ Regrettably, in 1898, when the Count died, only two stories of the house had been completed. It had, regardless, such an air of distinction about it that it was cherished as a special place by many people and many travelled to view it. In time the island came to be known as Castle Island. Count Charles de Cazes was 45 years old when he died, reportedly of dropsy brought on by a liver complaint.³⁵

When the Count died the island became the property of his

³³More Edmonton Stories, p. 79, and Spirits and Trails, p. 118.

³⁴Spirits and Trails, p. 28, and More Edmonton Stories, p. 80.

³⁵Edmonton Bulletin, p. 85; Spirits and Trails, p. 28; and More Edmonton Stories, p. 80.

daughter, Constance de Cazes, who at the time of his death was a spinster living in Stony Plain.³⁶ Later Constance became a teacher³⁷ and married a local farmer by the name of Greer.³⁸ (No mention is made of Charles de Cazes's wife at the time of his death; perhaps her death preceded his.) Constance de Cazes remained the owner of the island until 6 August 1910 - at that time she was known as Mary Constance Greer - when she sold the island to Joseph V.E. Carpenter (real estate agent) and Robert Vernon Healthcott (surveyor). They held on to the property for two years when they sold it to Benoit Berthoux, the next major owner of the island.³⁹

³⁶Land Title 21Q, dated 10 December 1897, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, Alberta.

³⁷Lac Ste. Anne Sakahigan, p. 76.

³⁸Notes on Viscount Charles de Cazes.

³⁹Land Titles #57 O, dated 8 March 1887; 21Q, dated 10 December 1897; 156F10, dated 6 August 1910; 157F10, dated 6 August 1910; 20D14, dated 2 December 1910; 231G22, dated 16 October 1912.

C. The Reign of the Martins

In 1930 Castle Island became the property of Shorty and Brownie (Dora) Martin. Shorty Martin was a prosperous businessman from Edmonton; at one time he was the proprietor of the Shasta Cafe, which during its heyday was considered the most elegant cafe in Edmonton. The Martins radically changed Castle Island, from a place with a crumbling "castle" and wild terrain, to an island with well manicured lawns and professionally designed buildings.⁴³

Shorty Martin - his real name was Alphonse Eugene Martin - was born in 1884, probably in Nebraska, USA.⁴⁴ It is not clear when he came to Edmonton, but by 1913 he was listed as the owner of the Pullman Cafe in Edmonton. In 1917 he became the owner of St. James Cafe (between owning the Pullman and the St. James Cafes he worked as a waiter at the Lewis Cafe) and in 1920 he established the Shasta Cafe, an establishment that has had a long, though not always distinguished, life in Edmonton. During the 1920s, when Shorty Martin was its owner the Shasta Cafe was an elite dining establishment in the city. In 1929, Martin sold the Shasta and

⁴³One source states that Castle Lodge, which was built for the Martins, was constructed by two natives from the Lac Ste. Anne area under the supervision of an architect from Morinville. It was made of spruce logs from British Columbia (the logs were acquired from the Catholic Church at Gunn when their project for a new church fell through). Spirits and Trails, p. 119.

⁴⁴"Alphonse Eugene Martin," Edmonton Journal, 5 October 1942, p. 12.

V. THE SUMMER VILLAGE OF CASTLE ISLAND

The Summer Village of Castle Island was officially incorporated on 1 January 1955⁶⁰ and registered on 24 April 1956 at a public hearing held by the Village Council at the home of the secretary-treasurer, Clarence G. Buchta, in Edmonton (11548-78 Avenue).⁶¹ The council held its first statutory meeting on Saturday 20 August 1955 at 8 pm at the home of Frederick Bull on Castle Island. Present at this meeting were Cyril Perry (returning officer), T.D. Bruce (municipal affairs), Clarence Buchta (secretary), and Frederick Bull, Florence Perry and Robert Wishart, who formed the first Council with Fred Bull as the mayor.⁶²

The first residents of the island were the five families who rented summer cottages from the Bulls - the Perries on lot 12, the Buchtas on lot 10, the McLennans on lot 9, the Wisharts on

⁶⁰"Auditor's Financial Statements 1955-1962, Summer Village of Castle Island," Provincial Archives of Alberta, #74.174/477.

⁶¹"Form of Statutory Declaration, Summer Village of Castle Island," Provincial Archives of Alberta, #71.80/11.54.

⁶²"Minutes of the Summer Village of Castle Island, 1955-1987," Records of the Summer Village of Castle Island.

lot 3, and Ken Alpaugh on lot 5 - and of course the Bulls.⁶³

In 1954 they were joined by Austen H. Anderton on lot 4;⁶⁴ in 1955 by Stanley Grasdahl on lot 2⁶⁵ and Lloyd Quinn on lot 6.⁶⁶ In 1956 William and Rose Garvin and Eugene and Irene Alpaugh joined the island community.⁶⁷

Many of the residents of Castle Island voluntarily serve their community as members of its council, as mayor and as the secretary-treasurer. From the formation of the Summer Village four people have held the position of secretary-treasurer (now known as municipal administrator). They have been: C. Buchta

⁶³Caveat #1384JS, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 18 June 1954; Land Title #198Y157, registered at the Land Titles Office, 2 March 1957; Caveat #1908 JS, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 7 July 1954; Caveat #2457KP, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 28 May 1956; Land Title #176R152, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 26 January 1955.

⁶⁴Caveat #2475JU, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 13 October 1954.

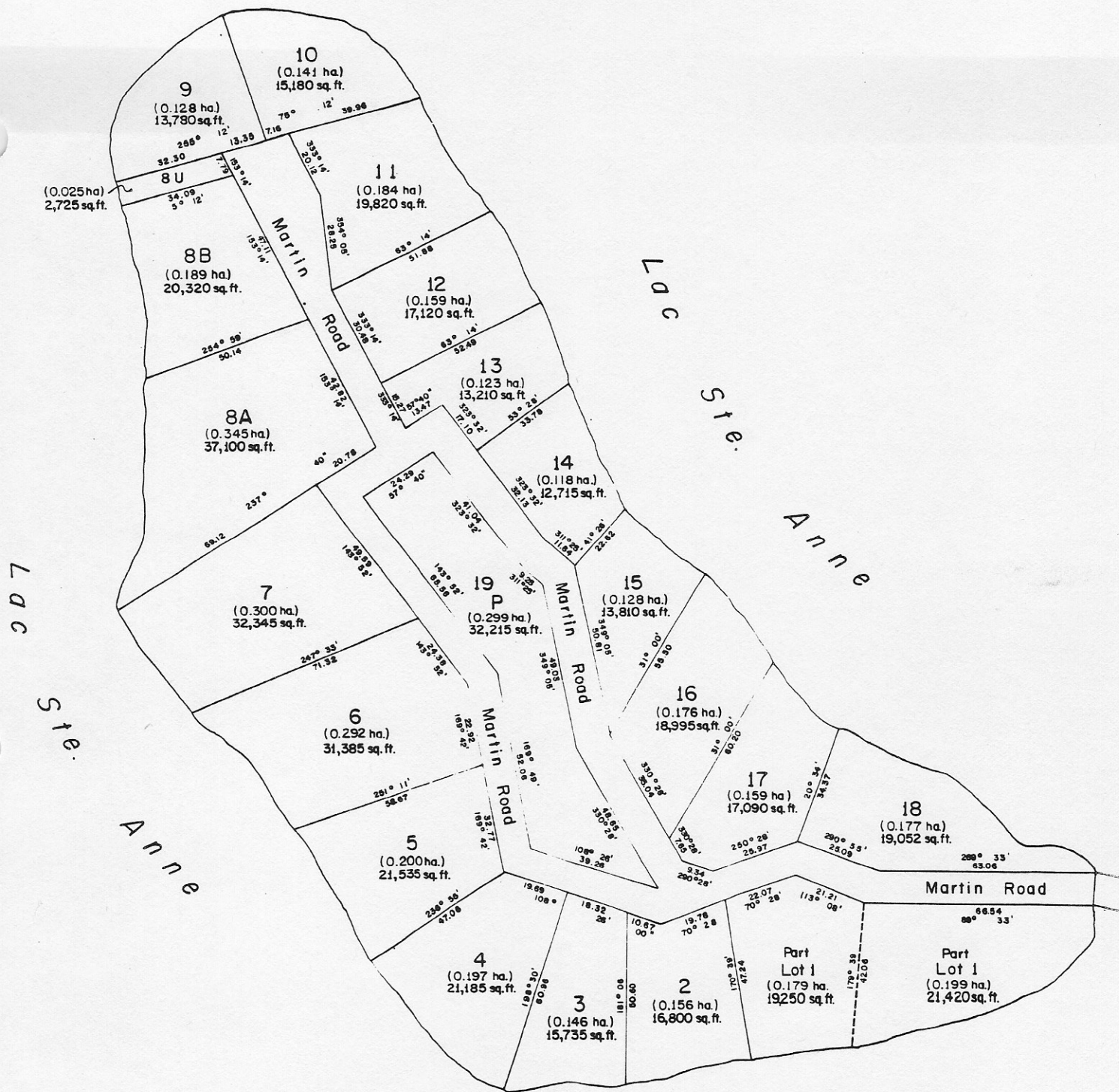
⁶⁵Caveat #485KB, registered at Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 7 April 1955.

⁶⁶Land Title #78U155, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 16 August 1955.

⁶⁷Caveat #6551KG, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 29 May 1956; Caveat #1980KK, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 27 July 1956; and Land Title #113K164, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, 14 June 1957.

(1955-1960); F. Bull (1960-1973); B. Lehman (1973-1985); and K. Armstrong (1985-1988). A chart with the names of council members and mayors for 1955 to 1987 is included as Appendix 2.

An important feature of community life on Castle Island is the warm relations of its residents many of whom have lived on the Island from the mid-1950s. As time passes and new people come to live in this unique community, it is my hope that they will appreciate the contribution that all of those who have lived on the Island before have made.



MAP 2: MAP OF CASTLE ISLAND, COMPILED BY L.O. OLSEN, 1985

APPENDIX 2

Mayors and Council Members Summer Village of Castle Island 1955-1988⁶⁹

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Year	Mayor	Council Members
1955 & 1956	F. Bull	F. Perry R. Wishart
1957 & 1958	F. Bull	C. Perry E. Alpaugh
1959	E. Alpaugh	A. Grimsrud J. Garvin
1960	J. Garvin	L. Olsen A. Halford
1961	B. Huffman	L. Olsen A. Halford
1962	L. Olsen	A. Halford A. Barrie
1963	A. Halford	C. Buchta R. Wishart
1964	C. Buchta	R. Wishart A. Anderton
1965	C. Buchta	J. Guy J. Greenan
1966	J. Greenan	J. Guy H. Ratai
1967	J. Greenan	H. Todd B. Huffman

⁶⁹Based on the Office Records, Summer Village of Castle Island.

1968	B. Huffman	H. Todd B. Marsh
1969	H. Todd	B. Marsh J. Garvin
1970 & 1971	B. Marsh	J. Garvin W. Buchta
1972	W. Buchta	B. Huffman M. Ruscoe
1973	W. Buchta	B. Huffman G. Mowat
1974 & 1975	A. Halford	G. Mowat A. Olsen
1976	G. Mowat	A. Olsen B. Huffman
1977	B. Marsh	P. Garvin R. Slemko
1978 & 1979	B. Marsh	P. Garvin W. Buchta
1980, 1981 & 1982	B. Marsh	K. Watson P. Garvin
1983 & 1984	G. Mowat	J. Helland M. Imrie
1985	G. Mowat	J. Helland M. Imrie B. Huffman
1986	G. Mowat	B. Huffman H. Todd
1987	B. Huffman	H. Todd G. Mowat

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Land Title 157F10, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, Alberta, dated 6 August 1910.

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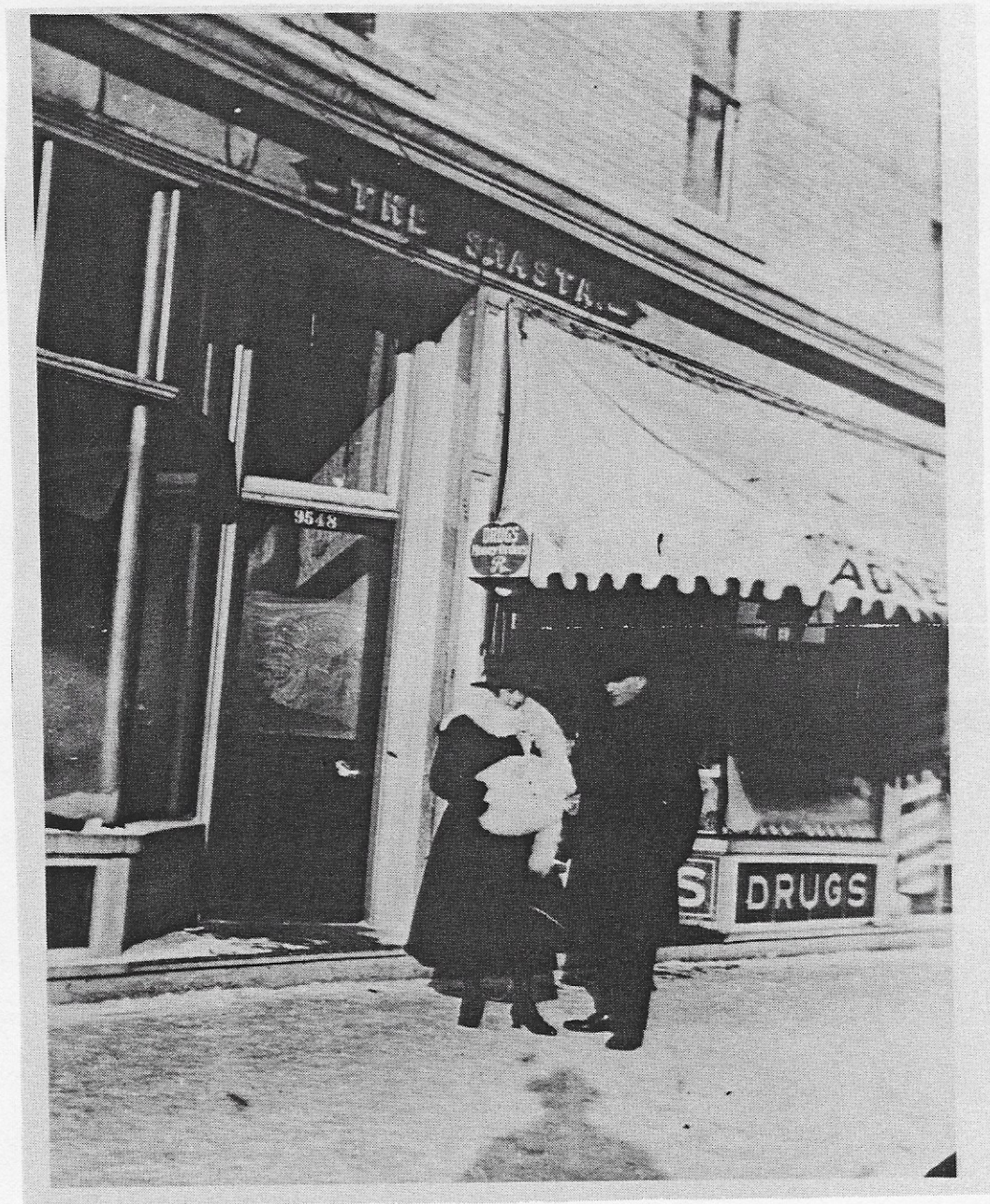
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PHOTOGRAPH 4: SHASTA CAFE, EDMONTON, c1919; IN FRONT ARE MR. AND MRS. J. GLASSMAN

became the owner of the New Edmonton Hotel, which he owned until 1942. Martin died on 4 October 1942.⁴⁵

Martin's nickname was reflective of his size; when Shorty Martin sat in a straight-backed chair his feet could not touch the floor. He was a very romantic man who set out to build a fantastic resort for himself, his wife and his guests, whom he entertained often and at lavish parties.⁴⁶

Initially Shorty Martin hoped to save the great house on the island and he had numerous architects inspect its remains to see if it was reparable; unfortunately, it was not. It was found that the stones had been put together with lime and sand which had weathered and were extremely worn. Instead, under the supervision of a French architect from Morinville, Martin had the castle demolished and on its cellar he had a lodge built. The lodge was constructed in the tongue and groove fashion of the early settlers' houses. Stones from the dismantled castle were used to build the lodge's foundation, fireplace, chimneys and the stairs down to the lake.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Hendersen's Directory, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941; and Edmonton Journal, 5 October 1942.

⁴⁶Spirits and Trails, p. 119.

⁴⁷Spirits and Trails, p. 119.

The Martins also had several farm houses transported from across the lake onto the island to serve as guest houses for their family and friends who were their frequent visitors. Their other achievements were the island's landscaping and the construction of the causeway and wooden bridge to the island.⁴⁸ Landscaping included the clearing of many of the island's shrubs and weeds, and the development of a large grassy area in its center which was surrounded with a hedge of caragana bushes. They also established a large vegetable garden in what is now the backs of the Helland and Halford houses and a second vegetable garden and raspberry patch on what is now the Olsen property.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Spirits and Trails, p. 119.

⁴⁹"Shorty and Brownie Martin," unpublished short story by Isabel Bull.



PHOTOGRAPH 5: WOODEN GATES AT THE ENTRANCE TO CASTLE ISLAND,
FROM THE MAINLAND, 1949, CONSTRUCTED BY THE
MARTINS

D. The Bulls Take Over

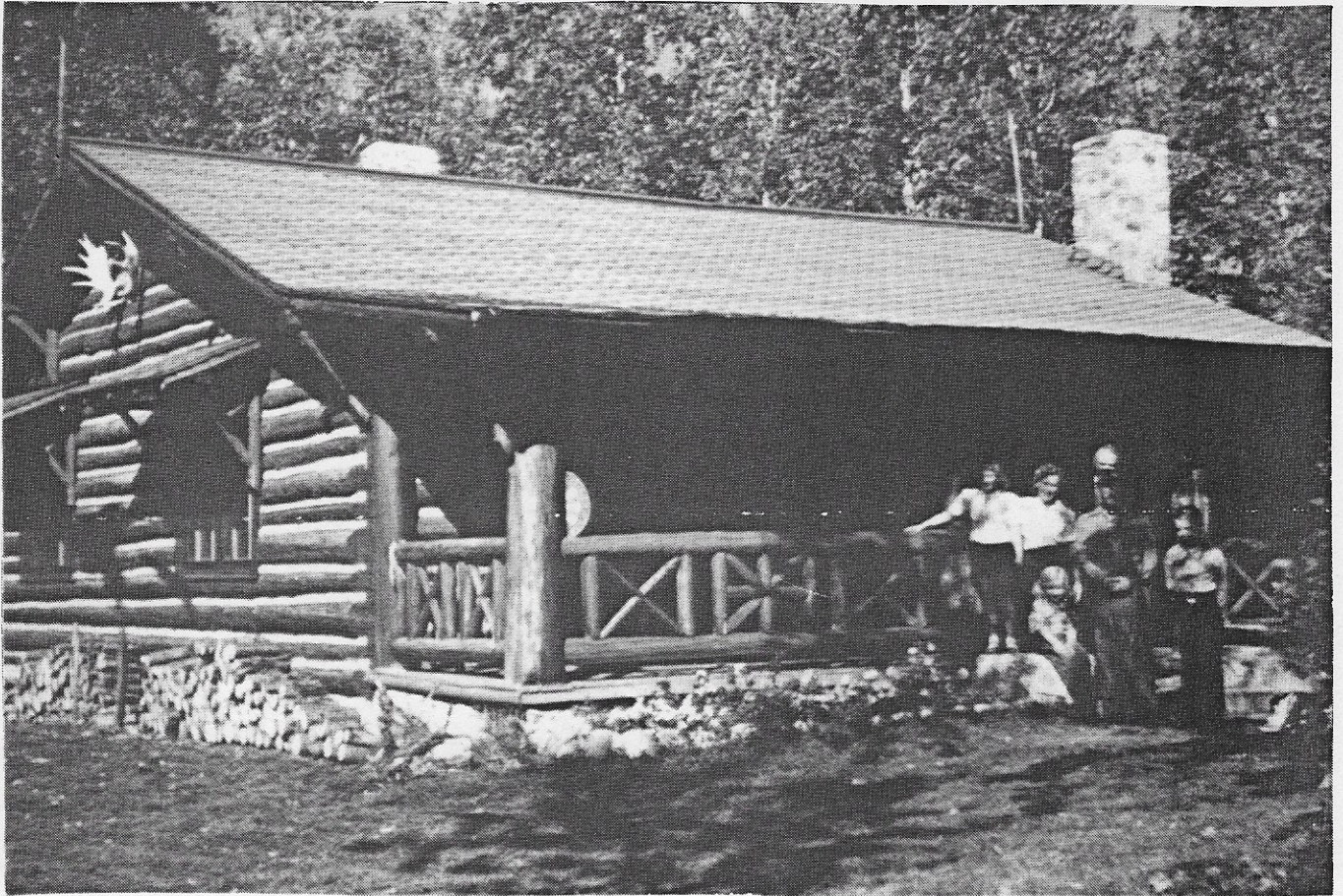
In 1951 Castle Island, still known as Isle Constance, was bought from Brownie Martin by Frederick and Isabel Bull, who had come from England to Edmonton in April of 1947. On a whim, the Bulls contacted Mrs. Martin when they noticed an ad for the sale of her island in the Edmonton Journal in September 1948.

We had arrived from England the previous April and were living in Edmonton. This advertisement [for the sale of the island] intrigued us, as one would certainly not find anything like this in English newspapers. We thought it would be rather fun to see the Island...We wrote to Mrs. Martin so she phoned us saying that she would very much like to show us the Island, but she did not have a car. Neither had we, so we just forgot the whole thing.

The following April (1949) we were very surprised to receive a letter from Mrs. Martin, stating that she would be happy to show us the Island if we were still interested. We had completely forgotten about it, but by this time we had acquired a little Austin car. Daddy had arrived from England the previous month and as we had not taken him anywhere. We thought it would be a good opportunity for a day out and a picnic. We picked up Mrs. Martin at her home in the City, and with the little car groaning under the weight of a well-built elderly lady, a similarly well-built English gentleman, plus our family of four, we set off for the Island.⁵⁰

After spending only one day picnicking on the island, they offered to buy it for \$7000.00 - a sum they assumed would immediately be refused. Isabel Bull recounts the story:

⁵⁰Isabel, Bull, "Once Upon an Island," unpublished manuscript, p. 1.



PHOTOGRAPH 6: FREDERICK AND ISABEL BULL WITH THEIR TWO CHILDREN CHRIS AND ROSELIND AND FRIENDS; IN FRONT OF CASTLE LODGE, CASTLE ISLAND, 1951.

Fred approached Mrs. Martin. "So sorry Mrs. Martin," he said, "but I am afraid we can only raise \$7,000 and I don't wish to get too much into debt." Much to our surprise, she insisted that we buy the Island at that price so long as her sister and brother-in-law were able to live rent free in their cottage and have use of part of the garden as long as they wished. She also did not wish us to tell anyone what amount we had paid, and she did not wish us to commercialize the Island. At the same time, she warned us that it was impossible to make any money there.

"How much interest, will you charge," Fred asked "we shall have to extend the payment over the next two years, until our money arrives from England." Upon this the "Sergeant Major [Isabel Bull's name for Brownie Martin]" really came into her own, 'I've told you I am not selling this place for money. I would like to have someone own it who will love it as Shorty and I have done. There will be no interest and you can pay me when you can.' Apparently Fred looked very much like her former husband⁵¹ (short, bald and tubby...) so she had taken an instant liking to him.⁵²

In 1949 the Bulls moved to the island. It came with two large log houses, four cottages (one occupied by Sam and Lydia Paddock - Mrs. Martin's sister and brother-in-law), a small log hut with a bath, a log garage with nine row boats, and a metal garage with an assortment of tools, equipment and "interesting looking junk."⁵³

The Bulls lived on the island during the summers and operated it

⁵¹Brownie Martin married the taxi driver, who regularly drove her from Edmonton to the Island, after Shorty's death. The marriage proved to be a disaster.

⁵²"Once Upon an Island," p. 2.

⁵³"Once Upon an Island," p. 3. Sam and Lydia Paddock lived on the island year-round for 10 years after its purchase by the Bulls.

as a small summer resort; they rented their nine row boats and two of the cottages - one to Mrs. Martin's friends and the other to their friends Cy and Florence Perry - and charged picnickers who came to the island. The boat rental business flourished and the Bulls had to build a pier from which it could operate.

It was essential to build a pier from which to rent the rowing boats, so again Fred was compelled to exercise his doubtful ability as a carpenter. The following Sunday when this structure was supporting a number of people, down it went and our customers were well and truly baptised.⁵⁴

To this enterprise Isabel Bull added the operation of a cafe from the lodge - the lodge was also used as the Bulls' residence. Isabel Bull started the cafe business quite by chance. She recounts the story in the following account:

One beautiful warm spring day, a car drove onto the Island carrying three smartly dressed ladies who asked if they might get a cup of tea. They were charming people and I "put down the red carpet" so to speak, and gave them the full V.I.P. treatment (British-style) with thin slices of bread and butter, home-made jam and cake and "tea as it should be". They appeared to be quite impressed. They were our first customers and this was the start of my "cafe" venture.

Daddy made a sign "Cafe" in his beautiful old English style writing, which we hung outside the door. I found out from my dear friend, Florence Perry, how one produced a hamburger or a hot dog, and I bravely faced feeding the hungry.⁵⁵

When the popularity of the island as a summer resort grew and the Bulls were able to rent all four cottages, they added a fifth cottage to the island. Mrs. Bull remembered two couples who rented their cottages:

⁵⁴"Once Upon an Island," p. 6.

⁵⁵"Once Upon an Island," p. 8.



PHOTOGRAPH 7: BOATING ON LAC STE. ANNE, c1942. PICTURED IN THE PHOTOGRAPH ARE LOUIS BIAMONTE AND HIS SON RICHARD

Most weekends "Honeymoon Cottage" was taken by a very handsome looking couple. She was very beautiful, rather Spanish looking, and she sang and played the guitar very well. He was as tall, dark and handsome as any screen star. We enjoyed their company very much. Unfortunately, after returning to the city for the winter, Fred attended a Masonic Ladies Night, and who should be there but our beautiful Honeymoon Cottage guitarist. She was on the arm of a short, fat, old gentleman whom Fred thought might be her father. He approached with a beaming smile of recognition but received a stony stare. Later, when out of earshot of her companion, our lady friend apologized to Fred for her rudeness, but she was with her husband! They never came to the Island again - we missed them.

Another charming couple visited the Island every Wednesday afternoon. They would change into swim suits in their car and then would alternately swim in the lake, performing all sorts of water ballet feats, and chase each other through the trees. We tried not to let our eyes turn in their direction and we kept out of their way as much as possible. We never had any other customers, other than this couple, on Wednesdays. Unfortunately, towards the end of summer, as Fred was walking down the main street of a nearby town, he saw the man approaching. He was dressed in the clothing of a Catholic priest. They both recognized each other, but our friend walked quickly past with unseeing eyes! Our Wednesday customers never came again - very sad!⁵⁶

With time the cottages were rented to five families for the duration of the summer; all the residents and visitors became close friends. They were: Cy and Florence Perry and their four children (Pam, Lee, John and Rob); Florence and Clarence Buchta and their son Bill; Alvin and Irene McLennan and their son Ken; Bob and Dena Wishart; Ken Alpaugh; and of course Isabel and Fred Bull and their two children, Chris and Rosalind. Isabel Bull recalls their time together:

We had many happy barbeques, wiener roasts and fish fries. Exercise classes were held by me on the lawn in front of the lodge for the ladies and providing no one was within sight, a nude dunk in the lake followed. Unfortunately, somehow the word

⁵⁶"Once Upon an Island," p. 9.

must have got around, because a few years later, when the Village of Castle Island was formed, one of the first by-laws to be passed was one prohibiting swimming in birthday suits!⁵⁷

In 1950 Fred Bull built new stone gates at the entrance to Isle Constance from the mainland; he was assisted in this task by Mr. Hanson a farmer in the Lac Ste. Anne area. The gate's iron work and sign were made by a blacksmith in Onoway.

After working hard for a number of summers at their resort business, the Bulls were forced to concede that it was a money-losing operation and in 1953 they began to subdivide the island into lots. In 1955 the Summer Village of Castle Island was formed and the first of 21 properties were sold to the Bulls' family and friends. As the island gradually changed, the Bulls found it hard to remain on the island and in 1956 they moved to a site just across the lake.⁵⁸

The Island was split up and sold and never seemed quite the same from my point of view. We started to look at the prospect of buying land across the lake. It had a beautiful sandy beach which we enjoyed many times, plus a partially finished house with all the modern conveniences.

We left the Island and eventually made our permanent home at the other side of the lake. Our life and the running of Bull Bay Tree Nursery was the next episode in the life of the "Green Bulls".

Our lovely Island and the picture book log house was a happy memory.⁵⁹

⁵⁷"Once Upon an Island," p. 11.

⁵⁸"Once Upon an Island," p. 17.

⁵⁹"Once Upon an Island," p. 17.



PHOTOGRAPH 8: ENTRANCE TO CASTLE ISLAND, 1950, IN FRONT ARE
ISABEL AND FREDERICK BULL

B. Castle Island Becomes a Picnic Area: The
Ownership of Ben Berths (Benoit Berthoux)

Not much is known about Ben Berths except that he was a Frenchman - his real name was Benoit Berthoux - and that besides owning Castle Island he owned and operated a store at Big Eddy, which was just above Edson.⁴⁰ It seems that Ben Berths spent most of his time at his store, which was definitely part of the Wild West.

Ben Berths, a Frenchman who owned Castle Island in Lac Ste. Anne, had a store at the Big Eddy. His supplies were packed up from Lac Ste. Anne by such packers as John Yates, Jeff Armstrong, Bill Yates and others.

That winter of 1906-1907 was one when it was impossible for horses to paw the snow to get at the feed. This struck Hornbeck [one of the local packers] very hard, for he had not put up any hay. His horses got down and could not get up. Billy, his man, shot them. The last to be dispatched was Hornbeck's saddle mare, which Billy shot after supper.

[That evening] Hornbeck asked [Billy], "You shot the little mare Billy?"

"Yes," [replied Billy].

"If she isn't alive in the morning, [Billy], I'll shoot you," said Hornbeck.

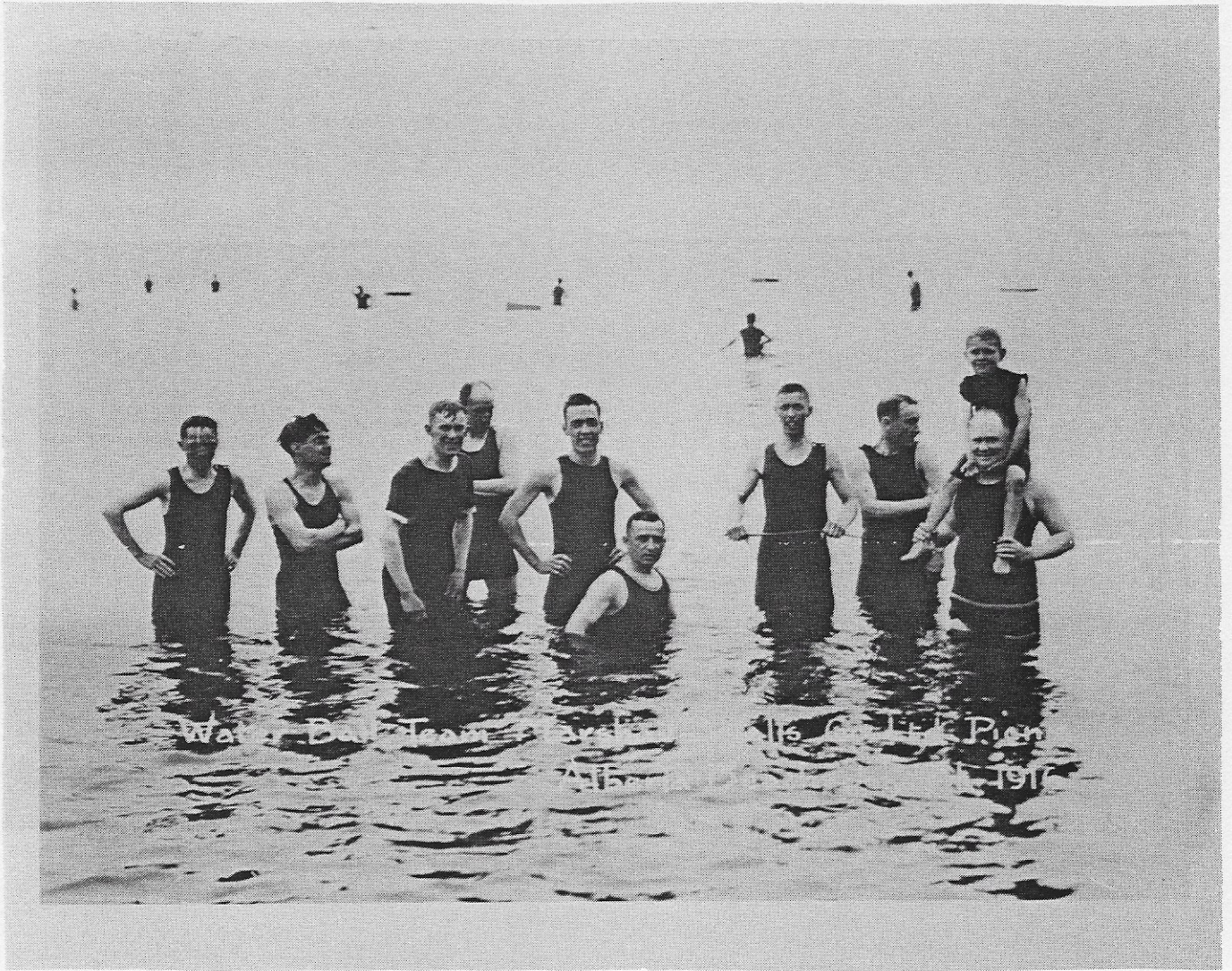
Billy fled and went to Ben's store with another settler known as "Frenchy".

The whole catastrophe unhinged Hornbeck's mind. He came to Ben Berth's store and started shooting things up. All the men ran outside and Ben fell over a cut-bank. They all shot at Hornbeck, after telling him to put his hands up when he tried to shoot.

They say Ben Berths' hair turned grey in one night.⁴¹

⁴⁰Land Title 231G22, dated 16 October 1912, registered at the Land Titles Office, Edmonton, Alberta, and West of the Fifth, p. 222.

⁴¹West of the Fifth, p. 222.



PHOTOGRAPH 3: WATER BALL TEAM, MARSHALL WELLS CO. LTD. PICNIC,
ALBERTA BEACH, 8 JULY 1916

Officially Ben Berths became the owner of Castle Island on 16 October 1912. At that time Alberta Beach was undergoing development as an attractive resort area for the population of the growing town of Edmonton. In 1916, for instance, the Canadian Northern Railway Company, which operated daily train service to and from Alberta Beach, built "several palatial buildings" at the beach to house visitors from Edmonton. A newspaper report about the construction of some of the buildings said:

For the last ten days the Canadian Northern Railway have had a large number of artisans busily employed putting things into shape. Already all the old-time Indian shacks in the vicinity have been demolished and the underbrush and weeds at the lake front entirely cleaned out, leaving an excellent stretch of sandy beach unparalleled in the west for safety, beauty and comfort.

A pavilion is now under construction. This building has a ground space of about seventy by forty feet and as the very choicest of maple lumber is being used, an elegant dancing floor will always be available for picnic parties. A big, roomy veranda extends all round the pavilion and wire screening and canvas curtains are being adjusted to add to the comfort of the visitors. As this building is being erected practically on the beach it will readily be seen how advantageous it will prove in case of inclement weather.⁴²

From accounts in local histories, tourists and local people would often row out to Castle Island during the 1910s to 50s for picnics and for the excellent fishing off the island. The island remained the property of Ben Berths until 4 October 1930.

⁴²"Travelling Men to Find Model Resort at Alberta Beach", Edmonton Bulletin, June 13, 1916.

God's Lake.⁴

To the white trappers, explorers and administrators who next came to the area,⁵ Manitou Sakahigan was not God's haven, it was the domain of the Devil. Its mysterious nature was viewed with suspicion and they changed its name to Devil's Lake (in Cree Machimanito Sakahigan).⁶ This was the name preferred by the Hudson's Bay men located at Fort Edmonton and for the first part of the nineteenth century the lake was known as Devil's Lake in official correspondence.⁷

In 1843 the lake was again renamed. This time it was christened Lac Ste. Anne by Father Thibeault, a French priest who established a Catholic mission at Lac Ste. Anne (this was the first Catholic mission to be established west of St. Boniface). It is said that Father Thibeault had made a solemn promise to his patron saint - St. Anne - upon his arrival in Western Canada in 1823 to give her name to the first mission that he established.

⁴Spirits and Trails, p. 28.

⁵In the 18th century the English, French and Metis peoples came into the area. The English came as administrators, Hudson's Bay Company representatives and surveyors; the French as missionaries, traders and at times as government representatives; the Metis as trappers, hunters and later the area's first agricultural settlers. West of the Fifth, p. 8.

⁶Spirits and Trails, p. 28 and Drouin, E.O., Lac Ste. Anne Sakahigan (Edmonton: Editions de l'Ermitage, 1973), p. 13, are but two of many sources that refer to Lac Ste. Anne as Devil's Lake.

⁷Spirits and Trails, p. 11.

Thibeault kept his promise and went one step further; he not only named his mission after his patron saint, but the lake on which the mission stood as well. To this day the lake is known as Lac Ste. Anne. The English and government records used the English version of the name - Lake St. Ann, Lake Ste. Anne or Lake St. Anne - in the first half of this century. Since the 1950s, it has been known only by its French name - Lac Ste. Anne.⁸

The ceremony of renaming the lake is described in the following account:

...Father Thibeault, with surplice and stole on, approaches the very edge of the lake, blesses it and renames it Lac Ste. Anne because of his devotion to this Saint.⁹

⁸Lac Ste. Anne Sakahigan, p. 13.

⁹Lac Ste. Anne Sakahigan, p. 13.

III. ORIGINS OF THE ISLAND'S NAME

Castle Island has also been known by different names. It was first depicted in a map made by one of several surveyors who recorded the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁰ The name of the surveyor was J.K. McLean and the map was dated 27 May 1898. On this map the island is called Isle Constance.¹¹ On the second, third and fourth maps of the lake and settlement, all composed by McLean, the island continues to bear the name Isle Constance but its size changes from 12.3 acres (on the third map) to 12.87 acres (on the fourth map).¹² By 1914 Isle Constance increased in size to 13.4 acres and in 1918 the island's name changed to its English version Constance Island.¹³

¹⁰The surveyors who worked in the Lac Ste. Anne area were: T. Kains [1883], T.W. Chalmers (1895), J.K. McLean (1898), P.R.A. Belanger (1899), H. McGrandle (1903), R.V. Heathcott (1908), A.S. Campbell (1912) and H.M.R. Soars (1917). Unfortunately, the island is not described in any of their reports or letters. Source: Plan of Township 54, Range 3, West of the Fifth Meridian, #83.421, Provincial Archives of Alberta.

¹¹Survey #85.34/231, Provincial Archives of Alberta, dated May 27, 1898.

¹²Plan of Township No. 54, Range 3, West of the 5th Meridian, recorded 29 July 1899, and Plan of Township 54, Range 3, West of the Fifth Meridian, recorded 28 June 1909.

¹³Plan of Township 54, Range 3, West of the Fifth Meridian, recorded 9 April 1914, and Plan of Township 54, Range 3, West of the Fifth Meridian, recorded 12 September 1918.



MAP 1: LAC STE. ANNE SETTLEMENT, INCLUDING ISLE CONSTANCE,
COMPILED BY MCLEAN, 27 JULY 1899

From written reports it is clear that Isle Constance, as it was referred to in official correspondence, was known as Castle Island as early as the 1920s. However, it was not until 1953 that the island's name was officially recorded as Castle Island. The following is an interesting, but not entirely accurate, account of how the island became known first as Isle Constance or Constance Island and later as Castle Island.

In the midst of the beautiful lake of St. Ann, which lies to the northwest of Edmonton, there is an island some thirteen acres in extent. On this tiny island far away from the city's glare, cut off from civilization as we men who live in the city understand the word, there stands a great house built of stone with seven gables and furnished with a degree of elaboration and expenditure of taste which would do credit to one of the old homes of Toronto or Montreal. It is around this house that our story clusters.

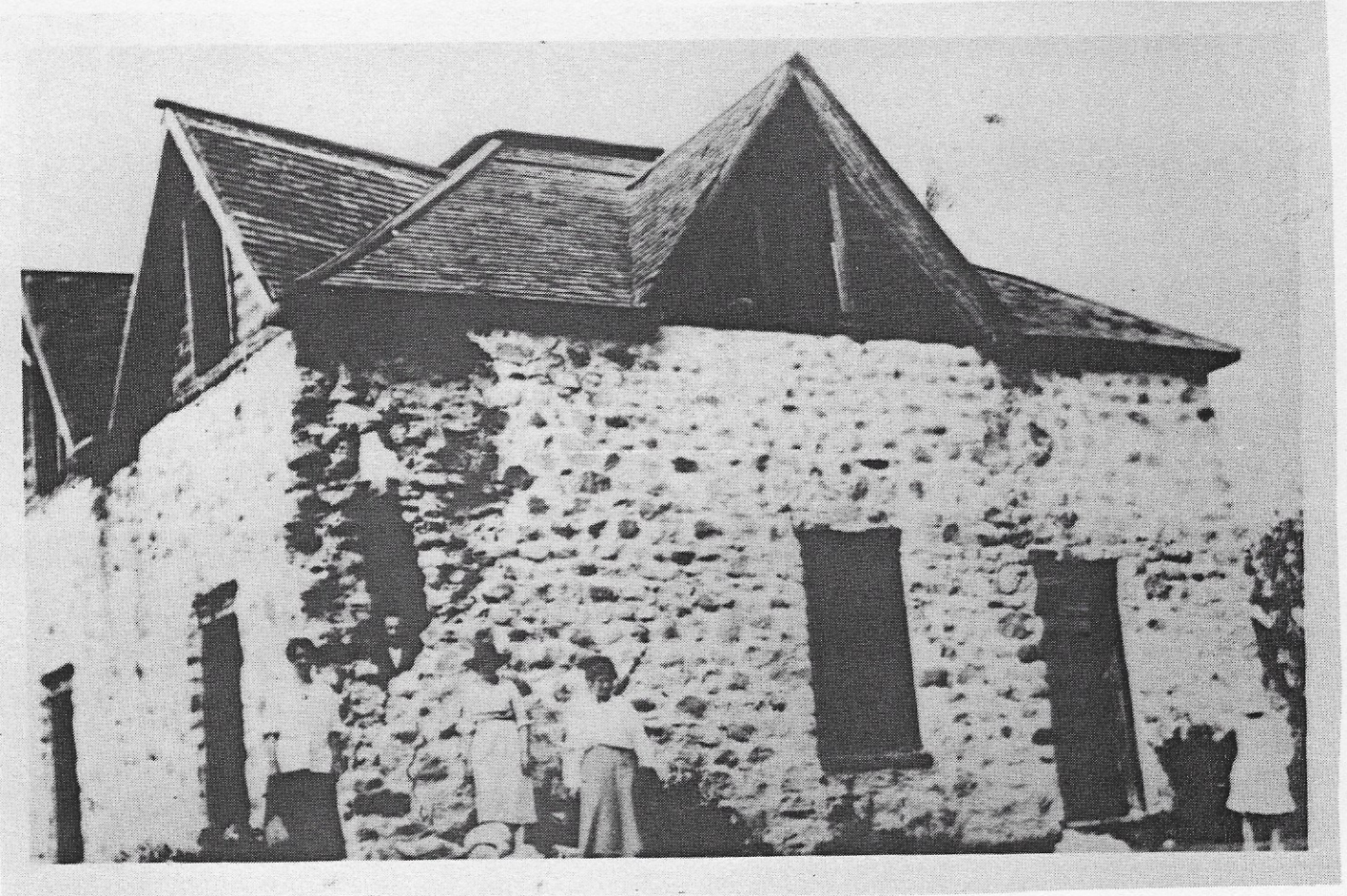
Today only a passing trader or a few wandering Indians, or perhaps a single prospector making his way north, ever gaze on this magnificent building so strangely situated and so out of keeping with the country in which it stands.

It was built by Count de Cazes, who after following the flagging fortunes of Garibaldi, came over to this country to spend the remainder of his days in peace. Bringing his wife with him, he built a chateau, accepted the position of Indian agent, and after a period of years died in 1900.

When he deserted the battlefields of Italy and sought the quiet of St. Ann, he brought with him a little girl, Marie Constance - their child. As she passed from childhood to womanhood she became of such rare beauty that it became a byword in the North, "as beautiful as the island lady". The traders said this when they wished to make a comparison of beauty. For many years the maiden lived a secluded life seeing no one except Indian servants and an occasional trader.

The island was officially named Constance Island after this maiden, although it is often called Castle Island for the great house which the Count had built before his death.¹⁴

¹⁴" Saga of the North" and "The Alberta Story," copied by Elizabeth Bird Pidcock, great niece of Eliza Margaret Bird Griffin who was the wife of Count Charles de Cazes, Notes on



PHOTOGRAPH 2: THE GREAT HOUSE OR CASTLE ON CASTLE ISLAND, THEN KNOWN AS ISLE CONTSANCE, 1930. IN THE FOREGROUND ARE SHORTY AND BROWNIE MARTIN AND THEIR FRIENDS

Viscount Charles de Cazes and the Bird Family, #83.184,
Provincial Archives of Alberta.