

One of the oldest hotels on the main street is the Royal. For many years the proprietor was Thomas McConnel, an English born gentleman who had a flare for business and at the same time believed in the old saying "work without play makes Jack a dull boy". Consequently he was an ardent lover of sports of all kinds, especially boating and curling and thereby hangs an interesting tale.

Over sixty years ago when the Scugog River and Sturgeon Lake were literally alive with water craft of all shapes, styles and sizes, Thomas McConnell had the first gasoline propelled boat. Later this boat "The Laura Mac" was converted to steam, and still later, returned to gas. The boat often carried as many as 20 people in its thirty foot length.

Interested in the out of doors, Thomas McConnell purchased an island in Sturgeon Lake, which in pioneer days was owned by a hermit named Jackson. It is located directly out in Sturgeon Lake from Ancona Point.

With an eye for beauty and being a lover of flowers, Thomas McConnell had one of the largest and most beautiful displays of flowers to be found anywhere east of Toronto. It was reported to have been magnificent in profusion, variety and beauty.

McConnell erected a large cottage with seven bedrooms, living room, kitchen, and game room. Many week-end parties were held at the island and a feature of the week-end holiday was the boat trip along the winding Scugog River, and across Sturgeon Lake.

Another distinct asset was the natural beauty of the island with a fringe of trees around the shore, and wide expanse of green sward, and myriads of flower beds in the centre. Birds of un-numbered species, colourful plumage, and sweet song, filled the island with natural music.

Fish, particularly maskinonge, surrounded the island in abundance. Meat and fish dinners were a specialty.

Later the ownership of the island passed into the hands of the late Jos. McConnell, who followed in his father's footsteps as proprietor of the Royal Hotel, and in more recent years, the island passed into the hands of Prof. Cornish, a teacher at the Lindsay Collegiate Institute and for many years in Toronto.

One or two of the old gas light standards can still be seen on the island. When these gas lights were in use, McConnell's island presented a fairy-like park at night, and could be seen for miles around.

Many a racy story has been heard regarding the "Laura Mac". This was particularly so when the craft was always a challenge to the steam yacht as the "Retta", which was owned by Joseph Brown, grandfather of Hilton H. Brown. Many a time the "Laura Mac" skipper endeavored to overtake the "Retta" as the boats loaded with passengers, plied their way across the lake, entered the "cut" and then dodged the buoys along the Scugog River.

One of the few times the McConnell boat scored a big triumph was when it was turned into a gasoline propelled boat and was able to skim along the water and beat the Retta to Lindsay.

It is interesting to note that the Royal Hotel was the first place of habitation in Lindsay to instal a then modern flush toilet. Mr. McConnell saw one work when he was visiting New York, and he had one shipped to Lindsay. At the time small and large, one and two seater privies lined the back yards and lanes behind places of business on Kent street. Dr. McAlpine, who was medical health officer at the time, ordered Mc-

Connell to take the new fangled toilet out of the hotel, but later on was convinced that it was not unsanitary as at first claimed. *17 Feb. '65*

Thomas McConnell was a fine curler in the days when the Lindsay Club won the large red and gold Ontario Tankard banners. His son Norman McConnell is one of Lindsay's well known citizens, residing at 26 Mill street