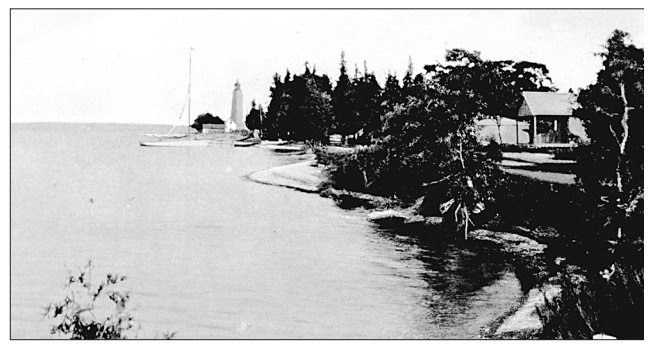
Postcards from the Past

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time that Presqu'ile moved from being a rural settlement and strategically and economically important harbour to a premier recreational destination. In the early years of the European settlement of Ontario there was little time for recreational pursuits and virtually no one traveled any distance looking for a good time. There are certainly early records of temporary hunting and fishing camps on the peninsula, but almost certainly the primary goal of these was food rather than fun.

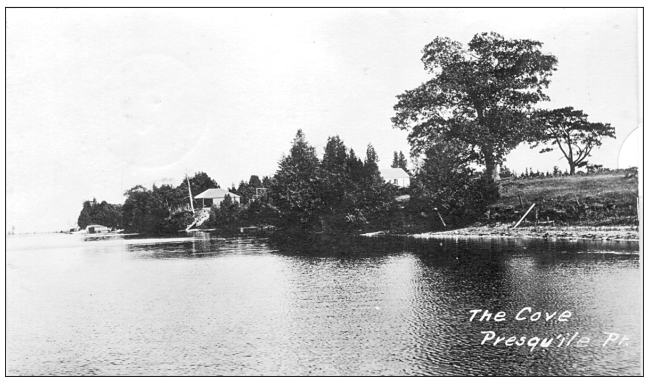
There are records of the officers bathing off the beach when a detachment of Toronto militia was stationed here for the summer of 1838 in anticipation of a rebellion (it was only a year after the Upper Canada uprising led by William Lyon Mackenzie). But perhaps this activity had more to do with keeping clean than recreation.

In any event, as the 19th century progressed, there was a general trend in the population of increased affluence, leisure time and urbanization. Many city people started missing the country life their parents and grandparents had worked so hard to leave behind, and those that were better off could do something about it. By the 1880s there was certainly a trend, at least for the well-to-do, to be spending summers in the country or going on picnic excursions to the lakeside. By 1890 there was already a well established summer community at Presqu'ile of about 50 families. Calling themselves "campers", some had built simple cottages.

Presqu'ile really hit the summer recreation map in 1905. In that year the Federal Government (which still controlled land use on the Peninsula) authorized the surveying of cottage lots. Even more significantly, the Presqu'ile Summer Hotel Co. Ltd. was formed with the building of a 50-guest hotel. A major annex in 1912 more than doubled its capacity and a dance pavilion established the hotel as the hottest summer



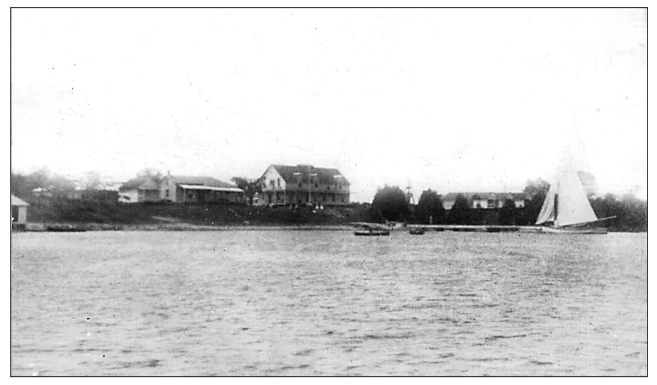
spot in Presqu'ile and Brighton. It declined during the 1960s and was dismantled in 1971. For over half a century, however, it was the focal point for summer fun in the area and its story can perhaps be best told by the people who visited and wrote back to their friends and family. Following are some of these postcards and letters from the past. Step back in time with us as we read over the shoulders of absent friends.



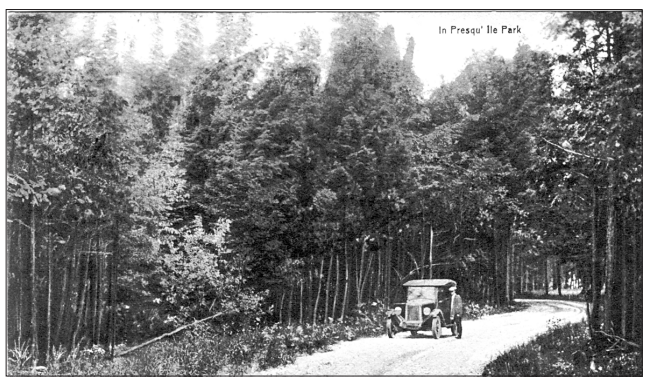
To: Athens, Ont.
July 26, 1910
This is one of the pretty spots in the harbour. Some of the shore is sand But this is limestone and is broken up into small stones worn smooth by the waves. You could throw stones all day here and have lots left at night.
A. M. Lee



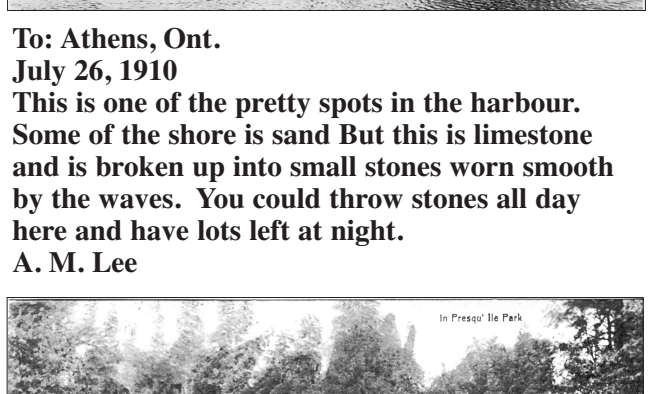
To: Rochester, N.Y.
August 18, 1914
Am having the time of my life. We dance every night except Sunday. Have had rain here every day since we've been here. Having the hardest time keeping track of Betty. Sincerely yours Mildred
c/o Presqu'ile Pt. Hotel, Brighton, Ont., Can.



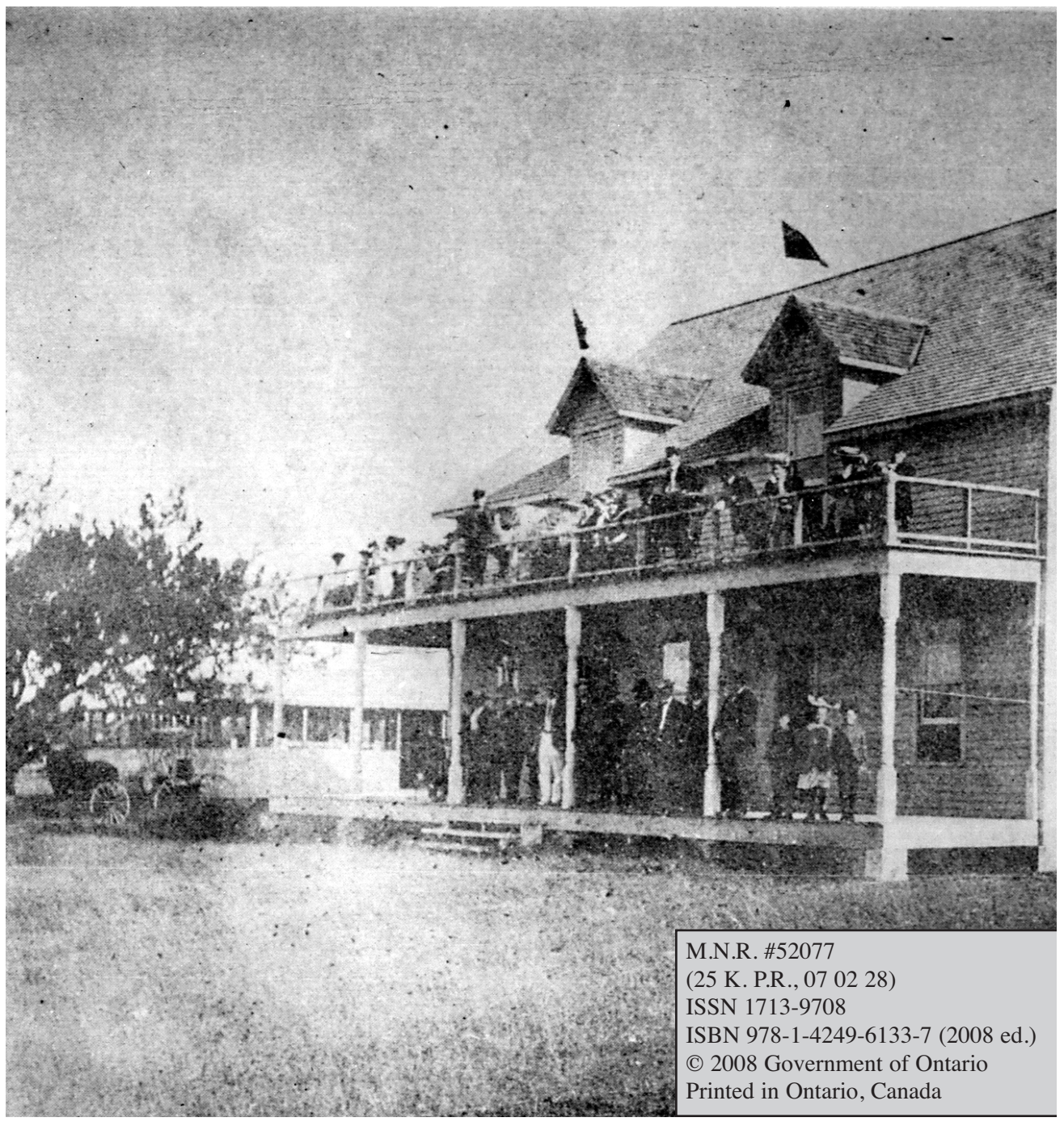
To: Philadelphia, Pa.
August 16, 1921
Hello Harold
I suppose you are still working away and hating women as bad as ever. I believe if you lived in a place like this for awhile you would change your view. Having a whale of a good time. Will be home by the end of the week. Yours Joe



To: Toronto
June 19, 1928
Dear Lizzie
First wk of my holidays have gone and couldn't have been spent more pleasant. Motored to Cobourg last Friday. Shortly after saw flames as we were driving along road, discovered it was baggage room at station. Baggage saved. It is very pretty here this time of year. At a verandah tea this PM. A few picnics have been planned for this wk. Love to all. Mora S.



To: Rochester, N.Y.
July 14 circa 1938
Arrived 7:30 AM, swabbed the deck, sun-bathed all day, Dance tonight, Race starts tomorrow at 2:00 PM- Good wind last night, Looks as though its dying down now- This is the Life !!!
Regards to all- H.



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