Presqu'ile Hotel
June 28th, 1924

Dear Virginia

I know I told you that I would write as soon as I got here but time has simply flown by. I thought that I would be bored, but I have actually been having an enjoyable time. My parents and I arrived last Friday by train to Brighton and were picked up by the hotel bus. You can imagine what I initially thought about spending the summer with my grandmother and parents! Yet, to my surprise there are a lot of kids my age here. Some stay in cottages, others are at the hotel. My family has rented one of the hotel cottages and I found out we are paying $16.00 a week for each person! It's very nice though and they just got in electricity here last year so there is electric light in the main hotel though we use kerosene light in the cottage.

I just adore going over to the big hotel to visit my friends there and to have dinner. I feel very sophisticated and important as I stroll through the hallways. Everyone is friendly and relaxed, and the food is to die for! Last night we had a delightful dinner. The dinning room is huge, it can hold over 200 people. The appetizer was cream of tomato soup, then roasted chicken and mashed potatoes for the entrée, and to top it all off, warm apple pie – Oh My Virginia, it was fantastic.

I just love it here! People from all over stay here, not just from Toronto. There is a couple from Philadelphia and lots of people from Rochester, some come over on their boats! On weekends all kinds of interesting boys come to the hotel for the dances at the pavilion. The cottager's here call themselves "The Gang" and have taken me under their wing. One of the girls in The Gang is Mindy, you would like her. She is going steady with a boy named Edward, they met at the cottage last summer. They will likely end up getting married. The rest of the The Gang is unattached but there are lots of handsome boys to meet at the dance pavilion. It is a real swinging time and I've already learned to do the Charleston and Fox Trot – pretty easy actually.

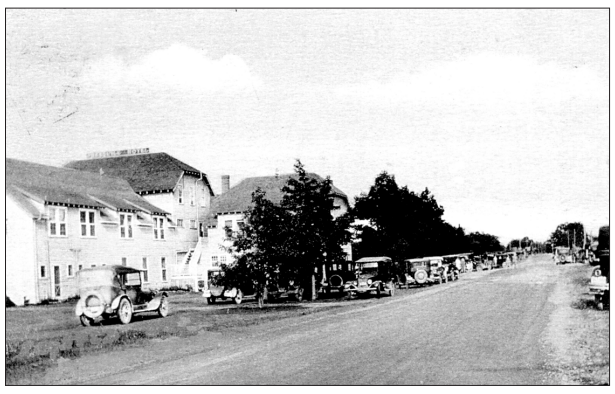
We do all kinds of things together, play tennis, go swimming in the lake. There is a nice beach on the other side of the point you can drive the cars right up on but with no car we have to walk and it is a bit far so we often swim off the dock here. We have also gone sailing and canoeing – you can rent these boats from the hotel but Mindy's father has a small sailboat we can use. When you get hot you can go to the snack bar and get a coke and an ice cream at 5¢ each. The coke is ice cold from the ice they cut right out of the bay in the winter.

My parents and I visited the Presqu'ile Golf Club yesterday. Mother and I played crib in the clubhouse while dad played his nine holes with some of the cottagers – lots of sand traps I'm told.

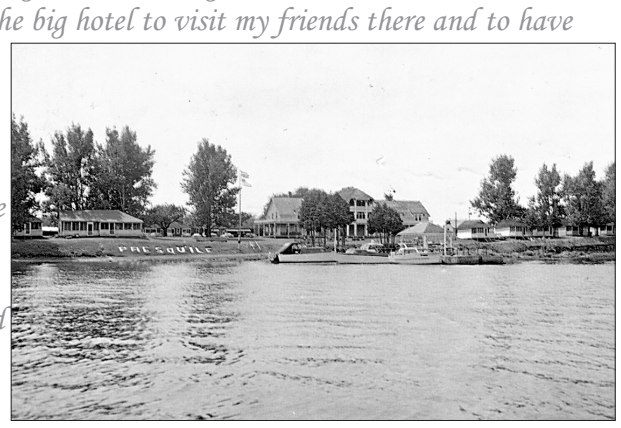
I'm really looking forward to the holiday weekend coming up, Dominion Day and the 4th of July. Saturday is regatta day and there will be all kinds of boat and swimming races. We are going to enter into the "hand-paddle, fours" race. It's a canoe race with-out paddles! It should be great fun though it's advised to wear a bathing suit. Mindy and Edward are also going to try the Mixed Tandem Canoe Race. On Sunday is the weekly baseball game. Cottagers against hotel guests and I think we have a good chance this time. Some very athletic looking young men have recently checked in! Before the game starts the hotel orchestra parades down the road, leading the players to the field.

Of course the big event will be the dance on Saturday night which I am definitely going to. I'm hoping some of those athletic young men will be there! I'll write again soon and tell you how the weekend went.

Your Friend Olivia



To: Buffalo, N.Y.
July 18, 1942
Dear Grant
We sit here like a bunch of nuts wondering what to do next. Whip, dad and Jr. are out fishing. It is 2pm now and they haven't been in yet for lunch. I guess we will go back home around the other way by 1000 islands. It will be a lot of fun. Sure wish you could be here. See ya soon.
Love Madelyn and Whip.



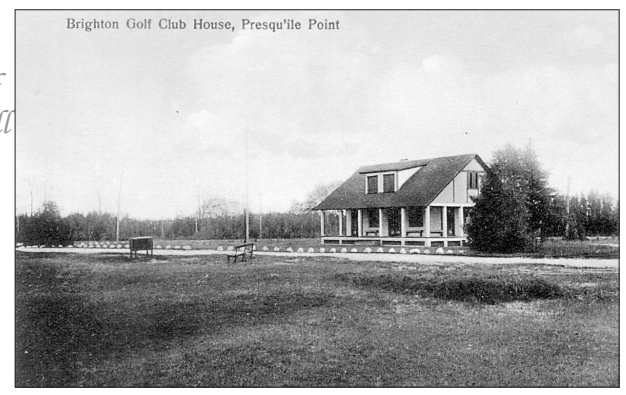
To: Toronto
August 15, 1961
Dear Eva + Bob
Just arrived here near Brighton. Wish you could come down – we'll be here for about a week then into TO. See you soon
Love All the Family



To: Victoria, B.C.
August 25, 1970
Andy and I having a nice quiet week at a Cottage here, offered to us by one of the ladies at work, it was quite an unexpected thing and we only had two days to get ready etc. We came Sat. only 90 miles from Toronto. We are alone and enjoying it. Got your letters and will write very soon.
Much love Jean and Andy.



To: Toronto
August 17, 1948
Hi old dear!
Mon. Eve.
Landed in sat. P.M. + have really kept things rolling ever since. Perfect weather, delicious food + wealthy Yanks so what more could one ask for? Sure wish you could be here to share in the "hellery". maybe next year somewhere – I'm going down to Toronto Sun. I think so I'll phone you on Mon. if I can locate your office. I have to be back for work on the 27th – darn it all!
Bye for now Ellie. Love Winnie



Wish You Were Here!

(Postcards and the Post Office at Presqu'ile)



The use of picture postcards took off at the beginning of the 20th century. During the Golden Age of postcards (1901-1913) tens of thousands of different cards were printed showing Ontario scenes. Use peaked in 1913 when 60 million cards were handled by the Canadian post office. Back then postcards were generally not used the way we use them today, as announcements of our vacation. In that era of next day mail delivery throughout southern Ontario and before widespread telephone use, postcards were used to set up appointments, send holiday greetings, send friendly reminders to write soon, and generally just stay in touch. The message "wish you were here" didn't become a postcard mainstay until the 1950s. Presqu'ile postcards however are often the exception to the rule. People that came here were on vacation, and wanted to let people back home know how well they were doing! "Wish you were here" was heard from Presqu'ile at least as early as 1910.

Most Presqu'ile postcards were mailed from Brighton or from the Presqu'ile Point post office. The Presqu'ile office was established on July 1, 1908 as a summer office, open in July and August, with W.M. Ketchum as the postmaster. In 1912 the job went to R.Y. Leslie and the post office was located in his store along the cottage row. Residents would be expected to come into the store to get their mail but apparently Mr. Leslie would often give some child an ice cream to deliver mail to someone he knew was waiting for a letter. In 1932 the post office started opening in June, July and August. Obviously Presqu'ile was extending its season.

In 1936 Mary Agnes Atkinson became the postmistress and the post office moved to her store just east of the hotel. From 1944 the post office was open four months, closing at the end of September. Mary Agnes remained postmistress until 1966 when she retired. A. Vanderwater ran the post office for its last three summers. After 1969, with many cottages now full-time residences, everyone was switched to year-round rural delivery.



The use of postcards dropped off considerably during the First World War and as the telephone became more common fewer postcards were needed to stay in touch. The vacation postcard lived on, however, and throughout its life of 61 years the Presqu'ile Point summer post office continued to handle many postcards to friends back home "wishing you were here".

We hope you enjoyed your glimpse into the past. All postcard notes are actual messages from the collection of David Bree. The letter is a modern composite. If you have any postcards or letters from Presqu'ile you could share with us we would appreciate it. Please contact David at the park.