LONG LAKE ASSOCIATION

HISTORY SERIES No. 5

MUMBRUE'S LANDING

Mumbrue's Landing remains one of the iconic past properties on Long Lake. Harmon and Marion Mumbrue built the store on the west end of the lake within a large parcel of property that was owned by the Coats/Mumbrue family back to the 1850's.

Harmon and Marion Mumbrue behind the counter at Mumbrue's Landing in 1965. (Source: Dawn Huffman)

More Than a Store — The store was built in 1956, using lumber harvested from the family's homestead southwest of the lake. After a year or more of construction, the store was opened for business in 1957.

Mumbrue's Landing was Long Lake's "convenience" or general store. Customers could pull up in their cars or boats to pick up supplies. The shelfs had groceries (such as bread, eggs and coffee), soda, ice cream, candy, various sundries and bait for fisherman. Boats could pull up to the dock and fill up their tanks with fuel. It was an honor system to report and pay for the self-serve gas.

As part of the business, Harmon Mumbrue built a boat landing alongside the store. He charged a small launch fee to visitors, but lake owners could use the launch for free. The store also rented row boats so visitors could enjoy a day of fishing on Long Lake. These were not any old row boats though, they were built from scratch by Harmon himself.

Shortly after the store was opened, the Mumbrue's opened a trailer park to the immediate south of the store. The trailer spots were rented on

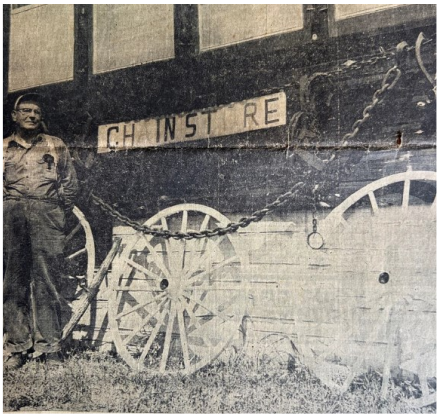
***Attribution**: The information presented herein is based largely on information available in the LLA archives and provided by family descendants and newspaper clippings, including the Saxeville Sesquicentennial Times published in 1978.*

an annual basis and renters were required to bring in their own trailers.

Harmon and Marion were known by all and became a central repository for where all the cottages were located and to whom they belonged. They served as the lake's long-distance call center and provided a small town, neighborly messenger service for folks around the lake. One could say that Mumbrue's Landing served as the lake's information hub, a kind of Long Lake Google in its time!

One witty customer referred to Mumbrue's Landing as a "chain store". The nickname stuck and to capitalize on the wit, Harmon adorned the front of his store with wagon wheels, bear traps, a large metal chain and a sign painted with the words "CHAIN STORE". Harmon was not only resourceful, he had great sense of humor.

In its heyday, half the customers arrived at the store by boat, cruising down Long Lake's two-mile-length with their outboards, stopping at the dock when something was needed. Mumbrue's Landing was part general store and part gathering spot. It was adorned inside with antiques and fishing nets hung from the ceiling.



The main attraction was a huge pot-belly stove complete with foot rails. It was authentic and a great spot to warm up when the weather was cool. There was also a collection of old clocks, a large school bell and a train whistle. Most of all there were stories and friendly chats inside this wonderful place. Customers

Fire of 1950

In 1950, a fire spread from the woods near Gilbert Lake all the way to Long Lake. It was never determined exactly what caused the blaze, but it quickly devoured trees between the lakes in about an hour. One theory is that dry material smoldered after a lightning strike the night before until it ignited the next day. Another theory is that a man was plowing with his tractor and a spark lit the fire.

Mumbrue's Landing, with the campground and cabin rental area saved the day, because as quickly as the blaze had burned down most of the forest land, it slowed dramatically as it neared the West end of Long Lake.

The year prior to the blaze, Junior Mumbrue (Harmon's father) cleared trees from the parcel of land to accommodate the camping area and rental cabins. Had the area not been cleared, the fire very likely would have continued around the lake to the south destroying more forest along the south shoreline. The fire eventually stopped in front of the elder Mumbrue's rental cottage area, but not before it destroyed more trees up to an area that is now the southern portion of the West Long Lake Road.

The blaze might have put a dent in the eventual construction of Mumbrue's Landing, but Harmon had cut the trees he would use for boards the year before the fire. The fire moved so fast that it jumped right over those logs on the ground. He was able to salvage enough wood to build the store. ◆

Orville the Owl

Among the memorable stories of Mumbrue's Landing is the tale of a very young great horned owl with a broken wing. Harmon found it in the woods when he was out emptying his minnow traps in a local pond in the woods. Harmon rescued the owl and named it Orville (after Orville Wright). Harmon kept Orville in a cage down by the lakeshore in front of the store until his wing healed.

Before he could fly, the cage offered Orvillle protection from predators, but Harmon also would let Orville out of the cage to work with him and help him gain strength to fly again. After Orville was able to fly short distances, Harmon would leave him out for short periods of time and the owl would sit under the large school/church bell in front of the store.

Since Orville couldn't hunt for himself, the Mumbrue family picked up roadkill to feed him. Because of Harmon's compassion, Orville eventually got strong enough to fly. He would come back occasionally at first and sit under the bell, perhaps a sign of thanks and loyalty to the man who helped him. Orville did bring a mate back with him a couple of times, but not long after the owl mates returned to the wild for good... Harmon's mission accomplished! ◆

Source: Dawn Huffman.

enjoyed chewing the fat with Harmon as he sat in his wooden rocking chair near the pot belly stove with his dog "Whitie" alongside.

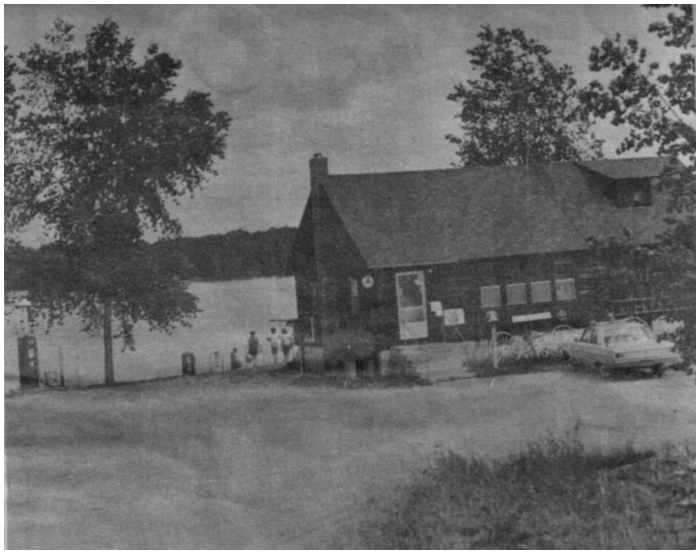
Harmon, his banjo and Whitie
(Source: LLA Archives)

Sharing Music — Harmon Mumbrue was a self-taught musician. Among his talents he played the banjo and saw. He used to play both at the store at night and would draw a crowd. He teamed up with his friend, Phil Thern, also a Long Lake musician. Together they would entertain lake folks and took their talents to local social gatherings and nearby retirement homes.

Harmon playing the saw (left) and banjo (right).
(Source: Dawn Huffman.)

New Owners Same Store — In 1972 the Mumbrues retired and sold the store to a family named Fisher from Oshkosh. While everyone still referred to it as "Mumbrue's" the store name changed to Fisher's Landing and was operated for another few years, largely in the same way it had been since 1957. The store remained open during the summer for 13 hours a day, seven days a week.

In the grand history of Long Lake, Mumbrue's Landing was not around for a long time, but in the memories of many long-time visitors and residents it remains an inextricable and cherished part of our lake lore, perhaps in large part because of its colorful owner Harmon Mumbrue. ◆◆◆



The store in its heydays of the 1960's. (Source: Dawn Huffman.)

Whitie on Harmons's ice fishing hut turned houseboat for summer fishing. (Source: Dawn Huffman)

The rental rowboats on the dock of Mumbue's Landing. (Source: Dawn Huffman.)

Filling up Grandma Ethyl Rucks' boat at Mumbrue's Landing. (Source: Bruce Rucks.)

Looking north from the store it shows the shoreline before the lake was dredged to create a cove in the southeast bay. (Source: Dawn Huffman.)