

Did You Know There Was a “Laundromat” at the South Access a While Ago?

Barbara Curtis at age 6 along with her family began coming to their Pine Haven Beach cabin on Long Lake from Des Moines, Iowa in 1928. She remembers as a young girl being with her mother down the South Access of Long Lake with the other ladies from Pine Haven Beach at the local “laundromat” of sorts...

The ladies from the cottages on Pine Haven Beach would do the family laundry at the South Access of Long Lake. At first there was a rock fire pit which was eventually replaced by a wood-fired stove that was large enough to have a copper boiler seated on top of it for heating the water from the lake for the “wash” cycle with the soap suds. The “rinse” cycle was actually “in the lake” where the clothes were rinsed out carefully by hand. The clothes were then hung on the clothesline back at the cottages to dry.

The ladies were diligent in keeping the soap suds out of the lake as much as possible as the copper boiler was dumped back in the woods away from the lake! They used homemade lye soap and also Fels-Naptha. The “laundromat” was a shared facility, just like the lake is a shared resource. The water quality of the lake was important then to the families of Long Lake, just as it is now. Today, we have laundries in our homes and a couple of official laundromats in Park Rapids and septic systems to treat the “used” water so it can be recycled in the long process by Mother Nature.

You can continue to keep Long Lake clean by utilizing appropriate soaps if nostalgia kicks in or your electricity is out and you find yourself using Long Lake as your laundromat or shower room. A special biodegradable soap is used in the Boundary Water Canoe Area (BWCA) for water quality preservation. Campsuds is one of the biodegradable phosphate-free soap brands available.