

Muskoka Holidays in the 1940s:

Memories From The Beaumont Family

My father Ken Beaumont was an accomplished amateur photographer, developing his own black & white negatives and prints, and in the process recording a lot of Ontario's transportation history. These included mid-20th Century scenes of railways, Toronto's harbourfront, major events, and life both in the city and small towns around the countryside.

It was in the years just after WWII that my parents started spending a week of their summer vacation in Muskoka. They would travel north by car and usually stay at Drumkerry Cabins, just below the falls in Bracebridge. Drumkerry was primitive by today's standards, but clean and cheery, and with a commanding view of the steamboat dock and riverfront.

A trip on the steamships was always in order for anyone holidaying in Muskoka, and I ran across more than a dozen local steamship and railway photos when going through my father's negatives. In the late 1940s he also experimented with 8-mm colour movies, and these too included Muskoka steamship, lake and town scenes. Richard Tatley used some of this footage in his steamship video, but black and white prints were my father's primary choice at that time.

To earn a little extra cash to support his photographic hobby, each spring Dad used to print samples of his pictures onto postcard stock, and sell these through local drugstores in the Muskoka area. The number of cards sold was relatively small compared to the big commercial producers. I only have one of dad's original postcards, so I wonder if anyone has examples in their postcard collection.

We certainly retain my parents' love of Muskoka steamboats, having now been members of the Muskoka Steamship & Historical Society for over 35 years, and annual cruises on *Segwun* remain an important part of our family tradition.

In finding my dad's steamship photos, I thought they would be a welcome addition to the Muskoka Boat & Heritage Centre in Gravenhurst. With today's ability to digitize pictures, I can still retain electronic copies, but know the originals will be in good hands at the museum and available to future generations of steamboat researchers and historians.

—Ralph Beaumont, member



S.S. Islander has just left the steamship wharf at Bracebridge, with the tug Niska resting in the background. Drumkerry Cabins appear on hillside above the dock.



S.S. Ahmic was scrapped in October 1951, the same month I was born. As a result we never "met" in person, but from her pictures I think she was one of the trimmest and most photogenic steamships on the lakes. Here she is captured by dad's camera, most likely leaving Port Carling.



Although there's no identifiable name on the building, this picture is most certainly taken at Beaumaris. R.M.S. Segwun is awaiting the arrival of R.M.S. Sagamo, which can be seen approaching in the background.



S.S. Cherokee rests at the entrance to the Port Carling lock, having just let R.M.S. Segwun lock through on its way to Lake Muskoka.