

# **SUMMER VILLAGE OF CRYSTAL SPRINGS**

## *.....a brief history*

*Located on the south shore of Pigeon Lake less than a kilometer north of the "Village" shopping plaza and between Norris Beach and Grandview, developers combined several land tracts in order to create the second oldest beach development around the lake.*

*Two land surveys, one by Mr. C. H. Snell in 1932 for Mr. Edward Snell and one by Mr. C.B. Altkins for Mr. T.S. Norris in 1945, carved out what would together, form most of the area. The name "Crystal Springs" was chosen because of the large number of streams that ran openly towards the lake and were used as a fresh water source by early residents.*

*The original Crystal Springs subdivision ran from range road 12 on the West to the current boat launch, along what was named "Lakeview Drive." The Norris development, initially known as "Lulubell Beach," ran from the boat launch to the Eastern border of the community. It also had its main road designated Lakeview Drive. A short street of 8 lots on the eastern border of Lulubell Beach was originally part of Norris Beach, but a "handover" to Crystal Springs in 1952 was negotiated by residents with leadership provided by resident lawyer Alan Cawsey, A small "Cawsey Drive" sign hangs below the street address today.*

*The Snell family initially named the western section of Lakeview Drive as Snell Avenue, however that name too was later changed to Crystal Springs Drive when the full length of the Crystal Springs road was renamed from Lakeview Drive in order to avoid confusion with other parts of the road that extended for kilometers around the south and west sections of the lake. For years, a small street sign "Snell Drive" hung below the Crystal Springs Drive sign on the western edge of the community. The roads were initially constructed of rows of fallen trees laid side by side and then covered with gravel. Logs below the road, while rare, can to this day be seen as they are pushed up through the hard surface by the streams below.*

*The fourth piece of land to eventually form part of Crystal Springs was developed by Edmonton business owner John Sollitt in 1952 and contains nine lots running west from the Day Park.*

*The fifth piece of the future community was a five home strip of lake front land on the western border, separated from Crystal Springs by low land and a stream. Originally part of Wetaskiwin County and bordering Grandview Village, the small strip of land was transferred to Crystal Springs following a petition by owners. The final "piece" of the community consisted of several second row homes in the east sector that were transferred from the County of Wetaskiwin in the mid 2000's.*

*Leadership for the incorporation as a Summer Village in 1957 was provided by Roy Young and Ralph Pocock, "men of considerable resources and influence." Young was employed as a senior executive with Alberta Government Telephones and Pocock owned a major Farm Implement Dealership in Wetaskiwin. Both men were subsequently elected to the Summer Village Council. Governed as an independent municipality, most of the cottages in Crystal Springs were occupied by seasonal residents in 1957, a situation that remains true today. According to the Department of Municipal Affairs, the Village had 90 full time residents and 170 dwellings in 2014. An unofficial count in 2017 identified 196 lots with 170 occupied dwellings, of which 20% were full time homeowners, with another 40% using their cottages year-round.*

*Historically the small number of full time residents made operating a business challenging and the only commercial venture in the community was a corner "B/A" gas station and grocery store on the most westerly boundary. Opened in the early 1950's by the Breton family, it was soon purchased by Dorothy and Ed Overall. The green siding building served up British American gas from "gravity pumps," block ice from wood shavings in a garage, groceries, candies and fishing goods. For at least two summers they even delivered milk door to door. The store also boasted the only phone in the area.*

*The business was the only service west of the stores at Westeros and Ma-Me-O Beach and one that Crystal Springs residents spoke of fondly. Children in particular enjoyed ice cream and a wide array of candies including many like "jaw breakers" that are rarely seen today. The Overall family lived in the building itself and were said to "always go the extra mile."*

*The store was sold in the late 70's to the Passmore family, while the Overall family remained in the community. The buildings were upgraded and modernized with new gas pumps and appliances, and then sold to the Elgert family.*

*The business was closed in the 90's as the Village shops were being constructed. A fire had earlier destroyed the Westrose Store and Post Office and the closure of the Crystal Springs store for a period, left the nearest gas and groceries at Ma-Me-O Beach.*

*Year's before the corner store closed, the Village Council received a "concept plan" that detailed a new store, café and tennis court, but a final plan never materialized. The buildings eventually fell into disrepair, becoming derelict and dangerous and in November 2017 they were ordered demolished. The community no longer has commercial ventures with the "village" and its array of shops and services, dominating the region.*

*Crystal Springs residents live and recreate in a mixture of million dollar homes and quaint cottages. The municipal government's focus therefore centers on residential services, driven by a vision of **"A caring, clean and safe lakefront community with opportunities for recreation, relaxation, respite and relationships."***

*Services include strategies to improve lake water conditions, to clean shorelines, a public wastewater system, modern, convenient fire and ambulance services, an enhanced policing, revitalized parks including a children's park a heated pavilion and a lake viewing platform, safety enhancements and organized social/recreational opportunities.*

**The above information was adapted with permission from a royalty free booklet "The Summer Village of Crystal Springs" available on Amazon.ca**

