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History of Fish Lake Resort

The story of Fish Lake would not be complete without discussing the life activities of the man who has made the modern conditions largely possible: Charles Skougaard of Richfield. In 1910 there were no structures whatsoever on the shores of Fish Lake. There were only hazardous dirt roads, little more than trails, leading into the area. This man with vision and foresight formulated a plan for operations and for the accommodations and convenience of citizens desirous of visiting the area. State and Federal authorities were interested through the operations of Charles Skougaard and eventually, largely through his efforts, a road was constructed permitting automobiles to arrive at their destination on the Lake shores. A humble beginning in the nature of tents on frames were established for the accommodation of guests. A modest store selling essential items such as groceries, and fishing gear was established. Year after year additional cabins were built. The profits made from the operations were plowed into the enterprise again and again till there was more than 150 cabins, some of them modern. The road into the lake was only a dirt wagon trail up the "Hog's Back." Mr Skougaard built 12 boats in the valley and they were taken by wagon, a good 2 days trip, into the Lake. Men worked hard making a new road up the Old Mahogany Canyon so make it easier, when completed it was called "Skougaard Canyon." Now the Camp was too "up to date" for candles and kerosene lamps and Mr. Skougaard filed on the water power at Twin Creeks and put in a power plant for electric lights.

A 30 foot launch was laboriously put on wheels and 2 teams of horses hauled it over the Glenwood dugway and up to the lake. Twenty people could make the trip around the lake. The boat was run with a huge motor.

The first hotel was made from native lumber. It had 8 bedrooms and a dining room with a table where 16 people could be seated. The Lobby had home made table and chairs and a big pot bellied stove where Fishermen could congregate to dry their shoes and swap tall tales of fishing.

A 10ft x 10ft store was built for housing and selling fishing tackle. This was tended by the daughter Josephine while their son Chase racked up the oars, tended boats and caught salamander and bull-heads needed for bait. Fish dinners were always ready for the guests. As business progressed and road conditions improved, an open air dance pavilion was built next to the Hotel where John Hood and his band played for the dances. The following season found the dance hall with the roof blown off and the floor sagging. So Mr. Skougaard built a larger hall strongly braced and walls to protect the floor.

In 1914 there were 4 automobiles in Richfield and [_____] finally drove into the Resort successfully. So Mr. Skougaard bought a lumbering Pope Toledo Car, hired a mechanic driver to take passengers into the Resort from Richfield. It took 3-4 or 5 hours depending on the undependable auto tires and unstable motors. In 1917 the first hotel and store were torn down and 2 more new buildings were built. One with large fireplace. The lobby and 6 tables in the dining room. An annex housed 8 bedrooms for guests. The tents still served for campers but that year [_____] camp houses of lumber.

The week of July 24 now became Fish Lake's own holliday [holiday] season. A track for foot races and pony races was leveled off down at Pelican point – baseball teams organized in the Valley and challenging all teams on a field without bleachers or [_____] [boundary?].

Finally in 1920 Governor Bomburger aided Mr. Skougaard in getting a State road put into the lake. By now most of the boats were equipped with outboard motors and the store had gone into the grocery business in a building of its own. Ice was cut from the Lake in the early

Spring and stored in an ice house in sawdust to keep food during the summer. Milk was brought in by teams twice a week from Burrville along with the mail. In 1925 Mr. Skougaard succeeded in getting U S Mail service for the Lake and bought a ranch at the north end of the Lake where a dairy could supply the Camp with fresh milk, cream and butter, and riding horses were kept at the ranch for the tourists to enjoy riding the Forest trails.

Roads were much better, cars more dependable and more people heard about Fish Lake. In 192[] work was started on the Skougaard Tavern, a building almost a City block long made entirely of pine trees from around the Lake, brought down from the sawmill in Bowery Creek and from there to the new building. Mr. Skougaard's son Chase was the architect. The building is 450 feet long, 73 feet wide and contains 33,000 sq feet of floor space. Two large fireplaces are of native rock quarried in nearby mountains. A dance hall where a thousand could dance without crowding, a dining room where two hundred could be served, a large lobby, two huge rock fireplaces. Bedroom built around it in Swiss Chalet design with hot and [] keeping cabins.

The store added a lunch counter and sandwich bar. A few years later the store up by the road was torn down and a store was located in the hotel building between the dining room and dance hall. In 1945 a boat pond was taken out of the shore and a new stone boat house was built. The Skougaard Tavern was changed to Skougaard Lodge and was considered the largest and finest structure of its type in the West. Charles Skougaard and his wife Hannah along with his son operated the Resort business. Mrs. Skougaard worked side by side with her husband all these years till she retired in 1937. Their daughter-in-law Phebe took over the management of the dining room, kitchen etc and hiring of ladies and girls department. After Mr. Skougaard's death in 1949, Chase and Phebe carried on the business until 1963 when the Resort was sold.