

Early Businesses: The Wiese Family



The Summer Village of Gull Lake was originally called Wieseville after an early settler named William Wiese. The picture on the left was the Wiese family home, ultimately owned by the Jenkins family. The picture on the right is the same house in 2015 and was located on the corner of Wiese Street and Highway 12. Unfortunately as a result of arson, this historic building burned to the ground in 2016.

William and Mary Wiese, originally from Germany, came from Nebraska with their six children in 1900. They arrived in Lacombe on the newly-completed Calgary-Edmonton Railway (later a subsidiary of the Canadian Pacific Railway) and were greeted by another early arrival, John Ebeling Sr., who took the family to a log cabin on the south of Gull Lake. It was March and as is often the case during that month, the ground was covered in snow so the family travelled the twelve miles by a horse drawn sleigh.

Linda Weise Marshall writes, “William Wiese was an entrepreneur who saw great possibilities in his adopted province. He immediately set to work to make his log cabin comfortable, plastering the inside and re-siding the outside.” He had farmed in Nebraska and hard work was not new to him or to his family. During the winter, he cut wood and hauled it to Lacombe for sale. He added more land to his original homestead. He purchased a few pigs, sometimes using fish from the lake as feed, and raised cows and planted some crops.

However, not content to settle down as a farmer only, and seeing the potential for a lake resort, he built a boat house and rented out boats to families who came from Lacombe and the surrounding area to visit the sandy beach on Gull Lake. To accommodate the farmers and business men who travelled past the Weise property on their way west on the dirt trail to Bentley, he built a “stopping house” as he and his sons were often called upon to help stranded travellers out of the mud and snow and were in need of assistance, food and lodging. Meals were 25 cents, a real bargain.

The first large scale development by Wiese was registered on July 20, 1905 and compromised municipal addresses 1-15 and 29-115 Lakeview Avenue. The earliest cottages along the beach were likely built on some of these lots.

With increased visitors coming from Calgary and Edmonton to Lacombe by train, the Wiese family spent many hours ferrying visitors to and from ‘the Lake’. Subsequently a livery stable, a store and the Lakeview Hotel were built. He also ran the telephone exchange and post office, serving as post master from 1907 until 1912.

It was no wonder that the small hamlet was called Wieseville.

References: Marshall,L.(1972) Mr. and Mrs. William Wiese. In *Wagon Trails to Hard Top* (pp.654-657). Lacombe, Alberta: Lacombe Rural History club.

