

In The Good Old Summertime
Letter written by Lillian Gunsberg Klein
Retyped by Larry Gunsberg – items in parenthesis are Larry's additions

Some of my happiest childhood memories are of a place called Walled Lake. It was about 20 miles from Detroit, but took hours to drive there..in 1920...as many roads were gravel. When we got to a high hill, Dad (Ignatz) would tell everyone to go get out of the car and he would chug to the top. Then, we would walk up and get back in. When school was over, all our relatives would move to the lake from the whole summer. Our fathers would come for the weekends.

The cottages were owned by our 7 families with 20 children, all cousins, from babies to teenagers (note: The Friedman's, my mothers family, also had a cottage there, which is how the Friedman and Gunsberg families knew each other...Renee and Dick meet when they were children at Walled Lake).

In the early years, it was very rustic, with no electricity and only kerosene lamps and stove. Mother (Aunt Razie) would put a portable oven over the burners and bake delicious pies and cakes occasionally. There was no inside plumbing except for a sink with a hand pump for washing. An outside pump was used for drinking water. The lake was our bathtub. Bushes that grew big luscious raspberries surrounded the privy outside. One cottage was the "The Big House". Three families lived there. It had a long screened porch where everyone would congregate. The adults were at one end and the children at the other end. The older cousins would teach the younger ones manners and rules, like no swimming till 2:00 PM or we would get cramps and drown. Wear a hat in the sun, or would get sunstroke, offer a chair to a grownup, etc. We did everything as told to be on their good side. We learned about stars, insects and plants, and it was all fun.

As little children, we would walk to a farm for milk with our covered buckets. One day, I wore a new overall and was caught in the rain. When I got home, my body was blue from the dye. Some days we would walk to the village (of Walled Lake), over a mile away, to get a soda or something at the General Store that carried everything from groceries to dry goods. After the big noon meal, the girls and mothers would meet in the yard. My dear Aunt Fanny (wife of Sigmund) would try to teach us to knit, crochet or embroider. She had the patience of a "saint".

With all the kids, there was never a dull moment. One day, my father brought out a guest and told me to show her to her room. Someone had left a fishhook on the bed and when I sat down the hook went into my....finger. Lucky it wasn't elsewhere. Father drove me to the country Doctor and I ran in crying "...please don't cut off my finger..". It took him half a minute to remove it and didn't even hurt, but I got a lot of attention that day. Another time, my aunt was removing a sliver from my cousin's foot. All of us kids were watching and I fainted! When a child cut his foot, my aunt would bandage it with a slice of tomato to prevent an infection. There were a LOT of home remedies.

Peddlers would come around often, selling different articles. One sold a cream called Wonderful Dream Salve. It came in a tin like polish and looked like it too. Some sold linens and gadgets. It was a hard way to make a living.

On Labor Day, the families would pack up and return home. The men would load up a truck with cribs, washtubs and things needed at home. Summer vacation was over. When I talk to a relative, they usually ask if I have written about Walled Lake yet. Now I can say "yes".