

I lift my feet as water eeks into the boat. Two fellows feverishly baling with wooden buckets, while a third works the oars gasping and groaning. Mother and I pray we'll make it across Lake Max to '90 Acre Island' before this wreck of a boat sinks! We can hear father calling to us from shore. Smiling!

Father knows real danger on the water. So, he's not overly concerned by our puny dilemma. He was only 14 when he set out for adventure back in England – He spent 6 years at sea before coming to Manitoba ... and settled not far from here, at Mountain City.

It's 1898 and I've heard many stories about the building of our island cottage. This is my first time here!

As our home-made boat neared - Father splashed over and hauled me out - setting me on solid ground with 'There you go, Alice!'

After helping mother, we set out for our cabin.



An unidentified cabin at Lake Max - from a postcard.

My father, Bob Hurt, works with lumber and so building this cottage has been a fun project! He's been the engineer for Morton's Sawmill for 3 years and he built the first elevator in Boissevain with his friend Mr. Tetchell in 1886.

Our log cabin is wonderful! It's surrounded by berry bushes. Mother says we can pick the berries when they're ripe and make fresh jam at our cottage! The cabin walls are made of logs, carefully placed one on top of the other.

Father told me the logs were cut during the winter and hauled over the ice by horses so he could start construction first thing in spring.

It's the first cottage on the island – but there's talk of many more. It's a popular place. Lots of families come to the island in summer to swim and boat and fish. Many pitch tents and stay for the weekend. You see, the big fires that scar the mountain don't touch this island. As a result, there are very large oak trees here.

In summer. This is the party place. Father took over the operation of a small steam launch named, Lady of the Lake, from Mr. George Morton. Father enjoys being the captain. He gives pleasure cruises to friends and visitors to beautiful Lake Max. You can often hear a harmonica or a banjo playing, and my dad singing favorite tunes of England – competing with the loons for the prettiest sounds on the water. Sometimes he'll turn off the motor - let the steamer gently drift in the orange glow of a prairie sunset....

I expect there'll be many adventures – and I suspect I'll be hiking up my skirts a few more times as well!

Betty Sawatzky and David Neufeld adapted '90 Acre Island' from a story written for Vantage Points 3.