

THANK-YOU FOR TAKING THE TOUR.
WE HOPED YOU ENJOYED THE
VILLAGE OF DORSET.

Credit for this project must go to the Township of Lake of Bays Heritage Advisory Committee and their dedicated volunteers, and the Dorset Community Group for their invaluable insights into their hometown. Special mention must go to Brad Robinson, Roy McKay, Penny McEachern and Ruth Ross.

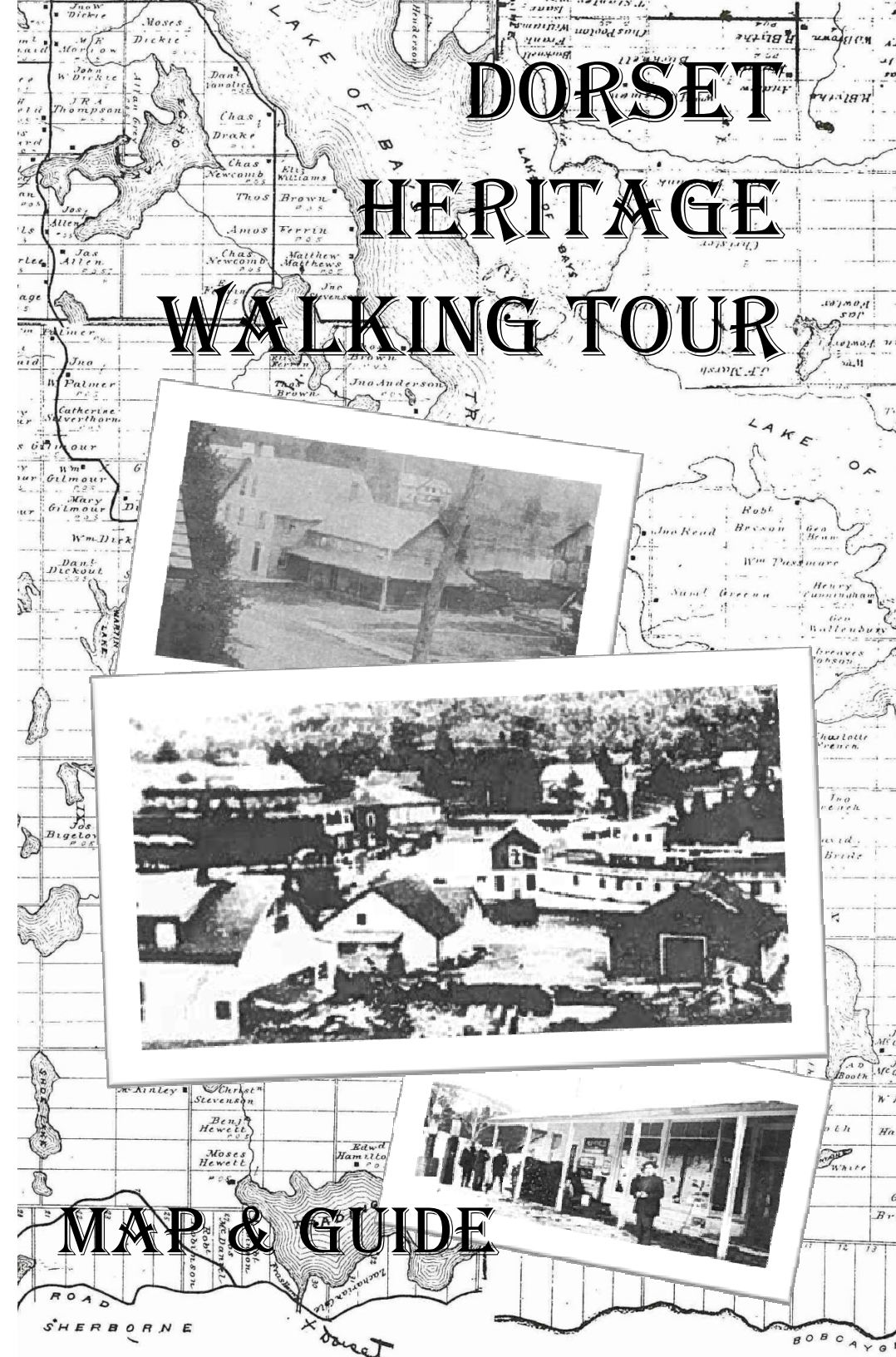
We hope you enjoy this Heritage Tour, and welcome your comments at www.lakeofbays.on.ca to help us make it even better.

Other websites that offer insights into Dorset's history include: www.dorsetheritagemuseum.ca & www.bigwinsteamboat.ca

For more information regarding heritage in Lake of Bays please visit the Heritage Register at www.lakeofbays.on.ca/heritage



CREATED IN 2010 BY THE LAKE OF BAYS
HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE



WELCOME TO DORSET IN LAKE OF BAYS

A Dorset History Lesson:

First Nations' Chippewas of Bigwin Island made this part of Lake of Bays their summer campgrounds for years. When white settlers began moving into the area in the early 1800's, Dorset became known as Trading Bay for Francis Harvey's trading post that sprang up along the Narrows. No one knows who the first white travelers were, but someone carved 1675 into a rock in the area – found in the early 1800's by Tom Salmon, one of the first settlers on Lake of Bays.

Over the years the hamlet saw an influx of loggers, timber barons, hunters and trappers, soon to be followed by settlers in 1868 taking up free grant land. While the land looked promising, as it was cleared it became apparent that the stony Canadian Shield did not lend itself well to farming. The lakes and forests were much more appealing to tourists who soon followed into the region every summer. The families of Chief Yellowhead and Chief Bigwin continued to summer in this region well into the middle of the 1900's.

The town line divides the main street between Sherborne and Ridout townships.

Sherborne was surveyed in 1862 by Gen. Thomas Ridout, who named it for his hometown in England. Ridout was named for the surveyor himself. The abutting ward, Franklin took its name from the great Arctic explorer who died seeking the fabled Northwest Passage. Now Sherborne is incorporated into the Algonquin Highlands, while Ridout and Franklin were encompassed into the Township of Lake of Bays.

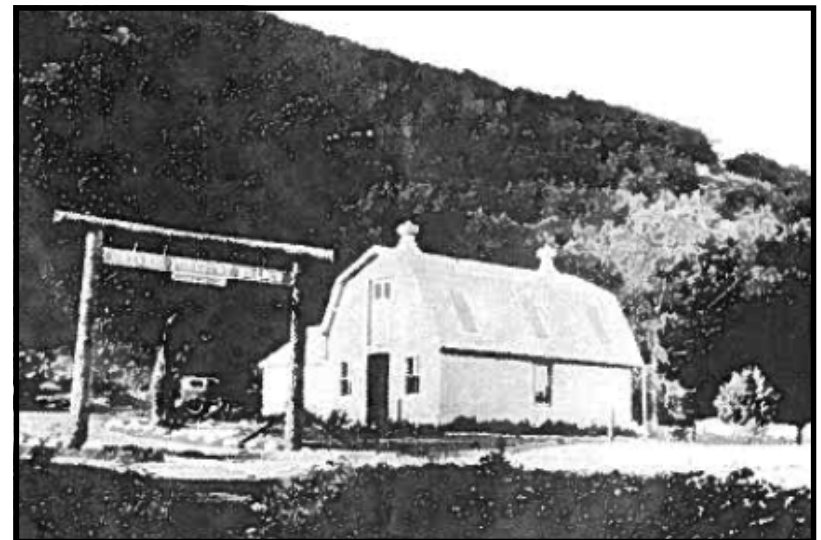
The village has a long and colourful history. Zachariah Cole, one of the surveyors on the Bobcaygeon Road, saw such promise here that he became the first settler, clearing 17 acres. When the logging boom hit, Zac Cole built a hotel and trading post on the site of an old French Trading post, complete with a whiskey still in the backyard next to a brick kiln. A driving force in developing the young village, Zac used to claim he wanted his coffin made from tamarack, because it burned with loud cracks and noises, so everyone in Hell would know he had arrived. Today a great many people consider the village that Zachariah Cole promoted to be a little piece of heaven.

This tour will take approximately two hours, but you can spend much longer by taking time at the various sites highlighted on the map (centerfold). Be sure to visit the newest attraction, the **S.S. Bigwin**, re-launched in July 2010 on her 100th anniversary, following eight hard years of restoration work. She is replete with her own fascinating history. At the other end of town, the Heritage Museum is another spot that should tempt you to spend some extra time.

Across the road, the 'Dorset Ice Palace' is the public skating rink. Many winter nights saw the town hockey team, "The Dorset Hounds" in action here. The *village jail*, run by Angus McKay, was built in 1880 next to the present Community Centre. Occupants of the jail, who had stepped outside the law, found themselves serenaded on Sundays by the church choir, gathered outside to sing "Rescue the Perishing." In 1932 the *OPP* took over the building, and the music stopped.

20. Look up to see the famous *Dorset Lookout Tower*. At the base of *Tower Hill* is the *Dorset Museum*, housed on the original property of the *Fire Ranger headquarters*, built in 1927. There are many interesting exhibits – including the Gilmour Tramway replica -- and knowledgeable guides, so be sure to stop in to gain a sense of Dorset's past.

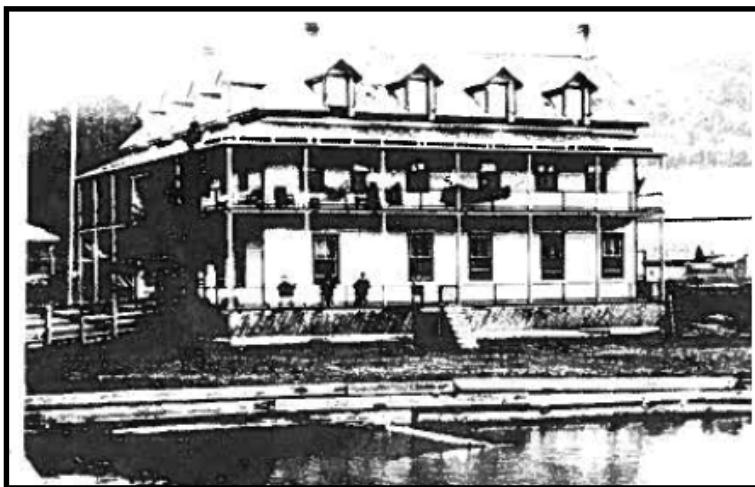
21. From the Museum door, it is a short walk back to the *Parkette*, concluding this circle tour. Should you still have energy, the *hiking trail* leading to the *Lookout Tower* begins at the Museum. Look for trail signage. Or drive to the Tower parking lot, and visit the Tower from there. Built in 1922, this was one of the original Fire Towers from which rangers watched the forests for signs of fires. The original external ladder lead to the top, 82 feet high. In 1967, a new Tower was constructed, complete with the current stairway. When you visit Algonquin Park Visitor Centre, there is a display featuring the original Dorset Fire Tower.



Fire Ranger's Headquarters, Dorset.

17. The dock under your feet has witnessed many changes, including the arrival of the steamships that encouraged tourism at the end of the logging era. There were three storage buildings along this dock: one owned by the *Mickle and Dymont Lumber Company*; another by *Fred McKey*; and the third by *Shier Lumber*. The *Northern Delites* ice cream shop is the only survivor of those original buildings. Over its lifetime it has been a dance hall, and a gift shop, and not changed in size. There is a *Parkette* beyond the old dance hall that is a good place to rest and enjoy the lake.

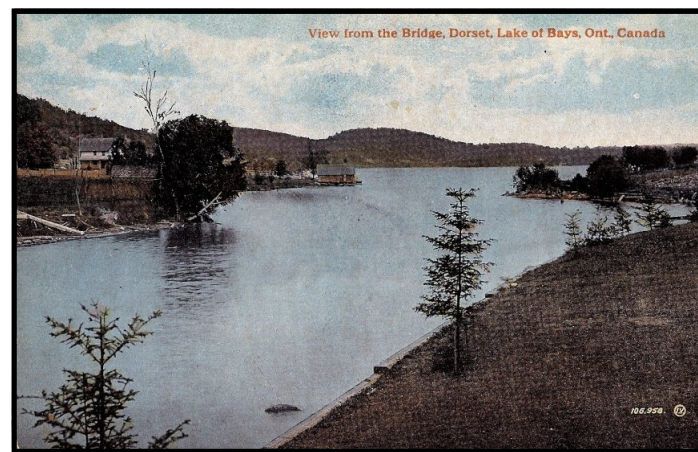
18. Leaving the waterfront, the site of George Tutt's store, in operation until 1905 is on the left. Purchased by Fred McKey, it was sold in 1921 to the *Baturenskys*. They operated it as a garage and snack bar until they sold to the present owners, Bill and June Johnson. Completely destroyed by fire in the mid-1990's, it has been rebuilt into a modern retail store, realty office and restaurant.



This was the first hotel in Dorset, originally named the Colebridge, it then became the Fairview.

19. The LCBO mini-mall was built in 1967 as a *Centennial project* and economic driver for the village. Beyond the mini-mall the trees over the roadway met in an arch. Combined with the lack of houses and lights, this section of road running past the current LCBO was known as *Lover's Lane*. A large boulder, known as "*Kissing Rock*" remains, just beyond the Community Centre. (Continued on next page)

AND SO IT BEGAN...



View from Dorset Bridge

Please refer to centerfold for a map of plotted locations

1. The **Dorset Parkette** picnic grounds date back to the 1950's. A historic plaque commemorates Bobcaygeon Road, the original Settlement road from Lindsay to Huntsville.

David Thompson, arguably the World's Greatest Land Geographer, was 67 when he mapped these shores in 1837. The name he chose, Lake of Many Forks, held until 1853 when it was changed to the current name, Lake of Bays.

2. The bridge on Hwy 35 crossing the Narrows was built in 1957 to bypass the village. Enjoy the view of Lake of Bays in both directions. To the west, you see the hump-back bridge in downtown Dorset that you will cross later in this walk.

3. Over the bridge, turn right onto Harvey Avenue. The house on the corner, currently the *Moose Bed and Breakfast*, was built during the logging boom in the 1880's. Built by Frank Simmons, for the Mickle Dymont Lumber Company, the house was occupied by Mark Malloy, and later became known as the Flaherty House.

4. On your left, the pottery studio, *Chetolah*, began life in the 1880's as the storage barn and livery for the Mickle and Dymont Lumber Company, housing the logging horses.

5. Continue to *Knox United Church* on your left. While built as a Presbyterian Church in 1894, the Methodists and Presbyterians combined services here. In 1944 it became Knox United Church. A plaque set in the stone wall in 1994 commemorates Norm MacKay, a descendant of one of the original settler families. The stone fence surrounded the church to keep wandering livestock out of the church yard. In its early years, if the weather was unfavourable on Sunday, church services were simply held on a different day.

6. At the bottom of Harvey Ave. on your left is *Gregory Brand's Furniture*, housed in the oldest wood frame home in Dorset. The original settler, Francis Harvey, built this as his second home after moving out of his log cabin in 1882. Later occupied by Jack and Annie MacNamara, and known as the MacNamara Home, this building has not changed since it was built. If you enter the building, look for many original features, such as the plank floors, high ceilings and windows. Jack MacNamara was the first Towerman manning the Dorset Fire Tower for the Department of Lands and Forests.

7. Turn left onto Main Street and climb "Pill Hill". Named for the location of the Pharmacist's shop, operated by Frank Fisher, the original sidewalks leading here were made of wooden planks. The pharmacy is long gone, but the nickname Pill Hill lives on with the locals.

8. On the right stands Mary Magdalene Anglican Church. Originally built in 1894, it was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1903. Directly across the road was the Methodist Church, used only in the summer. That building became the Orange Hall. In 1874 the school outgrew its location, and half the students moved into the Orange Hall.

9. Just beyond the Church, on the right, is Dorset's first house. Built by Frances Harvey in 1857, it was originally a log cabin that has expanded over the years. Francis Harvey was a trapper and shopkeeper who traded with the First Nations transiting the lake every summer. Harvey Avenue is named for him.

The current bridge was built in 1914 when the water was raised by the dam. The arch was necessary for the passage of large boats. Except for replacement of the decking from wood to concrete, the bridge remains unchanged. Look for the plaque on the bridge from the maker, Western Bridge and Equipment. On the South side of the Bridge the marks remain where the **S.S. Iroquois** came adrift and hit the bridge. The **S.S. Iroquois**, one of the mail ships plying the lakes, was later decommissioned and sunk at the South Portage dock, where it now forms part of the dock area.

Crossing the bridge, you are following the old Bobcaygeon Road, built in 1856 as a colonization road. This road divides Haliburton County from the District of Muskoka – as you walk Main Street, you can have a foot in each municipality.



16. Leaving the bridge, *Robinson's General Store* is on the right. Early accounts indicated that Zachariah Cole, in 1862, built a hotel and store on this site, which burned in 1886. The hotel was rebuilt as the Fairview. That also burned in 1907. Fires were frequent in the wooden buildings due to the combustible materials and limited firefighting abilities. The next frame building here was the Red Onion Hotel, parts of which remain upstairs in Robinson's. Five cent slot machines were a popular feature of the store, until banned by the province.

In 1921, Fred and Marguerite McKey built a general store next door to the Red Onion. After Fred's death, Marguerite married Harry Robinson in the early 1930's and the store became known as *Robinson's*. It is still owned and operated by the Robinson Family, and the original building is still part of the store. Look for the tin ceilings inside, and other original features.

12. The Chimney built for picnics at The Ladies Auxiliary Bathing Beach, now known as Chimney Park, or the Bathing Beach, provides a landmark for a picnic or swim. Looking out from this park, at one time, this bay was filled with logs headed to the Tramway, and criss-crossed by steamboats.

13. Heading back towards the village, on the left, before the bridge, sits Ed Speers' original store. In 1922, Wesley Clayton, took it over, operating as Clayton's General Store for many years. The local post office was in this store. When applying for the post office, the villagers applied for the name Cedar Narrows because the tips of the cedar trees met over the narrow stretch of river. This name was already in use, so Colebridge was proposed, after one of the early settlers, but this name, too was taken. Because many of the settlers hailed from the southwest of England, the name Dorset was chosen. In 1883, the first Postmaster, Allen Phillips, would canoe from Dorset to Baysville to collect the mail, on a salary of \$50 a year.

The two buildings comprising Clayton's General Store and Marina currently house the Lake of Bays Navigation Society and Marine Museum, the home of the S.S. Bigwin. The smaller building on the dock was used as sleeping quarters for the captain and crew, as well as storage for produce transported by the steamships that plied this lake from the 1920's to the 1950's.

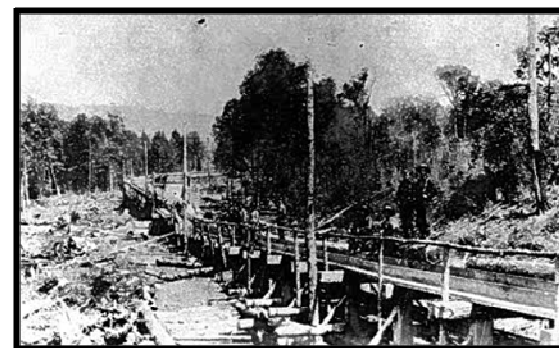
14. Across the road is the Fiery Grill Restaurant, originally the Dorset Hotel, popular with the loggers. A three story building with balconies around the outside, it was built in 1907. Like many of the old wooden structures, the hotel burned. It was rebuilt by Dan McIlroy as a red brick hotel. In the 1970's the top floor was removed and it was converted to a restaurant. The brick on the exterior is the original brick. It has seen many owners over the years, including the wife of Group of Seven Artist Franz Johnson. Look for murals of his works at the Museum.

Behind the hotel, now the parking lot, was the Snake House. One of two jails in Dorset, it was located close to the hotel to house loggers recovering from too much celebration and overindulgence in alcohol! In short, it was the town's drunk-tank. The building has since burned, but the memory of the Snake House lives forever.

15. Pause in the middle of the *hump-back bridge*. Before the dam was built in Baysville, the Narrows in Dorset used to be quite shallow, fordable by a horse and wagon, while pedestrians crossed on a plank bridge. The first wooden bridge was built in 1859. In 1905 it collapsed under a heavy load – the team of horses and wagon floated downstream and were retrieved undamaged; not so the bridge. (Continued on next page)

10. The Dorset Garage has seen many changes since it was built in 1935 by Hiram Barry. His home still stands, near the lake behind the garage. Hiram brought his car to Dorset in winter over the ice, and in 1909 became the first person to drive a car from Dorset to Bobcaygeon in 1909. The corduroy road was very rutted, muddy and difficult in places, so sets of planks were carried on the car to be laid down in front of the wheels in the wet places. The garage is still owned by his descendants.

11. A focal point of the street is the yellow Lockman house, the original office of the Gilmour Lumber Company. In 1892 this company acquired timber rights to a large tract of crown land within Algonquin Park in Peck Township, including South Tea Lake, Canoe Lake and Joe Lake. Dorset became the northern headquarters. The Gilmour Lumber Company built the famous Gilmour Tramway in 1893 – stop at the Museum to see the scale model. Lifting 20 foot long logs half a mile uphill over height of land from Lake of Bays to Raven Lake, this device was part of the log drive taking timber from Algonquin to Trenton. Floated downriver into Lake of Bays, the logs then traversed the three mile long tramway into Raven Lake, and the Black River. It took two years to put the drive over the tramway, and three years to get the logs 200 miles to the mill in Trenton. Despite costing a million dollars to build, the Tramway was abandoned after one log drive.

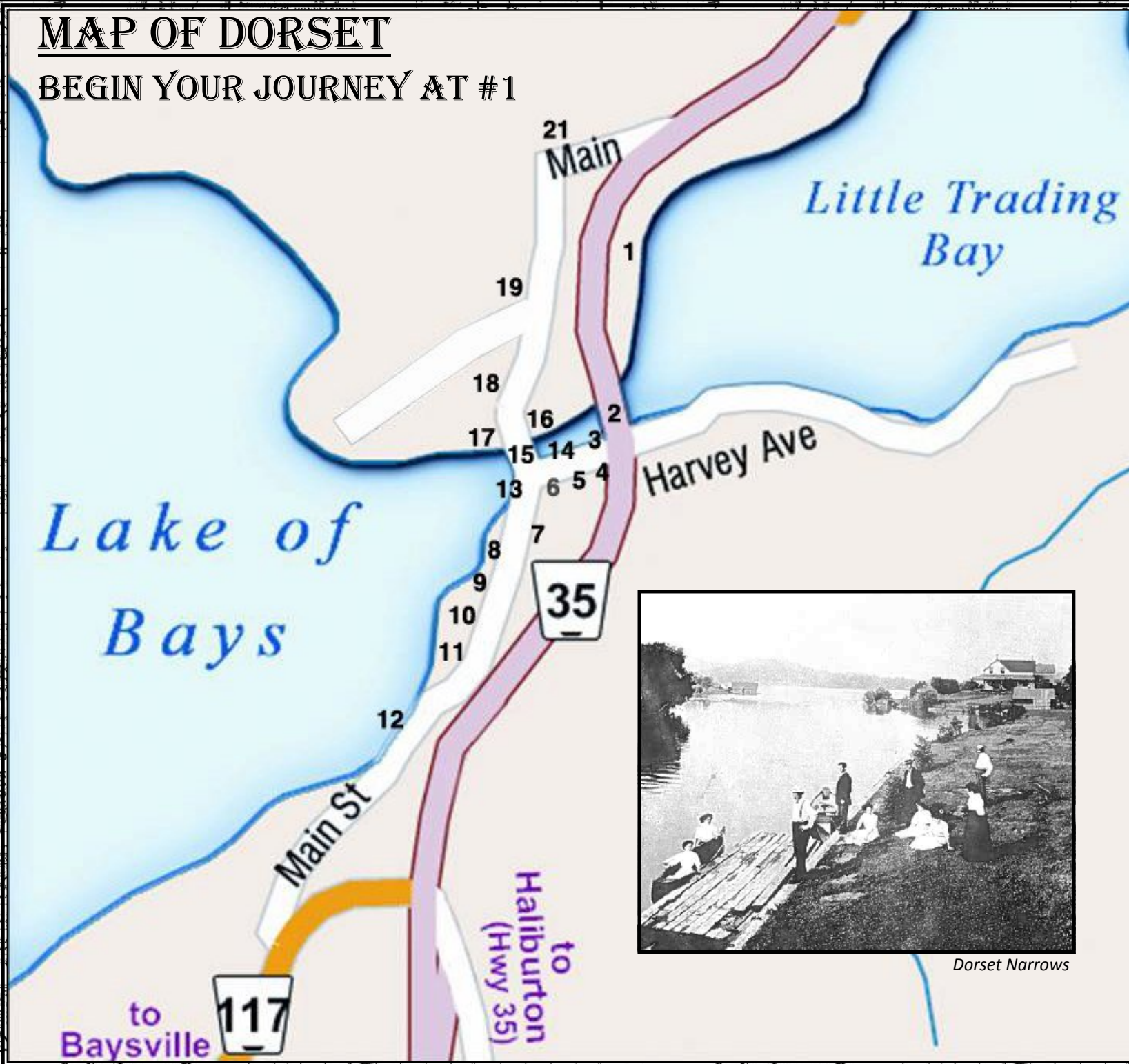


Building the Tramway

The *Dollar House*, located just left of the Gilmour office, was built in 1892 as a boarding house before being taken over by Lockman's daughter upon her marriage to Mr. Dollar of the U.S. Dollar Shipping Company. Mrs. Dollar was popular for candy apples at Halloween. The lilac bushes along this road are from stock she had shipped over from Dorset, England.

MAP OF DORSET

BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY AT #1



Dorset Narrows