

# A Little Boulder Lake History

by Steve Greene, references: Northwood's Bank, Linda Reminger, Bruce Bohnsack



*Louise Hewitt outside the Dorset Bank holding a Silver Pike*

By the year 1919, the tiny community of Dorset had been thriving in the heart of Minnesota's lake country since the Great Northern Railroad built a depot there 26 years earlier. Located nearby for the convenience of local farmers were a grain elevator, potato warehouse, and a stockyard. In the days before the automobile, tourists came to Dorset by train. Sometimes as many as 50 tourists per day were met at the station by fishing camp operators with horse-drawn buggies. The Dorset skyline of the era included a hotel and restaurant, a general store and post office, a blacksmith shop and livery stable, a church, a school, a town hall, and of course, a saloon. The last business to be established in the early days of Dorset was the bank. Some of the local farmers and merchants decided they needed a financial institution nearby. They persuaded W.L and L.F. Cary, who owned a bank in nearby Menahga, to

open an establishment in Dorset. The Farmers State Bank of Dorset was organized on September 25, 1919. For a short time, the bank operated out of Peter Avenson's general store, then from a log building nearby.

Less than a year after they established the bank, the Cary brothers sold their controlling interest to J.C. Hewitt and his son, Colby (C.R.) Hewitt, in June 1920. J. C. Hewitt operated a bank in Nassau, MN. The Hewitt's then erected a bank building a block east of Main Street, facing the railroad tracks (now the Heartland Trail). This way train passengers would see immediately that Dorset was a flourishing town with its own financial institution.

In July 1936, the bank was moved from its location facing the railroad tracks to a building across from the general store (Dorset House). *continued on page 5*

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Once relocated, the bank remained in the same building (currently a gift shop) for almost 50 years, many of you may have seen the vault inside that is still there today. The familiar brick-fronted building graced Dorset's main street for many years. It was during the '50s that the community became famous in Ripley's Believe It or Not as the nation's smallest town with a bank. In 1954, George Grimm's column in the Minneapolis Tribune featured Farmers State Bank as having the highest per capita deposits of any bank in the upper Midwest. Sixty-five years after Farmers State Bank of Dorset was chartered, the name was changed to what is today Northwoods Bank of Minnesota. In 1985 construction was completed on a 4,000-square-foot building at the new site on Highway 34 in Park Rapids. What has this got to do with Boulder Lake you ask? Well Colby Hewitt being a very forward thinking man had the foresight to purchase lake properties, including large properties on Boulder as well as Big Sand. He owned a large portion of the southeast shoreline of Boulder running from what's now Knotty Pines resort all the way around the bay on the east end of the lake.

In 1942 he built a log cabin on the south east end of the lake on the point that is now owned by the Bohnsack family. His wife Louise loved Boulder Lake and even though they had another cabin on Big Sand she always preferred to spend her time here. Louise did not drive but Colby often times would drive her down at his noon lunch and then would join her after work. They would eat supper here and then go home. They were both avid fishermen he preferred panfish, but she was always fishing for a trophy, and was once written up in a DNR book for having caught an 11lb silver pike. In 1944 the cabin on the point and all the land east of there was sold, without Louise's knowledge to a single nurse from Ortonville named Vera Geier. Louise got so upset with Colby that he ended up building another

cabin around the bay to the west for her that is still in the family today, now owned by his granddaughter Linda and her husband Rich Remiger. Linda's parents Gertrude and Orvin Reynolds who had honeymooned in the original cabin ended up building a home next door to what is now Linda's that is currently owned by the Kron's.

In 1950 when the Nevis Muskie was dedicated by Gov Luther Youngdahl he actually stayed on Boulder Lake in the original cabin, which even today still has some of the hand made furniture from that era. Vera Geier who had no children and being an only child herself had no nieces or nephews, so when she died in 1981 she had left the cabin and the entire east end of the lake to her paperboy Jay Ross of Nevis who eventually broke it up into five lots and sold it off calling it Boulder View Estates.



*Colby Hewitt hanging out at Fullers in Park Rapids*