My name is Jan Watterworth, nee Ellsworth. I grew up in what is now Art and Karen Carey’s cottage at 5672 Lakeside. My parents bought the cottage in 1937, when I was 1 year old. We spent every June, July, and sometimes September at the cottage every year until 1958, except for 1 summer during World War II. We rented it to the George Dyke II family during the month of August. Mother sold the cottage to the Dykes in the early 1960s. I was married and living in Baton Rouge, LA at the time and couldn’t care for it.

The cottage was originally built sometime before 1920. (It is in a 1920 postcard owned by Janine and Fred Maxeiner at the Old Theta cottage).

I didn’t spend summers at VBP again until the late 1990s, although I visited and walked the beach anytime I was in the area.

I currently spend the month of August at the Hunter cottage, next door to the cottage I grew up in. I knew the original owners of the Hunter cottage, Stan and Betty Hunter. The cottage is now owned by a grand niece of Stan and Betty.

I have many, many memories of summers at Van Buren Point. Before WW II we could come to the cottage down South Road. We had to bring our own drinking water from our home in Fredonia. Originally, we only had an ice box. Dad brought blocks of ice down every night after work. During WW II the gate was put at the intersection of Lakeside and South Road, making our block a dead end. The gate is still in place.

In early days, merchants delivered groceries to VBP. I remember Shiloh, which delivered bakery goods, the ice cream man, and, of course, the milkman.

Life at Van Buren seems to have remained much the same over the years. It is a place for families and a safe place for children to meet and play. One change is that there are multiple play grounds, whereas when I was very young there was only one playground. The Merry Go Round is still at that site. The original store and post office is now gone. The store was in what had been a ball room. I think (not sure) that the Victorian style building was destroyed by fire. Another store was built next to the community center. It is now a private residence. As teenagers we often gathered at the store and for movies and dances at the community center. However, most of our activities then were on the beach, where we met for swimming and tanning in front of the Voelp Cottage. At night, we build fires and sat around singing songs accompanied by a guitar or other string instrument.

Before I was old enough to meet with friends throughout the Point, we played in our block. We built tree houses in the woods, and even built a putt-putt in the woods at the Merchant’s (now Fuller’s) yard. Often wondered what Mr. Fuller thought when he found pipes stuck in the ground. Our putt-putt was inspired by a real putt-putt which, along with a driving range, was at the corner across from the White Village. We couldn’t afford to use that putt-putt everyday so we built our own. We used sapling trees for clubs and picked up stray golf balls from the driving range.

We also used to go to the Drive in. We would walk up South Road and go to the back of the drive in, turn on the speakers and watch from the distance. My mother thought we were “cheating” and I suspect she went to owners and paid our way!

We spent most of our time on the beach and in the water. One summer we discovered a “big rock” way out in lake. Of course, that rock is still there and has been called many different names by many generations. My family currently calls it “Bob” and we all try and get to that rock every summer.

Friendships made at Van Buren have continued all these years. Unfortunately many of my close friends from early years are no longer with us, but it is wonderful to meet with Helen and Bob Huntington and with Ruth Fleming every summer.

As teenagers we were more adventuresome. Some activities included putting Tide in the fountains in Barker Square in Fredonia and taking the flags from the tees at the golf course and placing them in neighboring chimneys. We also “borrowed” an Iron Deer from a family in Dunkirk and placed it on the point. That last event resulted in a picture and article in the Dunkirk Observer.

I hope to continue to spend summers in Van Buren as long as I live. I feel that life in Van Buren is a priceless experience at any age. It is rewarding to know that current generations continue the original traditions to keep the Point a place where families can safely enjoy their summers.