

# The Atkins Farm on Presqu'île

In 1897, John Atkins, a wealthy British accountant, was transferred by his employer to New York to manage the company's American branch. In 1901, he and his family began having summer vacations at Presqu'île Point. Lots were available for rent along the bay shore, and the family, including their maid, set up tents on a lot at what is now 184 Bayshore. Later, the family had a small cabin built.

In 1915, to prepare for eventual retirement as a gentleman farmer, Mr. Atkins bought the Maitland farm at Calf Pasture Point. Farming was declining on Presqu'île, and over the next few years, he also purchased land from five farms along the bay shore.

To serve the ever-growing summer population on Presqu'île, the dairy barn on the farm was enlarged to hold up to twenty cattle and a large hay mow. Also, a large ice house was built to store ice for sale to the summer cottagers. It held about 1,000 tons (907 tonnes) of ice.

Mr. Atkins' oldest son, also named John but called Jack, graduated from Connecticut Agricultural College and took over operation of the farm. John Atkins (senior) died at his desk in New York City August 31, 1933, so was never able to realize his dream of becoming a gentleman farmer.

In 1937, Ontario passed a new law requiring pasteurization of milk. The equipment would be very expensive. Therefore, the Atkins arranged with Spencer's Dairy in Brighton to take over the milk delivery business to the cottages, and also to take their milk all year, a good arrangement for the farm. Previously, after the cottage season, milk had to be taken to butter or cheese factories, at lower prices.

In 1938, the Atkins built four rental cabins along Calf Pasture Cove. They also had gasoline pumps installed between the cabins and the main road so they could help service the growing volume of traffic to the dance pavilion and cottages.

The Atkins farm business, the last one on Presqu'île, ended on September 1, 1956, when the cattle barn was struck by lightning and burned down.

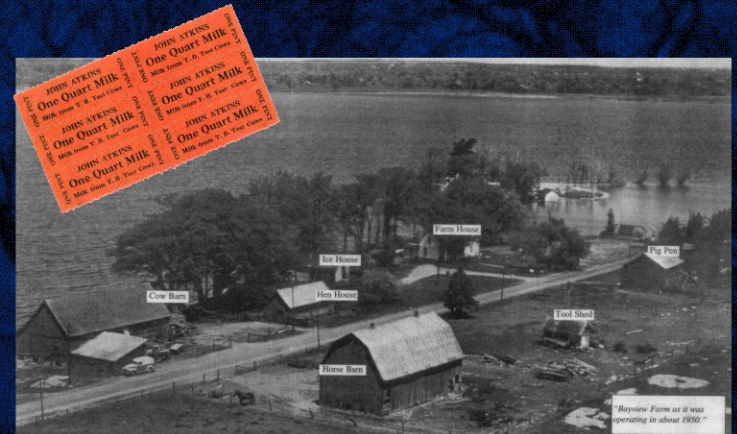
In 1957, to obtain access to the bay shore, the Park bought the farm and built Atkins Lane. All the buildings were taken down and John Atkins and his wife, Frances, moved to Brighton. The Atkins family enjoyed its long involvement with Presqu'île and contributed a great deal to the quality of summer cottage life.



The Atkins family home, circa 1940. At the left is a water pump used to supply the family's drinking water. The concrete slab it stood on, located to the left of this sign, is all that remains today of the Atkins farm complex.



Every February, with hired help, ice was harvested from the bay. Blocks were sawn from the ice and taken up the slides into the ice house as shown. Sawdust from local lumber mills was used to cover the top and sides of the ice. This ice was then delivered to cottages and some businesses throughout the summer.



The main buildings of the Atkins "Bayview Farm" as seen from the air, circa 1950.

The milk house was used to hold a separator which produced cream, and other equipment to bottle milk and cream for delivery to the cottages. Hens supplied eggs for sale.

Other services provided for cottagers included: picking up and delivering Eatons and Simpsons orders from the railway station; delivering supplies from Brighton butcher shop; cutting grass; helping to open and close cottages by putting in and removing water lines to the bay; selling gasoline; relaying messages from their phone; and keeping watch on the cottages through the winter.



Jack Atkins family, 1949. Back row, from left, Frances Atkins, sister-in-law Ruth, son Harold, Jack, son Bob (with dog). Front row, daughter Peggy and son Donald.



John Atkins family at their summer cottage, circa 1903. From left, Mrs. Atkins, John, daughter Gladys, son Jack, the maid, John's sister May, and son Clarence.



Bob and Harold Atkins and hired man delivering ice (note the ice-tongs).