

Southampton

Our cottage/retirement home:
The pre-build phase 2001-2004



Here's an aerial view of Southampton, ON taken from a post card. Southampton, part of the larger municipality of Saugeen Shores, has a year-round population of just over 3,000 people; more in the summer! Our property is just off the south (left) edge of this photo. The Saugeen River enters Lake Huron near the north (upper right) side of this photo. The cluster of white buildings in the centre represent the business district along High Street.



High Street is Southamptton's main street. It runs west toward Lake Huron, past the WWI and WWII memorials, terminating at the beach and the large Canadian flag. Several of the more interesting buildings on High Street, such as the one at left, have been converted to bed and breakfast inns.



Water is an important theme in Southampton. The top photo was taken looking north along the beach. We scanned this one from a tourism brochure. All of the remaining photos were taken by us! The bottom photo, taken in the summer of 2002, shows the fishing fleet and some pleasure craft anchored near the mouth of the Saugeen River.





The Southampton shoreline boasts some modest but picturesque sand dunes. The top photo shows Nikkie and Charlie standing at the entrance of the dune walk, three blocks due west of our property. The picture was taken in the Spring of 2001. The bottom photo, taken from the dunes in the summer of 2002, shows the just-restored lighthouse on Chantry Island. The island, now a bird sanctuary, sits about a mile off shore from the south side of Southampton.





Two of Southamton's distinct seasons are depicted here! The top photo was taken during the winter of 2002/2003 and shows Nikkie ascending a snow bank near the end of High Street. Chantry Island is visible in the background. The bottom photo was taken on a warm sunny fall day in October 2003. Nikkie and Charlie survey the empty beach with the High Street flag and the Saugeen River light visible in the background. During the summer of 2004, a recently discovered shipwreck (believed to be about 200 years old) was excavated on this beach by a team of archaeologists and volunteers.





Summer is a time for fun! Nikkie (right), Charlie, and her friend Corin enjoyed a picnic beside the creek in July 2003. The year before, Mark, Nikkie and her friend Jeremy built some sand castles and did a bit of swimming in Lake Huron.





More seasonal pictures are shown here. In the top one, from the winter of 2002-2003, Nikkie sits in the snow alongside “our” creek just before it passes under the bridge on Albert Street. At right, Nikkie stands in the creek in early April 2004. The creek passes right along the north edge of our property (it actually flows across land owned by our neighbours Don and Maureen) and was one of the main features that originally attracted us to this lot!



Here are two summer shots. The top one was taken in June 2002 just after we ran (Sue and Mark) and roller-bladed (Nikkie) the Huron Shore 5k in Southamton. It shows Sue and Nikkie standing on the southeast corner of our lot. The photo at right, taken in August 2002 shows Nikkie, Charlie, and Sue relaxing beside the creek.





We did most of the site preparation work ourselves prior to construction of our cottage! Here's Sue (top) raking leaves and debris, in the fall of 2002, out of what is now our back yard. Most of the trees are ash and dogwood, but there are at least 25 species represented on our property. At right, I compacted some of the brush we hauled off the lot in July 2003 using Grandpa Havitz's pick-up!



At left, I used a chain saw in the spring of 2003 to chop up some of the ash trees which grew within the footprint of our cottage. Later that summer (below), Nikkie, Charlie, Nikkie's friend Ashlyn and me posed by our growing wood pile.





In an effort to preserve the character of our lot and to keep as many trees as possible around the creek, I developed some temporary retaining walls (above) in the spring of 2004. Initial digging will be done by hand! The walls allowed us to raise the portion of the lot on which the cottage will sit by about 2' as required by the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority without covering existing trees with soil. Top right, here I am testing the "top soil strainer" built using a bit of chicken wire and some salvaged surplus lumber from Grandma and Grandpa Shantz's pool deck. The photo below left shows some of the clean top soil that used to backfill around the foundation after the footings and frost wall were laid in August 2004. As the cottage neared completion, the wood walls were replaced by stone.





Left, Sue and her watering can in front of our newly poured frost walls in late July. Below, I shovelled sand and gravel in early September while listening to an MSU football game on the radio. A fortunate benefit of Southampton's location is that radio signals from both Alpena and Tawas City, MI travel clearly across the Lake!



Nikkie, Charlie, Sue and I paused for a break while back-filling in August, 2004! The pre-build stage had reached its conclusion!

