

Katelyn Coffey



The basic geography of Ottawa County is easy to distinguish. The lines and shapes that make up the perimeter is relatively simple; most kids would have studied it in their early elementary years. Sprouting in the wide expanse left over from Muskegon County, Allegan County, and Kent County, it is an area immensely populated with benevolent feelings of good tidings and joy.

Ottawa County is the type of place where you can walk outside and immediately hear the rhythmic pitter patter of a summer rain, feel the morning dew on your socks, and hear the chatter of neighbors as they stand on their porches. You go into town and, although it appears bleached and conventional from afar, the closer you get, the more you see swatches of color. Almost every large building is bedecked in some decoration, from flower oriented pots hanging precariously from the roofs of houses to intricately carved archways. It is enough to make anyone mesmerized.

Not far from my house, in a secluded enclosure of pungent smelling trees, is a park. It isn't the classy, habitual park that one would expect a child to climb upon a monkey-bar set or a father to push his daughter on a swing. Pigeon Creek Park is both elusive and beautiful, with trees that sprout in every which way like large, jagged teeth. In the winter, when the snow creates an canvas across the fallen debris and broken twigs, the lodge lights its windows and becomes a

place booming with skiers and sledders. I remember once, when I was a little younger than I am today, I was watching my family sled when a young family skied up next to me. Calling what they were doing skiing is a slap in the face to all skiers out there. They were waddling, ambling, and falling. I remember the young mom falling down the hill with a drum-shattering screech. Later, when I met up with the family in the lodge, we talked and laughed about the events that had previously transpired. It was the sort of notion you would see in a soap opera: two families who had just met, laughing and drinking hot chocolate under the scrutinizing glow of the burning hearth. I had never saw that couple again, but I would never forget that brief moment of harmony. It didn't matter who you were, what you looked like, or where you came from. You were one and the same, and no amount of leering or impassiveness would change that.

I have numerous family members who live far away from the Lakeshore. They question me, as one might assume, about why I don't go to the beach every second of every day. They reasoned that, since I lived in such close proximity to it, I should sit in the raging sun for hours. The answer is simple: it had become such an abundantly used gift that it shielded itself away from being a necessity.

The beach itself is glorious in and out, day and night. The sky can become a haze of metallic violet, the sun barely visible behind heavy clouds. The sand spreads as far as the eye can see like a golden tarp, so fair it seems to shimmer. When you walk across the soft sand, your feet fall into the ground and become almost blistering hot. The water is both lucent and gleaming; it is hard to imagine that somewhere, across the huge expanse, is another state experiencing the same unbelievable sight we are.

The beach can become even more beautiful when the sun begins to disappear behind the horizon. The sky lights up painting everything palest green and pink. You can sit on the beach, look up at the stars in the sky - more numerous than the grains of sand you sit on - and feel a strange sense of peace and tranquility.

Ottawa County can do that to you. It's the type of place where you'll smile and wave at the check-out lady or you'll stop and talk to a person you just met moments before. The acceptance provides you with an almost uncanny feeling of serenity. I love living in Ottawa County. I wouldn't change it for the world.