

## The Legend of The Swinging Bridge

The story begins with Abraham and Janie Belle Spengler who built a farmhouse and foot bridge on a remote 2-acre parcel in 1904. The bridge was their only access because the hillside was too steep for a road from County Line Road. In 1920 Earl Shaner, a young executive at Penton Publishing Company - later becoming Chairman of the Board, and his wife, Margaret Shaner purchased the property. Earl and legendary Gates Mills stone mason, George Brown, built a cottage with a fireplace on the property. But by 1925, when the Interurban railway stopped running, the Shaners along with their daughters Miggy (Tichy) and Helen (Cain), moved to Cleveland Heights keeping the houses across the river as their summer and weekend retreat.

During the Depression the Maple Leaf Land Company sold them 36 acres of adjacent property. Through the years three generations of Shaner descendants, built homes on the bluffs above and grew up enjoying life and adventure on the Chagrin River and its banks. Helen's daughter Meg Lamb, being the oldest of 12 grandchildren was deeded the farmhouse and cottage in 1975. Her husband, Cliff, and son, Chris Blaskis, built a barn where they stabled Arabian horses.

Meg's sister, Liz Lentz, recalls that when the river was low, they would drive their truck across through the river. Then in the 1990's a long steep jeep road was created on the east rim of the valley overlooking the woods and the river below. Liz and their cousin, Rick Tichy who still lives on the 36-acres, attest to the wonderful life growing up by the river. As children they would use the river to ice skate, wash their horses, and swing from ropes into the swimming hole. They held homemade raft races starting at the big rock to the bridge.

Exactly 50 years after Meg Lamb moved into her grandparents' farmhouse, she sold it to Gregg Goldberg in 2016. Mr. Goldberg passed away in 2017. Meg Lamb died in 2018 and the swinging bridge washed away in a fierce rainstorm that summer. Without access to the site, Goldberg's heirs sold the property to the Gates Mills Land Conservancy in 2020. This property adjoins three other conservation properties to the north of the Swinging Bridge property. The steep grade along the river with no direct access, made these properties ideal for conservation and protection of the river's watershed. We are grateful to these property owners who recognized the vision to support the conservation of these lands and the Gates Mills Land Conservancy.

(With contributions from Marci Anselmo, and Liz Lentz's historical research and accounts)