



Placid Pioneer

June 2008

Growing Up on Lake Placid

by Georgia E. Jones

My great, great Grandfather bought property on Buck Island in 1894. Even back then our deed restricted shoreline cutting. Very environmentally correct. Our family came from Brooklyn by coach to Whitehall, by boat to Westport, overland to Lake Placid, by launch from Billing's Boat Landing to Buck Island. Billings built my great Grandmother's guideboat, which we still use. Great grandfather stayed that fall to oversee the building of camp and in a letter home he wrote that he waited for workers to show up but they didn't. Seems not much has changed since then!

One summer grandmother's little brother needed milk in camp so they rented a cow and kept it in a barn. It was returned in the fall to the Torrance Farm. Many years later the people in the house next door kept a horse. Mom wasn't happy when it wandered over and relieved itself in front of her visitors.

Electric service came late to my family. We got up with the sun and went to bed when we heard the 9:30 train whistle. We had kerosene lamps and a kerosene stove and George & Bliss kept a kerosene pump for us. One day we knocked over a lamp and soon after that we had electricity. With the cost of electricity now, we should have stayed with kerosene! George & Bliss Boat landing was my favorite place. Mrs. George sat in her rocking chair on the second floor and nothing escaped her eagle eye. I hung out on the docks and bothered Dick Gill, Loren Risley, Art Stevens and everyone else.

Capt. Stevens drove the "Doris", delivered mail, took tourists sightseeing and let me sit with him in his wheelhouse. Groceries were delivered to lockers at G. & B. We shopped at Ryan's. Family lore has it that my great grandmother had a row of some sort with Shea's over an order, which ended her



customer relationship with Shea's! In later years we went to Spitzer's.

At age six I met Ellie Lamb, Vern's sister. She was out on the dock with her mom, Elsie and her baby brother, Nash. We're still friends today. One day we met Kate Smith's niece, Kathy Stine, took Kate's paddleboat out and tipped it over. Kate was not happy with us. Kate let us sit in her studio while she broadcast live "It's High Noon in New York" and "Time for Kate Smith". We sat very quietly.

We had many caretakers but Charlie Martin was memorable. I rescued tools when he dropped them in the lake and creosoted boards until I was coated with brown stuff. Not a great thing for little kids to do any more than watching the airplane fly over camp spraying DDT. Little did we know.

Georgia E. Jones is a lifelong resident of Placid Lake.

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Message from the President

by Peter Roland, Jr.

2007 was the year of “Extreme Makeover- Museum Edition”, and 2008 is developing as the year of collaboration with other organizations. The new exhibits in the Waiting Room were well received by members and visitors last year, and work will continue on these and other exhibits in 2008. This year we have also developed some exciting partnerships that will be enhancing our museum experience and also giving us a presence on the World Wide Web.

From opening day on May 24th until July 6th, The History Museum will be hosting “24 Hours – A Photographic Interpretation of Life in the Adirondacks”. The exhibit has been created by the Lake Placid Institute, and will display the winners of a photography competition by high school students from throughout the Adirondack Park. We are pleased to be able to partner with the Lake Placid Institute in hosting the opening of this exhibit, which will be moved to two other locations in the Park later in the summer and fall.

We are also working with Olaf Carlson’s Computer Technology class at Lake Placid High School in developing a website for the Historical Society and History Museum. We hope that this will be the first of many programs that will expose students to the history of our community, which is a goal of our strategic plan.

The Winter Lecture Series was a great success again this year, with over 200 members and guests attending a variety of programs each month during the winter season. We would like to extend another thank you to our presenters, who provided an interesting and educational night out every month from January through April.

We are excited to have Jamie Welsh join us as the new Director of The History Museum. A recent graduate of St. Lawrence University, Jamie is already putting his experience and enthusiasm to work in creating a better experience for our museum visitors.

Looking ahead, we have a number of events planned for the season. The annual Members Reception will be held on Thursday, July 24th and will include the ever popular “Ray Brook Ramble”, a train ride to Ray Brook and back courtesy of the Adirondack Scenic Railroad. Community Day is scheduled for Saturday, August 16th and will feature a craft fair and silent auction to benefit the Historical Society. Ted Comstock will again be donating his expertise for the third Antiques Appraisal Day on Saturday, September 22nd. “Antiques Roadshow” has nothing on us!

So there is lots going on this season and we hope you will take advantage of the benefits offered by *your* Historical Society. It is clear that the ability to continue our current operations and expand programming in the future is totally dependent on the support of our membership and other organizations which underwrite our efforts. If you have not renewed your membership this year or would like to make an additional donation, please use the form enclosed to show your support. Your financial contribution, along with a dedicated corps of volunteers, will allow the Historical Society to continue providing service to the Lake Placid-North Elba community.

We thank you for your support and wish you a fine Summer Season!

Mark Your Calendars for Upcoming Events:

June 7

Opening Reception, 4-6pm

24 HOURS:

*A Photographic Interpretation
of Life in the Adirondacks*

July 24

Annual Members Reception, 5-8pm

August 16

Community Day, 10am– 4pm

September 22

Antiques Appraisal Day, 10am– 1pm



Lake Placid – North Elba Historical Society

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From the Director's Desk

by James Welsh

Poet and author Ralph Waldo Emerson describing history wrote: "intellectual nomadism is the faculty of objectiveness." Emerson also wrote an early poem on the Adirondacks entitled "Adirondac," in which he described the Philosopher's Camp on Follensby Pond, near Tupper Lake. Certainly, Mr. Emerson did not have the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society in mind when he made his statement concerning "intellectual nomadism," however, in my mind the phrase is one that describes museum professionals and academics aptly. The phrase relates to an individual's ability and desire to explore a variety of subjects and subject matter. It is my privilege to get to explore a collection that is as varied and interesting as ours. It will be a challenge to bring these collections to light in new and innovative ways.

This is where I see the relation between Emerson's statement, myself, and the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society. Our collections represent a very good cross section of life in the community of Lake Placid. However, despite the quality of our collections, as an objective individual, I must say that their care and our record of

them has room for improvement.

As I begin as the director of the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society, it is important to emphasize the importance of your role as members of this



The Lake Placid North Elba Historical Society's Museum... The sun is shining, pay us a visit.

organization in supporting our efforts to continually improve as a cultural and educational resource for the community of Lake Placid.

As we begin the 2008 season we are welcoming the Lake Placid Institute to hang their show "24 Hours- A Photographic Interpretation of Life in the Adirondacks;" we are beginning work on collection cataloguing and will be welcoming back Theresa Passantino to

assist us with these efforts.

On a larger scale we are beginning to look into avenues of funding for several larger capital projects including the potential refurbishment of the freight house as a collections storage center. This project would allow the freight house, which is located directly behind the museum, to serve as a permanent home to our collection.

As we move forward we also must not neglect our physical plant. With your help we were able to successfully repair our slate roof three years ago. Next year we must paint our building, a project estimated to cost \$8,000-\$12,000. An additional contribution with your membership renewal this year will help us start the process of raising these funds.

There are many challenges ahead, only a few of them have been laid out here. However, this is the basis of my "intellectual nomadism," my curiosity to explore the wealth of our collection and to further the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society. Engage yourselves with our organization and help us move forward. Thank you for your past and continued support.

Volunteers Wanted

As we begin the summer 2008 season at the History Museum, we are opening with a new look as the Lake Placid Institute "24 Hours-A Photographic Interpretation of Life in the Adirondacks" is hanging in our main room. This exhibition will only be up until the 6th of July. If you are interested in lending us a hand to help us put back our existing exhibit in early July we would love to hear from you.

Whether or not you're interested in our efforts to reinstall our exhibits later this summer you may be interested in working with our extensive collections, learning what goes on "behind the scenes" at a museum and fulfilling your thirst for local history.



NEW CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

You helped fix the roof, now we need to paint the Museum! Please consider an additional donation to help fund this necessary project.

Thank You.

Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society's Wish List

- Flat storage files for maps & documents
- Office chairs
- Desk Lamps
- Folding chairs
- *Lightweight* banquet tables
- Vacuum Cleaner

If you can donate any of these items, please let us know!



Bev's Bits... A report from the Town Historian

by Beverley Pratt Reid

In case you have not done your spring cleaning, here is a hint for you. According to an ad in 1919 the following items will make your housework much easier: Carpet Sweepers; Carpet Beaters; Curtain Stretchers; Clothes Lines, Clothes Racks; Curtain Fixtures, Mops and Brooms, Brushes, Tack Hammers, Screw Drivers, Furniture Polish, Paints and Wax. The phone number was 35-J.

The first telephone in Lake Placid was in 1901 at 37 Main Street and Mrs. Rufus Walton was our first, and only, operator. It was called the Mountain Home Telephone Company and there were about thirty lines (mostly hotels and businesses). By 1914 there were seven operators with over three hundred local lines and around two thousand subscribers. The early switchboard was an magneto board where the phones had to be cranked to reach the operator. In 1914 they changed to battery operated and by picking up the ear piece you would contact the operator. In 1919 the

office was moved to 117 Main Street to house the latest equipment and make room for fourteen operators. A couple of years later the company became the New York Telephone Company. In the early sixties we saw the demise of the operator when the new dial system arrived. Since then the name has changed many times and continual new equipment has been installed.

An article in the Spring 1969 "The Placid Pioneer" told about the terrible forest fires in the Adirondacks in 1903. It stated that there was no rain for seventy-two days and the carelessness of smokers and unattended camp fires were the cause of many of the fires. A District Ranger reported that in fourteen days, ninety-three forest fires had been extinguished, of which over eighty were on the roadside. There were a total of 600,000 acres of land in the Adirondacks which were burned. Cinders fell as far away as Albany and the darkness fell over

the northern communities. Men were recruited at two dollars a day and many stories resulted from their experiences. The first village hotel in 1871 was Brewsters', later called The Lake Placid Inn. Then came Joseph Nash's Excelsior House (later the Stevens House), Grand View, Allen House and Mirror Lake House. On Lake Placid Lake there was the Ruisseaumont and Westside (Whiteface Inn). Also built was the Cascade House On Cascade Lake and The Adirondack Lodge at Heart Lake. By 1910 there were over one hundred homes on the Lake Placid shores and the 1910 census showed 1,682 residents of the village.

More "bits" next time...

If you have any questions relating to the history of the Town or Village, please do not hesitate to contact me:

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Boating at Camp Minnowbrook on Lake Placid



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