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Merrill's Campground by Bob Wisniewski

My name is Bob Wiss (Wisniewski). I was at Merrill's Campground every summer from 1945 - 1985. I kind of think my family got there just by luck. My Father was too old for the draft during WW II but worked first at the Boston Navy yard and then later at Sylvania where they manufactured munitions for our armed forces. After VE Day (May 8, 1945), the government felt they had adequate munitions in reserve and many workers were terminated. My dad then became a working partner with Stan Powers who was starting a new business in Milford, N.H. Stan and his family had a "cottage" at Merrill's. The "cottage" had been mostly unused during the war years and was in need of repair. Stan suggested we try it some weekend and maybe clean it up a little. We didn't have a car but stored my Uncle Jim's '36 Buick coupe for him during the war. With rationing somewhat relaxed after VE Day and with adequate gas stamps we loaded up and set out. As I recall we could not find any map and got 'off the track' (lost) quite a few times. I must have asked "are we there yet Mom" a million times. But we made it. After those terrible war years it was like Heaven there at Merrill's on the lake. We went back every chance we could. That winter Mr. Powers told my dad that his Mrs. a cultured lady, really thought the "camp" too rustic and crude and did not wish to go there anymore and that we could have the "cottage" for fifty bucks. Dad bought it and four generations of my family enjoyed time spent at Merrill's.

I do not know when Stan acquired the camp or how long he owned it. The season usually started the weekend before Memorial Day (back then, May 30th) and ran until Columbus Day. When John Merrill closed the gate for the last time Merrill's Campground became a memory. Those summers at Merrill's were certainly some of the best times of my life. And so, I write this, in part, as seen through the eyes of a fifteen year old boy at Merrill's Campground.

It has been almost 30 years since most of us closed the door for the last time at Merrill's. Some left at an earlier time and some of us regretted it was to be our very last. For the most part, I believe, we just walked away, although, we could have taken our cabins if we wanted to. Not likely. But two of the cabins and one modular unit did survive. The Wilkins family cabin first moved from up close to the barn to its location on the waterfront and then in 1961 it was moved from the Campground to a field on the George Road where it languished up on blocks and deserted, for quite a few years until it vanished or was burned by vandals. After the Minot family

(Continued on page 2)

moved to Beachwood they had the bunkroom part of their cabin hauled over the ice to be attached to their newer structure. This cabin was later purchased by Frank Adamson and is still owned by his daughter, Carol Daigle. (The Adamson family was one of the very first to camp at Merrill's) and so part of Merrill's exists at Beechwood! One of the Princess Modular units which replaced the Legro, Wilkins and Josephson cabins was moved over to Hammerhead Lane in Groton after the camp ground closed in 1985. After years of neglected repose, it no longer exists.

Life was simple and needs were few - looking back one might suggest that those times were almost from another time period. In the early days the "cabins" were half tent with enclosed wooden roofed cook kitchens. The only one to remain so constructed, for the duration, was the Rich/MacAdams cabin on the water front. My cabin was on the south string third from the waterfront with the Martin family (a complete log cabin which was removed in 1948). The Holt family cabin was in front of ours, then came Duke, Morris, and Lyons/Hill. Others were the Hollister family (later built a cabin), Shepard, then Piper up next to the road. Only Holt and Wiss in this string kept their cabins for the entire forty year period.

To say our cabins were "rustic" would be doing them a great service. For the most part few had any electricity. We used oil filled glass hurricane lamps with a few lucky folks utilizing "Coleman" or propane fired fixture lamps. So, no refrigerators, toasters, no modern electric stoves and microwave ovens were yet to be invented. We kept the food "cooled" in ice boxes - the ice man came through every other day or so and would "chip" off a piece of ice from the big blocks that had been harvested right on the lake the previous winter and stored down at the ice house on Bristol Bay. The "kids" (the boys and girls of the campground) followed the iceman around on hot days hoping for a sliver of that cooling ice to suck on. I think the icehouse on Bristol Bay stayed there right up to the late '40's or early '50's. If



Inside of a Merrill's Campground Cabin, circa 1950.

you look closely you can still spot part of the retaining wall of the icehouse where it came right out to the road. Most of us used propane fired cook stoves and some really lucky folks might had had a propane refrigerator, although I can't think of one. Electricity came to most of the cabins by the early to mid '50's, however, there was never a telephone on the campground.

All of the cabins had running water - sort of. Some on the waterfront got it from the lake and rest of us got it at one of the five faucets the Merrill's had piped into the campground. We then ran back to the cabin with glass jugs (no plastic in the '40's) or galvanized buckets. The water detail to the faucets was always enjoyable as it was a good time to meet with your neighbors for an exchange of friendly daily gossip. There were also two well pumps at the Merrill house where John and Hazel lived. If you craved real spring water, it was available at two springs in Bristol - one on the "old road", (original Mayhew Turnpike) just below the dam at the foot of the lake and the other just before the Mill Stream Ice Cream. There were also two springs in Plymouth.



Merrill's Campground 1936

The campground was well serviced during the week with "vendors" for all our needs. I have already mentioned the iceman, but we also had the Franklin and Concord Dairy arrive in their cute Divco milk trucks. These you may remember were where the driver actually stood up to drive! They had milk, butter, eggs and other dairy products. The Cushman bakery truck came in on a regular schedule and local farmers came through with fresh garden goods. A few years later Glenna Merrill came door to door with fresh veggies. In the early days if you ran short of something you could go up to Papa Merrill's house across the street for emergency rations at his little unofficial camp store. And, it was just a hop, skip and a jump to the East Hebron Post Office. This was first on the east side of 3A in the yellow house then on the west side until Bev Smith retired as postmistress. Then it moved back to the yellow house where it stayed until it was moved again to what is now the 'blue' house! Since that time, it was

terminated by the US Postal Service as no longer necessary.

Along the water front from south to north the cabins were: first an old tent platform which was removed about 1950 to provide better beach access. The families more or less in order of their cabins were: Hermance, MacKenzie, Legro, Wilkins, Josephson, Woods, Rich, MacAdams, Ingrahm and Nickerson.

There was one cabin in the circle of the campground and that was the Adamson cabin on the extreme north end. The Dubreuil cabin was at about the exact center of the campground and Olson built the last cabin right up by Rt. 3A. (Olson was nephew of Powers from whom we bought our cabin). There were also some campers with tents who returned for a few years.

Merrill's Campground was considered the area between Rt 3A and the lake. Papa Merrill sold lots to the folks on the hill with rights of way to the lake. Technically, they were not part of the campground, as they were permanent and we were temporary. Through the years many of the cabins changed hands and were bought by fine folks. However most were older than I was.

MEMORIES

Memories and dreams of days long gone by
My, oh my, how the days into years do fly.
Time hold the curse of slipping away
Out of our grasp forever to stay.

But for a moment let me take you there
Back to those times when we had nary a care
When the sun shone warm and the days were long
And our lives moved along like our favorite song.

Come with me now to those days long gone by
When hopes and wishes reached up to the sky
A way above any care or woe
Higher than any hill or mountain you may know.

The games we played and the kids we knew
In those days it seems we were never blue
After the game it was king of the raft
Sink or swim and you had to be fast.

To the movies we went on a Saturday night
Squeeze all the gang into some dad's car - it was quite a sight
And we'd do it again the next Saturday night
If another dad's car would suffer our plight.

Over to the ledges on a hot summer day
Coppertone on young bodies in the sun to play.
Anchor the boats in the waves by the shore
Dive from high cliffs and play with thrills galore

Through the canyons of memory and down the river of life
Could you wish for more than those times of no strife?
Life was pure, it was simple, and our days rang true
But you can't go back there whatever you do.

Flash up to the present, thanks for coming along
The days have come and the days are gone - now we sing autumn's song
Too soon we face mean old winters wrath
So keep true to your friends as you slide down life's path.

Keep looking up as the days stream on by
I hope your future shows all blue sky
Blue skies and happy days my friend
Like we had when we were kids a way back then.

Bob and Janet Wisnewski live in Milford, New Hampshire and have a second home here in Hebron where they continue to enjoy all that the Newfound area has to offer.

Cryptogram Challenge by Kathy Begor
Each letter in this code stands for another.

Clue: Z equals T

AGOFBL BKKGFX PMLE RFGMZ VMEX ZB GLCBE ZAG


BIZYBBFX. KBF BDGF BLG AILYFGY EGMFX, KMPQJQGX

GLCBEGY SMPHQLN GWHGFQGLSGX MZ PGFFQJJ'X SMPHRFBILY.

Answer on Page 6



We presented an interview with Flora Braley in our January 2014 edition. It is with profound sadness to write here that Flora passed away at Speare Memorial Hospital in Plymouth on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2014, after a brief illness. She was 96, a good friend and supporter of the Historical Society.

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<p>Cryptogram Answer</p> <p>Hebron offers many great ways to enjoy the outdoors. For over one hundred years families enjoyed camping experiences at Merrill's campground.</p>	<p>SEPTIC SYSTEM DESIGN, DESIGNER #37 SUBDIVISION PLANNING TEST PIT SERVICE & TAX MAPPING</p> <p>B. A. Barnard Enterprises, Inc. Hobart Hill Road Hebron, NH 03241 603-744-2696</p>	<p>Donald Merrill Landscaping & Painting</p> <p>Over 20 yrs Experience</p> <p>PO Box 36 Hebron, NH 03241 603-744-7846 Email: NOCAB@prodigy.net</p>
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Hebron Historical Society Program Events Calendar

Tuesday August 12 - Pot Luck with Program - The Palermo Mine of Groton by Bob Whitmore . This is a Tuesday and not our usual Saturday.

September 8 - Annual Meeting - All are invited, 4PM upstairs at the Academy. Annual election of Board Members.

November 11 - Veterans Day Ceremony - At the Gazebo on the common at 10:45AM. Refreshments to follow.

This space sponsored by
Arthur and Sandra Cummings

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Doug and “Ralph” McQuilkin

This space sponsored by
The Hillier Family

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Willa and Bill Lucarelli

Membership Update *DUES DUE EACH JANUARY*

A membership gift to a family member or friend is a wonderful way to help preserve our history and archives.
Membership forms are included on the back page of this newsletter for your use.

**Thank you for your support,
“Ralph” McQuilkin, Membership Chair.**



Books and Publications from the Hebron Historical Society Hebron Videos on DVD:

Three videos on one DVD: **Merrill’s Campground 1930’s, Historical Hebron** and **The Beauty of Hebron**, \$15.

Two videos on one DVD: **The Beauty of Hebron 2** and **Birds of Newfound**. \$10.

Sergeant John Ordway, A History with his Genealogy. The story of Hebron resident John Ordway who became the third in command of the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Price \$10.00 for members, and \$12.00 for non-members.

The Genealogies of Hebron, NH
A new 347 page book, completely indexed, of genealogies of the families living in Hebron for the first two hundred years of the Town.. Price \$25.00 for non-members, \$22.00 for members.

The History of Hebron, NH The First Two Hundred Years

A new 247 page book with 75 color and Black & White photos, and 11 maps.. This new history of Hebron gives the story of the founding of the town, its growth and major citizens set in the historical context of what was happening in the world around them. Price \$29.00 for non-members, \$25.00 for members.

Hebron Tiles—designed by Derry Riddle and Produced by Betsy Twombly. \$10.00

A Self Guided Tour of the Hebron Cemetery—A guidebook in color of what to see in our cemetery. \$5.00

The Origin of Hebron Names—A pamphlet giving the origin or road, mountain, waterway, camp and other Hebron Names. \$5.00

**These items may be purchased
directly from the Hebron
Historical Society
PO Box 89**

Hebron Historical Society
PO Box 89
Hebron, NH 03241
www.HebronHistSoc.org

Have You Renewed Your Membership ?

Lapsed Memberships will not receive future Gazettes.

Join The Hebron Historical Society. Send in this membership application with the appropriate amount to Hebron Historical Society, PO Box 89, Hebron, NH 03241. Checks accepted.

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Telephone (optional) _____ email (optional) _____

Life Member (\$100) ____ Couples Life Member (\$150)____ One Year Individual Member (\$10) ____

One Year Family Membership (\$15) _____ Life Patron (\$200) _____ Life Benefactor (\$400)_____

Ideas for future Programs: _____