

WHITE BIRCH POINT ASSOCIATION 1912 - 2012

Jim Franco

This August the White Birch Point Association celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of its establishment. This is the second of a two part series adapted from *The History of the White Birch Point Association* by Jim Franco.

Older Antrim citizens may remember White Birch Point resident Harold Fleming who lived all year around at his small cottage beginning in 1956. He had quite a combination of heating systems to maintain a comfortable temperature. The fireplace was augmented with kerosene heaters and later electric panels that proved to be costly. He finally settled on a wall furnace fueled by propane. Since his cottage was well beyond the steep turn in the road which the road agent, understandably, would not plow, the tank for the propane was located on the lower road from which it supplied the gas to the furnace via a half inch iron pipe. To solve the problem of getting supplies to his cottage, Harold had a garage constructed on the lower road. After shopping he would place his groceries or whatever he had purchased into a basket that was located next to a window in the garage. The basket was on a cable that went from the garage to his house; between the garage and the house were two poles that supported the cable. After climbing to his home with the help of snowshoes he would get on a bike that was mounted on the porch floor (it

only had a back wheel) and would pedal the bike which would bring the basket up on the cable to the porch gate, where he would unload the contents of the basket. Harold died in 1971. When I purchased his cottage in 1977, the bike was still mounted on the porch.

In the early 1960's the Flemings were the dominant family at White Birch Point since they owned four of the twenty-two cottages there. In addition to Harold, his mother Abbie owned a cottage named "The Hearthstone" which she summered at for more than fifty years. Ross Fleming and his wife Marie had built a cottage that they called "Foot Hill Cottage" in 1949. Harold and Ross's sister Elizabeth, a physician who practiced medicine on an Indian reservation in Oklahoma, owned the cabin known as "Boulder."

The girls camp, Birchmere, continued to own most of the property on the north side of Patten Hill and was at times a source of irritation for the cottage owners. They complained to the Board of Selectmen about the use of a public address system which was operated at a volume sufficient to be heard from the beach all the way up the hill to the horse stables and paddock. In their letter, they stressed that for the thirty-five years Glenn Loucks and Alice Kyle ran the camp they did so without the use of loud speakers. The issue was never resolved to the satisfaction of the cottage owners. Use of the beach would periodically surface as an issue, and elaborate rules were written to maintain peace between the owners and the camp. Cottagers were

limited to a small area to the west side of the beach and were urged not to use the beach for swimming when the camp girls were there for their scheduled swim times, 9:30 to 12:30 and 4:30 to 6:00. All of this became history when the camp ceased operating in 1974.

At about the same time White Birch Pointers had serious discussions about the advisability of purchasing the camp property which was put for sale by the owner, Eleanor Loucks of White Plains, New York. Two of the members did decide to make an offer. However, their offer and the asking price were too far apart to settle the issue. In 1980 the ownership of the camp property was transferred to J. David Loucks. As part of a plan to sell two lots on the lake, Loucks transferred ownership of the beach and an adjacent area of 1.4 acres called "The Grove" to the White Birch Point Association in 1981. Thus, for the first time the Association owned property and decided to apply for status as a voluntary corporation to the New Hampshire Secretary of State. The application was approved in December 1981.

Next the Association turned its attention to possible ownership of a 3.8 acre parcel that contained the pump house and water reservoir. The system supplied water to seventeen of the cottages via a gravity feed system. When the owner of the parcel and water system informed the water users that the annual fee would increase from \$55 to \$350, the desire to purchase became serious. After much negotiation a purchase price was agreed

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to resulting in Association ownership of the land and water system. Upon the advice of the Association's attorney, a separate application was filed with the Secretary of State for a non-profit corporation. The application was approved in 1985.

The 1980's presented a number of challenges. In 1987 the Middlesex Boy Scout Council of Massachusetts announced that the Boy Scout camp on Gregg Lake was for sale. This caused considerable alarm in the town and around the lake. The three-hundred fifty acre site had the potential of unwanted development due to the fact that Antrim's zoning laws would not prohibit extensive development. Efforts were made to secure funding from a conservation organization, but the price (\$1,200,000) was too much of an obstacle. Eventually the Town made an offer to purchase which was rejected, and finally a good outcome occurred when, in 1992, the Swiftwater Girl Scout Council of Bedford, New Hampshire, purchased the property thus insuring no additional development on Gregg Lake. The efforts made by Antrim's citizens during this challenge are still much appreciated by all who own property on the lake as well as by all who continue to enjoy its beauty.

Camp Birchmere property was now reduced to the 2.5 acre parcel on which the lodge, eight bunk buildings, a cottage called "Perch," and the White Birch Inn were located. The Inn had served as a dining hall and meeting place for the campers. Charles and Francis Patten purchased this parcel in the early eighties and turned the lodge into a summer residence. They requested that the Antrim Fire Department burn "Perch," seven of the eight bunk buildings and the Inn. This was completed in 1996.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Association was celebrated in 1987. Several social events were held including a culminating dinner at the Powder Mill Pond Restaurant in Bennington.

As has always been the case, social life at the Point revolves around the beach. During the summer many residents visit the beach on a daily basis. On the weekends, naturally, there is more dense use. The Independence Day and Labor Day holidays draw many extended families. The lake is full of children enjoying themselves and each other. During the 1970's there were just a few rowboats at the beach; then canoes became popular for several years and at the turn of the century kayaks became the most popular boat at the beach. Motorized boats were never popular at the White Birch Point beach.

The Association meets twice a year, in the spring and again on the Saturday before the Labor Day weekend. Following the annual meeting in August a potluck dinner is held. This has been a tradition since 1988. Several times during most summers, Sunday morning breakfasts are held at the beach. Evening BBQs are organized by several families and many members enjoy an occasional lunch at the beach.

White Birch Point has evolved from an area dominated by girls camps surrounded by individually owned cottages, to

an area of twenty-two cottages, five of which are now fully winterized. White Birch Point has a timeless quality about it that is cherished by all who experience its unchanging nature. For those of us who are so fortunate to enjoy ownership here, White Birch Point will continue to be a special place well into the future because those who were here before us maintained its special nature and passed it along to us; and those who succeed us will be just as determined, as we are, that it be preserved and maintained as it has been for one-hundred years. ☞

THE ANTRIM BOG COPPER

Paul Bedell

Have you ever found yourself looking for something, and in the process found something completely different and unexpected, and been totally taken by this new find?

One of my favorite pastimes is the study of dragonflies. These insects are aquatic, breeding in lakes, ponds, rivers, and marshes. So, in one of my forays in search of different species, I put on my knee boots and bushwhacked into the marshy north end of Gregg Lake. The dragonflies were good, but looking down at my soggy boots, I noticed that I was standing in the midst of wild cranberry! I ate several of these bitterly delicious native fruit, and then also noticed the nondescript, but very interesting butterfly known as the bog copper. This small butterfly is found only in acid bogs of the northeastern United States, from New England west to the Great Lakes. The larvae feed only on wild cranberry and related plants, and the adults feed on "water from raindrops and nectar from cranberry flowers."

I think this marsh is a local treasure. As I witnessed the bog copper, singing in the background were alder flycatcher, swamp sparrow, and rose-breasted grosbeak, among many other birds.

Paul Bedell, son-in-law of Dick Winslow, recently visited Antrim with his family. ☞

FREE Community Suppers

Sept 19 • Oct 17 • Nov 15 • Presbyterian Church • 5:30 p.m.



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