

# Mr. Crompton's Historical Commentary

When the suggestion was made at the annual meeting of our association July 23, 1977 and approved by those present, that a get-together and talk on the history of the association and lake would be held at some future date and when asked to head a committee to arrange for the same; I found that I had taken a big bite. I hope at least I have made a start to chew at the bite.

Previous to 1825 the area was mostly brooks, which as high water ran into low places, such as that which we now call Pawtuckaway Basin and formed what was known as Pawtuckaway Pond. The run-off from this pond went into the North River. Of the brooks that ran into this area, one was Back Creek and another was the brooks that ran between Round Pond and Pawtuckaway. Also Mountain Brook at the southern end of the area formed small pools in the low places as it ran into what was called Pawtuckaway River, or as some called it - Stingy River. Both the North River and the Stingy River then ran into the Lamprey, the water of which was used to furnish water power for the Newmarket Manufacturing Company, a textile mill.

Around 1825 the company must have decided that the water supply was not enough for their needs. They came into the area and started to purchase land for a dam. Not knowing just how much land would be needed, they purchased some flooding rights. In some areas the landowners would not sell flowage rights, without the company purchasing large tracts of land which they did.

I have been told that the dams were completed around 1836, forming two artificial ponds, called Dolloff Pond and Pawtuckaway Pond flooding a total of 802 acres. The dam at the south end was called Dolloff Dam and the one to the north was called Drowns. A dike had to be built at what is now the entrance at Seaman's Point. It was called Gove's dike, named for the Gove family that owned the property at that time. Other small dikes had to be built to stop the flooding or run off of water onto land not purchased. The two ponds contained 35 islands (some of which are floating islands). The largest of the group being Big Island, with its 500 acres. The second largest is Horse Island, with 38 acres, and the next is Log Cabin Island of 10 acres, which shields the Fundy area from Pawtuckaway Basin. I have made no attempt to go into the State Park area history. When talking with John Cole, State Park Manager, in regards to arrangements for this talk; we agreed it might be a good idea to have a talk about the Park and Mountain Area (which is a very interesting place) at some later date.

In late 1939, a few of the campers got together to talk over the subject of water drain off in the pond. The Electric Co. had a representative attend this meeting. Due to a 1920 strike, The Newmarket Manufacturing Company moved south and it's interests in Pawtuckaway Lake eventually passed into the hands of the New Hampshire Electric Company. Some of the suggestions was to drain Pawtuckaway early one year and Mendums Pond the next (Mendum Pond in North Nottingham and Barrington was another pond the Electric Company used for water supply) holding back the water as much as possible during July and August. The representative informed us that July and August were their harvest months for electric power, and if the water was needed they would have to use it. In 1940 another meeting was called, some



of the people present felt something could be done to improve the conditions on the pond and so the results were the establishment of the Pawtuckaway Improvement Association. I believe Russ Brown was elected the President and John Cahill was elected as the Clerk.

The next fifteen years was a period of many interesting events for the improvement of the pond and welfare of property owners. Most camps in this period had the most modern conveniences, which consisted of an outside toilet some 30 or 40 feet from the camp, the old hand pump, or a water bucket to obtain water from the pond (very few camps had wells). The State Park provided no drinking water but the spring down off the Nottingham Road supplied drinking water. The old black sink in the kitchen with the drain running through the wall of the camp, and the drain water running onto the ground which was infested with flies and mosquitoes. If you wanted to get anywhere near your place, the road were your problem because no backhoe or bulldozers to help. Many of the turns into the road were made to avoid large stones or tree stumps. There was more time dedicated to working on the road for filling in mud holes after rain because there was no speedboating or water-skiing.

There was no water in the pond, to speak of, during the months of July and August and into late Fall. Boating was fair if you had a flat bottom boat or a mud scow that would ride up onto the rocks or if you happen to hit one, which was more often than not. You could not navigate to the lower pond because there was merely a stream of water to the dam.

The first improvement to come along was electricity. The campers had tried to get the New Hampshire Electric Co., to extend their poles from Folsoms farm into the pond area, but the Electric Company claimed that there was not enough customers. Along came our good friends, the New Hampshire Electric Co-operative, which we knew was a non-profit organization financed by low interest rates from the government (the first pole was set in late 1939). Before the lines could be extended five subscribers had to agreed to take power. By 1940, most of Seaman's Point had power for lights but not many electric refrigerators. Ice for iceboxes was a problem, the only ice known on the pond was at Gove's, now White's Grove. From 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights, Fred Gove would be at the ice house to sell ice which, of course, you had to carry in your boat. After that time Fred and his horse would deliver ice and wood in a wagon to a few customers. If you happened to be on the end of his route, it might be quite late by the time you received your ice. It was often said that it was a good thing he had a horse and wagon and not a truck, for the time he had a few "sips" with his favorite customers, he may not have been able to make it home with a truck. "But the good ole horse knew his way home."

When talk started about improving the road, which is now Route 156, Norman Packard (later President of the association) State Senator, and Waldo Sanborn and others helped to push for the road.

Water level was the topic at almost every meeting. In 1950 we were able to get our first real break from the Electric Company. Hans Brustle, President of the association and Chairman of committee on water levels, put in many long hours (taking valuable time away from his wood carving business) along with Reverend James E. Hawkins of Raymond, Waldo



Sanborn of Nottingham, and support accorded us by the Deerfield Rod and Gun Club, the Federated Sportsman's Club of New Hampshire (of which Harry Derfoam was Secretary), and last but not least the New Hampshire News for the large amount of publicity they gave by bringing to the attention of the public the problem we were having with the electric company. It sure was a great help for us and the future of the State Park, I don't think the Electric Company appreciated this publicity. The water resource board entered the picture concerned about the water and fish widely publicized. The Water Resource Board then offered a compromise to the Electric Company in the spring, which had been turned down prior to the flood of public agitation and newspaper publicity on the subject. In fact, just two months previous, the Electric Company stated that it could not possibly accept any restrictions inside of three years. After only two months Chief Engineer, Leonard Frost, of the Water Resources Board announced that L. Greer, Vice President and General Manager of the Electric Company had signed an agreement of restrictions of operations at the pond. The four major terms of the agreement were:

- 1) that the water level shall not fall below 18 feet on the gauge at Dolloff Dam during the period of June 1st through October 1st.
- 2) that the water level shall not be drawn below 10 feet on the gauge at any time.
- 3) that the emergency drawing must be agreed to by both parties.
- 4) that the leaks at the Dam gate be repaired this fall and the water level be lowered to make this repair.

This agreement worked fairly well, but several disputes with the Electric Company arose over leaks at the gates which they were reluctant to repair. When the contract was signed Mr. Greer accounted for his quick policy change due to the emergency of new methods, whereby the drainage of water from the pond could be decreased. No mention was made of a new method of generation of steam other than water. One of our members working in the field of science reported that a new method was beginning to work out that of mercury generation. He predicted that in the not to distant future the Company would not need the water at all. Sure enough in 1955, just five years after the agreement, the Company offered their holdings to the State (minus some acreage which was sold privately). The deed to the State was registered on April 22, 1956. The high water level of the pond question came up again when Francis C. Moore of the Water Resource Board called on camp owners and left ballots to be marked as to the height of water they desired. After the ballots were counted a level of 25 feet at the Dam was agreed on.

In 1957, House Bill #297 was presented to the legislature and was referred to the Committee on Resources, Recreation and Development. At that time a report of the associations views was also presented. In the same year, the general court, by Chapter #318 (law of 1957) directed the State Planning and Development Commission to make a study of the most practicable means of opening this area for development the State, the Town of Nottingham, private parties or a combination of same. This commission was headed by Mr. John Phillsbury, Chairman. John had also been a manager of New Hampshire Electric Cooperative for a number of years.



Charles Crangle was planning director and he was aided by several other state departments. We were fortunate enough to have had Walcott L. Elwell, one of our members, who was at that time the Boat Inspector on the pond, assisted in the development plan. The plan formulated, in general, met with the approval of the association, but we were opposed to Section A and Section B. The report was then sent on to the Governor and Council and a statement giving the views of the association was read. In 1957 a youth organization was started, but it was short lived due to internal differences among the youths.

In 1958 and 1959 a request was made to the State that the names of Dolloff Pond and Pawtuckaway Pond be changed due to their size to Pawtuckaway Lake. The request was granted and in the same year the association was incorporated and then entitled "The Pawtuckaway Lake Improvement Association". From 1956 to 1965 the association maintained a dump but they were forced to give it up after the State passed a law outlawing private dumps. This dump cost the association an average of over \$50.00 a year. In 1960 an article was placed in the Town Warrant to appropriate \$400 for a fire pump to be placed at Pawtuckaway Lake and operated by the Fire Department. This pump was purchase and located in White's Grove, Mr. White being a member of Nottingham's Volunteer Fire Department. In 1960 the sum of \$750.00 was place in the Town budget for aid to camp roads and \$488.70 was spent. Last year, the budget for camp roads was \$2,500 and \$2,363 was spent.

In 1965 a public hearing was held on a request for variance to the zoning ordinance in order to build a privately owned marina. A ballot was sent out by the association to the members, giving the officers and directors full right to speak as representative of all the membership. At the public hearing a very large number spoke against the marina, the Town Board voted for the approval and then the PLIA voted for court action. The case was argued in Supreme Court during the summer of 1968 and a decision adverse to our interest as handed down by the court. The cost was taken care of by about 45 members interested in keeping the lake free from commercial ventures. Mr. Carolton Eldridge of the firm Shaw & Eldridge filed a motion for rehearing which was denied. The case we lost was one of the most nonsensical he had ever read. Over the years we have had following as Presidents:

Russ Brown, Seamans Point  
Jack Parkman, Seamans Point  
Charlie Laramy, Seamans Point  
Ed Peterson, Seamans Point  
Tom Cronshaw, Seamans Point  
Charlie Pati, Seamans Point  
Delmar McDermitt, Seamans Point  
Frank Carey, Seamans Point  
Hans Brustle, Pawtuckaway Shores  
Jim Daly, Dolloff

Bill Clewes, Pawtuckaway Shores  
Webster White, White's Grove  
Norm Packard, Fernald's Grove  
Carl Minich, Cahill's Development  
Cathy Douglas, Fernald's Grove  
Walcott L. Elwell, Seaman's Point  
William Netishen, Fernald's Grove  
Joe Leddy, Cahill's  
Robert Fitzgerald, Pawtuckaway Shores  
George Voltz, Pawtuckaway Shores

In closing I want to thank everyone that in anyway helped to make this possible and a special thanks to John Cole, Manager of the State Park and our Secretary, Judy Clewes and her helpers for publicity.