

Province Lake
A History
Wakefield - Effingham - Parsonsfield
1700 - 1900

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INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, Province Lake was under the sea during the Cretaceous period, some 80,000,000 years ago. Then came the great Ice Age, only 3,000,000 years ago. This is known as the Pleistocene Epoch. That was when the tops of our local mountains were dragged into the lake hollow.

The sand, clay and huge boulders were pulled by the slow but powerful moving mass of ice. The soil went into the water, leaving the large rocks along the flat land, along the shores. The continual washing of waves along the shore washed away the muddy soil, leaving the clean, white sand on our beaches. Today, the sand on our beaches is not as clean and white as of yore due to the action of the many motor boats stirring up the muddy bottom.

The original clear jelly fish from the sea that covered Province Lake, have been completely killed off within the last 40-50 years due to the motor boats. These jelly fish were the size, shape and thickness of a pancake, but firmer, not 'messy jelly'. They surrounded the clamshells from which they were able to suck out the meat. As a child, I played with them, taking out the centered shells and rolling them in white sand to be served to the grown-ups as make believe sugared doughnuts. The last time I saw a jelly fish in Province Lake was around 1945. At that time, only a very few were left.

The bird life near and on the lake has also changed. A pair of bald eagles had a nest on the top of Ames Mountain until 1926 when some lawbreaker shot one of the birds. Then, after a few years a pair of golden eagles nested in a dead tree near the same place. The Loons were more abundant then than now. Now that we have the seagulls, that fly in from some dump, they break the Loon eggs in their water's edge nest. The little, brown thrush, who made it's nest on the ground in the pine spills, have gone too - too many people walking around.

The deer and moose still come by for a drink every now and then. The fish remain about the same in type, but in much smaller numbers. There are still a few bass, both smallmouth and largemouth, pickerel, yellow perch, hornpout and sunnys.

The ducks, mallards and other species, are seen around the lake daily. The woodchucks, raccoons, skunks, and porcupine are thinning out, and the big, black bear is too shy for this changing area. One may be spotted occasionally by a lone, quiet fisherman near a hidden brook. Thank goodness we still have those cute, little chipmunks to race over the stonewalls and the squirrels, both red and gray - which some people complain about. Now and then, a beaver and a muskrat can be seen swimming in the lake. A lovely dark-haired, botched with orange, coyote came along the shore during the summer of 1994. They are new to our area, coming up from Massachusetts, it is said. From the south have come the Black Anhinga birds, to sit with wings out stretched, on the big shore rocks near the southside point.

The forest trees are constantly changing, according to nature's cycle. Cut the pines, hardwood trees take their place and when the oak, maples, ash, etc., are cut, the pines come back again.

Even the names of places have changed. State of Maine from Province of Maine; Town of Effingham, New Hampshire from Leavittown, New Hampshire. Carroll County was part of Strafford County. (Records before 1835 are located in Dover, New Hampshire). Our Province Lake was once Province Pond in 1820, and before that it was Little Ossipee (note the spelling). Ossipee (as it is spelled today) is Indian for "Pine River".

"So the old order changeth, giving place to new."

MEASUREMENTS

Province Lake covers 1,008 acres, or 1.58 square miles, that comes out to 3,446,101 square feet of surface area. It was measured in 1906 by 3 men, Mr. D. W. Downs, Mr. Justin M. Glidden and Mr. E. W. Emery.

One day in February, 1906, over ice 15" thick, covered with a thin coat of snow which had become part of the ice, they used Mr. Downs' horse and wagon, marking a spoke in a front wheel - a wheel was 3 feet, 5 3/4 inches in diameter - 10 feet, 10 inches in circumference. They measured from West Newfields Road on the east, to the northwesterly corner; then from the Stevens house to the Bragdon house on Bonneyman Road; then from the Stevens house to Butler's field; then from Parker's rock off the point, around the cove to Beachwood, west, and I guess, back to West Newfields Road.

Province Lake is considered a rather shallow lake, with recent depth measurements, recorded in the early 1990's as follows: 17 feet along north side, east to west; 16 feet through the center, east to west; 14 feet north of island and point, and 7 feet around island, with rocks showing up, shallower than 7 feet between the island and the point.

The average altitude of Parsonfield, Effingham and Wakefield is about 1000 feet above sea level. Green Mountain is 2500 feet higher, Ames and Pocket Mountains are 1000 feet higher.

COPY OF LETTER FROM THE THREE MEN THAT MEASURED THE LAKE IN 1906

Parsonfield, Maine
Feb'y 24, 1906

We, the undersigned, beg to announce the measurements of Province Lake. On the above date, over ice about fifteen inches thick covered with a thin coat of snow, which had become part of the ice, making the conditions for measuring perfect. We used Mr. D. W. Downs horse and wagon, marking a spoke in front wheel (wheel 3', 5 3/8" in diameter, 10' and 10" in circumference).

From Kingsley's Road on the east to muddy inlet on the west - 809 revolutions making 1 mile 211 rods 2' and 8".

From Chas. Stevens to Bragdon's - 696 revolutions making 1 mile 136 rods and 16'.

From Chas. Stevens to Syndicate - 748 revolutions making 1 mile 171 rods 1' and 10".

From Parkers rock point to Garland's - 375 revolutions making 246 rods 3' and 6".

Length - a trifle less than 1 3/4 miles

Width - a trifle less than 1 1/2 miles

Width - at narrowest point - a trifle more than 3/4 mile.

Signed,
D. W. Downs
Justin M. Glidden
E. W. Emery

The lake is bordered by three towns, Effingham, New Hampshire, Wakefield, New Hampshire and Parsonsfield, Maine. Less than one third of the lake is in Maine.

ROADS

Road building was a town's first priority, after house building. At first, there were only foot paths between neighboring homes, then two trails were cut into the lake region. One came from East Wakefield and one from Ossipee.

In 1813, a road was made from Granite (part of Ossipee) to Effingham at the western slope of Pocket Mountain. The second road, made in 1823, came from East Wakefield, over the ridge to Robert's Blacksmith, near Taylor City. Taylor City, so called because several families of Taylor were grouped in the South Effingham area, and are still there after over 100 years. Old deeds refer to that area as "The City".

These roads were 3 to 4 rods wide on paper, but actually only 8 to 10 feet wide. New Hampshire law required only 8 feet, which is wide enough for two horseback riders to pass easily.

In 1812, Bailey Road was built across the northshore from Parsonfield Road as a convenient means of reaching the mills on South River. About 1835, a road from East Wakefield was opened to Province Lake. This road did not continue on across the front of the lake at that time. Records show that as late as 1856 there was no shore road. This early road turned left at the home of Ira Thompson (now only cellar stones) on the lake and went directly through the property of Sylvester Cooper (white farm house beside the Province Lake Store and Marina) as a right-of-way past the Titcomb/Bragdon Farm (burned in 1926) and out to the lake on the southwesterly corner just below Jim Prince's house.

Until the late 1900's, no road legally existed from the southeast corner of the lake to the southwest corner near the water - there was only a footpath along the cove beach with bars across the way into the point pasture. The ruts were created by the New England Box Company when they cut off the timber from the Ames Ox Pasture in 1922. There was no town road built on the shore until the 1980's when the land was taken by the town of Wakefield for a 4 rod wide highway. This land is mentioned in all deeds as "going to the high water mark." It was never given nor sold to the town. The road running along the west shore where the Beachwood Campground and many other camps are located was built in the 1970's by Artemis Remick.

All three towns surrounding the lake, Effingham, Parsonsfield and Wakefield, do very well in keeping these roads in decent repair and plowed in the winter.

AS IT WAS 1725 - 1910

Ossipee Indians, 30 or 40 families of them, lived on the western shore of Province Pond, called Little Ossipye on early maps. They were a bloodthirsty band who joined with the Pegwockets of Fryburg and the St. Francis braves of Canada, in plundering the towns in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts and carrying off the settlers to sell in Canada. Their trail went through our area as it is almost certain that Captain Lovell and his brave men followed this trail when pursuing Paugus in 1725. In 1758, General Amherst sent Rogers with his rangers to clear out any remaining Indians in the area, and this he did very well. The last Indian to trouble this area was Chief Chocorua and some of his braves in 1761.

By 1776, George Kezar, a fur trapper, found an abundance of game. Others joined him and soon greatly depleted the territory of all animals with valuable fur - beavers, etc. They left bears and deer to become a nuisance to the new settlers by eating their garden plants and the wolves to kill their livestock. It was said, "The wolves were very numerous and ferocious as they hunted in droves with the noise of a double brass band."

About 1770, the first early settlers arrived, usually the men came up ahead of their families. Many came from Exeter and Newmarket in the summer after they had planted their gardens at home. They cut down trees for log cabins and to clear the land for farming. After a couple of years of building, they brought their families on ox hauled sleds in winter. It was recorded by the Ames family that it took 9 days to reach the Parsonsfield shore - the present golf course. Think of riding for days in the cold, open sleds with several children.

Ten foot high log fences were used to protect their farm animals, while zig zag log fences were used to surround their acres of corn, rye, flax, clover and vegetables, all of which grew luxuriantly for the first few years in the virgin soil. The soil was soon used up, cutting down on extensive food production.

The Township of Parsonsfield was granted on August 5, 1771 to Thomas Parsons of Leavittown (Effingham). The Town of Effingham was incorporated in 1778. The Town of Wakefield was incorporated in 1775.

It was recorded by a Mr. Leavitt of Leavittown (Effingham), that James Dearborn was the first settler in 1768. The second was Walter Avery, with Will Palmer and Jeremiah Marston soon after. The first eight families came from Hampton, New Hampshire.

The township grants required at least 40 homes of 16' to 18' square to be built with 3 - 5 acres of land cleared in 4 years. Original lots were 150 acres and sold for about \$100.00 each, in installments if desired, noting that, "in case of War, the payment time should be reckoned from the return of Peace", so sure they were of the peaceful outcome of the Revolutionary War!

In 1820, some boundary lines between neighboring towns were shifted and swapped around. A gore of land on the north shore of the lake was sold for \$5.00 to Effingham from part of a common land grant from Wakefield by John Ames. The western shore was swapped between Ossipee and Effingham. Also in 1820, Maine became a state instead of just a Province of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts - Province Pond was the new name of Little Ossipye Lake. After the starvation years of 1816-1817, when there was a deep frost every month of the year (even July) and residents had to eat their livestock, the young people began to leave the area for the city mills to earn big pay checks of \$8.00 to \$10.00 per week.

The pioneers up from Exeter, Newmarket and Hampton were fine, intelligent, healthy, hardworking people who had some money when they came -

they were of "quality stock".

The towns around the lake remained sparsely settled until the 1930's when summer people began to build camps all along the water's edge.

AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND TRADE

After their log cabins were built, the forests were timbered off and hauled 30 miles to the coast for shipment to England and Jamaica. Rum was the largest return load - two hogshead - 100 to 150 gallons each - of rum and one fourth that quantity of other intoxicants were shipped each month. All of this used by approximately 200 people - there must have been some staggering going on in those days! Domestic violence? Never mentioned. In later years, moral influence became a power for good when the consumption dropped from hogsheads to barrels to jugs.

Between 1785 and 1790, three saw mills were put into operation where the logs were sawed into boards and clapboards used for building the spacious 2 1/2 story houses of the region. The work gave employment to the residents along with the grist mills, tannery, woolen mill and others along South River leading out of Province Pond. Today, South River is a tiny brook in marsh land.

The first dry goods store appeared in the early 1800's under the painted sign "West India Goods and Groceries." Potash paid for many groceries. Potash was a valuable commodity used in the making of soap, gunpowder and tanning of leather. Much was sent to England. Butter was made and sent to out of town markets. For the first 50 to 60 years, wheat and rye were the main crops before oats became popular.

Until 1840, linen and woolen goods of home production were the standard clothing material until cotton began to come from the mills down country.

Every farm had cows numbering 1 to 15 or more. In 1833, a Durham bull was brought to Parsonsfield and soon that breed became common in all parts of the lake region. 15 years later, Devons were introduced and in 25 years more, the Herefords were most popular. A few Jerseys provided butter. Sheep were raised to a great extent in the earliest years. Horses were raised and sold. There were of a short, plump variety, rougher coated and hardy, living often for over 30 years.

In 1798, a post office was opened where a little old man on a little dark horse with a little filled mail bag across the saddle, came jogging into town Saturday after Saturday.

WALKS

There are all kinds of walks to take around our Province Lake. Walks to pick wild flowers and berries, to watch birds and frogs, to check cemeteries for dates and names of the early settlers, maybe one of your ancestors. See the list at the end of the book for family names with more than 4 graves in local cemeteries. There are many others around to check out.

Originally, each family had its own graveyard on its own land. Surrounded with fencing to keep the grazing livestock off, some yards were raised and banked with granite slabs specifically for this purpose. It seems rather nice to keep the family together in death as in life.

The inscriptions on stone were often lengthy, sentimental poems. All seem to refer to "rest". Life was hard in those days. Other details included where the people were born, where and how they died, such as the wife who fell into the fireplace and was burned, and the man murdered on the piazza of the store. There are several graves of whole families, mostly children, who died in one year, probably of small pox, diphtheria or measles.

Then there were the many soldiers down through the ages of wars, mostly the Civil War. Several died in the Battle of Bull Run. Too many were only 16 or 17 years old. It is good to see the Stars and Stripes and other flags placed beside even the most remote graves to show honor to those who served their country. Loving words were written in stone, like:

"Be patient, kind and sympathetic"

"He died in beauty as a pearl dropped from some diadem"

"What is home without a Mother"

"His pains and groans are now over"

"She did what she could"

"Dear one, it is lonely and sad without you"

"Meet me in a better place"

"After the rites were over we laid him in his narrow bed and hoped he'd gone to heaven" Hoped? Questionable? You will find a closeness with the people of the past who walked on your land and loved your lake and mountains.

There are many cemeteries, both small and large, very near to Province Lake. One exists for the Getchel family near the top of Province Mountain just east of Dr. Wilkinson's house. James Marston's family graves are on the east side of Stage Coach Road. One of the first families in the area, James was a close friend of John Ames, both of the Newmarket section of Exeter in the 1700's.

John came up here because of James. John named his first son Marston Ames after James. Since then, the name of Marston has graced sons in 4 descending generations of the Ames family.

Near the lake is the resting place of John Tuck and family. The cemetery is located across the road from the big white house owned by Joseph Benzing, at the lower end of the golf course. John Tuck was the father of Amos Tuck, who was born and raised in that house and who went to Boston, Massachusetts to earn millions of dollars, some of which he gave to Dartmouth College for its Business School. John's words, written for Parsonsfield's Centennial Anniversary, are as welcome to us all today, over 100 years later, as when he wrote them: "When the curtain that time will drop, shall hide us all from human eyes, and the curfew shall toll the knoll of another century, there will stand under the same sun that shines on us, and in view of the same hills that now encircle the horizon, another multitude of people. To that assembly on the wings of their hope and love, the farmers and people of Parsonsfield send their greeting and bid it welcome to their fair fields, towering hills and happy homes; And welcome to all the transcendent blessings transmitted through them by the Father, to the advancing generations as an

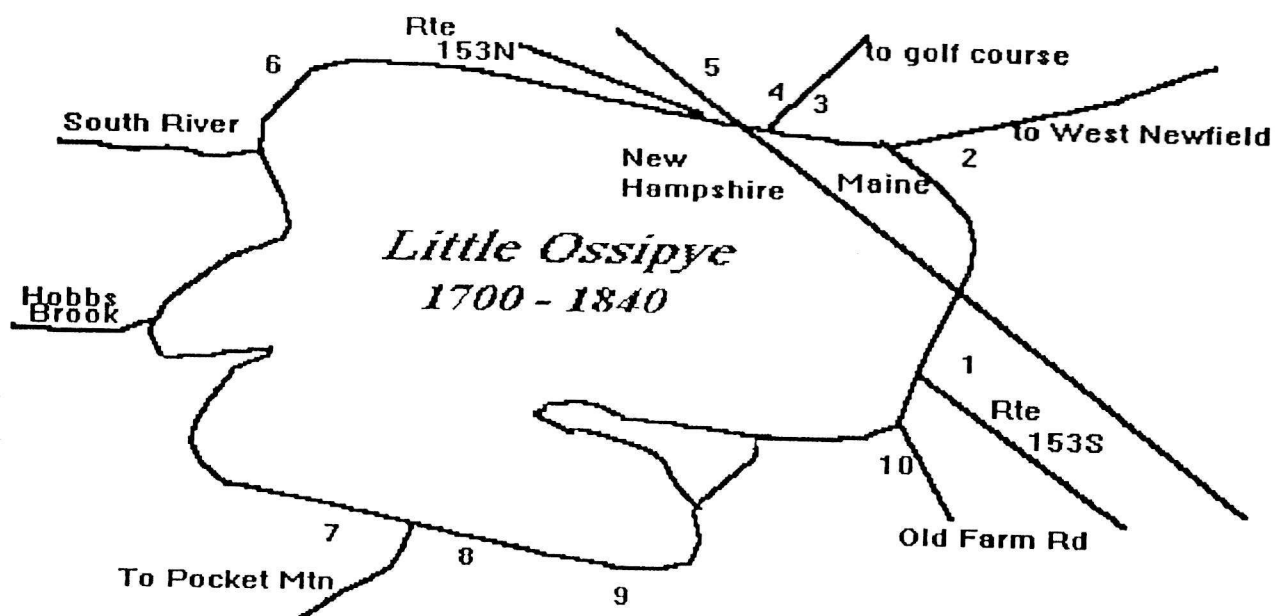
everlasting inheritance." Mr. Tuck died within a few days of writing this welcome.

Doesn't it make you feel that you want to do everyting you can to keep the lake area as clean and lovely as it was in the olden days?

NAMES OF SOME OF THE EARLY SETTLERS

In graveyards where four or more names are recorded, we find the following names. Read to see if any of your family names are represented. You make check the cemeteries for others.

AMES	DORIS	HILL	MORRISON	RICKER
BENSON	DAY	HOBBS	MOULTON	ROBERTS
BAILEY	DEARBORN	HODGDON	MUDGETT	SANBORN
BERRY	DOE	HUNTRESS	NEAL	SMITH
BICKFORD	EASTMAN	KIMBALL	PAGE	STONE
BLAZO	EDWARDS	LEAVITT	PARKS	SWEAT
BOOTLILY	EMERY	LIBBY	PARSONS	TOWLE
BROUN	FENDERSON	LITTLEFIELD	PEASE	WADLEIGH
BURBANK	FOSO	LORD	PENDEXTER	WATSON
CARLTON	FROST	LOUGEE	PERKINS	WEDGEWOOD
CHAPMAN	GARLAND	MERRILL	PERRY	WEEKS
CHASE	GILMAN	MILLIKEN	PIPER	WELCH
CHELLIS	GOODWIN	MOORE	PRAY	WILSON
CHURCHILL	HASTY	MORRILL	REED	YOUNG



Homes of Early Settlers:

1. Ira Thompson 1835
2. John Tuck 1788
3. John Ames 1787
4. Daniel Ames 1787
5. Meserve
6. Bailey 1785
7. Roberts - Cooper
8. Drake
9. Titcomb
10. Sylvester Cooper 1831

State of Maine 1820

Province Lake 1840

Wakefield + Effingham
Carroll County, New Hampshire

Parsonsfield, Maine
York County