

Lake Waramaug Association

May 2015



Community Gathering and Annual Meeting Sunday, June 7, 2015 2:00 PM Lake Waramaug Country Club

Please plan to attend our Annual Meeting and community reunion, where the Board of Directors will welcome you with a drink and conversation, and with any luck, balmy temperatures. Our Association is the core of the Lake community devoted to its protection and preservation. We are most effective when working together in the greatest numbers possible, so please do join us to discuss our mutual interests. Bring your friends and neighbors - especially newcomers to the Lake area - to join in the conversation.

At our Annual Meeting immediately following our community reunion, at 2:30 PM, Tom McGowan, Executive Director of the Lake Waramaug Task Force, will report on the State of the Lake, including the installation of new in-Lake LayerAir Restoration Systems at Arrow Point. Tom's reports highlight our meetings and keep us up to date on developments for the protection and preservation of the Lake. There will also be an election of directors of the Association and reports concerning our continuing efforts.

In Memoriam: Janet M. Bates 1916-2015

As this newsletter went to press, the Association received the sad news of the death of Janet Bates just short of her 99th birthday. Janet, a lifelong resident of the Lake, was dedicated to its protection, restoration and preservation. She chaired the Lake Waramaug Task Force from its inception in 1975 through 1993 and served as a director of this Association from 1993-2008. Her memorial is the present beauty of Lake Waramaug, a tribute to her remarkable efforts.

Our annual Independence Fireworks Display will be held on Saturday, July 4th. (Rain date, Sunday, July 5th).

Join your lakeside neighbors by continuing the long tradition of lighting flares to outline our Waramaug in fiery brilliance! Many thanks again to Dorothy Hamilton, who has once again hospitably made her property available as the firing site. Flares will be available for purchase at our June 7th meeting, and after June 7th (while supplies last) at The Hopkins Inn, Nine Main and County Wine & Spirits. The celebration begins with the lighting of the flares at 9:00 PM, as a prelude to our magnificent fireworks display at 9:30 PM. The fireworks display is sponsored by the Association as a reminder to the community of the efforts of both the Association and the Task Force to protect and preserve Lake Waramaug.

Dues Reminder

Your annual renewal of membership is important to us.
Please return the enclosed envelope as soon as possible.

INCLUDE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS SO THAT WE MAY CONTACT YOU
PROMPTLY WITH LAKE NEWS AS THE NEED ARISES.



www.waramaugassoc.org

P.O. Box 2272
New Preston, CT 06777



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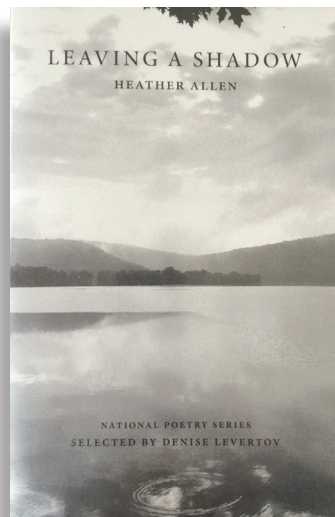
Thomas McGowan

Polar Bear Run

Regardless of a week's postponement and snow covered roads, the 31st Annual Polar Bear run had a great turnout and some fast times. Will Sanders, 27, of Wethersfield won again with an incredible 42:14, averaging a 5:34 mile, his fourth consecutive. Marie Davenport, 40, of Guilford took top billing for the women. For more information and to register for next year's race, please see <http://www.lakewaramaugpolarbearrun.com>.



Photo Credit: Keith Angell



Leaving A Shadow

by Heather Allen

From a still place
On the shore of the lake,
I look into the landscape
Of the soul —
A web of radiance, its heart
The child of summer
Drawn deep into the mirror of water

To swim with birds and fish
In the same luminous currents,
And drift into a veil of trees
As real as their reflections
In the branching shadows above us.
Here at the center
Of transparent time and space

Morning and evening
Circle in place,
Turning through haze and mist
Into the wind's dancing brilliance,
The liquid amber of late afternoon,
And the last islands of brightness
on the hills at dusk —

These hills encircling the lake
That have given me their shelter and their shape —
The hollows where smoke and shadows gather,
The long light-soaked slopes
Of the fields:
The clouds of forest
Dreaming in me still.

"Leaving A Shadow" by Heather Allen from *Leaving A Shadow*.
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Cover Photo by Alan Wiener

Landscape Of The Soul

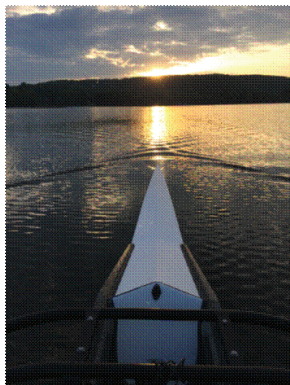
For Board member Heather Allen, the Lake and its surrounding landscape has inspired verse. "Although there are no direct allusions in her poems, Heather Allen has clearly learned from the classical Chinese tradition how to listen to the world around her and how to allow it to speak through her, through observations of light and shadow and the turning seasons. As with her longtime practice of Tai-chi and her study of traditional Chinese medicine, her poetic practice leaves no room for self-indulgence, but rather seems to arise as naturally as leaf to branch. Hers is the temporal world of constant flux, but a world illuminated by a light that lies beyond, mysterious, essential and alive." (www.coppercanyonpress.org).

The Association offers an essay about the history of rowing and sculling on Lake Waramaug.

Rowing on Waramaug

by Chris Beckett

During the warmer months on Lake Waramaug, a group of four men take to their sculls early in the morning, when the surface of the Lake is still like a pane of glass, with mists rising from the warmer waters to the cooler air. They are a private group of people and yet socially minded, greeting several other rowers each morning. A few can boast an Olympic pedigree. Together in love of the cerebral sport, these athletes scull across the surface, graceful as aquatic birds, yet exerting great effort unbeknownst to appreciative onlookers. One describes



the experience as a privilege, zen-like, quiet and reflective. With a limited line of sight, propelling his boat backwards with even strokes, reflection is a natural byproduct, working in the present yet blind to what is ahead.

Presently, the Lake is home to more than just recreational rowers and retired Olympians. The Gunnery School crews are largely seen as a signal of the arrival of Spring, described by one West Shore resident as appearing as an army of ants across the Lake, effortlessly carrying what appears to be sleek blades of long grass, their Pocock and Vespoli sculls, from the Beebe Boathouse adjacent to the Washington Club beach. Ice still dominates all basins of our Lake, but as soon as the water is clear, safe and passable, the boys and girls of The Gunnery will displace a modest, chilly wake with their 24" wide hulls in preparation for Spring competition, including the eagerly anticipated Founders' Day Regatta, which has been held on Waramaug since 1959.

Yet our Lake's sculling and rowing history extends further back in Waramaug's past than 1959. Presumably, the Wyantenock people wielded oars to propel their canoes, for more practical purposes: transportation and fishing. But sculling for sport was first regarded by columnist Pen Dragon. In a June, 1875 edition of the Litchfield Enquirer, he reported "The Oars Club, composed of the elite of Bridgeport's young men quartered at the Cheere Point House, held a regatta last Thursday. The Club hired the steamer Flirt for the day and carried many loads of pleasure seekers. Among the goodly crowd were the judges Charles E. Beeman and George F. Brown, with members of the Oars Club and your worthy correspondent... Waramaug has not been the scene of such festivity for many a day, and the occasion will be remembered by the assembled multitude as a choice moment of pleasant by-gones." (From A History of Lake Waramaug, by Mary Harwood, The Lake Waramaug Association, © 1996). At that time, the course was a mile and three quarters long, extending from what is now the Lake Waramaug Country Club beach, to the East Shore near Pinnacle Valley, known as the New Preston Basin.

Just four short years after our locally-flavored competition, Waramaug was discovered by The New York Crew, which according to Pen Dragon, was using the Lake as training waters for the International Professional Regatta on one of the more famous courses on the East Coast, the Schuylkill River in Pennsylvania. A more formal history, however, can be drawn from 1947, when Gunnery School football coach Rod Beebe, for whom the boathouse adjacent to the Washington Club beach gets its name, began a rowing program for his young, male scholar athletes.

Beebe proceeded to develop a powerhouse program that would produce a crew of Olympic caliber. "In 1956, for example, the Gunnery's varsity crew rowed in the Olympic trials at Lake Onondaga, New York, and made it to the semi-finals. Unfortunately, they lost in the finals to Princeton and Cornell." (Harwood, *ibid*). In 1959, with the generous support of Katherine Conroy, Coach Beebe began the annual Founders' Day Regatta on Lake Waramaug, a tradition that continues, held this year on Sunday, May 3, 2015. This year's Founders' Day hosts 25 different scholastic teams and rowing clubs; the endeavor is a huge one, requiring more than 100 volunteers, many of them local residents. Since 1978, the same year girls were invited to participate, the Founders' Day races have taken place in the Kent basin, along the shore of the State Park. It is notable to include that women had competed in the sport for only six years at the time, making Waramaug one of the first locales of women's competition in American history.

Since 2000, the Connecticut Public Schools Regatta has been held on the same course, in cooperation with the Founders' Day organization. Shortly following the Founders' Day Regatta, May 17th of this year, thirteen crews throughout the State compete in ten events at the CPSRA Championships. Two trophies awarded at the races are named in honor of W. Hart Perry and Chris Combs, commemorating their tireless work: promoting rowing in the State.

The Kent and South Kent Schools also utilized Waramaug's excellent watercourses for practice and competition. Chris Combs, son of the Inn on Lake Waramaug's former proprietor Richard, remembers fondly being a filler for absent rowers at the request of then South Kent coach, Chuck Willing. The school used the Inn's beach as a launching site for practices from 1967, and soon thereafter recognized the Kent Basin as an ideal locale for the course, being protected from wind and more than 1500 meters in length, the high school regatta standard. Combs developed a life-long love of the sport, later rowing for Washington College in Maryland, and currently serves as a Director of the Eastern Association of Women's Rowing Colleges (EAWRC).

Hart Perry, who was head coach of the Kent School crew, utilized Waramaug for practices as well. He said that he "always thought that [Waramaug] would make a great competitive course. This was proved in 1971, when the National Junior Regatta was first held at the Lake with junior teams from all over the country competing. [He] then put in a bid for the Olympic Trials Regatta." (Harwood, *ibid*) Perry's bid was accepted, and the US Olympic small boat rowing trials for qualification in the 1972 Munich games were held on Lake Waramaug. At this time, only men competed nation-wide, while the sport for women was still in its developing stages. Jay Combs, another of Richard's sons raised at the Inn, recalls a competitor arriving in a Volkswagon Beetle with a scull strapped to the roof, which he drove all the way from Los Angeles to try to qualify. Jay was remorseful never to have learned if he had.

Jay also recalls several families housing competitors in August of 1972, including the Weidlich family. Kirby Mullen, daughter of the late



Peter Mullen, former Association president, remembers selling refreshments to spectators at stands set up along the State Park.

Mark Sptiz took top medal honors at the Munich games in swimming that year, earning seven golds and breaking as many world records, but the men's rowing team also had a very respectable showing. Of the athletes who tried at Waramaug that summer, Jim Dietz was the most successful, making it to the finals and placing fifth overall. The American eight-man shell in the 2000 meter sweeps ("sweeps" refer to rowers who use a single oar rather than two), consisting mostly of Harvard and Union Boat Club of Boston men, won the pre-Olympic regatta, setting a course record. In the finals, where tickets went for more than \$100 apiece reflecting Europe's love for rowing, the Americans won a silver behind New Zealand, and just eking by the East German team by six one-hundredths of a second.

South Kent's Chuck Willing is also known for bringing the Women's Eastern Sprints to Waramaug in 1979, as mentioned, a groundbreaking time for women in the Sport. Willing was responsible for building the course, which consisted of an impressive laundry list of materials. "The 680 acre Lake in New Preston had a protected water basin that was excellent for racing. The EAWRC and its members also found the Lake Waramaug community to be very supportive of the event. A trio of private high schools were involved (Kent, South Kent and Gunnery), especially South Kent School, which set up the buoyed course, a job that required seven miles of cable and 1500 buoys." (From "The First Strokes," by Erica Hurtt, Ivy League Public Information Assistant).

Members of our community housed women competitors in their homes, both for overnight stays and rest stops for the Brown crew, in the case of the New Preston based Combs family, or as a "respite site" for the Princeton Crew, who sought sustenance and rest at the West Shore home of Grenville and Sally Paynter. Oarswomen were shuttled via bus between their Danbury hotels, the race site at Sutters' Cove and the Paynters' stately summer home. The well-bonded crew swept the event in 1996, much to the delight of their hosts.



The sprints were held in the Kent basin until 2000, at which time Willing had retired, the race length at the women's collegiate level increased to 2000 meters, and Title IX involved the NCAA in regulation of competition. The Kent basin, measured in at 1950 meters in the 6th lane, and therefore 50 meters short. It remains an ideal locale for high school competition, however, which is 1500 meters.

To read the conclusion of "Rowing on Waramaug", please visit the Community pages at our website, www.waramaugassoc.org



Memorial Day Celebrations

Our Lakeside towns will be commemorating those who have fallen in service to our country this Memorial Day. We encourage you and your families to take part:

WARREN:

The town of Warren will hold a parade on Sunday, May 24th at 11:30 AM from the Community Center on Sackett Hill Road. Immediately following the parade, the Warren Volunteer Fire Company will hold a hot dog lunch for all at the Fire House.

WASHINGTON:

The town of Washington will celebrate on Monday, May 25th, starting with a Roll Call of Honor at noon at the Washington Green Cemetery. At 1:30, the commemoration will continue at the Harry O. Erikson Pavilion Hall in New Preston, where a parade will proceed to New Preston Cemetery on Baldwin Hill for a 21 gun salute. At 2:30, the parade will re-commence at Washington Primary School with a pause at the bridge where flowers will be tossed into the Shepaug River in memory of Naval veterans, and end at Bryan Memorial Town Hall for the traditional ceremony, including a reading of In Flanders Fields, by John McCrae.

KENT:

The town of Kent will also celebrate on Monday, May 25th with a parade beginning at 9:30 AM, at the Kent Center School and culminating at the Community House on North Main Street, where they will have an ice cream social co-sponsored by the Kent Lion's Club and the American Legion. At noon, the Kent Land Trust will host a picnic on their field south of town. Admission is free.

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**Saturday, July 18, 2015:
Hopkins Vineyard Triathlon**

**Sunday, September 6, 2015:
End-of-Summer Lake Waramaug Association gathering and meeting.**