CAROGA



An Adirondack Town Recalls Its Past

Barbara McMartin

CONTENTS

Preface
Dedication–to Emma Krause
Introduction–History Missed

1—The Birth of the Town of Caroga 1

Prologue 1
The Wandering Point 1
Roads for the First Settlers 3
North Bush Native Son ~ Isaac Peckham Christiancy 6
By Dr. R.M. Palmer
North Bush and the Roads to Caroga 7
By Isaac Peckham Christiancy
North Bush to the Present 12
The North Bush Methodist Church 19
Newkirk Mills 22
Glasgow 27

2—Wheelerville and Pine Lake 29

The Era of Logging and Tanning 29
The Awakening Town 29
The Wheeler Claflin Company 32
Tanning 33
Pine Lake and Lumbering 34
Wheelerville and the Tannery 37
The Men Who Built Wheelerville and Pine Lake 43
The Canada Lake House 44
The Arnts 47
The Waning Years 49

3—Canada Lake 51

The Snyder Letter and the Lake in 1819 51
As I Saw It Seventy Five Years Ago 51
By Henry R. Snyder
Two Nineteenth Century Painters Who Enjoyed the Lakes 54
The First Summer Residents 57
The Fulton House 63
The Auskerada 70
The Dam at Stewart's Landing 76
The Decades of Steamers at Canada Lake 78

4—Canada Lake–The Resort 87

An 1890's Vacation 87
Loch Villa 93
Dolgeville Point 97
Alfred Dolge and the Auskeradas 99
The Auskerada Lakes 99
East Canada Lake Protective Association 102
Cutting Ice 102
The Point Breeze Club 103
Eberly Hutchinson 106
Boating After the Turn of the Century 107

5—The End of the Logging Era 110
Irving Pond 110
Wheelerville in Eclipse 114
Pine Lake Lumbering Ceases 118

6—The Caroga Lakes 124
The Resort 124
Summer Homes 137
By Catherine Bryant Rowles
Caroga Lake Protective Association 143
The Gloversville Auto Stage Company 145
Stores 149
Churches 153

7—Canada Lake–The Durey Years 154
The Durey Purchase 154
Cyrus Durey 155
Development at the Lake 158
The Mill Company 160
Sleigh Bells on the Camel's Hump 166
By Helen Ireland Hays
The Mill Fire 171

8—The Artists' and Writers' Colony 172
Clare Victor Dwiggins–The Idylls of the Lake 172
By Phoebe Dwiggins Ballard
Paul Bransom 180
By Helen Ireland Hays
Charles Sarka 182
Blazed Trail Productions–The Russell Movie Company 185
The Widdemers 191
By John Widdemer

9—Canada Lake to the Present 192
Green Lake 193
Meanwhile, on Dolgeville Point or By the Skin of His Teeth 199
As told to Phoebe Dwiggins Ballard by Skeet Sliter
Nick Stoner Island 202
Kane Mountain 205
Cottagers in the Twenties 206
Hermits 210
Canada Lake Post Office 211
Hal Schumacher 211

10—The Town Grows Again in the Twenties 212
Nick Stoner and His Monument 212
Major Nicholas Stoner 213
By Cyrus Durey
The Dedication Ceremony 216
Nick Stoner Golf Course 217
Shermans 221
Pine Lake and Groshans' Park 228
The Stoner Lakes 231

11—Modern Caroga 232
Summer Residents 232
Getting There Was Half the Fun 235
The Fish Story 237
Caroga's Characters 238
Weather Notes 239
The Fire Department 240
Wheelerville School 241
Royal Mountain 241
Town Government 242
12—Notes From the Past Thirty Years 244
North Bush Methodist Church 244
Postmasters 244
No Gasoline in Town 244
Twenty-Five Years as Town Clerk 244
Earthquake and Windstorm 244
So Much Has Changed 245
Wheelerville School 245
The New Town Hall 246
Landfill Closing 246
Dick Lefebvre 246
Stewart's Landing Dam 246
Gone but not Forgotten 247
Honors for Staff Sgt. Harold P. Witzke 248
End of an Era 248
The Merry-Go-Round 249
Kane Mountain 249
Nick Stoner Golf Course 249
Winter Sports 250
Royal Mountain Ski Area 251
Royal Mountain Ski Patrol 252
Senior Citizens 252
The Caroga Clinic 252
Caroga Historical Association and Museum 253
Nights Out 255
Little Allen Inn 257
13—Associations and Citizen Activists 258
East Caroga Lake Protective Association 258
Kirchens Grove Association 258
Canada Lake Protective Association 259
West Caroga Lake Association 259
The Stoner Lakes Fish and Game Club 260
Pine Lake Civic Association 260
Black Flies 260
Navigation 260
Members of the Armed Forces from the Town of Caroga 261

PREFACE

This book is written for the people of the Town of Caroga and its summer residents, past and future. It is intended to celebrate the good times, to relive the past through the eyes of those of other generations who saw the town, and to remember those families who have always been a part of the town.

The son of one of the town's first citizens prepared a description of early life in North Bush. It constitutes a most important part of the history and the following was written as introduction to that account:

History records only the combined or aggregate actions of nations and can only give the biographies of a very few individuals whose position has given them a predominant influence in the nation in which their influence has been specifically felt in giving form and shape to great events and social movements, whose effects are felt and recognized for ages. It needs, however, but a little reflection and consideration to satisfy us that each individual human being, however humble, has a personal history of his own quite as real and quite as interesting to himself and his children and near relation, at least, as that of the greatest historical characters has to the nation at large.

It is in that spirit that we touch on a part of the lives of the citizens of Caroga for whom records could be found. Because the town hall burned and most town records no longer exist, the history depended on the contributions of many family papers. If some have been omitted, it was only because they were unavailable. There are certainly many parts of the record of the town to be discovered.

I have attempted in this history to recreate life in the Town of Caroga at various periods since the first settlers arrived, one hundred and eighty years ago. To do so, I have relied on the descriptions of those who saw or participated in events, and reproduced large parts of these personal stories so that the reader might experience the thrill of discovering a few of the unusual bits of writings that are all that we have from which to compile the story of the town.

I have tried to satisfy the summer residents' curiosity about their predecessors as well as to document the lives of early settlers for their descendants. To accomplish these goals, I have interwoven letters, early writings, family records, deeds and newspaper accounts with many paintings and photographs. Not only did I wish to evoke memories of past eras but I hoped to make the past tangibly real.

As the history of the town unfolds, I trust that my readers will come to see, as I did, that, from the vantage of this bicentennial year, the destiny of the town lies in the beauty of its lakes and streams and mountains. The potential for recreation is unbounded and unmatched within the Adirondacks. Since the land within the town is now largely owned by the State, as a part of the Adirondack Forest Preserve, the future is relatively safe for the thousands who have found and will find that its summers are the best anywhere within our northern mountains.

The Town of Caroga lies south of the center of the northern boundary of Fulton County in New York State. The area is at the southern edge of the Adirondack Park.

The name of the town derives from an Indian word and the initial's sound of the native name was somewhere between a "C" a "G" and a "K." The hard sound reflects in the fact that early maps sometimes referred to the Caroga Creek and

the Caroga Lakes as Garoga. However, from the time of the creation of the town, the State Legislature gave it the name, Caroga. The word may mean either "a creek" or "on the side of," and either translation is appropriate because it is the lake shores and streams that characterize the town.

The town's thirty thousand acres contain a very small population, only eight hundred permanent residents. It was a privilege and a great pleasure to help them and the summer people recall and record their past.

Barbara McMartin

Preface to the Second Edition

I have been fortunate in having a dedicated committee help me with the revision of the Caroga history. The committee decided early on that it would not change the first edition at all, but that I should add a dedication and an introduction that would include some of the historical notes that were missed the first time around. Little new history has been discovered except the confirmation that Canada Lake was the Adirondacks' first planned resort community.

The end of the book now has notes from the past thirty years or so as the town grew to its present population of over eleven hundred residents. We also added a much needed index. As you can imagine, picking out significant events from recent times without the perspective of history is challenging. It is consoling to know that the town's historical files are growing and story hours and oral histories are being recorded so that they can be used in another few decades when this book surely will be revised again.

Barbara McMartin, Spring 1998

Bibliography

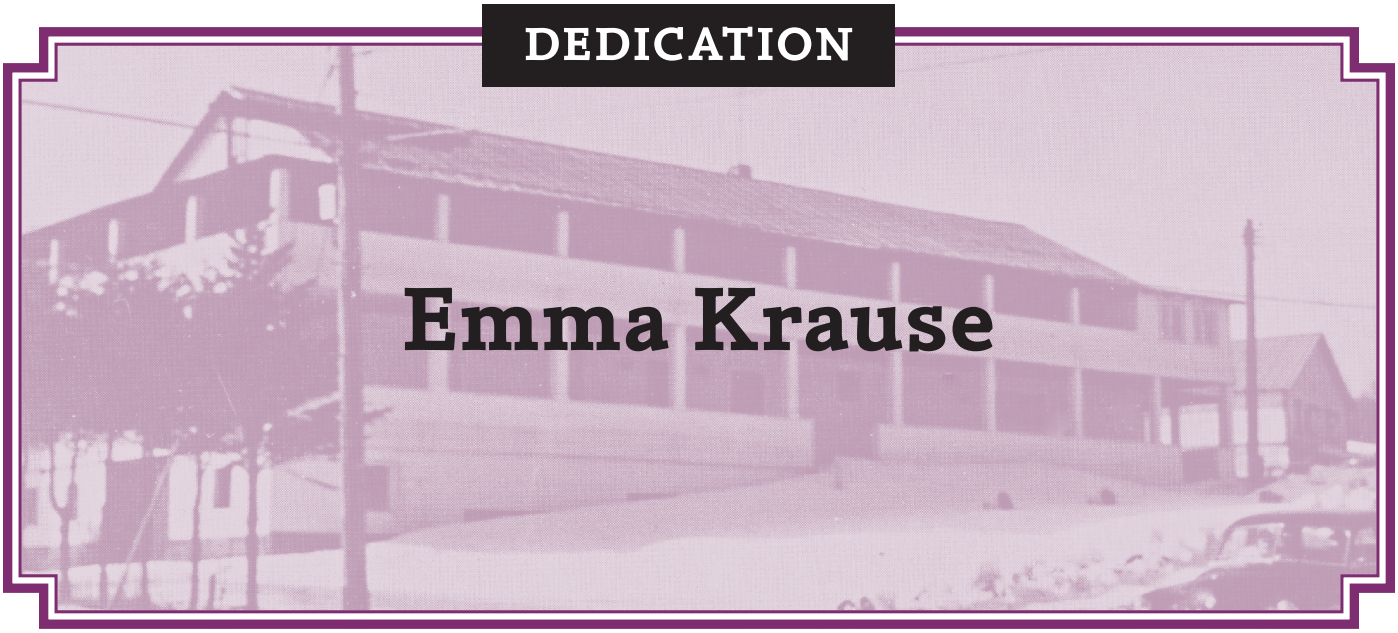
Colvin, Verplank, ***State of New York, Report on the Adirondacks and State Land Surveys to the Year 1884, Great Land Patents***, Albany, Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1884.

Dwiggins, Clare Victor, ***Bill's Diary***, Wisconsin, Stanton and Lee, Publishers, 1945.

Forthingham, Washington, ***History of Fulton County***, Syracuse, New York, D. Mason and Company, Printers and Publishers, 1892.

Simms, Jeptha, ***Trappers of New York***, Albany, S. Munsell, 1857.

DEDICATION



Emma Krause

The Committee to Revise the Caroga book dedicates this [2nd] edition to our beloved Emma Krause. She inspired the first edition, cajoled the Town Board into financing it, and shepherded its production. She has been a role model for another female politician, our current Town Supervisor, FritzAnn Surace, and inspired her to undertake this revision.

In addition to helping plan the Caroga history, she introduced me to so many wonderful people and encouraged me to listen to their stories. She stopped me from asking embarrassing questions, told me marvelous vignettes of townspeople, and cautioned me that many tales could not be told. Her great sense of humor made the writing and collecting photographs a very rewarding experience for me.

The 1976 edition has a brief note telling that Emma was elected Town Supervisor in 1966 and Chairman of the Fulton County Board of Supervisors in 1970. There is so much more to her life and career. Emma was born in Gloversville in 1913 and left high school to learn to be a beautician. She used to visit Caroga Lake with her mother, who was Aunt Kate Unger's sister. The sisters were daughters of Englebert Fisher from the Hohler Road. Aunt Kate was the cook at the Unger House, which she own with her husband Jake. They added rooms to the old farm house, located at the Five Corners. There were four Unger children, May, who was fifteen years older than Emma, and John, Arthur, and Vincent.

The Unger House was struck by lightning in the late 1920s. The Ungers rebuilt the burned out structure and reopened it in 1930. Emma opened a beauty shop at the Unger House, which served the busloads of tourists from Utica and Albany who were attracted to Shermans. Peter Hodder ran a store and gas station across the street, at the point in front of the Jammer. He teased Emma and made her so angry she hit him with a pair of cutters, then quit, and started a new career. She began taking care of the books for the Unger House as well as for the ice house and gravel business and ended up in partnership with May.

By this time, the Unger House had fifteen rooms with four in an adjoining building. Business was great all through the 1940s with square dancing and wild parties. May's illness brought Vincent (Babe) into partnership with Emma although he owned the building given to him by his parents. The old Unger House burned in 1955 and Babe bought "The Well" where the Unger House is now. Babe died in 1958 and the restaurant was sold to the Robinsons from Bleecker. Emma took care of her aunt and uncle until their deaths in 1959 and 1960. She had gone with Winston Krause for ten years and when she finally married him in December of 1959 she "retired," although retirement only lasted for six years.

A controversial land transaction involving 55 acres on the way to Irving Pond that was owned by Babe seemed unfair to Emma. She was upset enough to enter the Republican primary and run against Charlie Putman in 1965. As the first woman on the Board of Supervisors, Emma knew many were not happy with her election, but

others like Supervisor Brownell from Northville helped her. By the time she was was elected the first woman chairman in 1971 the headline in the local paper shouted "First Board Queen." Emma has served on many committees, chairing the Social Services Committee. In 1976 she was appointed chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

Emma was there to accept title to the Stewart's Landing Dam. She appointed a planning commission and authorized a study in 1968 of water pollution on West Caroga Lake. Under her tenure pipes to water the golf course were put underground, lawn mowing became mechanized, retirement plans and health insurance for town employees were established. But all her successes are tempered, she says, by the disappointment she felt on failing to bring sewers to the town.

Through it all, Emma has been a booster of the town, as excited about its progress as she was when she shot her first deer on Sheely Mountain — and in the excitement threw her gun away, only to have it found buried under the leaves.

Emma held office through 1983 and when she retired the Fulton County League of Women Voters gave her their Elizabeth Cady Stanton Award. Townspeople remember her for the patient way she brought planning to the town. Since she retired, she has retained a vivid interest in the town, the historical association, and in particular the revision of Caroga, so it is with great appreciation for her inspiration that we dedicate the revision and rename it as she wanted, ***Caroga, An Adirondack Town Recalls Its Past***.

Barbara McMartin, W. Alec Reid, Gay Lefebvre, Anne Jung, Doreen Ford, Bob Mohoney, Krystyn Toles, Chris Watkins, Patricia Purtell, Donald Stock, FritzAnn Surace, Emma Krause, Inger McDaniel, Emmeran Arnst, Kay Schmutz, Doris Gage, and Jean Parnell.



Remembering the Unger House

Introduction

History Missed First Time Around

It is amazing that so much of our past emerged during the years 1975 and 1976 when I was researching our history for Caroga, especially in light of the fact that early town records had been destroyed by fire. We uncovered so much that the committee decided not to edit the original version, but to reprint it with a new title, Caroga, An Adirondack Town Recalls its Past, a much needed index, and a glimpse of the town in the last three decades. But this decision does not mean that all our past was revealed in the first edition—in fact, we missed some very important early records.

Black Heritage

With the help of Fulton County Historian Lew Decker, the town has uncovered and celebrated black families among its pioneers in North Bush. One was Amos King, who joined the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, the first black regiment to fight in the Civil War. He survived the assault on Fort Wagner on July 18, 1863, when most of the regiment was killed. He returned to North Bush to farm at a site on the Beech Ridge Roan where he survived two failed marriages and the death of two sons. Town historian Kay Schmutz was able to learn that his farm later belong to the Lane family and the Spencers.

At a ceremony in 1996, a marble stone marker was placed in the North Bush Cemetery in honor of the black residents of the town. The beautiful ceremony was attended by the members of the reactivated 54th Regiment, church members, and Assemblyman Mark Butler in addition to local government officials.

According to the 1865 Census, Caroga's black families included seven members of the Leonard family, two of whom, Charles H. and George were also soldiers in the Civil War. A second black family, the Milletts, also had a soldier, Thomas E. in that war. Two other black families farmed nearby in North Bush, the Parkers and the Bowmans.

Another black family was associated with the tannery at Wheelerville. Leonard Gardner, his wife, and daughter Eva (born in 1883) lived on the Morey Road. They left when the tannery closed, but Eva returned with her husband George McWalker to raise five children also on the Morey Road. One of the children, Genevieve, remembers attending school in Wheelerville.

Secrets

The town has recently begun to talk about one of the dark secrets, an attitude it shared with many other Adirondack communities at the time. At one time people of the Jewish faith were prohibited from owning property at Canada Lake. Deeds from the area declare that the property cannot be sold to "Hebrews." It is known that the Schine family was never able to buy a property on the lake on which they could build, preferring to build in the isolated splendor of the pines at MyHill near the five corners.

Surveys

After Caroga was published, historian Francis B. Rosevear was able to show that the "Wandering Point" that fixed the survey of the corner of the town near Stoner Lake was really nine different points. He focused a deposition from nineteenth century surveyor J. B. Koetteritz that showed the extent of the confusion over local surveys. He testified that "After the Dolge failure in 1898 all the survey field books and all of the maps of the Claflin operation disappeared." Koetteritz believed that there is "no patent or tract in the Adirondack region where there is so little definite information, such absolute lack of any authentic map or any greater irregularity of the supposed equal acreage of lots." With much diligence, Koetteritz also believed he had straightened out the confusion over the conflicting survey lines.

Nine Corner Mystery

Among the many stories overlooked in the first edition was a legend associated with Nine Corner Lake. The story was told by the late Ray Hillabrandt, a resident of Dolgeville, who operated a boat on Canada Lake. There are still signs of an

old lumberman's dam at the outlet of Nine Corner Lake. Long ago there was a shanty not far from the road to Pine Lake, where a man named Sweet offered lodging for eleven boarders who were peeling bark at the head of the lake, two miles to the northwest. Many of them were French Canadians, a good natured lot, the merriest of whom were two brothers, Jacques and Frank La Feare. Late one June day a severe thunder storm brought winds that toppled huge trees and Sweet allowed that the "Canucks will get wet today."

As it happened, the bark peelers did not return at their normal time and everyone assumed that they would construct a shelter to wait out the fury of the storm. But as the night wore on and they did not appear, a search party was organized. Dawn was beautifully clear and bright as the party started out, following the trail to the lake and walking around the rocky southern shore. They found a crude boat which the men had used to cross the lake. It was jammed between some rocks on one of the many rocky points with a hole broken in the bottom. Stuffing a shirt in the hole, the men search the lake for the lost eleven, and as they crossed the lake, they found the bodies of every man with the two brothers still clutching each other.

Later that summer two eager hunters were camping on the same rocky bluff during another violent storm. As they looked over the lake lightning appeared to illuminate an overturned boat with men struggling in the wild water nearby. The next flash of lightning revealed nothing, but the two hunters were so frightened they began a wild flight toward the shanty through the dense woods. They arrived breathless and bleeding from many scratches and with torn clothes from racing through the ragged underbrush. As they narrated their experience, some doubted it had happened, but ever after it is said that even the most skeptical among them never wished to be out at night on the lake that so filled them with dread.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Another story we missed concerned Eleanor Roosevelt. During the early 1930s Eleanor, her son Elliott, and two grandchildren visited J. H. Decker's Silver Springs Cottage (now the Steuber camp) on the north shore of Canada Lake. As told by John Widdemer, her son and the trooper assigned to protect the family "were fishing off Nick Stoner Island, when a huge bass hit Elliott's rig and in the scramble, his valuable new gold watch tore off his wrist and spiraled down and down into the half light. The valiant trooper dove after it," but failed to recover the watch.

Logging Canada Lake

Somehow overlooked was the story of mining logs from the bottom of Canada Lake. In 1958 a group headed by Greg Ashlaw, a local lumberman, harvested 30,000 board feet of timber, mostly birch, from the bottom of the lake. They estimated that as much as two to three million board feet could be harvested and they recovered much of that in the next year. Ashlaw knew of the logs because his grandfather Ollie Austin had taken over the original Durey mill on Canada Lake around 1920. Durey had cut from four and a half to seven and a half million board feet annually, most of it hardwoods like birch, maple, beech, oak, and maple. About 2% of the logs floated to the mill sunk. Ashlaw and his crew dove from a raft to affix chains to the logs, brought them to the surface, and attached barrels to them so they would stay afloat while they were towed to shore.

Family Stories

Families have examined their roots and discovered how many New England Yankees found their way to North Bush to farm. Sardis Lamphier (born 1828) left Williamstown before 1853 for North Bush, where his future wife, Mary Elizabeth Thompson, was living. They raised nine children in a home on North Bush Road, south of the church. Two sons, William and Edward, built many camps around the lake and William helped build Sherman's Pavilion. Daniel Mussey came even earlier from New Hampshire, arriving in 1828. His son fought in the Civil War and he raised nine children all on Mussey Road in North Bush. The descendants of one of his sons, Edward, born in 1865, are residents of the area today, He was a sawyer, with mills at Stewarts Landing and North Bush, a trustee of the North Bush School, for which he donated land, and a town assessor.

In 1980, Robert Emmett Stock, published his "Memoirs of an Adirondack Native Son" (a copy is in the Caroga Museum's collection). In it he told of his grandfather Jacob (born in 1811) and his

grandmother Katrina (born in 1812), who emigrated from a small town near Wiesbaden in 1846. They settled in the Town of Caroga in 1859 on a property in Totten and Crossfield Great Lot 44 between Fisher and Hohler roads. Hohler Road is the eastern boundary of the town and the Stocks and their neighbors were closer to life in Bleecker than Caroga. Stock's book tells of the many neighbors who also came from Germany, their sawmills, logging, hunting, and shingle making and how they built the first Catholic Church in the county. The German settlers can be traced by the names in the Catholic cemetery, which lies just over the town border in Bleecker.

Old Buildings

History lives in all our old buildings. Rev. Merrill Dence wrote that the oldest camp on East Caroga was not at James Point. In 1896, Rev. Charles Beford snowshoed three times around the lake to pick the spot (now First Ave. Extension) where in 1897 he built camp Pioneer. He also built Rock Lodge and Tanglewild, the latter owned since 1919 by the Bowmans (Becky Bowman just died at age 100). James Point was built in 1898. Rev. Dence's grandfather, Rev. George Seibert, bought camp Pioneer in 1908.



The Pine Lake School became the Ram Pam Club and later Robert Hillock's hunting cabin.

The school house at Pine Lake, built in the late 1800s, became the hunting camp of the Hillock family. Called the Ram Pam Club, the building is now the summer home of John Hillock. Lake View House at Canada Lake sold ice cream in the days before its porches were added. Now it is the home of the author and her husband, W. Alec Reid. So many buildings have stories to tell, so many families have deep roots in the town, that there is not room here for them all. But all the extra notes we have collected and longer versions of some of our new material are now a part of the town's historical files for all to study.



Before the porches were added, Lake View Inn on Canada Lake sold ice cream.