

The Artists' and Writers' Colony

Clare Victor Dwiggins Idylls of the Lake

By Phoebe Dwiggins Ballard

In that peaceful time for America at the turn of the century Clare Victor Dwiggins, better known as DWIG, and his pianist wife Betsey Lindsay, whose romance had begun when they met as look-alikes, were among the artists, writers, and musicians clustered in Greenwich Village. They were the hippies of the day, free thinking people who abhorred office hours and factory routines, established their individual work schedules and succeeded or not in the difficult art of disciplining themselves to create, produce, perform.

In 1905 Dwig and Betsey discovered Canada Lake, when there were no camps west of Dr. Granger's on the south shore and few on the north side west of Cyrus Durey's lumber mill where the Canada Lake Store is now located. After two vacation visits at the Fulton House they bought property in the cove called Punky Bay, just south of Sand Point, and in 1907 built the Dwigwam, the camp in which I was born.

Dwig "antiqued" a print of the Declaration of Independence with coffee stain and charred edges, mounted it on a leather shield, hung it, and they declared their own independence from regimen-

tation. Dwig had a studio with a stone fireplace constructed on the hill just below the present south shore parking lot. There, every morning he drew his daily panels and Sunday full page cartoons of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, and later other series, keeping afternoons and evenings free for fishing, picnicking, hiking, visiting. From the time the ice went out until snowfall we lived at the lake, Dwig mailing his work once a week to his New York syndicates, the first nationally syndicated cartoonist ever to work outside Manhattan.

As my brother Don Dwiggins and I grew we started the fall school terms and finished the spring



The first "kicker" on Canada Lake.



Betsey and Dwig on the porch of their new camp "Dwigwam."

terms under Minnie Luff (Sargent). After rowing across to tie up at the log boom against the mill, running the logs, and walking up the hill, we reached the schoolhouse that is the nucleus of Bea Holliday's present home. Later when the school moved to Wheelerville we ran the first one-lunger Evinrude on the lake up the inlet channel, beached the boat and again walked. In between, our school was at Plainfield, New Jersey. It was a casual approach to education that we both enjoyed.

Almost immediately after building the Dwigwam, Dwig and Betsey began gathering a colony around them. First came Charles Sarka and Grace. Charley then being noted as one of the best pen and ink artists in the country. He was the Chicago born son of Bohemian parents. He favored his native baggy pantaloons, Hawaiian shirts, bright red wool sashes, and high woodsmen's boots, except when he enjoyed walking in bare feet. They visited, then bought and built a cabin in the woods on the north shore near the Shannons and Weavers, where Charlie drew and painted through the summers.

A steamer plied the lake from the Auskerada Hotel, carrying sightseers and delivering groceries brought up from town by the horse drawn mail stage. At its whistle, as it pulled up to his dock, Charlie would hear the boatman shout to the passengers, "...And here you'll see the famous barefoot artist..." and Charlie would pad down

to pick up his order and be ogled by the rubber-necks, a small price to pay for dockside delivery.

Next, Dwig met Paul Bransom when they were both working for the old *New York Journal*. Paul was also drawing and painting animal cover art for the *Saturday Evening Post* and other major magazines, and illustrating books. Kenneth Grahme's *Wind in the Willows* is a beautiful example of Paul's high quality animal portrayals.

Dwig brought Paul, a handsome young man, and his beautiful wife Grace to the lake. They loved Canada Lake and built their studio in the woods near the Sarkas in 1917, back from the shore where they were surrounded by a natural animal preserve and could tame the wild things to use as models.

Betsey brought Herbert Asbury, then a cityside reporter on the *New York Herald Tribune*, who soon bought the property that was then the westernmost camp on Dolgeville Point. Later he brought his first wife, Helen, another beauty and a hostess whose home was a salon for artists of all kinds.

Herbert, when he was a young reporter in New York, on one traditionally slow Saturday, wrote his favorite news story. It insisted that the weight of the great buildings proliferating on lower Manhattan was sinking the south end, lifting the upper and soon all would slide into the sea. He called for volunteers to meet him at the north end, slice beneath the city, tow it into the Hudson

and turn the whole island around to place the heavy end in shallow water. On the appointed day, Herbert was delighted to find a host of nearly a thousand men gathered with axes, picks, shovels to do their civic duty.

It was the Dwiggins' delight to take a suitless swim early every morning from May to November. One autumn, in my teen years, I stayed with Helen and Herb and she and I swam together until one morning we dashed down to the dock, found too late that it was coated with half an inch of ice, and both of us skidded the length of the pier and on into the water for a very chilly dip.

Helen later brought her sister Emily Hahn (1905-1997). "Micky" was writing for *The New Yorker* magazine but would later turn to books such as her *China To Me*, *Congo Solo*, and many more. She is still producing. Returning from a safari through Africa (the theme of *Congo Solo*), she brought a present to Skeet Sliter, a small monkey. It too took a cold bath on a day when it jumped out of Skeet's arms and out of the boat. Shivering



Dwig's guests

and shrieking, it was brought ashore, towed down vigorously, then closed in a warm oven for an hour to recuperate.

By then Herbert, a man with a pixie sense of humor, was writing his non-fiction series, *The Gangs of New York*, *Barbary Coast*, *French Quarter*, *Gem of the Prairie*, and other histories of the under-worlds of America. Nunnally Johnson, then doing stories for the slick magazines, before he became a top flight script man in Hollywood, was a frequent Asbury guest. Some time later Herbert's second wife, Edith Evans Asbury, joined us and is now a by-line writer for *The New York Times*.

But those were the later days. Early on James Stanley arrived, a superb bass baritone and Victor Red Seal recording artist. Jim was invited to join the New York Metropolitan Opera but refused in a cavalier gesture because he, prematurely bald, would not wear a wig even in costume. His wife Nell, a fine pianist, traveled as his accompanist on their concert tours. They built the first camp around the Sand Point corner, now occupied by Vince and Mabel Kane.

As the group swelled John Lowell Russell and his wife, Lu Case, brought their daughter Evangeline and son John Jr. to start a community of their own next to the Dwigwam. The Russells had a main cottage, three satellite cottages, one each for the children and one for Lu on the hill similar to Dwig's studio. At that time Lu was writing "true confession" stories for the pulps.

When the motion picture camera was developed Lu and John organized the Blazed Trail Production Company and set about making westerns. Lu wrote the scripts, John played the heros, "Van" was the ingénue and Jack learned to crank the camera from Joe Settle.

Burns Mantle, renowned New York drama critic, arrived to see what was going on in the north woods and found a madhouse carnival of activity.

The Dwiggins met James Thurber and Althea in Nice where they were stringers for the *Paris Herald* and came to interview Dwig. For an afternoon over a pitcher of martinis neither took notes, yet when the piece appeared in the Riveria edition there was not an error, not a misspelled name. The following summer the Thurbers came to spend the season in a tent in the Dwiggins yard, while Jim wrote *Is Sex Necessary?* under difficulties. That



Dwig at work with his grandson Don.

summer the phonograph record, *Horses, Horses, Horses* was the rage and Don Dwiggins played it endlessly until Thurber walked in without a word, lifted the platter off the machine, broke it over Don's head, and walked back to the tent in blessed silence. It was Dwig who actually titled Thurber's first book, when the two sat discussing the abomination of having to include sex scenes to sell a novel. IS SEX NECESSARY? Dwig thundered, and created the immortal phrase.

Don and I often doubled for Baby Ivy as stunt actors, jumping off high places into rivers, swimming underwater escapes from villains, daring those actions considered unsafe for the little starlet. Don, who also posed as a naked cupid in the fadeout frames of a love story, grew up to win his wings as an RAF flight instructor during World War II. He became an aviation reporter on the west coast and went on to produce many air and space books, living and working in Malibu, California.

It was an exciting, partying time in that early period when, as today, everyone played an instrument and filled the nights with music. Nell Stanley and Betsey playing piano, Jim treating us to concerts others paid much to enjoy. Paul Bransom whistling *Wedding of the Winds*, accompanying himself on his guitar. Bud Shannon making fast fingerwork on his ukulele. All chiming in with other



Don and Phoebe Dwiggins standing beside Major Haynor's plane at Wheelerville. Don developed an enthusiasm for aviation at an early age.

guitars, mandolins, banjos, harmonicas, even washboards. Eberly Hutchinson, the erudite New York State Treasurer, crossing the lake standing on the gunwales of his Indian canoe with a double bladed paddle, bringing his fresh grown vegetables, coming to recite classic poetry in French.

Any excuse was good for a clan gathering. On one Fourth of July everyone pooled a fund for fireworks. In boxes and bags a heap was piled on the Russell's twelve foot square raft and Jack, about fifteen, and his friend Reg Scriven with Bob Hamilton to direct them were delegated to set off the show over the water. There was a goodly quantity, firecrackers, Roman candles, skyrockets, pinwheels, the works. All went well for the first ten minutes, then a spark went astray and caught a paper bag afire. In no time explosions began, spreading from container to container across the raft, and streaking missiles shot out in all directions. Jack dove off one side, Bob off another, and Reg off a third. We followed Reg's underwater path by the flashlight that kept burning for nearly three minutes until he had to surface. On shore all dove for cover from the rockets bombarding the audience. Even the usually unruffled Dwig, who kept calm through such incidents as Don losing a brand new Evinrude overboard in deep water, did a wild war dance dodging and stamping out little flames that started up on the dry ground. It was a memorable Fourth.

Costume parties were common. One was a pirate party for which Jim Stanley faked a wooden leg and all guests made up to their fiercest. For Evangeline's eighteenth birthday they held a wild Indian party.

Sunday was the favorite day for afternoon "Vespers", when everyone's work week was finished and they were free to play at one or another camp. Jim Stanley's building was not complete on a day when Jim Thurber opened a door he believed led to the bath, stepped into air, fell six feet to the shore rocks and rolled down them into shallow water, not being missed until a faint voice came up, calling.

"Althea...Althea...Here I am, down among the goldfish..."

He was rescued, mopped off, and the party went on.

Russell Cole, a syndicated cartoonist like Dwig, was one of the few who returned year after year

but never built or bought.

At the end of World War II, I brought my husband, Willis Todhunter Ballard (1903-80), to the lake for the first time and we have been returning ever since. After Betsey's death Dwig sold the original camp, then regretted it and built another on the south shore at the west end of the lake. When he died Tod and I sold that and built a third camp, and in 1974 sold that. But we are still here, working on books, now over a hundred, writing under our own names and handful of pseudonyms for a variety of publishers, keeping to the tradition of the old colony, getting the production out before we turn to play.

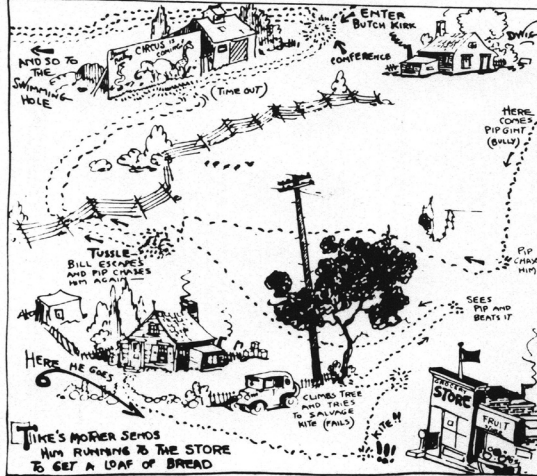


The Dwigwam was first called the Mandalay.

MONDAY. CLEAR AND WARM. GRANDMA GAVE ME SOME PRISMS OFF HER HANGING LAMP TODAY.. TRADED ONE TO RUFF FOR HIS RABBITFOOT



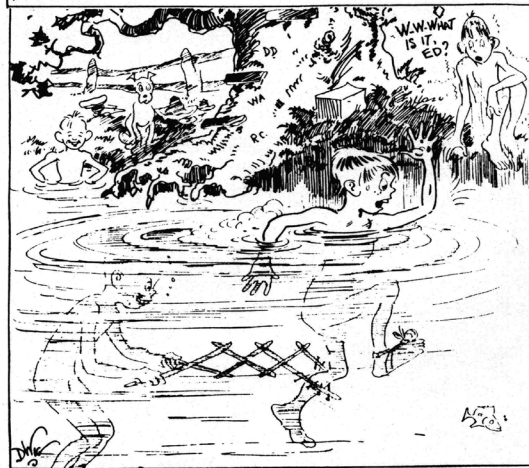
TUESDAY. FAIR & WARMER... ME AND PIP AND BUTCH WENT SWIMMING TODAY.. THE WATER WAS SWELL. GOT A LICKING.. THINK I'LL RUN AWAY.



THURSDAY. CLOUDY & HOT, JUST RIGHT FOR BASS... ME & RUFF BUMPS & BUCK WEAVER GOT 12 & ONE EEL



WEDNESDAY. RIZING TEMPERATURE.. ME AND RUFF BUMPS TRIED OUT OUR PATENT SEA SERPENT AT THE SWIMMING HOLE TODAY. IT WORKED SWELL



FRIDAY. HOT & CLOUDY. WAS IN TEN TIMES TODAY.. WE MADE VIC POTEI EAT MUD BECAUSE HE WAS CLICKING ROCKS



SATURDAY. FAIR & MISTY. THERE'S A NEW GIRL WITH LONG HAIR VISITING TAYLORS... STEPPED ON A NAIL



This series of Dwig's cartoons is from the book Bill's Diary.



A trio of birds displaying their plumage.



*Standing, left to right, Dwig, Paul Bransom, James Stanley, John Russell, Nell Stanley, Dr. George Streeter;
seated, Evangeline Russell, Teddy (dog), and Lu Russell.*



Dwig and friends partying at Irving Pond.



The Pirate Party, Peg Leg Jim Stanley is on the left.



Paul Bransom painting in his Canada Lake cottage.



Paul Bransom

By Helen Ireland Hays

Paul Bransom, often spoken of as the "Dean of Animal Artists," first came to Canada Lake in 1908. He and Grace,

through their friendship with Betsey and Claire Dwiggin's rented, for the whole summer, a little cottage right next to Dwig. At that time the cottage was owned by Dr. Granger.

In 1917 the Bransoms built their own camp. Paul and Grace lived there from the first of May until after Election Day each year. They voted in the Town of Caroga, and Paul continues to do so—but now, with an absentee ballot. Canada Lake is his legal residence.

George Chappell built the Bransom camp and his son, Floyd (or Pat), still takes good care of it. This fascinating place is filled with mementos. The present living room, lighted by a huge north window, served as both living room and studio for many years. Today the studio is a smaller room, lighted by a skylight. A big drawing board dominates the room. The chair which Paul has used

for many years is, of course, directly in front of it. Brushes and colors stand conveniently on a low table at the right. This vital little room, in which so much work has been done, holds sketch pads filled with reference material, Paul's own pictures, pictures and pieces of sculpture given him by friends, a collection of mounted birds—so many well-loved objects! Sometimes Grace used to say, "The walls are closing in!"

Paul, as we all know, is a very successful artist. He has illustrated some forty-five books and made covers and illustrations for many magazines. He says that during the 20's and 30's thirty-five magazines used animal stories with illustrations and also covers with animal subjects. Paul worked for thirty-three of these thirty-five periodicals. Of course he had to meet many "deadlines." When the pressure was great Grace would put a sign on the back door saying, "Please no visitors until after five o'clock."

All these drawings had to be shipped to various publishing houses. Paul often speaks now of how much Francis Arnst, when he worked for the American Express Company, helped in getting these drawings off with the greatest possible dispatch.

Paul and Grace have been greatly loved. They made many friends at Canada Lake and in Fulton County. Both were loyal supporters of this neighborhood, Paul has given copies of a number of the books he illustrated to the Wheelerville School. He has also been more than generous in giving his pictures to a wide circle of friends.

The time came when Charlie and Grace Sarka, whose camp was a little east of Paul's, spent only a few weeks—late in the summer—at Canada Lake. Years before, when they first came to the lake, Charlie had planted several apple trees which, over the years, bore few or no apples. One year, as a special surprise and welcome, Paul tied dozens of big, red apples on the Sarka's trees.

In June 1974 Weber State College in Ogden, Utah, gave Paul the Honorary Degree of "Master of Art." Paul and his niece, Althea Bond, flew out so that Paul might receive this honor in person.

The pictures which Paul had given to Weber State College were hung temporarily for that occasion. Soon they will be hung as the "Paul Bransom Collection" in the new wing which is being added to the college library.

For a number of years neighbors at Canada Lake have given a party for Paul on his birthday. Sometimes there has been a theme. On July 26th, 1974, the theme was "Degree Day for Dr. Bransom." A suggestion was made to the guests that, if they wished, they might write a verse or two on that subject. A cap and gown, adorned with Paul's own doctoral hood, hung on the back of the fireplace. Dozens of "diplomas" were suspended from the living room ceiling by threads and moved with every breath of air.

After dinner our host invited the guests to read their poems. Every single family had written a loving tribute to Paul. One of the most entertaining poems was written by Dr. Malcolm McMartin who had several times ingeniously rhymed "handsome" with "Dr. Bransom." Everyone felt this richly deserved.

The great moment came when Bill Van Voast, for several years a resident of Caroga Lake and a participant in the affairs of the Town of Caroga,

rose and said that instead of a poem he would like to present Dr. Bransom with a Resolution from the Town Board of the Town of Caroga. This was a matchless moment. Possibly no Town Board has ever done such a thing before!

The Resolution was rolled like a diploma and tied with a ribbon. The text was ably worded in correct legal phraseology by Emma Krause, a Supervisor of Fulton County and Head of the Town Board.

Diane L. McGregor, Clerk of the Town of Caroga, lettered this document using handsome rustic letters for certain parts and sprigs of evergreen, in color, as decoration.

The Town Board expressed thanks to Paul for his many years of residence with fine influence in the neighborhood and wished him a happy eighty-ninth birthday.

These sentiments, we are sure, all of us, his many friends in this community, join in extending to our good friend and neighbor, Paul Bransom.



Red Fox illustration by Paul Bransom from the 1963 Seagram's Sportsman Calendar.



Charles Sarka

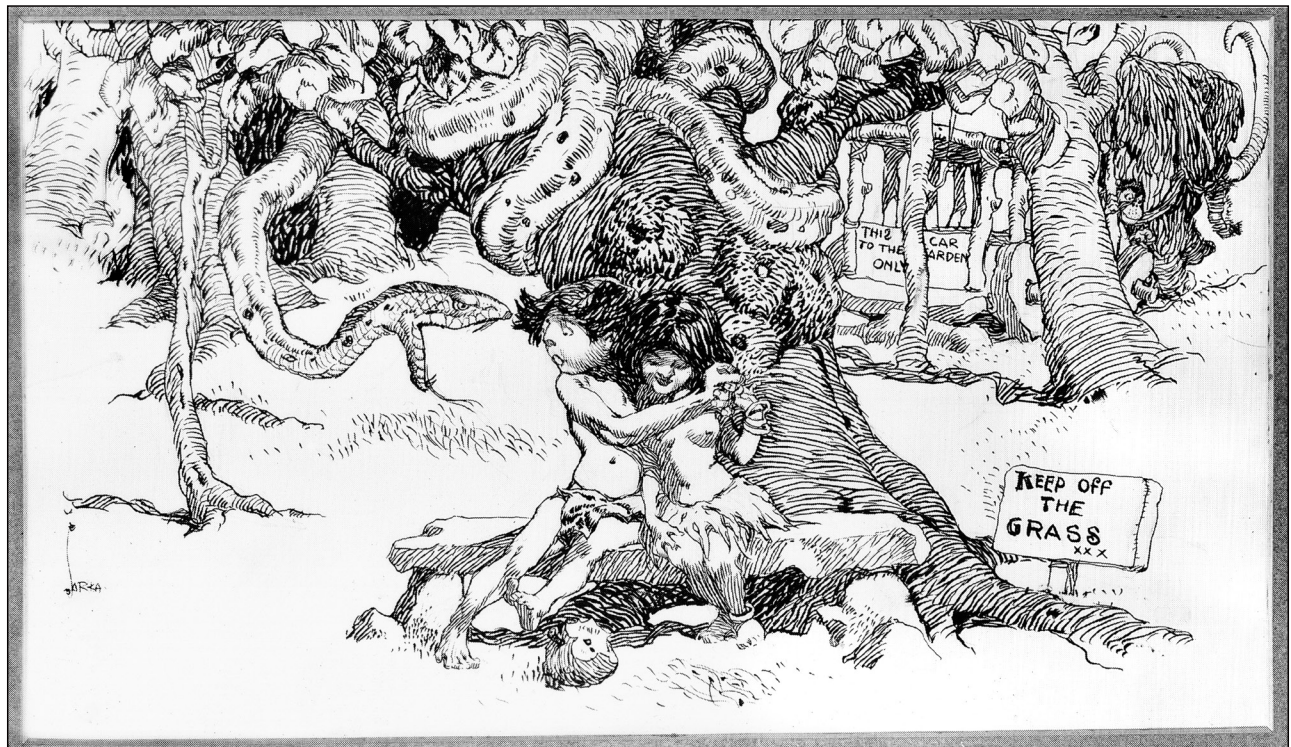
More than any other artist who has made Canada Lake home, Charles Sarka found inspiration in the surrounding mountains and changing scene. He was a resident of Canada Lake for fifty years and every day from spring to fall he set out from his cottage on the north shore to make a water color sketch of the views he enjoyed. From flitting butterflies to darting chipmunks, all nature delighted

him. He used the brilliant pink of pinxter bushes or the flame colors of sumac, to frame many views of the lake. When he picnicked at distant lakes, Nine Corner or Pine Lake, he always took his sketch pad.

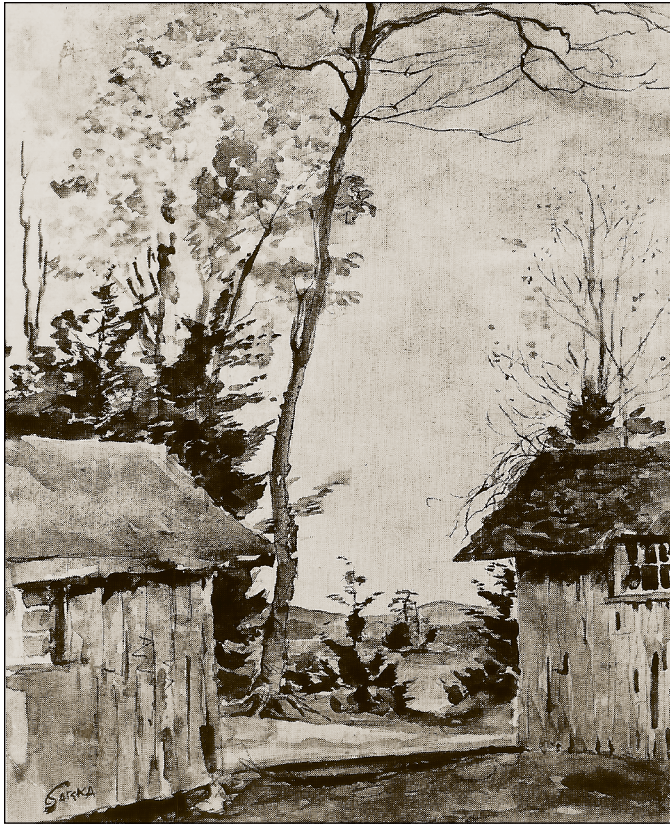
Charles Sarka trained in an engraving firm. He was born in Chicago in 1879 and worked for several magazines and papers in the days when a staff artist performed the visual feats that photographers do now, vividly recording the events of the day.

When he moved to New York, he worked first as an illustrator for the old *New York Herald*. He met George "Pop" Hart, the artist, and they shared many trips to distant lands to paint. A watercolor by Sarka of Hart hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. Sarka traveled to Florida, Hawaii, Egypt, Morocco, and Tahiti, sketching all the while, and producing a collection of paintings whose exhibitions earned him the reputation as one of the finest watercolorists of the day.

With his future wife, Grace Jones, and her sister Alice, Sarka first visited Canada Lake in 1907 as guests of the Dwiggins. He married Grace, the sister of Haydon Jones, a well-known newspaper sketch artist, in 1909. In 1910, they made plans to purchase land at Canada Lake and they became



*A typical early Sarka etching. Top left, Charles Sarka self portrait.
All Sarka pictures courtesy of the Davis and Long Gallery, New York City.*



Sarka's fifty happy years at Canada Lake are recorded in hundreds of water colors. Each is as fresh and vivid as the scenes he painted. Soft greens of the woods evoke the warmth of the deep forests around Canada Lake. The bright colors that he used to depict the lake remind all summer residents of their happiest days there.

DUSK ON THE LAKE

By Catherine Jacobs

*This is the hour when night slips quietly
Along the flaming edges of the sun,
There on the lake, an opal ecstasy
Repeats the heavens' vow that day is done.*

*A silver moment as a fish leaps high,
Or deer's hoof breaks a twig upon the shore.
Then sudden cool, a night bird's startled cry
The creak of oarlock and the dip of oar.*

New York Times

permanent residents in 1912. With the exception of a few summers, they came to Canada Lake regularly from June to October, until 1960.

Sarka was one of the best known magazine illustrators of the time, contributing to *Colliers*, *Scribners*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Everybodys*, and *Harpers*.

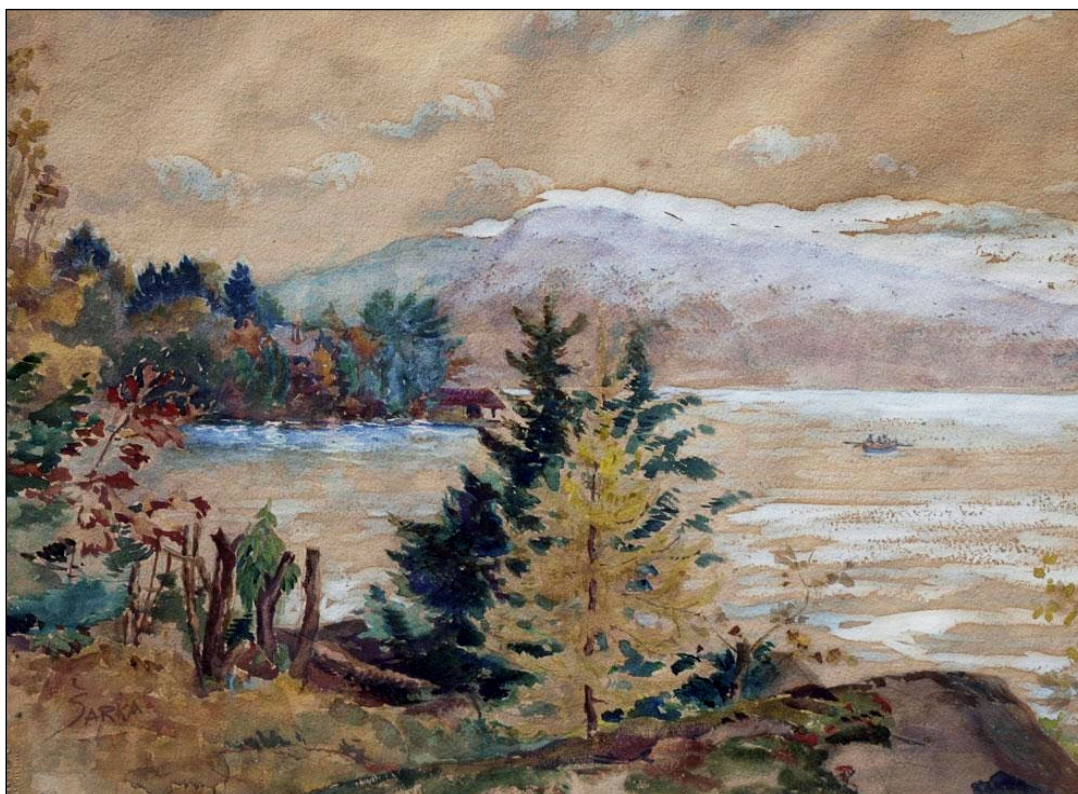
Summers were a diversion from illustrating, but not from painting. Mrs. Sarka's niece, Catherine H. Jacobs, who has provided several of his watercolors to be copied for this history, remembers her first visit to Canada Lake in 1914. The trip from Boston involved a train ride to Fonda, the electric trolley to Gloversville, and a buckboard to the Auskerada. A boat took her the rest of the way to the Sarka camp where at the time there were two small buildings but no conveniences.

A typical day at the Sarka camp meant rising late for a swim in the lake. After a big breakfast on the porch, Charles took his stool and paints off to make his daily painting. Often, his wife, who was a poet, modeled for him. The beauty of his sketches of her reflects his enduring love for her. One of his paintings shows Mrs. Jacobs as a young girl in a swing. She remembers posing for the picture in a swarm of bugs, so citronella was provided to protect her, and her uncle dubbed the picture, Citronella Kate.





Sarka's wife Grace, and his niece Catherine Jacobs on the dock at Canada Lake.



One of Sarka's Canada Lake landscapes.

Blazed Trail Productions The Russell Movie Company

(This article was written in part by Phoebe Dwiggin Ballard and the author has added the reminiscences of Paul Bransom, Floyd Chappell, Bertha Ballou Slade, and Lewis Ballou)

John Russell came from Yankton, South Dakota, Sioux Country. It was rumored that there was a lot of Sioux blood in John Russell; but as being Indian was not fashionable, he denied it vehemently.

The first summer he and his wife, Lu Case, came to Canada Lake, their children Jack and Evangeline, were quite small, no more than six and eight.

Paul Bransom remembers John Russell as a *"character, a promoter, and genius. He was the type who could propose 'you get the navy, I'll provide the ocean'. In the Spanish American War, he was sent to the Phillipines as a private, but came back a captain."*

When John Russell formed Blazed Trail Productions to produce western films, many people in the Town of Caroga became involved in film making. Almost all the photography was done in the sunshine, on various locations near Canada Lake, although the company did have an indoor studio in Gloversville for a time. Floyd Chappell remembers that they used the old Richards house and barn near the schoolhouse in Wheelerville for some of the scenes. The bowling alley on the Auskerada property was remodeled for studio use and the roof was removed from the south side to let light in. There were canvasses on rollers to cover it when it stormed. Floyd's father, George, built interior sets and rooms there, even wall-papering and painting as necessary.

When he was not building sets, George Chappell also worked as an extra, as did many other townspeople. Floyd's sisters, Bessie and Edna, were extras in one or two productions, as were Delbert and Myrtle Willett.

The town office, the old Wheeler-Claflin Company store building, was used for a set in 1923 and the two old houses at Irving Pond which were still standing were also utilized for some of the film-making, and Willetts' barn after it had been remodeled into a dance hall.

An Indian village sprang up at the end of Canada Lake where the Fulton House had stood before the fire. A tepee concealed the old well



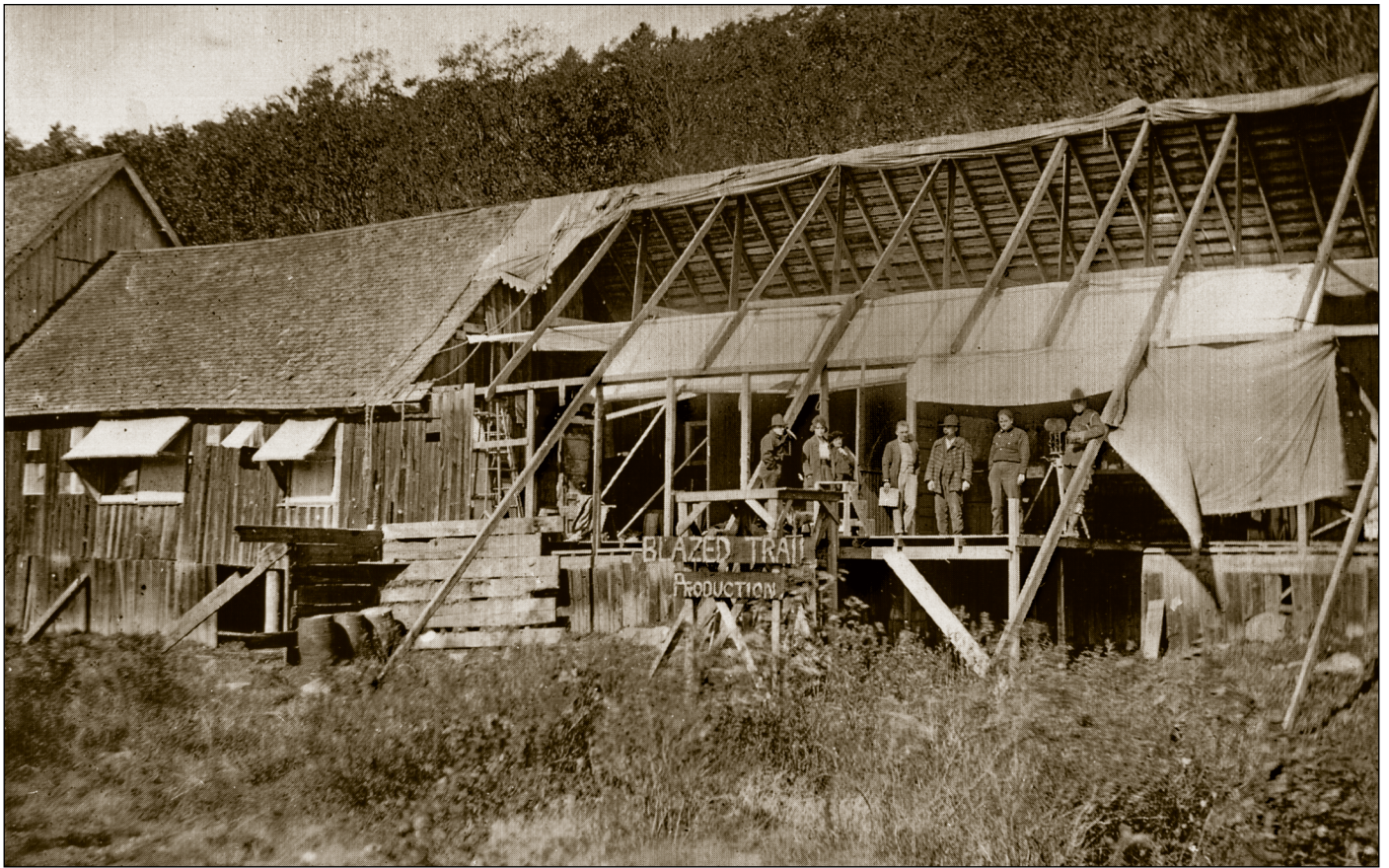
Portrait of John Russell by Paul Bransom, 1907.

house to make the scene authentic. One of the Blazed Trails' most dramatic scenes was a wild chase with horses galloping across the swamps at the far end of West Lake.

According to Phoebe Dwiggin Ballard, *"the Russells brought to the lake with them a stock company from New York and, since there were no guilds to prevent anyone except a union carpenter from picking up a hammer, promptly put everyone to work building. All pitched in with a will, eager to move from the tents that housed them in the beginning.*

"Among the actors was a handsome young man, Fred Keating, an understudy of the magician Thurston, who protested that he could not risk injuring his hands with saws and such, but did his bit in entertaining the crowd with prestidigitation when darkness stopped the labor.

"George Irving came as director and later made a name as one of the better Hollywood directors. 'Commodore' J. Stuart Blackton was there, a young New York reporter who had bought one of Edison's first cameras and invented the newsreel by ingeniously tempting a reluctant and furious Commodore Perry out onto his deck when he returned from his North Pole trip and lay at harbor in New York harbor.



The bowling alley of the Auskerada Hotel with the roof removed to give light for the filming of indoor scenes.



*The Wheeler Claflin Store was also a set in 1923.
The people are actors and extras from the Russell Movie Company.*



Indian village scene on the site of the Fulton House.



Scene from a Blazed Trail Production.



An impromptu band with members of the Blazed Trail Production Company() and natives in 1917; stove pipe–Alex Lyons, violin–Jules Cowles,* banjo–unknown, mandolin–Oscar Apfel,* accordion–Milton Ballou, mouth organ–Charles Profair, tin pan–Joe Berry,* bell–unknown,* oil can–Charles Robbins,* director–Henry Sedley**

Commie shot live action as Perry chased the reporter's accomplice out of his quarters, escaped mayhem with his film, rushed ashore to develop it and speed it to Tony Pastore's theater at the last minute for a scoop showing that same night. Commie also is remembered for his part in producing history's first animated cartoon. At Edison's studio / laboratory in Orange, New Jersey, Blackton, assigned to 'cover' Edison's development of the movie camera, drew a series of pictures of a man's face, winking. Photographed in succession, the wink made animation a new art form.

"And Kitty Ville, a London music hall entertainer and singer, came to play character parts. Kitty was playing a bar maid on a Russell set using the bar of the Auskerada Hotel when two ladies in a buggy drove up, wandered in, sat down at a table and asked that beer be served them, all unaware that the room had been preempted as a location. The cast and crew huddled. Rather than disabuse the intruders they were brought steins, then the troupe staged

an impromptu brouhaha, shouting, throwing chairs, tables, bottles, punches. It was all caught on film for showing at parties, but the ladies missed seeing the camera, so precipitate was their departure to escape the "battle".

"'Baby Ivy Ward' was the company's forerunner of Shirley Temple, and in one story played an appealing waif living in a rotting mansion. For that setting the building now housing the Maple Tree Knoll restaurant was rented and a shooting date agreed on. To the company's dismay when they arrived to take pictures the rent money had been used to refurbish, repair and paint the old place sparkling white. Lu's script came in for some hasty rewriting to conform to the new set.

"One summer Blazed Trail Productions made a film of Cardigan, Robert W. Chamber's book. The film was shot at Broomstick lake. For the siege of the stockade they cut and pointed tall spruce poles, burying the butts deep enough that they would support the scaling attackers, a fence with two walls.



A gathering in the days of movie making. Upper left, Betsey, Dwigg and Phoebe Dwiggins, Verne and Reg Scriven. Jim Stanley is lying on the railing. Top right, Fred Keating (in the studded belt). Seated, Maud Scriven, Lu Russell, Nell Stanley, Grace Bransom, Evangeline Russell, Paul Bransom, Teddy (dog) and Jack Russell. Standing, John Russell and a niece. Photo by Joe Settle taken in 1918.

Left, the present Maple Tree Knoll Restaurant was the setting for the movie "Baby Ivy Ward." It was originally the home of Town Supervisor and Mrs. Thomas Bradley who lived there in the 1870's-1880's. The owners when the move was made were Mr. and Mrs. Bechler who are shown with their son Lewis.



Do you recognize any of the actors or extras from the movie Cardigan?

It took a lot of logs. When the filming was finished Charley Sarka made a deal for the posts, had them trucked to his land and stacked, intending to build a fine log house. He did get the fireplace and mammoth chimney put up by John Connally, but never the house. The fireplace has stood naked for years and gradually the logs rotted where they lay, Charley never giving up on his dream.

The parties the Russells had were famous, but Evangeline's eighteenth birthday was celebrated with as much planning and excitement as the creation of a movie. A lot along the lake shore was cleared a hundred feet deep as a stage. Lu Russell wrote the script for a series of tableaux in which many of the guests were gathered along the shore in skiffs, rowboats, and gaily painted canoes to watch the scenes on shore.

Before them was enacted an Indian Love story,

with two braves competing for the hand of Evangeline. John Russell led one part of braves, the other came from the bay across the lake on the north shore and was led by Billy Strong. Paul Bransom was a brave in Billy Strong's tribe, along with the Shannon boys and Dennis and Buddy Palmer.

The crowd of Indians had to shout to make themselves heard by the audience off shore. The script called for Billy Strong and John Russell to wrestle for Evangeline's hand. John was a big, powerful man, so it was appropriate that his wife's script called for him to be the victor.

All the braves were costumed in a state of undress, with no more than beads and breechclothes. Some wore head dresses made of feathers and Paul Bransom also carried a shield decorated with feathers. His body was painted with



Evangeline dressed in Indian costume for her eighteenth birthday party.

roofing compound and it took days to get rid of the red stuff. He wonders now why he did not get sick.

Paul wore a real pair of Indian moccasins, made by a man who was part Sioux and part Scots and who was in love with Evangeline against her father's wishes.

The tableaux were held in the late afternoon, in daylight, and later the guests moved to shore to celebrate among totem poles and campfires and tables piled with eats and drinks.

It happened that Lu Case Russell's brother was high in the national Department of Indian Affairs. The Sioux nation was preparing to hold its large great council of all the tribes, the largest gathering ever. Lu's brother managed to arrange that she should have exclusive rights to filming the historic conclave, and of course she wrote a script to fictionalize what should have been a documentary. The troupe went west in toto, took many reels of film, then cut it to ten as a final product.

It was shown once for film brokers, but immediately impounded by the backers who had not been repaid. Blazed Trail Productions had overextended itself and never recovered. That single film record of the end of the great Sioux nation, like Charley Sarka's logs, lay in a vault until it too rotted together and was lost.

The Widdemers

John Widdemer writes of his mother and his aunt.

My parents, Kenneth and Mabel Widdemer, borrowed Bud Shannon's camp for their honeymoon in 1921. It rained for the entire two weeks, but they still liked it enough to offer to buy the camp.

They purchased the camp in 1922 and the family has summered there ever since.

In 1928, my father and aunt built the Mud Lake cottage for their mother who spent the rest of her summers there, as did Aunt Margaret until two years ago.

Both my mother and my aunt wrote a great deal while at the lake. My mother wrote adult fiction, but her best effort was a series of semi-fictionalized biographies of the childhood of famous Americans. It was published by Bobbs Merrill and is still in print. The volumes on Alexander Graham Bell and Washington Irving are particularly popular in schools.

My aunt, Margaret Widdemer, won recognition while she was in her teens for her avant-garde "lib" poem, "Factories." It was a scathing protest against child labor, and helped eliminate that phase of American life. She won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1919 for her poems, "Old Road to Paradise."

While living at the lake, she published forty odd novels, stories oriented for women and set in historical backgrounds. Her works included a trilogy of historical novels based on Sir William Johnson and his family. She wrote for radio (soap operas) and traveled to Chatauqua where she was co-director. Margaret Widdemer also helped organize the Bread Loaf Writers Conference. Throughout her life she received many honors for her achievements, the latest of which was an honorary membership in Delta Kappa Gamma, the International Honor Society for Women Teachers. 📖

PRIZE

by Margaret Widdemer

*I swam a sparkling mile
Through the glassy lake
Where I saw a lily shine
Just now at daybreak,*

*But when I reached the leaves
For the thing of white
It was only a feather dropped
In a wild duck's flight.*

*I have no broken flower
Captured and dying –
But I have a dream of a bird
Flying – flying!*
