

# Lake Shore Park has long history

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Lake Shore Park began as and remains a private, invitation-only community within the town of Gilford. Located along the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee, it boasts several idyllic, sandy beaches which span a total of nearly three-quarters of a mile of shoreline. Gilford's Thompson-Ames Historical Society was honored recently when it was allowed a rare glimpse into the illustrious history of this recreational resort.

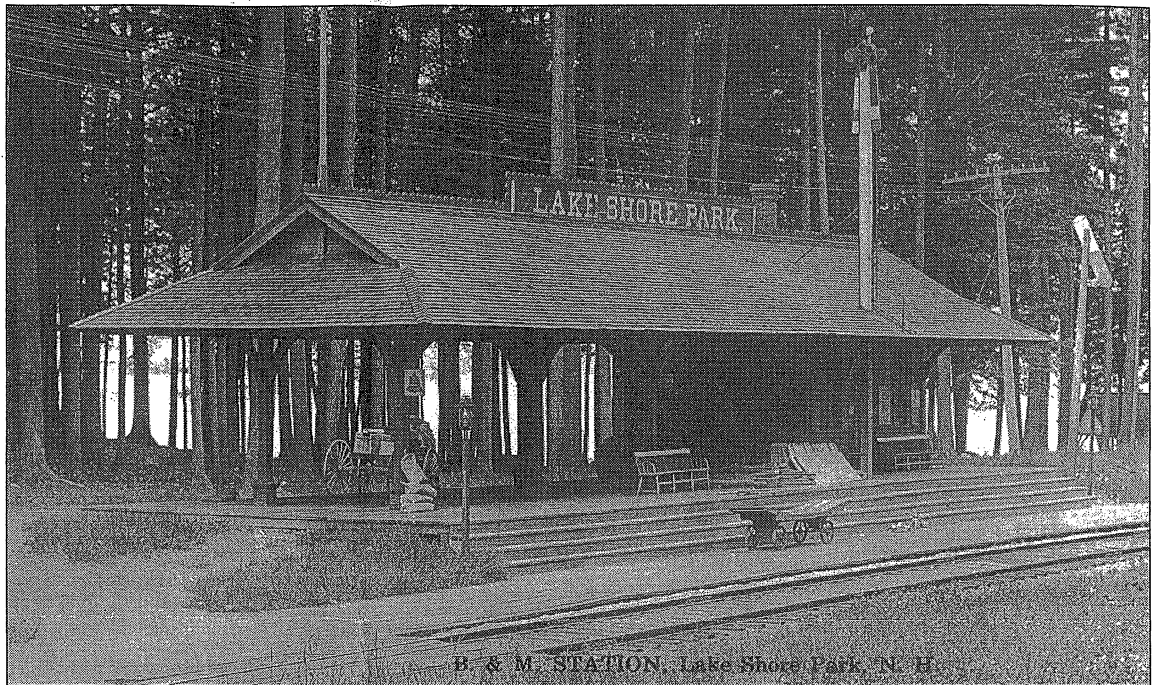
A walking tour of this area was given by long-time Lake Shore Park (LSP) resident, Gerrie McKenna, and Priscilla Puleo, granddaughter of George H. Jones, the early, private owner Lake Shore Park. McKenna is well-known to many in Gilford as she is in her 13th year of running the after-school program at the Gilford Community Church. Both women possess amazing energy and endless enthusiasm for LSP and its history. As these two women reveal its little-known history, one can begin to appreciate the historical value of the park and well as its contributions to Gilford itself.

This 128-acre tract of land was originally owned by the Boston & Maine Railroad and was used as a resort for its employees. The track ran right through the middle of LSP and the railroad constructed numerous buildings on the site including a train station, the Pavilion, a bowling alley, and a "beer house." One of the most elegant buildings constructed was the Lake Shore Park Hotel which was perched majestically at the entrance to the park. This magnificent structure was lost forever when it burned in the early 1900s.

There was ever only one set of track, not the traditional two sets. Trains would return on the same track, which was a unique feature of the resort. It is a little known fact that this part of the lake was opened up because the railroad was used to transport ice from Winnepesaukee. The ice from this lake was very much sought after since it did not contain the bubbles and debris that most lake ice does.

Of the original structures constructed by the railroad two remain: the Pavilion and the train station. The Pavilion, complete with its own stage, is used for entertainment purposes today just as it was when it was owned by the Boston & Maine Railroad. The people would get to enjoy wonderful live bands in the 1930s and Frank Jones, Puleo's uncle, would pass the hat to collect money for the musicians and then he would chip in the rest.

Puleo said as she walked past the train station, "It was so beautiful down here; across from where the tracks ran was a bank which, during the summer, was always filled with pink ladyslippers." Against the yellow and the green colors



THE TRAIN STATION, shown here, in Gilford's Lake Shore Park during the early 1900s when it was owned by the Boston and Maine Railroad. Lake Shore Park became a family-oriented resort when it was sold to George H. Jones in 1922.

that the Boston & Maine Railroad used to paint their buildings, that must have been a spectacular sight.

The railroad sold LSP in 1922 to Puleo's grandfather, George H. Jones. He, along with other family members, created a family-oriented resort. Such a feeling of family was felt that five generations of some families have remained at Lake Shore Park or have settled in Gilford and its surrounding towns. McKenna said of the Jones family, "We were treated like family by all the Jones' and they, in turn, became 'our family.' They were deeply respected by all who stayed at Lake Shore Park."

While talking with Puleo, it is apparent why this family was so respected by all who knew them. Her sense of family and her love of LSP shined through as she toured the resort. She has so many priceless memories of the time when her family owned LSP. The Jones Family kept the store which is located within the Pavilion. The Harry Jones' ran "The Old Depot," a restaurant that was housed in the old train station.

"Blanche Jones was an amazing woman and such a great cook!" remarked McKenna, "The Jones family never wanted to take advantage of anyone to make extra money. They were extremely fair, and they worked incredibly hard. They were even able to keep the store stocked

during the shortages of WWII."

Early visitors to LSP stayed in tents or used some of the wooden cabins. As LSP expanded, tent platforms were also utilized. Those platforms led to canvas-top cabins and then, in the 1940s, especially after WWII, completely wooden cabins were added. It was the perfect place for families to spend one or two weeks or even the whole summer. Adults and children alike enjoyed boating and swimming in the lake.

McKenna laughed as she told the story of how she and her friend used to swim the mile and one-half across the Broads to Welch Island, "That's the only time we would wear a swim cap. We'd tuck our sandwiches up under our caps and swim to Welch Island, eat lunch and then swim back!"

Activities and entertainment at LSP were always geared toward families and the activities themselves have quite a history. A child at heart, McKenna has organized countless programs for children including her traditional Sunday morning frog races which she started 41 years ago.

Eventually, the Jones family sold their beloved Lake Shore Park and the resort remained the same until 1974 when the Lake Shore Park Association began the process to purchase LSP. The "Original Thirteen" consisted of 13 men and

women who represented the 296 families that called LSP home. Lake Shore Park was purchased, and without outside help or assistance of any kind, this association began a massive campaign to upgrade and restore the buildings, beaches and its marina.

Today, it is obvious what all-American dedication and hard work can accomplish. A tour of LSP now shows the circa 1890 Pavilion in mint condition. The beaches and original piers are in pristine condition. The marina has been upgraded and a walk-over bridge constructed for all to use. A total of 310 families inhabit LSP, and they reside in wonderfully maintained cottages and mobile homes.

Gilford should be proud of Lake Shore Park and the preservation that has occurred in this part of town, including the history that accompanies this resort. The dedication and pride of all who live there is obvious.

Gilford's Thompson-Ames Historical Society is most appreciative to have the opportunity to learn the history of LSP and to have these families' stories relayed to us.

If you would like to share your family's stories and history, feel free to contact Gilford's Thompson-Ames Historical Society at [thomames@worldpath.net](mailto:thomames@worldpath.net). Be sure to check our website at [gilfordhistorical-society.org](http://gilfordhistorical-society.org) for our upcoming events.