

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RAINBOW LAKE ASSOCIATES, INC.

The first attempt to form an organization of the residents of the Lake was made in 1924 with a constitution, by-laws and a code of ethics. The water level of the lake was a prime concern at the time as was some of our current problems such as fish stocking, observation of game laws and prevention of fires. They called themselves the Rainbow Lake Association and while they did accomplish a name change from Rainbow to Rainbow Lake for the railroad station, they were not too successful in controlling the lake level.

For several years prior to the formation of the organization of RAINBOW LAKE ASSOCIATES, INC. there existed a very unsatisfactory control of the water level of Rainbow Lake and adjacent waters. At times the level of the lake dropped many inches, badly affecting the camps at the upper end of the lake. The lower end was also inconvenienced, but not as much. At that time the International Paper Co. controlled the water level by means of the Lake Kushaqua Dam. Several property owners (Wardner, Hochhausen, Donovan) had certain agreements with the Paper Company, supposedly protecting their "rights". The agreements were little protection at best and honored only when the property owners protested the water levels.

The Kushaqua Dam continued to go into disrepair and all efforts to get the Paper Company to repair it were useless.

In July 1946 a group of shore owners met to discuss the situation and try to come up with a solution. This discussion led to a second meeting to form a property owners association at which time Col. Brett, H. T. Hochhausen, Charles Wardner, L. W. McFarland, Dr. Edward Carter and Frank Zeraga all subscribed a substantial amount to start a fund to repair the dam if no other means could be found to fight the bad situation. Further funds were sought from all shore owners. This was the beginning of our organization, growing out of the need to solve a common problem for the shore owners.

After considerable negotiation, in 1947, an agreement was reached with the Eastern N.Y. Power Co., who was owner of the defective dam, to rebuild it for certain "rights". This contract was signed for the ASSOCIATES and is still in effect. The Company has lived up to their agreement, and since the construction of the new dam we have enjoyed satisfactory water level. High water in the spring from snow melt is drawn off as fast as possible and everyone can use the lake during all seasons.

Having accomplished their original purpose -- securing a new dam --, the ASSOCIATES continue to exist to create and promote a communal interest in all that concerns the increasing number of shore owners on the various waterways joined by Rainbow Lake.

Over the years a variety of problems have been considered by the organization. The Rainbow Causeway has been repaired from time to time. In 1954 concern was expressed about fire protection, and the first fire map was drawn up, complete with a set of signals and camp numbers. By 1955 this was an important part of the agreement reached with the Bloomingdale Fire Dept. and various contributions have been made to this Dept. since that time. In 1971 the Fire Map was completely redone, printed and distributed. A major point of concern that has not been solved yet is the institution of some type of zoning for the lake property to protect the beauty and health as well as the investment of each shore owner from the possible misuse by indiscriminate people. The ASSOCIATES now have an even larger responsibility with the increasing number of shore owners coming along with the development of the Vosburgh Tract. There were 80 shore owners in 1972 and this season has brought several more.

Concern for the natural resources has been evident from the earliest times, with the trial stocking of fish in the first years and frequent consultations with the Conservation Dept. Classes in wildlife identification for the children of the Lake was conducted one summer. Guest speakers have appeared at our meetings to

inform the membership about sanitation, wildlife, zoning, etc.

The first settler in our area was James Wardner, who came in 1849. This was Walter Wardner's grandfather. For several years he operated a small hotel in the general area of the Higgins-Vahsen properties. It was James Wardner who built the dam at the head of Rainbow (now the Causeway) to make higher water at his end of the Lake. For weeks he cut and hauled logs, and then stones out on to the ice so that when spring came and the ice melted the dam would be in place. Several properties to-day still benefit from his dam. This does mean that there are some flooded areas where the remains of stumps create navigation problems. However, our unique floating islands, bogs, or what ever you call them are even more of a problem. As the hot summer weather advances, the islands rise from the depths. Much consideration has been given to their removal, and all schemes such as weighting them down with stones or cutting off the stem-like bottoms.....have failed.