

# Lake Waramaug Association

May 2016



## Community Gathering and Annual Meeting Sunday, June 12th, 2016 at 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. 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, and bring your neighbors - especially newcomers to the Lake area - to join in the conversation.

Immediately following the reunion, at 2:30 PM Tom McGowan, Executive Director of the Lake Waramaug Task Force will report on the State of the Lake, including an overview of last summer's water quality conditions, removal of curly leaf pondweed, results of spring 2016 shoreline survey of aquatic invasive plants found, progress in funding and setting up our first ever zooplankton "farm" to help restore these algae-eating organisms in the lake, and finally, progress in assisting restoration of dairy farm waste control system operation located near Sucker Brook, the main feeder stream to the Lake. As is obvious from the above, Tom's reports highlight our meetings and keep us up-to-date on developments for the protection and preservation of the Lake.

### Our annual Independence Fireworks Display will be held on Saturday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> (Rain date, Sunday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016).

Join your lakeside neighbors in the tradition of lighting flares to illuminate our Lake in celebration! Many thanks again to David Shapiro and Abby Pogrebin, who have once again hospitably made their property available for the fireworks launch site. Flares will be available for purchase at our June 12<sup>th</sup> meeting; after June 12<sup>th</sup> (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.

### 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:

The town of Warren will hold a parade on Sunday May 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

The town of Washington will celebrate on Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 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.

The town of Kent will also celebrate on Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup> 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.



[www.waramaugassoc.org](http://www.waramaugassoc.org)

P.O. Box 2272  
New Preston, CT 06777

## 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.



## Board of Directors

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*Jenna Downs models Warren's new cold water rescue suit. Photo credit: Joann Marsh.*

## LWA Donates Water Rescue Suits

The Association has donated four rubber water rescue suits to the Warren Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. Ours is a mutually beneficial relationship; the WVFC, Inc. are neighbors to the Lake who keep our residents safe, and is on hand at the fireworks launching site every year. We thank them for their service. As well, the Company is currently recruiting new volunteers. For more information, please contact Joann Marsh at [wvfc@warrenfirecompany.org](mailto:wvfc@warrenfirecompany.org).

## A Note On Land Use

The current influx of building projects around the Lake, as well as the enforcement of the thoughtfully-considered Washington, Warren and Kent zoning regulations to preserve and protect Lake Waramaug — designated by the State of Connecticut as a Heritage Lake — continues to present challenges to our mission as an Association. The towns must invest considerable time and effort to apply their current regulations and the intentions underlying them, given homeowners' desire to change pre-existing non-conformities. Most of the properties around the Lake pre-date the current zoning regulations and could not be constructed today, which has become more pronounced with significant increase in construction activity. The technical considerations in determining the impact on wetlands in various settings further complicate evaluation of proposed development. While each change or variance may seem inconsequential, they counter the towns' and State's intent for our Heritage Lake District. In addition, the cumulative impact of multiple variances would place much more stress on the Lake and surrounding land, and be detrimental to Lake quality. Given the LWA's long-standing bylaws and mission around the Lake's preservation and protection, which includes the monitoring of zoning enforcement, the Association has been providing technical input on various matters as the towns grapple with the complexities of these cases. The towns' engagement of technical experts on their own behalf is encouraging.

A homeowner considering redevelopment of their property should contact a qualified environmental engineer prior to submitting their project plans for review by the Inland Wetlands and Zoning Boards of their respective town, and refer to the suggestions provided in the Note on Land Use published in the Fall, 2015 Association newsletter.

## Waramaug's Unique Outlet - An Historical Perspective on Our Dam

Drought and a broken water flow control mechanism at the Lake Waramaug dam kept lakeside residents talking about the lowest water levels in memory last summer, causing the Lake Waramaug Association, the Task Force and the Town of Washington, the latter which maintains the dam, to take steps towards its repair. According to Lake Waramaug Task Force Executive Director Tom McGowan, low water levels in the lake are harmful to its ecology, resulting in "increased aquatic macrophyte conditions" (weed growth). Water quality is also at issue. According to McGowan, low water levels "might stimulate the germination of cyanobacteria (also know as blue green algae) and akinetes (spores) that were too deep to germinate when the lake remained more full." These organisms can also have an impact on the ones that inhabit near-shore habitats.

Safety was also a concern, as many sand banks and rocks, normally well below the surface of the water, now lay close to the surface, posing a risk of swamping watercraft, and in one case did. Removable docks lay beached. Grass began to grow where bluegills once swam.

After inspection and initial quotes from engineering firms, the town of Washington declared the dam to be structurally sound, needing only a pipe and valve replacement. The Waterbury engineering firm of Tata & Howard has been awarded the bid to design the repair work and manage the permitting process with the State. A resolution at a January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016 special Washington town meeting made funds available for said task, which will pave the way for the second part of the project: the review of construction bids, work for which should begin by late this summer.

The history of the dam, believed to be significantly older than the earlier reported 100 years, is a microcosmic symbol of early American economic history, when manufacturing relied on water power. Two hundred and seventy years ago, when Waramaug was known as "West Pond" to distinguish it from "Great Pond" (Bantam Lake), New Preston settler Edward Cogswell recognized and utilized the power of the falls that dropped 200 feet into the East Aspetuck River. "It took [him and other] early settlers but a very short time to harness this river at twenty-one or more dam sites, extending one and a half miles. For over five generations, water wheels hummed as a great diversified industrial empire became paramount in the area." (Empire Over the Dam, Kenneth T. Howell and Einar W. Carlson, The Pequot Press, 1974).

Cogswell's name seems poetically perfect for a man who was a cog in the wheel of the founding of the New Milford-North Purchase, as New Preston was then known. Other families who made up spokes of that wheel are familiar to present residents: Averill, Kinney, Wheaton and Whittlesey. Yet when it comes to water-powered industry, Cogswell was more like the wheel itself. With great foresight, he bought more than 20 lots measuring slightly less than 100 acres, many on the banks of the East Aspetuck including the lucrative 35<sup>th</sup> lot in 1747, which "turned out to contain a considerable outcropping of magnetite iron ore." (Howell and Carlson, *ibid*). Interestingly, he made these purchases of land lying in Waramaug's Reserve, which has been established by "agents for western lands after 1686 for use during the lifetime of the great Indian Chief Waramaug. After the Sachem died in 1735 at age 77, Edward Cogswell and Daniel Averill divided on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1744 land that had been previously purchased." (Howell and Carlson, *ibid*).

One of Cogswell's lots is the present-day home of the Lake Waramaug Dam, and tames the only outlet Lake Waramaug has, the origin of the East Aspetuck River, an important tributary to the Housatonic which eventually deltas into Long Island Sound. At the birth of American industry, the Connecticut colony offered an abundance of natural resources that contributed to the construction and furnishing of raw materials necessary to developing our new world. Amongst the most important of these at the time was water power and iron ore, not to mention seemingly endless supplies of virgin hard and soft woods, igneous and sedimentary rock. Cogswell now possessed all of the building blocks listed above, and built Cogswell Iron Works, which was in business for close to fifty-five years, producing both finished and semi-finished items until it was torn down in 1800. Most importantly to any Lake Waramaug resident, Cogswell owned "privileges of the stream."

After the War of 1812, an era in our history known as an "Era of Good Feeling," an iron ore blast furnace existed on Cogswell's 33<sup>rd</sup> lot, which according to Howell and Carlson, met practically all of the seven criteria for perfect blast furnace location. The Waramaug and Litchfield Iron Companies operated here, utilizing mostly ore from Bull's Bridge, South Kent and Webatuck, New York. It was delivered by oxen over New Preston Hill, a route well-known to any New Yorkers taking the scenic route to the Metro-North's Wingdale train station.

One of the directors of the Litchfield Iron Company, William Bushnell, sold the property to Oscar E. Beeman of Washington in April of 1875, a four acre lot which included the all-important waterpower and riparian rights to the lake and stream. Beeman razed the furnace, using its rocks to strengthen the former dam and form the foundation of the iconic mill that still stands today on Route 45, now a private residence, the lovingly restored and renovated Riverdance Mill.

According to Duncan Woodruff, whose father Robert owned the mill from 1941 until his death in 1975, Oscar Beeman built two dams at the same time his mill was being constructed in 1875: one at the outlet of Lake Waramaug and another adjacent to his beautiful mill. The dams were built concurrently with the bridge over the origin of the Aspetuck, and at the start of a ten year-long project: the first road to entirely circumnavigate the Lake, which according to Mary Harwood's *A History of Lake Waramaug*, was a contentious project due to disputes between property owners and the three bordering townships undertaking the work, who sought via "handsome sums" the rights-of-way for their lake road.



*Beeman's Fish Hatchery*  
Photo credit: Gunn Historical Museum

Oscar and his son Henry owned and operated their saw mill and general factory until he sold it in 1941 to his former employee, Robert S. Woodruff. Henry brought his Renaissance spirit to the banks of the East Aspetuck, realizing a fish hatchery specializing in the propagation of small mouth black bass fingerlings for stocking purposes. He also was a budding horticulturist, developing a strain of blueberry that grew to the size of plums, vibrant new varieties of petunias, and shag bark hickory trees with succulent easily-cracked nuts. He developed a specialized propeller for trolling his muslin nets for tiny crustaceans meant for feeding his young bass. He lovingly built beautiful violins and cellos, all of which were bought by Rudolph Wurlitzer of the noted New York Wurlitzer Music Company upon Henry's death in 1941.

Many locals still refer to the Riverdance Mill as Woodruff's Mill, and one of Robert's sons, Clifford, still resides in an adjacent home. Robert was a bit of a nostalgic, and according to Harwood, "removed the new fangled electric generator [installed by Henry Beeman], restored the old fifty horse-power turbine, the water wheel driven by 3,000 gallons of water per minute, and ran both a sawmill and a mechanic shop... He would open the gates that let water into the turbine and that one big wheel ran the pulley that started everything in the

machine shop." Woodruff solely owned the water rights to Waramaug, deeded to the property itself. Both Duncan and his sister Esther can remember making the short trek upstream to the gatehouse at the Waramaug outlet, to draw its waters as needed to run his wheel. A control shaft opened the gates which allowed the water to operate the turbine.

According to Woodruff himself, the mill owners "had an agreement among themselves - the first one started at a certain time and, of course, they all used the water for power. The first one started and passed it on down to the next one and they used it over again and on down. It was just like a set of stairs...I own riparian rights on the lake and the water rights and the whole business." (Robert S. Woodruff Oral History as recorded by Dorothy Averill and Natalie Dyer, Gunn Historical Museum, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1974).

In 1955 Woodruff could also boast that he owned one of the few operating mills in the State of Connecticut, a business that continued in part as a result of a thriving wartime Navy contract, whereby he produced an obscure part for anti-aircraft weaponry which required a 32 foot-long board accommodated easily in the large mill.

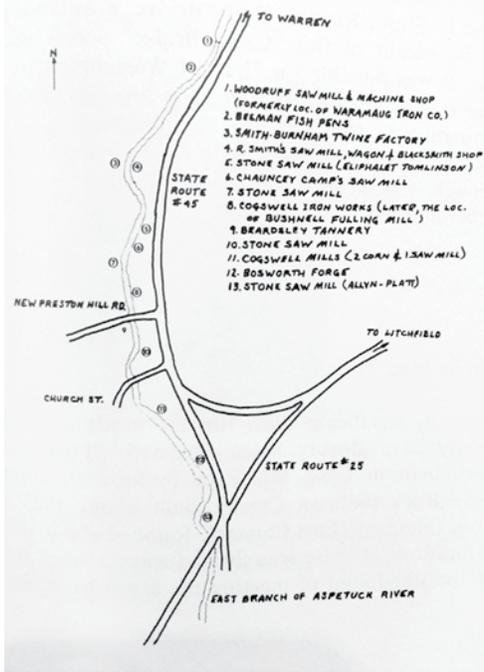
Woodruff also confirms that the dam was built in 1875, a "master stone job" that was done by a Kent Company by the name of Peet, and famed for its strength and quality. Yet the Rosedale cement that was used then was not as strong as Portland cement, which Woodruff and an engineer by the name of George Terek utilized during a 1944 repair. Terek reportedly boasted that "come judgement day, that cement will still be here." Terek prophesied. (Gunn Historical Museum, *ibid*).

In 1955, Woodruff happily lived on the second floor of the mill with his growing family. On August 19<sup>th</sup> of that year, heeding his neighbors' warnings of the second of two back-to-back hurricanes, the Woodruffs sought refuge at the home of his minister, waiting out the storm at his parsonage. Gratefully for the Woodruffs, the 400 bags of Portland cement Terek and he had used in the 1944 repair work at the dam had proven worthy: the water was raging so furiously that "you could have ridden it...but the dam stayed. There was a lot of speculation [from townfolk] that the dam was gonna go... but that shut 'em up like a batch of clams." (Gunn Historical Museum, *ibid*).

Neighboring Washington Depot was not so fortunate, as the Shepaug furiously took houses, cars, even cattle in its torrent. Two people died. Just a few yards downstream from Woodruff's mill, a bridge adjacent to Krasselt's store washed out, which the entire community came together to rebuild.

After the devastating floods, safety guidelines and river monitoring became more diligent. But the matter of Woodruff's water rights were omnipresent as a concern of the Lake Waramaug Association. In 1925, just eight years following the Association's incorporation, meeting minutes record that a committee appointed to confer with the Mill Owners Association was formed to see if an arrangement could have been made to curtail the withdrawal of water from the Lake. In 1929, a legal opinion was sought to determine the rights of property owners regarding fishing and the rights of the Mill owners. In 1930, a Committee of one who was not named, was appointed to confer with Henry Beeman to see if the water rights might be conveyed to the Association. In 1961, Mr. Robert Bonyng was asked to look into the matter of the water rights then belonging to

*continued on page 4*



Hand Drawn Empire map from Howell/Carlson Book

suffering eight broken ribs, a broken jaw and a cut chin; as a true stoic so typical of her surrounding New Englanders, she considers herself “lucky” that she fell on that small landing instead of another steep flight of adjacent stairs. She jokes she left a bit of her blood in that mill, as did many of the previous owners.

The Mullens and our entire community are fortunate that Bobbi Smith bought the then endangered mill in 1996, meticulously renovating the interior into a private residence all the while retaining and restoring the historical façade. Enlisting the help of noted engineer Brian Neff, the work was done in 1997 in an impressively quick five and a half months. In 2006, she also restored the eighteen foot dam that remained in her deed, using beautiful stone work, much like the original settlers used, only with much more sophisticated engineering.



Photo Credit: Tom McGowan

## Waramaug in Abstract Form

Association member and artist Ann Quackenbos says her oil paintings are “inspired by the landscape of northwest Connecticut. I work from observation and memory. The paintings start out as a translation of what I see, then take on a life of their own in the studio and become more abstract.... I look at the subject for a long time. At some point, I see something beautiful, an abstract pattern of shapes and colors, and this is what I paint.” For more examples of Ann’s beautiful work, please see [www.annquackenbos.com](http://www.annquackenbos.com) or <https://www.artfinder.com/annquackenbos>

*Sun and Lake*, by Association member Ann Quackenbos, oil on canvas, 24 x 30", 2015.



the Woodruff property, and finally, in 1991 thanks to the generosity of Peter and Billie Mullen, the Town of Washington accepted the gift of a small dam on the East Aspetuck River.

After Robert’s death in 1975, his children held onto the mill, which ceased to be operational. Yet under their stewardship in the late 1970s, Dr. Robert Kortmann began design work for what would amount to be the first in-lake restoration project at the former Beeman Fish Hatchery downstream. Its design was almost identical to the recently decommissioned Frost System at Arrow Point. In 1982, a 1600 foot long pipe was installed, running from the middle of our Lake, over the dam to the Hatchery, where the water was aerated and sent downstream. The system was decommissioned in the early 1990s, when the more sophisticated LayerAir® system was implemented.

It was then that the Mullens acquired the at-risk mill, the all-important dam and riparian rights to the Lake. In 1991, the mill was for sale; a variety of entrepreneurial potential buyers contemplated the property, the most serious of which envisioned a small theatre. The Woodruffs, as mindful citizens, cared for Waramaug’s waters with integrity for years, but the sale of the mill left them vulnerable. At the time, the mill was in terrible disrepair, according to Mrs. Mullen, derelict and stood as a tempting invitation for vandals. Windows were broken, leaving the historic building open to the damaging elements.

While touring the mill, Mrs. Mullen was climbing to the trademark Beeman cupola via its handmade antique ladder when she missed one of the last uneven rungs. At the small landing she tumbled,



The Riverdance Mill Today

Drainage from our Lake Waramaug flows Southward to only one outlet: over the spillway of a small concrete and masonry dam, likely to include stones from a 275 year-old iron blast furnace, to the East Aspetuck River, an important tributary to the Housatonic. Its water levels are no longer regulated by a Mill Owners Association, but by the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection which requires a certain amount of water to flow to the East Aspetuck for the preservation of wildlife and for the fighting of fires in downstream towns. The Lake itself must maintain certain water levels for safety, ecological concerns, and water quality standards. Therefore a fully functioning, operative dam is crucial for our communities, that no longer rely upon the power of its water, but upon its health and quality.

Many thanks to Esther Devine, Duncan Woodruff, Tom McGowan, Bobbi Smith and Billie Mullen, who agreed to be interviewed for this article. A special thank you to the Gunn Historical Museum, who provided The Association with a copy of an oral history of Robert Woodruff as recorded by Dorothy Averill and Natalie Dyer, February 7, 1974. Additional sources include: “New Preston’s Little Red Mill: One of Few Still Operating in Conn.,” *The Naugatuck Daily News*, 7 February, 1955; *Empire Over the Dam*, by Kenneth T. Howell and Einar W. Carlson, The Pequot Press, Chester, Connecticut, 1974; and, as ever, *A History of Lake Waramaug*, by Mary Harwood for the Lake Waramaug Association, 1996.