

LAKE WEIR YACHT CLUB - LAKE WEIR CLUB

1909 - 1973

It was in November and December that the guests from the north would travel the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad to Waresdale Station, the present Weirsdale, and from the station the carriage with the fringe on top took the guests to Lakeside Hotel. Many who wintered in their homes around the lake came by steamer from New York Harbor to Jacksonville, thence by train to Ocklawaha, East Lake, Stanton, or to Weirsdale, as did the W. H. Bickleys, the C. W. Willards, the L. E. Staffords, H.T. Connard, the Clausens, and the Schnitzlers.

Lake Weir began to come alive with activities of the sailboats, yachts, and launches, as this was the chief means of transportation and sport. Mr. Clausen, manager of the Lakeside Hotel, furnished a passenger boat for pleasure and cruising around the lake, and to transport the guests to entertainments in private homes. In addition to private boats, Bob Fosnat owned and operated the "Biliken", a passenger boat with a capacity of forty people. When Chautauqua was a "going thing", Mr. Fosnat, Sr., operated a steam boat, "Della", with a capacity of 50 people. Swimming and aquatic sports gave as much pleasure in November, December, January, February, and March as other months, because the temperature was just cool enough to stimulate action and bring forth Oooh! Aaah! Uhh! Yes, there were those who boasted of a dip in Lake Weir every morning before having their Florida orange juice and coffee. The residents bragged on the lake water - 99.9 per cent pure, and the homes used the water for drinking as well as for other purposes by running a pipe line into Lake Weir approximately 150 feet, and pumping water to the house.

Distinguished people wintered around the lake: there was Mr. Goodwin, editor of the Chicago Gazette; the Bickleys owned the amusement center in Ashbury Park, N. J.; the Willards owned the first hardware store in Westerly, R.H.; the Schnitzlers owned the largest ferris wheel in the world at Asbury Park, N.J.; the Wileys, the U.S. Ambassador to France; the Haskells, who imported tea from China; the Bradfords owned a large furniture store in Nashville, (lived in the house where Ma Barker and her son were killed later).

The only doctor between Leesburg and Ocala was Dr. H. W. Henry who lived in Ocklawaha. Dr. Henry answered the call to see suffering people all around the lake and near by areas; with his little black suitcase in hand, he hurried to visit the people day and night in his boat, even stormy weather did not stop him; and expectant mothers were eager to hear the motor boat approaching at the crucial moment. Later, Dr. Henry moved to Ocala. Mrs. Wallace Sturgis, Sr. (Catherine) is the daughter of Dr. Henry.

The Lakeside Hotel had a large room and space for dancing and entertaining.

It was their custom to welcome the winter guests by giving a party and inviting others living in the area; and such gatherings at the hotel every other week kept excitement and gaiety alive for everyone, for there was the piano; and Florence Nasmyth Lytle could play for the dancing - both square dancing and round dancing; those who couldn't dance enjoyed other activities.

On one special afternoon, the Lakeside Hotel dock was crowded with yachts, sailboats, and launches. The lake residents had come from all around the area to welcome the guests and others wintering that season; the Biliken had brought the residents not owning a boat, and had picked up the guests at the East Lake Hotel which was owned and operated by Frank Carpenter, a Civil War veteran from Brooklyn, N. Y. Greetings, laughter, reminiscing of previous seasons, dancing, and a spirit of gaiety filled the room. The atmosphere of joy and a desire for continuing such occasions, more frequently, and in still a larger hall - one that would accommodate a larger group - prevailed among the merry makers; also they wanted a place to serve dinners, and a location suitable to expand the aquatic sports, including racing, regattas, gala festivals of all kinds, - a resort atmosphere. The talk of a location and special building to accommodate large crowds spread rapidly and with enthusiasm. Mr. Goodwin was the most active, and pushed the idea along. Just so, the Lake Weir Yacht Club had its beginning.

"At a meeting of a number of owners of launches on Lake Weir, held at the Oaks, Eastlake, (now Dr. Harroll's home) March 31, 1909, the Lake Weir Yacht Club was organized by the adoption of the attached constitution and the election of the following named officers for the ensuing year:

Commodore, W. R. Goodwin, Eastlake; Vice-Commodore, H. W. Henry, Jr., Ocklawaha; Secretary, D. S. Woodrow, Eastlake; Treasurer, Z. C. Chambliss, Ocala; Executive Committee, W. R. Goodwin, D. S. Woodrow, H. W. Henry, Jr., W. S. Bickley, Weirsdale, C. W. Willard, South Lake Weir, F. E. Haskell, Weirsdale, L. R. Chazal, Ocala, John Meffert, Ocala, A. A. Bartlett, Weirsdale, A. J. Leavengood, Stanton.

Those whose names are attached to the constitution are Charter Members of the Club.

CONSTITUTION OF THE LAKE WEIR YACHT CLUB

ARTICLE 1 - NAME - The name of this club is the Lake Weir Yacht Club

ARTICLE 2 - OBJECTS - Its objects are to unite owners of launches on Lake Weir in closer affiliation; to hold launch parades, water carnivals, races, and picnics and other functions, and to protect and promote fishing in Lake Weir.

ARTICLE 3 - MEMBERSHIP - Owners of launches, yachts, and sailboats on Lake Weir are eligible to membership, and also others particularly interested in the enjoyment of the waters of this lake. Members will be elected by vote of the executive committee.

ARTICLE 4 - OFFICERS - Officers to be elected annually, shall be commodore, vice-commodore, secretary, treasurer, and executive committee of nine, of which the commodore and secretary shall be members ex-officio.

ARTICLE 5 - DUES - The membership fee shall be \$1, and the annual dues \$1 each year thereafter, payable February 1st.

ARTICLE 6 - MEETINGS - The annual meeting shall be held on the second Tuesday in February and special meetings on call of the executive committee."

CHARTER MEMBERS

W. R. Goodwin
Robt. L. Fosnot
Z. C. Chambliss
David S. Woodrow
J. G. Lege
A. A. Bartlett
Weston H. Stokes
Wm. H. Bickley
S. T. Clausen
A. J. Peterson
Melton Carnahan
J. M. Wiley
F. E. Haskell
Henry T. Connard

Charles W. Willard
Earnest Schnitzler
L. E. Stafford
A. J. Leavengood
M. H. Sanborn
James R. Chazel
J. H. Bradford
E. J. Lytle
H. W. Henry, Dr.
E. F. Newport
John W. Chapman
Chas. H. Edgerly
R. W. Pryor

W. E. Kinkel
E. D. Hemingway
J. E. Staples
E. B. Sherman
E. D. Roberts
J. C. Wiley
Sumner Hall
J. L. Carney
D. E. McIver
Geo. K. Robinson
Geo. MacKay
D. W. Davis
J. M. Meffert
J. D. Taylor

Again the following season, 1910, the Lake Weir Yacht Club held an annual meeting.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF LAKE WEIR YACHT CLUB

"At a meeting of the Lake Weir Yacht Club, held at the Oaks, East Lake, Florida, Feb. 1910, the following orders were adopted:

The hour of meet, unless otherwise specified, shall be 2:30 P. M.

The boats of the fleet shall fly a club pennant, which will be orange with the letters L. W. Y. C. in black. The executive committee was directed to

place an order for all the boats of the fleet which have names.
The following code of signals will be observed:

For the present, signals to the Fleet will be displayed on the Palmetto Cottage Flagpole, Woodmar, (Methvin Place) as follows:

Bare pole, sail postponed to next suitable day
Red flag, meet at Lakeside Hotel dock
Blue flag, meet at Fosnot Dock. (was very close to present clubhouse)
White flag, meet at Henry Dock (at Ocklawaha)

The executive committee was directed to plan a programme for the next months, for one day each week, and notify each member.

Twelve members paid dues for the past, which was forwarded by the Commodore to the treasurer, Z. C. Chambliss, Ocala, as follows:

W. R. Goodwin, J. S. Carney, E. J. Lytle, G. D. Thompson,
A. A. Bartlett, M. S. Carnahan, C. W. Willard, John Carsten,
Geo. Russell, D. W. Davis, J. G. Lege, Robert L. Fosnot.

W. R. Goodwin, Commodore"

The minutes indicate the club was incorporated under the laws of Florida in the name: THE LAKE WEIR CLUB ASSOCIATION, East Lake, Florida, in 1911. Mr. E. F. Newport deeded to the Lake Weir Club Association the present lake site. The people hastened to find means of financing a clubhouse. Stock certificates of \$10.00 per share were sold, beginning March 11, 1912. Five hundred ninety-one shares were sold for building the present clubhouse. The records do not indicate particulars concerning the building process; however, through interview with Mr. Alfred MacKay of Ocala, the writer learned that McKeever & MacKay Hardware of Ocala, shipped materials by Atlantic Coast Line to the present site. Mr. George MacKay, a club member and the contractor, chose rough lumber - clapboard siding - for the construction, for this was very inexpensive and durable. The minutes of Feb. 14, 1912, state the building committee of the clubhouse was called upon to make a report; and the minutes taken Feb. 11, 1913, record the first meeting of the clubhouse; at the same meeting, Dr. Henry reported the opening of the clubhouse. The clubhouse rules were reasonable and similar to the present, i. e. a statement of the purpose, rules for the protection of the property, dues, regulations, and signals; the records indicate that the L. W. Y. C. rented the clubhouse from the Association, for \$125.00 yearly, paid in 4 installments. The treasurer was directed to purchase as much stock for the club as conditions of the treasury would warrant. The project was declared tax free on the grounds the Lake Weir Yacht Club is a community affair for the pleasure and recreation of the surrounding area inhabitants, supported solely by contributions of local people who use it for social affairs.

The interior plans of the clubhouse are much the same as when first constructed,

i. e., the porch, the main room for dancing and social affairs, the kitchen; and under the main room were several individual rooms for changing clothes, "the bathhouse" which is no longer there. The dock was long enough to accommodate several boats, (the present pilings indicate the shape). Steps led from the dock to the west porch; also, steps led from the bathhouse up the south side of the porch; the present card room was the smoking room until 1928, when it was converted to the card room, and the main room was used for dancing, games, dinners, and other activities.

Often members came by boat in the afternoons, enjoying swimming, dancing and games. A piano was purchased, a victrola and records, and one member donated a billiard table. In the evening, everyone dressed for dinner - a covered dish each had brought, made much the same plan that we have now. The commodore for the year was host at each dinner, and his wife hostess. About 8:30 in the evening the Atlantic Coast Line train brought members and their guests from Ocala, to the special dances and entertainments at least once each week. The largest part of the membership was from Ocala. They were dressed in evening clothes - wearing their best jewelry; the diamonds flashed as they caught the light of the gaslight lamps swinging from the ceiling. On the same train came the orchestra to play for the dance. The train attendants - conductor, fireman, and engineer - all were delighted to get some of the delicious meal as they let the passengers off right in front of the clubhouse door. One might say this was an accommodation train; and the engineer made a point of refilling the engine tender with water from the water tank at East Lake, that gave them an excuse to stand longer. The friendship between the train attendants lasted until the trains stopped operating on the tracks. After the orchestra had a bit of refreshments, they made their way up the short stairs to the orchestra loft, right over the entrance door, the east entrance. The fiddler gave the "a" string a pluck; others tuned their instruments to match the tone; and the feet began to shuffle, the voices to sing, the whistlers to join the tune, the bodies to sway; and the clubhouse was a room of rhythm.

Some of the men and women did not know how to dance, but they were not bashful; Florence Lytle came to their rescue and taught those who would meet with her; she charged a small fee which she applied to the piano fund to help pay for the piano, and to purchase records. Florence also taught dancing lessons to young people and children until she was married. Florence was patient with her students and had fun with them; Dr. Henry was one of the star pupils. Once Dr. Henry said, "Florence, you should charge me more for stepping on your feet". Of course, Florence laughed and replied, "I know my feet were made to walk on, but that is my privilege."

About 12:00 P. M. the north bound Atlantic Coast Line stopped at the clubhouse to take on the passengers and the orchestra for Ocala; again, refreshments were served to the train crew. A happy, gay time was enjoyed by all; the clubhouse closed and everyone returned to their respective homes, looking forward to the next occasion. Programs were planned for the season by the committee and they called special attention to holidays, birthday, and celebrations by giving a carnival, masquerade party, or a series of festivals. In our Club, we have one family of five generation membership - Schnitzler, Bickley, E. B. Lytle, Key Scales II, and sons, Kay Scales III and Earle Scales (Steamboat).

After World War I, and about 1918, the residents around Lake Weir traveled more in cars, and the generation of boat owners followed the trend; so the people used boats less and less. The title "commodore" gave way to "President" of the club, and governing officers came into use - this continues.

In 1921 a dam in the Ocklawaha River was built, which probably caused the water level in Lake Weir to rise, for this is about the time the minutes speak of the lake water problems beginning at the clubhouse. The minutes indicate that a committee was appointed to inspect the condition of the building, which they did; the membership was advised to purchase two carloads of rock, which, with other available material for re-inforcement, they considered would be sufficient to build a breakwater that would extend two feet above the present water level. Later, another effort was made to save the bathhouse from being inundated. Geo. A. Miller, Jr. borrowed the Carl Rose Dredging & Pumping equipment from its location near Ocklawaha to pump sand from the lake, raising the soil level approximately 5 feet which made the clubhouse appear to be on dry land. The Association was called upon to build a bulkhead around the sand costing about \$150.00. For lack of funds this was not carried out; hurricanes, storms, high winds caused erosion of the sand, and the water level was flooding the bathhouse and doing damage to the underpinning of the clubhouse in general. The Association had no other funds than that paid to them for the rent of the clubhouse, \$125. per year. People around the lake complained of high water also, and to prevent the lake water level from rising any more, the canal connecting Lake Weir and the Ocklawaha River was dug to take care of the overflow. Perhaps this was the time the bathhouse was closed, for we hear of it no more. The Association could not make the needed improvements, so they offered the Lake Weir Yacht Club 45 shares of stock at par value to pay for the materials to put the clubhouse in safe condition, which they did. The club members got busy: they gave box suppers, bridge parties, masquerade parties, cake sales, dances, put on dinners for the Kiwanis of Leesburg, and rented the clubhouse to non-members for parties. Later, they learned it was advisable to restrict the use to members only or to have a member sponsor the affair. At the same time problems and difficulties arose among members, interest in the club waned, the members divided into two groups, but under the same organization, meeting different evenings each week and with officers in each group. This continued for several years and membership increased in each group.

Evidence from the minutes show that the dock became unsafe in 1928; to warn the public, a red flag was mounted on the dock, - members came by cars. It was advisable to obtain permission from Atlantic Coast Line to put the walkway across the track. Permission was granted, and a contract drawn; at the same time permission was granted to lay a pipe line and septic tank on the right-of-way. Improvements in the clubhouse facilities continued with the installing of the electric wiring of the building in 1928. Other improvements were needed and steps must be taken for more financial aid than the membership felt wise, for they realized the clubhouse was the property of the Association, and not that of the membership. The Lake Weir Yacht Club was in trouble. An excellent solution was reached by the finance committee. They proposed

to the Lake Weir Yacht Club members that an effort be made to secure the stock from the Lake Weir Club Association so there would be an incentive on the part of the club members to put the building in safe condition; this meant a transfer or donation of the stock to the Lake Weir Yacht Club. Mrs. Methvin, president at the time, and Geo. A. Miller, Jr. contacted every stockholder or heir to the stockholder, to explain the problem; also expressed the desire of the members to continue this community-spirit enterprise. This met with favorable results. Certificates were endorsed and donated to the Lake Weir Yacht Club in majority of cases; in other cases, the holder of the shares wrote a letter of transfer, signed before 2 witnesses. The letters to the stockholders, their reply and the certificates are filed with other documents of this Lake Weir Club Association.

By May 1933, two-thirds of the stock shares from the holders were in the hands of Lake Weir Yacht Club - 177 shares owned by L. W. Y. C. and the others by donation. (More shares came in at a later date.) This generosity called for a special celebration, and the club planned a delightful way to express their appreciation.

The time was the evening of May 29, 1933, the club members entertained those stockholders who donated their shares. In order to perpetuate the memory of the old Association personnel, the club enrolled the names of the donors on a permanent tablet in the form of a key. The evening was a very gala affair; the program very special. The following is quoted from the minutes:

"The programme was opened with music by an orchestra composed of Mr. & Mrs. Geo. A. Miller, Jr., Mrs. Ethel Hanford, and Miss Griffin. The next number was the crowning of the May Queen; the bridal procession was led by the court jester, Dr. Stanton; the Misses Betty and Babs Zuber and Helen Knoblock as heralds. Mrs. Methvin was Queen of May and Miss Roberta Nichol, his Royal Highness. Two colored pages carried the bride's train; Mrs. Lillian Bull was crown bearer. After the Queen had been duly crowned, they seated themselves upon the throne. The Queen was very attractive in her bridal robes as were the others who participated in the crowning. Mr. Stuart Fritch favored the company with two songs. Shirley Lytle gave two songs in costume, also a hula-hula dance.

"Misses Betty and Babs Zuber gave a dance which was very much enjoyed. Ray Eaton gave a tap dance. Dr. Stanton read some unusual epitaphs which he had found in different places in his travels. Mr. Miller welcomed the guests in a very apt speech and presented them a key to the club house which was of unusual size and inscribed with the names of the donors of stock." (THIS KEY NOW HANGS ON THE WALL OF THE CLUB HOUSE.)

"The entertainment closed by the bridal party marching from the

club room to music furnished by the orchestra. Refreshments were served and dancing was enjoyed."

December 1, 1937, the minutes recorded the following:

"The Lake Weir Yacht Club unanimously voted life membership to Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Methvin and to Mr. and Mrs. Geo. A. Miller, Jr. for their outstanding work in securing a majority of the stock for the club."

Letters of appreciation and acceptance are recorded in the minutes.

~~The Lake Weir Yacht Club~~ now owned 362 of the 591 shares of stock, and it was no longer necessary to have different officers in each. The Lake Weir Club Association being already incorporated, laid the basis for the club; it was proposed that the same officers act and officiate as such in the two organizations. To avoid any difficulty with the Comptroller of the State, and with the tax collector, the name was changed to LAKE WEIR CLUB, in 1934. To perpetuate the corporation, the officers must meet as such in the corporation at least once each year.

Necessary repairs were made; Stuart Fritch has been called upon many times to make safe the pilings that support the club house as indicated by the minutes. The Lake Weir Club held weekly meetings with scheduled host and hostesses through the summer months in the twenties and early thirties; beginning October 1937 it was decided to begin the season in October and end the following May. The Constitution and By-laws have been changed or written to serve the need of the members and to protect the property. At a meeting October 1, 1941, the retiring president of the Lake Weir Club, Fred Briles, suggested that a president of the club should serve only one year, and that it would be a good policy to rotate the office alternately between men and women. This met with approval.

In the late 40's, ~~canasta was introduced to the club members~~ who did not play bridge, and they have striven for a "wild and a natural canasta" ever since, as well as, "taking the discard pile" as often as often as possible. Always Pick It Up!!

All members, from beginning to the present, have brought pleasure to the group and contributed much to perpetuate and maintain this community enterprise; their friendship, their energy, their service; all was gratis and many times the material used was gratis, too. The minutes do not record all the specific services, nor do they pinpoint the exact dates. By the very nature of the work and the individual's capabilities, one service may seem more outstanding than another, but every member has given his best which makes the Lake Weir Club unique.

The writer would like to list a few important improvements in the last twenty years -

In the 50's, gas heaters were installed, replacing the one stove in the large room; however, the paneling of the dining area by Dick Fleming and Walter Burkhardt made still a greater difference in the temperature in the cold months; it was important to have pure water for drinking, as well as, for kitchen use, and Harold Peters saw to that.

In the 60's and early 70's, better lighting for the canasta players was installed; the card room was enlarged and received a complete face lifting - floor, paneling, ceiling, painting, curtains - and the porch floor and railings were replaced - then painted; the roof was repaired and painted. They have cared for us well, - our electrician members, carpenter members, painter members, and building committees- Bud Boyer, Richard Fritch, Geo. A. Miller, Jr., Roland Reppert, Stuart Fritch, Frank Ehlers, Kay Boyer (the lady painter); all these, and more - - looking forward to their best girl's favorite recipe in generous servings on Wednesday evenings when the best cooks around the area decorate and fill the table with delicious food.

"They also serve who only stand and wait." If you haven't had your turn, be patient, you will be called on soon.

Sources of Information

Documents and records of the Lake Weir Club Association.

Minutes of Lake Weir Yacht Club, 1909 - 1934.

Minutes of Lake Weir Club, 1934 - 1973.

Interviews with Caroline Lytle, Weirsdale; Florence Lytle, Weirsdale; Howard Lee, East Lake Weir; Alfred MacKay, Ocala; Mrs. Catherine Sturgis, Ocala; Mrs. Ida K. Marrinan, East Lake Weir; Sam Fosnot, Ocala.