

## **Moose Pond History**

### **by Leigh Macmillen Hayes**

At the August 2010 annual meeting of the Moose Pond Association, Alan Ordway of Camp Winona, regaled the gathered group with the history of the pond.

It is ten miles from Berry Pond in Sweden to Berry Cemetery in Denmark with the nine mile man-made Moose Pond in between. The pond, as we know it today, has three basins, which cover a total of 1,694 acres: Upper Basin--365 acres, Middle Basin--941 acres and Lower Basin--388 acres.

### **Moose Pond Dam**

Taking us back in time, Alan reminded us that in 1792 Cyrus Ingalls built the first log sluiceway where the current dam is located in Denmark. Cyrus floated logs from the newly created Lower Moose Pond, probably to a nearby mill. In 1824 a more substantial dam was created. William Haynes raised the height of the same dam in 1872, which created the current impoundment. At this time a previous dam of unknown origin that existed above the Narrows, located between the lower and middle basins, was breached, and the pond became one elevation. Look for remnants of the former dam when you slow your boat down to travel through the Narrows.

As several manufacturing companies in Saco needed water to run their mills, the Saco Water Company eventually took control of the main dam in Denmark. In 1918 Cumberland Power and Light Company gained control because they needed the impoundment to feed water to the Great Falls Hydroelectric Dam. The company was acquired by Central Maine Power in 1942.

For years Moose Pond was controlled by economic interests; saw, grist and woolen mills and later power plants would pull the plug in order to feed the dam. Consequently, the level of water in the pond would change rather dramatically over the course of the summer and fall. Eventually, the State Legislature enacted a law that Moose Pond would be maintained at full pond level until after the camps' season ended.

During 1977, when Alan served as Chair of the Board of Selectmen in Bridgton, Central Maine Power was ready to sell their rights to the dam. Alan thought it would be a wonderful idea for Sweden, Bridgton and Denmark to purchase and gain control of it. The town of Bridgton voted in favor, but Denmark did not. A few years later, when Denmark solely owned the dam, it was in need of repair and funding. Eventually, the three towns agreed to contribute toward its upkeep. Today the three towns maintain the dam and keep the current average elevation at 418 feet.

### **Moose Pond Causeway**

The Bridgton Historical Society's publication, *Bridgton, Maine 1768-1994 An Updated Bicentennial History*, provides a portrayal of the evolution of the Moose Pond Causeway.

According to the authors: "Town Records from 1830-1842 show that two roads were laid out from Bridgton to Fryeburg, the first in 1832 'by the head of Moose Pond, the other in 1833 across the Pond by the present route, when the town voted 'to open . . . a winter road from the middle of town towards Fryeburg . . . it was voted to 'let out by contract the building of the bridge' across Moose Pond and the road across the Island, work to be completed May 1, 1835." The bridge was over the sluiceway used for driving logs. "In those days 'bridge' meant the two structures that spanned the water between each shore and the Island [Sabbatus Island], and the water level of the Pond was probably five feet lower than the present average. The result was a passage from shore to Island and Island to shore--probably not more than 20 feet wide, not much above water level, and covered its entire length with planks of uneven thickness, and with no guard rail."

Originally, this road to Fryeburg was only open during winter months. Consequent construction of the Moose Pond Causeway opened up a direct route to Fryeburg. For many years it was underwater in the spring. In 1924 it was raised high enough so it was passable year round.

Sadly, in 1953, when the State decided to rebuild the Causeway, the impact these changes would have on the environment were not considered. The MDOT filled in the deep, natural channel and moved the bridge to the shallows adjacent to Sabattus Island, changing the ecology of the pond a great deal.

The State also made other changes. In 1955, folks from Inland Fisheries and Wildlife thought they were headed to Moose Pond in Waterford. Instead they ended up at our Moose Pond and accidentally dropped a huge amount of large mouth bass, which instantly ate many smelts. Fortunately ME Fisheries says there are still smelt in the pond.

## **Moose Pond Then and Now**

Over the years, Alan told us, he explored a few secret spots, most of which have disappeared. One of his favorites still exists at the northernmost end--the historic site of Lost City. Today only huge granite stones mark the remnants of an 1830s village. To get there, one must encounter a few beaver dams, pass through an alder patch and around a path marked with poison ivy.

What is now flooded land at the northern end of the pond was once timberland. If you kayak, canoe or fish in the upper pond, you are familiar with the tree stumps. A lot of the lower pond was once pasture, including Scanty Bag Cove on the western shore across from Camp Wyonegonic.

Land ownership has historically made Moose Pond what we enjoy today. CD Cummings, Diamond Match, SD Warren, Hastings Interests, Camp Winona, Camp Wyonegonic, Hio Camps and Pleasant Mountain kept the pond protected until state plumbing codes came into effect.

Fortunately, Alan pointed out, the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA) was organized in the early 1970s to protect us from ourselves. Organizations like LEA and Loon Echo Land Trust have worked diligently to preserve the Moose Pond watershed. Peter Lowell, executive director of LEA, describes Moose Pond as one of three "Cream of the Crop" ponds in the Lakes Region. The Moose Pond Association works in conjunction with these other groups to maintain the quality of life on the pond for future generations.