

The McWains' on Seymour Lake

The McWain family has been on Seymour Lake for nearly 80 years. Beginning in 1928 to 1960 our grandparents, Jesse and Inge McWain, had a camp on the southeast shore on what is now Seymour East (on the lake map # 322A). Jesse began working on the Grand Trunk Railroad as a conductor in the early years of the 20th century. He and Inga lived on Pherrin Street in Island Pond where they raised three sons, Zenas, Morris, and Lyman. They spent time on Seymour in the summers, but Jesse also enjoyed fishing on Norton and Averill Lakes.

In 1917 Dr. Lawrence Henderson, a Harvard University professor, bought a large tract of land on the northeast end of the lake on both sides of Route 111. On the east side of the road it included the Grezes' red farmhouse and what was the Goodsell farm south to the then Nelson Lay land. Along the shore it included properties now numbered from about #268 to #279, from Chaffee or Waters to Gildersleeves. In the 1920's Professor Henderson built a large congregating/dining camp on the big rock "Ledge", five sleeping camps, an ice house and a large three bay garage where Jim McWain's drive entrance is now. Water to the dining camp was from a spring on the Henderson property on the East side of Route 111, about a mile from the camps. We have heard that a local carpenter named Burroughs did the building, but Dr. Henderson designed the camps. To this woodland retreat Professor and Mrs. Henderson invited family, friends, colleagues, and students. The property was equipped with sailboats, canoes, and the 22' western fir diving board mounted on an old wagon axle set into drilled holes in the rock. It is still in use.

Professor Henderson died in 1942, and the property remained unoccupied through World War II. In the late 1940's and early 1950's the Hendersons' son sold portions of the property in a number of parcels. Morris and Bertha McWain bought 11.5 acres on and around the ledge in 1949. The property was a 1920's vintage retreat. Conditions were very basic.

The sleeping camps originally had no electricity or running water. Access to the property was via a path from the meadow adjacent to the garage near the old town shed on Route 111. Within two years Morris and his father-in-law, Joe Haley, made major improvements. Electricity was put in each of the camps, and water was piped from the main camp to two other camps. The main/ledge camp was renovated to include a kitchen, bathroom, hot water and bedrooms. Two of the sleeping camps received additions which included bedrooms, kitchen, and bathroom; however, these camps only had cold running water. An access road, to replace the footpath, was built by Joe Haley (he had been road commissioner in Norton) when he got tired of carting supplies down the path. A boathouse was added in the mid-1950's. Hot water to the other camps was put in gradually from 1963 to the 21st century!



Lyman and Agnes McWain rented one of the camps for nearly fifteen summers, so the two families' children, Jim, Nancy, Janet and Lyman, grew up on the lake and in the surrounding woods and fields.

We cousins spent our summers swimming, boating, fishing, water skiing all over the lake, camping and hiking at Wolfs Point, and picking wild berries. By 1963 we began bringing our children to Seymour to continue our lake traditions.

In 1965 Lyman and Agnes bought the center portion of the ledge property with 4 camps, the old ice house, and the boathouse. A few years later, in 1970, Bertha and Morris built a new camp just to the north, now owned by Jim and Bonnie McWain. Jim's daughter and son-in-law, Robin and Zac, live at this camp and operate the Morgan Store. Nancy McWain Gilmond and her daughter and son-in-law, Cheryl and Peter Morse, bought the next property to the north, formerly the Locklins' (#271). They are just finishing a new camp there. Lyman and Susan McWain and Dick and Janet Colby now own the ledge property and the vacant beach property to the south.

After almost 90 years the buildings are still standing tall, providing a great summer place for our children and grandchildren. Jesse and Inge McWain now have eleven great-grandchildren and twelve great-great-grandchildren, giving us all compelling reasons to protect the beautiful Seymour Lake experience for the future.

Janet Colby, Jim and Lyman McWain



This picture was discovered at the Vermont Sportsman. It is Dr. Henderson's (now McWain's) place on the ledge with the diving board (the pins in the rock to the left of the standing fisherman are the board anchors). I suspect the picture was taken in the late 1920's or early 1930's. The fishermen's names on the back of the picture are: Cashman (?), Goodfellow and Nye. Can anyone provide information on these gentlemen?