

History of Winans Lake

A history of Winans Lake was compiled in 1992 by Nancy Moynihan with the assistance of George Hull. This history became part of our member packet.

At that time Nancy extended an invitation to all of us to submit any stories of "Life on Winans Lake". Unfortunately, no stories were ever submitted.

Because I am so interested in the history of our lake, I asked my Mother-in-law, Jane Coates, if she might have information packed away that pertained to Winans Lake. She did come across a few things, one of them being a recording of a conversation on February, 1968. The label reads "Winans Old Timers @ Hull Farm at the Luncheon Table". Evidently this was a regular monthly gathering. On the tape Hiram Smith (who taught at the Winans Lake School) is reading a brief, which includes a lot of the information that is already in our packets.

He does speak of a little five year old boy named Roscoe Cavell. Roscoe always sat in the front row at school. He listened to every word spoken by his teacher, Mr. Smith. He never missed an assignment. Roscoe grew up and became a Doctor. He had a home and property on the North Shore of our Lake. What I found interesting is that when the road on the North Shore was to be named, it was supposed to be Cavell Road. There was a mistake in the making of the sign. When it was posted, Cowell was on it and was never changed.

This is only a little "tidbit" but it is part of our history. I now join in the invitation to all of you to send in any story or scrap of information you might hear or come across about Winans Lake. The more stories we have, the richer our history will be. The more we write down now, the less we'll forget later!

Lorraine Coates
September 2000

A Note of Thanks

My thanks to George Hull, for giving me so much information and help in compiling the following history.

-Nancy Corsa Moynihan (April 1992)

The Early Settlers

French explorers of the early 1600's were the first white people to visit what is now the State of Michigan. The French dominated the region for a century and a half, but did little to develop it being primarily interested in the fur bearing animals it contained. The British gained control of the Michigan region after defeating France in the French and Indian war (1689-1763). In 1787 following the Revolutionary War in America, Michigan became part of the Northwest Territory of the United States. In 1805 Congress established the territory of Michigan and in 1837 Michigan became the 26th State of the Union.

Outside of Detroit which was then a small village, only a few hamlets existed, mostly within 50 miles of Detroit. The rest of the land was wilderness. The land surrounding Pleasant Lake (the name was changed to Winans Lake in about 1915) was purchased from the Federal Government by pioneers during the early to middle part of the nineteenth century. The land was sold in 640 acre tracts.

The first settler on Winans Lake was Peter S. Hendrick (a soldier in the war of 1812). He was a wagoner and a farmer. He and his wife raised and educated eight children and together farmed the land at the East end of the lake now the site of many homes along Tamarack Drive. His home is now owned and occupied by Frank and Susan Polermo . The house was built circa 1832, obviously updated since then it is perhaps best known as "the house with the tree growing through it" on Winans Lake Rd. between Pleasant Lake Rd. and Hendrick Drive.

The land on the South side of the lake was purchased by George Galloway and included much property now being occupied by the Lakeland's Golf and Country Club. George Galloway and his wife had two daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah. In 1855 Edwin B. Winans, who later became Governor of the State of Michigan married Elizabeth Galloway. Their home is designated by an historical marker on the South side of the lake in the front yard of the Seiter home at 5917 Winans Drive.

In May of 1878, George Lafayette Hull purchased 84 acres on the Northeast corner of Winans Lake. Mr. Hull raised fruit which he marketed in Hamburg and Brighton. His home is the white centennial farmhouse now occupied by his great grandson George M. Hull. The land to the West of the Hull farm on the North side of the lake was owned by Lou Eppinger, who owned a sporting goods store in Detroit. His grandson James Romine and family occupy the original house located on the West corner of Teahan and Cowell roads.

Edwin Baruch Winans was the most distinguished man to have owned and lived on property around Winans Lake, born at Avon, New York (in the Finger Lakes region of New York State) May 16, 1826. He was the only child of John and Eliza Winans. At the age of eight he moved with his parents to a farm at Unadilla, and later to Perrysville. At the age of twenty he entered Albion College. It was his intention, as soon as prepared, to enter Law School at the University of Michigan, but he never did, the discovery of gold in California changed his plans.

In March of 1850 he started for California by the overland route. After four months, footsore and weary, and in an almost exhausted condition he arrived in California. He found gold and saved and accumulated his earnings. After mining for two years Mr. Winans located at the little mining town of Rough and Ready, and with others formed a ditch company for supplying miners with water for their operations. Leaving the ditch company, Mr. Winans and a partner opened a small bank at Rough and Ready for buying the miners' gold and sending it to the mint. In 1855 when the bank was well

established, Mr. Winans returned “to marry the girl he had left in Michigan”, she was Sarah, oldest daughter of George Galloway, (the owner of the farm property now occupied by Lakelands Golf & Country Club). Sarah had expected to marry Mr. Winans but could not accept the conditions of the little California mining town. She refused to go and laughingly suggested he marry and take her sister Lib (Elizabeth) west. He knew Lib well and at once proposed to her, Lib accepted. They were soon married and returned to California, remaining there until 1858 when Mr. Winans sold his banking interests and they returned to Michigan.

Edwin Winans was elected to the State Legislature in 1860, and re-elected in 1862. He was judge of probate for Livingston County from 1877 to 1881. He was elected to the forty-eighth and forty-ninth Congresses representing the sixth district. In 1890 he was elected Governor of Michigan and served until his death on July 4, 1894.

The Winans had two sons George G. Winans (born at Rough and Ready, California) and Edwin B. Winans Jr. (born after the family returned to Michigan). Edwin Jr. attended West Point and went on to become a Brigadier General.

The John O. Hearn Company of Detroit began buying properties around Winans Lade in 1921. The founders envisioned an ideal family community for recreation in the beautiful outdoors of Michigan. Plans included golf, swimming, tennis, boating, hiking, and fishing. A club house was planned to provide a place for dining and a large room for dancing and meetings.

Purchase of the surrounding farm properties were negotiated with George E. Winans, Isabell Hull, and Myron Hendrick.

The Pleasant Lake Hills Corporation was organized in December 20, 1921 by John Hearn, Carl Johnson, Roy S. Moon, George E. Winans and Edwin B. Winans Jr., articles of Incorporation were filed with the Secretary of State on January 23, 1922.

The club house at the Lakelands Golf & Country Club was constructed in 1924 along with a nine-hole golf course. The doors of the club house opened in the spring of 1925.

In 1927 the name Pleasant Lake Hills Corporation was changed to Winans Lake Hills Corporation and nine holes were added to the golf course under the direction of Daniel Denton. Hard times overtook Lakeland with the stock market crash in October of 1929 and the closing of banks in 1933. Fortunately two men appeared on the scene to help Lakelands weather the storm, they were Glen P. Cowan and Thomas L. Brooks. Glen Cowan was president of Arctic Ice Cream and the Nizer Corp., He invented the iceless ice cabinet for the Nizer Corp., Sales of the Iceless Cabinet were very successful, however Cowan became embroiled in a disagreement with the members of the Nizer Corp. Board of Directors and sold his stock for over a million dollars. Cowan had been interested in Lakelands since it's conception and had a friend of his, Chief Bender running the club. Recognizing the financial plight of Lakelands, Cowan offered to make up the deficits incurred on an annual basis. This he did. In September of 1930, Glen Cowan was killed in an automobile accident in the thumb area of Michigan. Mrs. Cowan did not continue to subsidize Lakelands after her husband's death.

In February, 1931, Thomas L. Brooks met with Ken Coates of Great Lakes Steel and George Bott of the Manufacturers Nation Bank to discuss the administration of the club. Brooks had been a successful food broker and realtor in Detroit. Because real estate sales were poor in Detroit, he agreed to take over the

management of Lakelands at no salary for one year. Brooks was a frugal, hardworking, understanding man who was able to cope with the day to day problems as they arose. When he could not find people to work for the club, he and his wife Olive cooked and did whatever else needed doing.

Lack of funds caused Lakelands to fall behind in their mortgage payments to the Winans, Hendricks, and Hulls. Foreclosure seemed a definite possibility. Brooks learned about this and with forethought persuaded a small group of club members, including George Bott, Ken Coates, Paul Farrell, and Ken Sproule to put up the money to continue payments on the mortgages. The action kept the mortgages from falling into the hands of possible exploiters.

During the early forties, activities around Lakelands subdued. Many members were called into the service of their country. Gas rationing made it difficult for people to come from Detroit, Birmingham, Farmington, and other areas to utilize the facilities of the club. Tom Brooks who had left Lakelands at the end of the Thirties was asked to return and take over running the club, and this he did. In a recent conversation with George Bott (member of Lakelands since 1931), it was brought to my attention that had it not been for the efforts of Thomas Brooks through those very lean years. Lakelands wouldn't be what it is today.

Over the years since the second world war, Lakelands, through efforts of loyal Lakelanders, hardworking forward planning committees and hours of patient labor by presidents and boards of directors have kept the club, the golf course, and all facilities a pleasant place to spend time. In 1955 Bert Hilbert, Ann Arbor store owner, donated 200 spruce and pine trees to beautify the area around the clubhouse and parking lot. In 1965 the dream of many years came into being when at the July board meeting of 1965, Don Kaump, Pathologist with Parke Davis, moved that a watering system for the golf course be installed using Winans Lake as the water source. In the spring of 1966 during the presidency of Doug Knott, the watering system was turned on. The system was installed by the A.J. Miller Co. at a cost of \$60,907. From the late fifties thru the 1960's much attention and discussion had been given to the possibility of a new clubhouse. The original clubhouse that overlooked Winans Lake, built in 1924-25 was thought by many members to be unsafe. A new clubhouse opened in 1971 (it has since been replaced by the present clubhouse which opened its doors in 1987). The old clubhouses were both torn down during the construction of the present clubhouse. The cart barn was erected during the winter of 1983.

In 1917 the first of three Supreme Court cases testing the privacy of Winans Lake took place. On January 22, 1917 George G. Winans brought complaint against David O. Willetts and friends for trespassing on the water of a private pond named Winans Lake. George Winans pointed out that David O. Willetts, Willis Jonson and LaVern O. Cushing, all of whom were residents of Ann Arbor, had for a period of two to three years made a habit of traversing the waters of the lake for the purpose of fishing. Willetts claimed that the outlet at the Southeast corner of Winans Lake was navigable stream running to Gut Lake some twenty-four rods, from thence to Zukey Lake, thence to the Huron River, and finally to Lake Erie. The court ruled the stream was not navigable, George Winans won his case. He was granted permission to keep trespassers off Winans Lake.

On November 20th, 1925 John O. Hearne, President of the Pleasant Lake Hills Corporation signed a Bill of Complaint against Louis Eppinger, Mrs. Louis Eppinger, Harry W. Himmelhoch, William Himmelhoch, and Alfred H. Nopper, thus ushered in the second Court Case concerning the privacy of Winans Lake. The Plaintiff, the Pleasant Lake Hills Corporation claimed the defendants, Louis Eppinger, et.al. be decreed to have no right to enter upon the waters of Winans Lake or any part or portion thereof for the purpose of bathing, fishing, boating, hunting, rowing boats, storing boats, building docks, or for any

other purpose whatsoever, without the consent of the Plaintiff. The Pleasant Lake Hills Corporation maintained they purchased Winans Lake with the clear understanding it was a private piece of property. The private property extended to the high water mark. Mr. Eppinger and the defendants claimed it was not a private lake. They had used the lake for years for boating; fishing, etc... as had many other people in the area. The circuit court presided over by the honorable Joseph H. Collins decided in favor of the Pleasant Lake Hills Corporation declaring the property owned by Louis Eppinger did not have lake privileges.

On August 31, 1936 the Winans Lake Hills Corporation filed a Bill of Complaint against Eva Moon, Bert Moon, and Raymond Moon for trespassing on the waters of Winans Lake without proper credentials. Once again the privacy of Winans Lake was being challenged and once again it was back to the Howell court room. Hiram Smith Attorney for Lakelands Golf & Country Club tells the story in his "Recollections of Winans Lake" 1968.

"After I located in Howell I became a member of the Lakelands Golf & Country Club and was their attorney for many years. The Moon boys had used the lake so often and had pretermitted their friends to use it for fishing. They ran sort of a boat livery, with a large part of their customers from the Ann Arbor Fire Department. The Lakelands Golf & Country Club, Thomas Brooks, Secretary, had permitted the Moons to use the lake, as the Club did for all nearby residents, but the Moon boys had used it so often that they decided they had the right to use it, not only for themselves, but for anybody else who might be their guests or clients. Therefore, after being warned by the club that their use had never been anything else than permissive, and they still being defiant, the club commenced injunction proceedings against them. It was that case which put a final termination to all efforts to destroy the private character of the lake."

In contrast to the final statement above, Ken Coates in a letter written to his son Tom Coates, Sr. (date of the letter unknown) says this, "As time goes on, it may become more difficult to keep Winans Lake private. It would seem we should not be negligent in the enforcement of the rules and be sure we do not violate the conservation laws."

Dedication

No history of Winans Lake would be complete without mentioning William Leininger. As Bill Leininger died this past year (1991) at the age of 97, we felt it appropriate to dedicate this first edition of the Winans Lake Association membership packet to his memory and to the memory of all who have helped to make the Winans Lake community what it is today. Bill considered the lake sacrosanct and was very protective of its history. The lake's preservation was one of his primary concerns as he got older. His desire was to see the lake survive in its present state after he was gone.

Compiled here are memories and excerpts from articles and letters written to or about Bill Leininger by: Greg Austin, and George Hull. We would like to expand this section to include stories and information about other Winans Lake residents, please send us yours.

"Bill Leininger actually purchased the Lakeland's Development Company in 1944 and claimed ownership of the lake bottom. He had a unique background. He was raised in Oklahoma, knew Geronimo, the Apache Chief. He claimed in fact to have his last bow and arrow. He was a Captain in the U.S. Army Air Force having flown a French Newport in World War I. He was one of the first pilots to drop propaganda leaflets over enemy territory. He later recruited Lindbergh and was his commanding officer when he

taught him to fly in Texas. Bill had an advertising company in Detroit in the 30's and came out to Winans Lake to settle in the 40's. Bill kept young in attitude and physically through exercise and Wild Turkey Bourbon. He had a sign in his kitchen that said "so many women, so little time". He was known in the community for his enthusiasm for woman of all ages. Whenever a man died in the community, his widow usually got a call within several weeks being asked by Bill to go out and forget her troubles. One divorcee in her late 30's allowed herself to be talked into a date with Bill, and later remarked that Bill Leininger was not ready for just holding hands. Bill had been seen sitting in a boat looking into the water at places where he had earlier stacked brush piles onto the ice (as the ice melted, the brush pile sank to the bottom of 10 or 12 feet of water) he would observe the fish habits in and around these brush piles. His chief concern as he got older was the welfare and well-being of Winans Lake. He wanted it maintained as it has been a private lake, free of pollution, free of motor boats and free of any excessive abuses that have plagued many of the other lakes in the area."

Greg Austin

Excerpts from "Reflections"

Written by George Hull on the occasion of Bill Leininger's eighty-eight h birthday.

"Bill Leininger of Winans Lake means many things to many people. Bill Leininger: Builder and Developer. I met Bill Leininger in the summer of 1946. He was building a home east of our property. The home is now occupied by Harold Falls. He told me he had bought the Winans Lake Hills Association and planned to build more homes and develop the area into a first class residential area. He built several homes on Winans Lake including the one he lived in on Cowell Rd. and one lived in today by Frank Ferguson on Pleasant Lake Road. He formed the Lakeland Development Company and reached his objective of creating a fine neighborhood as we know it today. Bill Leininger: keeper of the Peace and Quiet on Winans Lake. On a Sunday morning in May 1953, I arose at 6:30am, having been awakened by the chatter of two red squirrels. At that time I was in the habit of shooting all red squirrels as they insisted on using our attic for winter and summer quarters. I shot the two squirrels with a 12 gauge shotgun. The boom of the shots got Bill out of bed and up to my place on the double. He reminded me, with vehemence, and in no uncertain terms that Sunday mornings was for sleeping on Winans Lake and not for hunting. I told him of my plight with the squirrels. Several days later he arrived at our door with a squirrel trap.

Bill Leininger; Politician, bill Leininger; United States Air Force... and the list goes on... Happy Birthday to a man who has worn many hats!"

Sincerely,
George Hull

A story about George Hull
By: Greg Austin

George Hull lives at the northeast end of the lake in a house whose foundation was laid in 1861 by his forefathers. He's been coming to the lake since the late 1920's and was a stockbroker in Ann Arbor. He believes Winans Lake is the magnificent example of man's ability to preserve.

In 1979, a few days after Christmas, George saw a Canadian Goose frozen into the ice overnight and took a ladder pushing it 150 feet out onto the lake in an attempt to save the goose. As he got to the goose, the ice broke and he floundered in the water until the Hamburg Township Fire Department arrived led by Rev. Carl Weltzer (of Kohlrabi fame and the local Lutheran minister). A rowboat was taken out, breaking through the ice all the way out to where George was by now suffering from extreme exposure. A successful rescue was made however George was in intensive care for several days, but finally made a full recovery. When asked why he did it, he stated simply "I wanted to save that goose." "We found out after the rescue attempt that the goose actually had a broken wing." George related.

I have added this section at those who are new to the area may not be aware that the building standing on the corner of Winans Lake Road and Chilson Road was once the Winans Lade School.

The Winans Lake School (before 1915 known as the Pleasant Lake School, at that time a white clapboard building which overlooked the lake) was probably much the same as most rural schools of its time. Hiram R. Smith (Probate Judge in Howell who later became Attorney for Lakeland's Golf & Country Club) who taught at the Winans Lake School wrote the following in his "Recollections of Winans Lake"

"One time when I was a youngster my father took me for a ride past Winans Lake and I noticed a little school house standing in the woods on the hill on the south shore of the lake. I remarked to my father that if I should ever teach school that was the school where I would like to teach. In 1903 I was graduated from Howell High School. That summer Will Blades, Director of the Winans Lake School District, came to our home and enquired if I would like to teach in the district the ensuing year. So, it was quite a thrill to sign up to teach in that same school."

"I crossed the Winans' fields on the way to the school house. Little did I think that someday people would be milling around those fields, swinging clubs, and hitting little white balls from one place to another. At that same time Orville and Wilbur Wright were messing around down at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, with some wooden contraption trying to fly. I had heard that they had finally made it for a distance of fifty feet. What a way to waste time and money and imperil life in such a fantastic and hopeless undertaking. Little did I know that the day would come when I would see airplanes come gliding out of the sky and landing on those same fields."

There was indeed a landing strip at the Lakelands Golf & Country Club, George Bott (member at Lakeland's since 1931) wrote the following:

"On a Sunday morning in the late 1930's the Dawn Patrol (a group of flyers) flew into Lakelands for breakfast- some 30 to 40 small planes, and parked on what is now the golf practice range. Also, William Stout of Ford Motor Aviation Division used to fly into the club on Sundays in the old Ford Tri-Motor plane. At the beginning of World War II, the government ordered the "wind sox" removed from the old caddy house."

The Winans Lake School became part of the Pinckney Community Schools in 1958; it was then an elementary school with 120 students. It later became a kindergarten center before closing and then being sold in 1980.

In compiling this history I came across some interesting reference material that I didn't include because it was not specific to Winans Lake, but those of you who want to know more about the area may find it worthwhile to visit the Hamburg Township Library and buy (or borrow) a copy of the Hamburg Township

Historical Society "Settlement Days 1831 – 1981" booklet. The booklet includes lots of information written by many local people (more are still around and would probably be happy to elaborate on what they wrote) the booklet also has a lot of interesting photos.

An Invitaiton

Remember that this history is a starting point. We hope that we'll hear from a lot of our members in the future. We'd love to hear from you about your story about life on Winans Lake, or your family's history of Winans Lake. Visit our website, www.winanslake.org, and use the 'Contact us' form to get a hold of one of the Lake Association board members, or simply submit a story to winanslake@gmail.com.

The Winans Lake Association Board of Directors, August 2012
8760 Chilson Rd., Brighton, MI 48116