

“Goose Lake” Club

An Organization Composed of Chardon Sportsmen - Land Purchased at Lake Aquilla – A Survey made and Buildings to be Erected

Geauga Republican – May 27, 1895

There are few towns of its size in the State that can boast of more enthusiastic sportsmen among its inhabitants, or count more ardent disciples of the rod and gun than the town of Chardon. While the equine thoroughbred is given no small amount of attention, there is always a lively interest manifested in both hunting and fishing in season. Isaac Walton has many expert followers, and there are also quite a number of professional gentlemen in Chardon who are skilled and proficient in the use of rod and gun.

Since local fisherman have been forbidden the freedom of the waters of feeling in favor selecting and securing some suitable spot where the recreation of fishing could be indulged in without fear of molestation from so-called clubs, or corporations. This feeling took a substantial turn a short time since, when a number of well-known gentleman met and formed what will hereafter, it is said, be known as the “Goose Lake Club.”

The Capt. O. O. King, of Chardon, belongs much credit, for it is largely due to his energy and personal efforts that the Club was organized and funds raised for the undertaking. An acre or more of land has been purchased at lake Aquilla (Claridon Pond), and County Surveyor Phelps last week completed the survey of the property.

The grounds, as surveyed, begin near the inlet road bridge, north of the lake, and consist of a strip of land, high and dry, and of sufficient width to warrant a good roadway to where the inlet enters the lake. Here there is a frontage of fully 150 feet. At this point, it is said, the Club will build a dock, or pier, and erect suitable buildings with sleeping apartments, also boat houses, etc.

Amount other contemplated improvements is the filling in and building up of that section of shore to the right of the inlet, which usually overflows in high water, and this work will probably be commenced in the near future. A meeting of the members of the Club is to be called in a few days, we are informed, to consider the advisability of buying more land, also to raise funds necessary to push the work to completion.

“The object of the Club,” said Capt. King, a few evenings since, “will be to establish pleasure and fishing grounds, and a more desirable location, everything considered, it would be hard to find. No inland body of water in the State of Ohio has larger or gamier black bass than Lake Aquilla. Among other fish that are frequently taken from its placid waters are the strawberry, or speckled ass, rock bass, perch, catfish and carp. There is always good duck and snipe shooting in season at the lake, and the property is considered valuable by sportsmen.”

The old name of Lake Aquilla was “Goose Pond,” and so it appears in the county records of a half century ago; a title it probably received from the large number of wild geese which annually visited it in the early days. The lake was formerly surrounded by a heavy growth of timber, but has gradually succumbed to the axe of the woodman, and now the shore is clear in several places.

The Club numbers twenty-six members at present, and is composed of the following named persons: Capt. O. O. King, W. S. Metcalfe, N. H. Bostwick, H. O. Bostwick, s. D. Hollenbeck, C. A. Mills, A. D. Downing, Dr. S. G. Downing, Wm. N. Keeny, E. S. Keeny, E. L. F. Phelps, Dr. O. Pomeroy, Dr. F. S. Pomeroy, C. W. Fuller, of Cleveland, S. F. Eldredge, S. S. Smith, S. L. Chapman, E. P. Eldredge, B. F. Pease, O. R. Parks, H. McGugan, L. L. Fletcher, C. W. Osborne, of Painesville, Edwin L. Phelps, C. F. Ferris, and Dr. Clara Swan.

Mrs. Phoebe W. Foote and husband, Mr. Chas Foot, of Thompson were in town Monday morning and signed a warranty deed conveying the property above described to the “Goose Lake Club.”

Goose Lake Club Notes.

Geauga Republican – June 1896

The Goose Lake Club have built a fine pier or dock on their property at Lake Aquilla, and are now busy clearing away brush, cutting lilies and otherwise improving the grounds. The new dock just completed is 280 feet in length and 6 feet wide, with a platform 10 x 30 feet at the outer end, where a depth of about four feet of water is reached. The mouth of the “inlet” is being cleaned out, and a large and roomy boat-house, with room for oars, fishing tackle, etc., above will soon be built, trees set out, and those now standing on the property will be neatly trimmed up, making a place where the members of the Club and their friends can pass many pleasant

hours. A number of boats will be put on Lake Aquilla in a few days, and during the season a large number of fish of different kinds will be put in the lake. Capt. O. O. King recently received a letter from Hon. J. J. Stranahan, Superintendent of the State Fish Hatchery at Put-in-Bay Island, the purport of which was that a supply of young fish sufficient to stock Lake Aquilla could be obtained next winter from the hatchery by coming after them, and this will probably be done.

Prospects Bright for W. Claridon

Geauga County Record – February 16, 1912

It has been a busy winter in West Claridon. There has been work for every man and team that could be hired.

The outlook for another busy building season there is assured thus early by improvements which are to be made at Lotusdale Farm, where a large bungalow, 32 x 60 feet in size, will be erected and occupied by J. K. Turner and family as a summer residence.

The bungalow will be located north of the Lotusdale farm residence and buildings, facing on the macadam highway. The plans, it is understood, call for 10 rooms, one 20 x 25, with a fireplace, sleeping apartments, kitchen and screen enclosed porches, all under one roof.

Contractor Ed. Matthews, who will have charge of the construction, says that two carloads of building material have been ordered. The bungalow, when completed, will be a true type of that unique style of architecture.

Two smaller bungalows were erected last season by the Turners in the Lotusdale woods west of Aquilla Lake, and rented before completed. It is reported that these bungalows are already rented this season to Eastern people, who will spend the summer here.

C. L. Smith and F. E. Ford are figuring on plans for a bungalow to be erected on their 49-acre tract, one corner of which borders on Aquilla Lake.

But the biggest and most expensive single improvement on Spencer Street this year, will be the establishing of a tiling system on Lotusdale farm. The plans were made by Cleveland engineers last autumn.

A large ditching machine, weighing 14 tons, will be shipped here in a few weeks from New London, O., for use on the job. The machine will be operated from daylight to dark by means of gasoline traction engine, and

manned by two men. The machine will excavate to a depth of 6 feet, and moves along at a perceptible speed.

The knowledge that such a large machine will soon arrive here, and be seen moving over the fields in West Claridon, has caused considerable talk among farmers of the locality, who have expressed a desire to see the machine at work.

For some months past people who live along the macadam road have speculated among themselves over the possibility of securing electric lights in their homes and building through an extension of the service of Chardon's municipal lighting plant. So far as known no application for the service has been made to the village authorities.

Are Houses Haunted; Do the Dead Return?

Geauga County Record – February 23, 1912

“All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors.
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.
We meet them at the doorway, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.
There are more guests at table than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts.
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.”

On one of the coldest nights of the present winter, the writer was sitting alone in the kitchen of the old Reuben Hall homestead near Aquilla Lake in West Claridon – a large roomy structure familiarly known as “the haunted house,” which had been our home for quite six months. The snow lay in deep drifts along the country roads, which gave but few signs of recent

travel. The severity of the weather without was evidenced by the cracking of forest trees, which was the only sound to break the wintry stillness. A reinforced log fire, which burned brightly in the large open hearth, sent out waves of comforting heat, which penetrated to the further most corners of the room, provoking a look of satisfaction from the house cat, our solitary companion, which purred a note of grateful appreciation and content. There is something cheering about a blazing wood fire on a cold Winter's night. The cares of the day rest lightly—"While the red logs before us beat the frost line back with tropic heat."

While watching the slow evolution to ashes of a large back-log, we fell to ruminating upon the history of the old house and its earliest occupants, about whom we had succeeded, by diligent inquiry and research, in learning many interesting facts. Still ticking away in a niche in the kitchen wall, and measuring correctly the time for strangers as it had for several generations, whose last life-beats it had witnessed, was an old wooden clock, which the senior and original head of the Hall family had brought to the farm a century ago. About the room, and in adjoining rooms, were other reminders of those who once called the place home. "None are left of that circle now. The dear home faces whereupon that fitful firelight paled and shone. Henceforward, listen as we will, the voices of that hearth are still."

After standing for years alone, untenanted and deserted, like some aged person who had been left in their declining days without a single friend upon whom to lean, the old house still had a mission to perform, we mused. Once again home scenes were being enacted beneath its wide roof, and the sound of human voices echoed within its doors. The strength of its construction, being reinforced by large boxed whitewood beams which traverse the side walls at intervals, serving as an additional support to a heavy frame, appealed to us by reason of its stability. The pioneers builded better than they knew. While much of their handiwork in the vicinity had been obliterated by time, here indeed, was yet a landmark that had been preserved to recall those far-off days when the country hereabouts was young.

Notwithstanding the assurance of many well-meaning persons that "the old house was haunted," we had up to this time seen neither ghosts or departed spirits. The Hall family were Spiritualists, but it is solemnly affirmed by some of the older residents of the locality, who remember him well, that Reuben Hall, head of the family, who died in the 50's was never strong in the faith, although he interested himself in providing for the meetings held in his home. Over a half century ago large gathers of

Spiritualists were held here, and “mediums” had little difficulty in demonstrating to the followers of the cult present that the dead do come back. There is one thing about the Spiritualists that is worthy of note; they always accept literally what is offered. The knowledge that the tricks of deception of a “medium” have been exposed, never appears to weaken their belief in the genuineness of a “test.”

Dancing parties were also held in the house when the oldest residents of the neighborhood were children, but were discontinued, so the story goes, when death first entered the family over five decades ago.

Since coming into possession of the old house, and learning its rather curious history, we had somehow cultivated the feeling that either ghosts or departed spirits would be made welcome if, perchance, they should come trooping in. The eccentric builder and his wife, who survived him some years and lived alone there until her death, would enjoy returning to their old fireside more than any one else, we reasoned; and they would be most likely to appear, too, if the dead to come back.

How long our mind was thus preoccupied, we do not know. There is a kind of sleep that steals upon one sometimes which, while it holds the body prisoner, does not free the mind from a sense of things about it, and enables it to ramble as it pleases. The mind has its vacations, we are told. It is then that our latest serious thoughts are often pictured as a reality, only to be rudely dispelled when we are awakened.

We suddenly became aware that a light was flickering in an adjacent room. We distinctly heard voices, and saw reflected the shadow of moving forms reflected on the wall. Then into and through the open doorway leading to the kitchen, appeared the slightly bent figure of a man well past middle life, whose rugged features showed the effect of constant hard toil. Behind him slowly walked a woman of nearly equal age, carrying a candle above her head. Both were dressed in homespun. They stood in the full light of the fire, and from pictures that an old album in our possession contained, we recognized Reuben Hall and his wife, Rebecca. We plainly saw the earliest tenant and builder of the house reach up and take down from hooks on the overhead wall a curiously made rifle which we had not noticed before. His wife brought a powder horn from a corner of the room, and a small pouch which evidently contained bullets. Reuben Hall, known in his day as an unerring marksman, was going on a hunting expedition.

The desire to accompany him was so overpowering that we called out his name. There came a crashing sound; and, starting from the chair and rubbing our eyes, we discovered—that the partially consumed back-log had rolled over on the heavy dogirons, releasing a shower of sparks which were

carried up the chimney with a noisy roar, making the sound heard-and that we had been dreaming in the “old haunted house” near Aquilla Lake.

Our Spiritualistic friends will declare that it was a “visitation,” and ample proof that the dead come back. We say it is proof that people dream of things they think about. If remembering our departed friends is a spiritual manifestation or visitation from them, as Spiritualists claim it is, then the dead do come back, and we have no mind of our own. A happier, more sustaining thought is that somehow, somewhere, some day we will meet our departed loved ones after the trials of this life are over. A natural belief, also, is that we remember the dead because of enduring kinship ties, and our former long association with them on earth, while their good deeds serve as a guide-post, ever reminding us of what is best in life.

P.S.—but there’s not telling how far the writer would have gone on that hunt with Reuben Hall, if the back-log hadn’t rolled over at an opportune moment and awoke him up. R.L.D.

Geauga County Record – February 23, 1912

Local News – For several weeks before the ice breaks up at Aquilla Lake in the Spring, it is necessary to keep a channel open in front of the Proctor boat house, to prevent serious damage to the piling on which it stands. A narrow channel is cut, and this is kept open by cutting this ice daily that forms there until the danger is over.

Electric Lights on Geauga Farm

Geauga County Record – March 22, 1912

The residence and building at Lotusdale farm in West Claridon are to be lighted by electricity. This announcement was made by Mrs. J. K. Turner, of Cleveland, while in Chardon last Wednesday.

A Cleveland electrical engineering firm has been commissioned to install a private lighting plant there of sufficient capacity to light the farm if necessary, we learn.

The farm residence and bungalow will also be equipped with steam heat.

Material is still arriving for the new bungalow, which is to be erected just north of the Turner farm residence. The original plans for the bungalow have been altered, calling for a larger building.

The living room in the bungalow will be 24 x 32 feet in size, with an extra large fire-place, and there will also be about a dozen other rooms, all under one roof, while a 12-foot porch will nearly encircle the building.

The bungalow will be a valuable building addition to West Claridon, while the tiling of Lotusdale farm this season, representing a considerable outlay of money, will be still another substantial testimonial to the live interest that Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Turner take in their country home.

They are bringing improvements there which beautify and enrich their holdings, and enhance the value of other property in the locality.

Feb 6 1958 Geauga Times Leader

Aquilla Briefs

The Aquilla Chapter of the hospital organization is going to start meeting again. No date has been set for the first meeting.

The girl scouts met at the hall for their regular meeting on Thursday. The girls had a business meeting and a flag ceremony. A valentine party was also discussed. Mrs. Pat Dawson and Mrs. Kay Babbitt are their leaders.

The brownies met at the home of Mrs. Betty Parr for their meeting on Wednesday. The girls are making a valentine box for their valentine exchange. They also spent some time working on pot holders. Refreshments were brought and served by Carol Wolfe.

Story Hour is held at the home of Mrs. Harold Gaines, 185 Turner St., each Wednesday. Children over eight years old attend from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.. All children are welcome.

Geauga Times Leader – Feb 20, 1958

Aquilla Briefs

Organizational plans were made last Sunday for a community bazar to be held on the July 4 weekend.

Bazar chairman is Mrs. Jessie Marthe. Aiding he will be Mrs. Betty Parr, publicity Mrs. Marge FRigic, community kitchen with Mrs. Dorothy Rienke and Mrs. Jennie Smith assisting. Mrs. Parr will also head the hospital auxiliary booth.

Other booths planned will include fish pont, baked goods, white elephant, parcel-post, dart game, Girl Scout, Boy Scouts, refreshments, and a penny pitch.

In charge of tickets and prizes are Conrad Hoffman and Steve Vinicky.

Announcement of another meeting will be made soon.

The Girl Scouts and Mrs. Pat Lawson and Mrs. Kay Babbitt donated to the village a wall clock for the hall.

Geauga Times Leader – April 17, 1958

Aquilla Briefs

An ordinance was passed at the last council meeting permitting parking on the east side of Turner Dr. between Goredon and Berkshire Drs. From 6 a.m. to midnight in order to facilitate the parking problem for various activities at the village hall.

Aquilla Village delights in past, future

The Sunday Paper – October 2, 1983

Aquilla Village – “Where nature smiles, and the summer lingers in the Berkshires of Ohio.”

In the early 1900s that slogan enticed many Cleveland residents, and some internationally known artists, to a summer stay in a central Geauga county area now known as Aquilla Village.

Not officially a village until 1946, Aquilla became a popular summer home for thousands who flocked to cottages on the western shore of Lake Aquilla.

Emilie Esmonde, who is on village council and is also a member of the Geauga County Historical Society, credits Judge Lester Taylor with naming the 40-acre lake at the source of the Cuyahoga River. She said Taylor borrowed the Latin word “Aquilla” which means eagle, after he got a bird’s-eye view of the lake and thought it resembled an eagle’s head.

“Someone added the extra “L” at sometime, but no one can figure out why,” Esmonde said. Until then the lake was called Claridon Pond.

Another legend among the villagers has the name “Aquilla” coming from an Indian chief who lived in the area, Elnora (Spencer) Zepp said.

Zepp is the great-great-granddaughter of Nathaniel Spencer, who acquired a 600-acre parcel of land from the Connecticut Land Co. The parcel included the present 92-acre site of the village.

In an adjacent state park, Zepp said there is a stone marker carved with the profile of an Indian and the words, “Chief Aquilla,” standing at the

chief's alleged gravesite. Zepp said the stone is the work of an early camper.

"Some of the original kids found the stone and said that there is an Indian chief buried there," Esmonde said, "But historical accounts say it is baloney. It's just a story, but all the kids believe it."

Development of the area began after J. K. Turner became owner of the property around the turn of the century, Esmonde said.

Turner, a labor mediator, built a home which he used as a meeting place for those trying to resolve labor conflicts, Esmonde said. Cottages were built to house those conducting business in Turner's home.

Zepp lives in Turner's original home which lies outside the village boundaries.

Esmonde said the property was taken over by the Realty Aquilla Co. in 1920. The construction of roads and cottages began to change the pastoral setting.

The community stayed summer grounds for visitors until the Depression, when people began taking up permanent residence, Esmonde said. Notable visitors included German painters Hans Busch and Fred Siegel.

Busch studied at Berlin's Royal Academy of Art and did numerous paintings of the area, some of which were displayed in the Cleveland Museum of Art and at international shows in Philadelphia and Chicago.

In those early days, a fence split the village, and sidewalks, lined with kerosene lamps, led the way to the lake and the one water well that served villagers.

An Aquilla community organization, still in existence, was founded in 1923. It maintained a beach area and a community building by the lake. Zepp said the building had to be moved several feet after the first floor was flooded.

When interest in the organization began to lag, Esmonde said the group petitioned to incorporate the area. As a result, on July 15, 1946, Aquilla became Ohio's smallest village.

"Good things come in small packages," Aquilla Mayor Edward Lubecky said. Now the village is Ohio's third smallest, with approximately 380 people living in 150 homes.

"It still has retained that country feel," Lubecky said. "I can look out my window and see cows in the pasture. I like that." The flocks of geese that make their yearly stop at the lake is another of the area's natural wonders.

Although the village fell on hard times and was designated as a target area for neighborhood improvement, there is a new movement toward rejuvenation.

Mary Strung, director of Community Development of Geauga County which handled part of the funds used last year to install a \$1.2 million central sewer system, said she feels the village is on the brink of turning itself around.

“People are doing things and that’s encouraging,” Strung said. She referred to renovations projects at many houses.

The community group which fell by the wayside plans to revitalize the lake area, including the beach which will be exclusively for members. Federal funds will be used next spring to pave roads, which Lubecky said will raise property values.

“We are seeing more and more young people down here,” Lubecky said. “It is a good place for a couple to get started. They buy a small home here, and then once they get the equity built up, they move on.

“But, there are a lot of residents that have been here for years, and years, and years, and will be here until they die.”

Lake Aquilla: Rich With Memories and Legends

Chardon Courier – January 27, 1995

Lake Aquilla, a natural glacial lake which represents the headwaters of the Cuyahoga River, is rich with silent tales of the past. Hunting grounds to Indians, recreation for early settlers and home to a colony of summer cottagers in the early 1900s, Lake Aquilla’s history remains mostly in the form of memories, mysteries and legends.

One of the legends begins in the woods near the lake, where the remains of an Indian burial site can be found. A large depression in the ground is surrounded by a mosscovered sandstone outcropping on three sides. One stone bears a beautifully carved portrait of Chief Aquilla. Other names are carved out as well, and many believe that the Chief’s squaw was buried next to him.

Legend has it that the lake was named after the chief of a small, peaceful tribe that hunted and fished in this area, following the river and staying briefly in camps. The Delaware, Tonawanda and Massasauga tribes were some of the Indians found in Geauga County during the late 1700s.

According to the Pioneer and General History of Geauga County, Lake Aquilla was referred to as Claridon Pont and Goose Pond by the early settlers until 1880 when Judge Lester Taylor is said to have renamed the lake. Judge Taylor had a home on the Taylor-Wells Road side of the lake. Since the outline of the lake resembled the head of an eagle to Judge Taylor, and the Latin word for eagle is “aquila,” he called it Lake Aquilla. No explanation was ever given for the additional “L”, except perhaps a misspelling.

Some people say that the carving of Chief Aquilla was done by an artistic camper, who signed his name at the bottom – H. R. Wagner.

Camping was popular at the lake in the early 1900s. The Lake Aquilla Wildlife Area property was then owned by Ward and Mildred Roberts. The Roberts family opened the lake up as a private recreation area. A popular spot for church picnics and family reunions, visitors came from far and wide to rent a rowboat for 50 cents, picnic and perhaps spend the night under the stars.

Obviously, there is some contradiction in the stories of how the lake got its name, but there was no doubt that people enjoyed the area so much that a summer resort was inevitable.

The Lotusdale Estate, owned by J. K. Turner, extended down to the lake. Turner built a fine house and cottages for his many guests. The stone pillars and iron gates still remain, but after the main house burned, Turner sold a large tract of land to the Aquilla Realty Company in 1920. After surveying and building roads, they put lots up for sale. The realty company promoted Lake Aquilla with a series of BurmaShave – type signs seen along Rt. 322, “Lake Aquilla in the Berkshires of Ohio where nature smiles and summer lingers.” In 1923 lots were sold at the county fair as a “Buy one, get one free” package deal. Many former visitors bought land and build cottages for summer use only. The summer community was comprised of mainly upper middle class professionals.

The early owners incorporated to promote interest and entertainment to protect the members; therefore, on September 20, 1923 Aquilla Lake Community Inc. was born. Members paid dues with which they soon erected a community center/dance hall down near the lake front. Dances were very popular during this time. Twice a week, people came from all over the county to trip the light fantastic. A couple by the name of Foster came out from the big city to teach social dancing.

The community owned a portion of lake front property where they built a beach, complete with a diving board and lifeguard station. The Community held clambakes and corn roasts down in the grove.

In those days, life centered around the lake. Elnora Zepp, a year-round resident of the remaining Lotusdale property for many years, recalls some of the wonderful winter activities. Ice fishing was popular; as it still is today. Ice boats, which were sail boats on runners, were a trend that lasted a few years. Some farmers came and cut blocks of ice from the lake, hauled the blocks out on bobsleds and packed them in sawdust to last well into the summer. This practice worked well to keep dairy products fresh until electricity became widely used.

Ice skating was another fun winter activity that varied from year to year. It seems that a grist mill on Butternut Road dammed the river and occasionally the floodwaters would freeze just right, so that one could skate all the way to Burton.

During this time, a man named Mort Eldridge operated a store in the small community, which he sold to Fred and Joe Barrows. The Barrows expanded the store and added a restaurant where Mrs. Barrows' cooking became a big hit. The restaurant, called Barrows' Country Inn, had a large dining room and a fireplace. They held clambakes and served as a lodge for various clubs such as the Kiwanis and the Chamber of Commerce.

Life at Lake Aquilla had a magical, vacation-like atmosphere, until the depression in 1929 brought many changes. People all over had to curtail extra expenses, so many cottages became winterized for year-around living. Strangers appeared on the scene, finding the small community an economical place to live. However, these new residents had no interest in the Aquilla Lake Community, Inc. and paid no dues. Soon the Community property became run down with neglect, and there was no more dances, corn roasts or clambakes.

In 1933, a new organization was formed, Lake Aquilla Estates, for the purpose of selling the remaining lots. Since this organization did not quite fit the bill either, concerned residents proposed making the community a corporate village. Aquilla Village was established in July of 1946 as one of Ohio's three smallest villages, holding a steady population of under 400 people. All the lots, springs and roads were turned over to the Village, but the community still owns the lake front area and other land for community use.

Today, the Lake Aquilla Wildlife Area is mainly used for waterfowl hunting and fishing for bluegill, black crappie, largemouth bass and northern pike. Aquilla Village is a quiet, peaceful place to live. The community center is gone, and the roads are now paved, but little else has changed.

Many residents have lived there all their lives and plan to stay for the duration. It is a friendly community where everyone knows everyone, giving residents a comforting sense of belonging.

Emily Esmonde, a member of the Village Council and resident since the early 1950's says, "It's a good place to raise kids." And indeed many of the kids who grew up there have come back to raise their own children and stay in the little village where everyone knows your name.