

**A Brief History  
of  
Van Buren Point  
Chautauqua County, New York**

**Commemorating the Twenty-fifth  
Anniversary  
of  
The Community Center  
1949 - 1974**

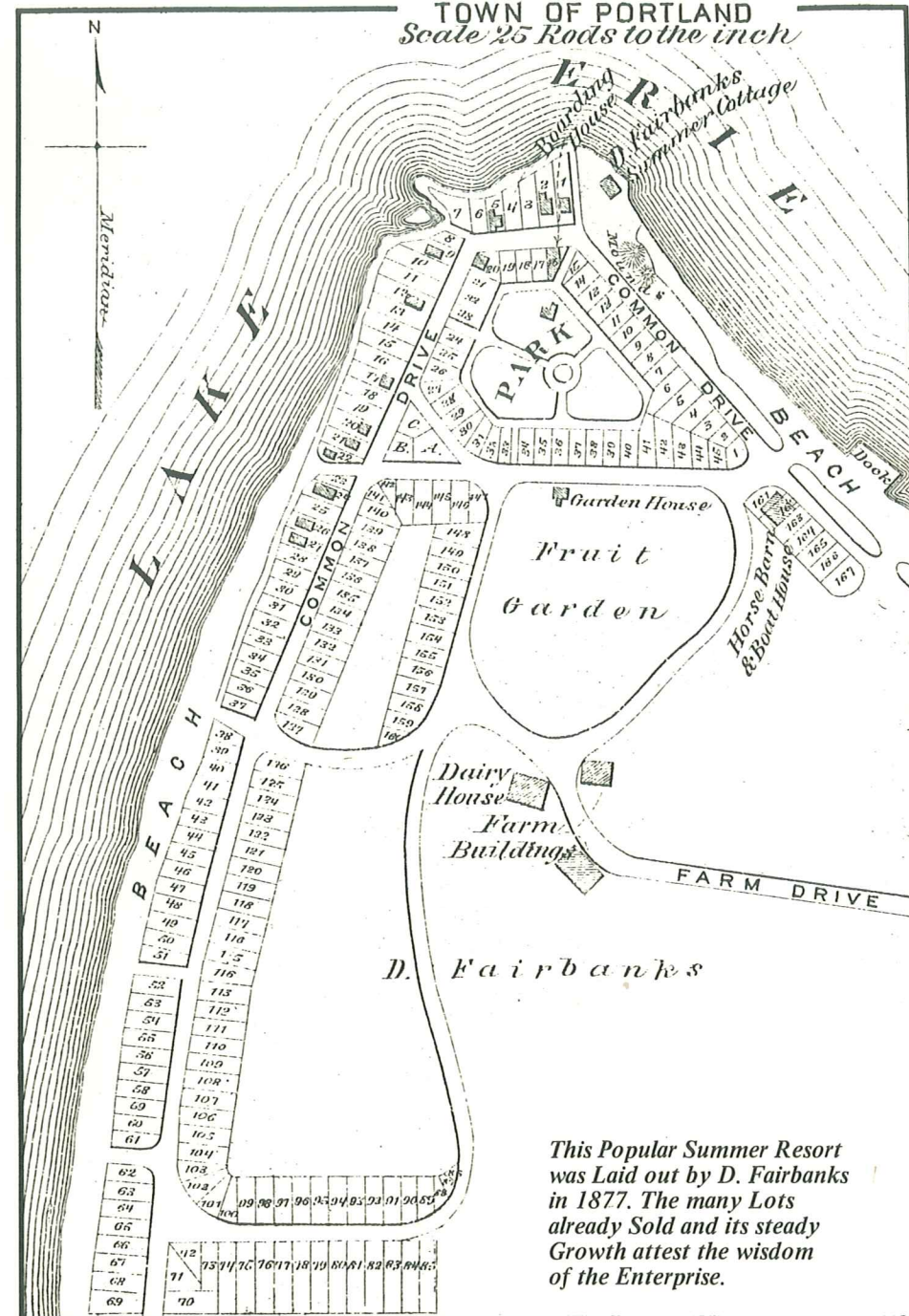
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1949 - 1974

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August 27, 1974

INLAND SEA SIDE  
**VAN BUREN POINT**  
 TOWN OF PORTLAND  
*Scale 25 Rods to the inch*



*This Popular Summer Resort  
 was Laid out by D. Fairbanks  
 in 1877. The many Lots  
 already Sold and its steady  
 Growth attest the wisdom  
 of the Enterprise.*

## Preface

Van Buren Point is a unique experience affording tranquility and serenity within a private community amidst beautiful natural surroundings. This is attested to by the fact that its summer residents return year after year; many who came first as renters were so attracted that they have subsequently become property owners. Primarily Van Buren is a family resort and its uniqueness rests largely in the relaxed and safe environment for children. As one reflects on Van Buren Point as we know it today, the natural presumption would be that this place and its purpose had always been a woodland setting on the shores of Lake Erie particularly suitable for the enjoyment of nature as a summer vacation spot. However a reading of available historical materials tells us that the early settlers and investors had a diametrically different vision: they envisioned Van Buren not as a summer vacation place but as a thriving commercial railroad terminus and seaport.

This brief history of Van Buren Point has been compiled under the auspices of the Women's Club of Van Buren Point from old newspapers, files and correspondence and minutes of meetings.



### Notes on early history

Had Van Buren City flourished as a city, according to records going back to 1768, we might never have known Van Buren Point as a summer resort.

The Six Indian Nations, through the mediation of Sir William Johnson, by the treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768 agreed to sell a vast territory extending as far west as present Erie County, Pennsylvania, which was then a part of New York. This is the first record of a transfer of land in western New York.

In 1784 The Holland Land Co. began its large purchases. This company was formed by a number of wealthy merchants of Amsterdam, Holland. In three years The Holland Land Co. invested in 1105 warrants for land, each warrant calling for 900 acres. The area now known as Van Buren Point was included in one of these warrants and was first surveyed by David Watts in 1786. An old map of Van Buren Harbor on record in Mayville shows The Holland Land Company holdings comprising most of the property now known as Van Buren Point. The first written record and description was by John Lincklaen, employed by The Holland Land Co. to explore and report on its holdings. He left Philadelphia August 3, 1791 and visited what is now Van Buren Point on September 3, 1791. Early in 1800 there was a small fishing settlement on Van Buren Point which took its name from a Hollander named Van Buren who was identified with The Holland Land Co.

In 1816 The Holland Land Co. began to dispose of its holdings and records show they sold parcels No. 1 and No. 2 to Justus Adams for \$820.50 in the year 1816 and parcels No. 3 and No. 4 to Bishop Adams for \$225.64 on June 25, 1835.

Bishop Adams cleared fine timber - - oak, maple and walnut and built a log house that had no floor. A huge fireplace about filled one end of the house and the family life centered around the fireplace. It was so large that when they wanted to put in a "back log" that would anywhere near fill it, they used a yoke of oxen. The house was built with low doors in the side walls and a long chain would be run through the house and hitched to the log. The oxen were hitched to the other end of the chain and the log pulled into the house in front of the fireplace where it could be rolled into place. Such a back log would last for three days.

In those days there were still many Seneca Indians roaming about and they often visited Bishop Adams and his family. They were always friendly and usually hungry. The house had only one room but blankets were used as curtains to screen the beds of the family, the Indians would roll themselves in their blankets and sleep on the floor in front of the fireplace. About three o'clock in the morning they would slip out quietly to come back later with a deer, one quarter of which Betsy Adams always cooked for them and the rest of the deer was left for her.

There were a few other families not far away so that at one time there was a small log school house at the Point. School was taught by a retired minister who also held preaching services in the school house on Sundays. His wife and one son had died of consumption, so he determined to try the toughening process on the four boys left. They were allowed to wear shoes in the house or at school but out of doors even with snow on the ground they went barefooted and grew into strong healthy men.



In Bishop Adams' time, an Englishman by the name of Steffans settled near the lake and began to manufacture brick, building a kiln - - this was simply a pit dug in the ground covered with big flat stones and banked with dirt. These bricks accumulated; some were sold and others were used later in building Van Buren City.

Bishop Adams built a scow that he used on the lake for several years. It had two masts and two large sails, the canvas being made from flax raised at the Point, spun and woven by Betsy Bishop and sewed into the right shape. He would sail up to Conneaut, Ohio, and load up with limestone and bring it to Van Buren and then burn it taking the lime to Buffalo to sell. When clearing the land, the large timbers of oak, maple and black walnut were made into rafts and floated down the lake to Buffalo. The small hardwood was burned and the ashes leached into lye and taken to Buffalo. With a favorable south wind the old boat could make the trip to Buffalo and return in one day.

Medical herbs grown at Van Buren Point with the help of the Indians were gathered by Bishop Adams and prepared for the Burdock Medical Company of Buffalo.

### Visions of site as a commercial harbor

Deeds recorded show that on September 28, 1835 Squire White of Fredonia, N. Y. (first licensed physician in New York State) purchased this property from Justus and Bishop Adams, with other lands, a total of 329 acres, for the sum of \$8,580. Shortly after this purchase Squire White with Chauncey Tucker and others, formed a voluntary joint stock association having a capital of \$12,000 divided into 60 shares of \$200 each. The purpose of this association was to acquire the lands as noted above, dividing the same into village lots, with streets and improvements, and the selling of these lots to others. Soon after this association was formed it commenced business, divided the land into village lots, improved the harbor by building wharves, piers and a warehouse, laid out and graded streets, sold and conveyed many lots upon which houses were built and in the year 1837 the village thus formed had about 300 inhabitants. Squire White and his associates expected the railroad being built to have its terminus at what was to be Van Buren Harbor.

When the New York and Erie Railroad was projected in 1836 its western terminus was fixed upon the shore of Lake Erie. The first location was about four miles above Dunkirk, where a point of land puts out into the lake (now Van Buren Point), considered to afford good landing facilities besides being a good site for a commercial town that was expected to spring up on the completion of the road.

The "Western Democrat" (a newspaper published in Fredonia - - later to be the "Van Buren Times") enlisted the advice of a "Mr. Haynes of New York", who seemed to be regarded as an expert on harbors. He sailed the entire length of the southern shore of Lake Erie, assessing the potentialities of the harbors. "All" of them were found inadequate or unsafe; but when it came to Van Buren Harbor, Mr. Haynes waxed eloquent in his praise. It had, said he, "preeminent local advantages, equalled only by the talents and enterprise of its citizens."

The plan was mapped off, and the embryo city laid out and an eligible site selected for a forthcoming lighthouse. On March 21, 1837, the Light

House Bill was reported passed in the State legislature making an appropriation of \$2,700 for a Beacon Light at Van Buren Harbor. However the railroad as completed, terminated at Dunkirk and the village at Van Buren Harbor did not prosper.

In the May 9, 1837 "Van Buren Times" mention is made that a petition addressed to the State legislature requested that the Erie Canal be extended to Van Buren Harbor.

The Van Buren Harbor Bill was passed in the House of Representatives on May 23, 1838 for an appropriation of \$12,000 for improvement of Van Buren Harbor. "This sum properly managed would render Van Buren a safe and convenient harbor." The need for harbor work vanished with the collapse of Van Buren City.

The names Van Buren City and Van Buren Village were used interchangeably and apparently had nothing to do with the form of government nor the size of the entity. The title used seemed to indicate the potential of whatever was at hand.

In 1835 a company was formed and stock was sold on Wall Street to build the first railroad from Fredonia to Van Buren. The Erie Railroad terminus at Dunkirk made building this new railroad unnecessary.

About 1835 when the City of Van Buren was enjoying its building boom, there was a brick block building built. Starting in September 1836 the "Van Buren Times" - - a literary commentary, was printed on the top floor of this building. The equipment and writers came from Fredonia where they had published "The Western Democrat" and the "Literary Inquirer". Two years later, the mortgage holder seized the "Van Buren Times" equipment and moved it to Erie. Arba K. Maynard who served as editor for a time, was the first Postmaster of the U. S. Post Office at Van Buren Harbor established August 13, 1836. After the service of four other postmasters, the office was discontinued on December 6, 1856.

In 1838, large lake boats found our shallow bay a problem. The first large boat in the harbor was The Wm. Peacock that ran between Buffalo and Erie followed by The Captain Townsend commanded by Captain S. Fox of Fredonia.

### Events subsequent to the demise of Van Buren City

Squire White died intestate at Fredonia, April 2, 1857. A judgment filed June 24, 1871, referring to Van Buren, recites in part "All the buildings erected and improvements made on said lands have fallen into decay and been destroyed or taken away, the inhabitants have removed and the lands for nearly thirty years past have been and now are useful and valuable for farming purposes only."

Some cottages were moved to Fredonia and are still in use today - - one is at the corner of Central Avenue and Temple Street. The brick block building at the Point was dismantled and used to build the business building at West Main Street and Forest Street. Armstrong's Hotel at Van Buren City was not completely finished inside - - after being dismantled, the stone was shipped by boat to Buffalo and used to build the Phelps Hotel later known as the Clarendon. The land was used by Mr. John P. Hall who had the largest farm in



the country. He raised sheep and cows - - sending the milk to the cheese factory.

Since most of the stockholders of the joint stock association which had promoted Van Buren Harbor had died, their heirs removed to other places and unknown, records lost and title to the remaining lands uncertain, the Supreme Court of New York appointed one Orson Stiles as Referee. By a series of deeds dated at various times in July, September, and October, 1871, Orson Stiles took title to all the lands remaining to the association which had been formed by Squire White and others, and deeded these lands to George Barker on September 24, 1874 for \$6,000.

### Emergence of Van Buren Point as a summer resort

George Barker deeded his interest to Daniel Fairbanks on December 12, 1874. During the next few years Daniel Fairbanks sold numerous lots. Two of the transfers are noted here as being of interest:

"Daniel Fairbanks conveyed lot No. 15 to Harriet E. Thayer by deed dated August 9, 1876 and this deed sets forth various provisions for walks, beach rights, restricting sale of intoxicating liquors, etc."

"By deed dated September 16, 1879, Daniel Fairbanks conveyed lot No. 10 to Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) for \$115.00." (This lot was sold to Harry Raymond Rogers, M.D. of Dunkirk on November 17, 1882 for \$200; for once in his life, Mark Twain made a profit on his investment).

The Fairbanks family lived in a good log cabin on the Point and spent much of their time improving the farm. Picnic groups frequented Van Buren Point and some lots were sold.

Beginning in 1884, J. Lansing Moore, an energetic young man from Buffalo, acquired various pieces of property at Van Buren Point.

Mr. Moore, known as "The Father of Van Buren", spent much time on plantings and property improvements. He continued the picnic grove privileges but his largest income was from the sale of lots. He developed the land as a summer resort, cottages were built and beautiful shrubs and flowers started.

Mr. Moore was prepared to take boarders in the cottages and at the boarding hall. At that time, some cottage people arranged to have their meals for the season at the boarding hall.

During this same period, a line of good "busses" (Horse drawn vehicles) ran on schedule from Fredonia and Dunkirk:

"Regular trips leave Fredonia at 8:25 a.m. and 6 p.m.  
Leave Van Buren at 9:30 a.m. and 7 p.m."

Also, travel by lake boats was available round trip to Dunkirk depending on the weather.

In 1889 a booklet was published describing the advantages and beauties of the property and showing various views; Van Buren was characterized as "A Beautiful, Quiet Place for the Overworked and Weary to Rest."

The brochure went on to say, "If persons who intend to visit the Point will notify the superintendent and inform him by what road and train and at

what time they will arrive, they will be met at Dunkirk or Van Buren with suitable conveyances." (Van Buren would have been at the railroad crossing on the Van Buren Road. Usually the conveyance was a buckboard suitable for hauling passengers and trunks.)

The present Victoria Cottage was part of the original hotel building of which Mr. Moore was proprietor.

The hotel had 20 bedrooms on the second floor. The first floor had a covered veranda on three sides. The dining room, size 22½' x 80'; an office, a few sitting rooms, a large kitchen and service rooms completed the first floor. The published schedule of rates was as follows:

### VAN BUREN POINT HOTEL

Rates	
Board per day .....	\$1.50
Board per week .....	8.00
Lodging .....	.50
Breakfast .....	.50
Dinner .....	.75
Tea .....	.50
Coffee per cup .....	.10
Tea per cup .....	.10
Milk per glass .....	.05
Cream per glass .....	.10
Lemonade .....	.10
Cake .....	.10
Ice Cream .....	.10

Van Buren Point developed into a very popular resort; unfortunately, Mr. Moore made some unwise investments and lost his interest in the resort. In 1896 the property was sold to John F. Wilson who sold it to Judge John L. Lambert of Fredonia.

An interesting newspaper article in 1903 relates that Van Buren Camp life and all its pleasures are within the reach of everyone. It reports that "every day a cottage is rented for a whole or half month by people who are attracted by the economy of the rents - \$8.50 to \$14.00 a month."

### Development of Van Buren Point subsequent to purchase of property by Andrews Land Company

The Andrews Land Company of Erie, Pa. purchased the land in 1910; Mr. A. J. "Barney" Andrews was instrumental in much of the subsequent development. After his death, his son, W. D. Andrews was in charge.

The pavilion at Oakdale and Central Avenue was popular about this time. It served as a recreation hall, grocery store and post office - - access to the dance hall was through the store. A covered veranda on three sides served to observe the action on the dance floor. The second floor was used to house visiting band members. Card parties and roller skating were frequent programs. Special events included Spencerian writing lessons and sponsoring a small seasonal zoo. Mr. Arthur Brown from New Castle, Pa. managed the store and pavilion and lived in Elmherst Cottage at Central Avenue and Park Blvd. Early in the 1940's the pavilion was torn down because the building was in disrepair.



Around 1910, horseback riding became very popular; many guests at the Point came because of the beautiful horses available. A large newspaper ad dated July 3, 1912 mentions the baseball diamond and picnic tables. "The Van Buren Point Cafe, under the care of Mr. Guy Gugino an experienced caterer, is now open. The best of meals is to be had here, as well as iced drinks, ice cream and the like. The Barn under new management - - For hitching in the barn 10 cents, hitching and feeding 25 cents."

Central Avenue, as we know it today, was not open off the township road. Access was by "Common Drive" now called Lakeside Boulevard off the township road at the next set of pillars near the lake. This made a beautiful entrance through "The Willows" on up to the hotel and dining hall. The horse barn was at Grove Avenue and Park Avenue at the place where we discard leaves today. The first floor was used for the animals and the second floor housed two large water storage tanks that served the community. After streets were paved, having horses travel about was not as desirable and the horse service was discontinued. When the present water storage tank was purchased from Van Buren Bay, the horse barn was torn down.

This interesting paragraph was found in a booklet "Van Buren Point on Lake Erie" published about 1910 by the Andrews who operated the Van Buren Point Company, Erie, Pa.

#### "HOME LIVING AT HOME COSTS

Living at Van Buren alters the general fact that your vacation is an expense - - a luxury to be afforded only the more well-to-do. For here a vacation is an economy.

To prove this: \$1200 will buy a lot and build thereon a seven-room cottage, equipped with bath, fireplace, screened thru-out, and completely furnished. \$100 will cover the interest on your investment and all carrying charges, including upkeep, gas, water and garbage collection. This amount, covering our four months' season, would average a monthly rental of \$25, a sum considerably under the rental of the majority of homes in town.

Beyond this you could doubtless effect a saving in your daily living costs. You will pay from 12 to 15 percent less for groceries and vegetables than prevailing city prices; milk will cost you but 8¢ per quart; ice 40¢ per hundred; gas 35¢ per thousand. Under the open door policy competition will regulate the prices of food and other merchandise."

The following paragraphs are taken from a commemorative publication of the Van Buren Point Management Corporation issued in 1942:

#### "THE HOTEL AND COTTAGES.

Surrounded by a landscape of great beauty and variety, near the extremity of the head-land, is found the hotel with its cluster of cottages scattered here and there in shady nooks and quiet retreats for the use of families who prefer the privacy of individual homes. From the verandas can be enjoyed a sweeping and unobstructed view of the lake, harbor, beach, and surrounding country - - a prospect which never fails to please and entertain those who delight to study the fair but ever-changing face of nature.

Ample provision is likewise made for the many who prefer

walls of canvas and a gypsy experience in the white tents, which are pitched on the sunny campus, along the sandy beach, or in the shady groves.

An important adjunct to the hotel is the fertile farm of 100 acres, from whose fields and pastures, orchards and vineyards, vegetable gardens and berry patches, greenhouses and hennery are supplied daily to the hotel tables an abundance of fresh vegetables, berries, fruits, milk, cream and eggs.

Every possible provision is made to satisfy the material wants of the patrons of the Point, and no one ever has occasion to carry away other than pleasant memories of a spot upon which Nature has lavished her treasures so freely.

#### WALKS AND DRIVES.

Winding over the sunny greensward, in and out of the cool groves, through the leafy dells, and along the sands at the water's edge are wide plank walks and shady woodland paths for those who would taste the exhilaration of an early morning stroll or enjoy the calm delights of a moonlight promenade.

For others who prefer to ride, there are fine graveled drives on the grounds, kept well sprinkled, while all the adjacent country is a region of fertile farms, and excellent roads. One favorite drive is the old Lake Shore Turnpike, which follows the windings of the beach all the way from Buffalo to Cleveland, presenting an ever-changing panorama of charming land and water views. Another good road winds over the Chautauqua Hills to Mayville, 18 miles distant, at the head of the far-famed lake. Still others lead to Cassadaga, to Dunkirk, to Fredonia, and to the Brocton grape district only five miles away. The hotel livery is well stocked with well-trained saddle horses, safe riding horses which any lady can drive, and spirited animals for those who enjoy speeding over good roads. Besides, there is a fine drove of Shetland ponies, which, with dog-carts, are the delight of the children.

#### FROM A SANITARY POINT OF VIEW.

The manifest sanitary advantages of Van Buren Point have won for the place the highest endorsement of the medical profession. A number of the leading Buffalo physicians not only commend it to their patients, but likewise bring their own families here, and spend with them as many hours each day as pressing professional duties will permit.

The renowned ozone-charged atmosphere of the Thousand Islands is no more pure, no more invigorating, no more free from malarial taint than the fresh lake breezes which favor the fortunate dwellers on the Point even on the sultriest August days when not a breath of air is stirring inland.

The natural slope of the plateau upon which the hotel and cottages are built is away from the lake, and all the sewerage is drained back to the extreme rear of the farm, where it is rendered wholly innocuous. The entire sewerage and water-works system was planned by an expert sanitary engineer and constructed under his direct supervision. A pumping station supplies to the hotel,



each cottage and every part of the grounds an abundance of pure lake water for all purposes.

Add to the other hygienic features of life at the Point the excellence of the food supplied direct from the farm to the table and it is little wonder that pale and puny children grow plump and rosy, that weary mothers become strong and vigorous once more as the result of restored appetites, freedom from household cares, and sound sleep; that jaded business men who come out on the evening trains return to town the next morning rested and refreshed, and even the visitors who linger on the grounds only a single day take their reluctant departure with brighter views of life."

### **Van Buren Point Association, Inc.**

Following the acquisition of the property which is now included in Van Buren Point, an area of about 100 acres, A. J. Andrews sold some lots and rented a number of cottages. He furnished water to the cottage owners which was pumped from the lake into a tank located across the road from the present water tank. He also arranged for the collection of garbage and rubbish and the general upkeep of the property, for all of such services he made an annual charge to each cottage.

In the year 1927, the cottage owners formally associated themselves together as the Van Buren Point Association, Inc., incorporated July 26, 1927 under Article 2 of the Membership Corporation Law of the State of New York. This action was accepted at the cottage owners meeting of July 4, 1928. Paragraph 2 of the Certificate of Incorporation reads as follows:

"The purposes for which it is to be formed are all the general purposes authorized by law for membership corporations, especially the development of Van Buren Point in the Town of Pomfret and Portland, Chautauqua County, N. Y., as a recreational center and summer cottage colony, including the securing, construction and maintenance of parks and playgrounds, sewage, sanitation, light, heat, power, water, fire and police protection and other necessary and convenient services to that end, the arrangement and conducting of meetings and assemblies for mutual improvement and entertainment along educational, scientific, musical, recreational and other lines for its members and others, and the ownership, operation and use of all facilities, necessary and expedient for the accomplishment of the foregoing purposes are any of them."

It appears that the acquisition of the sewer system and the need for its improvement were important considerations in the formation of the Association. Each cottage making use of the sewer was assessed a fixed sum for extensions and the construction of a proper treatment plant, which therefore became one of common ownership.

In the season of 1934 a change was made in the matter of services performed by the Andrews interests for the cottage owners. The following paragraph is quoted from a letter dated May 8, 1934 addressed to the members and cottage owners:

"The present Board of Directors, has made an agreement with Messrs. A. J. and W. D. Andrews of the Van Buren Point

Company to lease the facilities they own for the season of 1934. For this season, in addition to the sewer and street lighting systems owned by the Association, there will be added the operation of the water supply system, collection of garbage and rubbish, maintenance of roads, tennis courts and children's playground. This year, for the first time, the operation of Van Buren Point will be under the exclusive control and supervision of this Association of property owners. The successful operation now rests upon the Board of Directors and they are in duty bound to comply with the instructions of the majority vote of the cottage owners as expressed in the Annual Meeting on July 4th every year. The only services not under control and supervision of the Directors are electricity and gas."

A reading of the minutes and old correspondence reveals that during the early years of the Association many contributions of time and effort were made by some of the dedicated property owners who served as officers, directors and on committees. We who enjoy the pleasures and privileges of the Point today owe a great debt of gratitude to those who were instrumental in guiding the affairs through what must have been most difficult and trying circumstances.

### **Van Buren Point Management Corporation**

As has been stated previously, for many years Van Buren Point was operated by the Andrews interests who owned most of the vacant land, a number of cottages, the water system, roads and beaches. After the death of A. J. Andrews, the Andrews family declared their intention of selling their interests at Van Buren. A group of cottage owners recognized that if the Andrews holdings were in the control of owners who would exploit the property for maximum profit, the interests of cottage owners could be adversely affected and the character of Van Buren Point would change. Therefore, this group formed the Van Buren Point Management Corporation in 1942 and all the holdings of the Andrew interests were acquired thereby.

One of the principal assets included in the property was the water supply system which was constructed by the Andrews Land Company prior to 1918. During the years, replacements were made. A gas engine to drive pumps was replaced by electric motors, two wooden tanks were replaced by the present steel tank, pumps and piping replaced when necessary because of wear and corrosion. However, the water was not suitable for drinking and the cottage owners and renters were obliged to obtain drinking water in jugs from the Dunkirk water supply at the gas station outside the Point. In 1947 the Management Corporation installed a purification system consisting of a Graver reaction tank and rapid sand filter, with necessary clear well and equipment for proper treatment of water to meet the requirements of the New York State Department of Health.

Except for a period of approximately four years between 1945 and 1949, when the Board of Directors of the Association decided to conduct the maintenance operations of the Point, the Management Corporation supervised the operations on terms similar to those prevailing when the Andrews interests held the property. During these years the active supervision of the maintenance



functions were undertaken by Walter F. Bragdon who was President of the Management Corporation. Upon Mr. Bragdon's death in 1958 the contract work for the Association was carried out by various individuals responsible to the Management Corporation Board of Directors, who in 1959 decided that the Corporation should dispose of all of its properties and cease operation.

It was the desire of the stockholders of Van Buren Point Management Corporation that the Point be protected from commercial exploitation and that the tradition of the Point as a family summer resort be preserved. Accordingly negotiations were begun with the directors of Van Buren Point Association of which T. C. Fockler was then President, to determine the feasibility of the Association's acquiring the outstanding stock of the Corporation and thereby all the property holdings at the Point. An agreement was eventually reached and subsequently approved by the cottage owners. Under date of September 3, 1960, the Association agreed to purchase all the outstanding stock of the Corporation for a total price of \$40,000 payable over five years without interest. This transaction in effect transferred the ownership of all the Management Corporation holdings, including the water plant, roads and beaches, to the Association, except for eight cottages owned by the Corporation and the piece of vacant property which lies between the present police house at the gate on Central Avenue and Route 5. However, on August 30, 1962, the cottage owners approved an agreement to purchase this latter piece of property for \$8,000 payment to be made when the payments on the previous agreement had been made. All of these payments were made on schedule by 1966 by means of a \$50 a year assessment on each cottage. As a result of these transactions, all the property within the confines of Van Buren Point is now owned by the individual cottage owners or by the Van Buren Point Association, Inc. Following the completion of the schedule of payments, the need for maintaining the corporate entity of Van Buren Management Corporation ceased and the corporation status was formally dissolved as of January 1, 1968.

### Source of water supply

Perhaps no historical account of Van Buren Point would be complete without reference to the supply of water for domestic purposes. Previous reference has been made to the furnishing of water first by the Andrews interests and later by Van Buren Point Management Corporation. These sources of supply were not considered satisfactory by all cottage owners however. A reading of the minutes shows that as early as 1937 the cottage owners approved the appointment of a committee to meet with representatives of local municipal bodies and other interested parties in an endeavor to form a satisfactory water district. For reasons which the recorded minutes do not clearly explain, this effort never came to fruition. Again in 1938 the minutes indicate that a water district was actually approved by the Town of Portland but it appears this action was aborted because of legal action by certain persons. References in the minutes continue up through 1946 but no decisive actions are reported. Unfortunately the impression is inescapable that the failure to complete plans for obtaining water from the City of Dunkirk during all these years was attributable to disagreements, apparently acrimonious at times, among certain of the cottage owners as to the procedures to be followed, and on the part of those who were furnishing the water supply, as

to the need and desirability for forming a water district to obtain water from an outside source.

Subsequent to the acquisition of the property and assets of the Van Buren Point Management Corporation in 1960 the question of obtaining our water supply from Dunkirk was raised again. There now seemed to be unanimity of opinion that this would be extremely desirable. Diligent effort by the Board of Directors assisted by the Association's attorney seemed to augur success. In fact at the September 1962 cottage owners' meeting, the motion was carried unanimously that we should initiate a water district so that negotiations could be started with the City of Dunkirk for acquiring water service; also each cottage was assessed \$25 to construct the necessary installation facilities to hook-up with the Van Buren Bay Water District line at the corner of Lakeside and Orchard Avenues. Unfortunately at the July, 1963 meeting we were informed by our attorney that after approval by all the State and local boards, the Town of Pomfret refused to grant a temporary hook-up by refusing to act and without reason or explanation. The frustrations of our efforts since that time are well known to most of the present cottage owners. However, in 1974 the Portland Water District No. 2 was formed and it is expected that Dunkirk water will be available by 1975 or 1976.

### Women's Club of Van Buren Point

During the years those members who have supported the activities of the Women's Club of Van Buren Point have contributed immeasurably to the delights and recreational enjoyment of the residents. Not only is this true but as a result of sponsoring social and recreational activities the Women's Club has made substantial financial contributions to the Van Buren Point Association, Inc. The tangible evidence of such help is seen in the building of the Community Center. At the instigation of the women, the Association in September, 1939 purchased the two adjoining lots on which the Community Center now stands, together with what is now the tennis courts and the playground area, from the Andrews' interests for the sum of \$750, all of which was contributed by the Women's Club.

In 1947 construction of a Community Center was begun at an approximate cost of \$10,000, financed by a contribution of \$3,000 from the Women's Club and a mortgage loan from two of the cottage owners at four percent interest. Payments of principal and interest were completed as a result of annual contributions made to the Association by the Women's Club.

Gust Goeddel, who died in 1967, was the designer of the Community Center and supervised its construction. His work was acknowledged in the Grand Opening Souvenir Program dated July 2, 1949 and acclaimed at the meeting of the Women's Club of Van Buren Point held July 1, 1949.

At the Community Center there have been a variety of programs suitable to the times. No one is permitted to work for financial gain. Through the years, service people or someone with special skills have been hired to serve the changing needs of the community. An addition to the Women's Club By-Laws reads: "Religious services to have priority on the Sabbath Day."

When the mortgage was paid, the Women's Club of Van Buren Point voted to present the title to the Van Buren Point Association. The Women's Club provides for the interior of the building and the Van Buren Point



Association cares for the exterior, insurance, taxes and utilities.

The purpose of the Women's Club of Van Buren Point is to provide the playground equipment and the program at the Community Center. The women of every cottage-owner family, are considered members - - dues are payable at \$2.00 per year - - the price has never been changed even with rising costs.

The Women's Club of Van Buren Point has contributed other funds to needs in the area. In 1954, Lot Number 261 next to the Community Center was purchased and presented to the Van Buren Point Association. On at least two occasions, funds have been contributed toward the repair of the tennis courts. Starting in 1959, The Women's Club has donated funds each year to the Brocton Fire Company which serves this area. Whenever Church and Sunday School funds have been greater than the immediate operating needs, a donation has been given to Migrant Missions which serve the Chautauqua area.

### Interesting miscellany about Van Buren people and events

People who come to Van Buren Point sometimes have a cherished experience to relate. Many of the old-timers have passed on but these are some of the stories.

The late George Prendergast enjoyed recalling his experiences with our water system, construction of various cottages, the pavilion, the enjoyment of the people who rode horses here and life in times gone by. When he built his cottage at 10340 Orchard Avenue, he found the foundation of a former building buried in his land.

One elderly gentlemen recalled days of the rum runners - - a boat with a strong inboard Chrysler engine would tow a barge of liquor from Canada across the lake into the bay. As it approached land, the lights would be turned off and when near enough, the barge would be cut loose and the boat would leave. Young men would guide the barge to shore and run with the cases to good hiding places. In trying to verify this story, one man who, as a young man, had spent time running with the cases - - confirmed that it was exactly correct - - except that he could not be positive that it was a Chrysler engine! One lady told of the excitement the night the rum-runner boat exploded and burned out on the lake. People at the Point lined up on the shore to watch the excitement.

Mr. and Mrs. George Kimball came to the Point and did tent-camping on their lot at 10336 Orchard Avenue about 1910. They enjoyed lake-front privileges - - there was nothing in front of their view. Their daughter is Mrs. Russell Batcheller.

Mrs. Helen Scott, who lived at 5546 Lakeside Blvd. recalled that the most beautiful thing she ever saw at Van Buren Point was Mrs. "Beebee" Detroia, as a child, dancing with her father in the old pavilion.

On October 2, 1920 the Van Buren Point seasonal post office was established with Watson A. Hinckley as postmaster.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Reed "Silver Birches" was a grocery store owned by John Smith around 1917. Mrs. Smith was the former Lillian Sidey. Clara Hall (sister of Mrs. A. Drake) was a clerk in the store during her high school years and lived above the store. This cottage has a concrete floor

under the wood first floor.

Schmidt's farm house was a lake front cottage, since moved to its present location.

The Fitzer cottage, 5468 Central Avenue, was moved from the lake front and had the name "Seldom Inn".

Mr. and Mrs. Harper B. Edwards, 5469 Lakeside Blvd. had really planned a trip to Hawaii - - but in the meantime Van Buren Point and their particular cottage had so much appeal to them, that they bought the cottage and called it "Hawaii".

P. S. They did not take the trip!

The "Jolly Rodger" cottage at 5482 Oakdale was owned by the father of our Thomas A. Rodgers when Mr. Rodgers was a small boy. After serving many different owners, the cottage was for sale when Mr. and Mrs. Rodgers and family were touring our area. Even though it was not our vacationing season, the cottage held a fascination resulting in a sale so that we enjoy them as our good neighbors.

Winning a large quantity of bricks in a Sidewalk Superintendent's Contest in Pittsburgh by Mrs. Stewart Wilson resulted in finding a use for them in the building of her cottage at 5882 Lakeside Blvd.

When the Tritinger cottage, 5569 Lakeside was rebuilt in 1950-51, the new solid brick walls enclosed an old cottage that was removed as the new building enveloped the old structure.

At the time the McKinley house, 10329 Park Avenue was built, it was intended to be a religious library; a group at Van Buren Point had in mind the beauty of the land, the convenience of the hotel and the library would interest others to come and study and participate in religion and compete with Chautauqua Institution. Without sufficient funds, this plan was short-lived - - Chautauqua was able to move ahead with the backing of the Methodist Church.

While this house was owned by Mrs. Watson A. Hinckley, it served as an Inn - - caring for weekly guests and serving dinner to cottagers on Sunday.

The "Fernstone" cottage at 5537 Cottage Avenue was an Inn for visitors at the Point. It was owned by Mrs. Olive Daub Funk.

The patio of Mrs. Katherine D. McAbee, 10351 Central Avenue is a memorial to her father, Stanley S. Drago, who designed the patio and had it partially completed at the time of his death.

Admiral William Barker Cushing, a Civil War hero, built the "Isabell" cottage (5554 Lakeside Blvd.) in 1871-72. He had an outstanding career in the U. S. Navy resulting in President Lincoln requesting that Congress give Admiral Cushing a vote of thanks, December 5, 1864.

At least nine cottages are in-part former garages. One cottage is made of "moved here" TB health buildings. Some cottages are sections of the frame hotel built here and removed to other locations on the Point. A few cottages arrived here in knocked-down condition and had served other uses elsewhere.

When the Tower Cottage (5510 Lakeside Blvd.) was new, the porch nearest Lakeside Blvd. was an open porch that continued on around its West

side. The tower had an open look-out porch on top covered with a hip-roof - - access was by open stairs from the ground level.

Pulpit Rock was known as Grant Rock. Park Avenue was called Lakeview Avenue.

More than 15% of our cottage owners today are second, third and even fourth generation owners - - mostly in the same cottages.

With the prospect of high lake water for at least four more years and following a winter of heavy lake storms that severely damaged the road paving on Lakeside Boulevard below Park Avenue, the gabion wall was built during the summer of 1973 under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Corps of Engineers. The wire baskets were fabricated in Reno, Nevada and filled with stones trucked here from the vicinity of Elmira, New York.

## Conclusion

During the approximately ninety years of Van Buren Point's existence as a summer resort, many have contributed to its remaining a community of families and individuals with a common interest. To mention some names would be to run the risk of overlooking others who by their foresight and dedication have helped to cultivate and preserve its outstanding characteristics: a summer resort that is truly distinctive because despite the differing viewpoints and personalities of its residents, moments of decision affecting the welfare of the Point have been characterized by a willingness to follow a course of action that seemed best to the majority. We hope that this will always be the case so that for our children and our grandchildren Van Buren Point will continue to be a place of summer delight and enjoyment.