They Came to Sharon

We have known that Sharon was a seasonal destination for many during Sharon’s Resort Era. Lake Massapoag and the environs were the magnet that attracted people to Sharon. Reading some old Boston Daily Globe articles (1872-1923) we find concrete evidence of the town’s fame as a destination.

In August of 1889, the Casino Club of Boston had about 800 at their annual picnic at “the grove” by Lake Massapoag. The Casino Club was composed of members of the German Catholic Holy Trinity Church of Shawmut Avenue, Boston. The newspaper reported that they played a baseball game as well as track events.

Burkhardt’s Grove was located between East Foxboro Street, Beach Street and Harding Street. It was a forested area that was enclosed with a fence, had a large building with a dance floor and a kitchen, some swings and a baseball field. It was established in the 1880s by Burkhardt Brewery as a recreation area for employees. Later it was sold to the Norfolk and Bristol Street Railway company as a destination for their trolley system. (See Heritage Hunter, September 2006.)

Burkhardt Brewery was located in Jamaica Plain on Parker Street near Wentworth Institute. It was in business from 1850-1918 with many German and Austrian employees. This probably explains the Casino Club’s awareness of the Grove.

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Archives Committee

The Archives Committee is pleased to have Eva Kravette and Nina Le of Sharon Girl Scout Troop 4006 helping us with an ongoing project of documenting various Sharon cemeteries. They will be photographing and diagramming the West Cemetery with special attention to documenting damaged or difficult to read stones. This work is fulfilling the community service leadership part of the Girl Scout’s Silver Award.

We are still looking for photos from 1920-1950 (WWII) and for help with typing and accessioning. Call 781-784-3294 for more information. Melanie Rosenbaum

April’s Quilt Show

The Society’s first quilt show was a great success, despite the rainy cold weather. Approximately 100 people toured the museum which was magically transformed into an incredible display of folk art. Diane Miller, the owner of most of the quilts, was a charming host and never tired of sharing her knowledge and love of quilts and quilting with all those who came for the exhibit. It was historical in nature, of wide general interest, profitable and fun. Gary Sullivan, Ways and Means

The museum displayed over 50 quilts on hanging racks and elsewhere around the museum. The oldest was probably from the Civil War era. Ways & Means Chair Gary Sullivan is seen in upper photo.

The Massachusetts Automobile Club had an organized drive to the Massapoag Lake Hotel in June 1901. We have a facsimile of a brochure for Boyce's Massapoag Lake Hotel in our archives indicating the hotel could accommodate 150 guests. Prices ranged from $12.50-21.00 per week. This included three meals a day. It was also advertised they had a golf course, bowling alleys and a clay tennis court. Guests who came by train were picked up by carriage at the Heights Train Station taken to the lake and taken across the lake by a steam powered launch. But, the age of the automobile was beginning.

Initially automobiles were a hobby for the wealthy and adventurous. The technology was rapidly expanding with electric, steam and gas powered vehicles being manufactured. Many were chain driven and were steered by a wooden tiller.

Sixty-one autos of various types left Copley Square that June at 10:30 a.m. and arrived in Sharon for lunch at 12:30 p.m. Interestingly, most of the vehicles were powered by steam. They were joined by cars from Rhode Island, Worcester, Brockton, Middleboro and surrounding towns.

After lunch some participated in competitive games in their cars. The first event sounds fascinating. The 300 yard "Slow Race" appears to be a race of traveling 300 yards at the slowest possible speed. (I believe you had to be moving constantly.) The winner took 4 minutes and 38.4 seconds. Third place took 2 minutes and 9.2 seconds to travel the 300 yards.

The second event was an obstacle course to test the skill of the drivers in maneuvering their vehicles. The final race was a "Coat and Vest Race." This had the drivers driving as fast as they could from one point to and another and then jumping out of their car and straightening their coat and vest in a gentlemanly manner.

This same organization, the Massachusetts Automobile Associated sponsored in June of 1912 an outing for 3,000 "blind, crippled and destitute children," under the leadership of Chester Campbell of Wollaston. He duplicated the event in August at Elm Lawn and Massapoag Grove for the poor children and "inmates of the almshouse" in Quincy and Wollaston.

The caravan of automobiles came from Quincy through the Blue Hills, Ponkapoag, Canton, Sharon and Sharon Heights to Lake Massapoag. Among the visitors that day was a Mrs. Ellen Cluse, the oldest woman at the Quincy Almshouse. She was the widow of John Cluse, a Civil War Veteran. The Globe reported "she has been an inmate there more than 30 years."

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The Massapoag Hotel in winter with a sleigh.
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