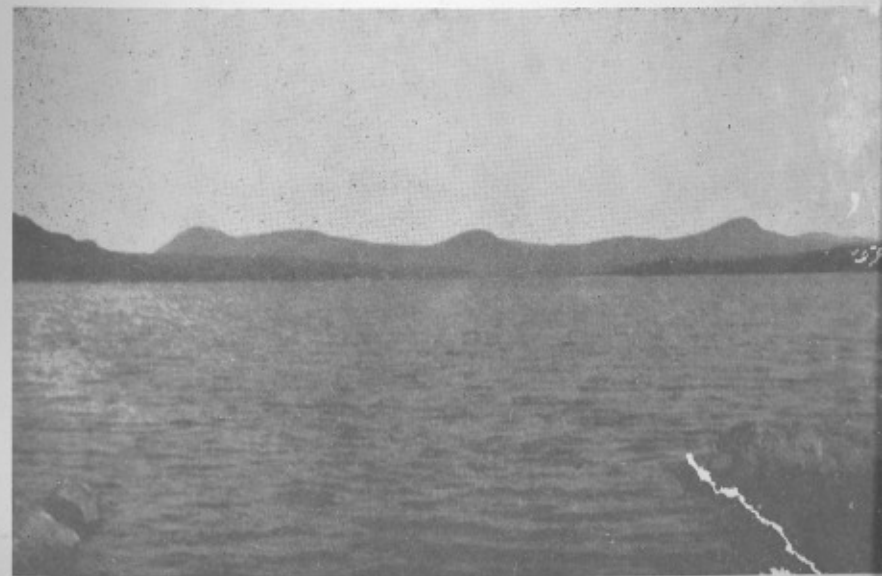




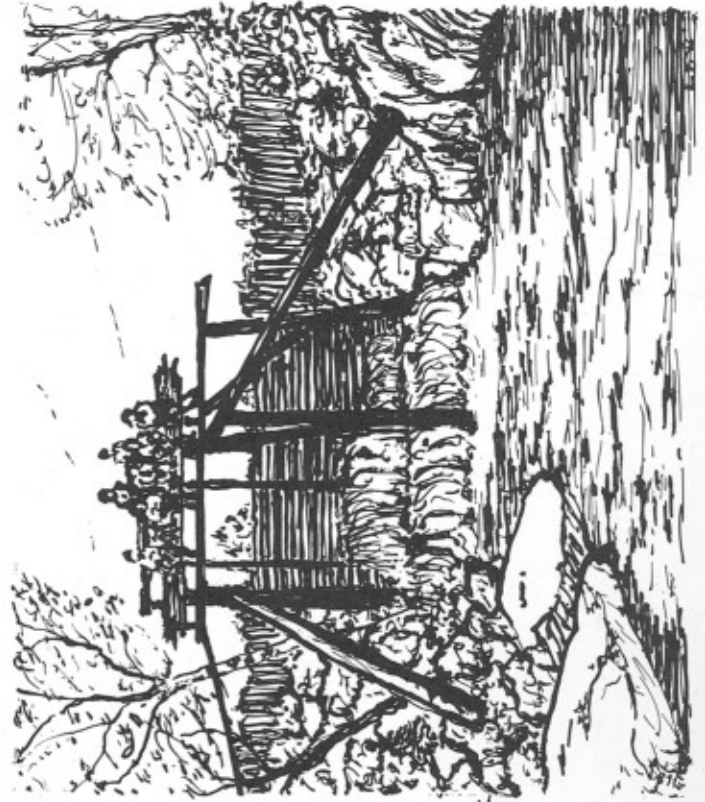
Camping at the Pond  
A History of Lake Groton, Vermont

Marion Lindsay Proudfoot



# Camping at the Pond

A HISTORY OF LAKE GROTON, VERMONT



The Old Dam

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Dedicated

to

the Memory of

Benjamin Franklin Clark, M.D.

Born in Groton, Vermont, and learned to camp at the Pond in his boyhood. He loved the place all his life and by his interest and enthusiasm through the years sparked the necessary advances which developed into benefits for everyone.



Gale's Camp—1915 (Summer)



Gale's Camp—1915 (Winter)

## Camping at the Pond

A HISTORY OF LAKE GROTON

by Marion Lindsay Proudfoot

Since the early nineteen hundreds when a stranger appeared in the town of Groton to buy supplies he was greeted by the words, "So you're campin' at the Pond." The special purpose of this chronicle is an attempt to describe what camping at the Pond has been like during the last seventy years. The Pond is no longer the isolated, little known spot it was and is now known as Lake Groton. The general outline to be followed includes some historical facts about the area before 1900, early camping, the changes through the years and the unchanging things, including the spirit and continuing values of the place. This journey into yesterday is a composite of the recollections of many persons who have fond memories of life at this beautiful scenic spot in the midst of the north-eastern Vermont hills, which reach down to its very shores. Besides spoken words of experience, several diaries, logs of camp activities, and formal written histories of the area will be acknowledged as sources of information. It should be explained that small summer houses known as cottages in most places have always been called camps here.



## I

### Before Eighteen Hundred

To introduce this history, some facts about the years before nineteen hundred may be of considerable interest. Although there is yet little evidence to prove it, Indians probably camped at this pond. A few arrowheads and relics have been found here. Recalling these primitive times, General A. Harleigh Hall wrote in 1877, "Here solitude reigned supreme, broken only by the hungry cry of some wild animal. The Indians roamed o'er trackless forests or glided swiftly over the placid waters of the pond in their light canoes." Looking at the rocky shores and the three hills at the north end, Owl's Head, Big Deer and Little Deer these Indians were no doubt as enchanted with the view as thousands of visitors have been since.

The pond is the head waters of the Wells River, which flows into the Connecticut. An ancient map made during the French and Indian Wars gives the correct course of both the Connecticut and the Wells River and notes "along this route many captives have been carried to Canada." In February 1704 from Deerfield, Massachusetts 112 men, women and children prisoners were carried north by a party of 342 French and Indians. Some of these tarried at the oxbow in the river at Newbury for a while, then continued along the trail via the Wells River. In 1725 Captain Benjamin Wright of Northampton, Massachusetts with a scouting party of 60 men ascended the Connecticut River, past several ponds (Rickers, Groton, Kettle, and perhaps Osmore) crossed the height of land, descended to the Winooski River, and on to Lake Champlain. They returned the same way. They were retracing the route by which captives from the burning villages in Massachusetts and Connecticut had been hurried to Canada.

Later many stories were told about "Indian Joe", a Revolutionary War scout and friend of the settler. His loyalty to them was in sharp contrast to the attitude of the other Indians of his time. Born in 1739 in Nova Scotia, he was the first known camper at Groton Pond. Indian Joe and his squaw, Molly, were fugitives from their warlike tribe in Canada. For a time they took refuge near Ryegate and Newbury and lived in a cave. Later they made camp on an island in a lake near West Danville. After the war a soldier, Major Jesse Leavenworth, who built

the first mill in Danville named the lake "Joe's Pond." This was one reward for the invaluable aid Indian Joe had given. He had been hired as a scout by General Jacob Bayley who was commanding the northern colonial forces and who mapped the original Bayley-Hazen Road. Also he was personally honored by General George Washington when his headquarters were at Newberg, New York. Joe and Molly were invited there to dinner with the General. In his old age the State Legislature of Vermont granted him a pension of \$70.00 annually. Much of his time had been spent hunting and fishing around the ponds in Groton and vicinity. A son, Toomalek, proved a disappointment to his mother. He was known as a rascal. But his memory is recalled in the name of the spot where he was killed in a quarrel, Toomalek Point on Rickers Pond. The History of Marshfield states that tradition says that when Mollys Falls roared from heavy rains, Molly could descend them in her canoe. Most of the leading men of Newbury attended Indian Joe's funeral on February 19, 1819.

## II

### Before Nineteen Hundred

This nomadic way of life gave way to that of the "first white settlers" of towns. They came in canoes by waterways, on horseback and some on foot carrying their few treasures and many necessities such as axes, snowshoes and food, all to establish homesteads among the hills. The first permanent settler in Groton was Captain Edmond Morse. He arrived in 1783 and built the first saw and grist mill in town. This was the prime requirement before a grant of land would be given to any individual. The foundations of an old grist mill can still be seen at the head waters of Coldwater Brook. It was built by men from Peacham who thus acquired ownership of that area. Captain Morse also built the first frame house in Groton. An active and energetic man he was the first blacksmith and military captain of Groton and Newbury. The state government supplied the arms and ammunition to the committees of safety in each town. Another first for the Morse family was Sally, their daughter, the first child born in Groton. In 1803 she married John Hill. She was remarkably industrious and capable in a day when strength and a hopeful spirit was very necessary.

A document known as The Times Report of 1901 "Milestones of the Town's Progress" tells us that the town received the name of Groton through the influence of its settlers, many of whom were born in Groton, Massachusetts. Groton was originally the name of the mansion home in England of Governor John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts. This new Groton in Vermont was 28,300 acres in size. In this area there are two ponds taking up 880 acres. These bodies of water, over 1,000 feet above sea level were then called Long Pond and Little Pond. They are connected by a small brook and empty into the Wells River, which flows through Groton, then ten miles east into the Connecticut River at Wells River. The town was originally heavily timbered with spruce, hemlock, beech, birch and maple making the manufacture of lumber an important industry through the years. Land clearing, home building, and plowing continued. On October 20, 1789, Groton was chartered by his Excellency Governor Thomas Chittenden to Thomas Butterfield and 61 others. The town was organized in 1797. By this time families from New Hampshire and the "Kennebunkers" from Maine had arrived to join the settlers from the state to the south. William Frost had the first painted house in town, the first wheeled carriage and the first shop with goods for sale. Jesse Heath, a revolutionary soldier was a citizen. The Baptist Church was organized in 1813. The Methodist Church followed about 1828.

Amasiash H. Ricker in 1857 bought a hundred acres of timberland and built thereon a millplant, the first in Vermont, two and a half miles from the village of Groton and Little Pond. Judge Darling pioneered in building the first granite shed in 1896. Besides these names still well known in Groton many now associated with Lake Groton appear on the old maps of the area. For example White, Lord, Lund French, Page, Eastman, Clark to mention a few.

### III

#### "What's in A Name?"

The land outside the town was always called "wild land" and the ponds were left to the lumberman until the settlers had more leisure. The names of the ponds were changed often and were seldom recorded

except on old maps, therefore dates of these changes are difficult to prove exactly.

Lund Pond was the first known name. Silas Lund came to Groton about the year 1790 and he purchased the mill now known as Ricker's Mill. His son, Jeremiah Lund, born in Groton April 13, 1796, built his home east of the mill on what is called Jerry Lund Hill. The cellar hole of this home is still visible and there are indications that the southern slope was once pasture land. About the year 1842 the Lund family sold a portion of their land including the mill to the Ricker family. The two ponds were known for many years as Big Lund and Little Lund. But shortly after 1842 the names were changed to Long Pond and Little Pond.

In 1867 the Rev. O. C. Clark wrote "In the Northwestern part of the town are two beautiful ponds of water called Long Pond and Little Pond: the former four miles long and one mile broad; the latter, one mile in length by one half mile in width. At the foot of Little Pond is the 'Lake House' recently erected by McLane Marshall. A pleasure boat 30 feet long and ten feet wide called 'The Lady of the Lake', and capable of carrying 60 persons at a time is also an attraction at the smaller pond. Both these ponds contain an abundance of fish and afford the inhabitants of this and adjoining towns no little sport in catching them." Later Long Pond was named Wells River Pond and Little Pond called Ricker's Pond. For the last seventy years the names have been Groton and Ricker's Pond.

