

# A Preservationist Community

## Douglas S. Langdon

Reminiscences of, some historical data, and reflection on, John S. Apperson's Lake View Hotel and "Palmyra" properties: 1919-2010, Huddle Bay, Bolton, New York

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to our parents, Dorothy E. and Ellsworth Langdon, and to Aunt Katie (Dr Katherine B. Blodgett)... Absent them, we all would be renting at a local motel every summer! Thank you Aunt Katie and parents!

## Confessions – Stop!! – Credits – Acknowledgments

### Confessions

Readers should constantly keep in mind, that as the title page proclaims, this epistle is largely a compilation of sometimes ill-defined, possible inaccurate 1919-2010 memories; in my case as recalled by a )then) pre-teen/teenager, callous youth. Furthermore, I did not even appear on the scene until 1936. Much pre and post 1936 data were gleaned from the collective recollections of multiple people and written sources most of whom were “actually there” – or knew the people who were there. Mr. James Dodge’s 1919-1940 information was substantially augmented by my parents (Dorothy and Ellsworth Langdon) reminiscences of that time period, when they (later joined by myself) were not infrequent guests of Dr. Katherine Blodgett at Lake George, and in Schenectady, New York.

In any case, no pretense of even “one micron” of total veracity is claimed! Your author welcomes, indeed hopes for, a flood of corrections and amplifications! Perhaps we will be able to compile a substantial aggregation (? A blog) of the foregoing and disseminate them!

### STOP!

All readers would be well advised to (STOP) right here! Please turn on your computer and proceed to Ellen Apperson Brown’s [www.vahistoryexchange.com](http://www.vahistoryexchange.com) (Community Archives of Southwest Virginia, LLC). Ellen is John S. Apperson’s great niece, and besides being a popular Virginian historian based in Roanoke, she is his preeminent biographer. This is a major challenge not yet fully consummated, and her “fun job.” Possible this slender monograph may “nudge” her to complete the task. Ellen’s “day job” consists of creating the above noted growing genealogy organization, and guiding it as CEO.

Once at Ellen’s web site, peruse her five Apperson essays:

“Getting Ready for the Electrical Age”

“For the Love of Virginia”

“Forever Wild”

“Becoming a Conservationist, One Letter at a Time”

“Defending Democracy on the Home Front”

If pressed for time, at least read “Forever Wild,” pages 23-30. You may learn more about the authentic John Apperson, than in this paper.

Ellen has been a constant inspiration for yours truly in this undertaking you are now reading. She is more than a mentor, for her above noted published papers provide so much insight into how Appie accomplished what he did in the Adirondacks, although starting out life in south western [Southwest] Virginia. Ellen has the distinct advantage of first hand, family historical data going back to the family roots of the 1700s. She has also worked hard with the Dome Island Committee on several occasions.

We expect great things from Ellen, and her career demonstrates that great things are happening right now!

### CREDITS/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It also should be proclaimed that we gleaned a tremendous amount of general information about “the ole Unc” (Jim’s terminology) from Jim Apperson and Tom Apperson (Appie’s nephew and great nephew, respectively). Until Wall Street lured Tom away, and Jim’s ultimate death, we thought this duo might carry on Appie’s conservation causes. If joined by John Apperson, III, Chester Sims and Ellen Apperson Brown, they might have pulled it off, but fate was not cooperative.

Jim Apperson was a storehouse of historical vignettes and off-the-cuff past observations of who, where and what happened; all this was sprinkled with humor, a mix of white lies, and much exaggeration. This in turn was directly adjusted by how many fermented malt beverages we, and he, had downed. If only the tape recorder had been on! Jim and Tom led the Langdon and McGrew families up and down Tongue, Cat, Black, and Crane Mountains, until we could not command our quadriceps muscles to take one more step upwards! They tutored us in ADK lore and skills. Sadly for us, Tom got detoured by Wall Street interests, but we hope to get him back in the DAC’s in the not too distant future.

The very sad and untimely death of John S. Apperson, III, in 1971, suddenly catapulted Jim into the position of being Appie’s principal Lake George heir and conservator. This was a tough and expensive job. To top it off he became the full time custodian of all the property and buildings. This he did with aplomb – picture Jim greeting the usual unauthorized trespasser (looking for a free spot to camp out) – “Can I help you? – in a southern accented semi-threatening tone, and dressed to the hilt in garb best described as à la movie “Deliverance!”

Ellen Apperson Brown’s full scale Apperson biography is eagerly awaited by all Apperson devotees. In the meantime, see Ellen’s must read web site, and visit the Apperson library at the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks – (“Protect”) on St. David’s Lane, in Niskayuna, New York. For instant gratification, immediate relief can be obtained by walking in the open doors of the Bolton Historical Museum (open in the summer). There one can be immersed in Apperson’s 1910 – 1950 tents, sleeping bags, packs, tools, and even his Morris canoe. Besides this exhibit, do not miss the pictures and hotel register of the original main Lake View Hotel. Check out the 1916 registration of the Teddy Roosevelt family.

Very few people with any historical aspirations can write much on our region without heavily appropriating material from William P. Gate's numerous books. They are the "historic canon" for Lake George. I have been guilty of quoting extensively from these wonderful publications, for which I offer our sincere gratitude. For starters, I refer any and all readers to Bill Gates':

- a. "Old Bolton on Lake George" – especially pages 47-79
- b. "Lake George Hotels and Landings" – especially pages 43-47, and 105

Personally, I think all Lake George (or? all Adirondack) owners should read Mr. Gate's statement of his concerns titled "Adirondack Values: Timeless and Simple" on page 137 of "Millionaire's Row" (2008).

This should be a mandatory discourse and admonition for all persons contemplating any Lake George construction or development, and the Bolton Planning Board! It is "so Appy" – Mr. Gates obviously might be an Apperson disciple.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following generous people are some of the folks who purposely or inadvertently were kind enough to provide the information, data, and stimuli that comprise this paper.

(In no particular order)

John S. Apperson, Jr.  
John S. Apperson, III  
James W. Apperson  
Ellen Apperson Brown  
Thomas I. Apperson  
John S. Apperson, IV  
James W. Dodge  
Mrs. Florence Christie  
Chester Sims  
Shirley Dean  
William P. Gates  
Buzz Lamb  
Pat Babe  
Virginia Mannix  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Stupps  
Dr. Arthur Newkirk  
Henry Caldwell  
William Horne  
Mrs. Nancy Horne  
Chet Kastensmith  
Dan Bennett

Nancy Rogal  
George Goodwin  
Joseph Lieto  
Kathy Conover  
Nancy Williams  
Frank & Delores Kunker  
Ruth Turner  
David & Sheryl Smith Ebeoglu  
Lee Haines  
Ted Caldwell  
Folger Gifford  
Dr. Hugh Allen Wilson  
Patricia Prindle  
The Apperson Library  
Roger Summerhayes  
Lancer Ross  
Debbie & Bill Hoffman  
Cornelia Wells  
Helen Barton Benedict  
Bolton Landing Historical Society

This paper does not have a bibliography as such; rather the “notes” on each section and Appendix should credit most sources, with explanation, most of the time.

A FORWARD TO OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN – or “How we all came to be here.”

In 1936, at the advanced age of five, I first stepped out to Aunt Katie’s rocky point and gazed out over the lake and Huddle Bay. In the foreground was Horace Barber’s Boat Livery, the Algonquin Hotel, and Madame Sembrich’s estate (no opera students practicing at the moment.) Then began the panorama of Sweet Briar Island, Leontine Island, long stretches of Clay Island...ending at the “Eye of the Needle” (misnamed) and Homer Point. Hiawatha Island was barely discernable. In the far distance was the peak of Black Mountain, then Shelving Rock, Sleeping Beauty Mountain, and Little Buck together with Buck itself in all its majesty...and finally came Pilot Knob completing the magnificent spectacle.

For me, a young veteran of the Great Depression and previously of East Orange, New Jersey, this was a formative, life changing moment in time. This was the way God meant the world to look like! As you know only too well, I became an Adirondack Lake George enthusiast, an incurable condition which is likely to last for a lifetime. Like other zealots we have a passion for the Adirondacks that runs life long, and sets us apart from our friends and family who simply envision the “DAC’s” as a perfect place for a week’s summer vacation (unless it rains.)

This is why I consider activities such as mucking out the ditches, rip rapping the shoreline, and carting loads of road stone as “fun” instead of work. In the midst of such activities I often think of how much we owe to Aunt Katie (Dr. Katherine Blodgett), your grandparents, and great grandparents (Dorothy and Ellsworth Langdon) and Mr. Apperson for all of us being here. Without them, we would be briefly vacationing at some crowded, expensive motel. Therefore, this paper is my best attempt to give you some history of how we got to be here, and to remind you that many people worked very hard for many years to make all this possible, especially your forbearers. Indeed, Lake George did not just fall into our hands” for our personal enjoyment. Like the U.S. Marine Corps, it was earned, not just given, and we all have to continue to work hard to keep this beautiful place.

Above all, keep in mind Mr. Apperson’s sentiment – “Some come to work, and some come to play”...a balanced mix of both activities should keep us all secure!

## PROLOGUE

### PART ONE 1919-2010

It was the “Roaring Twenties” and times were good for the country, for Bolton Landing’s “Millionaire’s Row,” and for the city of Schenectady with its ever expanding General Electric Company. Actually, it was the General Electric Research Laboratories that brought together a group of interesting Schenectady based environmentalists headed up by John S. Apperson, Jr. together with friend Dr. Irving Langmuir (Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry in 1932.) This growing circle of well educated, vibrant conservationists, augmented by numerous volunteers, “hands-on” Apperson friends and outdoor enthusiasts, was formed before and after 1919. This was the decisive year when Apperson purchased the extensive properties of the Lake View Hotel in Bolton Landing. The area encompassed the Huddle Bay region from the Huddle Bay Beach all the way north past the wet lands adjacent to the hotel annex.

One should keep in mind that this was in a time period when “being green” was not in vogue. Quite the contrary, being a millionaire with a huge manicured estate was in fashion. What I find most interesting are the people and personalities you will read about. Yes, you may later decide that some of them could be described as unique. Above all they were smart, energetic, dedicated and visionary. I will attempt to tell you the story. So read on if you dare – there will be times when you may be confused, so use the register, and be sure and view Ellen Apperson Brown’s web site; and I hope you enjoy!

### PART ONE

#### THE CHRONICLES AND NARRATIVE OF JOHN S. APPERSON’S LAKEVIEW HOTEL AND BARBER MOUNTAIN PROPERTIES 1919 – RECENT ERAS

### THE REGISTER

Dear Reader: As you proceed through these chronicles, it may be helpful to refer to the following register of places and persons involved (both now – and later) as you move through the ninety year time span covered. It may also be advantageous to frequently refer to the Appendix for more amplifications and credits.

#### Places:

- A. The Lake View Hotel Property – the lands from the Beach Road north to the extensive wet lands along the northern aspect of the hotel annex.
- B. “The Palmyra Properties” – the lands. Prior to 1927 known as the Barber Farm. This area extended from the wet lands north, all the way to Mr. Elis Barber’s marina and the Algonquin Hotel. The appellation “Palmyra Properties” (instead of Barber Farm) was created by Jim Dodge, who was Mr. Apperson’s buyer in 1927. Jim had to travel to Palmyra, N.Y. to negotiate with the executors of an estate, and successfully executed the purchase as a single entity.

- C. Barber Mountain – the small mountain (elevation about 800 ft.) on the west side of 9N highway. This was later “Appie Top” in the vernacular of the local summer residents.

People:

- I. Original owners of the Lake View Hotel property as of about 1919.
  - A. Mr. R. J. Brown – originator (1875) and owner/operator of the Lake View Hotel. He lived across 9N in now Joe Lieto’s house. Died 1917, causing the hotel property to be sold to Apperson and partners in 1919.
  - B. John S. Apperson, Jr. – “Appy/Appie.” Bought the Lake View Hotel property in 1919. Died 1963; our MAJOR PERSONAGE.
  - C. G. Hall Roosevelt – of the FDR branch of the Roosevelt family. G. E. Engineer. He was transferred by G.E. to Erie, Pennsylvania. I the early 1920s.
  - D. William Dalton – of the Northwest Bay Loines family. G.E. Engineer. Sold to Appie in 1928.
  - E. Dr. Irving Langmuir – a major internationally known scientist (Nobel Prize winner – 1933) at G. E. A long time good friend and frequent financial backer of Appie. He purchased the property adjacent to the Beach Road independently about 1924-1925 from the Beckers.
- II. Subsequent Apperson family owners/heirs, of the Lake View Hotel property after Appie’s death in 1963.
  - A. John S. Apperson, III – nephew of Appy; father of Tom, John S. IV, and Ellen Apperson Brown. Prematurely died 1971.
  - B. James W. Apperson – nephew of Appy; single, no issue, AKA “Uncle Jim.” Died 1980, leading to the distribution of Apperson’s Lake View Hotel property to private individuals.
- III. Subsequent (non-owner) Apperson family member heirs deeply involved in the property for many years
  - A. John S. Apperson, IV, born 1944.
  - B. Tom Apperson, born 1948.
  - C. Ellen Apperson Brown, born 1950. Superb biographer of Apperson – especially from the Virginia family viewpoint. A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR to this monograph.

All of the above are children of John S. Apperson, III, and served as executors for the final distribution of the property in the 1980s.

- IV. Various subsequent (non-Apperson family) owners, carefully selected by Appy and Langmuir or by Jim Apperson.
  - A. Mr. and Mrs. Kilgore (Florence) Christie – bought hotel annex in 1928.
  - B. Chester Sims and Shirley Dean (technical legalities obviated a formal union) – bought the hotel annex and prior Main Hotel land, in 1974, after Mrs. Christie’s death. Chester was selected by Jim Apperson for ownership.
  - C. Dr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Newkirk – a trusted long time, hard working Apperson associate, especially for Appie’s Dome Island project. He was a personal assistant to Dr. Irving Langmuir. They, along with the Smith and Huckle families, took over the Langmuir’s property in 1951.
- V. Current owners – since the death of “Uncle Jim: (James Apperson) in 1980, selected by “market forces,” with executors Tom and John Apperson.
  - A. Mr. and Mrs. William and Kathleen Horne – present owners and superb conservators of the Lake View Hotel Annex.
  - B. Mr. and Mrs. William and Deborah Hoffman – current owners of Chester Sims’ chalet on the site of the original main Lake View Hotel. They are the



- current holders of much of the historical data on the area, received from Shirley Dean and Lisa Chapin (Chester Sims' daughter.)
- C. Mr. and Mrs. Stuart and Carol Colby – Their home is situated on top of the foundation originally created and intended to be a home for Teddy Roosevelt's granddaughter Alice Longworth Roosevelt (but never completed.) The foundation "ruins" was a "play land" for us, as kids, and in turn, our children.
  - D. The Charles Mayer residence is on the southern aspect of "Parodi Point," a most photographed view of the lake to the north.
  - E. The Eugene Haag residence has Mr. Apperson's original property and camp – the hotels' ice house, dubbed "Chill House" the small camp on the water's edge, and the boat house. This general area would often become a weekend camp ground for Appy's work crews and their families during the 1920s and 1930s. The large boat house and dock complexes accommodated the "Article XIV, Section 1" Chris Craft, now owned and refurbished by Christopher Langdon, and Appy's canoes (among them the "Morris" canoe, which is now in the Bolton Historical Museum).
  - F. Mr. and Mrs. David and Sheryl Ebeoglu have Dr. Langmuir's original property next to the Beach Road. When the Langmuirs bought Crown Island in 1930, it became the Langmuir's land base for coming and going to Crown Island. After the "Big Blowdown" of 1950, he transferred it to a "triumvirate" of the Dr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Newkirk, Smith, and Huckle families. The American chestnut meticulously renovated buildings are "gems" of Mr. William Hill's skilled craftsmanship. Cheryl Ebeoglu (Smith's daughter) and David have many personal memories of contacts with John Apperson.

## BACKGROUND

Perhaps 1919 was an opportune time period for a real estate acquisition at a reasonable price. The Adirondacks, indeed the entire nation and world, were still reeling from the planet's most destructive war, immediately followed by possibly the world's worst documented disease pandemic (the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919, claiming fifty million lives.) See Appendix 1 for bill Gates' account involving the Huddle. The decade of the "Roaring Twenties" had yet to evolve.

John S. Apperson, Jr., a General Electric engineer originally from Virginia, and already a well known conservationist, had long been a regular sojourner in the Adirondacks in general, and Lake George in particular. In 1918, Apperson had purchased a small piece of Lake George property in the Narrows, on the east side of Tongue Mountain (Turtle Bay). A frequent visitor to, and rip-rapper of needy islands in the Narrows, he and his work crews needed a place to store their boats, tools, and equipment as well as sleep over night. Unfortunately, this beautiful spot was accessed only by boat, and did not lend itself well to late Friday night arrivals after work (usually by train).

Appie celebrated his new status as a Bolton Landing land owner in a 1923 letter to Pliny T. Sexton.

Mr. Pliny T. Sexton  
Dear Mr. Sexton:

Palmyra, N.Y.

After camping out each week-end, winter and summer, for seventeen years on the State Islands, I have at last acquired a small piece of land on the

south side of the Lake View property and I have converted the old ice-house into very comfortable quarters.

In 1925 Dr. Irving Langmuir, soon after Apperson's Lake View Hotel property acquisition, purchased the several acre Bolton Huddle Bay parcel lying between the Beach Road and the Lake View Hotel. Dr. Langmuir was a long time personal friend of Apperson, and a prominent General Electric scientist (winning the 1932 Nobel Prize for Chemistry). He not infrequently was a crucial financial backer of Appie's conservation causes. Langmuir and family obviously loved Lake George, and a decade later bought nearby Crown Island. However, they continued to own the Huddle Bay property, using it as their shore base for coming and going to Crown Island.

## THE BIG PURCHASE

About 1919, Apperson and partners purchased the entire (absent Mr. R. J. Brown's residence) Bolton Landing Lake View Hotel property. The tract was and still is a formidable piece of property of approximately 25 acres. Beginning on the southern aspect (adjoining Dr. Langmuir's) it consisted of a large ice house (walls 12" thick filled with sawdust), the nearby small "men's bar" on the lake shore, a two story fully enclosed large boat house, at least three dock complexes (not counting the remains of the main hotel's steam boat dock), an ample storage and repair shop building, and the barn-like carriage house. A full set of completed cellar foundations awaited a fated future residence on the top of the hill (more of this subject later).

On the northern aspect of the property was the massive Lake View Hotel Annex, complete with numerous guest rooms, employee living quarters, a large ballroom, kitchen facilities with sitting room, and the owners suite (Honeymoon suite) on the top floor. Three Victorian porches, two facing the lake and one to the north filled out this grand picture. This edifice was and still is, clearly the surviving historic "gem" of the complex – thanks to Chester Sims and current conservators Bill and Kathy Horne. A full road system connected all these buildings.

The main Lake View House Hotel, which sat very close to the shoreline, in front of the Annex, was an imposing three story Victorian edifice. The Annex complemented it, and together with its extensive steamboat dock, and other support buildings, must have been a major competitor in the Bolton Landing Hotel landscape. William and Ida Dalton demolished it in the mid 1920s – by that time it may have been considered a fifty year old "white elephant." My parents, Ellsworth and Dorothy Langdon, appeared on this scene in the late 1920s and never mentioned having seen the original main hotel edifice. The last entry in the hotel register is September 1919, just prior to Apperson's purchase.

## THE BUYERS

In any time of place, it is obvious that this was a major purchase, not only in size, but in cost. John S. Apperson, Jr., although relatively well-to-do, was not wealthy. Irving Langmuir, who definitely had deep loan pockets, did help, and we surmise that Appie brought in the other two participants, all of the Schenectady General Electric Company, for cost sharing reasons. As you will see in the forthcoming eye witness account, these were (#1) William Dalton of the Northwest Bay Loines family, who were good friends and supporters of Appie, and (#2) G. Hall Roosevelt of the FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt Hyde Park family. Incidentally, the Teddy Roosevelt family had also been long time visitors to the hotel (more on that later).

It may be of interest to speculate that Apperson might have been the minority financial backer of the original three partners. The historical data is confusing as the partnership evolved during the 1920s. In any case, as you will see, Apperson emerged as the sole owner of the property by March, 1928. Appie could be coldly unyielding to people he considered not to be twenty four hour a day conservation/preservationists. Most importantly, how the property should be utilized, and the principles thereof, were likely a most important factor. Dr. Langmuir's deep loan pockets must have been critical to Apperson's strategic designs.

#### JIM DODGE – HIS EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

At this point it would be illuminating to divert from my retrospections, and go directly to the words of an authentic eyewitness observer who was actually present in the era under discussion. This author is James Dodge, in 1919 a single General Electric engineer, and definitely a trusted member of Appie's "conservation" group. In fact, he was selected, a decade later, to travel to Palmyra, N.Y. and consummate Apperson's "Palmyra Properties" purchase. (Mr. Dodge acting as a single buyer closed the purchase of the entire "Barber Farm," Part II of this treatise to follow). Mr. Dodge's account was obtained at my father's (Ellsworth Hall Langdon) request in 1982. Even at that time, the "Apperson Era" was ending. Jim Apperson had died and the ranks of the living Apperson associates were rapidly dwindling. The entire Apperson property was being sub-divided and sold to new owners who had little knowledge of the property's prior history and legacy. Memories were starting to fade (the author's current situation) and my father was afraid the particulars of the history of this portion of the "Huddle," under Apperson's influence and control, might be lost. Indeed, this paper you are now wading through is a continuation of that quest!

#### JIM DODGE'S LETTERS

James W. Dodge  
Suncoast Manor, Box 371  
6909 9<sup>th</sup> Street South  
St. Petersburg, FL 33705

October 15, 1982

Dear Ellsworth:

Thanks for your Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> letter. I shall try to answer some of your questions about the Lake George property. I have made three sketches to try to explain matters.  
Sketch #1: is general arrangement of various parcels of property  
Sketch #2: is the Lake View Hotel property which later became the Apperson property.  
Sketch #3: is the Palmyra property.

#### LAKE VIEW PROPERTY

About 1919 the Lake View Hotel property was purchased by Messrs. J.S. Apperson, William Dalton and G. Hall Roosevelt, all of Schenectady, G.E. The property was divided at that time into three (3) approximately equal shares as indicated on Sketch #2, Apperson taking the southern portion, Dalton the middle, and Roosevelt the northern. Apperson took the boat house and the ice house and small camp on shore, Dalton took the old Lake View Hotel, Roosevelt the Hotel Annex.

Later, about the time G.E. moved the railway department to Erie, Roosevelt sold his portion to Apperson and Dalton and the entire Lake View property was then divided between Apperson and Dalton. There was a difference of opinion between Apperson

and Dalton for some years as to how the central part of the property should be used and Dalton finally sold out to Apperson and moved to the Loines estate on N.W. Bay.

Apperson then sold the north portion of the property to Mr. and Mrs. Christie of Schenectady. Later, after the death of J.S. Apperson the property passed on to the Apperson nephews John and Jim, who I believe purchased the Christie portion.

Further changes since the death of Jim Apperson I am not familiar with.

#### PALMYRA PROPERTY

(Author's note: To be discussed in Part II of this treatise)

Between the Lake View property and the Algonquin Hotel there was a piece of vacant land in 1928-1929 of about 125 acres, which lay in both sides of the Bolton Road. The portion on the East side of the road ran from the road to the lake and had some 600 feet (+ or -) of lake shore frontage. The portion on the west side of the road was forest and mountain of something over 100 acres.

(Author's note: refers to Barber Mountain.) This entire parcel of land was owned at that time by the estate of a man living in Palmyra, N.Y. and since I do not have a record of the owner's name, I am using the term "Palmyra Property" to describe it.

About 1928-1929 a group of Mr. Apperson's friends in Schenectady became interested in the Palmyra Property and decided to purchase it jointly and divide it up for camp sites and recreational use. It was agreed that the land be purchased and divided up as follows:

The land between the Bolton Road and the Lake Shore was divided as follows:

South Portion – Katharine Blodgett

North Portion – Frank Bennett

Portion South of Bennett – to J. W. Dodge (the author of these letters)

Portion North of Blodgett – to Edith Clark

(Please refer to Sketch #3 for clarification of these divisions)

All the land of the Palmyra Property lying on the west of the Bolton Road went to Irving Langmuir (See sketch #1)

#### CHANGES IN OWNERSHIP OF PALMYRA PROPERTY

A few years after purchaser of the Palmyra Property by the Schenectady group, Miss Blodgett transferred a portion of the south lot to Miss Gertrude Brown of Schenectady for a camp site near the Bolton Road. (See Sketch #3)

Also, Mr. Bennett sold a portion of the North lot to Miss Dorothy Mersereau of Schenectady for a cottage near the Bolton Road. (See Sketch #3) (Author's note: Ms. Mersereau was the sister of Dr. Langmuir's wife, Marion)

About 1939, Mr. Dodge sold his lot and camp (See Sketch #3) to Miss Edith Clark. This lot was later sold to Mr. and Mrs. Cormak of Schenectady and has since changed ownership again, I understand. The Blodgett property, including the Gertrude Brown camp, later passed into the ownership of the Ellsworth Langdons of Schenectady, but I do not know the dates or details of these transfers.

## PURCHASE OF THE PALMYRA PROPERTY IN 1929

In order to negotiate the purchase of the Palmyra Property in 1928-1929 the interested Schenectady group supplied the funds and appointed J.W. Dodge to act as their agent, and for him to go to Palmyra, N.Y. and negotiate the purchase in his name. This was done and the deed for the entire Palmyra Property was drawn in the name of J.W. Dodge as purchaser.

Then deeds for each parcel of land for the individual owners were drawn up transferring the agreed upon portions from J.W. Dodge to the other owners.

### GENERAL COMMENTS

The previous sheets are sketched up from memory only, as I have no written records. The dates are mostly guess work and the dates of purchase may well be off some couple of years. If anyone is interested in factual history, these dates could be looked up in the County Clerk's Office of Warrensburg County at Lake George Village, where the deeds are all recorded.

I hope you can read most of my writing which gets worse with age. Perhaps you could type up any portion of interest to others – Perhaps you will find something of interest here.

Yours, Jim Dodge

Three pages of diagrams follow...

Chester Sims and I debated the question of the ultimate fate of the main Lake View Hotel edifice for a long time. Finally Chester wrote to Jim Dodge in 1985 attempting to settle the discussion once and for all. At last we got the answer, dated January 29, 1986: The underlining is mine – not Jim Dodge's.

Mr. James W. Dodge  
6909 Ninth Street South  
St. Petersburg, FL 33705

January 29, 1986

Mr. Chester T. Sims  
P.O. Box 669  
Bolton Landing, N.Y. 12814  
Dear Mr. Sims:

I have your letter of December 23, 1985 and will try to comment on your various questions about the Lakeview Hotel property.

#### 1. Demolition of Lake View Hotel

As described in my earlier letter to Langdon the entire Lake View property was purchased by 3 General Electric Engineers from Schenectady about ca. 1919. The southern portion was taken by John Apperson including the ice house and boat house. The middle section was taken by William Dalton including the Lake View Hotel building and the old stone foundation was taken by G. Hall Roosevelt including the old Hotel annex.

William Dalton used the old Lake View Hotel as a camp for a few years, but found it not suited to his needs, so he tore down the old hotel (I do not remember the date) and made plans to build a more elaborate house on the old stone foundation.

John Apperson strenuously objected to any attempt to build on the old foundation. He made life so miserable for Mr. Dalton that Dalton finally sold out his interest in the Lake View property and moved to the Loines estate on Northwest Bay.

## 2. History of Old Stone Foundation

The old foundation was in place when the Lake View property was purchased by the Schenectady group and I never heard anything about who built it or when it was built.

3. I have no information about the annex building or the small cottage at the rear of the annex.

I spent many happy days at the Lake View property as a guest of John Apperson during the years 1919 to 1930 during which time we always used the old Ice House as camp and headquarters both summer and winter. We did much fishing, canoeing, sailing, camping on the islands, skate sailing, skiing, etc.

Our neighbors were mostly wealthy people with large estates, before the days of motels, etc.

Best Wishes,  
Jim Dodge

It should be noted that Jim and Angie Dodge were also one of the subsequent owners of the 1928-1929 "Palmyra" Purchase. He must have been one of Appie's most trusted associates.

## JOHN S. APPERSON, JR.

Dick Beamish recently noted in the *Adirondack Explorer*: "The City of Schenectady has produced more than its share of conservation giants who devoted large chunks of their lives to preserving the natural beauty and tranquility of the Adirondacks." Apperson certainly was a superb example of that genre.

## EARLY YEARS

As far as I know, Appie and the Apperson family at large were not affluent. However, great niece and Apperson family biographer, Ellen Apperson Brown, notes that his father was a "medical doctor and entrepreneur, having founded the Marion and Rye Valley Railroad." In the same treatise (one of many excellent and authoritative papers she has written on Apperson) she further explains his early Virginian years – as in this excerpt ("Defending Democracy on the Home Front" – 2000):

At seventeen he had registered for classes at V.P.I. Blacksburg, Virginia, but his temperament and restless energy kept him from doing well in the classroom. Father and son may have reconciled eventually, for John found employment as a surveyor and foreman on the same local branch railroad. The railroad experience was an ideal preparation for John's later careers – both at GE and as a conservationist. From the railroad he learned road construction and engineering, about mining and mineralogy, and about effective management practices. He discovered the value of getting thorough and accurate information. His methodical approach served him well years later when he needed to convince legislators about conditions affecting the forest of lakes. He had seen these places himself and had studied all the pertinent facts. He also practiced and perfected the art of persuasion, making use of his lively sense of humor and a generous dose of Southern charm.

These insights from Ellen Brown are likely our best and maybe our only revelations, on how a Virginia born young man with only partial engineering college training, and so specific hyper social family standing, could later become friends of NYS Governors, Al Smith, FDR, Lehman and Harriman, and a very effective lobbyist of the Albany legislature and NYS Conservation Commission.

#### ARRIVAL IN SCHENECTADY

About 1900, he left southwest Virginia for Schenectady and GE because that was where the “industrial action” was. His nephews John S. Apperson, III and Jim Apperson followed years later. From 1900 to 1960 Schenectady New York was a very intellectually and financially vibrant city. Appie was an intellectually aggressive and socially attractive individual who was quick to grasp what needed to be done to promote his conservations/preservationist mores.

At GE, although well educated for that era, he was not a professional engineer with advanced degrees or even a baccalaureate. A member of the Power and Mining Engineering Department, his strengths seem to be that, no matter the multiple programs a project had, he could get the job moving briskly. He must have been a top notch facilitator. One story of Appie's early GE career, related to me by Tom Apperson, told of an early Apperson GE project requiring a group of workers which contained the usual quota of malcontents (i.e. trouble makers). When the truck containing the work crew left for the project site, one or two remained behind on the ground nursing their bruises. Fisticuffs may have been a factor.

Appie quickly rose in the expanding company as Ellen Apperson Brown described in her insightful paper, “Defending Democracy on the Home Front”:

As war broke out in Europe (1939), John Apperson had already completed forty years of work as an engineer at the General Electric Company in Schenectady, New York. His career had been a remarkable achievement for a man who had

come north in 1900, from Southwest Virginia, with no college degree to his credit. His intelligence and determination helped him to get an extraordinary education “on test” and on the job. By 1940 Apperson had risen to a management position in Engineering General, with primary responsibilities in reviewing patents and in coordinating the details for contracts. The job required him to stay informed about new products being developed in some seventy engineering divisions.

These skills would seem to combine the talents of a lawyer/paralegal plus a knowledgeable engineer, and brings to mind the father of Katharine Blodgett, a lawyer in the patent department of General Electric. (More on this in Part II)

### JOHN S. APPERSON, JR.

#### Discussion, Memories, Digressions, Conjectures, and Vignettes

My personal contacts with Appie were few and far between and always viewed through the eyes of a child, pre-teen, college or medical student. From that vantage point, he was not an especially child friendly character – usually focused on the business at hand - namely WORK! (meaning conservation, preservation, and maintenance). He dressed quite formally for being “at camp” with the felt brimmed hat of that era, suit, coat, shirt, and sometimes even a tie. As Ellen Apperson Brown notes in her biography of Appie, “Uncle John always insisted of getting everyone to work hard when they visited the lake.”

That image is a lingering vignette I have of Appie, along with the direct quote I most remember (that was told to me by Tom Apperson) the now famous, “Some come to work, and some come to play, and the latter...” The ominous unsaid end of that phrase was that the non workers might not be re-invited. The expression's origin was said to have been Appie's reply to a questioner, who was marveling at the prodigious amount of work accomplished by Appie's volunteer shoreline rip-rap crews I “the Narrows.” Appie's original purchasing partners for the hotel property likely were participants in these rugged crews, who at the end of a day of back breaking labor must have been ready to relax, socialize, and possibly party a little. This whole focus of Appie's work ethic would seem to engender many opportunities for developing personal tensions between Appie and some of these partners (Dalton, G. Hall Roosevelt). Partying and elaborate homes were not among Appie's pursuits, and along with his need to be in control, these factors may have been the deciding reasons for the change in ownership that evolved between the original partners in 1928.

Another memorable vignette of Appie was related to me by my father, and took place during one of those working weekend “soirees” in the 1920s. My parents and the other members of the work group were sleeping on the floor of the screened porch of Appie's shoreline cottage (said to have been once the hotel's bar). In the middle of the night, my Dad (always a fitful sleeper) suddenly awoke to find Appie silhouetted in the bright moonlight looking out over the lake and holding a shotgun at the ready. Appie



appeared distinctly apprehensive. Dad gasped, “Appie, Appie, what’s the matter?” After a few moments the only measured taciturn reply was, “I have my enemies, you know.” It must have been a tense night! Indeed, Appie did generate many enemies, a lot of them in “high places,” due to his conservation causes, which angered both certain corporations and their political backers. However, that is a story for another time and place.

## FORESTRY: TREE CUTTING

From my point of view, Appie was not a tree-hugging rabid preservationist who wished to abort any or all of man-kind activities in the ADK’s. Although often remembered in that context I think he would today be classified as a sustainable forestry advocate. Forest improvement cuts, to remove overstocked and impaired trees, thus opening the canopy to the better and healthy trees would have been OK with him. What was anathema to him would have been high grade clear cutting – “take 100% of the best (trees above 2025 inches DBH) and leave the rest.” This practice leaves the forest in a very degraded condition of diseased, genetically impaired, low quality trees, and may take 200 years for nature to repair, and was the general methodology used in the ADKs in that era. Appie would also have been “hostile” to the present unpleasant tendency to cut down a beautiful 200+ year old ADK forest to construct a lawn for a mega mansion or commercial value. The lawn would be detrimental to the lake for many reasons, especially phosphorous and its attraction to Canadian Geese. He did not care for people who came to the ADKs/Lake George and then construct a replica of their ostentatious metropolitan NYC/NJ/CONN home. His view was if a person came to the ADKs for homebuilding he should try to create an ADK like environment that minimally impacts the environment. The Palmyra Property original owners never hankered for lawns, and sun worshipers had to jump in their boats and get their rays “on the lake.” I can only imagine what opinions Appie had about nearby Dr. Becker and his wife Marie, and their manicured, opulent estate (more on that later.)

During the 1920s to 1950s many would be visitors to the Lake View Hotel and Palmyra Properties found that their “ticket for admission” was to bring along fifty to one-hundred seedlings from the NYS Saratoga tree nursery. The Barber Farm (Palmyra Property) was especially in need of reforestation, and the visitors often found that their weekend would be largely consumed by planting the seedlings! Current owners may owe a debt of gratitude to these early amateur foresters as they look out over their beautiful pine groves – some of which are now reaching maximum maturity.

Please see Appendix II for an internal Saratoga tree nursery 1924 memo – Appie was ordering one thousand red pine transplants, and they were cooperating!

## THE BARGES

A unique feature of the properties was Apperson’s flotilla of wooden barges. They were essential for his work projects – especially “rip-rapping,” but were terrific tools for everything else from dock repairs to boat house construction and repair, and

people transportation. Constructed of a mix of hardwoods and white pine, rectangular in shape, and about fifteen feet long by six feet wide, they survived for over forty years – up until the late 1990s. I have no knowledge of the manufacturer but would put my guess on Smiths or Ellis Barber. Basic propulsion came from long oars, poling and occasionally a small 3.5 HP outboard. Like Apperson's 1927 Chris Craft, they were named after various clauses of the NYS "Forever Wild" constitution. Just one barge from the group survived, until about 1970. It was up on saw horses, upside down, in the carriage house and badly in need of repair. John III, Jim and Tim Apperson and I undertook the job of re-caulking all the wide open seams and replacement of rotten planks. Since all the chestnut camps required almost yearly re-caulking of their seams between the vertical half logs, there was an ample supply of creosote soaked hemp-like caulking which was pounded into the seams, and a final coat of battleship gray paint applied. We re-named this craft "Miss Rip-Rap" and she lived again for several glorious years of hard service. Her first job turned out to be the deconstruction of the former steam boat dock (cribs) that had extended out for almost 100 feet in front of the old main hotel. (On the following page is a 1980s request by Chester Sims for assistance in rescuing the "U.S. Miss Rip-Rap".) The dock itself was long gone, but the log cribs filled with large rocks lived on, and in times of low water were hazards to navigation. Our work crew was heavily reinforced with children equipped with snorkels and masks and seemingly unlimited energy of youth. The rocks were removed and placed in the barge and then became badly needed rip-rap repair for the area. The 100 year old crib logs, weeks and months later, would suddenly find themselves released from the weight of the rock, float up, and be found floating at large; themselves a hazard to navigation. These logs were not the modern plantation grown lumber now found in lumber yards, but tight grained, strong and would have made elite lumber if we had re-sawed them. Some were taken by Chester Sims, and some by us, and a few of these 130 year olds can still be viewed as landscaping on our property (but in a near terminal state.)

## THE STEAMBOAT DOCK

The steamboat dock itself must have been quite an impressive structure from 1875 to its demise. My guess is that our present 9N was not a very functional mode of transportation until 1910 or later, so the steamboats were the primary means of getting people, guests, food and supplies to and from the Lake View Hotel and all the other hotels on the lake. Bill Gates tells us (Lake George Hotels and Landings, pg. 43-44), "the guests (hotel capacity 125) would arrive by large steamboat to the Bolton House dock further north, Bolton's public pier at the time. From there they would be delivered to the Lake View House dock by a small private steam barge – i.e. the "Fannie." See this same book for more details for the Lake View Hotel's activities, history, and offerings, plus pictures. I can still remember the U.S. mail, crates of food supplies, with tourists and luggage, arriving on the Mohican at Bolton Landing in the 1940s.

One unanticipated bonanza of our work on the steamboat cribs was finding a significant number of antique liquor bottles deeply embedded in the mud around the dock and I still have a fair collection of those. Various suppositions have visualized decades of nocturnal inebriates wandering out on the hotel dock, polishing off their

flask, and throwing it into the lake – (to add to my collection). There are probably others waiting to be discovered. This may be a little (surprising given that Bill Gates notes (pg. 44) “There was no bar at the hotel.” Possibly, Proprietor Mr. R.L. Brown was a member of the temperance movement. His hotel certainly had all the other amenities.

### The “ARTICLE XIV SEC. 1” Chris Craft (Cadet)

John Apperson’s “Article XIV Sec. 1: is alleged to have been the first Chris Craft on Lake George (1927), although I am not sure how one can document that as factual. Lamb’s was the local Chris Craft dealer on the lake at the time (Buzz Lamb), but James Smith seems to have been Appie’s subsequent source for maintenance and repairs. She received a new engine about 1935, but otherwise appears to have been a relatively trouble free craft. Ellen Apperson Brown says the family celebrated the new purchase on Turtle Bay in 1927, and Frank Leonbruno told that his crews knew to keep a keen eye out for its appearance in the Narrows. This usually indicated that had some new shoreline damage project to discuss. For over thirty-five years the Article XIV Sec. 1 was Appie’s “Conservation Flagship” on the lake as he pursued his paternal quests: i.e. :the islands are my children and the lake is my (substitute) wife.” Using the Article XIV, Sec. 1 as a fancy “show boat” was not one of Appy’s interests. His motivations were lake conservation and protection. This entailed a lot of just plain work, and not just the massive shore line rip-rapping that he and his voluntary work crews accomplished over many decades. Along with his flotilla of work barges, the Chris Craft Cadet was a working boat, pure and simple. Sheryl (Smith) and David Ebeoglu tell us that the Art. XIV Sec 1 “never looked so good” as at the present time, after her extensive rehabilitation. In Appy’s era, she was a “plain Jane,” (if any Chris Craft could be described in that vein), often a little beat and worn – and always hard at work. Art Newkirk (page 9, *John Apperson’s Management of Dome Island*, March 1997) describes some of the Chris Craft’s erosion control activities utilized by the work parties on Dome Island...

...take Apperson’s Chris Craft with a canoe on top on a calm day, and never more than two passengers, anchor the Chris Craft near the island, and use the canoe to go ashore. The areas worked were where foot traffic had broken down the vegetative cover, exposing the underlying sandy and gravelly soil.

Personally I suspect some Chris Craft purists might not approve of this technique, but it got the job done. Getting ashore and up the bank from any craft on Dome Island is an exercise in agility and good luck.

Most every summer in late August, Appy would select a day of relative calm on the lake surface and direct Mrs. Christie (owner of the Lake View Hotel Annex) to gather any available ladies then in residence at the Lake View Hotel or “Palmyra” Properties, for their annual boat ride. At the appointed time, they would gather on Mrs. Christie’s small boat wharf (where the current Horne boat now resides) all atwitter, equipped with slackers, and obviously quite honored to have been invited. Appy and the Article XIV Sec. 1 would promptly appear, and the difficult job of loading them on board would

begin, along with copious amounts of non-stop feminine chatter. Appy would stoically put up with all this, and off they would go for a slow speed, hopefully spray-less, glorious trip up the lake. This yearly event seemed to be Appy's major concession to the female contingent, since he was strictly a man's man and not given to a lot of attention to the distaff side.

She spent her winters at Smith's boathouse, but after Appy's death, resided in the hotel carriage house year round, with the stern protruding in the elements (partially covered with tarps), and was rarely used. After Jim Apperson's death, executors Tom and John Apperson tried to interest the Blue Mountain ADK Museum in her as a historical artifact, but did not get much response.

Finally, she was purchased by an individual who disappeared (with the boat) from all "our radar screens," and could not be traced at that time. Years passed, and ultimately the boat resurfaced in storage at Bay View Marina. Along with the boat was a major unpaid storage bill that was rapidly growing, but no apparent owner. It was then revealed that a bank held a major lien on the boat, but not on the trailer. She was repossessed by the bank and removed for safekeeping to the Sims home (thanks to Shirley Dean)! Everyone was overjoyed to find the Article XIV Sec. 1, again. However, a new problem became the lack of any permanent shelter to protect her from the elements.

Christopher Hall Langdon now entered this scene, disclosing a long-standing, unrequited love affair with the Art. XIV Sec. 1. This had evolved over twenty years of seeing her reposing in the Lake View Hotel carriage house – unloved, unused, unkempt and often protected only by "the world's largest housekeeping spider" cum an equally massive web, some four feet plus in width. Chris's first two bids for ownership had come in on the low side.

To shorten the tale, she was then purchased by Chris from the bank and began a successful five year rehabilitation process which revealed multiple problems of unseen damage and decay. These were meticulously repaired, and at long last, the Article XIV Sec. 1 lives again on Lake George "Apperson territory" in all her glory!

On August 2, 2010, she transported a few of the first selected members to be inducted into the prestigious Lake George Land Conservancy's Apperson Society from Hague, across the lake to Blythewood. I think Appie was "smiling from on high on that great day!"

#### JOHN APPERSON'S SCHENECTADY LIFE

We know quite a bit about where Appy spent his time at Lake George, but considerably less of the details about where and how he lived during his sixty plus years in Schenectady. The Mohawk Club was his residence for many years, especially in the 1920s, and he moved to 1079 Teviot Road when he purchased that home sometime in the 1930s.

## THE MOHAWK CLUB

The Mohawk Club, located on the corner of Union Street and Church Street in downtown Schenectady, New York, was less than a block from the historic "Stockade" district. This neighborhood contained a high quotient of socially prominent families, with either "old money," Dutch ancestry, preeminent careers, or all three of the foregoing. It is quite likely that Appy got to know a lot of people who were beneficial to his conservation causes due to this proximity. For instance, Dr. Katharine Blodgett, Mr. and Mrs. A. Kilgore Christie, and Gertrude Brown all lived within a two or three minute walk from the Mohawk Club and all of them became owners on "Apperson territory."

The Mohawk Club was and is a very selective, elite, gentlemen's residence and eating club with some of the best food in the city. For a socially conscious, upwardly mobile, Schenectady resident to drop the information that they had recently been invited to dine at the Mohawk Club, was a nice "tidbit" to place in any conversation with like-minded persons.

Indeed, in that era (and area), 1920s to 1950s, everything British were considered generally superior, and having Dutch forebears gave one an automatic step up the social scale. The ladies of the stockade area (and elsewhere) were careful to make all their indicated social calls, discreetly placing their calling cards in the little silver bowls that sat next to every interior front door, via their white gloved hands. It is likely that, if being considered for membership in the Mohawk Club, it did not hurt a bit to be a certified WASP!

How all of the foregoing helped or served any of Appy's purposes, I do not know. Pictures of him taken in his twenties and thirties I think would qualify him to be described as a tall, handsome man. In any case, he was able to effortlessly interface among people in all categories of society – from Adirondack backwoodsman to the socially and intellectually elite, and especially with the politicians and legislators in Albany. He could be a quite proper and charming "you all" southern gentleman when appropriate and then make his points with the "movers and shakers" of the State legislature or with the Adirondack Mountain Club members, and the New York State Conservation Department commissioners, with equal ease. The Mohawk Club was an excellent platform from which to launch all these endeavors.

## 1079 TEVIOT ROAD

This neighborhood was adjacent to, but not part of, the prestigious "General Electric Real Estate Tract," where prominent, often famous, or at least very well to do General Electric executives lived. For instance, Steinmetz and Dr. Langmuir lived there. Many residents sent their children to the select private school in the area – The Brown School. My mother was the principal of that institution during the 1940s.

I never visited Mr. Apperson's residence at 1079 Teviot Road, Schenectady, so this oral history, like most of this paper, is strictly from accounts of others who were there. It apparently was strictly a "bachelor pad," minimalist and functional, and devoid of the feminine touch. Appy was generous with sharing the house with new General Electric engineers looking for more permanent digs, and Jim Apperson lived there for many years before and after Appy's declining years and death. From the 1930s to 1940s on nights and weekends it often was a hotbed of activity, centered on meetings of the Mohawk Valley Hiking Club (MVHC), plus many "do it yourself classes" designed for making one's own sleeping bags, skate sails, and "skins" for winter mountain climbing on cross country skis.

Chester Sims recounted one story that describes the general tenor of life at 1079 Teviot Road. Mr. Apperson and the others, then current guest occupants of the house, were walking home together from the General Electric works – they usually walked so as to keep their hiking legs conditioned. One member of the group asked "What's for supper tonight?" A Reply was "I don't know. What did we have last night?" "Carrots" was the retort, "and the night before." "Well, how about Monday night?" "I think it was carrots." This tale, which may well be apocryphal, could explain why Jim Apperson and Appie liked nothing better than being invited out to share a home cooked dinner. The lady of the house usually was confronted with some of the most appreciated and substantial appetites of their cooking careers! Requests for seconds and thirds were to be expected. Mrs. Florence Christie fulfilled this role at camp admirably, and solidified her function as matriarch of the Lake View Hotel property during the summer sessions.

#### MENTORING PAUL SCHAEFER

Appy was a mentor to Paul Schaefer during much of this time period. Paul's Adirondack roots were in the Johnsbury area, (not Lake George), and he swiftly became a leading Adirondack conservationist and protector of the forever wild concept. In the Schenectady/Niskayuna region, Paul had dual talents for which he was justly famous. He designed and built large, usually expensive, architecturally elite Dutch colonial homes for the affluent. By the late 1930s, Paul built his own ADK style (stone) home on St. David's Lane and moved his family in – now the home of the Apperson Library and headquarters for the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks ("Protect"). Appy and Paul often worked in tandem on various campaigns, with Appy demonstrating how to document their causes with films, photos, engineering surveys and data. They would be prepared! And they personally knew the characteristics of the sites in contention – they had been there! No doubt they knew all too well that their opponents were using similar tactics, via corporate legal and public relations departments with considerable "war chests." When the moment of truth arrived with the lobbyists and legislators, Paul and Appy could turn to them and ask – "How many of you (lobbyists) have actually been to and walked that valley and or mountains in question?"

APPY'S ART OF PERSUASION – VIA SOLILOQUY, CIRCUMLOCUTION  
FACTS AND SHIRT CUFFS...PLUS RATTLESNAKES!!

The Smiths, Huckles and Newkirks got to know Appy very well during the 1950s after they took over Dr. Langmuir's property in 1951. They were next door neighbors, and of course Dr. Art Newkirk was Dr. Langmuir's personal assistant for many years (it's likely he was one of Dr. Katherine Blodgett's successors for that job.) He was especially valuable for Appy's Dome Island projects, and its 1956 gifting to the Nature Conservancy. For many years after that, Dr. Newkirk was the head of the Dome Island Committee that managed the island for (absentee owner) the Nature Conservancy.

Sheryl (Smith) and David Ebeoglu have recounted to us how an elderly Appie took them "under his wing" at the lake "as young folks." He took them on hikes up Tongue Mountain and others, shared his docks for their boats, and they enjoyed many boat rides in the Article XIV Sec. 1. Their description of Appy's Chris Craft pre-trip preparations is enlightening. Each trip was preceded by double checking the extra fuel, and careful loading of an auxiliary (out board) motor, paddles, tow-ropes, help lights, grappling hooks, the usual flotation devices and who knows what else! He took no chances!

Sheryl and David are astute observers of Appy's conservation methodology and persuasive powers. They describe his style as often convoluted and circumferential. He often would not get right to the point of contention, conversationally "moving around the edges" with facts and data – until finally he would later "go in for the kill." One would then and only then very definitely know what he was getting at! At other times he could almost smother you with southern charm (unless he suspected you of harboring some duplicity). Art Newkirk reminded me that Appy could be "very N.Y.C.: - i.e. right to the point." He remembered a Barnet Fowler (reporter for the Schenectady Union Star) column in which he was reminiscing about "if he had a week to give of his future for reliving some of his past" – his first item was – "The late J.S. Apperson buttonholing us at State and Ferry Streets, asking if we knew of anyone to whom he could give Dome Island in Lake George."

They describe his dealing with Dome Island unauthorized visitors as always a problem. Campers, particularly the younger partying types, were especially feared due to the threat of a forest fire which might denude the island. (Bolton Landing did not have any fire boats in that era.) If Appie found visitors on the island he would often discreetly shadow the interlopers, at a considerable distance, seemingly not paying attention to the callers. Before long the touring party could not help but notice the older, formally dressed gentleman in the distance who kept forcefully stomping the ground at regular intervals. At last, their curiosity piqued they would eventually double back and ask the elderly gentleman – is everything all right? He would then turn on his southern charm and reassure them that all was very well indeed. However, in the course of their conversation it would not take long for Appie to drop the news that he was just being prudent,, and the forceful stomping of the ground was the best way of avoiding the numerous rattlesnakes that heavily infest Dome Island. It did not take too long for the news to get around that Dome Island was a veritable rattlesnake metropolis, and the trespassing problems were considerable reduced. I suspect that Appie took some cues for his "Rattlesnake strategy" from the fate of the Sherman House" on French Point at

the northern end of the Narrows. Bill Gates relates, “The story passed down says that one sunny day a group of ladies were sitting on the hotel’s porch steps when a large rattlesnake appeared from beneath the porch. The ladies promptly left the hotel and spread the word, causing the hotel’s decline. (Hotel was built in 1878 and burned in 1889) (Bill Gates, Lake George Hotels and Landings)

Art Newkirk remembered Appy’s signage on Dome Island, “at one time he placed a sign on the island giving the treatment for rattlesnake bite, implying the presence of the snakes.” No one has ever reported seeing rattlesnakes on the island, at least not since 1956.

Another dual purpose methodology stylized by Appie was the seeding of Dome Island’s banks with poison ivy. The poison ivy grew luxuriously and covered the banks. This primarily was intended for erosion control, but people were not supposed to go on the banks!

Ellen Brown told me her suspicions about Appy’s famous “kidnapping of Governor Al Smith.” In 1929, B.K. Bixby’s “St Louis” launch was filled with New York State dignitaries, Governor Al Smith, his famous commissioner of public works Robert Moses, John Apperson and a host of New York State conservation department movers and shakers – as they inspected the Lake George Narrows, especially the east side of Tongue Mountain. It was here that Moses was strongly advocating placing the contemplated new 9N highway from Bolton Landing to Sabbath Day Point and northward. If Moses had prevailed, a highway in this location would have desecrated the Narrows. Ellen surmises that Appy had hard data, geological factors and cost estimates written all over the cuffs of his rather formal shirt (under his suit jacket). He referred to the date as he continuously rebuffed most of Moses’ proposals with counter plans, backed by his facts and the panoramic views they could all see from the boat. We all know the ultimate course of that highway (9N) – Governor Smith was convinced by the end of the boat ride!

#### APPY’S LAKE GEORGE PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION

This organization was founded and hand crafted by Appy sometime in the early 1940s – rather late in his conservation career. I suspect that up until that time, Appy depended upon his relationships with prominent, somewhat conservative minded, political figures (i.e. Gov. Al Smith, Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mosby, Bixby, etc.) to get the leverage he needed to promote his long list of conservation achievements. Backup for these movements came from his large cadre of upstate grass roots supporters and higher profile leaders such as Paul Schaefer and the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks. The Lake George Protective Association may have been Appy’s attempt to formulate a support organization under his control, and located in the Lake George region where he was best known and had his support base. He sensed a “preservationist power vacuum” around Lake George, and considered the longer standing Lake George Protective Association to be unduly under the control of Lake George Village commercial interests, and a few wealthy sports fisherman. Dr. Irving



Langmuir, as usual, was a co-founder, and indeed they heavily reinforced the organization with prominent scientists from the Natural Science Departments of Union College, RPI, General Electric, and the then NYS Conservation Department. This was at about the time when Dr. Langmuir produced his landmark studies on the Lake George water temperature isotherms, and how they turn over as the seasons evolve. Lake George Village commercial interests were notable by their absence in the group, but the Bolton Lambs and Smiths were on the board. I consider the present Lake George Land Conservancy to be the closest "fit" to Appy's Lake George Protective Association, both philosophically and functionally, and the Fund for Lake George to also be a very close second clone.

By the 1950s my parents, Ellsworth and Dorothy Langdon, were the recording secretary of the Association, and kept a massive ledger containing all the minutes and proceedings of the Association (now hopefully in the Apperson library on St. David's Lane, Schenectady, NY). A couple of days prior to the August (Labor Day) annual meetings, my Dad and I would set out in Dr. Blodgett's 18 foot Old Town Sponson Canoe cum 5 HP Johnson Outboard, to remind the local vacationing members of the up-coming meeting and drum up a good audience. The trip would start out in Huddle Bay, touch along Homer Point, up and down Clay Island, thence to a couple of "grandfathered" camps on the west side of Tongue Mountain and end up at similar sites on the east side of Tongue Mountain and Turtle Bay in the Narrows. The family names have now long "slipped out of focus," but Bill White, Art Newkirk, the Van Dykes, the Goodwins, the Caldwells, and the Witheralls all "ring bells." These trips often seemed like "preaching to the choir," but everybody was happy for the reminder.

The article to follow from the "Glens Falls Times" gives the September 12, 1944 pertinent facts of the organization's inaugural. It was still war time (W.W.I.I.), and the assembled group still had major concerns about the maintenance of Lake George water levels. The trial for the water level regulations care was coming up in 1945.

September 12, 1944  
Glens Falls Times

Dr. Irving Langmuir  
Heads Newly Formed Lake George Group

Miss Kathryn H. Starbuck of Saratoga Springs, Kenneth Reynolds of Albany, Timothy Cohen of Albany and John S. Apperson, Schenectady are the incorporators of a new Lake George Protective Association incorporated yesterday by the State with Dr. Irving Langmuir of Schenectady as president.

The directors are Walter Harris, Arthur Lamb and Henry Smith, all of Lake George, Mrs. David Fleming of Southport, Conn., M.F. Witherall of Troy, Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Apperson. Temporary officers include Dr. Langmuir, president; the Rev. Dr. J. Howard Melish of Brooklyn, treasurer, and Miss Dorothy Mersereau of Lake George, secretary.

The association was formed on Labor Day at Dr. Langmuir's camp on Crown Island, Lake George.

The purposes of the Lake George Protective Association, Inc. as declared in its charter are:

1. To protect Lake George, its islands, watersheds, and mainland shore, including the outlet of Lake George, and the purity of their water; and to aid in establishing and maintaining reasonable water levels in Lake George;
2. To protect fish and game and other wild life and the wild forest lands, and prevent spoil erosion, at Lake George and within its watershed;
3. To protect the interests and welfare of property owners and the public at Lake George; and
4. To collect and disseminate information pertaining to the foregoing purposes, and to cooperate with the public officials, corporations, private organizations, and individuals to those ends.

The group, at its organizational meeting, declared itself to be emphatically and irrevocably opposed to the deepening of the Lake George outlet.

The annual meetings themselves filled up the grand ballroom of the Lake View Hotel Annex, possible a maximum of 75-100 people. Four or five high quality scientific papers on botanical, geological and ornithological subjects would be presented by Union College and NYS Conservation Department scientists, often with an emphasis on Dome Island and maintaining reasonable lake water levels. The Nature Conservancy itself seemed to be notable by its absence. Although the owner of Dome Island (thanks to Appy) it was still a small organization, and possibly Dome Island was its only major holding at that time. By the 1960s an elderly and ailing Appy gave a sad and tearful kind of goodbye pep talk to the assembled group, a kind of "passing the baton" to the next generation. This sad and rambling discourse may have been his swan song. My last recollection of Appy may have been the following year when my father and I gave him a ride from Schenectady up to the lake. He was clearly declining, possible from chronic congestive heart failure, but still fully in his game." He was worrying about his camp and property and if Jim and John were up to taking care of it all. As fate would have it, twenty years later, his forebodings would prove to be well-founded. As the grim reaper took a further toll and Jim Apperson died, all the prior Lake View Hotel properties transferred to private owners for elegant residences, some with "McMansion" attributes. Dome Island lived on, however, a permanent, physical reminder of Appy's magnificent Lake George conservation achievements. Maybe Barber Mountain ("Appie Top") might be considered a runner-up for this honor.

#### THE PEOPLE AND PLACES DR. IRVING LANGMUIR

We always had the sense that Dr. Langmuir, like Appy, was an omnipresent "elephant in the room" for our entire region of Huddle Bay. He functioned as Apperson's

silent partner. One rarely saw him, but his presence and influence were all-pervasive. This should not come as a surprise, as an internationally acclaimed scientist he frequently moved in completely different social and scientific levels of society. The Langmuir's camp, built in 1927, was the first after Huddle Beach Road, but that does not mean it was the largest or the most opulent. Quite the contrary, it adhered to the same modest William Hill fabricated vertical log, American chestnut construction, with multiple outbuildings designed for specific uses (outhouse included). It was constructed in the same era as most of the Palmyra Properties camps, but had a number of custom touches that set off its high caliber. It continues to live on today as a portion of the Ebeoglu's home. It should be kept in mind that all these chestnut camps were never designed or intended to be winter residences – a winter weekend was the maximum – and only if the woodstove could be maintained at the top heating capacity. The Langmuir's large home came later in the 1930s when they moved to Crown Island and the Huddle Bay camp became their land base for coming and going to Crown. For this and for many other reasons, we rarely had contact with the Langmuirs.

In November 1950 an extremely destructive “blow down” (wind storm) struck the entire northeast United States and caused severe damage to the entire Huddle area (see Bill Gates' book “old Bolton,” page 78). The Langmuir's camp suffered a lot of havoc, and even part of the chimney was demolished. At this point, the Langmuirs decided to transfer the property to a triumvirate of three families – the Newkirks, Smiths and Huckles. Art Newkirk was Langmuir's protégé at the research lab, but all three family groups were loosely inter-related. More importantly, they collectively all got along well and, according to Sheryl Smith and David Ebeoglu they never had any important differences. The Ebeoglus have beautifully enlarged and enhanced the entire camp (1997) and it lives on as a wonderful example of Will Hill's creative craftsmanship.

Since Appy was not a wealthy individual, where the money needed to bankroll his conservation projects came from is unclear. Like-minded people in Appy's large circle of Adirondack/Lake George enthusiasts were the obvious primary source, and Dr. Langmuir likely had the largest and deepest pockets. He certainly helped in a lot of other ways. In 1925 he took over Appy's Turtle Bay property in the Narrows. Lee Hanes mentioned that there are still a lot of historically important pictures of Appy and Langmuir on the walls of that camp. Their relationship was also a “two way street” – the Langmuir boat house, built in 1911 as part of the hotel, was moved from the Lake View Hotel property, and has many attractive features.

Dr. Langmuir's scientific biography culminating in his 1932 Nobel Prize is obviously far beyond the scope of this treatise. Thanks to Roger Summerhayes here are some of his scientific and major Lake George milestones:

1909 - joined G.E. Research Labs

1910 – met Apperson

1923 – started (“home”) movie making – especially skiing & mountain climbing

1925 – acquired the Turtle Bay property from Appie

1925 – acquired Huddle Bay property for their camp

1930 – acquired Crown Island and moved there

1939 – Dome Island purchase with Appie  
1940s – “artificial” rain making with Dr. Vincent J. Schaefer (Paul Schaefer’s brother). (Still said to be used in China)  
Sixty-three patents and fifteen honorary degrees

Above all, it is said that his colleagues remember him most of all for the tremendous amount of fun he had from science.

I choose to remember him for his papers on Lake George thermal layers (Isotherms), “Langmuir Cells,” and how these temperatures and currents manipulate the mechanics of “ice out.” It was such a logical intuitive study, one always gets the proverbial “why didn’t I think of that,” (and use it to win the ice out lottery!)

I also like to remember him for rising to the occasion, and coming to the aid of a friend in need. As the years rolled on, Appy became more and more distracted by his well-known conservation causes. On rare occasions his job at G.E. may have been in jeopardy. The often told story comes to mind how, on one such occasion, Dr. Langmuir went to the top brass, and flatly stated – “If Apperson goes, I go!”

Those of us who serve on the Dome Island committee tend to think of the island as a 100 percent Apperson gift – as we should. However, everyone should keep in mind that Langmuir loaned Appy about one half of the original purchase cost in 1939. Later in 1956, at the time of Appy’s gifting of Dome Island to the Nature Conservancy, the latter was a tiny organization. It agreed to accept Dome Island only if a dowry accompanied it, to maintain and protect the island, at no cost to the conservancy. An endowment was raised and Dr. Langmuir was the chairman of the committee that collected hundreds of contributions, large and small, from all over New York State. If one were to view that list of contributors, Dr. Langmuir’s contribution would be at the top - both via work performed, and financial assets donated. By 2007 the current endowment had grown to reach as much as \$800,000. At present it is much less than that due to the vagaries of the stock market.

#### JAMES APPERSON (AKA UNCLE JIM) AND CHILL HOUSE (Chilhowee House)

“Uncle Jim” Apperson was John S. Apperson’s nephew. A metallurgist at General Electric, he was a lean and wiry western Virginian, well educated and well spoken. When “at camp” however, his southern Appalachian accent reappeared and he dressed (frayed work clothes occasionally assisted by strategically placed safety pins), lived and worked like a “mountain man.”

In Schenectady he lived at 1079 Teviot Road – Apperson’s long time residence. At Bolton Landing his entire persona changed. Off came the suit, on came the well worn back country clothes and hat, sometimes held together with the (his words) “Irish needle and thread.” His western Virginia drawl oozed countrified aphorisms and he could identify most of the wild flowers on any hike by their Latin and English names. Jim roamed the property in this “Deliverance mode” ambushing trespassing tourists with

a mildly threatening “Can I help you?” tone that sent interlopers scurrying back to Huddle Beach forthwith.

After John Apperson III’s untimely death in 1971, Uncle Jim became the owner of the entire Apperson Lake View Hotel property. This was a major job and a huge responsibility that Tom Apperson tried mightily to help him with. Jim, above all, was a superb Teller of Tales, in the best southern Appalachian oral tradition. He would appear in our meadow and proceed to provide us with an erudite discussion of the current crop of trees, wild flowers and fauna. Never one to decline an invitation to tarry awhile and enjoy a fermented malt beverage plus audience; he would sit down and regale us with non-stop stories of the “Ole Unk” (Appy), the islands he had rescued, the battles with squatters (Hank Durn and Ingin Joe) and mountains hiked. Jim would gratefully eat up a storm (all bachelors seem to love a home-cooked meal), stretch the truth to the limit and beyond, and provide the audience with a treasure chest of Apperson history and Appy’s philosophy of life.

## CHILHOWIE HOUSE

When at the lake, Jim continued to live in the “Old Unc’s Chill House” after retirement. This was Appie’s converted hotel ice house residence, and it remained unchanged from the original Apperson era. The walls were 110% covered with every imaginable North Country tool, sporting items, and old time utilitarian contrivances (many dating from the original hotel inventory). Skate sails and outdoor sports objects vied with cooking equipment that mostly hung from the walls. The kitchen conveniences were modest at best, with cooking accomplished on the wood stove. The bathroom that I remember was a lone toilet “throne” that sat all by itself in the middle of the adjacent storage room, without any adornments or conveniences. It may have been the bane of the visiting Apperson women (Katharine, Ellen, etc.) during their stays, but certainly better than the outhouse. The most “luxurious” furnishings continued to be the prior hotel’s brass beds. For a first-hand account of visiting Chill House, see Ellen Apperson Brown’s website. Needless to say, one or two weeks of trying to cook family meals at Chill House may have been enough for most female relatives (although they may be reticent to say so). Although we always thought the Chill House name for the Apperson camp was derived from its prior occupation as the hotel ice house, it actually was probably named for the village in Southwest Virginia where Appy was born. Ellen Apperson Brown’s “For the Love of Virginia,” February 19, 2000, research gives us the answer.

Appy, as his friends called him, had developed a very special home away from home nearby – at beautiful Lake George. He had purchased a “camp” at the lake in 1920, consisting of several lots on the west shore of the lake, and had convinced some of his friends to become his neighbors. This camp named Chilhowee after the village in south western Virginia where Uncle John was born became famed for its Southern hospitality, as he welcomed friends and family from all over the world. The camp provided a home base for his real

career – as a conservationist dedicated to protecting the wilderness (Forest Preserve) of New York State, and in particular, Lake George and its islands.

After Jim's death, I suspect some of the contents of the Ice House Camp, Boat House and Carriage House provided a substantial original inventory for Henry Caldwell's "Black Bass Antiques." Chester Sims and we had no place to store all the stuff (sadly), and the Bolton Historical Society Museum was full up with its complete Apperson exhibition. To get the flavor of what it must have looked like at Chill House, take a tour of today's museum and check out the Apperson collection which is extensive and authentic. Also, do not miss the Lake View Hotel ledger, and pictures. The skate sails may also be one of a kind. The current climate change seems to obviate the favorable ice conditions (known as Black Ice) required for the skate sailing popularized by Apperson from 1910 – 1960. Yours truly did get to try it once or twice in the late 1950s – terminated by a few twisted ankles, thanks to the expansion cracks in the ice.

Many evenings Jim cultivated his coterie of raccoons which showed up regularly at their specific times for their usual fare of dog biscuits. Each had gained a descriptive name, and a few could be enticed transiently into the house. Those of us who were visiting the lake and especially our children were often the appreciative audience for these shows.

When Mrs. Christie died, Jim bought her property, took over the Hotel Annex, and maintained it as best he could, but it was not really used. He needed all the help he could get. Nephew Tom Apperson came to the rescue, coming up from NYC regularly on most weekends and vacation, (often carpooling with us) and joined the work force just when he was most needed. Chester Sims was hand-picked by Jim to take over the Lake View Hotel Annex property after Mrs. Christie's death in the early 1970s, and turned out to be a wonderful steward of the land. Jim and Tom Apperson would lead our neighborhood family groups up Tongue Mountain, Appie Top (Barber Mountain), bush-whack up Cat Mountain, or cling and grab up Crane Mountain with equal ease, seemingly never getting winded. They cooked on the old Chill House wood stove, slept on the old army cots and worked untiringly to maintain the boat house, carriage house, shoreline porch building, docks, and hotel annex in the best possible repair. It was an overwhelming job order, but a labor of love.

Jim certainly was an outstanding character in an already crowded area rife with somewhat flamboyant personalities. He also was a good steward of the Apperson legacy and property, within his means. Sadly, the scourge of the Appersons" – carcinoma of the colon took him, but he toughed it out at camp right up until the neoplasm invaded the vital organs.

Uncle Jim Apperson "made life interesting" at camp for us all, was our resident historian, and was and is missed by all.

MR. AND MRS. KILGORE CHRISTIE (and the Lake View Hotel Annex)

The Christies of 22 Front Street, Schenectady, NY (the Stockade area) were Mr. Apperson's selection in the summer of 1928 to take over the Lake View House Annex. This was after the breakup of Apperson's original 1919 purchasing group (G. Hall Roosevelt and William Dalton). I am guessing that Mr. A. Kilgore Christie must have died in the early 1930s. I do not remember meeting him, and do not recollect any description of him, other than that he was the nephew of the Treasurer of the General Electric Company (Henry W.W. Darling).

In any case, my primary memories of Mrs. Florence Christie "Aunt Flonnie," a widow without any children, were a) that she seemingly never met a child she did not love, and b) from each early June arrival on she could never stop gushing how "I just love my Lake George place!" She was psychologically very different from all the other "Palmyra property" owners who were mostly "no nonsense" physicists, chemists, or electrical engineers. Florence could best be described as the sweet grandmotherly type. Not a scientist or intellectual by nature, she did not live by "Koch's Postulates." She played a mean game of Bridge, as did everybody else, but it was accepted that she should not keep the score. She, or prior occupants, had decorated the hotel with about thirty beautiful 1910 – 1930 European travel posters from Switzerland and all the world's beautiful places, but otherwise she made almost no other changes.

Florence lived summers in the rear first floor of the Annex where there was the sitting room, bug woodstove, and the rudimentary ancient hotel style kitchen. Everybody worried about her living alone in that huge edifice, and the always looming threat of fire (1890 – electrical wiring). Most early mornings she could be seen taking her swim off the old hotel wharf (now the Horne boathouse). This is also the site of the well known 1920s era group picture of the FDR Roosevelt family. FDR himself, Eleanor, and G. Hall can be identified. Mrs. Christie was an excellent cook and consequently was one of Appie's favorite people – a frequent source of home cooked meals at camp.

As Florence aged, keeping up the place became an ever increasing problem. For many years her brother Burt would spend summers with her. Burt looked even older and more infirm than Florence, was "deaf as a door nail," and chain smoked Lucky Strikes until the ashtrays overflowed (in that timber dry edifice). A pensioner of the Remington Repeating Arms Company, his health deteriorated with every cigarette, and on several occasions he became ill enough, that we or a neighbor would have to rush him down to Glens Falls Hospital for a multi-week stay. There followed a series of "helping families" that would stay with Florence for most of the summer season; run the house; make repairs and enjoy a joyful summer. Some were more conscientious re the former activities and some had stronger predilections for the latter.

In general, children were not very prevalent on the Lake View or Palmyra properties until the Bennetts and my family arrived. Most of the owners were "permanent singles." It was always reassuring to know that we (kids) had a "friend indeed" in Mrs. Christie, and it was quite likely she was baking some peanut butter cookies for us, soon after our arrival.

On the following page is an example of Mrs. Christie's poetry that was discovered by Ellen Apperson Brown. It dates from 1923, five years prior to the Christies becoming the owners of the Lake View Hotel Annex. The Christies were likely long time members of Appie's volunteer work crews at the lake.

August 1923

I.

Oh! Chilhowie, dear Chilhowie  
'Tis mighty hard to part from Thee  
You've won our hearts adoringly  
...And filled us with dear memories.

II.

Our appreciation in poetry done  
Begins each day with the rising sun  
And then continues on and on  
'Tis thus we thank thee, Apperson

III.

Hand in hand we say goodbye  
Take one last look and heave a sigh  
We carry with us in our eye  
...A picture marvelous 'till we die.

Florence K. Christie  
A. Kilgore Christie

## CHESTER SIMS AND THE LAKE VIEW HOTEL ANNEX

Chester Sims, a prince of a man, was selected by Jim Apperson to take over the Lake View Hotel Annex in the early 1970s, after Mrs. Christie's death. The building had suffered the ravages of time in the prior one hundred years, and will always be a "work in progress." Chester was an avid wooden boat sailing enthusiast whom Jim had met at the Boston area sailing clubs and both were General Electric metallurgists. Chester was also a top notch conservationist, camper/hiker (despite a congenital heart condition) and a highly trained connoisseur of the dry martini (he reserved them for special occasions). His job at G.E. (known as "generous electric" sarcastically by the derisive) was heading up the materials engineering specialties.

As soon as he could, Chester got to work on the annex. First, an entire new roof was installed. Next, the entire building received two coats of green paint. The 100 year old wood just sucked up the paint and did not even say "thanks!!" Then an unfortunate work crew was sent into the attic to evict hundreds of little brown bats whose forebears



had been loyal residents since the 1870s. Then the really unpleasant work began as hundreds of pounds of guano were shoveled down chutes (it must have been valuable fertilizer); in places the guano was well over a foot deep on the attic floor. The entire attic region had to be meticulously externally covered with fine wire mesh to try and keep the bats from promptly returning to their long time abode. These bats were permanently and devotedly bonded to this attic, and personally I do not know how one could keep them from returning to the 100 year old edifice.

To combat the bat problem, Chester imported bat experts from the N.Y.S. DEC and Union College. Their solution was bat houses located well away from the hotel. These had to face south (bats like the warmth of the sunny side), but the most viable placement location was the adjacent swamp which was cool, dark and gloomy. Never phased, Chester ran extension cords to the bat houses and put a hair dryer on each one to keep it warm. Chester should have applied for the Nobel Prize for preservationists! As far as I know the bat houses never received any occupants.

Finally the job of dry-walling the bedrooms began, as well as attempting to realign the multiple small European style bedrooms into useful suites that might be attractive to potential family renters. There were almost no closets. Instead, prior visitors had utilized large steamer trunks. The one bathroom at the end of the hall style of living was clearly unacceptable, as were the rare electrical outlets with exposed knob and wire tubing. I vaguely remember seeing the number 50 on one of the tiny bedroom doors. I wondered if there were that many rooms, but it may provide some flavor to some of the types of problems that Chester faced. The top floor "owner's suite" may have been used by (founder, owner, and manager) Mr. R. J. Brown, and possibly by the Teddy Roosevelt family. Mr. Brown's later main residence on the other side of 9N is a spate story for another time.

After completing almost a total renovation of the interior of the upstairs hotel annex, Chester's renters did finally come. He even modestly upgraded the kitchen, and designed it for multiple tenant/family groups to share, and share alike. Unfortunately, although the summer tenants were a fun and interesting group of people, they were also an eccentric and erratic lot. Furthermore, they were loath to pay the kinds of rents now expected routinely. After all, the annex was not exactly a "Sagamore" competitor!

Just to make matters even worse, early in this era, Chester was immersed in a series of "marital re-alignments" – until Shirley Dean appeared on the scene. Shirley, previously married to the well known Glens Falls/Lake George commercial photographer, is an outstanding woman. Also, an avid wooden boat sailor, hard worker, friendly and well liked by the locals, she became the perfect partner for Chester and the Lake View Hotel Annex property.

Chester did finally see the error of this ways in pouring endless money into the Hotel Annex. Instead, they built a new ADK A-frame Chalet on the Point where the prior main Lake View Hotel had originally stood. Ted Caldwell was the builder, son-in-law Tom Chapin and daughter Lisa Chapin, were the architects, and they came up with a

beautiful home devoid of any of the drawbacks of the old Annex. It was so energy efficient that heating was mostly accomplished via a wood stove. (After Chester's death, Shirley did add a modern gas furnace). The house subsequently has undergone several alterations and enlargements, the most recent of which by William and Deborah Hoffman, has produced a beautiful and gracious ADK "mini great camp," with equally attractive landscaping.

Chester and Shirley each had twin wooden classic sail boats that were the "apples of their eyes." In the fall season they could often be seen sailing about Huddle Bay in the later afternoon, enjoying a cocktail, in the golden glow of the setting sun over Appie Top Mountain. Once or twice a year they would embark on an extensive sail up the entire length of the lake, staying at various "sailing friendly" hostels, which took several days. Chester and Shirley avidly promoted sailing in the Huddle Region. Tri City area sailing clubs all came to the Hotel Annex and held regattas combined with large doses of entertaining and fun. Extensive water fights/ambushes seemed to determine the winning boats for some races. In October, 1989, Chester and Shirley held a Hotel Annex Reunion with some fifteen to twenty couples attending. Presumably these were people who had enjoyed the Annex in the years between 1975-1989. All signed in on the original hotel register; other than that, the last official entry on the register seems to be September 7, 1919 (Naomi Farr and Marion Stockwell of N.Y.C.)

After retirement, Chester and Shirley traveled the world (South Korea, Japan, Eastern Europe), where Chester did extensive consulting work attempting to keep some of these nations', quite dated, electric power turbines from expiring. Apparently he was able to save a number that were near death. I got the feeling that these were not modern gas turbines, and some may have even pre-dated World War II.

After Jim Apperson's death (1980), the entire Apperson property (sans Chester's Hotel Annex) was subdivided for new private homes, by executors Tom and John Apperson, IV. Chester stood alone as the resident "Apperson Territory agent" and tried vigorously to inculcate some iota of Apperson philosophy in the new owners (i.e. modest homes, minimal lawns, minimize tree cutting). This turned out to be like "shoveling sand against the tide" in some cases. He did succeed in the case of Appie's original buildings, and of course the Ebeoglus of the Langmuir property did not need any counseling. See Appendix III for Chester Sims' opinions on future development mores.

The current Hotel Annex is still intact and better than ever thanks to the wonderful ministrations of the William and Katherine Horne family. Their rehabilitation of the building remains a work in progress and likely always will be. It certainly merits an historic restitution award on the most exalted level. They have maintained the original 1890 décor, architecture and thus its full turn of the century atmosphere. Most of the other Apperson territory properties have had complete new homes tacked on of varying style and couth, and a few original chestnut cabins have completely disappeared. The original Lake View Hotel Annex, however, lives on in all its 135 year old glory. Thanks you, Chester, Shirley, and the Horne family.

The Annex originally had been used as an overflow guest house when the main hotel was temporarily overbooked on peak holidays. It was also utilized as housing for visiting musicians and entertainers. The elegant grand ballroom was the site for major dances and many ping pong tournaments. The following excerpt from a 1902 *Lake George Mirror* gives us some insight into the Lake View Annex activities.

Pleasant Times at Lake View House – Lake George, N.Y., July 4, 1902

Summer life has begun in earnest. Every evening in the large and spacious music hall, the guests gather and while away their time to the soft music. Another perfectly up-to-date and enjoyable pastime is ping pong. The guests are playing with so much vigor and enthusiasm that tournaments are talked of. Within the last few days Mrs. Phelan C. Hawn of Washington, D.C. has proved herself to be quite the angler. She has already caught a dozen pickerel, weighing about forty pounds. Mr. Anthony Guarino, a great Italian artist from New York is with Mr. Brown for several weeks. Every day Mr. Guarino is our sketching from the beauties of nature that surround the place.

A tour of the Annex is like stepping back in time to 1890, and must be seen to be appreciated. One can easily imagine the guests fully immersed in Vienna Waltzes or Ragtime in the grand ballroom. The second floor porch facing the lake fully qualifies for having all the attributes of a Trudeau/Saranac Lake T.B. "cure porch."

The hotel drinking water supply came from across 9N. A spring part way up Appie Top Mountain (Barber Mountain), still active and used, was tapped and connected by wooden (chestnut) pipes, under 9N, to a cistern now located underneath the Colby home. These chestnut pipes still worked, and were still providing water for Mr. Apperson's house, up until the early 1980s. The spring and fall set up/take down procedures, were very labor intensive – a job that Tom Apperson took over.

Chester's unfortunate, premature, very sad demise came as a result of his congenital heart condition combined with an overwhelming pneumonia. This started in the far reaches of Mexico, where they were visiting old G.E. friends. He and Shirley were quickly put on the plane to return home, but by Baltimore/Washington, D.C. it was obvious things were critical or worse. His memorial service was indeed one of the saddest I have ever attended, but was somewhat ameliorated by Chester's specific instructions that all attendees who wished, should partake of one (or more) of his glorious Martini's (expertly prepared by Shirley).

I am a firm believer that had Chester survived longer, "Apperson territory" and Bolton Landing might be a better place. His work as chairman of the Dome Island Committee, after Dr. Newkirk stepped down, (this group administers Dome Island for the Nature Conservancy) is another small example. Chester's contagious sense of humor allowed great things to be accomplished, even when various contentious situations had to be overcome. In 1995, he organized the Dome Committee together with Ted Caldwell, John Giddy, Frank Leonbruno and about seventeen Bolton High School

Outing Club students, such that they rip-rapped thirty (30) feet of severely eroded Dome Island shoreline. See the following page for a poster announcing this work party. On another occasion he organized the "Apperson Territory" residents to petition the town for a Bolton Landing Noise Ordinance. At that time we were being (involuntarily) subjected to a high level of Rock 'N Roll music broadcast out and over the lake from the Algonquin Restaurant – music really amplifies when sent out over water!

[poster transcript]

**RIP-RAP REPAIR OF DOME ISLAND**  
Bolton Central School Outing Club

Saturday Morning, September 16, 1995

9:00 meet at Mohican Point [The Bixby Place]

Coffee, doughnuts, orange juice [compliments of the Dome Island Committee]

9:00 – 9:30... Introduction by Chester Sims... Prepare boats...

9:30 – 10:00 Board Boats and go out to Dome Island

10:00 – 11:30... Rip-Rap Dome Island's Northwest Corner

11:30 – 12:00... Walking Tour of Dome Island

12:00 – Subs, Chips, soda, cookies, [compliments of the Dome Island Committee]

1:00 p.m... return to Mohican Point

Students will need to bring:

Old sneakers for wading

Dry clothes and shoes for walking tour

[optional] old pair of work gloves

In case of bad weather [rain or a howling nor'easter] the trip will be cancelled.

Questions? Call Mr. Gaddy or Mr. Caldwell...

**THE DOME ISLAND COMMITTEE SINCERELY THANKS YOU!!!**

## DR. WILLIAM G. BECKER & VILLA MARIE ANTOINETTE ESTATE

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, we neighborhood kids loved to spend time fishing the south end of Huddle Bay. An added attraction was the massive Becker mansion and estate (Villa Marie Antoinette) which at that time included all the land from the cemetery up to Huddle Bay Beach. The Villa Marie Antoinette was a foreboding, gloomy place complete with overgrown formal gardens and the general aura of a haunted villa. There were not any overt signs of life. Our overactive adolescent imaginations engendered visions of the Deutschland National Socialist Party or the German American Bund holding secret meetings in those mysterious tunnels we had all heard about (World War II was imminent)! But never fear, we all knew Appy and Dr. Langmuir would protect us! Nevertheless, it did not help any when Harry K. Thaw, a convicted murderer, bought the place in the later 1940s.

We were always told that the secret of Dr. Becker's great wealth was derived from his bringing the protected formulas for dye making from the German chemical cartels to the United States. During the Great Depression, and prior eras, when a lady needed a new dress or other garment (at least in my family) she did not just go out and buy new. She would simply select a quality serviceable prior dress and dye it another color. This generated a lot of revenue for the German chemical cartels until Dr. Beckers came to the United States in 1910, bringing his intellectual property and dye secrets with him. During World War I, the blockade of Germany (1914 – 1918) shut down access to all the German dye licenses for the allies and the rest of the world. This may have made Dr. Beckers the millionaire owner of the Huddle (almost). He and his company – Allied Chemical and Dye Company – were in the “secrets (!) cat-bird seat” as far as dyes were concerned (and maybe a lot of other German chemical cartel.

Actually, it appears that Dr. Beckers was quite a decent man. He did a lot of good things for the Huddle and it appears that Appy and Dr. Beckers did not clash as much as one might expect. They would seem to have been almost complete opposites. Maybe it was wise to steer clear of Dr. Becker. They corresponded a fair amount, and I came across a number of letters from Appy and Dr. Becker concerning topics such as skiing, skating on the lake, and Appy filming his “rip-rap work.” One JSA letter (February 14, 1933) to Dr. Becker re: skiing up the “little mountain back of the camp, I was interrupted by one of my neighbors...” may give a clue to Appy's distrust of Becker. Both Dr. Langmuir and Appy harbored a fear that Dr. Becker might appropriate Barber Mountain for a new mansion, and make it an extension of his (contemplated) “Deckerville.” See Appendix IV for a copy of the “Petition to Retain the Historical Names – Bolton.” I do not know who wrote this petition up or if Appy signed it; I suspect he at least joined in signing it since it was in his 1928 correspondence. Stay tuned for more on Barber Mountain (later dubbed “Appy Top” by the local summer residents).

By the end of World War I, a lot of local Bolton folks were probably happy to have been able to sell much of their lake shore lands to wealthy people for extensive mansions. However, the realization may have set in that it was no longer easy to access the lake itself! In *The Huddle*, Dr. Becker must have been sympathetic. About 1919, he “swapped” a road on his main property that led to the lake shore for the new (current) Beach Road, plus a new dock that would terminate at a depth of at least five feet. This was done at no cost to Bolton taxpayers. See the copy of the petition signed by eighteen Bolton residents. (Appendix V) This project may have not been fully completed until about 1924, and Dave and Sheryl Ebeoglu tell us that Apperson had a hand in the road’s design and course. Appy recommended the curve which diverted storm water from directly “straight lining” into the lake (with all the road surface pollutants). The curve also obscured the view of the beach from 9N, thus reducing the numbers of visiting, casual “day trippers.”

Incidentally, the new Beach Road may have created one unintended consequence for Dr. Beckers. It generated a several acre “orphan” piece of Dr. Becker’s land between Apperson’s Lake View Hotel property and the new beach with its road. This quickly became Dr. and Mrs. Langmuir’s property in 1925-1926 and may have been purchased from Dr. Becker’s wife’s estate (Marie Pothern Becker, who died in 1924).

#### A SURREPTITIOUS 1948 TOUR

From a child’s perspective, the Marie Antoinette Villa projected a scary, gargoyle-loke image, especially from the water on a gloomy day. The overgrown, elaborate European gardens complemented the mansion itself, producing a perfect Hollywood-like concocted scene, from which either Mr. Rochester’s wife or Dracula might step out on the extensive verandas at any moment. In 1948, this provided an irresistible draw on our teenage imaginations. I was a guest at “Homeland” (previously Madame Homer’s estate) and our conspiratorial group of teenagers set out at dusk with flashlights, found an open window, and entered a world we had never seen. The mansion seemingly was almost abandoned, but still had a full complement of furnishings. Leaking water had flooded the lower level bowling alley and turned it into potential skating rink. The décor, furniture, chandeliers, extensive wall hangings and exotic wood paneling seemed French provincial in style and truly magnificent, especially via flicking flickering flashlights. Bill Gate’s uncle was the current guardian, and as soon as he saw our flashlights, he set off in his pickup truck to “kick us out.” His slow pace down the unplowed driveway gave us time to make our escape out the open window, which was our unauthorized entry. These “tours” (I think we made a couple) can only be described as surreal, giving us an inside glimpse of Millionaire’s Row life and times, that otherwise might only be available in Hollywood productions or Vanderbilt mansions.

The haphazard breakup of the Beckers/Thaw estate in the 1950s, into multiple motels (some not very “classy”) and small second homes, was a terrible and unplanned loss for Bolton Landing, (one man’s opinion). If there had been any kind of even rudimentary zoning and planning in that era, it might have been a different and better

story. "Apperson territory" did not undergo that unfortunate process when it was sold off in the 1980s, thanks to Mr. Apperson's influence, Tom and John Apperson's work as executors, and deed codicils.

## THE LOINES FAMILY

(Nearby Residents and Comrades)

Located on many acres in Northwest Bay, members of the Loines family were among the first to donate property to N.Y.S. for the Lake George Park. For details on this remarkable family of early preservationists on the lake, one should consult Nancy and Bill Rogal, and Nancy's groundbreaking series of lectures at the Darrin Freshwater Institute in 2007.

For purposes of brevity, I have "lifted" the following paragraph from Ellen Apperson Brown's monograph "Becoming a Conservationist – One Letter at a Time" (page 11) that sums up Appy's relationship with them. Especially interesting is Ellen's hypothesis concerning Appie's marital considerations; a supposition I have heard from other sources.

Many of the friendships he (Appy) enjoyed during the early twenties lasted most of his lifetime. Probably the most remarkable and interesting relationships were with the women of the Loines family. The mother, Mary Loines, was fond of him and treated him almost like a member of the family. Hilda Loines became a sort of first lieutenant to Appy (she may have been the first to coin his nickname) and had a great deal of satisfaction in helping him wage his conservation battles. Sylvia, the youngest daughter, may have been the one woman John Apperson ever really considered marrying.

## HOTEL OWNER MR. RICHARD J. BROWN AND HIS RESIDENCE (across 9N)

Mr. R. J. Brown was obviously deceased before John Apperson made his purchase in 1919, but was clearly quite a personage in his own right. An accomplished civil engineer, surveyor, historian, and businessman, he began to buy up land in the Huddle region as early as 1873. It is quite possible that some of his (future) Lake View Hotel purchases were from the famous opera singer Theresa Parodi. Her triumphant opera career preceded Madame Marcella Sembrich by about fifty years, as did her Bolton Landing properties. By 1875 he was able to open the Lake View Hotel and guided it as proprietor and manager for some forty two years. He died at the age of seventy one after a series of strokes (bad carotid artery disease). He kept the hotel operating despite roof fires, his chef drowning (1912) and the not infrequent recessions

(panics) that occurred in that era. His skills had to be considerable to attract the likes of the Teddy Roosevelt family to the Lake View House, and even interest them in starting construction on a summer home for their granddaughter, Alice Longworth Roosevelt, on the hotel grounds. (See page 22 of Bill Gates "Old Bolton" – do you think a marriage fell through?) The present Stuart and Carol Colby's imposing home now resides on those foundations and the cistern that serviced the hotel. As you know, it was quite likely Ida and William Dalton's hope to build a home on those foundations in the 1920s was the major factor that broke up the original Apperson-Dalton partnership. Apperson strenuously objected to any and all such plans. Now we know that William Dalton was the person who demolished the main Lake View Hotel edifice near the lake shore. This happened sometime in the 1920s because Jim Dodge stated "it was not suited to his needs" (probably in very poor condition). Exactly when the hotel annex was constructed is not known, but obviously the hotel business must have been going very well indeed for Mr. R. J. Brown, to warrant this extensive addition to the hotel complex. At its nadir the entire composite could accommodate up to one hundred and twenty five guests. (See Bill Gates book "Lake George Hotels and Landings," pages 43-44 for a complete account of the hotel and its extensive compelling attractions).

Mr. Brown had a wide range of talents. In 1912 he was appointed to head a commission to research the history of the military roads and Indian trails used in the French and Indian War.

Mr. Brown's primary residence, on the west side of 9N, is still a very interesting home. It has been the residence of the Joseph Lieto family since the 1970s, and demonstrates some of the niceties of the Victorian period. Ten or twelve foot ceiling heights, chestnut paneling and crown moldings set off its authenticity.

During the later 1940s and 1950s it was the home of the Colonel John McElroy family. He was one of General Patton's most trusted WWII Army Engineering Corps commanders. That Eisenhower-Cold War period in history fueled a high level of tension with the USSR, together with much fear of an atomic war. The result was a recommendation, for everybody who could, to build a backyard atomic bomb shelter. Colonel McElroy heeded this call with gusto! He constructed his bomb shelter strictly fulfilling all the Federal government mandates and recommendations. Joe Lieto says the original emergency canned food and water supplies are still present in the shelter vaults, although the ceiling is sagging and most of the rooms flooded. Remind me to decline any invitations from Joe to dine in that bomb shelter! (Joe's a good friend). I am sure Bolton Landing has many esoteric and/or eclectic homes, but very few with a 1950s style atomic bomb shelter! The structure is not visible to the casual observer, but Joe Lieto might arrange for an interesting (but self-guided!) tour.

PLACES  
Barber Mountain (Appie Top)



As early as 1922 John Apperson bought the 12.38 acres uppermost top of Barber Mountain (from John and Hilda Carey), thus protecting it from any potential predation by Dr. Becker. In 1923 Appie wrote to Pliny T. Sexton asking if he would consider selling "a few acres...for a garden and wood lot," of Sexton's Barber Mountain property. Appie added – "I would hesitate to bother you about this, since it would not mean much of anything to you...etc." Having the top of the mountain already under his ownership, I suspect Appie was sending up a "trial balloon" searching for more of the property. I do not think any purchase occurred at that time. However, he was actively planning one! Appie and Dr. Langmuir continued to be troubled by the concept that Dr. Becker might be planning to increase the extent of his (contemplated) "Beckerville" by acquiring some of Barber Mountain. If he had succeeded in that effort, they feared a new Becker mega mansion planted on its slopes, lording over "Apperson territory" and much more of the Huddle.

In any case, no matter what the sequence of the purchase, by 1928 Langmuir and Appie had acquired most of Barber Mountain. The largest purchase came as part of the "Palmyra Properties" from what was likely once the Pliny T. Sexton's estate. Dr. Langmuir took "all the property west of the state road (9N)." For awhile there was a plan for each new lake shore owner to also take his or her 1/6 portion of the mountain west of their individual new properties (fortunately consummated). By the late 1940s John Apperson had acquired all of the sixty plus acres of Barber Mountain from Dr. Langmuir and the name (unofficially) changed to "Appie Top."

The mountain mostly continues to live on intact, unlogged (at least since the mid 1800s) without any development or homes and is a beautiful tract of old growth forest primeval. It was used as an Apperson territory community resource for hiking, camping and skiing. Prior to the development of Gore Mountain, it was a very popular ski slope for the early owners. You would "herringbone" up the steep slope, and ski down trying to dodge the trees, on those early heavy wide hickory skis – no lifts and no warming huts! To me, it was an exhausting workout and not a good way to learn the sport.

Most families made at least one yearly hike to the top and a few would camp overnight. The Bennett children did a lot of exploring on the mountain. The Langdons and the Caldwells (their property adjoins to the west) utilize it a bit more at the present time. The truth is, it really is underutilized and we wish more Apperson territory residents would take advantage of its beautiful vistas and pristine forests primeval (but please no fires!).

There are no formal trails, so one has to bush-whack. Now and then one can come across some evidence of old ski trails and intact stumps testifying that the mountain had once been partially logged. Traces of old horse trails suggest that patrons of the Lake View Hotel may have enjoyed horseback riding on the lower slopes.

One clear cut site of human activity has always been evident at the base of the mountain where the "conservation club stream" (our home grown title) goes under the 9N highway, (and reappears next to the Dan Bennett home). At this location we have

frequently enjoyed and explored two massive stone foundations, clear cut signs of a mill pond, and a separate race leading to the foundation. It was always my guess that this locale had been the site of a “thunderstorm mill” – (as discussed by Bill Gates in “Old Bolton”, page 13). I mentioned the spot to him, and his investigation reveals that it was the water supply for the original Locust Grove House, later renamed the Algonquin Hotel (burned 1959). It was complete with a large cistern, and the other foundation may have been some sort of water management and distribution control system, or chill house. We all remember the Algonquin Hotel very well. The hotel lawn was a prime source of night crawlers for young folks on a rainy night. It succumbed to fire (arson) in 1959, and was replaced by Chic’s Marina, Chic’s Villa Bella Lodi and the Algonquin Restaurant.

Another sign of prior “man and beast” activity on the mountain was discovered by Chester Sims via turn of the century photos showing a sheep pasture on the lower northeast slopes. This should remind us all that much of the current Apperson territory was once engaged in very active agriculture until the turn of the century. Our area was based on an agrarian, not tourist oriented, economy; and farming was the primary enterprise.

Dr. Langmuir and John Apperson did overlook one aspect of Barber Mountain, despite all their due diligence. They either did not realize, or were unable to purchase, the extreme southern aspect of the mountain, which has some remotely decent means of access. Not long before we (Langdons) purchased the mountain from Executors Tom and John IV Apperson, unknown to all of us, a person had already put down in a nearly mile long road up to a south side small level area, and started construction for a three to four home development. An acre of Apperson’s best oak forest had already been clear cut to improve the view without permission. No one knew about this, since a building permit had not been obtained from the town. This sad situation was slightly ameliorated when the town downsized the development in extent and location to some degree. The developer was told that this was “not a nice thing to do,” and then proceeded to build his house. Unfortunately, as with so many developers, the damage was already done. It is no wonder that Apperson and Langmuir were very alert to the dangers that this situation demonstrates – and we thank the Almighty that they were. Most of Appy Top has been preserved, up to the present era (2010).

Although we often wonder about many town’s strong predilections for growth at any cost, I was happy to receive at least one compliment from a (later) Bolton Landing supervisor She stated (and one wonders if other “town fathers” feel the same), that she appreciated Barber Mountain as a town resource, since it conveys to the new tourist the concept that they are approaching a true ADK town. The tourist does not need to worry about having made a few wrong turns, and is not entering the – not very classy town to our south. I would like to think that not only Barber Mountain, but also the Pinnacle qualifies for that same mind of honor.

In today’s world, the Lake George Land Conservancy has been able to accomplish the same kinds of land preservation around the lake that Apperson and

Langmuir were able to consummate from 1920 to 1950. It is in the best interests of the residents and the town governments to provide all the support they can to the L.G.L.C.!

## 2011 THOUGHTS ON CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

### 1920s huddle Bay Conservation

John Apperson, Jr., a Schenectady GE executive, was a new Bolton Landing resident as of 1919, when he bought the recently defunct Lake View Hotel property on Rt. 9N. During the later 1920s, Mr. Apperson gradually increased his ownership (with the help of Dr. Irving Langmuir) to include all the 9N lake shore property, as well as Barber Mountain, between the Bolton Beach Road and Mr. Barber's Marina, now the Bay View Motel and Marina – close to the present Algonquin Restaurant. Although this was in an era when “being green” was nearly unheard of, he demonstrated a very perspicacious long term view of conservation mechanics. This long range conservationist way of looking at life and future times has greatly benefited those of us who take a “The Lake Comes First” attitude when it comes to major decisions on how to treat our lakeshore and or Lake George region properties.

Mr. Apperson was a very successful GE executive, but for those of you who still remember GE compensation standards of that era, you know he was not a “well to do” citizen with the massive, deep pocket, resources of today's developers. Consequently, he had to devise a system of insuring that the individuals he selected to purchase these properties had the similar long term “the Lake Comes First” point of view that controlled his life and career as a lifelong Adirondack conservationist. Hemmed in on the south by the ultra wealthy Dr. William Becker, and on the north by a marina and the Algonquin Hotel properties, he had a small haven of conservation minded individuals, handpicked from the GE intelligentsia. None of these folks could be considered wealthy by today's standards of Bolton Landing summer residents. How could this be done a la 1927 legal devices and the nonexistent zoning mechanics of that time and place?

He came up with a three pronged plan that has worked well for the past 90 plus years. First, he placed deed codicils in all the new owners' deeds stipulating that “no business, commercial, or manufacturing activities were to be allowed on their properties.” This commonly used tactic was nothing new, and maybe goes back all the way to English Common Law. Conservation easements were yet to be invented as far as I know, and likely are a modern extension of deed codicils. The obvious problem here is who is going to do the long term enforcement of these restrictions? Certainly not the town governmental bodies who are innately ingrained to promoting business activities, business growth, and increasing town tax assessments. The only answer I know is the neighbors, who may or may not, be up to that often unpleasant job.

Second, he promoted, enforced, and encouraged an unwritten law for those basically conservation minded new owners. This stipulated that should anyone sell his/her property, the price extended over to the new buyer would be exactly the same

price they originally paid. He apparently had not the foresight to look into the future and envision the “real estate flippers” of a very recent era, that made huge profits in short time spans using this technique. It was also unwritten law that these second and third owners were to have the same conservation ethics as the entire “Apperson community.”

Third, a major force behind # 1 and #2 was the ongoing impact of Mr. Apperson’s personality – an all pervading energy that permeated the entire community. Mr. Apperson, as I remember him, was a friendly but not an easy-going person. He was all for the business at hand, and his business was conservation, family, and lake conservation – period! The community looked up to him as a benefactor who had allowed them to own a “little piece of heaven.” Everyone was somewhat in awe of him, and (let’s face it) afraid of his wrath.

By virtue of these three concepts, his plan has worked well for the past 92 years. Not too many years after his death in 1963, rule #2 began to be violated by the capitalistic concept of willing buyer, willing seller pricing. Although admittedly, not severely tested as such, these thirteen Huddle properties have never otherwise really fully violated Mr. Apperson’s conservation ethics over the last 92 year period of otherwise rampant Bolton Landing development.

## 2011 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS!

So fast forward to 2011! How are we to cope with often diverse, large families, massive town, state, and federal taxes, and what to do with our Lake George properties? One excellent resource is to “pick the brains” of the Lake George Land Conservancy concerning conservation easements. Their experts can assist you in creating a solution for your needs, which is crafted to the exact wished of you and your family, with built-in protections for all concerned.

## APPENDIX

- I. The Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919
- II. The Saratoga Tree Nursery Memo – 1924
- III. Chester Sim’s Thoughts on Future Development of the Lake View Hotel Property – 1982
- IV. Petition to Retain the Historic Name “Bolton Landing” (not Beckersville) – 1928
- V. Petition to Town of Bolton to Create the Huddle Beach Road and Dock – 1924
- VI. JSA, Jr. Letter to Langmuir demonstrating his preservationist plan, and eliminating the profit motive – 1928

## THE GREAT INFLUENZA PANDEMIC of 1918 – 1919

Those of us who are a little “sloppy” about getting our annual flu shot should read the introduction to Bill Gates’ book “Turn of the Century Scrapbook of Jonathan Streeter Gates.”

In 1919, the same year Apperson bought the Lake View Hotel, Jonathan Gates' son Walter, of the Huddle, "contracted the deadly Spanish influenza on a trip to Glens Falls." Like most of the forty million victims, Walter was a young (late thirties) healthy man in the prime of his life. He died in only eight days.

#### PETITION TO RETAIN THE HISTORIC NAME "BOLTON"

The settlement of the Town of Bolton was commenced in 1792 principally by New England people.

The early events which took place in or near this settlement of Bolton form a link in the chain of Lake George history that is often referred to in books, on maps, and in stories of fiction. Obviously the name should be preserved with the memories that are associated with the name, and the recent order of the Assistant Postmaster General to substitute the name "Beckersville" in honor of a relatively new resident seems wholly unwarranted and contrary to custom in New York State. Memorials to people are generally considered appropriate when established after their demise and in this instance would be more acceptable in some other form.

Therefore, the undersigned strongly urge that the village and Post Office retain their historical name of "Bolton."

This petition seems to have effectively squelched Dr. Becker's plan to change the name of the Huddle from Bolton to "Beckersville." I found this document in Appy's 1928 correspondence.