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## **C.O.A. AND L.S.P.A. ARE GOOD ANGELS OF LAKE SUNAPEE, SAYS CRESSY**

*By Will M. Cressy*

Probably the letters — C. O. A. — mean nothing to you; but to the summer dwellers of Lake Sunapee they mean much. They mean even more than much; they mean pretty near all there is to Lake Sunapee.

C. O. A. stands for the Cottage Owners' Association of Blodgett's Landing. This association was formed about 30 years ago. As far as Blodgett's Landing history states its principal object was to secure some street lights. Three were purchased. Motive power- kerosene. Later a few feet of plank walk were laid across a wet spot.

Twenty-seven years ago we, (Mr. and Mrs. Will Cressy) became summer dwellers at Blodgett's. Being of a hospitable nature we began to invite our actor friends up to spend a week or a month. And about everyone that visited us immediately bought or built a home. The result of this was that quite an actor colony sprang up there.

Anyone ought to have been able to foresee the next result. You can no more keep an actor from acting than you can keep a prohibitionist from cheating. And these actors wanted to act. Of course it would be under the heading of "a benefit." There was no fire department, no police department, no poor people. There was a Spiritualist Society, but it had more money than the actors did.

### **Discovered the C. O. A.**

And then one day some bright soul discovered it; discovered something they could hang a benefit on. The C. O. A. They must need money. They surely didn't have any. Just what they could do with it nobody seemed to know; but as president, "Snick" Ashley, (of Nashua) offered no objection. It was decided to give "A Monster Benefit Vaudeville Performance for the Cottage Owners' Association of Blodgett's Landing."

And it was done. Cressy & Dayne, Matthews & Harris and George B. Wright constituted the program. Result, Sixty dollars (15 cents admission.)

Now the question was — what to do with it?

### **The Grand Idea**

After days of worrying, "Bill" Matthews struck the Grand Idea. This show had been given in the Spiritualists' Hall, a building 30 feet wide, 65 feet long, with a stage 10 by 20 and seven feet, six inches high. We would build a real casino or club house. And as the C. O. A. now had more money than anybody else, we would all join the C. O. A. and get that sixty dollars for a starter.

And so we did. And with that sixty dollars we built a six thousand dollar club house, the C. O. A. Casino.

We did it by persuading a few moneyed men to put in the cash and we actor-folks promising to stick to them and give shows until we had raised the money to pay off the debt. And we did that, too.

### **Biggest and Best**

And we kept on doing it ever since, until today we have the biggest and best casino on the lake and probably in the state. We have a splendidly equipped stage and, auditorium, reading rooms, a circulating library, billiard and pool tables, bowling alleys, two pianos, a fine Victrola, bath houses, a fine bathing beach. We bring Champagne's Orchestra up from Concord every Saturday night for a dance, and take the orchestra from Soo-ni-pi Park Lodge for a mid-week dance every week. We book traveling shows and run a few moving pictures. And each year we give, at least, one grand vaudeville show by "Our Actor Friends."

### **Real Shows**

And these are some shows. Among those who have appeared at these annual affairs have been: —

John Henshawe.  
William Norris.  
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Connelly.  
Jack Norworth\_  
Louise Dresser.  
George W. Day.  
George B. Wright.  
The Shubert Quartette.  
Clarence E. Billings.  
Harry R. Cressy.  
Billy B. Van.  
The Beaumont Sisters.  
Maxwell & Dudley.  
Cecil Lean.  
Marie Dressler.  
Edgar Smith.  
Hal Merritt.  
The Nichols Sisters.

And I presume dozens of others whom I have forgotten.

As our community has grown our society has expanded in its scope until today we handle about everything. We have built and keep up a mile of six-foot plank walk. We support the entire street lighting system. We handle all the sanitary department. We collect and dispose of all garbage. We own and operate the fire department. We handle the wood and ice problem. We keep the bathing beach in condition. We conduct the life-saving station. We employ a caretaker from Sept. 15 to May 15,

Not so bad for starting in with three kerosene lamps and sixty dollars.

### **A Princely Gift**

In appreciation of the spirit shown and the results obtained, Mr. Henry Bowles of Springfield, Mass., has recently presented to the C. O. A. four acres of the beautiful grove surrounding the Casino to be used in perpetuity as a public park. This property is now being cleared, graded and drained and the association will spend some two thousand dollars in beautifying it.

Mr. Bowles has also presented the association with a beautiful tract of land lying on the opposite side of the road upon which Mr. Frank Shepard of New London is building a tennis court. In addition to giving the land Mr. Bowles will stand one half the expense of constructing the courts.

Is it any wonder that The C. O. A. means something at Sunapee?

### **And Yet Another**

Another organization that is a power at Lake Sunapee is The Lake Sunapee Protective Corporation. In fact this organization is a sort of parent association of all the smaller, or more local bodies at the various points and settlements about the lake.

This corporation was formed 22 years ago for the purpose of establishing and controlling some sort of a water level on the Lake. Some 50 odd years ago a water company secured from the state a 99 year grant for using the waters of the lake for manufacturing purposes. They put in a dam and had a high old time for 30 years. Then the summer folks began to come. And they began to build summer homes on the shores of the lake. They bought boats and launches. They built wharves and boat houses. And the trouble started.

### **Not Profanity**

As this dam company — this is not profanity, it is the real name of the company — controlled the waters of the lake. They naturally used them as they needed them. In wet weather they held the water back and in dry weather they drew it out. This was fine — for manufacturing purposes; but a

little confusing for the owners of boats, wharves and boathouses. In order for a wharf to be of real value it should be from a foot to three feet above water level. But under the existing conditions these summer dwellers in the summer cottages would come up one year and find their wharves two feet under water and the next spring they would be seven feet up in the air, or perhaps hundreds of feet from the lake at all. You never knew from year to year whether you were going to require a submarine or a balloon to get from your wharf to your boat. And you could not tell in advance whether to use your boathouse for a swimming pool or a roof garden.

### **A Startling Experience**

Another startling experience was to build a boathouse out in front of your house — as I did — and the next spring find it — as I did — in some other fellow's dooryard, half a mile away. And so, as heretofore stated, the Lake Sunapee Protective Corporation was formed and steps taken to secure some standard, water level. After much litigation this was finally done.

Since then the association has handled all matters appertaining to the lake in its entirety. For instance, they employ and pay a health officer appointed by the state board of health, to guard the waters of the lake against pollution. Every foot of land within 150 feet of the lake shore is under his jurisdiction. Everything that floats upon the surface of the lake must comply with stated laws and regulations. I do not know just what his labors at other points of the lake have amounted to this year, but I know that in my official position as president of the C. O. A. working with him, we have abolished all but five of the old earth closets and installed 36 costene toilets this spring and summer.

### **A Real Object Lesson**

The annual meeting of the Association is held at a different point on the lake each year. This year they were the guests of the C. O. A. And I do not think there was ever a more astonished body of men than they were to see what we had accomplished and were accomplishing. (Their first shock coming some two or three hundred feet after they crossed the town line between New London and Newbury. For several miles they had rolled along over beautiful New London roads. Then they crossed the line and struck Newbury roads. And inside of three hundred feet six big powerful cars were stuck on Grace Hill. And the delegation had to walk into Blodgett's. God bless our Newbury roads.)

After the regular business meeting the ladies of the C. O. A. served a colation. (It looked like a lunch to me, but my wife said it was a colation, so I know it was.) It was a good lunch, too; but it was wasted. The minute that crowd got one look at that collection of girls we had serving they did not know whether they were eating angel food or sawdust.

"Where did you get all these beautiful girls?" gasped President Dewey.

They ought to have been beauties; we had the pick not only of the country, but of the world. We had girls from California, from Florida, from New York, from Boston, from England and one from Rome, Italy.

The position of president of an organization like the C. O. A. not only calls for diplomacy, skill, and judgment but an almost inhuman faculty for finance. Our collections from annual dues run about three hundred dollars. And we spend from fifteen to twenty-five hundred a year. Teacher used to tell me that "fifteen into three-you can't." But you can! I do it every year!

Of course we get driblets all the time from pool, bowling, and other little things. We never make expenses on the dances, but do on the shows. But our one big lifesaver is our annual ladies fair. You know the kind I mean? Like a church fair? "Will you take a chance on my pin cushion?" "Try the grab bag. Ten cents a grab!" We ought to be put in jail once a year regular. Do you know for four years I bought the same shirt regularly, paying \$2.00 for a pink monstrosity that was marked plainly 67¢. My job is along about the end of the proceedings to go around and buy what is left over; stuff they can't sell to anybody else. And so I would, among other junk, buy this shirt. And then the next year my wife would give it to the shirt table lady. And then the shirt table lady would sell it to me again.

George Taylor of Springfield Mass. has got the right idea though. He sends his boy up to look in the window and see how many of these bunco tables there are and come back home and report. The boy comes back and reports that there are ten. Then George sends up \$5.00 for each table,

### **Not So Generous After All**

It sounds real generous and openhearted. But it isn't! It is foxy! He gets out of it cheaper than any man in the place.

And then in the evening we have the drawings for the various articles. And some fellow from Oshkosh who came through the town one day last June and bought the chance, draws the most valuable thing every time. The local folks who buy chances by the tens and dozens never draw anything.

One year they had a little miniature wine keg. It was real pretty. Of course I had no real use for it — (Amendment 18) — but as I had never drawn anything I thought that for once in my life I would. So I bought the entire hundred chances. Ten dollars. And when the drawing came a Swedish chamber-maid at the Ben Mere Inn drew it. I hunted up the little girl who had secured my ten and said to her—

"Say, look here, where is the little barrel I drew?"

"Why-er-you didn't draw it!"

"How could I help drawing it? I bought the whole hundred chances!"

"Well — you see — I sold another hundred chances on it."

### **Cressy the Star Auctioneer**

And then comes another of the perquisites of my official position. I have to auction off the stuff that nobody would buy at any price.

I sometimes wonder if I have not missed the vocation I should have followed. But when I can't tell whether I should have run gambling house, been a bunco steerer or just a plain holdup man.

But it's as an auctioneer that I really shine. Perhaps among strangers I should not do so well. But in a hall packed with people I know it is cinch. You see, being among friends that way, I am what you might call "*en touch!*" with my customers. I can tell by just looking at a man what he is going to bid. Perhaps he does not say a word. He may not even have the slightest suspicion that he is going to bid: until I announce that he did bid and my collector goes over to him to collect. Father vows that he only opened his month three times the other night and then for only twenty-five cents each time and they collected over eighteen dollars from him.

Well anyhow the sum total of our profits on the day and evening was \$518.

And, as our corporation papers absolutely forbid the paying of any dividends or profits to any member of the association, there is no other way than to continue spending it for the good of the community, the town, the state and humanity at large. So come on up! Come to wondrous Lake Sunapee. Come and see the sunlight sparkle on its waters. See its morning mists and its gorgeous sunsets. See the storm clouds sweep down from the mountains. Come in the spring and have some REAL fishing. Come in the fall and see the riot of colors on its hillsides and its gorgeous reflections in the mirror-like surface of the lake. And above **all** — **Come and look up the C. O. A. at Blodgett's Landing.**