

Farewell to Lake Sunapee *by Margery A. Todahl Blokhine*

Memories of Sunapee from 1910... written in 1971

"... As if it were yesterday, I recall that last epochal trip by rail from Boston (in 1910), when my parents and I were catapulted at a startling "mile a minute" (according to my uneasy father) toward our New Hampshire destination. I can still feel the teen-ager's sense of urgency, of mounting excitement as we sped, train rocking, toward Sunapee station. The *Lake* station, with its crowds and bustle!...

Then, the climax for a landlubber, the waiting side-wheeler at the dock... Perhaps it would be the *Kearsage*, the *Armenia White*, (I seem to recall that the *Weetamoo* was then out of commission) the *Ascutney*, or the small *Lady Woodsum*, in which we had once narrowly escaped disaster while making for *Blodgett's Landing* in a storm....

Inpatient for that thrilling moment when we should ascend the gangplank and step aboard... I see the dripping hawsers, hear their creak and strain, and as we cast off and the boat begins to move... feel the rhythmic powerful swish of propulsion. At last, we are waterborne...

Blodgett's Landing might as well have been *Liverpool*, and *Lake Sunapee*, the *Atlantic Ocean* to my unsophisticated experience...

Blodgett Landing Revisited

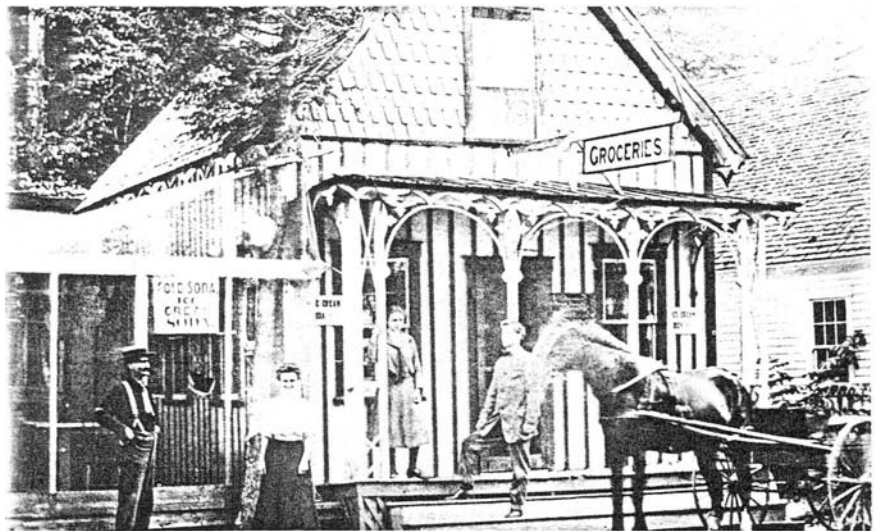
Blodgett's Landing...boasted a hotel, *The Forest House*, hardly less primitive than those seen in subsequent Western movies. Nevertheless, it was - oh, magic word! - a hotel. In addition, one side overlooked a so-called "camp ground" with tiers of crude pine benches facing a platform, the erstwhile scene of religious revival meetings, begun in the post-Civil War period.

Amid a field nearby, bubbled a crystalline "sulphur spring" from which all and sundry were pleased to quaff water supposedly beneficial to health.

And not far distant, teetering at lakeside, rose a somewhat flimsy "Casino" for Saturday night festivities, dances, of course, being the lode star for the younger set.

To me, the most interesting feature anywhere about was the *Shakers'* little shop, which dealt in candied flag root, horehound, "slippery elm" lozenges, and rock candy, as well as sweet-grass baskets, and birch bark trifles ornamented with porcupine quills, the work of Indians. I still have such a box intact, the ivory quills contrasting with the burnt sienna of the peeled bark. It bears eloquent witness to the artistic sensitivity and sound craftsmanship of an all but vanished people.

Yes, *Blodgett's Landing* was indeed an alluring Mecca. No less so were the ancient house and tillage of *Farmer Rowe*. But it was allure with a difference. A never-to-be-forgotten component was the agreeable unmistakable aroma built up from centuries of cooking over a wood fire -. oak, maple, apple which pervaded the big sunny kitchen, the former "keeping-room" of the farmhouse. The throat of the wide fieldstone fireplace was beaded with glistening traces of the great joints, the hasty puddings, hoe cakes, and the like, once prepared therein. These essences, inextricably associated in my experience with ancient firesides, added a piquant savor to the meals that our family sometimes enjoyed with *Farmer Rowe* and his wife...."



The Croft family store, ca. 1908

Excerpts taken from an article "Farewell to Lake Sunapee" by Margery A. Todahl Blokhine

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