
MANITOU MESSENGER

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Historic Boat Tour

In this issue, we reprint the narrative associated with this summer's historic Lake Manitou boat tours!

STARTING FROM ELKS GOING NORTH

We are departing from the Elks Lodge and Country Club. This property was originally developed as the Rochester Country Club, the first club in the county to have a nine-hole golf course. The course is filled with beautiful mature trees. In addition to their lodge activities, the Elks serves dinner each Friday evening and is available for private events. The newest amenity, two pickleball courts, were built in 2021. The Elks support LMA and is one of the our annual Poker Run sites.

We are cruising along Country Club Drive South, which turns sharply at the point and becomes Country Club Drive East. This area has always been primarily residential. You'll notice a variety of home styles, including some original farmhouses, fishing cabins and newer homes. Many of what were summer cabins and getaways have been converted to year round residences.

APPROACHING CHANNEL & DNR LAUNCH

As we move to the end of Country Club East, you will notice where Graham Ditch flows into the lake. Two creeks feed the Lake, along with numerous natural springs. You can also see the larger of the two public access sites. This one is owned by the Dept. of Natural Resources. The DNR boat launch is used for fishing tournaments. Often on Saturday mornings fishermen can be seen gathering their boats at the mouth of the channel, waiting for the starting gun to send them off to their favorite fishing spots.

For most of its early history, Manitou was a fishing lake in both summer and winter. There are both black and largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, spotted gar, northern pike, yellow perch, shad, sunfish and carp. LMA dredged this channel recently and posts important information by both public ramps.

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ALONG BESSMORE

Many areas of Manitou are rather shallow (3-5ft deep) and this leads to the questions: How deep is this lake? What is the bottom like?

Because of the way the lake was formed—five ponds dammed into one lake—this lake is one of holes. Where the ponds were located, the lake can get as deep as 25-45 ft. The bottom is technically classified as sand, but because of years of aquatic growth and natural forming muck, there are certain sections with vast amounts of silt. LMA encourages boats with deep drafts to be mindful of stirring up the bottom.

Annual treatment and management of the aquatic plant growth is an important part of LMA activity and expenditure. Each year they must submit a request to the DNR for the areas that they expect will need treatment. The DNR then determines which areas are approved. Generally, approval comes back for only 30-60% of the requested area. Then a contract is signed with a professional treatment company who then treats the lake. Some years require multiple treatments in certain areas, and sometimes the plant growth is not at the levels anticipated. Mother Nature keeps everyone guessing from year to year!

The shoreline curves again along Long Beach Drive, at the end of which stood the Long Beach Amusement Park from 1921-1937. Along with the sandy beach, known as White City, the park included a diving pier, toboggan water slide, dance pavilion and a hotel.

ACROSS FROM ISLANDS

From this area you have good views of some of the islands in the lake. This area is commonly referred to as "The Big Island", but there are actually three islands connected by marshy areas. All three have cottages, and are owned by different individuals or families. The only power on the islands is provided by generators. Be sure to notice the tiny island to the southeast. This is Honeymoon Island. In the 1950's a small cottage was placed on the island but has since been destroyed. Honeymoon Island is slowly disappearing into the lake.

ALONG NORTH SHORE

As we travel along the north shore, let's learn more about the most famous resident of Lake Manitou, The Manitou Monster! Stories abound from the earliest days of the lake, when the Potawatami Indian tribe settled nearby. This tribe migrated from Michigan, and lived on land owned by the Miamis. They named the lake Manitou (or Manitaou) means both "good spirit" and "evil spirit". Some records also refer to the meaning as "Great Spirit", and was applied whether the Spirit felt peacefulness and calm, or frenzy and hate.

They believed that the lake's waters held a monster fish or serpent with supernatural powers. A story that is attributed to a French-Indian named DeClaire, tells of his fishing experience south of the Big Island when he spotted a log floating on top of the water.

Suddenly the log changed into a monster fish with a fan shaped tail and huge eyes, which became flaring balls of fire. The monster lashed its tail across the lake and capsized

DeClaire's boat. He miraculously survived to tell his tale!

The story of the Manitou Monster survived for many years, with reports surfacing occasionally from settlers in the mid 1800's and even into the 1950's! These sightings always made the local news reports!

BAY LEADING TO POET'S POINT

We are entering an area near the peninsula known as Poet's Point. Behind this area was a pond known for it's many lily pads. You can see small groupings of them in front of the recently opened Lily Pad Boutique. The Lily Pad is another stop for LMA's annual Poker Run. Many of the cottages along this area of the lake were originally built as fishing getaways and had no heat or modern conveniences. Some are long gone, others have been renovated or enlarged as you can see. Each year brings changes to homes around the lake.

COLONIAL HOTEL

As we approach the Colonial condominiums, we will begin to learn about the amazing Big Band Era and the importance of Lake Manitou as a popular resort destination.

In the 1890's, the area just north of the dam was known as Columbia Park. In 1910, the Colonial Hotel and Terrace Gardens was established within the park. The hotel was in full swing in the early 1920's and a dance pavilion was added in 1927. It was rumored that gangsters visited the hotel. What we know as fact is that the Colonial was a major attraction to visitors from Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Chicago, and even from New York City. Many people traveled by train from these cities, and would be met by horses pulling wagons and

carriages to transport them to the Colonial Hotel and other hotels on the lake. Development was so scarce on the lake at this time that the horses hooves and the carriage wagons could be heard echoing across the lake.

As car travel became possible, even more visitors arrived. In the busy season, crowds of 2500-3000 people were reported at the performances. The dance pavilion was the setting for performances by famous names such as Glen Miller, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Lena Horne, Xavier Cugat and Louis Armstrong. In the summer of 1938, a band from NYC had a limited engagement and their performances were regularly broadcast on NBC radio.

We have a photo of the "Pastime" double decker excursion boat that docked at the Colonial and took passengers for cruises around the lake, stopping at other hotels as well. It could hold 60 passengers and cost 25 cents. Some evenings there were live orchestras entertaining the guests.

In October 1938 a terrible fire destroyed the entire hotel. It was rebuilt by Harry Paige and continued to be a popular destination until swing and big band music began to decline. In 1982, the Colonial Condos were built and remain today.

THE DAM

Our lake would not exist without the dam. In 1826, the federal government made a treaty with the Potawatomi tribe



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to build a dam and a mill. This created our 775 acre lake. The mill attracted the first white settlement, known as Tiptonville. When the Potawatomi tribe was removed to Kansas in 1838, the dam, mill and settlement fell into disuse.

VFW Post #1343 provides free services to its veteran members with the support of our community and hosts several events. The VFW is one stop on the annual LMA Poker Run.

In the early 1900's the Dam Landing restaurant offered food, lodging and boat rental. By 1920, the Dam Landing Hotel was a two story establishment featuring famous fish dinners. It is currently a restaurant and bar that is also a LMA Poker Run stop.

Next to the dam on the north side was once Bailey's ice house. Now it is Lakeside Park, owned by the city, with picnic pavilion, swimming area, public boat ramp, fishing piers and a butterfly garden. Prior to the park this entire area, as well as what is now the public Mill Creek golf course, was a large fish hatchery.

MITCHELL PARK & CONEY ISLAND

We are entering an area that housed lots of fishing cottages. The Duck Landing rented rowboats for 10 cents the first hour and 5 cents for each additional hour. This area was also a popular fishing area, including the bay known as Sunset Bay. In the middle of the bay is Coney Island. Yes, it did get its name from the famous Brooklyn amusement park! Deer have been spotted swimming back and forth from the island.

This island does have electricity, which is received via an underwater cable. Coney island is quiet and peaceful now, but it did have a raucous history! A summer resort opened in 1901 with a dance hall, a saloon and a beer garden. Small motor boats brought customers from a nearby launch at Columbia Park. According to reports by the local sheriff at the time, gambling, beer, whiskey and the absence of inhibitions led to fights with knives, razors and revolvers, and wild behavior requiring local law enforcement and doctors to respond.

THE MOOSE

We are approaching the Moose Lodge – another LMA Poker Run stop – which has been located on the lake since 1951, after purchasing a popular hotel on this site, The West Side, which had deteriorated. In addition to the lodge activities, the Moose schedules popular activities and entertainment. They also have a large beach area for member families to enjoy.

This area was known as Jewel Beach, and has always been a great natural sand beach. The West Side Hotel started as a one story structure with rooms and boats to rent. By 1914 a second story was added to the hotel with white verandas and balconies. It was a popular spot for Sunday dinner and provided a wonderful view of the lake. The hotel also boasted a sailboat for its guests to enjoy

SOUTHWEST BAY

You learned earlier that the lake is 775 acres. From this side, across the lake to Long Beach is 1.25 miles. From the

Dam southeast to the head of the lake is 2 miles.

We are cruising along West Side Road, and as we approach the other set of condominiums on the lake, we can recall another former great swimming spot, called Overstreet's Resort. Kenneth Overstreet, a schoolteacher, bought all of Wolf's Point in 1938. He had swimming, concessions, boat and cottage rentals. Overstreet's Resort was open until the 1970's. Now condominiums and private homes fill this location.

WOLF'S POINT

Traveling along Wolf's Point Road, again you will see a variety of wonderful lake residences. Some are older cottages with rich histories, while others have been added to or remodeled, and newly built homes replace some of the old ones.

Living is close on the lake. The neighbors all have the same desire: large windows for lake breezes and wonderful views! You will have noticed that some shorelines and homes are very low and close to the water, and other homes sit up high from the lake. The views from each home are beautiful, but can be quite different depending on their location.

THE CHANNELS

We are approaching the channel area, which created the opportunity for many more homes with access to the lake. In 1960 the Meiser brothers channeled the wetlands, creating a 15-foot deep passageway. With today's conservation laws, channeling is not permitted if it causes destruction of the wetlands. LMA most recently dredged the entrance between

the last two channels to maintain property values

We are passing the island first known as Round Top, but today it is called Treasure Island. It still has its original 1920's home, but it has been completely remodeled and has all the comforts needed for year-round living. This island is close enough to shore that utilities are provided by overhead wires on the west side. Notice the seawall and boat dock behind the house where they must boat to reach their car. Can you imagine their trip to the grocery?

GOOSE POND

We are approaching a housing area known as Goose Pond. Some of these homes occupy the site of the former Sportsman Restaurant. This area is unique because of the natural wetlands barrier that runs between the lakeside of the homes and the open lake. It is a popular area for water birds to gather, and a favorite spot of the flock of swans that live on the lake. Mid summer there are beautiful flowers that create lots of color in this natural area.

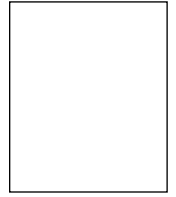
HEADLANDS

The headlands of the lake are a beautiful natural wildlife refuge that is the largest wetlands in Northern Indiana. Known as Manitou Island Wetlands, it comprises 643 acres. As you recall, the lake is 775 acres. Rain Creek meanders





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for 8 miles through wetlands from Mt. Zion Dam and pond.

In addition, two local families sold significant ground to add to the wetlands: Judy Burton Nature Preserve, 130 acres; and Bob Kern Nature Preserve, 162 acres.

The Lake Manitou Association works regularly to protect Lake Manitou and all of its 28,000-acre watershed areas. The quality and condition of the water flowing into the lake affects everything about the lake: the aquatic plants that thrive for fish and animal habitats; the aquatic plants that negatively affect the lake by strangling beneficial plants or restricting boat travel within navigable areas, the wildlife that depends on a health lake for survival, the fish population, and finally, the people who enjoy water recreation. Each year a large portion of the LMA income is spent on researching and working to make the quality of our lake the best it can be.

Monitoring conditions like silt and muck flowing into the lake is another expense. When conditions become unnavigable, the LMA has paid for dredging programs in various sites.

Most recently the channel by the DNR launch and the main channel system have benefited.

Boating safety is a major focus for LMA. All of the buoys around the lake are purchased, installed, monitored, repaired, removed and stored for the winter season. Each new lighted buoy costs in excess of \$500.

Boating classes have been offered on an annual basis in order to assure that new boaters to Lake Manitou are knowledgeable of boating laws and practice them.

NORTH EAST

As we turn north from the wetlands, we come to the site of another great hotel, the Fairview. In the 1850's land was purchased by the Cincinnati, Peru, and Chicago Railroad to speculate on lands along lakes in northern Indiana as possible resort sites. One hundred twenty-two acres was purchased for an unknown sum, but was appraised at \$21,400 in 1854. Obviously this was a huge, over-valued speculative venture because in 1859, the railroad sold 94 acres for \$5000. Almost 20 years later the same 94 acres was sold to Samuel Sibert for only \$1500. The property

was platted as Best View and still maintains that name.

Then in the 1870's a series of hotels was built at the east end of the lake. The East Side Hotel was a two story but rather plain wooden structure. Hairy Paige transformed it into the Fairview Hotel and Gardens. It too became a destination for rail travelers arriving in Rochester and taking carriages to the dance pavilion, bathing beach, and the restful atmosphere of Fairview Gardens. Their dance floor was the first open air dance pavilion in the Midwest.

In 1939, only three months after the Colonial Hotel burned down, the Fairview burned, never to be rebuilt. Private residences now occupy this site.

Years ago there was a concrete ice house that was constructed near this site. It collapsed into the lake, and was never recovered from the water. It rested in a shallow area and over the years a number of boats hit their prop on the remains. During the last LMA dredging project, this was removed from the lake, eliminating a crazy safety hazard. •

MEMBERSHIP

The Lake Manitou Association needs your support in order to continue its work each year. Please join us by becoming a member.