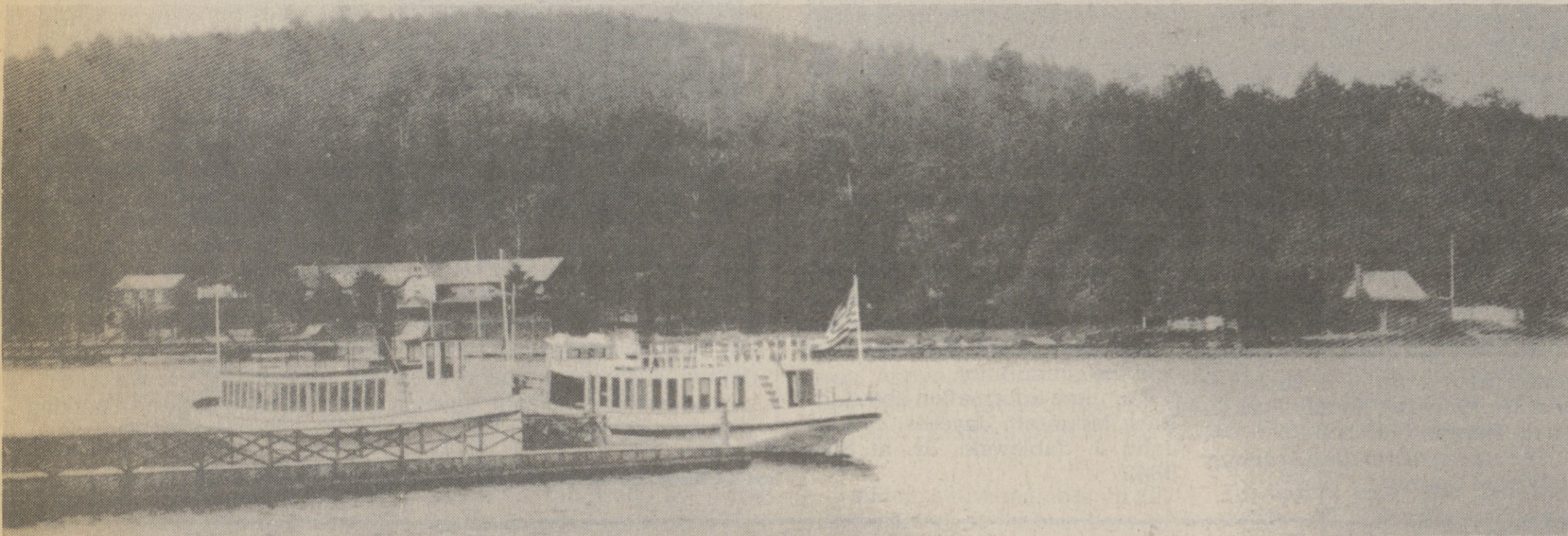


IS THIS THE BIGGEST LAKE? - Conneaut Lake, located in western Pennsylvania, claims to be the state's largest natural lake, challenging Harveys Lake. A postcard picture shows part of the lake's shoreline.



HARVEYS LAKE EXCURSIONS-For years residents from the Back Mountain, Wyoming Valley and other sections of the Northeast traveled to Harveys Lake where they took the steamboats across the lake to picnic at the picnic grounds.

Steamboats once crowded lake's waters

By CHARLOT M. DENMON
Staff Writer

In the early 1900's, two transit companies ran a half-dozen boats on the lake

Modern-day residents might find it hard to believe that several steamboats once plied the waters of Harveys Lake, taking hundreds of expectant tourists to their resort hotels.

The era of the steamboats on Harveys Lake was between the early 1890's and the 1920's, although it is said there was a steamboat launched on the lake as early as before the Civil War.

The Wingohocking is claimed to have been the first successful steamboat launched on the lake in 1860 by George P. Richards of Plymouth. It was an attraction offered by the Lake House for about four years before it was sold to a prominent resident who took it to a lake in New Jersey.

Although there are other claims that steamboats were used on the lake, it was not until 1876 that there is an account that James Rhoads purchased the Emma steamboat and took it to the lake. The Emma was about 25-feet long and covered with a curtain.

The Emma was in use for several years and then there are no records of others until 1887 when a two small steamboats were launched, one named the Rose and a second, Lily of the Lake, owned by Jacob Rice, owner of the Lake Grove House. That ran only a short time and is reported to have been bought by an Albert Lewis, who used it for private use, not public.

The Mistletoe was the next boat said to have been launched at the lake, by Charles Stanley and John Lloyd. It held about 30 passengers. A 41-foot steamboat called the City Charter was launched on the lake in 1889 by William Bond who lived at Warden Place and served the area for about five years at regular runs during the summer.

In 1891 the large steamers began to run on the lake, the first one Big

Boat built by Bond. It is said to have been about 70 feet long. In 1891, the dance pavilion was constructed at the Picnic Grounds and the lake became popular as a summer resort with residents of New York and Philadelphia coming to the area for the season. The Mistletoe, Big Boat and City Charter met the incoming trains and took the passengers to their destination. They also ran excursions for Lake visitors during certain times in the early evening.

In 1892, the Harveys Lake Transit Company was formed to operate a steamboat company and in 1893 George R. Wright, one of the owners, went to New York to meet with a builder of steamboats. Due to ice, he could not see many boats so returned home, but returned to New York at a later date with S.H. Sturdevant and George Rhoads and looked at several boats. They finally contracted with the builder to construct a steamboat which was named Rosalind and launched May 9, 1893, with a champagne ceremony.

The Rosalind was 60 feet long and could carry 75 to 100 passengers. It began public service May 20 and carried passengers at 10¢ per ride. Later the Lake Transit Company purchased Bond's Big Boat which he had renamed A.J. Lewis, and within less than a year renamed it the Shawanese. The Rosalind and Shawanese had cabins in front and behind the engine room and carried passengers on a rear wooden upper deck.

During this time, the City Charter had been taken from the lake by its owner and the Mistletoe disappeared, but another small boat 'Columbia' operated on the lake. Later the Columbia sank at its pier and was submerged for years at the inlet. The area was later filled in and any trace of the

Columbia was lost. In the late months of 1899 the Lake Transit Company ordered a new steamer to be built which would carry about 350 passengers. In June of 1900, the Natoma was launched. It was the only steamboat with a double deck to run on Harveys Lake. It had two lifeboats and its engine was double-acting.

In 1902, a new Harveys Lake Steamboat Company was formed to compete with the Lake Transit Company.

This company decided to build twin steamers, which were built along side each other on the shore of the lake above the Rhoads Motel. They were completed in 1903 and were named Wilkes-Barre and Kingston. The steamers were identical and were distinguished only by their names. They had awnings over the front and rear decks protecting passengers from the sun.

There were no laws governing the steamboats until 1903 when the state legislature enacted laws regulating inland steamboats requiring inspection, licensed captains, engineers and pilots. In 1904 the state inspectors required the steamboat companies to adopt a code of signals.

In February, 1905, the Lake Transit Company hired Osborn to build the last of the Harveys Lake steamers, and a new steamer 'Acoma' was built at a site above the Oneonta landing toward the outlet. Built at a cost of \$7,000., the Acoma was launched and a trial trip made July 3, 1905. It was a gala event and a great success and the next day the Lake Transit Company began regular runs with E.J. Carpenter as captain.

The greatest years for the steamers were from 1900 to 1920, with the two companies enjoying the

Lakes

(continued from page 1)

eventually attracted early man and beasts. The skeletal remains of three mammoths have been found in the lake.

Harveys Lake became a popular resort area and was home to many steamboats. Conneaut Lake is also a resort area, but it was the railroad that helped bring it to life. In 1843 the lake was raised to serve as a reservoir for the railroads that connected Erie to Pittsburgh.

Many boats have been used on each lake. From the 1890's to the 1920's several steamboats powered their way across Harveys Lake while taking tourists and visitors to many different destinations.

Conneaut Lake also had a large share of boats and still offers an authentic sternwheel paddleboat ride for those who visit the lake.

Yet another similarity between the lakes is their history with the ice business. Conneaut Lake was the center of an ice-cutting industry. One brochure from the lake says that, "Men and horses would

cut and haul slabs of lake ice to be stored in great warehouses for summer shipment to the iceboxes of Pittsburgh."

During the winters around the turn of the century, Harveys Lake was also used for its ice. In fact, one myth dealing with the lake tells of a team of horses that went into the lake when the ice that was being cut gave way.

Speaking of myths, both lakes have a bunch of them. Harveys Lake legends tell of ice that sinks during the day to a steamship that rests at the bottom of the lake.

Conneaut also has its share of legends but its most popular one seems to be the presence of a monster that is periodically seen by fisherman who make their way to the deeper parts of the water. This lake also has a boat that sank to the bottom. According to a brochure, "In 1922 a revolutionary speedboat set a world speed record on Conneaut Lake before capsizing and sinking. In 1985, the boat was raised from its resting place under 49 feet of icy spring waters and six feet of glacial silt."

Amusement parks have been another similarity between the two. Harveys Lake had its popular Hanson's amusement park and picnic area. The park was a source of entertainment for crowds who loved the rides, especially the wooden roller coaster. The park has now closed and plans are being readied to build townhomes on the former park site.

Conneaut Lake takes pride in

its amusement park that began in 1892. The park, which still attracts an estimated 350,000 people a year, is the largest industry at the lake. Its similarity with Harveys Lake increased greatly when it purchased the Pony Cart Kiddie Ride during the auction of the rides at Hanson's.

The two lake communities are also increasing in population. Both started out as resort areas but people are deciding to live there all year round. Not only do the residents of Harveys Lake enjoy the water but many people from the other Back Mountain communities head into the borough during the weekends.

Conneaut Lake is similar in that it relies a lot on tourism, but area residents enjoy the lake as well. Unlike Harveys Lake, Conneaut Lake borders five municipalities with a population of approximately 7,370.

Both the lakes are used for recreation as boaters and fisherman find their way to the water as often as possible. Neither lake has a limit for horsepower of boats and thus many speedboats, jet skis and other crafts are commonly seen on the waters. Despite this, both lakes also offer fishermen a great chance to get their limit.

With their natural beauty, great history, and attraction to the public, both Harveys Lake and Conneaut Lake are likely to continue to flourish no matter which is judged the largest

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