

LAKE LAWRENCE HISTORY

Lake Lawrence was formed several thousand years ago as the Vashon Glacier retreated from the Puget Sound Region North into Canada. In doing so it left behind a huge boulder approximately 100 yards West of the Intersection of Lindsay Road and 153rd Avenue, near the fire station. The boulder is approximately 15 feet tall. The below photo of this erratic boulder was taken by Barry Halverson in July 2019.



This boulder is known as a glacial erratic, defined as a piece of rock that differs from the size and type of rock native to the area in which it rests. A great article about the glacial period in our area and how it formed our lakes in this area can be found by typing in the following link: <http://nwsportsmanmag.com/geology-of-nw-fishing-hunting-how-a-giant-ice-cube-made-your-troutbass-lake/>

In 1873, a 331-acre lake in southeastern Thurston County was surveyed by D.S.B. Henry. Henry reported that there were between 25 and 30 settlers in the township surrounding the lake, and that some of the settlers had resided upon their property for 15 to 20 years. The lake is divided into two distinct basins. The larger East basin is 277 acres in size while the West basin is 54 acres. The surveyors began with the west-end corner near the shore. It took them three days to accomplish their task. The head man in the field party wrote, “a beautiful sheet of water surrounded by cedar, fir, alder and vine maple”.

Jim Kandel, an early resident, gave the lake its first name – Kandel Lake. At the time the area was surrounded by wildlife. The survey team said deer, grouse and mink were bountiful. Within the lake were many suckers and rainbow trout. Prior to 1951, the lake had perch, bass, catfish, suckers and crappie. In 1951 the lake was rehabilitated and filled with trout only. Many years ago, the lake gained renown as being one of the best fishing lakes this side of the mountains. Today, people still reach limits with trout and bass, but the waters are not filled like they once were.

In 1884, there was a bustling sawmill on the east side. Another mill was operating by the early 1900’s. They were fairly small operations, according to today’s standards, employing about five men apiece. Today there are remaining slabs from the mill’s activity in the waters of the lake. The slabs originated from the mill’s activity. The slabs consisted of a sawed log, trimmed, with bark intact. They were dumped with the sawdust into the lake, and most were 16 feet long. This activity in large part contributed to the heavy, mucky sediment currently found in the lake. Horse and oxen often pulled the logs to the mills. Lee and Dallas Edwards’ mother, Jenny, recalled working at the sawmill when she was ten years old for a dime a day.

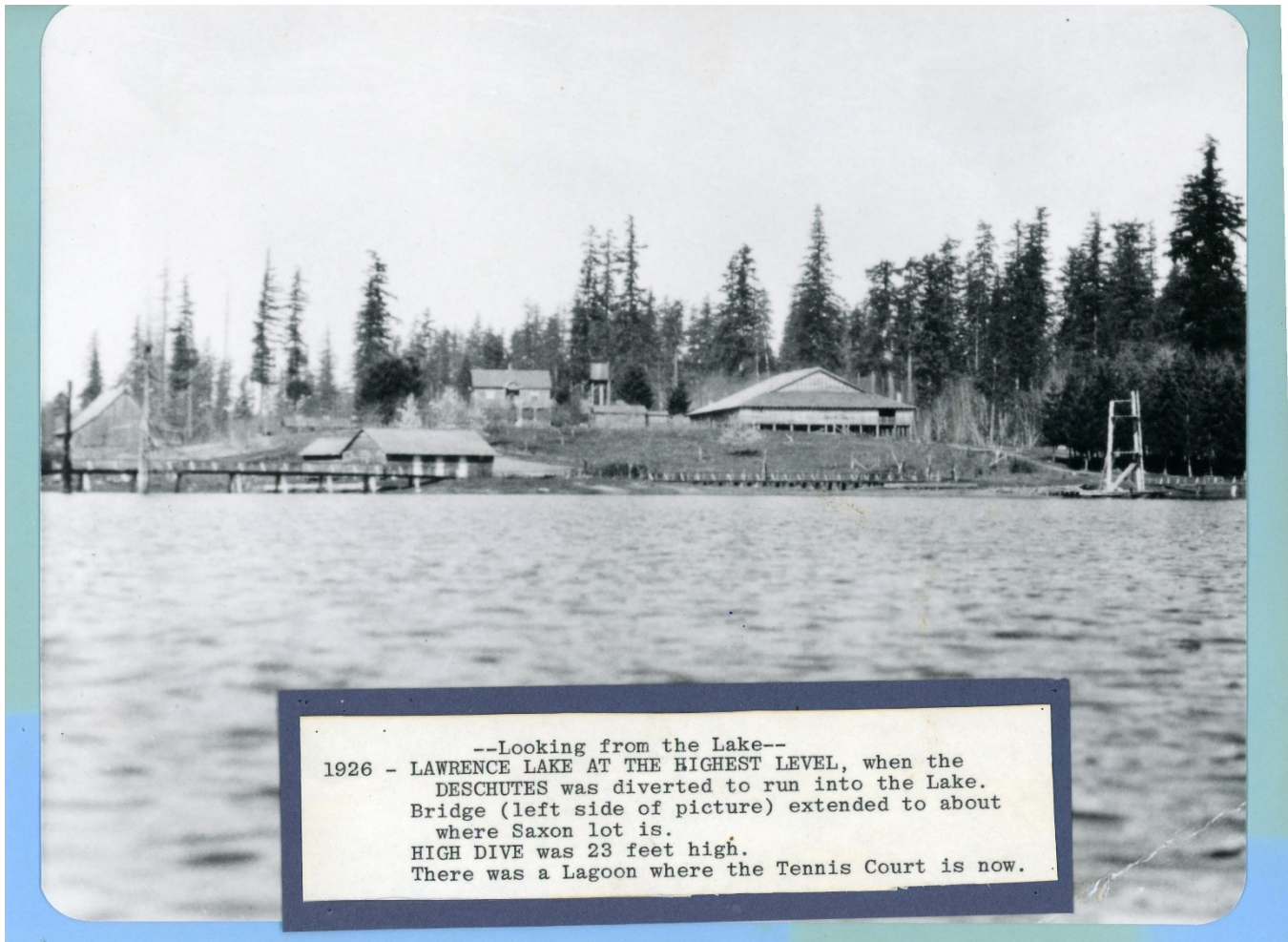
In approximately 1888 Sam or Jim (documents identify the first name differently) Lawrence bought the Kandel property, the lakes name was changed to Lake Lawrence. In the lifetime of Lee and Dallas Edwards, early settlers on the lake, many changes have taken place on the lake and the surrounding area.

Lake Lawrence West housing development was nearly all trees. So was the land of Scenic Shores development. This land was originally owned by the McKenna Lumber Company. Later it was sold to George DeWitt. George DeWitt's daughter, Leonna, sold the area to Dallas Edwards, Lee Edwards, Mike Edwards, Larry Shorno and Bob Landon and they developed it into Scenic Shores. Lee and Ruby Edwards developed the Lake Lawrence West area. Wildaire, another housing development, was owned and developed by Bill Goodwin and family.

In 1908 the Olympia Light and Power Company (later bought out by Puget Power) needed more energy. They dammed up the south end of the lake off Pleasant Beach Drive and placed a gate where the lake enters the creek to the Deschutes River. A ditch was also dug from where the Deschutes River flows very near Cougar Mountain Camp into the South end of Lake Lawrence which added sediment to the lake for over 20 years. This diversion dam would raise the lake by about 18 feet at various times. In the fall, when the water would get low in the river, they would open the gate so the waters of Lake Lawrence could supplement the power plant in Tumwater. The power supplied all of the Olympia area. This procedure was used until 1928 when the power plant in Tumwater was abandoned. The land on the lake was given back to the land owners who had joined in and supported the power company in the operation. In 1929 the lake was lowered back down to its present level.

To facilitate the dam and the rise in water level Frank and Jennie Edwards two-story house that now sits adjacent to the Lake Lawrence Lodge had to be moved from down by the lake, up to the hill top by three teams of horses. The resort got its start here on the hill, while the lake was still high. The little general store was in the end building next to the house, now over a century old.

Once called the "Edwards Pavilion", the Lake Lawrence Lodge was erected in 1923 by Mr. Armstrong, Louie and Albert Reichel, and headed up by J.B. Martin who was a local bridge builder. The dimensions of the all fir structure is approximately 120'x140'. All logs were felled from off the lake property itself. They were hand peeled and hewn and the steel rods were hand tooled. The fireplace was erected by Frank Noreen from Deschutes Falls. It took about one year to complete the building. This became an extension of Edwards Resort, a fishing and recreational getaway, here on Lake Lawrence.



--Looking from the Lake--
 1926 - LAWRENCE LAKE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, when the
 DESCHUTES was diverted to run into the Lake.
 Bridge (left side of picture) extended to about
 where Saxon lot is.
 HIGH DIVE was 23 feet high.
 There was a Lagoon where the Tennis Court is now.

Once completed, the Edwards family began having dances every other Saturday night starting in May and ending in October. Many popular bands, of the day, played here. People came from Tacoma and Seattle in their Model T Fords and earlier in their horse and buggies. Jennie and Dallas Edwards would go to downtown Tacoma in their 1924 Model T Ford and advertise the dances at places like Days Taylors, Mecca Restaurant, Tambles Tamales, Bimbos and Hunt & Mottet. Their advertising brought in a huge crowd of 1200 people for the first dance, which left standing room only. People had to take their turns on the dance floor as well as in the chairs. The next dance turned out 800 and after that, a regular crowd of 250 to 350 came. Couples paid \$1.10 each for the dance and \$.50 for supper which was served at midnight.

Children were welcome at these affairs. A room about 20x20 feet was provided with small wooden cribs in two rows, stacked 3 high. Each crib had a safety latch on the outside so their babies didn't fall out, and was lined with a cotton mattress pad. Mothers checked their babies regularly during the evening. Dinner was prepared and served by Jennie, a small crew of 5 women and Shirley Edwards, her daughter, who helped at a young age. The boys, Ozzie, Dallas, and Lee worked to sell pop, candy, gum and cigarettes as well as man the coat check stand. Supplies for the confectionary came from the Co-op Grange store located at the corner of 4th and Main, which Frank managed. For a charge of \$.10 each coat was folded and stuffed into a cubby hole and a brass tag given to each person with a number corresponding to the number on the cubby hole.

The earliest restroom facilities were outside, just a short walk from the lodge. Later, around 1950 when Lee and Ruby Edwards were running the dances, they put in the present restrooms.

When the weather was warm, wooden window awnings would be opened to let in the fresh breezes. The present fireplace was the only source of heat in those days and people learned to dress warmly and dance a little faster to keep warm.

In 1924, there was no electric lighting so gas lamps with 2 ½ foot stems were hung between the pillars. Half way through the evening they had to be pumped up. An electricity plant was installed in 1926 and electric lines came in 1927.

The music consisted of a 6 to 10-piece band. Lillian (Johnston) Erickson was the piano player and a resident of Yelm. Lillian would keep the group in the correct rhythm by bouncing on the piano bench to the tempo of the music.

A 20-gallon crock with a silver spigot was filled with ice water for the thirsty dancers. Frank brought ice from the store in Yelm for that and the water was carried up from the fresh water springs on the property. Other water used to clean, etc. came from the lake. Ice from the ice house at Newton & Bernice Smith's farm was carried to the lodge to keep the pop cold. Bernice recalls, "The ice house was made from railroad ties and sawdust. The lake used to freeze 6 to 10 inches each year and provided ice for a full year". Bernice remembers dressing chickens the day before the dances. "The chicken would be cooked in big pots on the wood stove in the hall's kitchen". Jennie Edwards was an excellent cook according to all who knew her. She would whip up something wonderful from practically nothing, and she seldom used a recipe. Some of the menus served at those midnight suppers were: Creamed chicken on hot baking powder biscuits, peas, beans, pickles, or roast beef or stew, and corn on the cob, but always biscuits, and pie for dessert. Once an elk was brought over, cut up and processed for minced meat pies.

The suppers were served family style with about 5 ladies serving 12 tables which seated 10 people each. Not everyone could eat at the same time so the first seating would eat while others danced and once a person finished, the serving ladies would lay a clean place setting for the next customer. Bernice Smith served at some of the suppers and recalls, "The supper help was paid \$1.00 per dance."

It was during prohibition when the dances first started, so people got their hand stamped at the door when they went outside to the out houses or for a little snort from the flasks. There were lots of comings and goings!

Governor Huntermer deputized Frank Edwards to keep the peace and armed him with a gun and a black jack. There were occasions when someone would have to be escorted out of the hall but no use of the gun or black jack was needed.

The day after a dance the whole family helped with the cleanup. Besides the general cleaning of the hall the children had the job of cleaning up the left-over moon-shine bottles left in the parking area. They were to take an empty gallon jug with them and empty any alcohol left in the 'dead soldiers' into it and bring it to their father, Frank, who would soothe his aching feet by soaking in it. Frank spent long hours in the store on concrete floors so the soak brought welcome relief.

After the lake was resumed to its natural level (as it is now) around 1929 by blocking the ditch that had been dug and rediverting the flow of the Deschutes River, the Edwards hired John Rogers to build 12 cabins for the resort customers. These cabins were also used after the dances when people wanted to spend the night and attend the baseball games, which took place in the park in front of the lodge on Sundays. Bernice Smith told about the baseball team her husband Newton coached and managed called "The Lake Lawrence Cougars". Newton also cleared the piece of land on which the baseball games were played. This local team competed with teams from Tacoma, Centralia, Chehalis, a Japanese team from Fife and a local Jehovah's Witness team. Some of the members of the 15-man team were General Christopherson from Rainier, Newton Smith, Ozzie Edwards, Louie Goldsmith, Mr. Sanchez from Nisqually, Dewey Caldwell, the Hicks brothers from Roy, and Mr. Armstrong who

played with a brace on his leg. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years. Sunday crowds usually ranged from 100 to 500 people. The refreshments consisted of hot dogs, pop, near beer, candies and gum.

Fishing was the resorts big draw and the season began in April. Here are some photo's provided by Lisa Kellejian, granddaughter of H.A. (Art) Trimble from his photo collection showing opening day of fishing season in the 1940's:

Photo provided by Lisa Kellegian from the photo collection of her Grand Father H.A.(Art) Trimble



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1955 - BOAT DOCK, All 105 Boats lined up, ready to go!

In 1948, Lee Edwards and his wife, Ruby, began running the resort and dances. Besides the 12 cabins there were at least 75 camping spots and 110 hand-built wooden boats. Lee built a 20-foot water slide that became quite

an attraction in those days. The season started in April, and ended after duck season in the middle of January. An end to the big dances came around 1960.



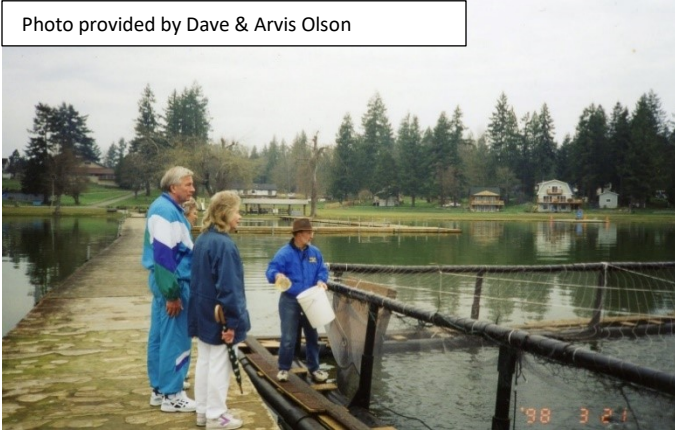
Around the late 1960's and early 1970's Lee Edwards dug the canal around a five acre+ plot of land, belonging to the Edwards family, that was mostly wetlands forming the island on the northwest end of the lake, commonly referred to as "Goat Island". Around the same time the two bridges, one a footbridge and the other a car bridge were then constructed to make the island accessible. Goats were purchased and placed on the island and cared for by local residents who also built a shed for winter protection. These community volunteers also provided feed and the services of a veterinarian. The goats kept the island trimmed of vegetation and the bridges made it possible to walk about and enjoy the island. Unfortunately, after several years a large pack of dogs attacked and killed the goats and a few years after the bridges were taken down due to safety concerns. The Lake Lawrence Community Club, who own the Island Property, also still own the access points to the Island where the previous bridges were. The club has been working for the past seven years to rehabilitate the island and has long range plans to reconstruct at least one of the bridges.

In 1973, the over 50-year-old resort closed, and the camping era came to an end. The resort property is now enjoyed by many private property homeowners. The café, playground, swimming area, and Edwards Pavilion became part of the Lake Lawrence Community Club, which still maintains these facilities for the benefit of their members. The lodge is also available to the community at large for all types of events to include weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, family reunions, and any other event.

Although much remains the same, a few necessary improvements have been made since the first dance in the '20s. This historically unique building holds many weddings and special occasions every weekend of the year.

Music and laughter have penetrated these walls for decades. The floors have endured many nights of dancing feet, and wonderful memories still linger, as tears of joy continue to flow thanks to the many volunteers of the Lake Lawrence Community Club.

Photo provided by Dave & Arvis Olson



From the 1980's to early 2000's the Lake Lawrence Community Club worked with the Washington Fish and Wildlife to raise Rainbow Trout in a stock pen at the Community dock. Each year approximately 2,000 trout were raised by community volunteers who fed and cared for the fish daily. When they reached maturity (6 to 10" in length) they were released into the lake. This process was stopped once the Department of Fish and Wildlife started stocking the lake on a regular basis. Between February and May 2019 over 27,000 trout were planted in Lake Lawrence by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Photo provided by Skip Meredith

The Seattle Inboard and Outboard Racing Associations started racing on Lake Lawrence on or about the Spring of 1976. They have raced every year except 2001 following the 28 February 2001 Nisqually Earthquake that reached a magnitude 6.8 causing water levels in the lake to drop to record lows. The Seattle Inboard Racing Association was unable to race in the Spring of 2015 due to numerous Yellow Flag Iris Floating Islands in the lake measuring 20x30 feet in size causing a hazard to navigation and racing.



Photo provided by Skip Meredith

The races are run on various course lengths from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to $1 \frac{2}{3}$ mile recognized by the American Power Boat Association and the Union Internationale Montonautique. Almost every class in both the Inboard and Outboards has set a record on the lake. Lake Lawrence is one of those "just right" lakes. It is big enough for the course, sheltered from wind, not very deep and disperses wave action quickly. Most racers know the reputation of the lake as having prime racing conditions to set records and come from all across the county to race on Lake Lawrence. Some class records are broken every year. For more information on Lake Lawrence World Record Hydro racing go to the following link:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20080509121323/http://www.seattleoutboard.org/lawrence.html>



Photo provided by Dave & Arvis Olson

In the 1990's the Fourth of July Annual Boat Parade was started. This event has grown from a dozen boats to over 40 decorated and colorful boats and other floating craft. The event starts at 1200 at the Lake Lawrence Community Club boat docks and travels counterclockwise around both the main and little lake until everyone ends back at the start point.

In 2015 another development on the southeast end of the lake, Lisa Lane, was developed with six - 5 acre lots.

Lake Lawrence is a shallow lake ranging in depth from an average of 8-10 feet to 26 feet at its deepest point. Currently Lake Lawrence has approximately 700 parcels/lots. Of this approximately 151 are lake front, 15 are canal front, and 537 are upland or parcels/lots located within home owners associations that have their own lake access by way of a community boat launch and park within each of the three larger associations (Lake Lawrence Community Club, Scenic Shores and Wildaire). There is one public boat launch on the southwest end of the lake at the end of Pleasant Beach Drive managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and is adjacent to undeveloped land acquired by Thurston County in 1988. In September 2019 the public boat launch was renovated with improved facilities, parking, boat dock and ramp.

Currently there is no stream or other above ground water source to feed the lake. The lake has numerous springs that feed the lake from the bottom. The old dam/weir in the West basin (little lake) that was built in 1908 by the Olympia Light and Power Company still exists, but is now located on a private lake front parcel. The weir is over 20' tall and the top can be viewed from Pleasant Beach Drive. When the water level of the lake raises above its high water mark it overflows into a stream bed through the dam shown below to the weir. There are four 2x12" planks that can be removed one at a time to lower the water level, if needed, to allow the excess water to travel down the stream bed through the weir and across the farm property to the west eventually emptying into the Deschutes River approximately 1 mile from the weir.



Photo provided by Barry Halverson. View from Pleasant Beach Drive facing southeast.



Photo provided by Barry Halverson. View taken from West (Little) Lake facing northwest.

This history is made possible by articles and notes from many sources, including:

1985 article from Nisqually Valley News

An unknown author of an article posted in the Lower Lodge of the Lake Lawrence Community Club

An article titled, "Within These Walls - A GLANCE INTO THE PAST", by Neo Brown, Lee Edwards daughter

Racing Association information provided by Russ Dodge, Chief Surveyor for The American Power Boat Association and Skip Meredith, Member American Power Boat Association and Lake Lawrence Lake Management District

If you have photos/articles/memories you would like to share to enhance/expand upon this history please contact Barry Halverson at halversonloma@hotmail.com or 253-341-6059.