

A History of Dunham Lake, part 5

By Anne Richards

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By Carolyn Richards

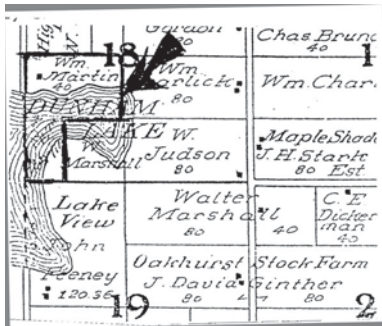
We have already revealed the details of the early settlement of the lake, establishment of the Migratory Bird Preserve, and the arrival and dissolution of Eureka Heights, and Lees Woods. This chapter will describe the North End settlement, Henry Wallace's crucial contributions, and some of the involvement of Murray 'Pat' Van Wagoner. We've had some movers and shakers, on the national level in our past.

Terry Gannon

The North End

The land at the north end of Dunham Lake was never acquired by Henry Wallace. Therefore, this property did not become part of the subdivision.

In 1866, the Martins purchased $\frac{3}{4}$ of a quarter section at the north end. Part of this land extended



across the lake into the area that is now Blue Heron. In 1910, Josiah and Adeline Hair bought this farm and built the stone house on the hill that is visible from the lake. They grew fruit trees and berries. The Hairs had come from Chicago. Adeline was a Ross. Her family lived on the west side of the present G. M. Proving Grounds, and so it was natural that she returned to live in Highland. Josiah had a background in chemistry. In Chicago he had started many companies and had was a Ross. Her family lived on the west side of the area that is now Blue Heron Josiah had a background in chemistry. In Chicago he had started many companies and had over

30 patents in his name. A fire extinguisher was the last in a line of patents and became a retirement occupation for him. In the 20's and 30's Josiah, Adeline, and their son Burchard set up shop in the red barn (still standing on Briar Hill today) and manufactured the extinguishers that Josiah had invented.

The cans for the Little Liberty Fire Extinguishers were made by the American Can Company. They were of tin, painted red, about 36" long and 2" in diameter. They sold for \$3 retail and \$1.50 in contract. In the barn they filled the cans with sodium bicarbonate in granular form so it would flow and added some magnesium carbonate to prevent caking. The extinguishers were hung on a nail, and to put the fire out the lid was removed and the granules swished over the fire.

Since the extinguishers were effective in protecting property, the Hairs had a contract with several area insurance companies. The firms gave the extinguishers to their customers as a bonus. The Hairs mailed the extinguishers directly to the policy holders. The chemicals came in drums via the Pierre Marquette Railroad to Highland Station. Burchard would pick them up in his Model T truck. Ulysses Sidney Beach was their mailman, and his horse-drawn cab, and later his car, would be filled with the Hair's fire extinguishers sent by parcel post.

In 1915 and 1917 the Hairs sold the south portion of their land to Wallace's Lakeview Farms Company. Those lake lots ultimately became part of our subdivision.

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Josiah died about 1925 and was buried in Chicago, but Burchard continued to manufacture the extinguishers until the start of WW II when the American Can Company discontinued the pattern for making the cans and went into defense work.

In a letter to the author of this history, Lee Weaver, who lived for years in Highland, remembers planting trees for Burchard Hair from the road up to the big house during the Depression in the summer of '31 or '32. "Burchard got the trees at a nursery 1/2 mile-west of Dunham Lake (probably Henry Wallace's nursery, by the present golf course.) The C.C.C.'s (Civilian Conservation Corps) were not used to plant trees. There were 7 or 8 young guys who worked. You couldn't buy a job then. Mark Holland furnished the truck. His truck tipped over twice going around a hillside while they were watering trees. Water was carried from the lake in an oblong tank on a flat bed of a truck. The tank was chained down, but when the water began to slosh to the downhill side, over it went! There were many wild geese and wild ducks in the bird sanctuary on the south end. There was one less after they caught one on the way home one night!"

At 45 years of age, Burchard married Katherine Potts, and he later married Marguerite Leonard and they had a son. In 1951, they sold the farm because Burchard's health was poor and they moved to Howell. The property was sold to Dr. Naylor, a Detroit dentist. Naylor lived in the stone house with his first wife. He and second wife lived in the red barn after he had made it barrier free due to his Parkinson's Disease. In 1972 Naylor's widow sold land to Ann Brody and she is presently subdividing it.

The Belknap Place

Frank and Della Belknap bought the farm at the northwest corner of the lake in 1904. In the present subdivision, their name stood where Briarhill curves sharply, just opposite the north gate the subdivision. Max Werner owns the home that stand there now and if you walk past you can see the base for the stone fireplace of the old Belknap house at the side of the Werner home.

In the early 1900's, Frank Belknap's family would go to town via horse and buggy. In the winter they used their team to pull the bob sleigh or cutter. The cutter held two people and the runners were close to the ground and stationary-- it tipped easily. The bob sleigh had movable runners so that it turned like a wagon and was more stable. Frank must have loved horses, because in 1916 he sold the farm to Benjamin Belknap and opened a ten-cent barn in Milford located near the present Milford Presbyterian Church. There, folks could unhitch their horse and stable it, for ten cents-- extra if the horse was fed. A spectacular fire destroyed his barn in 1929. According to the Milford history book "Ten Minutes Ahead of the Rest of the World", the firemen got "considerable notoriety for their unfireman like appearance. Some of them were playing in a local talent production called "Womanless Wedding" when the alarm came in and they didn't stop to take off their dresses..." a story that has come down through history as one of Milford's traditional funny tales."

In 1922 Henry Wallace's International Migratory Bird Preserve purchased the Belknap farm. Frank Fordyce, the superintendent, lived there awhile. In 1950, when the H. M. Wallace estate was sold, the house had six rooms, with a poultry house, tool shed, deep well and electric pump, and double corn crib of framing and wire construction.

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Henry Milton Wallace

As this history has related in earlier chapters, Henry Milton Wallace (H. M.) created and maintained the International Migratory Bird Preserve on Dunham Lake in the 20's and 30's. But that was only one of his many interests and accomplishments.

After H.H. graduated from University of Michigan Law School in 1897, he and some members of the law faculty formed a corporation to stake a claim on a gold mine in Alaska. According to his nephew, H.M. went to San Francisco and British Columbia and then to Nome, Alaska where he spent a number of months. When he arrived in Nome, his boat was kept offshore by a storm. Being anxious to get ashore and stake a claim before everyone else did, he hired one of the Eskimos who were paddling near the ship to take him ashore by kayak. Near shore, the Eskimo timed the waves and said, "Jump out and run!" H. M. did, but a wave came along and caught the kayak and the Eskimo was never seen again.

H.M. got supplies and staked a claim for his corporation and set up mining work. Two years later he and his partners sold it. Later it became one of the richest claims in Alaska. Upon his return to Michigan in 1901, he practiced law from Grand Rapids to Detroit, specializing in corporate law. He was a genius at thinking up new ways of doing things. He formed and headed many gas and oil corporations. One of them, the Waxahchie Gas Co., still exists in Texas. When his mother died in 1907, he moved to Detroit where he practiced law at the Union Trust Building and lived in the Book Towers Building and the Plaza Hotel.

He was National Committee Chairman in Michigan for the Republican Progressive Party (the Hull Moose party) during Theodore Roosevelt's campaign in 1912. But when T.R. lost to Wilson and withdrew from the party to form the Progressive Party, H.M. become disgusted with him and worked very hard to get Wilson elected in 1916. It was during his second term that Wilson restocked our lake with fish in appreciation of H.M.'s help. H.M. retired from law in Detroit in 1929, moved to Ann Arbor and lived in the Michigan Union. There he worked very hard to develop a memorial garden called Arborcrest, which exists today. It is located on Glacier Way between Huron Parkway and the V.A. hospital in Ann Arbor.

Dedicated in 1930, his memorial garden was an exceptionally lovely one, developed with forethought and intelligence. He chose land high and rolling with a substrata of sand and gravel. Rare trees, shrubs and flowers were planted by some of the same machinery and workers used here at our lake. It was one of the few cemeteries in the nation legally set up with perpetual care before it was required by law. H.W. was an officer and director of Arborcrest. Over the years, over 100 of the 160 acres were purchased by the University of Michigan and became North Campus. Many of the trees H.M. had planted for Arborcrest are now enjoyed by the North Campus residents.

Fortunately for us, Henry Milton Wallace (H. M.) grew up on his family's Dunham Road farm with a love of learning and a love of birds. It was his love of learning that enabled him to become a lawyer and to afford to buy the land around his childhood home. It was his love of birds that led him to his friendship with Jack Miner and to the idea of creating the bird and wildlife preserve from the land that he had begun to accumulate. In the 20's and 30's, while the land around other area lakes was being

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divided into little lots with cottages, Dunham Lake's shoreline was planted with beautiful trees and developed as the International Migratory Bird Preserve (I.M.B.P.). Dunham Lake's northwoods shoreline is H.M.'s living legacy.

That legacy was preserved by Murray Van Waggoner who, with others, was to buy the I.M.B.P. after H.M.'s Death. Those two personalities in Dunham Lake's unique history had interesting political paths that crossed in 1933.

In that year, H.M. Wallace was appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, then the Democratic president, to succeed Van Waggoner as a member of the Michigan Advisory Committee on Federal Public Works Administration. The PWA was created by Roosevelt during those Depression years to create jobs funding worthy projects to employ people. F.D.R. and H.M. were friends, and H.M. had helped bring state leaders into Roosevelt's camp during his presidential campaign the year before. Van Waggoner, then state highway commissioner, resigned from the Advisory Committee due to criticism from Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior and PWA administrator. Ickes felt Van Waggoner was making decisions too slowly, and so he suggested H.M., an old friend, as his replacement. H.M.'s office was in Detroit's Fisher Building. Over a two year period the committee investigated many different PWA project proposals. Some ideas were rejected, some approved and sent on to Washington for consideration. One of the big plans that the committee rejected certainly affected Detroit's future: the building of a subway in Detroit. They did approve drilling of many oil and gas wells in central Michigan. H.M. also had a principle part in the building of the Treasure Island causeway which connects St. Petersburg, Florida to Treasure Island, just offshore. William H. Hill, who owned Treasure Island, was a patent medicine king, his fortune made from Hill's Cascara Bromo Quinine. H.M. and Hill had been friends for years. Hill bought H.M. the only car he ever owned. H. M. became trustee of Hill's estate.

From 1936, Henry Wallace spent his winters in St. Petersburg and practiced law there, living in the Mayflower Apartments, which were owned by the Hill estate. In 1937 H.M. turned Treasure Island into a city, even though there were only four people living on it, and he became its first mayor. To increase the value of that real estate, H. M. asked President Franklin D. Roosevelt to send investigators to examine the site for the building of a causeway. Harold Ickes encouraged the investigators to approve the causeway, which was opened to traffic in 1939. On December 28, 1949, at the age of 77, Henry Milton Wallace died in St. Petersburg and was buried at Oak Grove Cemetery in Milford.

I know you have been waiting with baited breath, sitting on pins and needles, losing sleep from the excitement of it all these many months for the chapters on "The ESTABLISHMENT of DUNHAM LAKE ESTATES." Your wait is almost at an end. In our next issue we hope to continue Carolyn Richards history with further discussion of Murray Pat Van Wagoner, the development of our community, and more. Quite an adventure.
