

# Lake Reflections

## *The Story of Deep Creek Lake – Part III*

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Matthew “Matt” Storey, Sr. established one of Deep Creek Lake’s first restaurants in 1935. Originally from Brownsville, Pennsylvania, he started the business after purchasing 14 acres of property near McHenry along Route 219. The building was a small, one story structure with “Lunch” painted on a front window. According to Garrett County resident, Sam Storey, his father decided on pursuing the restaurant business because, “family members kept coming over from Brownsville and he got tired of feeding them for free.” Sam worked at the restaurant from age seven, waiting on tables. Six siblings also helped at various times. Sandwiches and beer were staple items with local customers. Sam Storey recalled, “Beer cost 15 cents a bottle, two for 25 cents, or seven for \$1.00 to go. Sunday’s menu was special because it featured a half chicken, two vegetables and a drink, for 49 cents. Pie was ten cents extra.” Residents provided Storey’s with a customer base, and “any tourists were a plus for our business.”

Restaurant work required daily and weekly preparation. Mr. Storey stated, “It was nothing for us to dress 50 chickens on Saturday. We also made our own ice cream. My job was to turn the crank until it was done. When it was ready, we sold it for five cents a dip.” The busiest time was Friday because it was typically pay day. Local people tended to congregate there for food and relaxation. “The bar business was steady, even during the winter. Oakland people even came over on a regular basis. We personally knew most of our customers.”

Storey’s Tavern’s appearance didn’t change much over the years. “We added restrooms because when we first opened, it had outside toilets,” recalled Mr. Storey. Following Matt Storey’s death, Bob Storey operated the business for approximately 20 years until it was sold in 1982, thus bringing an end to one of Deep Creek Lake’s oldest establishments.

The Harvey name has been associated with Deep Creek Lake since the early 1920’s when Earl K. Harvey purchased farmland from Charlie O’Brien, in the North Glade area of Deep Creek. The family raised a variety of crops including potatoes, corn, and peas that were canned at Mt. Lake Park. Raising chickens, sheep, hogs, and cattle were also priorities on the farm. Fannie Mae (Harvey) Kolb, one of 11 siblings, remembered, “We always had a big garden, and people would often stop to buy vegetables and whatever else we had.” While not a formal store, summer residents from the peninsula would be interested in making conversation and purchasing fresh food.

Creation of Deep Creek Lake took approximately 25 acres of Harvey farmland. Pennsylvania Electric Power Company later offered to sell unused land, and Mr. Harvey purchased 44 acres, thus adding to his farm after the lake was filled. Earl Harvey worked the farm until his death in 1975 when two sons, who both lived on the property, continued to operate it. In recent years the Harvey farmland was purchased by Real Estate developers, while the farmhouse sold at a later date and became a bed and breakfast establishment. If one looks at the new structures on the North Glade property, they can only imagine the rolling potato fields that once were the Harvey farm.

Harvey’s neighbor in the North Glade area was Mae (Brobst) Kahl whose family also farmed prior to the development of the dam. Mrs. Kahl recalls her father, Cormany Garfield Brobst, bought the farm in the early 1900’s. He raised dairy cattle, harvested crops and butchered hogs, selling them at Kempton and Kitzmiller, nearby coal mining towns. A specialty enjoyed in those towns was hog lungs, a meal not prepared at the Brobst home. In addition to meat, the family would sell “whatever we could spare. Sometimes it was turkeys; sometimes it was vegetables.”

Mrs. Kahl also recalls the Methodist Church where many people would arrive by walking or horse and buggy transportation. The church is no longer standing. Another memory is the only local store, known as Littman's Grocery. The business operated under the direction of George Littman in the early 1900's and was later taken over by Mrs. Kahl's Aunt and Uncle West. "Uncle Arthur had a store when I was really young. He was in partnership with a friend, Harry Oss."

The Kahl family enjoyed frequent visits from Mrs. Corliss, whose husband was chief engineer on the Deep Creek Lake project. "She used to come over almost everyday with her son. We often wonder what happened to him."

Like many other farms, the Brobst property became part of the hydroelectric dam project. As events unfolded, the Brobst house was razed but not covered with rising waters. The foundation remained and development has since occurred in the surrounding area. Interestingly, two neighbors moved with the Brobsts to the Oak Hill section of Accident, Maryland, thus keeping the sense of community alive.

Fred Thayer's earliest memories of Deep Creek Lake can be traced to 1938 when his father rented a small cottage, south of the Glendale Bridge, along Glendale Road. Thayer's rented cottage, and several others, had been relocated from the coal mining town of Vindex, a present day ghost town near Kitzmiller, Maryland. Cottages were virtually the only camping option offered to vacationers at that time since motels and campgrounds for tents were not yet available. Summer cottages remained primitive as they lacked heat and other amenities. One vivid memory of those camping days was the appearance of motorboats. "Motorboats were so scarce that if we heard one, everybody would come out to see. It was an event," recalled Mr. Thayer. The first motorboat the Thayer family witnessed was a white model, owned by Dr. McComas, who cleverly dubbed his craft, "Samoc." "There was only an occasional pleasure



*Matt Storey, Sr.'s restaurant, one of Deep Creek's first. This photo was taken in the early 50's.*

boater but a lot of fisherman that used the lake for recreation. No one ever heard of water skiing back in those days." According to Mr. Thayer, there would be an occasional swimming meet or boat-racing contest, but such events tended to be sporadic.

Another pleasant memory of Deep Creek Lake held by Fred Thayer was summer camp sponsored by Boy Scouts of America. Their first camp was located on the present day site of Silver Tree Inn, along Glendale Road. When that facility closed in the late 1930's or early 1940's, arrangements for a new camp were secured at Hoophole Run Cove section of Deep Creek. "There was a huge tin roof lean-to that slept as many as 30 boys. It had a cook shack and mess shack for meals. Oakland/Mt. Lake Lions sponsored it, but the property was actually owned by local businessmen; they allowed use of it for Boy Scouting events. Eventually, the property was sold to developers around 1960."

Fred Thayer has maintained both a historical and legal interest in Deep Creek Lake. Personal recollections have been augmented by legal efforts of his grandfather, Fred A. Thayer Sr., on behalf of companies who created the lake in the early 1920's. Fred Thayer noted the concept of Deep Creek Lake came to fruition in 1923 when two corporations, the Youghioghney Power Company and the Youghioghney Water and Electric Company, decided the establishment of



*Mid-60's Deep Creek Lake — Halsey's Snack Bar.*

a hydroelectric power plant would make sense in the Garrett County location. Initially there were plans for a dam and several separate impoundments on Youghiogheny River, in the vicinity of Swallow Falls. Eastern Land Corporation, a Delaware chartered company set up for the purpose of engaging in real estate operations, began the acquisition of property for the various impoundments, and according to Mr. Thayer, “My grandfather, Fred A. Thayer Sr., locally began acquisition of all the ground that became Deep Creek Lake and perimeter. The first deed was to Youghiogheny Hydro-Electric Corporation, which was a consolidation of the two earlier corporations, in 1923. There were several deeds, but the principle conveyance was in October 1925. My grandfather accepted his pay in acreage, which is now Willow O’ the Wisp. He was able to sell it to Dr. Thurl Bullard, who had one of the early recreational areas, for \$1,000 an acre. He thought he had really cleaned up.”

Eastern Land Corporation was purchasing some parcels but mostly farmland. Apparently, there was a general willingness to sell property to Eastern Land Corporation, although “some were tougher to deal with than others,

I recall my grandfather saying. But I can tell you, that as far as the Deep Creek Lake impoundment was concerned, every property was acquired voluntarily. There was no instance of eminent domain.” There later came a time when the state of Maryland acquired property for a public park, but that was unrelated to the original construction of Deep Creek Lake.

Not all of the original hydroelectric plans came to be realized, while new ones surfaced. The first plan to be eliminated called for building additional impoundments near Swallow Falls. New plans to install flashboards on the Deep Creek Dam, which would have raised the level of the lake four vertical feet, were proposed. Flashboards would have put lake water within a minimal distance of being able to empty into the Potomac River watershed as opposed to flowing westward into the Ohio River. Nothing ever came of the plan, but it explains a quirk of Deep Creek Lake. The level of the lake today, at maximum spillway level, is 2,462 feet elevation. Pennsylvania Power Company, commonly referred to as Penelec, owned the land at least as far back as a line established at elevation 2,466, plus 25 lineal feet. That explains the actual difference between spillway

level and the four additional feet from the flashboards that were never added to the dam. Penelec, therefore, owned the water and land as far back as four vertical feet. In some cases, that was a considerable distance.

In February 1942, the Youghiogheny Hydro-Electric Corporation conveyed to Pennsylvania Electric Corporation the property at Deep Creek Lake, with the exception of some excess property, which was retained by Eastern Land Corporation but managed by Pennsylvania Electric. The extra land was conveyed from Eastern Land Corporation to the Smith family who acquired numerous parcels around the lake including Thousand Acres, Blakeslee, Pergin Farm, Marsh Mountain and Stumpy Point.

Economic development by the Smith family and Fred Thayer's own family have brought changes to waterfront property, in particular, and the county's economy in general. When asked to describe the changes that have occurred at Deep Creek since the late 1930's, Fred Thayer summarizes by stating, "There has been an ever increasing tempo of growth."

Another interesting and little known part of Deep Creek Lake history originated in 1948 when Green Glade Airways was born on Lower Green Glade Road, near its entrance to Route 495. The airway began under the sponsorship of Bill Duncan who constructed a runway to accommodate single engine aircraft. A Jeep, emblazoned with "Green Glade Airways," provided service at the facility. Mr. Duncan established the airway after he purchased a cabin on the property following World War II. Local air service served a dual purpose: to provide sightseeing rides over Deep Creek Lake on weekends, and to provide fresh seafood to restaurants during weekdays. The venture ended about 1951.

Bill Duncan died in a plane crash at Ocean City, Maryland, although the exact date is unknown.

Holy Cross House history in Garrett County, featured in the Fall/Winter, 2003-2004 issue of Mountain Discoveries, brought back memories for several members of the Loar family who lived on the property prior to its acquisition by the religious order. Loar's connection to Deep Creek Lake can be traced to Henry and Virginia Maude Loar's purchase of farm property in 1910. Ethel (Loar) Seibert who grew up on the farm recalled, "Grandfather owned a sawmill that he used to cut roof shingles," while her sister, Freeda, remembered the Loar children slept on the floor while her parents rented rooms to boarders employed in the construction of the lake. Rising waters concerned Mrs. Loar, who deemed the lake to be dangerous for her children. The Loar's decided to move from the area in 1924 before the lake filled. Although the house was to remain intact under the power company's plan for lake development, most of the farmland surrounding it would be covered with water, providing the Loar's with a compelling economic reason to vacate the property. Following the Loar family's move, Henry and May Miller rented the house, "scratching out a living," until 1930 when the power company conveyed 36 acres of land to Holy Cross for \$3,000.

Priests and friars occupied the Loar house while work proceeded on their own facilities during the 1930's. It



*An unknown ball player stands at the Green Glade Airway (see front of truck at right).*

continues to be used by priests, including frequent visitor, Father Melody, who enjoys the spectacular vistas offered from the dwelling. Recreational boaters may also appreciate the beauty of Holy Cross House, one of the few undeveloped expanses of shoreline property at Deep Creek Lake.

As Deep Creek Lake continues its ever-increasing tempo of development, many residents enjoy reflecting on the past. Such reflections are important as they connect residents to communities while providing a sense of shared accomplishment.

Mountain Discoveries would like to thank Dorothy Cathell, Martha Wood Kahl, and the respondents for their input in the "Lake Reflections" story.



*View of the "Loar House," at Holy Cross as it appears today. This photo was taken from the Lake, on a calm, quiet Fall morning.*

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