

The Harris Family at Eagle Lake
As Told by Carl Wilson to Caroline Harris

"My grandfather, Isaac Harris, was a contractor in Brooklyn who built roads and subways in New York City. His crew were Italians and fond of him. When he died they wanted a marching band for his funeral but his wife would not allow it. In the late 1880's he drove all around this area in a horse and carriage looking for a place to build a summer house. He decided on 'Harris Point' on what was then Long Pond, then Chilson Pond, then Eagle Lake. He became the first non-native in the area. His house was built in 1891. He was then know as 'Long Pond Harris' since there was also a "Paradox Harris' and a 'Pyramid Harris'. His land was bought from Anson Moore, the father of Alson Moore whom some of us remember. They were good farmers and supplied many people milk, cream, butter and vegetables. His wife was Jenny DeZalia and the story is that he courted her for 14 years until her father told him he should make up his mind or stop coming. Other supplies were brought in the daily stage (which also delivered the mail) from Adkins and Scotts. The Harris Land had been pasture, and all the large trees have grown in since that time. The area which lately had a cabin and dump, belonging now to Bill Giesel, was a cornfeild. And , the 'main' road to Crown Point came in approximately the way we do and went east behind 'Moore's Ledge' to joint the present Crown Point Road before the Corduroy Road was laid across the swamp. It is impossible to find this road now - Carl tried.

Isaac Harris's house was finished in 1981 and his family spent the summers here after that. He had two sons, Woods and Wilson. Woods died here of appendicitis at about age 12. There is a room in the (old) hospital given in his memory. Wilson Park Harris was the father of Carl Wilson Harris, Margel Harris Hinder, and Jean Harris Archbald. The house had three stories and 13 rooms. Two German servants slept on the third floor and a coachman in a room behind the shed off the kitchen. Wilson was born in 1880 and so was 11 years old when the house was built. Isaac left this property to his grandchildren with Wilson to have the use of it. The trust company in New York City managed the estate and sold the (200 acre) dam property for \$200.00. It had been bought for \$100.00 and the bank thought they had done well. But, the buyer immediately made \$800.00 on lumber the first year - this in the early 1900's. There then followed many years of blaming the Harris Estate for the condition of the dam. The Eagle Lake records contain pages of controversy about the state of the dam. They eventually hired a lawyer who ascertained that the Harris Family did not own the land. Finally the State bought the land and it is included in the Wilderness Area of the Adirondack Park.

When Isaac and his wife died no one used the property for some time. Wilson had attended Cornell and while there met Helen Haist from Buffalo who was studying at the Ithaca Conservatory. They were married and lived in Buffalo where Wilson worked on a newspaper. When Carl was 12 in 1916, the family came here again. And in 1918, the year of the influenza epidemic, they stayed until after Christmas. Thereafter they stayed every year until the children were well along in college. Helen Harris had been a concert pianist until she had children, and knew well many muscians and opera singers. Alma Gluck and others used to visit. They would go out on the lake in canoes and rowboats and sing whole operas.

There came to be a number of other families who stayed for the summer and played together: the Lodges, the Rogers(at Bass Rock where the Thompsons now are), the Fischers in the house now owned by the Buechners, but which was then rented by the Moores, the Aldens, the Conklins.

The highest hill behind the Harris house was entirely clear of the present 60 foot trees and Grandmother Harris had a summer house on the very top from which she could see the lake. And there was also the tennis court were Carl and Margel and Jean used to gather most mornings with their friends. Many

days they climbed mountains. Wilson (called Pat) Harris took them to climb Mt. Marcy. They climbed Pharaoh and many times Potter with a large packbasket which they filled with blueberries.

Originally there was a stable for the horses and an adjoining icehouse on the slope next to the presents Archbald house. The ice was cut from the lake during the winter, packed in hay and used all summer. In fact, Carl and his sister remember making ice cream every day in a hand churn. Of course, there was no electricity until the old house was taken down and the Archbald and Harris houses built in 1961 and 1962. The Wilson Harris family had an automobile, of course, in the 1920's. In 1925 they moved their home from buffalo to Waban near Boston since all three children were in school in the area. Carl, during some college summers, worked on state roads such as rte. 22 and lived at the lake. Jean, who was studying physical education at Wellesley, was a counselor at summer camps. Margel stayed here longer since she was studying at Moriah. There she met Frank Hinder from Australia. Frank Hinder at one time rented the house where Ben Hill now lives, and grilled lamb chops outdoors which was a first for the Harris family. Frank and Margel are now both well know artists in Australia. The present Buechner house was rented for some years from Lonson Moore by the Fischers; it was called 'Yo Ho' and the hill beyond it was called 'Yo Ho Hill.' When Carl, Jean and Margel were out on their own, their parents still came for the summer. Harry Seaver, a musician, was also here and played on dual pianos with Mrs. Harris. Jean went to California to teach and returned to Wellesley; Margel went to Australia; Carl was married in 1945 and went to Virginia and Pat Harris also went there to help with the farming during the depression. During the World War II, Carl was sent overseas and Carol went back to Hingham, Mass., to be near her family. While Wilson (Pat) Harris, having been divorced remarried and stayed in Virginia. In 1956 he died in Virginia and Helen Harris two weeks later, in Waban. The next year the Archbald and Harris families visited the old house and eventually decided to build the present houses since it would be to costly to repair the old one, and also it was not winterized. With two houses here now the families have become very close, usually visiting the lake each month all year at the same time. The HARRISES came for long vacations in the summer as well, and after retiring from both professions and moving to Florida, they came here for the entire summer. (Now they have five children and eleven grandchildren who come regularly to visit their grandmother and on their own.* They all love Eagle Lake and are happy here - we hope for many years to come.)

*Carl Wilson Harris died in April, 1987.