

The Town History Corner

by Harry L.D. Weldon, Town Historian

There is a little bit of the Adirondack Mountains right here in our Town of Dryden, for sure! At least it is a place that when walked along the shoreline reminds one of the many lakes and ponds in the great north woods. From a hillside above it—well, not so much, you have to find one of the coves that surrounds itself with pine trees, marshy areas and waterfowl. On a late spring evening, sit there at a picnic table and sheer imagination allows one to hear the blood curdling call of a loon; a water bird so indicative of any northern forest.

History lends itself with a true tale of pre-historic record of Dryden Lake in the Town of Dryden, NY. This lake is what is geologically referred to as a “kettle lake.” It was formed when gigantic blocks of ice, buried in the outwash in front of a glacier, melted and receded.

The last glacier that covered this Town retreated northward; leaving great blocks of stagnant ice which broke off and became buried in the accumulating sediment. This sediment, composed of what is called glacier tillage, insulated the buried ice blocks and as the climate warmed the tillage fell away. The melting waters washed the tillage off, further exposing a concentration of ice to become a water puddle. A huge mud puddle, if you will, that settled out to form a pond or lake. Such is the case with our Dryden Lake.

Scientists tell us that the last glacier to have covered this area to a depth of somewhere between one and half to two miles thick, before the start of the meltdown, happened about 12,000 years ago at approximately 5,200 to 7,800 feet deep; about the twice length of Dryden Lake.

Sometime when your go out to the lake lay back on the grass as close to the water level as possible and look across to the farthest shoreline; doing this ought to give you an idea of what it would be like to be at the bottom of such a pre-historic glacier, looking up to the surface. It gives one quite a sensation.

Dryden Lake, since its discovery by early settlers, has been deepened by the addition of a “spill-over dam” and enlarged in acreage from its earlier size.

There is no record known of any permanent Indian (sic. Native American) settlement any place in Dryden town. There is abundant evidence that the aborigines used it as a hunting ground. Arrowheads of flint are occasionally found along banks of the many streams and particularly on the slopes overlooking Dryden Lake, where an archeological dig was done by the State of New York before a portion of the adjunct lands were made into a housing development.

Many a town resident can attest to finding such stone implements during the spring plowing on the lands over the years before these lands were subdivided for building lots. A photo that I took in the late spring of 2001 shows a probable cove site

used by the Indian canoes before traversing up the hill to a seasonal campsite. This campsite was undoubtedly the largest such site used by the early native inhabitants in this area.

A prize possession of mine is an arrowhead found in a roadside bank off the Virgil Road, another, a fish net-weight. This arrowhead and others like it took its first humble beginning some 325 million years ago, well before our time in the Paleozoic Era of Earth's history!

It is told something like this: "Gradually, bed after bed of sand, mud, lime and salt accumulated and were compressed into rocks reaching heights upwards of 8,000 feet. Then about 200 million years ago, the land heaved and this time drainage flowed south..."

Then, it seems, over 100 million years, the uplifted land was eroded into a plain, which was then disrupted by yet more uplifting. Then about ten million years ago the climates grew colder for some unfound reason. By two million years ago, the formation of a series of Ice Ages evolved—the last ending about 10,000 or so years ago, in scattered pockets, over the earth can be found glaciers of lesser magnitude. Glaciation has been determined to have reached its peak about 21,750 years past in New York State; in geological terms, it was only yesterday!

In other places in the Town can be found a number of glacial hanging valleys, "durmlins" (cigar shaped hills), "eskers" (narrow ridges formed by water flowing under an ice shield), "kames" (long, low steep-sided mounds of sand and glacier stone and gravel) and several mini-"kettle ponds" and "moraines" (ridges of glacier tillage and "dropped" rock and stone debris).

Truly these are historic treasures!