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BATHING AT LONG POND



The top picture was taken by Mr. Blackburn in the 1930s -- the pavillion at Long Pond. The picture to the left is of bathing beauties -- and we know them all. Left to right: Virginia Jones, Virginia Thomas, Essie Frye Gibson, Caroline Parrish, Emily Tillman, and Lonita Foster, seated. This snapshot was taken on February 26, 1926. A warm day, we hope. The formal opening of Twin Lakes was only a couple of weeks away. Great plans were in the making. Long Pond now boasts a Yacht Club with boats constantly sailing by and people skiing on the back of faster boats, and many people live year round in homes bordering these lakes. "Twin Lakes" were always two magic words to us kids for we spent many a day swimming, fishing, picking blackberries, and you name it -- even watching bathing beauties.

THE BEGINNING OF TWIN LAKES AS A RESORT

by

Albert Pendleton

For decades before 1926, Twin Lakes and Long Pond had been favorite swimming and fishing places of South Georgia. Pine Point, across from the Pavillion, had been used for swimming as far back as 1900. On March 3, 1926, Burton Lee Mank, developer and owner, opened the Twin Lakes resort, a five million dollar resort as a new "master suburb." Mank had built streets, wooden bridges, cleared out growth and erected cement entrances. March 3rd was to be a big holiday and was forever after to be known as "Prosperity Day."

Before March 3, 1926:

A large gang of workmen have been building bridges, great concrete entrances, laying of roads, putting up signs, and doing other development work. The bathhouse at Long Pond is undergoing reconstruction entirely. The house is being made two or three times as long as it formerly was and a large pavillion is being erected to extend from what was formerly the roof of the building back toward the hillside. A large sand pit is being dug out near here for children to play in. And the little folks can go from there out into the shallow water where they can have a good time without being in danger of drowning or being run over by older swimmers.

There is now in existence a map of this development. The names of the streets now, which appeared on street signs in the late 1940s or 50s, are pretty much the same as on the 1926 map. The lots in the 1926 opening which were for sale were around Twin Lakes, not Long Pond.

On opening day, March 3, 1926, there was a continuous round of orchestras, one of which was Elsa Horn's. (We interviewed her several years ago for a story in the Newsletter.) There was dancing by the pupils of Marie Greene Youmans. Sponsored by the Daughters of the Confederacy, Mrs. Youman's pupils danced Spanish and Italian dances "to conform to the names of the lakes."

The names: the first twin lake is called Ponce de Leon, the second, Lake Balboa, and Long Pond is really called Lake Sevilla. Some street names are: Riviera Prado, Clydetta Drive, Coral Gables Circle, Danieli Drive and others.

During the big opening of our now famous Twin Lakes, people came from all over South Georgia, North Florida and even from Jacksonville. This must have pleased Mr. Mank for the sports representative of The Times reported that there was a steady stream of automobiles all day, and at all times there was a steady count of approximately 2,000 persons in attendance. A free barbecue was held, so Mank really went to a great deal of expense.

Before the opening day, Mr. Mank had sold 150 lots. There was no sale of lots on that first day, but

...except the offering to the public the lot which was given by Mr. Mank to the woman's club building committee and this was bid in by Mr. A. J. Strickland.

...Mr. Mank, Mr. Hurst, Mr. Walker and others of the Twin Lakes development force, proved splendid hosts and added to the already favorable opinion held by the Valdosta people.

Everyone enjoyed the "complete transformation" of Twin Lakes, Georgia.

In only two weeks from the opening, Mr. Mank opened the Twin Lakes Country Club with

excellent meals and an orchestra for dancing, from 6:00 to 10:30 every night but Sunday, all for \$1.00 per person. Sometimes there was late dancing and Elsa Horn and her orchestra were again present many of these times. A band concert was held during the opening.

Twin Lakes soon became very popular on Sundays. There were concerts and more beautification began to take place. About 2,000 trees were marked for removal. A hotel was built the next year. I have seen a certificate of one share of stock in the Twin Lakes Hotel Company, the share valued at \$100.00.

Work was underway to build a canal between the second twin, Balbea and Lake Sevilla, Long Pond. This was completed and there was boating from one lake to the other. I remember in the late 1930s when we would spend summers at Twin Lakes, the canals were still there, but the one between Long Pond and the second twin lake was covered up and no longer used. (more next summer)

SOME HAPPENINGS OF 1927

In March 1927, "Beasts Soothed by Sweet Music," means that the Lions Club had a musical program by Elsa Horn and Emma Schoembs, and, "Lion Whitfield Ford gave a most interesting report of a visit he had made to St. Louis, attending the annual convention of the agents of the Missouri Life Insurance Company. He modestly divulged the fact that all of his expenses had been paid by the Company as a mark of appreciation for the volume of business he had written."

And at the Rotary Club meeting, Mr. A. G. Cleveland had as his program, two school boys, Gary Harris and Wilmer Williams, who "delivered the prize-winning speeches which they had used in school." The subject was "Personal Magnetism and both speakers showed they had put much into the preparation. They were clean-cut and logical and the speeches sounded like the reasoning of much older and more trained orators."

The Converse apartments opened June 1, 1927, "most complete apartment house, all modern conveniences, hot and cold water, gas ranges..." And on the same day, it was reported that Twin Lakes had a big crowd playing in the water.

In April the Valdosta Double Quartette sang at a reception in Tampa, a meeting of the Rotarians, and in May they traveled to St. Augustine to help out with a musical program.

In closing, back to 1926, for a moment...a beautification program was begun with a contest and much news of civic pride, gardening, how to plant, etc. These were the first plans to make our city well known. The Chamber of Commerce was going to have more money and a campaign was started to make Valdosta known to homeseekers, industries and visitors. A need was seen for a Junior Chamber of Commerce that year and one was started with much enthusiasm. Mr. Walter Dent Peeples was the Mayor of Valdosta at this time.

Albert S. Pendleton, Jr., Editor

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1981-1982

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