ONTARIO BEACH PARK! GOING! GOING!! GONE!!!

—Photos by Stone, Herald Photographer.

No. 1—Amusement buildings on east side of Ontario Beach Park, looking toward the lake from Beach Avenue.

No. 2—Entrance to "The Breeze," also known as Scenic Railway, at northeast corner of park. This is one of the most extensive concessions on the premises, the trestle-work and buildings extending all the way from the lake front to Beach Avenue.

No. 3—"Over the Top," an ever-popular attraction at the east side of the park, originally known as "The House That Jack Built," and subsequently as "The Foolish House," and "Trail of the Lonesome Pine."

No. 4—Exterior of Ontario Beach Park on south side, looking east toward river and ferry landing in Beach Avenue, showing Beach Avenue entrance to park, and one of the lofty steel towers on which are strung high-tension power cables which cross the river between Charlotte and Summerville.

No. 5—Hotel Ontario, looking toward the west.

No. 6—Concession buildings and merry-go-round entrance on west side of Midway at eastern end of park, looking toward Beach Avenue.

No. 7—Amusement places on west side of park, showing "The Old Mill," also known as "Venetian Canal."

No. 8—"Hilarity Hall," the grand-dad of all the attractions at Ontario Beach Park. This building was originally the Ontario Beach Park Auditorium and has housed some of the best-remembered and most spectacular features of successive seasons.

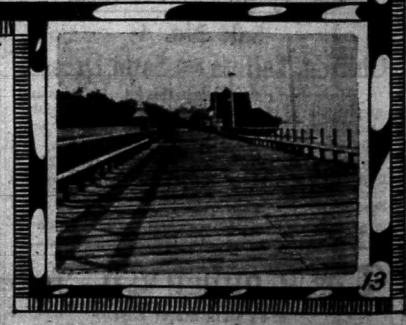
No. 9—"German Village," with its Teutonic name and coat of arms long since relegated to the limbo of expurgated things. In anti-bellum days the "village," which adjoins the big grotto shed of the Scenic Railway on the river front, at the extreme southeastern corner of the park, near Beach Avenue and the ferry slip, was the favorite drinking and eating resort of the park. It was closely associated with lager beer and "hot dogs."

No. 10—Hotel Ontario at night, its cornices outlined by thousands of incandescent lights.

No. 11—Japanese Village and native bridge just inside the Broadway entrance to the park.

No. 12—Night illumination of Broadway entrance to Ontario Beach Park as it looked when park was in its prime.

No. 13—The old boardwalk that extended along the lake front the entire length of the north side of the park in the days when the New York Central Railroad tracks ran into the park.



"LOT No. 21 in Township No. 2, Short Range, in the Town of Greece."

That is the prosaic manner in which a musty, age-yellowed deed in the office of the County Clerk describes a certain piece of property which the City of Rochester has condemned and, in all probability, will soon acquire.

It comprises approximately fourteen acres of sandy, unfertile land in the Twenty-third Ward, where the quiet waters of the Genesee slide out into Lake Ontario, covered for the most part with a maze of rambling, frame structures, gaunt and deserted, which bear mute witness of a metamorphosis that has already begun.

Ontario Beach Park has sung its swan song.

Last September its gates were locked, never to be opened again to throngs of happy pleasure seekers. Its myriad lights have cast their picturesque nocturnal reflection in nearby waters for the last time. Children have found their fairyland of never-ending delight in its atmosphere of mystery and romance that will soon be torn asunder amid the sounds of creaking, crashing timbers. The spell is broken.

Many Sincere Mourners.

Ontario Beach Park—with its crowds, its noises, its enchanting glamour, its excitement and thrills—is a charming memory, never to be forgotten. Many a heart will sincerely mourn its passing.

Soon a strip of municipal bathing beach will be all that marks the spot where countless thousands, young and old, have whiled away some of the happiest hours of their lives, amid a galaxy of amusement and recreation devices that for years formed a summertime mecca for picnic and outing parties from near and far. Music and laughter and gayety and life will still be there, but the old familiar scenes—the blare of the ballyho and the old picnic tables and benches rubbed smooth and glossy by more than one generation—will have passed into oblivion.

The history of Ontario Beach Park is interesting in the extreme. How it grew from a swamp at the mouth of the Genesee River, more than seven miles north of Rochester, to be one of the largest and most famous pleasure and amusement resorts in New York State is well worth recounting.

Part of Nobleman's Estate.

The land on which Ontario Beach is situated originally was part of the estate of one, Sir John Lowther Johnstone, said to have been an English nobleman who owned considerable property in and around Charlotte before the Civil War. In 1868 Martin McEntire of Charlotte acquired title to approximately 25 acres of land bordering on the lake and river basin, most of it swampy and unfit for either cultivation or building purposes. The tract was an ideal location for a summer resort, however, and Mr. McEntire made the most of it.

In those days the lower river was navigable from the lake to the lower falls, and numerous pleasure craft plied its waters. Mr. McEntire erected a little pavilion at the extreme eastern edge of what is now Ontario Beach Park, overlooking both river and lake, and soon had established a more than local reputation for his fish dinners. People came from miles around, especially on Sunday afternoons, descended the steep river cliff by means of an elevator at the old Glen House, below Driving Park Avenue Bridge, and there boarded a boat for Charlotte and one of "Mart" McEntire's fish dinners.

In 1872 Captain John Byrne, who was later known as John Burns, acquired title to the property, and with Charles C. Craig, father of William H. Craig, present superintendent of the Monroe County Penitentiary, erected the Spencer House on the site of McEntire's pavilion. There are many persons living to-day who will recall with infinite pleasure the old Spencer House, with its wide verandas overhung by mammoth willow trees, and flanked by a delightful picnic grove. It was a mammoth frame structure of the mansion type, much larger than the present Hotel Ontario, and with accommodations for more than 100 guests. It was a favorite summering place for many years for wealthy New Yorkers, and its popularity was by no means confined to New York State. The structure was burned to the ground by an incendiary fire some years later.

New York Central Gets Title.

Patrick Manrow of Greece who, like Captain Byrne, had acquired considerable wealth in the oil fields of Pennsylvania, bought out the Captain and Mr. Craig in 1876, and four years later the property passed into the hands of Patrick Cullen, who held title but a short time owing to a foreclosure of a mortgage by Manrow who, in 1881, sold the entire tract to the New York Central Railroad, which corporation holds the title at the present day.

Ontario Beach Park, as an amusement place, had its beginning in 1882, when the New York Central leased the land to Henry H. Craig, a brother of Charles C. Craig, and Eli M. Upton, the lease being given for fifty years, to terminate October 1, 1932. One year later Craig and Upton assigned the lease to a stock company in which they were interested. It was headed by Walter B. Duffy and was known as The Lake Ontario Beach Improvement Company, of Charlotte.

This company immediately began the erection of amusement devices and soon had in operation an Ontario Beach Park somewhat similar to that of the last few years, but on a much smaller scale. The Hotel Ontario, still standing as it was originally built, was one of the first buildings in the park to be erected by the lessees. Next came the Ontario Beach Auditorium, which burned, was rebuilt and underwent numerous transformations under succeeding managements. The second auditorium is still standing and known as "Hilarity Hall." A large music shell was erected to the west of the auditorium, facing the lake. This same structure was later moved to the plaza in front of the hotel, and faced in the opposite direction, as it stands to-day.

Other smaller structures, mostly in the nature of booths for refreshments and games of one kind and another, were put up around the hotel and auditorium, and numerous small hotels, cottages and drinking pavilions soon sprung up. There still remained a large space back from the beach, given over to a picnic grove and recreational ground for young and old.

The Lake Ontario Beach Improvement Company sub-let most of the concessions, and confined its active control to the hotel and auditorium. Later the auditorium, which in these days was one of the most popular places in the park, with its free vaudeville shows and tables for eating and drinking, along with a pony track, Ferris wheel and other devices was operated by William H. Craig. One of the early managers of the Hotel Ontario and the park was George W. Sweeney, later manager of the Hotel Rochester and now manager of the Hotel Commodore in New York City. His assistant for one or two seasons was Mark Luscher, who is now associated with Charles Dillingham in the management of the New York Hippodrome. Mr. Luscher booked the park's attractions. This position was also held by James E. Furlong for a time. Under Mr. Furlong's regime the famous Broadway Opera Company was brought to Ontario Beach Park. William B. MacCallum, former manager of Fay's Theater, managed the park at one time.

In 1906, when Ontario Beach Park was approaching the peak of its glory, a mortgage on the property was foreclosed and it was sold on the Court House steps for $61,500 to Charles H. Palmer. The same year the lease was assigned to the Ontario Beach Hotel and Amusement Company, a

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