

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

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Rochester corporation, which is the present holder of the lease. Two years later a part of the park property south of Beach Avenue, on which some shows and amusement devices outside the park proper had been operated with but small degree of success, was taken over by the New York Central Railroad for terminal purposes, and a high board fence was erected around it. Previously the New York Central tracks of the Charlotte Branch had run into the park proper through one gate and out another, forming a loop that extended out to the old boardwalk that skirted the beach. In this manner picnic trains were brought directly into the park to discharge their passengers. This practice was discontinued in 1907, and a terminal was erected south of Beach Avenue, with a gate and turnstiles through which Ontario Beach Park sojourners from distant points had to pass.

Park Rebuilt in 1907.

With the advent of the Ontario Beach Hotel and Amusement Company in 1906, plans were immediately got under way for the rebuilding of Ontario Beach Park. The old auditorium, a helter-skelter, merry-go-round and divers other entertainment features were becoming passe. They were not large enough nor spectacular enough to suit the new lessees and a rapidly increasing patronage. Shooting galleries, bowling alleys, pony tracks and paddle wheels were much too tame. People were demanding more excitement, greater variety and, above all, novelty.

In March, 1907, the work of rebuilding the park was begun, and on Decoration Day, March 30, 1907, greater Ontario Beach Park was thrown open to the public, although all of the amusement devices were not completed until the following July. The cost of the reconstruction was approximately \$500,000. Thomas Smyth of Rochester was manager of the park in 1906-07, and in the second year of his management James Clancy had charge of the amusements. John Caswell of Cleveland was manager in 1908.

Then came the crowning glory of Ontario Beach Park as the present generation has known it. The place reached the zenith of its fame from 1909 to 1912, during which years Benjamin Peer of Rochester was its manager. During this period, and subsequently, Ernest R. Chase was manager of Hotel Ontario, and Lieutenant Raymond E. Staines was excursion manager under Mr. Peer. Mr. Peer was succeeded in 1913 by Herbert Rogers of Cleveland, and in 1914 and 1915, Elmer Walters, former manager of the old National Theater in Main Street West, now Fay's, was manager of the park. From 1916 until the park was closed last September Elmer Vaughan, who had served as excursion manager under Mr. Rogers and Mr. Walters, managed the park.

Excursions from Near and Far.

For many years following its rebuilding in 1907, Ontario Beach Park was the destination of virtually every picnic party of any size in Western and Central New York, and many excursions came down by way of the Roma, Watertown and Ogdensburg Railroad from far distant points in the northern part of the state. There were excursions on all railroads to Ontario Beach Park. Every depot in every hamlet in the state, and even in other states, was placarded throughout the summer season with notices of special low-rate excursions to Ontario Beach. Excursion trains arrived every day of the week from somewhere or other, and over the week-ends the railroad tracks to the Charlotte terminal were congested with them.

Whole towns declared civic holidays and all the townsfolk flocked to Ontario Beach Park. There was a "Batavia Day" once a year, when every factory and store in the Genesee County town was closed up tight while employees, and everyone who could, journeyed to Ontario Beach Park for their annual outing. On such occasions two and three and sometimes even four, excursion trains would be run from a single town, generally one from each of the Central

lines, to Ontario Beach Park. Then there was the annual excursion from there was the annual excursion from Dubois, Pa., over the B. R. & P. Railroad. "O'Sullivan Day" was another road. On that day people from the northern part of the state came flocking in over the R. W. & O. Railroad. The day took its name from that of an excursion agent employed by the New York Central Railroad.

There were the annual Larkin Days, when Larkin soap clubs from near and far congregated at Ontario Beach; the annual Children's Day and Quinquennial's Day outings, the Pioneer Picnic, and church, school, fraternity, club, store and factory outings without number. Every day came to be a day of teeming humanity at Ontario Beach Park. There was much rivalry and bidding for "special" days and exclusive use of the picnic grove and tables on such days.

Do You Remember When—?

A bird's-eye glimpse of Ontario Beach Park in its prime is not amiss. Who does not remember the bands of Igorrotes, tribes of Eskimos and hordes of performing elephants that comprised a few of the wonders to be viewed for the small sum of a nickel or a dime? The spectacular outdoor features on an open-air stage, including what probably was the most striking series of chance-taking feats ever shown in the United States? There was Blondin, the famous Frenchman who walked above Niagara Falls on a tight wire, and James E. Hardy, the magnificent dare-devil who had not only crossed Niagara Falls, but had gone Blondin two better, and successfully negotiated Montmorency Falls and the gorge of the lower Genesee River. Then there was Harry Six, the world's champion high diver, who is still alive, though totally blind; and Oscar V. Babcock, the famous death-trap loop performer. Those and many other celebrities, too numerous to mention, were among the big drawing cards at Ontario Beach Park. George Thornton, the midget who served as park policeman for many seasons to the utmost delight of the kiddies, should not be forgotten.

Among the most notable permanent amusement places within the park may be mentioned the Virginia Reel, considered by some to be a genuinely hair-raising venture, and which burned to the ground in 1916; the Venetian Canals with their endless waterways, traversing dark channels that were broken here and there by lighted spaces where weird and beautiful scenes confronted the gondola passengers; the never-to-be-forgotten Scenic Railway that took one's breath away with one or two mighty dives that seemed through space and then shot one into total darkness where frightful dragons spouted flame and Rip Van Winkle woke from his long sleep in a beautiful tableau scene; the Slide-the-Bumps, Helter-Skelter, The Old Mill, Love's Voyage, The Waves, Night and Morning, where one got the creeps and a thrill every six feet; The Frolic, The Breezer, Motorhome, The Whirl of Death, Circle Swing, Pharaoh's Daughter, The Whip, Switch-back or roller-coaster, The House That Jack Built with its Chinese puzzle maze of winding passages, swinging bridges and trap doors.

Some Kaleidoscopic Changes.

Those were not all, nor even half of the sights to be seen, the rides, and the experiences strange and unique offered at Ontario Beach Park. Every season found something new in the park. Names of the different attractions were changed, and the attractions themselves were made new from year to year. The House That Jack Built was the Foolish House the following season, and later on it became Over-the-Top, and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.

Hilarity Hall had so many different names and housed so many different amusements that it would be difficult to enumerate them. As a casino, housing a dance hall, vaudeville stage and drinking resort, following the name Auditorium, which was taken from the first Ontario Park Auditorium, which burned prior to 1906, it was most popular. It was successively used as a show place for Bostock's Trained Wild Animal Arena, which nearly caused a panic during its engagement when fire broke out in another part of the park and the beasts threatened to stampede; The Johnstown Flood, a mammoth spectacle that was one of the features of the Pan-American Exposition; an Art Museum, a Baby Incubator, the

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ter proving one of the most novel attractions ever offered at the park; "Out of the North," an electrical novelty based on Lieutenant Kinslingbury's trip to the frozen North with the Greeley Expedition; "Jumble-Joo," with its fantastic grotto; and lastly, "Hilarity Hall," which was copied in other amusement parks all over the country in 1911.

Perhaps the greatest spectacle of all was "Fighting the Flames," a pretentious show in itself which occupied considerable space at the west end of the park in 1907 and in which more than 250 persons, two street cars, three pieces of fire apparatus, and many other cumbersome properties participated. It was the work of Irma and Bolossy Kiralfy, two famous Englishmen who staged such productions as "The Black Crook," and later were known the world over for their great outdoor spectacles.

Many Visitors of Note.

Ontario Beach Park had many distinguished visitors in its day. Hardly a man or woman of note visited Rochester or any of the nearby cities and towns but he or she was taken to the famous amusement place on the shore of Lake Ontario. Often these notables made public appearances and speeches at Ontario Beach Park. On their way to the World's Fair at Chicago the replicas of the three ships in which Columbus sailed to America made a stop at Ontario Beach Park and were a center of attraction for people for miles about.

Mammoth pyrotechnical displays were among the outstanding attractions of the park until a quite recent date. Among the most pretentious and artistic of these was one called "The Battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac," a big fireworks spectacle staged on the lake, which ended with the blowing up of the Merrimac. Big displays of fireworks, put on by the Pain Fireworks Company of Brooklyn, were regular features on two or three nights every week and on holidays and other special occasions. For a time "Japan Day" was a big hit each summer. On that day the park would be dressed in Japanese garb and thousands of Japanese lanterns formed night illumination. A Japanese Village and tea garden was one of the big, permanent attractions year after year. Troupes of Japanese acrobats and other performers were engaged for "Japan Day," and on one such occasion a representative of the Japanese Government was in attendance.

First Aeronautical Flights.

Some of the country's most famous bands and bandmasters have appeared in concert at Ontario Beach Park, among them being the world-famous Gilmore's Band. With the advent of automobiles in great numbers, the park was forced to turn to more energetic devices each year to hold its patronage. Great carnivals and symphonies were held. The first hydro-airplane to make its appearance in this vicinity ascended from Ontario Beach Park in 1911, piloted by Beckwith Havens. Later John J. Frisbie and his aeroplane, "The Rochester," flew there also. Mr. Frisbie was killed in Kansas a year or two afterward. Al Lucky was another of the first fliers to appear at Ontario Beach Park. In 1909 Rochester got its first glimpse of a dirigible in the air when Captain Jack Dallas went up in his

"Strobel Airship" at Ontario Beach Park.

Before moving pictures had attained to any degree of perfection Ontario Beach Park had a Penny Arcade, one of the first of its kind anywhere in the United States, in which machines with stereopticon attachments showed a form of motion picture for the small sum of one cent. The German Village and the Park Hotel, the latter managed by James Reardon for many years, were favorite resorts inside the park fifteen years ago. The Park Hotel was famous for its fish dinners and the singing of Fred Werner. The German Village was one of the most elaborate restaurants ever conducted at the park. Many will remember the old Fish Pond and other similar chance-taking booths, where one might or might not win anything from a pin cushion to an eight-day clock for a small expenditure. These and the shooting galleries were the forerunners of the paddle wheels of a later period. Palmists were always plentiful at the park.

One of Finest Beaches in Country.

Ontario Beach Park had, and still has, one of the finest inland bathing beaches in the country. The sand runs far out into the lake in long, level stretches and shallow water. The water toboggan or chute-the-chutes, as it was sometimes called, was an ever-popular adjunct of the bathing facilities provided inside-the-park.

At one time roller skating became exceedingly popular and a large roller rink, which was later operated as a dance hall, was erected at Ontario Beach Park.

In its prime, Ontario Beach Park, from a standpoint of landscape gardening, was a place of rare beauty. There were wide expanses of lawn in front of the hotel and midway attractions, dotted with magnificent and elaborately designed flower beds, artistic fountains, and ornate lamp posts, all set off by a profusion of shrubbery and well-kept trees. The old board walk, which paralleled the lake shore and which later gave way to a sand promenade canopied with arches of electric lights, was a joy to all who knew it. After it disappeared a series of small terraces were built out into the lake, surrounded by rustic fences and each set off by a huge "lovers" chair, facing lakeward, whose back was a big red heart. The tradition was that all young couples who sat in these chairs of a summer's evening and "wished on the stars" would realize their fondest desires.

Ontario Beach Park was a land unto itself—a veritable wonderland of ever-changing colors and delights. But, like every other form of amusement, it has had its day and is gone. It was a house built on the sand, and the winds of progress came and blew it away.

PAROLEE PRISONER THAT HE MAY GIVE HIS BLOOD

Philadelphia, April 10.—Judge Miller at Norristown has paroled James Coppola, serving a sentence for burglary, that he might give his blood to save his wife's life. Mrs. Coppola is in the Germantown Hospital in a serious condition.

In releasing him from jail the judge took occasion to remark that the wife