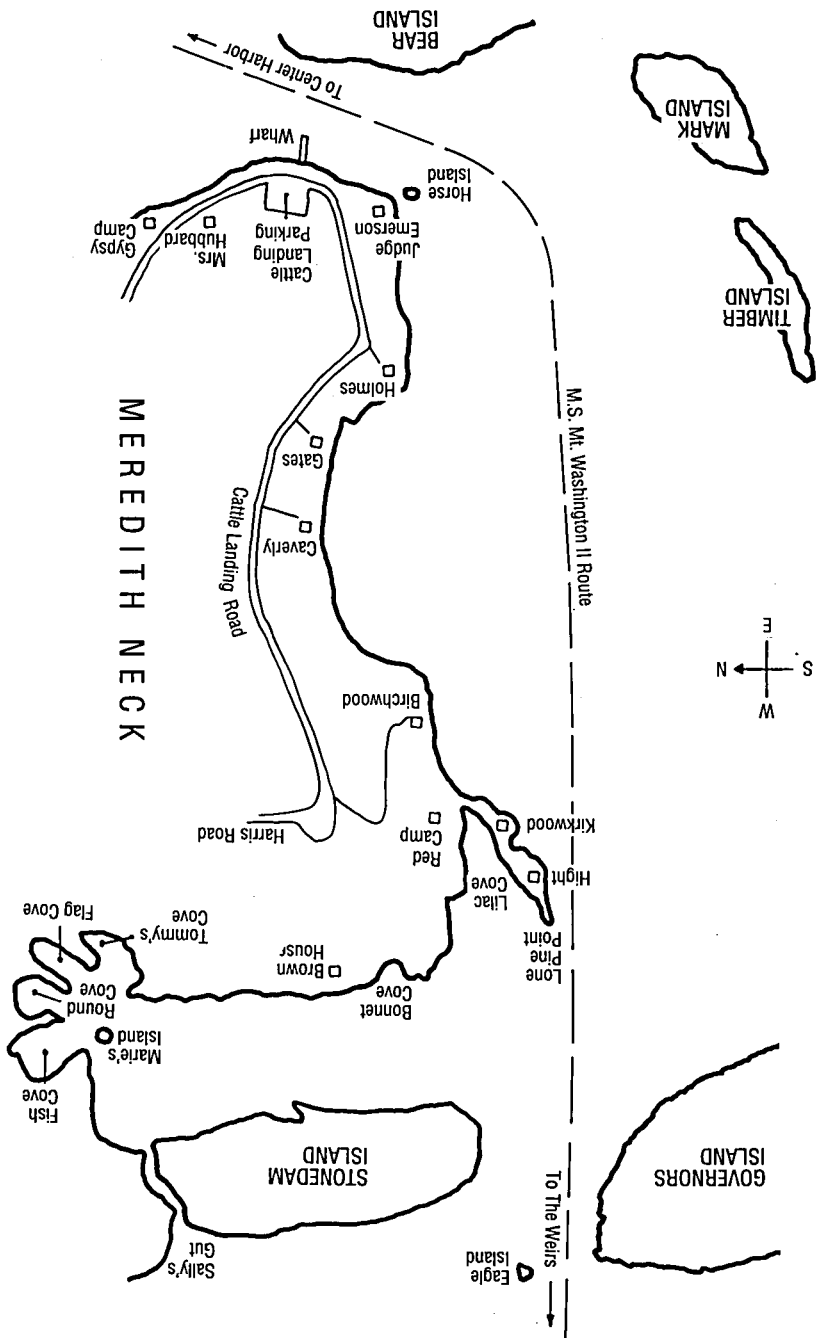


# Fifty Years



on  
Lake Winnepesaukee



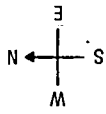
**MEREDITH NECK**

BEAR ISLAND

MARK ISLAND

TIMBER ISLAND

M.S. Mt. Washington II Route



Belknap Mountains

STONEDAM ISLAND

GOVERNORS ISLAND

Eagle Island

To The Weirs

Sally's Gut

Gypsy Camp

Wharf

Cattle Landing

Holmes

Gates

Caverly

Birchwood

Harris Road

Red Camp

Kirkwood

Hight

Lila Cove

Pine Point

Lone Pine

Brown House

Bonnet Cove

Tommy's Cove

Round Cove

Flag Cove

Fish Cove

Mare's Island

Sally's Gut

Horse Island

Judge Emerson

Mrs. Hubbard

Parking

Cattle Landing

Holmes

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Caverly

**I**t was the autumn of 1940, the year I returned home to Sharon from serving a graduate-apprenticeship at Shaw's Garden, St. Louis, that over the Columbus Day weekend Dad, Mother and I drove to Lake Winnepesaukee to visit former Sharonites, the Harry Greenlaws, who had built a summer camp on Tommy's Cove, Meredith Neck.

Dad was a landlubber. So Mother and I rowed a half mile across the bay to Bert and Marie Coleman's island athwart three other coves. I was sitting in the stern intent on reaching the quarter acre idyllic island. As we approached the wharf Mother said, "Look around." What she introduced me to was the view up the bay between the wooded slopes of Meredith Neck and Stonedam Island to the twin peaks of Belknap and Gunstock mountains eight miles across the water to the south. This enchanting scene on that sparkling autumn day made me say, "We've got to have a piece of this."

Friends often ask, "**How did you ever find this place?**" Well, Dad wanted a farm with a view. Mother wanted a garden with a brook. I merely wanted a place which we could use as a base camp to explore the White Mountains.

Seven winter months passed oh so slowly. Finally, over the Memorial Day weekend we returned to Meredith and contacted Lloyd Lund, realtor, who brought us to the very tip of Meredith Neck to the Osborn G. Stewart's summer camp which had just come onto the market, because last summer Mr. Stewart's horse had sprained its leg in clearing some thirty 75-foot white pines felled by the September '38 hurricane.

Over the Flag Day weekend, 1941, legal papers were passed and the Clark trio, Robert A and Gertrude E., took up summer residence on Lot 17 in Winnicoash Park, reached only by water. The Rover, a Morris Heights inboard motor boat, came with the property. Otherwise a narrow footpath following the shoreline was available, but we would have to leave the car at the end of Cattle Landing Road one-half mile away.

The Stewarts rented a boathouse from Mr. Goodhue at the Weirs, but the owner needed it so we had to rent a slip at Channel Marine across the channel outlet to Paugus Bay. Not only did we save fifteen miles of driving, but we also were enabled to carry heavy chattel into camp by boat across two miles of water between Governors and Eagle Islands. Essentially we became island dwellers without electricity.

The first year we took our separate vacations as extended weekends — Friday through Monday — the four consecutive days affording us time to build a chimney using stones lying everywhere around. Thus we set a pattern of camping with emphasis on work, relieved by short boat trips around nearby islands with neighbors aboard or just visiting at their camps. Suddenly **Pearl Harbor!** Brother-in-law Mel Buker and

brother Norman enter the Navy, Rob the Army Air Corps, and so for four years with rationing and personal movements made inconvenient and unpatric ("Is this trip necessary?"), visits to camp 125 miles north of Boston were abruptly curtailed from nineteen in 1941 to just over six per year for "the duration." Even so, construction proceeded by doubling the floor space as a deck to the 1936 bedroom and the 1937 kitchen. This work was done by Dad, his brother Estus, Bob Laird, Otis Tolman and others. After demobilization in 1946, activities were resumed somewhat. Lumber was still scarce and new cars hard to get. Tires were threadbare and so speed limits were observed. Adjoining Lots 18 and 19 became available and were purchased from the Stewart grandson, thus doubling the Clarks' real estate holdings to four hundred feet of shoreline. Also, in October, Stewart's 1938 mother-in-law camp was moved and reoriented to an easterly view and a sleeping porch added the following summer.

Our initial visit of 1948 found Cattle Landing Road extended one-quarter mile to the Gates' camp. In July Mel brought a stake-bodied truckload of corrugated surplus steel, such as used in Nissan huts, to Tommy's Cove (Skerret's) freight depot. It took two boatloads to deliver to Lilac Cove. By August 31st five carpenters erected a boathouse for Rover on the pilings abandoned by William Stewart.

On arriving at Gates' turnaround in 1950, we found timber cut to extend Cattle Landing Road a final one-half mile, which brought it directly behind Nap-o-Nek, renamed Birchwood. On our third visit that year, we found the road graded and passable. By the following summer, rural mail delivery became available for the summer months only.

Factory-built screened doors became available by 1954. We bought ten, using two for doors, the others to enclose the south facing porch. In the following summer a fresh coat of paint, barn red trimmed in buff, was applied. Henceforth it would be called the Red Camp.

In June, 1956, the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative installed power as far as Gates', and by Columbus Day masons using our dock brought in a huge hearthstone to the Kirkwood's new camp built by Cliff Pratt. We liked our Lone Pine Point neighbor's construction so much that by Thanksgiving Dad and Mother, looking toward a **retirement home**, drove all the way to Passaconway where Cliff lived to discuss possibilities of building a similar camp on Lot 19.

The following summer, 1957, was spent planning and making ready for realization the retirement dream cottage set by the Greenlaws twenty years earlier. After Labor Day, Cliff started placing the foundation posts parallel to the shore, "I thought that's the way you wanted it," all the while the enchanting Mae West Belknap Mountains directly opposite! Cliff was a master carpenter, but feisty. This was only the first misunderstanding. By Christmas afternoon the warm sunshine lay in onto the west porch at 70°F and that night Rob slept in the new camp.

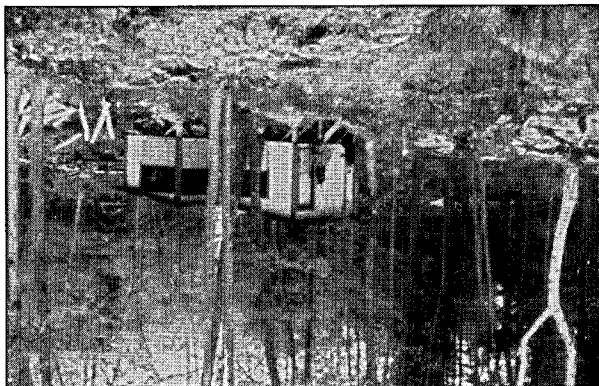
**"Year of accomplishment"** Mother called 1958. In April the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative set eight utility poles and now for the first time we had the luxury of electricity. By May we had hot water! But by the end of June Mother insisted on a tub for the cramped bathroom. Cliff balked. So Northern Plumbing was hired to install a bathtub. The septic system was installed in July. Cliff was given his final payment on July 30th. By the following May, Rob's camp had a Hot Point range.

By August 1, 1960, Ed Corrigan installed a toilet in the Red Camp. One month later the guest house with sleeping porch was moved for a second time, this time to Lot 18.

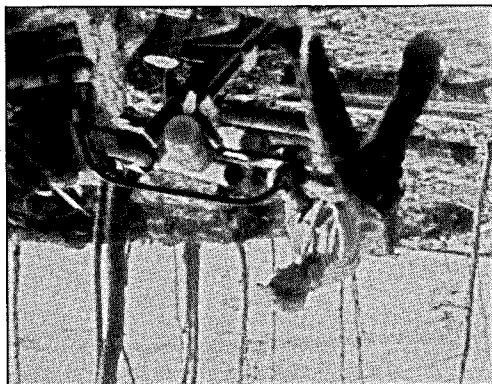
*Stone chimney and milk platform porch. 1941.*

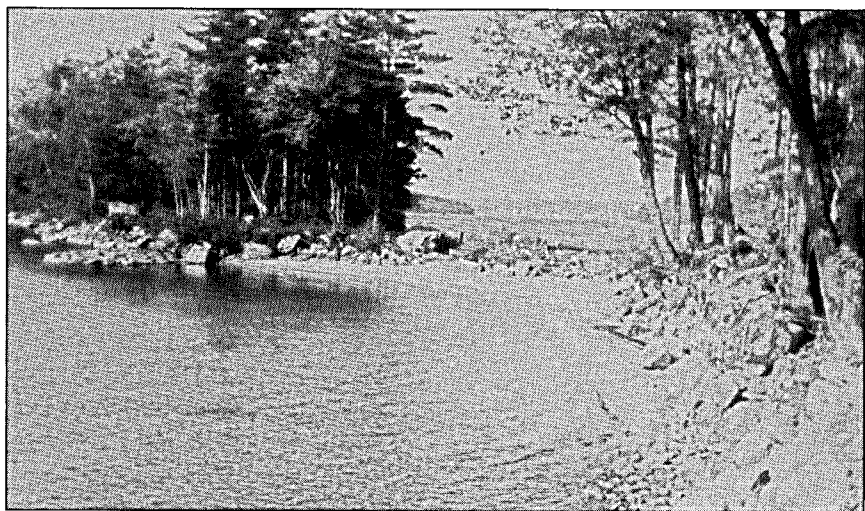


*Mother and Wayne Lenz entering camp showing Y-birch on rocky knoll. May 12, 1941.*

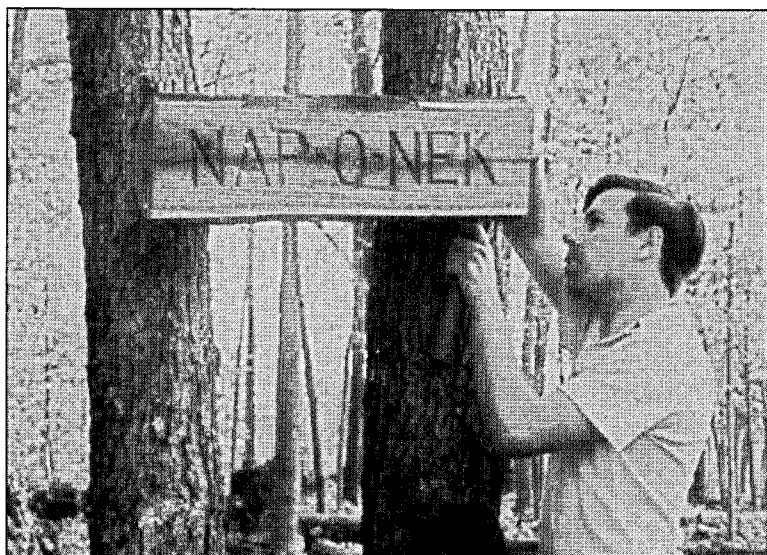


*Dad sawing hurricane logs. 1941.*





*Sandy beach looking s.w. to The Weirs, with Lone Pine Point to left and Lilac Cove in middle distance. 1942.*

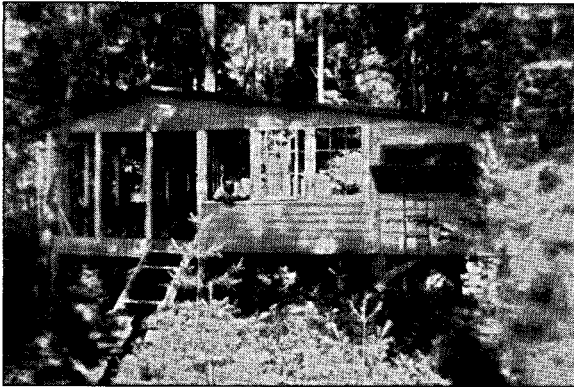


*Rocky knoll above Lilac Cove looking s.w. to The Weirs with Governors and Stonedam Islands in middle distance. May 30, 1945.*





*The Rover tied to cribbing in early spring 1940. Mark and Timber Island in background.*

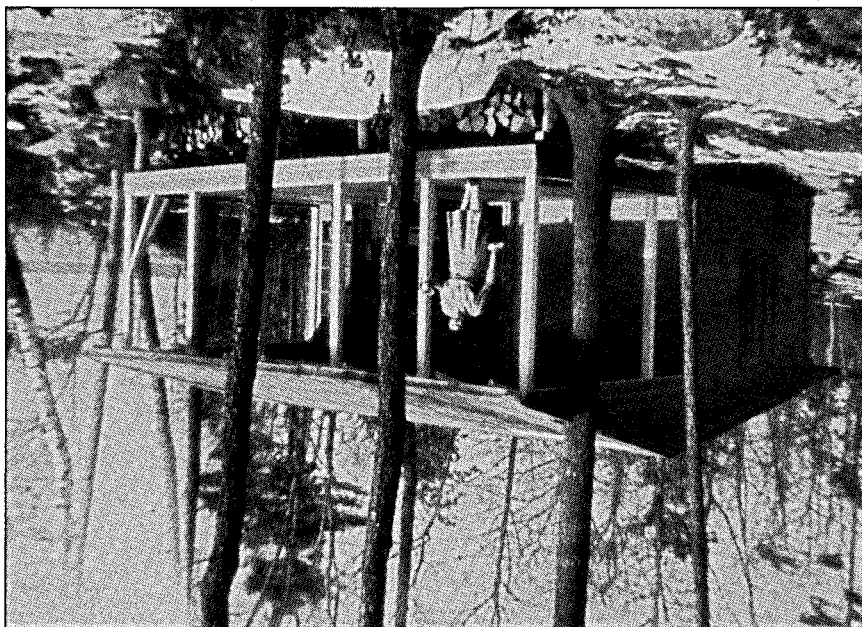


*East facade of Red Camp with brother Norman in dining room window. 1946.*

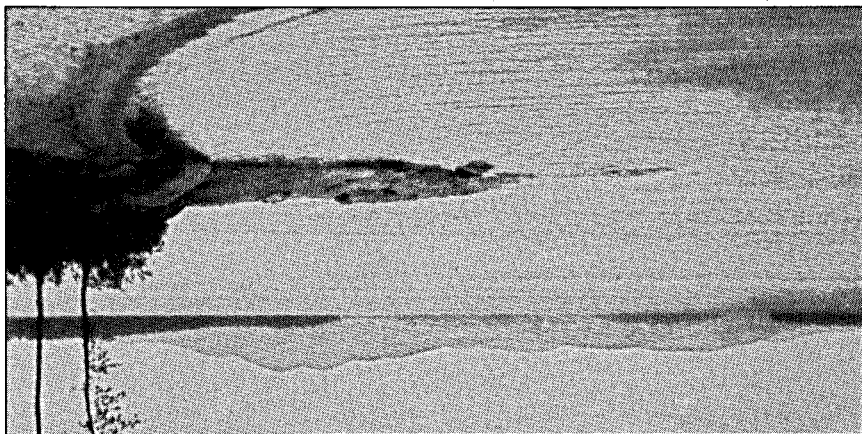


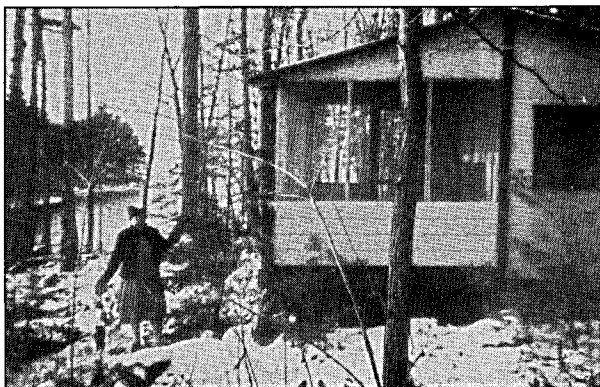
*Ms. Mt. Washington II post WW II.*

*Mother on open porch about 1950.*

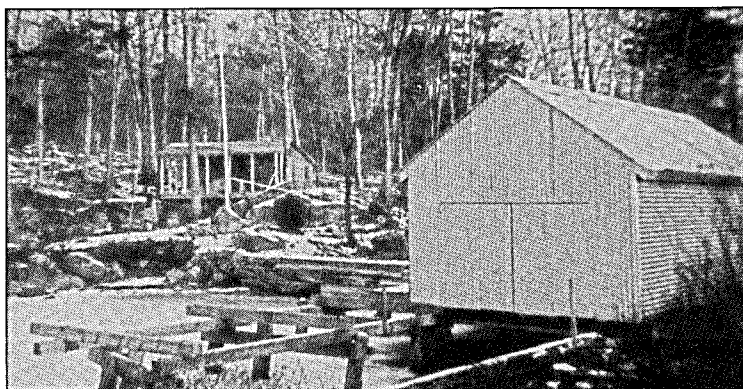


*Low water on Sandy beach looking south to Belknap Mts. Timber & Locke Islands, Varney's Point and Governors in middle distance. 1940s.*

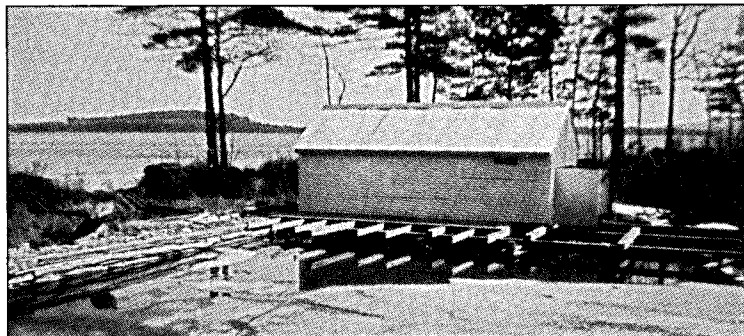




*Mother at Rob's camp with sleeping porch. Lilac Cove and Lone Pine Point in background. Winter 1947.*



*Boathouse showing cribbing with flagpole and open porch camp in background, about 1950.*



*Boathouse looking east about April 1950, floating ice in Lilac Cove. Mark Island in distance.*

The winter of 1964-65 found Rob temporarily in residence. He had engaged Mr. Pelczar to build a 13 x 18 foot bedroom off the east porch, and a well-driller was engaged to drive a 101-foot well three feet off its southeast corner. And so, in the brief period of twenty-four years, all construction you see today was completed.

But it wasn't all work and no play. **Mother's log** entries — she kept them for twenty years — regularly reported boat trips around Mark, Timber and Governor's islands and headway by passage through Sally's Cut, a tranquil waterway overhung by blueberry bushes and other branches between Stonedam Island and Meredith Neck. Other activities included day trips to the White Mountains, beach parties and swimming (to cool off) and, invariably, "to bed early."

Dad got his farm with a view, even though it had no pastures, no barn nor domestic animals. It did have enough work to keep him occupied to "earn his night's repose." Someone asked Harry Greenlaw of Tommy's Cove what on earth he found to do in his retirement. "I pound a nail and then look at the lake" was his quick reply.

Mother got her garden without the trickling water. Her "folly" still sits where we abandoned it: a deep hole filled with compost in the middle of the garden. She gardenened well into her nineties, tending her shade-tolerant native plants: ferns, mosses, creepers and certain flowering shrubs and low growing evergreens.

Rob got his base camp, which in later years became more of a base and less of a camp. He turned instead to his plant collections: azaleas, crab apples, daffodils, day lilies, hollies, lilacs, maples and rhododendrons plus assorted rarities such as cedar of Lebanon, golden larch, hybrid chestnut, Korean mountain ash, and the native Buckleya and Neviusia.

**Predatory animals** and epidemic infestations of gypsy moth caterpillars make gardening a bigger gamble than the stock market. The gardener lives in eternal hope. He is ever challenged to fit his crop to the available site. Growing plants introduced from temperate eastern Asia requires careful attention to soils, moisture and exposure, not to mention to native fauna.

Extremes of climate limit a plant's collective range. Native plants are the residue of flora which temperature or moisture extremes allow. When we try to grow plants beyond their natural range — for example, holly, flowering dogwood, tuliptree, and even the Asian forsythia — we must afford them protection from stress, such as exposure to exceptionally low temperatures, or drying winds, or soils unsuited for such borderline plants. The Lebanon Cedar is a case in point. Even Boston's climate is stressful for that montane Mediterranean conifer. Yet, I am growing it seemingly with success 125 miles further north than Boston. I attribute my success to having open water (except from January through mid-April) on three sides, plus a sheltered site away from late winter sunshine. Broadleaved evergreens are especially subject to leafburn owing to reflected sunlight during periods of low temperatures. Even so-called ironclad rhododendrons exhibit sunscald when protection from sun and wind are not provided. Consequently each winter I tie in several eight-foot white pine seedlings to interrupt direct sunlight over prolonged periods.

Weeks of rain or drought can prove stressful to garden plants. Birchwood soils, light and porous, are low in fertility. Fertilizer and ground limestone are applied in early spring before growth starts. During infrequent droughts, irrigation is required. Fortunately a lakefull of water is at hand. Hurricanes, too, are infrequent, except that we should not have discovered Birchwood had it not been for the unnamed 1938 hurricane.

But of recent times with the opening of the leaf canopy, the biotic factor has become a nuisance with deer nibbling evergreen foliage and rutting stems; beaver shearing young trees and lilacs, as well as chipmunks eating tulip bulbs. And, of course, New England is ravaged periodically by gypsy moth caterpillars that make winter of fresh foliage until a second crop develops. European weeds find their way into gardens. Dandelions and mugwort are a bane, but other ground covers often escape. These include Artemesia, Campanula, Veronica, Vinca, vetch, witch (quack) grass and groundnut.

**Why Birchwood?** Seldom are American homes given names, but camps, campers and boats are always named. Nap-o-Nek, however apt, was a contrived name. Atop the rocky knoll once

stood a huge white birch with a single trunk to about ten feet. So the name Y-birch was put forward. The northern deciduous forest contains a conspicuous white-barked birch. When all other trees are removed, a fairy grove of chalky white trees which cast a dappled shade remains. This landscape effect suggested Birchwood before, I might say, Hitler's aerie became prominent. The 1941 inventory of woody plants contained: white and red pines, Canada hemlock, white and red oaks, sugar maple, American beech, American elm, white ash, canoe, gray and sweet birches, scarlet maple, moosewood, ironwood, aspen, alder, witchhazel, hawthorne, shadbush, buttonball bush, arrowwood, leatherwood, sumac, wild rose, blueberry, huckleberry, huckleberry, sweetfern, spirea, chokeberry and sheepl Laurel. The 1949 inventory added eighteen American introductions: balsam fir, red spruce, basswood, tupelo, larch, American holly, black alder, flowering dogwood, mountain maple, hobble bush, witherod, nannyberry, rhodora, pinxterbloom, mountain laurel, woodbine, ground hemlock and trailing arbutus or Mayflower.



## **Birchwood Gardens**

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## **Affiliations:**

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\*Front Cover photo: *Dad, Harry Greenlaw, Mother & Ella G. on ledge exposed by low water at Sandy beach. 1940s.*

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