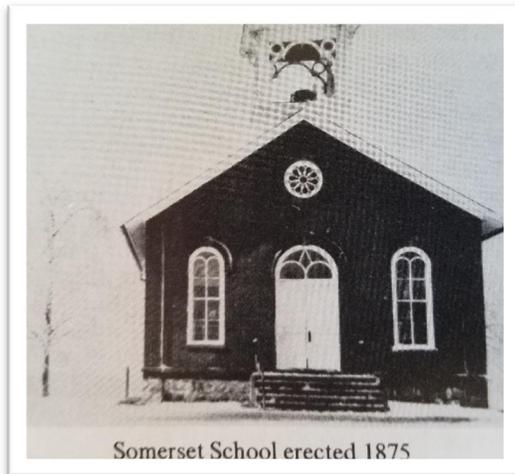


Lake Somerset – Personal Accounts, Changes and Events

The lake development occurred in the late 1960's. There were some residents present before the lake was actually flooded after the damn construction. Interviews with residents have contributed to this journal of accounts. This journal will continue to grow as those more stories are documented.

Fred and Claire Halliwill remember various aspects of the area before the lake. Before the damn was installed, Goose Creek ran the length of the lake from the present infeed side on the west end to the creek bed



on the east end of the lake where the damn was built. Fred and his buddies once floated down Goose Creek to the other side of Highway 127. They had fishing holes and various places where they would camp out and party as kids and young men. Fred remembered the artesian springs that filled the creek along the way. He also remembers

that there was a gravel pit near Somerset road, where the lake is now. Fred attended the school house on Somerset Road. He worked as a boy at the general store at the corner of Somerset Road and US 12.

John Argus, a lifelong resident of the area, lives north of the lake on Somerset Road. He indicated that he was involved in the construction of the lake. His family farmed the property at the corner of Somerset and Harper Roads for many years. During his many years here in the area, he remembers the lake area as bottom land with lots of trees and swampy areas. The railroad removed all the rails as the lake was being

developed. John was able to procure the railroad crossing signs from the depot area. Passing his pole barn north of the lake you can see them on the west side of Somerset Road. He recalled the stockyard, small depot and elevator in that area before the flooding of the lake. The last regular rail service here stopped in the late 1950's or early 1960's according to John. He recalled piloting a rail inspection car he acquired to roam the rails with some of his buddies. They travelled all the way down to the Indiana border on a day trip of the empty rails before the rail was completely shut down.

Pete and Denise Tochman's in-laws had purchased a property on Kildare Lane channel area. During those early years of the late 1960's, they recall there being no water in the area until the corporation started to fill the lake. Denise remembers walking across the channel before the flooding. Denise's mother still lives on that channel. They remember the period when the lake was filled. It filled quicker than expected causing some people to have to get things moved out of the future water line. They remember water skiing down the channel. Try that one today....

The Tochman's remember the bay area bordered by Kildare, Killybeg Lane and Somerset Lane, were a mucky "island" was present in the middle of the area. It appeared the development company did not expect the water to rise so quickly. The plan was to remove the island but when the water filled, they had to figure out another way to remove the obstruction. The corporation were able to slurry pump the "island" out of the bay, creating the current bay. The fill was pumped out of the bay over the hill and deposited in the field next to the Somerset Congregational Church.



Around 1986, the lake association lowered the water levels in order to allow the lake residents to clean out the weeds out into the lake. Jim and Joyce Bailey have pictures of the

event in front of their own home on Killybegs Lane. As is noted in the picture, the lake was lowered to facilitate cleaning and seawall repair. The current lake association board is evaluating this option for the future.

The bay bordering Grandview and Grandpoint Drive once had an “island” located in that bay too. It was removed in the 1980’s. The slurry of muck and materials were spread around the immediate bay properties and into the scrub dump area near the west park.

From various sources such as the newsletters provided by Peter Touchman, newsletter editor for many years, the lake association has made a variety of improvements over the years. The original two lake parks defined by the development corporation were expanded to the current 4 parks. The boat ramp and expansion of the main park were

completed as well. There was a plan for an on-lake marina as well, which never materialized.

John and Carole Ichesco provided some pictures of the lake and his



Carole Ichesco enjoying water skiing, above.
John with family and friends below

family enjoying the lake over the years. They purchased property on the lake but never built here. They enjoyed the lake water skiing and having many family events at the main park over the years. This is typical of all the discussions with residents. They have raised their families here in a family friendly lake.



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Amie enjoys the swings in the park while the Ichesco

friends and family relaxed and picnic there over the years, providing wonderful memories of the lake.



The enjoyment of swimming, skiing, fishing and just relaxing have the critically acclaimed values of this fine water centric community.

News Articles

One public news article has been printed over the years concerning the lake, the events and residents.

This article from 2009 details how good the fishing on our lake, per a long-time resident, Leland Spranger. The history of the lake, our community events and other residents such as Larry Wright, Chis Scollard, Rick Meyer, and George Rausch were interviewed concerning

the lake water quality and the association. The article is a nice overview of our association as well as how we manage the lake environment to keep this lake maintained.

Click the link:

http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2009/05/lake_somerset_still_making_a_s.html

Source: Peter Tochman

An event that occurred many years ago involved two fishermen who drown. There is a plaque near the boat ramp to commemorate the

event. David Erbacher & David Kurilko were the young men.



Discussions with various long-time residents who recall the event indicated that two fishermen in a canoe were fishing near the main park. They fell into the lake and were unable to get back to shore before drowning.

The weather in April was apparently cold and the fishermen were wearing cold weather gear when they capsized. They were unable to get to shore in time to save themselves.

As always, boating and personal safety basics apply to everyone. These reminders are included on the plaque.

Articles and Events

The lake Association website has past Lake Somerset Gazette Trading Post magazines posted for reference and historical information. The parties, events, board meetings and other news was distributed through printed pamphlets for lake residents from the 1990's until now. Now it is done through commutations from the association via email and the website.

Click the Link: <https://www.lakesomerset.org/gazette>

Editor Note: The above summaries of the conversations with various residents and non-residents have been acquired through personal interviews. Many of the people who have contributed here have provided photos, commentary related to the local history and their family experiences here at the lake. If you would like to contribute to this effort to preserve the history of those who have lived here or still live here. If you would like to contribute, please contribute if you have interest in participating. Email Pknight736@aol.com)