

A History of Pinehaven

Island Park and Pinehaven have a rich and interesting history. Long-time Pinehaven resident and former treasurer, Jack Thomas, wrote a history of Pinehaven in 1991. We are grateful he took the time to leave the following record. Walk near the dock and picture in your mind the way it might have looked in the early 1900's.

PINEHAVEN (the first eighty-five years)

Only God knows what prompted Roy S. Porter to homestead this land we now call Pinehaven.

For ten-thousand years men had left footprints along the banks of our river. Unknowingly, in 1810, Andrew Henry gave his name to it. Seventy years later the first of Island Park's permanent settlers put down tentative roots in what turned out to be forbidden soil.

Digging foundation holes with a back-hoe can be tough work today along the Henry's Fork. Growing profitable crops ninety years ago, sixty-one hundred feet above the sea, North of the forty-fourth parallel, using a horse and plow in this lava strewn strip seems like a seldom thing. But there's little logic in a man addled by the beauty of a wild river.

Porter's name surfaces January 20, 1906 on Fremont's records as occupying 164 acres in Idaho's Township 11 North, Ranges 42-43 East, Sections 11 and 12. the County seat, then as now, was St. Anthony. The county covered about four million acres, over three times its present size/ Population was around 10,000. Construction of the Yellowstone Park Railroad from St. Anthony to West Yellowstone had begun the year before.

Porter had two ways to gain ownership. Live on and work the land for five years, or buy it outright at \$1.25 an acre (\$205 total) Courthouse records shed no light on how he finally paid for it. But in the County Recorder's office on page #361 of Book #1 one finds the homestead patent, deeding the property to Mr. Porter. The signature on the patent is Theodore Roosevelt's. The date: May 7, 1908, the same year Porter's neighbor to the North, E. H. Harriman gained control of the Railroad Ranch.

Unlike Harriman, Roy Porter quickly moved on. He sold his quarter section, which included Swan Lake, on the 29 of February 1910.

A warranty deed transferred ownership to the Utaida (pronounced U-Tida) Rod and Gun Club. a group of sports-minded men from the Wasatch front and Pocatello Valley. My father, a late 1920's member believed they had been alerted to the purchase by Si Eccles, an Ogden banker friend of Harriman.

Just South of today's Pinehaven Common, along the river, a log clubhouse was built. Still standing are the remains of its lava fireplace and chimney, next to the road behind Janice and Cal Hammond's cabin. (Pinehaven block 11, lot 2). Relative accessibility was a drawing card for the new club, even though the train trip to Yellowstone took less time than horse or motor car from Ashton to the club.

According to Nell Burrall - a transplanted Nebraskan living in Ashton for eighty years-who went with her family on a 1910 trip to West Yellowstone, six days were spent with a team pulling what she called a "white-top", a covered wagon. "Of course," said Nell, "We had to care for the horses, cook meals, and set-up and break camp. Then went into the Park for two weeks."

But times were about to shift gears. Autos were to be allowed in the Park for the first time in 1916. A new road was built North from Ashton, following pretty much the West Yellowstone mail route. It is now called the Mesa Falls Scenic By-Way. Graded and graveled dirt, sometimes one lane, usually two, but still a boon to the about-to-arrive Summer tourists, it ended just North of the old Osbourne Bridge, picking up the Last Chance road along the East border of the Railroad Ranch. Although the new route took a little longer than the old Sardorus Hill, Antelope Flat goat path, it provided perhaps a more pleasant, less jarring way to reach the Utaida Club, where after World War #1, Harry Niess of Ashton had hired on as the summer caretaker/manager.

Basic - rustic, rather than cozy, describes the way I remember the inside of the clubhouse. It sported its share of open bunks and drafty floors. Festooning raw lodgepole walls were dusty, stuffed examples of God's local creatures - finny and furry.

Sixty-five years ago there was no Grub Stake Market, so haut cuisine was denied those who supped at Harry's table. Canned goods were a specialty, and trout of course, and it had to be fresh. Such power as existed came from a chugging Delco generator, not Fall River Electric. Water, yes. Ice cubes, no.

But the world was turning, even in Island Park. Fremont County had been reduced to its present size (about 1,200,000 acres) by 1919. In the preceding twenty-six years "mother" Fremont had given birth to Jefferson, Madison, Teton, and Clark Counties-in whole or in part. Railroad tie companies with fifteen hundred husky employees had begun to tear up the Targhee in earnest. County population boomed; it reached 10,380 in 1920, never reaching that figure again until 1980, sixty years later. The Henry's Lake Dam plugged up what my mother described as a "frog pond" in 1923, making it a respectable puddle. Bank failures plagued Idaho from Sandpoint to Malad throughout the '20's, including banks in Ashton, St. Anthony, Dubois, Rexburg, Shelly, Pocatello, Burley, Buhl, Jerome and Nampa - years before the "Great Depression". Somehow "Holly" and Ruby Hollingsworth of Ashton (he owned City Drug, and the Ashton bank hadn't gone belly up yet) leased some Forest Service land just downstream from the Club's South border, and put a little cabin on it - the first one I'd ever seen with rugs. They were Navajo, the thicket-hidden fireplace remnants from that cabin lie there about two-hundred feet in from the river bank, south of Jan Rock's cabin

and outside Pinehaven. Total crop failure followed the 1934 drought in the valley.

In 1938 as part of the Minidoka Project, the Bureau of Reclamation put a concrete cork in the Henry's Fork a little West of Pond's Lodge, impounding a lot of water - the Island Park Reservoir. At the time it was considered a mixed blessing, depending on whether you were a fish or a farmer.

Yellowstone Park's tourist trade dropped to a trickle during World War #2. The war's end brought more changes, including Fall River Electric's decision in 1947 to string a power line up the Mesa Falls road into Island Park and over the continental divide to West Yellowstone.

Utah Club members died, dispersed, lost interest, and finally sold all their holdings to Ernest Reber of St. Anthony on July 20, 1949. Two years later the Mesa Falls road was by-passed by the new highway from Ashton,, U.S. # 191 (now U.S. # 20), separating Reber's Swan Lake property from the land remaining to the East of the new concrete strip.

Mr. Reber held on to his land for eleven years, but in 1960 he agreed to sell to two different buyers; the North section (now North Pinehaven) to James Hooker of California - recorded 11/1/60; the Southern portion (now Pinehaven) to the North Fork Development Corp., a group of eight men (A. W. Brunt, G. E. Brunt, J. Hammond, L. Merrill, N. Young, A. Strong, and J. Noali Nixon). Note: these seven served as the original architectural Control Board, the predecessor of the Pinehaven Planning Board.

More changes: By 1961 the Fall River Rural Electric Co-op had run a spur power line, more or less following Wood Road #16 West from the Mesa Falls Road main line which then crossed over the river into Pinehaven's Division #1. That first Pinehaven subdivision plat was recorded July 9, 1963 although the formal property transfer deed from Reber to North Fork Development bears a subsequent recording date: October 1, 1963. Still two more land transfers were needed to complete this cycle.

Mr. Hooker sold the upper section to the North Pinehaven Development Corp. (recorded May 23, 1968) which was made up of a few of the North Fork Development shareholders, plus other Idaho Falls and Salt Lake men (A. W. Brunt, W. Hammond, J. Hammond, M. Wilding, A. W. Brunt Jr., R. Thorell, and G. Willis Carlisle).

Finally in late 1969 the North Fork Development Corp. rid itself of the Swan Lake property-about 28 acres-thru a land swap. The U.S. Forest Service wanted to protect the swan nesting area represented by the lake. In trade the USFS deeded approximately twenty-one acres to North Fork Development. This land abuts Pinehaven's South border's East end. It stretches a little less than half-mile South of Pinehaven along the river, and is perhaps sometimes 400 to 500 feet deep. Seven North Fork shareholders elected to divide this property into seven 300 foot wide riverfront tracts (known as Tracts "A" through "G"). But they also decided not to plat this newly acquired property as a legal part of Pinehaven subdivision, thus exempting these tracts from Pinehaven's covenants.

Apparently the original dream of the North Fork developers would have had Pinehaven, like the Utaida, as some kind of "club", this time with up-to-date frills: swimming pool, tennis courts, the works. Some time between 1964 and 1967 those dreams turned into hard-edged reality. Swimming pools were not only expensive, but temperature in most months fell below freezing. The club idea died quietly. The location was good; lots were sold. New owners took over the reins of power provided by the covenants.

Building permit records indicate two cabins going up in 1964 (Parkinson's and Jones') and by the end of 1966 there were eleven.

At 7:30 P. M. on Friday, August 25, 1967 an organizational meeting took place in Pinehaven. "The purpose of the Planning Board", say these original minutes, "will be to pass on policy regarding architectural building materials, etc., handle grievances amongst property owners, levy assessments for needed road work, and so forth". Rhelm Jones was elected the first Mayor. Charley Morris became Secretary-Treasurer. Money in the bank: \$384.00.

Nine Mayors have succeeded Dr. Jones. Secretaries/Treasurers have been in shorter supply, only six since Dr. Morris.

On the other hand the Planning Board's purposes and responsibilities seem to expand geometrically with land sales and new construction.

The number of lots (338) is about the only constant. the sound of local hammers and saws fluctuates annually. Nine new buildings went up in 1975, none in 1979. over time the annual growth rate runs about three and a half buildings - mostly cabins.

Just for the record: By 1972 there were forty-one structures, including a barn (since razed), a sales office (the entrance "A" frame), and a gas station (its tanks came down in 1991). By 1982 there were sixty-seven buildings. And by the Autumn of 1991 the total count reached an even one-hundred. (89 cabins, 3 commercial buildings, and 8 garages). The number of property owners has exploded, of course, from the original two development companies to one hundred and sixty in 1993.

Crystal ball gazing trends indicate more lots per person in the future as cabin owners seek protective space (breathing room) .

During the past twenty-eight years, have other things happened to this quiet corner of the world - important bits and pieces that shouldn't be forgotten ?

Money, or the lack of it, ranks high on many lists: The price of land has gone up; the dollar devalued; the Pinehaven assessment charges set on September 2, 1972 (that's almost twenty years ago) remain in effect. That can't be said about County property taxes: Pinehaven's assessments are still annually \$25 for a lot with building , \$10 for an empty lot.

Pinehaven's Trumpeter, Island Park's only yearly newspaper, hit the newstands on July 5, 1974 in its present form. (Its masthead logo was designed by cabin owner Erv Hartung, who also designed our road signs).

Two years later - to the day - the Teton Dam collapsed, wiping out Sugar City, parts of Rexburg, and the total road system South of St. Anthony. The river at Pinehaven became a trickle. To prevent more water from adding to the valley's problems both dams (Henry's Lake and Island Park) closed their floodgates.

Our two legal subdivisions were platted and recorded in the courthouse on a piecemeal basis, bit by bit, with four divisions in Pinehaven and three in North Pinehaven. Protective covenants accompanied each division filing. Result: By 1970 seven sets of covenants existed - almost, but not quite, mirror images of one another. (i.e. a cabin owner at the South end could have a green roof, one at the North end only brown) . Annoyance and confusion attended this situation. To correct it, under the leadership of then Mayor Bill Hogg, clarified, revised, and coordinated covenants were drafted. Accepted by a majority of the property owners in each of the seven separate divisions, these amended covenants became effective on May 7, 1977 for the entire combined Pinehaven/North Pinehaven area. A covenant prohibition against metal roofing was removed June 15, 1980.

Time marched on. In the winter of 1981-1982 general road snow- plowing began, paid for a special assessment, and thirty-one more buildings have been erected since roads began to be cleared in Winter.

The river, like time, still flows quietly by for us today, looking pretty much as it must have to Roy B. Porter as good a reason as any for him to have homesteaded this bit of God's green earth eight-five years ago.

Written by Jack A. Thomas, December, 1991.

Editor's Note: The number of cabins and lot owners have increased since Jack Thomas first wrote this article. Fees have changed, and Pinehaven's annual Trumpeter has been replaced by more frequent homeowners' newsletters.

