

“Our Glimmerglass”

A Newsletter from the Otsego Lake Association



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Winter 2013

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Brookwood Point Needs Public Interest and Financial Support

By Wayne Bunn (OLA) and Marcie Foster (OLT)

The Otsego Land Trust (OLT) acquired the 22 acre Brookwood Point property in October 2011 via a merger with The Cook Foundation. The property is located southerly of Sam Smith's Boatyard and adjacent to the Otsego Sailing Club. Since that time, the OLT has managed the property and has been developing a master plan for its future use. Prior to the merger, the OLT appointed a Citizens' Advisory Committee to make recommendations for use of the property. The Citizens' Advisory Committee then presented a draft plan based on public input, professional guidance, and numerous committee meetings. It provided a practical assessment of the challenges that OLT faces in dealing with the incredible opportunity to safeguard this one-of-a-kind property on Otsego Lake. OLT established the Brookwood Point Committee to develop an interim management plan for the property and to implement recommendations from the Citizens' Advisory Committee. An interim management plan was adopted by the OLT Board in May 2012 and the property has been operating under that plan since it was adopted. Right now, public interest and financial support is critical to the success of the Brookwood Point property. The Otsego Land Trust is a dues paying and supportive member of the Otsego Lake Association.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee endorsed a strong statement that “the highest priority for the site's reuse was to maintain public access, primarily to create low impact uses that include walking/hiking trails, non-motorized boat access, use of the formal gardens, and other leisure activities that would not interfere with conservation goals.” The conservation attributes of the property include: natural environment, water quality, historic and cultural attributes, and scenic and recreational values.

Some of the key elements of the interim management plan include: (1) the overall goal of using the property for low-impact recreational public purposes that do no harm to the conservation attributes of the property, (2) restore and maintain the historic features of the property if financially viable, (3) activities on the property must be self-sustaining or supported by gifts and grants, (4) obtaining public support since OLT does not have the financial resources to underwrite either capital improvements or operating expenses, and (5) no commitments will be made that inhibit OLT's ability to sell the property if it can no longer afford to manage and maintain it.

Since OLT's acquisition of Brookwood Point, several donors stepped forward with contributions that enabled two interns to be hired, some hazardous trees to be removed and Federal grant of \$188,000 was obtained under the Scenic Byway Program but this grant has a matching provision requiring OLT to contribute \$62,500 (part of which may be in-kind). OLT has proposed that this contribution be secured from donors and be in hand prior to commencement of any construction work.

Public interest and financial support is crucial for the success of the Brookwood Point property. However, unless the public sees improvements in the property, there may not be much support for Brookwood Point but, on the other hand, improvements cannot be made without public support – a classic “chicken and egg” situation.

How can Otsego Lake Association members help with the Brookwood Point property? First, you may contact the OLT office in Cooperstown [e-mail: info@otsego-land-trust.org or telephone (607) 547-2366] for a copy of the Recommendations for Brookwood Point dated October 20, 2012. Second, you may donate money or in-kind services to OLT to support this project. Third, you may volunteer your time to help maintain the property during one of the community workdays during the year. Fourth, you may visit the property and walk around to see for yourself what a beautiful site this is on Otsego Lake. Fifth, attend the March 9, 2013 public update meeting at 11:00 AM at Templeton Hall in Cooperstown. Your interest and financial support will help ensure that this property remains open to the general public for years to come.

The Otsego Land Trust was founded in 1988 as a private, non-profit organization under the 501 (c) 3 rules of the Internal Revenue Service and is governed by an independent Board of Directors. OLT's mission is to protect landscapes that define the Otsego Region by securing land and waters of significant scenic, historic, and ecological value, including forests and farmlands. OLT is professionally staffed and has to date worked with over 80 landowners to protect nearly 9,000 acres in the Upper Susquehanna River watershed.

No Time for Water Thyme in Otsego Lake

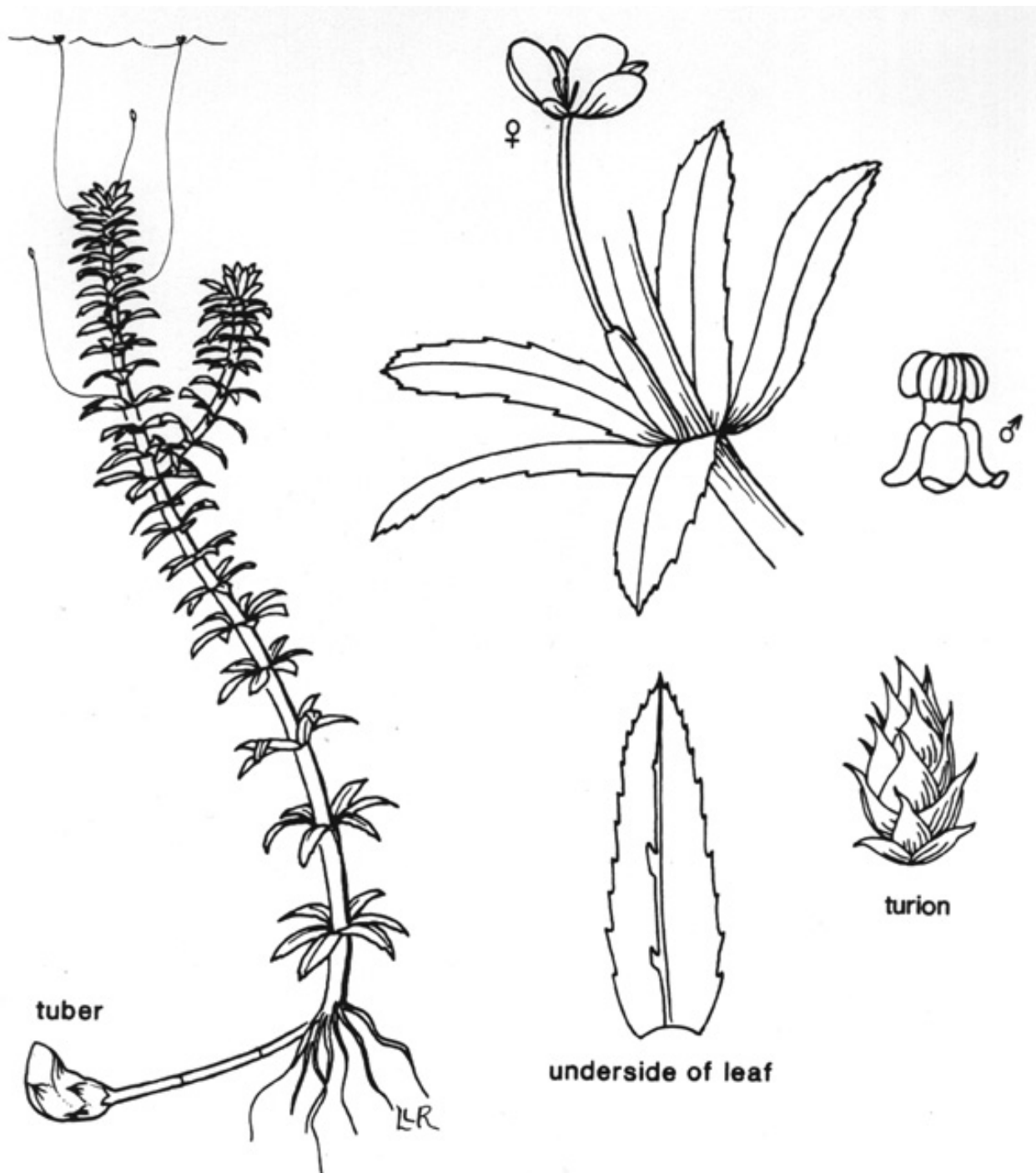
By Paul H. Lord

As I look out across the expanse of Otsego Lake this morning (January 15, 2013), ice floes are apparent here and there, but the lake remains open. At such times, it is not difficult to anticipate the blooming of our lake as the year progresses. Unfortunately, the bloom coming this year or next might be an ugly one. While rooted aquatic plants cover most of Otsego Lake's bottom in waters shallower than 18 ft. only intermittently do any of those plants reach the water's surface, much like the few ice floes I can see as I write this.

Rooted aquatic vegetation is necessary for a healthy lake. A good mix of green plants and large algae provide a carpet to protect bottom sediments from mud producing disturbances caused by wind driven waves. Additionally, these green growing things absorb the energy of wind driven waves and prevent shoreline erosion. Plants provide shelter for fish eggs and young fish and food for insects that, in turn, feed fish. Rooted aquatic vegetation around Otsego Lake is good for our lake.

Unfortunately, some plants don't share their surroundings with other species. They dominate and exclude other plants and large algae. The worst of these not only deny lake space

to other plants, but they grow to the surface, and they deny recreational opportunities to those of us who use the Lake for swimming, fishing, waterskiing, canoeing, kayaking or nearly anything else. The worst of the worst in the U.S. is Water thyme (*Hydrilla verticillata*), a foreign species that came to us from Asia. This plant is a plague in the southeastern U.S. requiring that hundreds of millions of dollars be spent yearly for chemical and physical control measures. If left untreated, recreational uses of our water are frustrated and the biology fundamentally changed.



(credit: University of Florida-IFAS, Center for Aquatic Plants)

In 2011, Water thyme was found in the inlet to Cayuga Lake in the City of Ithaca. In spite of a heroic effort mounted by a consortium of citizen groups, government agencies, and commercial firms, Water thyme made its way into Cayuga Lake, a waterway far too big to be feasibly treated with the chemicals that might keep Water thyme from spreading to Seneca Lake

via the canal that connects these two great lakes. Waterways from Seneca Lake connect to Lake Ontario and the Erie Canal. The bad news recently has become grimmer when we learned that Water thyme is now in the Erie Canal out by Buffalo, New York.

What can we do? We need to be even more vigilant. We need to ensure every boat, trailer, kayak, fishing rod, bucket, and personal floatation device brought into Otsego Lake is thoroughly cleaned, dried, and inspected. These precautions will also prevent the introduction of other foreign plants and animals into our lake. It is a small price for the continued anticipation of the blooming of our Lake.

Otsego Lake History and Science Tidbits

By Joseph W. Zarzynski, RPA (Register of Professional Archaeologists)

There are several meanings for the word—Otsego, probably originally spelled “Otsega.” One is “place of the rock,” named because of Council Rock at the southeast end of the lake, reputedly it was a meeting place for Native Americans. Another meaning is “clear, deep water.”

There are two waterways named Otsego Lake in the U.S., one in New York and the other in Michigan.

The November 7, 1889 issue of the *Union Springs Advertiser* newspaper reported that a diver, a hardhat commercial diver, found and recovered the body of Edward Walrath, who drowned in the lake five weeks earlier. Walrath was doing a hot air balloon flight over the lake when the balloon suddenly descended and fell into the lake. Walrath, age 24 and from Ilion, New York, was found embedded in the mud of the lake bottom in 60 ft. of water.

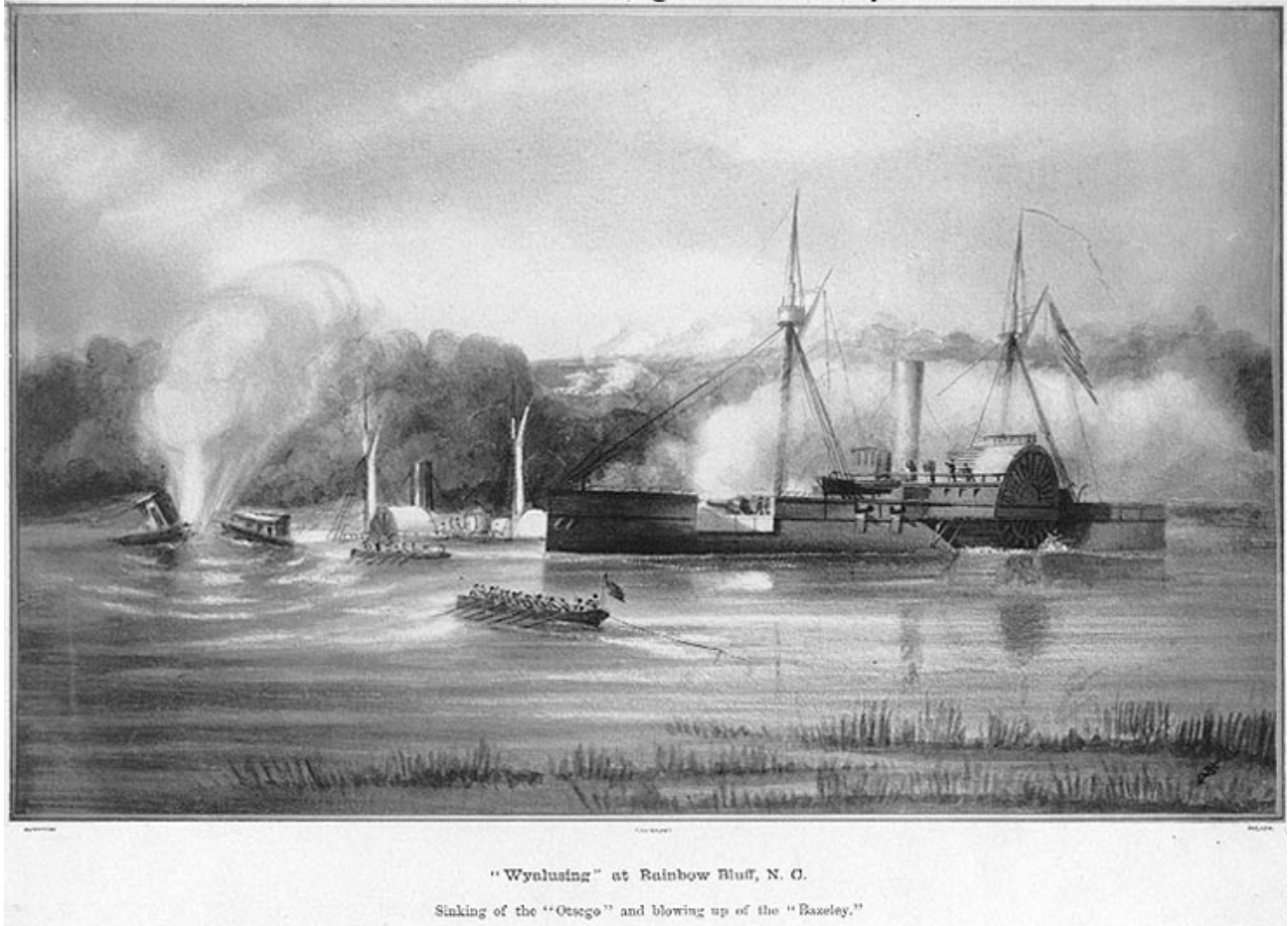
According to the June 22, 1899 issue of the *Richfield Springs Mercury* newspaper, one of the larger naphtha launches on Otsego Lake was the 30 ft. long, 6 ft. beam vessel—*Susquehanna*. It was on the lake in 1899 and was owned by John M. Bowers, esq. Naphtha fuel, a liquid of hydrocarbons made from petroleum, coal tar, and natural gas, was quite volatile. Thus, when gasoline-powered vessels were introduced, naphtha vessels soon became unpopular.

On July 23, 1926, *The Evening News* (North Tonawanda, New York) reported on one of the worst weather calamities to hit the northeast USA, a “devastating windstorm.” Several people were killed, many buildings were damaged, and crops around the Empire State were wiped out. “Cooperstown reported a large water spout on Otsego Lake which, however, spent its force wrecking a boathouse and overturning several small boats.”

The March 25, 1927 issue of *The Otsego Farmer* newspaper reported that there was a most unusual vessel on Otsego Lake, “a boat propelled by horse-power.” It started running on the lake in 1831. The watercraft, whose name was not reported, carried people to different locations around the lake. Passengers were often furnished with meals and even music for dancing on the vessel’s deck. Today, archaeologists believe that the first animal-powered watercraft appeared on the North American continent in 1814. Though no description was given of this Otsego Lake boat’s propulsion system, it may have had one or more horses walking around a turntable that then powered one or two side- or stern-mounted paddles. By the mid-19th century animal-powered vessels around the country were being replaced by steam-powered watercraft. Reportedly, Otsego Lake’s first steamboat was introduced to the lake in 1858, but it proved “unsatisfactory and it was soon discontinued.” Several years later another steamboat was brought to the lake and that mode of water transportation became popular until replaced a few decades later by naphtha and then gasoline-powered engines.

According to the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* published by the Navy Department in Washington, D.C., there have been several American warships named *Otsego*. The first U.S.S. *Otsego* was a small naval schooner that served in Florida waters in the early 1840s during the war with the Seminoles. The second was a double-ended, side-wheel steam-powered gunboat launched in 1863. It was sunk in December 1864 in the Roanoke River when it hit two Confederate torpedoes (aka-mines).

Photo # NH 51794 Loss of USS Otsego & USS Bazely, 9 December 1864



(credit: Naval History & Heritage Command)

In 1869, a light draft *Monitor*-class vessel named *Tunxis* was renamed *Hydra* and several weeks later was renamed *Otsego*. In 1874, the iron warship was scrapped. The last *Otsego* "warship" was a 1901 German-built steamer originally named S.S. *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* that was transferred to the American military in 1919, the year after WW I ended. It served as a troop ship. When WW II broke out, it again saw service as a transport ship making 31 voyages between Seattle and Alaska ports. In 1944, this transport was transferred to the Soviet Union, one of America's allies in WW II, and it was renamed *Ural*, after a mountain range in the former U.S.S.R.

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OLA Membership--We encourage all OLA members to renew and for all non-members to join. If you joined or renewed in the fall of 2012, you do not owe dues for 2013. However, if you did not join or renew in the fall of 2012, please do so. Thank you

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - OTSEGO LAKE ASSOCIATION - 2013

Please complete this application whether you are renewing or joining for the first time.

NAME: _____ **Date:** _____

PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS: _____ **E-Mail Address:** _____
(Only Used For OLA Announcements)

(City/Town) _____ **(State)** _____ **(Zip Code)** _____

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES (Check One): _____ Renewal _____ New Member
____ Individual \$25.00 _____ Couple/Family \$35.00 _____ Business \$50.00
____ Annual Endowment \$75.00 and Up _____ Additional Donation \$ _____

Please make your check payable to Otsego Lake Association and mail form and check to:
David Sanford, OLA Treasurer, P.O. Box 13, Springfield Center, NY 13468

OTSEGO LAKE ASSOCIATION – “HELPING TO PRESERVE A LOCAL TREASURE”
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Otsego Lake Association
P.O. Box 13
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WINTER 2013 NEWSLETTER & MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION ENCLOSED