



Pages in Time



Individual Supporters:
Lyn & Joe Rowden, Fairfield

Island Park was an island of dreams

by Milt Huntington

The magical music of Lloyd Raphnel and Al Corey drifted over Cobbosseecontee Lake drawing young folk from yesterday to East Winthrop's Island Park for a night of dating and dancing.

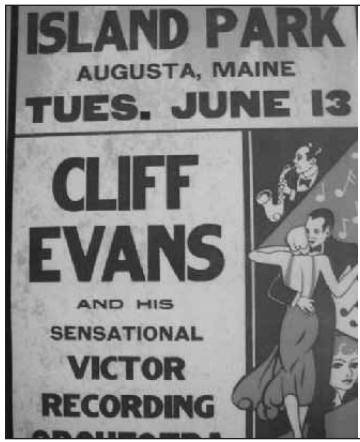
It seems like only yesterday when guys and gals in their teens and twenties poured across the bridge in East Winthrop to the dance pavilion where they would dance the night away. Alas! It wasn't yesterday. It was back in the 40s and 50s, but I remember it oh so well.

I remember all the colorful squares turning and turning in circles all over the dance floor, reflected there by the large ball spinning above. The elevated stage supported those wonderful bands of a time long ago. No one was dancing the Twist back then. Disco, The Monkey, The Stroll and the Mashed Potato were yet to come. No, it was just waltz or jitterbug, and the youth of Kennebec Valley and beyond flocked to Island Park to become a part of it all.

Some came there to meet someone new or rekindle an old flame. Others came to lie about their age and sneak into the "21 Club" where beer flowed like beer. Still others longed for intermission and the hope a dance partner would join them for a beer or a kiss or two in a car parked outside. In those days and nights of comparable innocence, drugs were not part of the scene.

Summertime intermissions also provided an opportunity for a cooling "skinny dip" in Cobbossee Lake, risking the loss

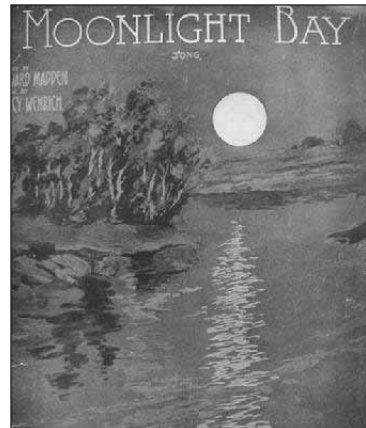
of the stamped admission mark on the back of your hand. How sweet it was to bathe in those cool nighttime waters until the



Island Park at the north end of Lake Cobbosseecontee was a popular night spot back in the days of trolley cars and revived after WW II. Dancers and music lovers came from miles around for the Big Band acts as this poster advertised. Internet photo

sound of the band beckoned us back to the dance.

White bucks, athletic sweaters, and plaid trousers with the hems rolled up were standard attire for the guys. The girls wore plaid skirts and bobby socks. No question about it – it was longer ago



Island Park had a theme song during the 50s – "Moonlight Bay." As one observer said, "How appropriate!" For more history on Island Park see www.cycmaine.org/lakehistory.html. Internet photo

than yesterday.

The music, however, will never fade away – not as long as there are compact disks and golden oldie radio shows. Allow me to dredge up some memories of the songs they were playing on the stage at Island Park. They were playing Frank Sinatra's "I'll Never Smile Again," Glenn Miller's "In the Mood" and Tuxedo Junction," Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing," and scads of tunes made famous by Artie Shaw and Stan Kenton.

The top hits of the day were reproduced from the stage at Island Park, and they included Nat King Cole's "Nature Boy," Frankie Laine's "Jezebel," The Ames Brothers' "Rag Mop," Theresa Brewer's "Music, Music, Music," Patti Page's "Tennessee Waltz," Vaughn Monroe's "Racing With The Moon," and Doris Day's "It's Magic."

We danced cheek to cheek to the strains of Jo Stafford, Perry Como, Bing Crosby, Georgia Gibbs, Peggy Lee, Les Paul and Mary Ford, The Ink Spots, The Crew Cuts, ("Shaboom"), Fats Domino, Mel Torme and Ella Fitzgerald. The list is endless. In those days, we chased the Big

Bands all over Maine. I remember seeing Louis Armstrong at the Old Orchard Pier, Ralph Flannigan, ("Harbor Lights") in

musical sounds drifting from the stage at Island Park. At the risk of coming across as maudlin and overly sentimental, I will leave



Milt and Lil Huntington, of Augusta, who recently celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary, met at Island Park in the 1950s.

Contributed photo

Lewiston, and the Glenn Miller Band with Ray McKinley in Orono.

At Island Park, the only big name I remember is pretty forgettable. It was Hezzie Q. Snow, who was more of a countrified comedian than a musician, but I got his autograph anyhow. Somehow, not much was lost listening to the locally generated

you with one more Island Park memory from the past.

What I remember most vividly about Island Park back in the good old days was the gal I took there on our first date back in the middle of the 1950s. On July 13, we celebrated our 53rd wedding anniversary.

Correction for Bridges of a by-gone era



In the September 2 issue of The Town Line, on the Pages in Time, the wrong photo was used with the following caption: Sebasticook River Bridge, in Winslow, after 1901 flood. Bridges have crossed at the site at Fort Halifax since 1791. This covered two-span toll bridge was built in 1834. Winslow bought it in 1866 and abolished the toll. Covered bridges were often called kissing bridges. Once a couple passing through this bridge encountered a minister, and they were married on the spot. A covered railroad bridge next to is was replaced with a steel one before 1901, when the highway bridge was washed into it by a flood. Photo from Richard Sanders Allen collection, NSPCB archives, as published in Covered Bridges Topics, Winter 2001

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