

Dolores Porter Wilkinson Memorial Room



honored by her family:

Ken Wilkinson, Lynne Wilkinson Spraker,
Stephanie Rene Spraker, Spencer Ryan Spraker,
Lori Wilkinson Wilson, Mark Edward Wilson,
John Porter (J.P.) Wilson, Reagan Louise Wilson



In Loving Memory of Dee Wilkinson (February 21, 1932 - December 7, 2000)

Findley Lake was a wonderful place to grow up. Ship N' Shore, the Roller Rink and a one room schoolhouse. The Lake was a great place for skiing and having fun with your friends. Many kids grew up here and stayed and many moved away from town. But as John Ed Pearce once said, "Home is a place you grow up wanting to leave, and grow old wanting to get back to."

Findley Lake will always be home to Ken and Dee Wilkinson.

In Loving Memory of Todd Michael Smith
(September 27, 1981 - July 13, 2003)

by his family
Marty, Ginny & Ryan

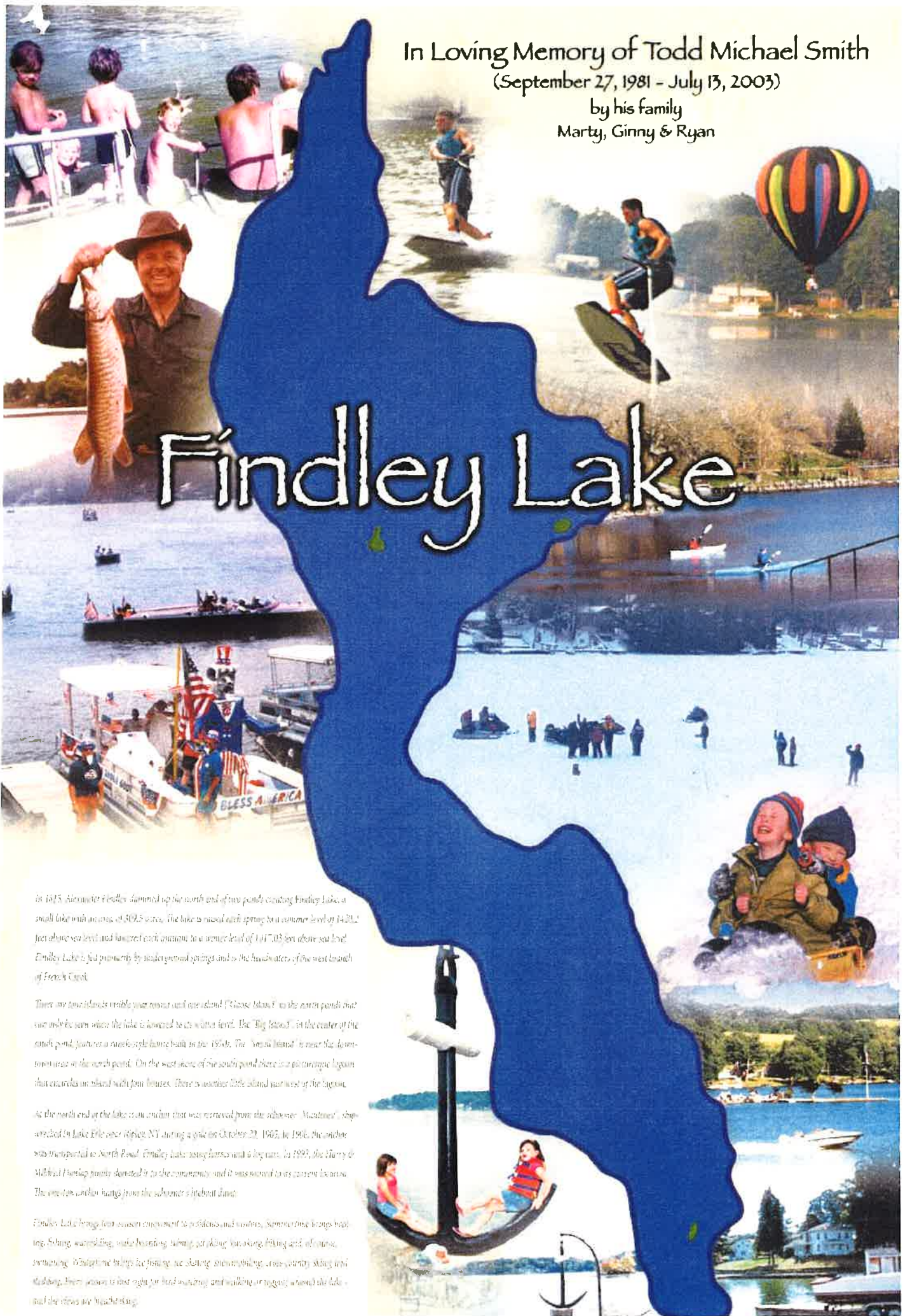
Findley Lake

In 1845, Alexander Findley dammed up the north end of two ponds creating Findley Lake, a small lake with an area of 509.3 acres. The lake is raised each spring to a summer level of 1420.2 feet above sea level and lowered each autumn to a winter level of 1417.03 feet above sea level. Findley Lake is fed primarily by under-ground springs and is the headwaters of the west branch of French Creek.

There are four islands visible from most of the island of Goose Island in the north pond that can only be seen when the lake is lowered to its winter level. The "Big Island" in the center of the south pond features a rustic style home built in the 1850s. The "Small Island" is near the dam-tower area in the north pond. On the west shore of the south pond there is a picturesque log cabin that overlooks an island with four houses. There is another little island just west of the log cabin.

At the north end of the lake is an anchor that was recovered from the schooner "Maudslowi" shipwrecked on Lake Erie near Alpena, NY during a gale on October 21, 1905. In 1966, the anchor was transported to North Pond, Findley Lake using chains and a log raft. In 1993, the Harry & Michael Findley family donated it to the community and it was moved to its current location. The anchor and log raft from the schooner's wreck had sunk.

Findley Lake brings four season enjoyment to residents and visitors. Summer time brings boating, fishing, water skiing, water boarding, tubing, jet skiing, water skiing, fishing and all kinds of swimming. Winter time brings ice fishing, ice skating, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and tubing. Every season is just right for bird watching and walking or jogging around the lake and the views are breathtaking.



Raccoon

Red Fox

The Findley Lake Watershed



Bald Eagle



Great Blue Heron



Snapping Turtle



Red Headed Woodpecker

About two million years ago, great ice sheets up to one mile thick (Continental Glaciers) advanced southward from Canada into this area. The glaciers would melt and recede or grow and advance as the regional climate warmed and cooled. This happened several times until about 12,000 years ago when the last glaciers receded. Depressions, known as kettle holes, remained after the ice blocks melted forming small lakes or ponds. Locally, the great Laurentide Glacier sculpted two adjoining kettle holes. In 1815 the ponds were dammed up at their north outlet by Alexander Findley thus creating Findley Lake.

Findley Lake is the westernmost lake in New York State and is fed primarily from underground springs as well as surface runoff from five tributaries within its 3,000 acre watershed. The lake lies atop the Allegheny Plateau located south of and above the Lake Erie Plain. Lake level is regulated using a mechanical gate in the spillway at the lake outlet. Summer lake levels are maintained at about 1,420 feet above mean sea level. Water exits the lake at the north into the West Branch of French Creek.



Pumpkinseed



Mink

Findley Lake, like all natural lakes, has a life cycle. Findley Lake began as open water and will eventually become a wetland and then dry land. This lake life cycle or aging process, known as eutrophication, is a process that can take thousands of years. Humans, however, can greatly accelerate eutrophication by adding unnatural levels of nutrients to a lake's water. Once nutrients enter a lake, they remain and are the fertilizer for weed growth and algae blooms. The weed growth, algae blooms and other decayed organic matter settle to the bottom of the lake and create layers of sediment which fill in the lake.



Yellow Perch



Largemouth Bass

Findley Lake covers 309.5 acres; a little more than half of that acreage came from the original two ponds. The other half came from the damming process which flooded the fields and woods surrounding the ponds. As a result, about one-half of Findley Lake is less than 10 feet deep. With these shallow conditions, the lake can easily become choked with vegetation.



Bluegill



Brown Bullhead

Findley Lake has been studied extensively and over the years various options for management of native and invasive plant species, such as Eurasian milfoil, have been implemented. Eurasian milfoil is native to Europe, Asia and Africa and is a very aggressive exotic plant with stems that are three to 10 feet in length, often forming dense mats on the surface. Controlling the milfoil is difficult and its presence greatly reduces our ability to navigate, swim, fish and aesthetically enjoy the lake.



Walleye



Smallmouth Bass

In conjunction with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Cornell University, small aquatic weevils were introduced into the lake and have in parts of the lake been successfully feeding on and controlling the Eurasian milfoil. In recent years, a mechanical harvesting system has been used to physically remove the unwanted aquatic plants by cutting, transporting onto a conveyor belt, ferrying to shore and hauling them away for disposal.



Beaver

Stewardship of Findley Lake is an important part of extending its life cycle. Everyone who spends time near Findley Lake can take an active part in preserving and protecting the Findley Lake Watershed. Be educated and act responsibly regarding lawn care practices, create buffer zones to keep soil, nutrients and other pollutants from reaching the lake, properly dispose of hazardous materials and properly maintain septic systems. Simple actions you take can make a big difference.



Black Bear

Findley Lake is a thriving ecosystem that is home to many native plants, fish, reptiles, birds and mammals. Through responsible stewardship, we can all enjoy the lake and extend its life as a healthy habitat and environment for the many plants and animals that rely on it daily.



White-tailed Deer



Muskellunge



Northern Pike



Bullfrog

Sponsored by: The Findley Lake Watershed Foundation

Wildlife images courtesy of NYS DEC

Red Squirrel
(by Flaistow John)



Hairy-tailed Mole
(by Michael David Hill)



Longnose Gar (28"-36")

The French Creek Watershed

THE FRENCH CREEK Watershed
A COMMUNITY TREASURE

North American Porcupine
(by J. Glover)



River Otters
(by Dmitry Azovtsev)



A watershed is an area of land where all rain or snow falling on it flows to a common outlet. For example, the Findley Lake watershed is that area of land that drains to the lake and then eventually flows to the lake outlet, next to where you are standing. Watersheds are defined by topography and are also called drainage basins. They come in all shapes and sizes; a large watershed usually contains many smaller, sub-watersheds.

The French Creek watershed is the most biologically diverse stream system in the Northeastern United States. It supports approximately 130 species of fish and mussels, five times the regional average. The French Creek watershed is 1235 square miles or 790,400 acres.

The outlet of Findley Lake at the Water Wheel marks the beginning of the West Branch of French Creek which joins the main stem of French Creek in Wattsburg, PA. The main stem originates in nearby Sherman, NY. On his trip to Fort LeBoeuf in 1753, George Washington gave it the name French Creek. Today, leading researchers refer to the 117 mile creek as "an ecological treasure."

The French Creek watershed is a sub-watershed of the Mississippi River drainage basin. French Creek is a tributary of the Allegheny River, which flows to the Ohio River and then on to the mighty Mississippi where it drains to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Mississippi River watershed is the third largest watershed in the world behind the Amazon River and Congo River watersheds. The river drains an area of 1.8 million square miles or 41% of the continental United States. This includes 31 states and two Canadian provinces.

A hidden world lies beneath the flowing waters of French Creek - a world of vibrant colors and swift movement. Among the sand and rocks, small, brightly-colored fish called darters make their home. Relatives of the yellow perch and walleye, darters are one of French Creek's most striking species, rivaling even the most colorful coral reef fish of the tropics. Fifteen species of darters inhabit the French Creek watershed including the endangered spotted darter. Darters can be as small as 1.5 inches and rarely get longer than 7 inches.

Freshwater mussels are an important food source for muskrats, minks, raccoons, otters, fishes and some birds such as herons. Mussels create an oxygen-rich stream and they spend their entire lifetimes partially or wholly buried in mud, sand or gravel. While mussels can move by using their foot, they rarely venture more than a hundred yards within their lifetimes. There are 27 species of mussels in French Creek. They can live as long as 100 years. French Creek is the home to four federally endangered mussels - the clubshell, northern riffleshell, rayed bean and snuffbox.

One of the most unusual organisms living in French Creek is commonly known as the eastern hellbender. This giant salamander can weigh over five pounds, reach the length of 29 inches and live as long as 29 years. The eastern hellbender subsists primarily on crayfish, small fish, worms and insects. This docile creature can leave a painful, non-poisonous wound to human hands if mishandled or hurt.

Lampreys may not look like fish, but they are. They have a unique life history, going through a transformation or metamorphosis from larva to adult. The lamprey's thin, cylindrical body is eel-like. The Ohio lamprey, found in French Creek, grows to about 12 inches. They grow for several years until the time of metamorphosis when they stop feeding and go right to the spawning and dying stages. Stream fishes prey heavily on lamprey eggs and the small larvae.

How you can help conserve French Creek? French Creek's native mussels and fish are being threatened by aquatic nuisance species. These are non-native plants and animals that can rapidly reproduce and spread very quickly, threatening more sensitive and important native species. Zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil are two examples. You can control the spread of nuisance species by thoroughly cleaning your boat, motor and trailer when transporting it between water bodies, especially between Lake Erie or Chautauqua Lake and Findley Lake. A big concern for the future is introduction of round goby from bait buckets. These fish eat young mussels and compete with native darters for habitat. Do not dump left over bait into the lake or creek. Use agricultural best management practices to minimize leaching of nutrients to ground and surface water. Encourage the growth of a healthy vegetative buffer along waterways to trap nutrients and sediment before they reach creeks, rivers and lakes. This also helps keep the banks from eroding, reducing the amount of sediment in the water.



Clubshell



Eastern Hellbender (13"-24")



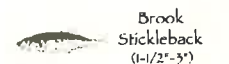
Eastern Sand Darter (2"-5")



Longear Sunfish (2"-4-1/2")



Spotted Darter (3"-4")



Brook Stickleback (1-1/2"-3")



Bluebreast Darter (2"-3")



Iowa Darter (1-1/2 - 2-1/2")



Variegate Darter



Wavy-Rayed Lamp Mussel and Lure



2 Male Northern Riffleshell

Striped Skunk (from birdphoton.com)



Crayfish (from Wikipedia)



Ohio Lamprey



Brindled Madtom (2"-4")



Central Mudminnow (2"-4")



Northern Hogsucker (6"-12")



Mountain Brook Lamprey (5"-7")

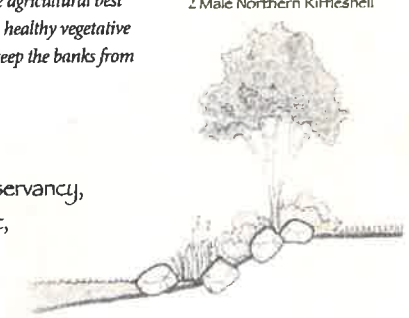


Goby (up to 4")

Sponsored by:

The French Creek Project, Central and Western NY Chapter of The Nature Conservancy,
The Nature Conservancy of Pennsylvania, Bill and Vicki Boria, Judy Hunt,
Chautauqua County Water Quality Task Force

Images not labeled are courtesy of NYS DEC and French Creek Project





Small Town Life

Memories of growing up in rural upstate New York during the 1950's and 1960's brings back recollections of a simpler time when family, friends, church, school, and community were the core of everyday life. What was and is so special about growing up and living in Findley Lake? Primarily, it's the people who make up and are involved in our families, church families, community organizations like scouting, and volunteer service organizations like the Fire Department that make life special. Findley Lake is also a recreational paradise where folks can participate in a variety of water sports, fishing, hiking, biking, camping, golf, and tennis. Peek'n Peak Resort added greatly to the recreational, as well as the employment opportunities for the community.

The neighborhood was the world to us and what a wonderful world it was. Families in the neighborhood and community, cared for each other, worshiped together, partied and played together, and truly loved each other.

Just as past generations affected the values and the lives of our parents, they have and will continue to impact us and future generations.

— David and Stephen Wilcox

In Memory of
Asa H. Wilcox
(1928 - 1995)

A Compassionate Man with a Passion for Life

And
In Honor of
Geneva Wilcox

M I N A

Scale: 1/4" = 10' to the Mill

Mina Through The Years

The Town of Mina, in Chautauqua County, NY, is a square block, six miles by six miles and is bordered on the north by the Town of Ripley, on the east by the Town of Sherman, on the south by the Town of French Creek and on the west by Greenfield Township, Erie County, PA.

Early Native Americans found hunting abundant in the woods, waters and meadows in the Town of Mina. Evidence of the Eriez Indians, known as the Cat People, is still found in the fields where in spring arrowheads may be tilled up by local farmers.

In its early days, the Town of Mina had two thriving settlements — Findley Lake and Mina Corners. Mina Corners, just two miles east of the Findley Lake hamlet, at the junction of Route 430 and the Mina-French Creek Road, was a prosperous pre-Civil War community with a bank, hotels, stores, sawmill, blacksmith, horse race track, tavern, stage coach inn, cheese factory and creameries. Some early industries at Mina Corners were tanning, distilling, the manufacturing of black salts and shingles, cabinet-making, wagon-making and harness-making.

Main Street in Findley Lake has been a hub of activity throughout the years and it has the same familiar winding road through the hamlet. Although the businesses have changed and the buildings have been repurposed, many of the buildings are easily identifiable in the photos as their "bones" are still intact.

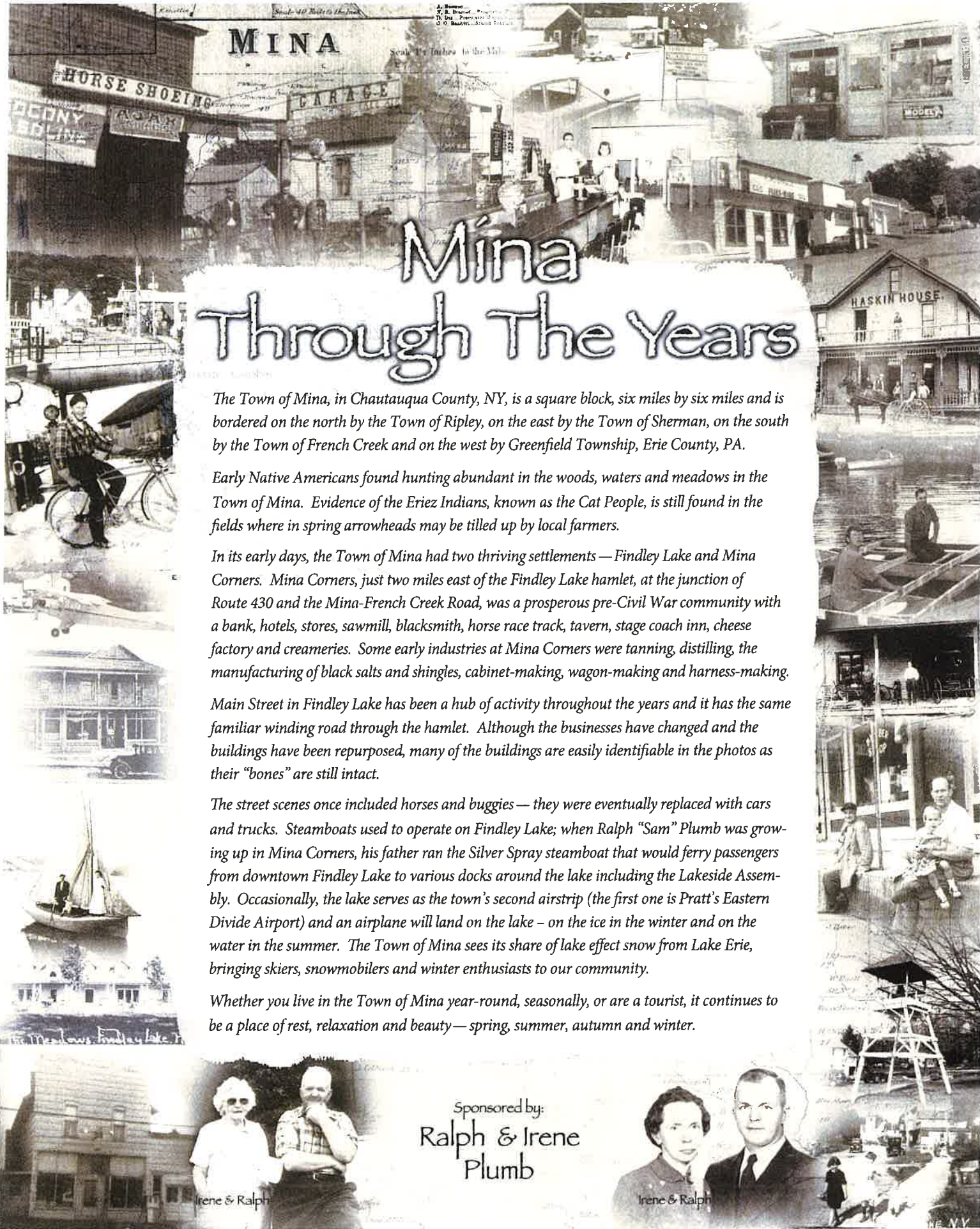
The street scenes once included horses and buggies — they were eventually replaced with cars and trucks. Steamboats used to operate on Findley Lake; when Ralph "Sam" Plumb was growing up in Mina Corners, his father ran the Silver Spray steamboat that would ferry passengers from downtown Findley Lake to various docks around the lake including the Lakeside Assembly. Occasionally, the lake serves as the town's second airstrip (the first one is Pratt's Eastern Divide Airport) and an airplane will land on the lake — on the ice in the winter and on the water in the summer. The Town of Mina sees its share of lake effect snow from Lake Erie, bringing skiers, snowmobilers and winter enthusiasts to our community.

Whether you live in the Town of Mina year-round, seasonally, or are a tourist, it continues to be a place of rest, relaxation and beauty — spring, summer, autumn and winter.

Sponsored by:
Ralph & Irene
Plumb

Irene & Ralph

Irene & Ralph



Lakeside Assembly and the Log Cabin

The Lakeside Assembly at Findley Lake was located on the west side of the lake (on Shadyside Road between Ball Diamond Road and Parsonage Road) and was a Chautauqua Assembly-like organization that offered educational, literary and religious summer programming from 1895 to 1915. It was founded by local businessmen Dr. Fred Lilley and Rev. F.C. Langdon. In the opening season, the managers wrote "The person who misses a single day during the Assembly will miss something which can never be regained – for the mill will never grind with the water that has passed."

The Lakeside Assembly was billed as "Rest, Recreation, Entertainment, Unexcelled Opportunity for Study, Bible Conferences of Helpfulness, Ideal Place for the Vacationist, The Best in Music and Art, Outdoor sports of various kinds." Rates of admission for 1915 were "single admission tickets, good for a day's sojourn on the grounds and all entertainment, are 25 cents. The rates at the hotel for this season, by the week for board and room, will be \$7.00 for each person."

Over its twenty year history, a number of prominent Americans lectured at the Lakeside Assembly including national prohibition leaders one of whom was the legendary Carrie Nation. The W.C.T.U. (Women's Christian Temperance Union) building, now known as Temperance Lodge, still stands on Shadyside Road as do many of the other buildings from the Assembly grounds.

Visitors to the Lakeside Assembly traveled by steam boat from the village in Findley Lake to the assembly grounds and other locations around the lake on either the Silver Spray or the Daisy.

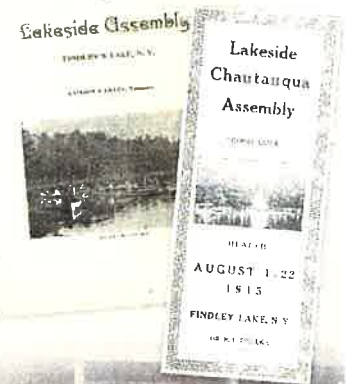
In the 1903, the Lakeside Assembly program showed a picture of the log cabin and the 1909 program referenced the log cabin as "the oldest and most historic building at the lake and will be fitted up for the Art Department. This cabin is a relic of pioneer days." In 1915, it was used as a school – "the children at Lakeside will spend many a happy hour with Miss Ransom in her school in the Log Cabin."

The log cabin, or log structure, has been on several journeys since it was first built in the late 1700's. It was built on the south side of the road on the hill east of Findley Lake on Route 430 just before Mina Corners. It is believed to have been built as an outpost to assist the militia in their travels between other outposts and military forts such as Fort LeBoeuf and Fort Niagara. Research indicates that it was built in the French-Canadian militia style with logs that were squared off, corners that were dove-tailed, and with logs whose dimensions were between 19" and 20" square, requiring a number of men to lift the heavy timbers to put them in place.

Asher Thompson and Harriet Shattuck were married in 1841 and moved into the log cabin. Years later the log cabin was disassembled and moved to the west side of Findley Lake where it was incorporated into the activities of the Lakeside Assembly. As an art studio, a sky light was installed to bring natural light into the building.

After the Lakeside Assembly closed, the log cabin was once again dismantled and in 1916 was moved to North East, PA to the south shore of Lake Erie near Freeport Beach. The log cabin was used as a summer home and remained at that site for close to 80 years. The addition of a summer kitchen and bathroom on the south end of the log cabin kept it from being identified as a log cabin from the road.

The Findley Lake & Mina Historical Society began its quest to find the log cabin in 1992. Through a stroke of luck, the cabin was discovered in 2003, just days before it was to be sold to another party. The log cabin still had the markings that were used to disassemble the logs and then reconstruct the structure. Through old photographs, the historical society was able to verify that the log cabin was indeed the one from Findley Lake. The historical society purchased the 30 foot x 24 foot log cabin for \$5,000 and brought the logs home to Findley Lake.



Sponsored by:
Dennis and Rebecca Brumagin
In Memory of:
Carlton & Millie Brumagin and Louie & Beulah Smith



The Mill and Water Wheel

Where you are now standing, at least two different saw mills and gristmills once operated. Originally built by Alexander Findley, then abandoned and rebuilt in the 1860s by Robert Corbett, the rebuilt mills included a horizontal water wheel inside the building. On June 28, 1892, Louis married Anna Sophia Christiansen of Buffalo and eleven days later Louis, Anna with Philip and Cynthia Swartz bought the combined mill from Ebenezer Skellie, a Civil War Congressional Medal of Honor recipient. In 1903, Louis bought out his brother Philip.

The water discharge from the lake ran through a flume located under the road then through the mill to the stream below. Water could be diverted from the flume to drive a water turbine wheel which powered either the saw or grist mill by an open complex belt system which by today's standards would have been an industrial nightmare. Thus water from the lake helped turn logs into finished lumber and grain into flour. In the 1800s and early 1900s, logs cut around the lake were skidded to the lake edge, formed into rafts of about 30 logs and towed by rowboat to the mill. Below right, the 1908 photo of men in front of the mill shows from left: George Fox, Harry Gravink, Harry Ives, Ralph Pierce, Leslie Smith, George Coe, George Giles, Al Smith, Earl Weaver, George Skellie, Bill Shum, Louis Swartz and Byron Bradley.

Look closely at the picture of the mill, circa 1925. There is an artesian well at the right edge of the photo and drinking ladle hanging on the window. This was the "community drinking fountain."

Ice was also harvested from the lake in the winter, stored in a block house within the mill as well as other buildings around town and sold to area residents throughout the year for their iceboxes. To keep the ice blocks from sticking together, sawdust generated at the mill was used to separate the blocks. Wintertime activities on the lake included sleigh races and ice skating.

In the summer, the Swartz family enjoyed boating in a 2-cylinder inboard motorboat that was named after Louis' daughter, Dorothy. Baseball was a favorite past-time and the local team, shown, top right, in front of the mill, hosted out-of-town teams at the field on Ball Diamond Road. Music was an important part of small town life and Will TenHagen, the barber and mortician for over 50 years in Findley Lake, enjoyed playing the trumpet.

The Great Depression, advances in technology, and transportation improvements, all combined to bring to an end of the mill's operation in the late 1930s. The mill property and the water rights to the lake were sold by Louis' son Larry Swartz to the Findley Lake Property Owners in 1949.

In 1999, to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the establishment of the Town of Mina, professional engineer Dennis Brumagin designed and constructed the components of the water wheel with the assistance of David Swanson. A group of community volunteers assisted with the final assembly. The Water Wheel is now known as the Swartz Family Water Wheel. The Marion Labar Walford Water Wheel Overlook was built in 2003. It was designed by architect Herb Kern. Construction manager for the project was Slaney Walford.

Sponsored by the
John Swartz Family

