



Getting to Know Plum Lake On the Islands - Five Pines

This is the first article in a three part series on the islands of Plum Lake.

Every Highlands boy has at some point stepped foot on the diminutive yet enchanting island pictured above - known to us as Five Pines. One can't help but notice the pilings still jutting out of the sandy bottom shallows of the island's south shore. Why are the pilings still there, shaped not like a long and narrow pier, but like a large rectangle? What purpose would a permanent boathouse have played - isn't the island too small for a permanent residence?

For those of you who know the island, the photograph above will hopefully bring you great surprise! Yes, there was a home on the island. Yes, a nice little three slip boathouse stood on top of the pilings. For years, we have looked and looked for a good photograph of the island - with the summer residence and boathouse of Edward and Bertie White of St. Louis, Missouri. Nothing! (The White's lived at #8 Aberdeen Place in St. Louis. This is several doors off of Forest Park in a neighborhood many Highlands men have come from over the last century.)

And then we got an exciting email from Jane Wilmot Field, our good friend from Wilmot's Island (Wilmots Island is the subject of the next ON THE ISLANDS article). She had found an old photo of the island, a good one too! In the garage of her winter residence in Hillsborough, California - there it was, hiding in a shoe box on the top shelf. Thank you, Jane Wilmot Field! What a great find!



Plum Lake's smallest walkable island has the shortest history as a 'residence'. (Technically, Camp owns a small island just off the northeastern tip of Senior Row peninsula, but it is so small and so thickety, it is not walkable, much less 'livable'.) We know Five Pines was summered on from at least 1921 through 1946. The island is depicted in the children's mystery novel *Jerry and Jean Detectors*, by Clara Ingram Judson and [pictures by] Dorothy Lake Gregory - published in 1923. [Published by Rand McNally & Company, Chicago and New York. The dedication page reads, "To Camp Highlands, in memory of good times."] The story highlights the adventures of Mr. and Mrs. White's niece and nephews during the summer of 1922, a year the White's were unable to use the island.

Mr. White (left) telegraphed his sister with the message "Suddenly called to Europe on business. Cannot use Five Pines this summer. Will you take it? Answer immediately. Leaving tomorrow, Ed." We would recommend this book for children 10 and under - after all these years it is still in print. Our 'Doc' appears as the character 'Cap'. Grandpa Frew is highlighted. Highlands plays a central role in the plot.

Camp is still in touch with another niece of the White's; Sally Dinka (Bertie's side of the family) was born in 1925 and summered on the island from age 7 to 15. She was able to shed some additional light on the Whites for us. Mr. White was the Solicitor General for the Missouri Pacific Railroad - a post he took in 1914. Somehow, he was friends with Judge Hook - for he and his wife Bertie first experienced Plum Lake while visiting the Hooks. During this visit, 'Ed and Bertie' spotted the small island they would later summer on. Judge Hook (of Hook's Point - see the Archives Magazine story All About Judge Hook and Hook's Point) was very much involved in railroad law, and they likely met through the legal world, perhaps in Kansas City, where both lived and worked temporarily. (Mr. Hook died while summering on Plum Lake in 1921 - the White house was likely constructed in the late teens.) Mr. White was one of the more prominent attorneys in St. Louis - so much so that his biography is featured in a Centennial History of Missouri (The Center State), One Hundred Years in the Union 1820 - 1921.

The White's were quite a sight around the lake, apparently traveling with their maid Molly and butler Walter (Walter also played the role of chauffeur). Walter was remembered well for his formal white coat and hat - motoring in the family's wooden cruiser to Sayner to pick up provisions and the mail. Mr. White originally had a 99 year lease on the island, but the Conservation Commission cancelled all leases and put them on a year to year basis. Mr. White was preparing to contest this in the Wisconsin Supreme Court the year he died, in 1935. The island remained in the family until Bertie died in 1946. That year the Commission contacted the heirs - three daughters, Nancy, Ruth, and Mary Louise - and gave them 90 days to get the house off the island. The house and everything in it was sold to Les Siegert, Evelyn Warner's husband [Warner's Resort], who tore it down and used the materials to build a cottage at Plumgate. And that was that! The island is now part of the Northern Highlands State Forest.



Highlands enjoys Five Pines island each and every day during the camping season - as a swimming, canoeing and kayaking destination, a lovely object to sail and ski around, and a beautiful island just to look at (and one can't help but look at Five Pines from the shores of CH). The best way to enjoy Five Pines though, is to get yourself on the island, have a swim, and relax and watch the world of Plum Lake - it is in every direction! So peaceful - an airy, sylvan paradise lit up with the open light of the lake. If there is a breeze, you'll feel it! The sound of lake water lapping up on the sandy, rocky shoreline is all around - 360 degrees! What a feast for the senses! Can you imagine spending the entire summer?

Up Top: Five Pines when it was known as White's Island, likely taken in the early 1930s as a postcard - contributed by Jane Wilmot Field. Middle: Edward Joseph White - his favorite pastime was fishing - how perfect! Above left: Aerial view of Five Pines with CH in the upper right and Hook's Point on the right, 1930s. Above right, view of Five Pines and Wilmot's from Cub - Colt Pier, 1940s. Below: Russell Bernhardt and Dan Bender anchor the Warwick Wood's War Canoe around Five Pines. Five Pines as caught by Mike Bachmann in 2007 - not a bad sight to end the day with!



Sources for this article include Jane Wilmot Field of Wilmot's Island (now known as Field Island); Sally Dinka, niece of Edward and Bertie White; Jerry and Jean Detectors, by Clara Ingram Judson and Dorothy Lake Gregory, 1923; Centennial History of Missouri (The Center State), One Hundred Years in the Union 1820 - 1921; Mary Elizabeth Scholfield Hickey's Lake People, 1985. We do not know what year the island was first occupied. Do you? If you have something to contribute to this article, we would love to hear from you. Email Tim Bachmann: plumlakekid@gmail.com