

Preserving Tuscarora

A future for Blue Mountain Lake's 124-year-old steamboat.

By Elizabeth Folwell

One of the most popular exhibits at the Adirondack Experience is a mechanized diorama showing a tiny train and a little white steamboat moving through our nearby lakes. The steamboat is *Tuscarora*, built in 1900 by William West Durant, and she brought passengers from Marion River Carry to resorts on Blue Mountain Lake until 1929. The Steamboat Landing was her birthplace and winter home.



With passengers filling both decks, *Tuscarora* steams into the channel between Blue Mountain and Eagle Lakes on a summer day.
Courtesy the Adirondack Experience.

Better roads signaled the end for many excursion vessels which were often burned, scrapped or scuttled. The *Tuscarora* escaped that fate and took on a new life in 1934, when it became the Graham family's camp, with bedrooms, a lounge, a kitchen, and bathrooms. As cozy as the cottage was, to all appearances it retained the essence of *Tuscarora*.

This 75-foot-long double-decker steamer is a rare relic of the heydays of Adirondack tourism and a glimpse of how a summer family repurposed a unique structure. *Tuscarora* is an important part of the history of Blue Mountain Lake, bridging the Victorian era and modern times.

Tuscarora owners Donna Gingell and Peter Halsch plus a committee of boat experts and historic preservation advocates have been discussing just what the future may hold for the boat. She is on shore in a quiet cove, not accessible for viewing. There is

much work needed to document and stabilize the watercraft and develop interpretation that will bring this unique story to life. Plans are to move the boat to a site on Route 30 next to the 1895 school (home to Schoolhouse Grounds coffee shop and Wide River II antiques), where visitors will be able to see the restored steamer and learn about its key role in Adirondack transportation. This relocation and restoration process is expected to take several years.

A grant from the Georgia-based 1772 Foundation enabled high-tech documentation of the structure. This historic preservation work is administered by Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH), Keeseville, NY, an organization that sees the value of saving this unique artifact as part of its overall mission recognizing the importance of the region's built environment.

Last fall, a team from Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), which is a program of the National Park Service based in Washington, D.C., used large-format photos and laser plotting to make images that show the *Tuscarora* from all directions. The HAER documents will provide digital measured drawings of the vessel, which will be enormously important for moving *Tuscarora* to its new location.



In March, following a successful campaign to raise \$15,000 from residents and visitors, the project received a grant from Generous Acts, part of the Adirondack Foundation. Currently other grant proposals are in the works. AARCH remains a trusted advisor and fiscal sponsor until the organization becomes an independent 501 (c) 3.

To learn more about the *Tuscarora* project, please join us at these events:

Old Forge Antique and Classic Boat Rendezvous, July 13 at Old Forge waterfront

Tuscarora Tea July 15 4 p.m. See the boat's new site and learn about her history and future. Free but please RSVP to contactus@tuscarorasteamboat.org

Toast the *Tuscarora* Cruise September 4 aboard the William West Durant. Fundraiser with beverages and delicious appetizers, \$125/person. RSVP to contactus@tuscarorasteamboat.org

More events are in the works. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/tuscarorasteamboat> for news. We invite you to join our email list!



Funding for *Tuscarora* is currently managed by Adirondack Architectural Heritage, which can accept tax-deductible donations on behalf of the project. Becoming an independent non-profit organization is a goal of the *Tuscarora* group in 2024.

Reminder-Don't Dump Bait

If you're fishing, please make sure your baitfish are certified disease free. Never dump unused baitfish, baitfish water, or worms into the lake. They can be undesirable invasive species and the water may include microscopic invasives like the spiny water flea.

Blue Mountain Lake Association

Officers

Cathleen Collins - Interim Co-President
Nancy Forhan - Interim Co-President
Andy Coney - Vice President
Diane Selin - Treasurer
Sherry Nemmers - Secretary

Directors

Nancy Swanson - Beautification
Jean-Marie Donohue - Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts
Ralph Coon - Highways
Bob Curry - Fire/Ambulance
Sarah Lewin - Membership
Michele Curry - Water Watch
David Kahn - Adirondack Experience

Advisors

Mary Lynne Heldmann
Paul Monroe



PO Box 245
Blue Mountain Lake, NY 12812

BlueMountainLakeAssociation.org

News of Blue

Summer 2024 Edition

Inside:

- Welcome!
- What We Do
- Water Watch Update
- Lake Adirondack Dam
- NY Safe Boater Certificates
- BML Buoys Earn a Permit
- Blue's Little Explorers
- 2024 Race Dates
- Who Was Henry Eckford?
- Preserving the *Tuscarora* and more!

Welcome!

Whether this is your first visit to Blue Mountain Lake, or you've been coming for years, we're glad you're here.

For over 75 years The Blue Mountain Lake Association has been dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the economic, cultural and physical facets of Blue Mountain Lake for the benefit of current and future generations.

Our membership includes year-rounders, seasonal residents, businesses, frequent visitors, and others who care about our lake and community. We'd love it if you joined too.

What We Do

- **Community Engagement**
Newsletters, emails, meetings
- **Philanthropy**
Supporting local non-profit organizations
- **Beautification**
Flower gardens, roadside cleanups
- **Local Government Liaison**

Town government, highway departments

- **Water Quality**
Professional and volunteer testing for clarity, excess nutrients, and road salt

- **Invasive Species**

Professional divers inspect lake bottoms and remove aquatic invasives

- **Lake Safety**

Shoal warning buoys and channel markers

- **Recent Improvement Projects**

Raised funds for a new ambulance

Built the town beach pavilion

Installed lighting in beach toilet building

Bought the playground sun shelter

Preserved the old phone booth

KEY DATES

bluemountainlakeassociation.org/calendar

July 5 - BMLA Water Watch Annual Meeting

8:30am at ALCA - Coffee & pastries provided; Doors open at 8:00am

July 21 - BluMouLA-BuFuRa

10:30 at Town Beach - Paddling and rowing races (register in advance or 8:30-10) www.BMLBuoyRace.com

August 1 - BMLA Annual Meeting

7:00pm at ADKX Auditorium

August 11 - Blue Mountain Sizzler

8:30 behind ALCA - 5k road race (register in advance or 7-8:15) www.BlueMtSizzler.com

August 12 - Indian Lake Town Board Meeting

7:00pm at the BML Fire Station

Blue Mountain Lake Association Membership - Join or Renew Today!

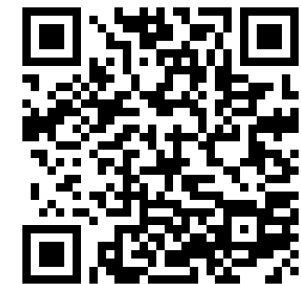
by Sarah Lewin, Membership Chair

More members than ever equals a stronger community than ever! Thanks to your involvement our hamlet has helped neighbors in times of trouble, been a welcoming community to new homeowners and businesses, cared for our beautiful lake, and celebrated with one another through events and gatherings year-round. These efforts are on-going, and we'd be excited to add you to the mix as a Blue Mountain Lake Association Member!

Please join (or renew) today and encourage your Blue friends, relatives and neighbors to do the same. Thank you and here is to a GREAT 2024!

It's Easy to Join

Scan [this](#) code with your phone's camera to join (or renew):



Or mail a check for \$25, along with your mailing and email addresses to: Diane Selin, Treasurer, PO Box 61, Round Lake, NY 12151



More Dam Projects

by Andy Coney

My father called us "sidewalk supervisors," those who love to watch construction. The latest unusual and visible project unfolding for our enjoyment is rebuilding the Lake Adirondack dam.

Dangerous dams have been in the news lately and we are reassured that two critical local dams are being addressed, Indian Lake and Lake Adirondack.

While the Indian Lake dam work will occur out of the public eye, sidewalk supervisors can watch the Adirondack Lake dam refurbishment unfold in plain sight.

Adirondack Lake lies just southeast of downtown Indian Lake on route 28. The road dips to beside the dam's ominous-looking leaking spillway. While the spillway's leaks are concerning, engineers report the real issues are beneath the earth embankment and the solution will be to inject stabilizing materials from above. Work should finish by September 2025.

Water Watch 2024 Campaign

by Michele Curry, Nancy Forhan & Cathleen Collins

The approach of another summer on the beautiful shores of Blue Mountain, Eagle and Utowana Lakes reminds us of the importance of remaining steadfast in our commitment to protecting our scenic waters. For decades, with support from friends and neighbors alike, Water Watch, and now the Blue Mountain Lake Association (BMLA) has dedicated itself to preserving the long-term water quality of our lakes. The economic well-being of our community depends upon this effort, as does our enjoyment of the lakes for swimming, paddling, boating, fishing and more. The good news: our efforts are succeeding!

We can take pride in how our community rallied after variable leaf milfoil (VLM), a highly aggressive aquatic invasive species (AIS), was discovered in Utowana Lake in 2020. This sobering reality galvanized our community to raise the funds needed to contain the spread of VLM and to begin working toward its eradication. Our quick response resulted in reducing the amount of VLM hand-harvested from the bottom of the lake from 400 gallons in 2021 to less than 40 gallons in 2023. Thankfully, no VLM has been discovered in Blue Mountain Lake or Eagle Lake to date. In January, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation awarded the BMLA a \$60,000 grant to help support this vital work over the next three years – a testament to our initial success and persistence. Our project was one of just four that were funded in the Adirondack Park. This was a huge accomplishment for the BMLA.

Blue Mountain Lake has been called “The Little Town that Could” describing how our community successfully unites to tackle issues and support one another. In this spirit, the BMLA is launching a new campaign: The 2024 Fund to Protect Our Waters.

Our goal is to raise \$150,000 to support ongoing efforts to: 1) preserve water quality; 2) prevent other AIS from entering our lakes; and, 3) continue work to eradicate VLM from Utowana Lake while providing ongoing AIS

surveys after our NY State grant expires in 2026. These funds will provide the BMLA with the resources needed to manage ongoing programs that are not covered by the grant, to immediately respond to any new aquatic threats, and to provide financial stability going forward.

Please consider giving generously. With your support, we will continue to protect our scenic waters for generations to come.

It's Easy to Donate

Scan [this](#) code with your phone's camera to donate through PayPal:



Or mail a check made out to “BMLA” with “Water” on the memo line, along with your mailing and email addresses to: Diane Selin, Treasurer, PO Box 61, Round Lake, NY 12151



NY Safe Boater Certificates

Soon Required for All

It has been sneaking up slowly but now is the time to act. At the BMLA's 2023 annual meeting we were reminded that New York State requires all motorboat operators to complete a boating safety course and carry a certificate. Boaters born on or after January 1, 1978 must have certificates in 2024. For all others, the deadline is January 1, 2025.

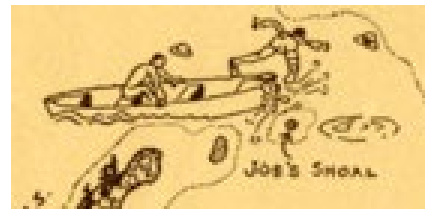
If you have a safety boating certificate from another state or a NY certificate you earned in the past, those are fine. New York residents with a certificate can add an anchor symbol to their auto

driver licenses and do not need to carry a separate card.

Contrary to widespread belief, law enforcement does occasionally patrol Blue Mountain Lake. Recently a 90-miler volunteer in a safety boat was ticketed for an expired registration by an officer assisting the race. Rangers, while not necessarily checking boats, are frequently on the lakes for routine patrol, rescues, and campsite maintenance.

The 8-hour safe boating course is offered across the state in-person and online. Contact the Hamilton County Sheriff's office for dates and locations of local classes. While the classroom course requires a day-long commitment, the online version can be paused and restarted as convenient. Some thirty-five vendors offer the online course and members who have tried them report success.

Let us all put this requirement behind us. And chances are you will learn something new.



State Approves BMLA's Navigation Buoys

Since the days of steamboat travel, buoys have been placed in our lakes to mark hazards and the 1933 state survey map shows some of those locations. Over time the responsibility for marking rocks has shifted; from guides to steamship company employees, to hotel and boat rental operators, and now to volunteers organized by the Blue Mountain Lake Association.

This past summer the BMLA was pleased to learn our navigation buoy permit application was approved by New York State, the first ever for a lake association. The BMLA's new five-year permit grants the buoys official status under Section 33 of NY Navigation

Law, however with that comes an obligation to maintain them.

Blue Mountain Lake's navigation aids follow the “red right returning from sea” standard. Blue Mountain Lake flows west through Eagle and Utowana toward Raquette Lake and eventually to the North Atlantic. So, returning to Blue through the channel, red buoys mark the right side and green the left. Leaving Blue toward Eagle Lake, it is the opposite.

White buoys in mid-lake identify dangerous rocks and shoals. Our white spar buoys stay in place year-round while in the summer, volunteers add large white “Danger Rocks” buoys, one for each significant rock or cluster.



SUN Fund Update

by Nancy Forhan

Following the July 2023 flood, the Adirondack Foundation activated the SUN (Special and Urgent Needs) Fund and solicited donations for the Central Adirondack Communities that were most affected.

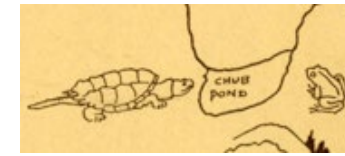
Thanks to your generosity, \$106,000 was collected specifically for Blue Mountain Lake and was distributed to individuals and businesses who had applied for financial assistance with property damage and lost business. The volunteer fire and ambulance department also received a grant.

A Family Daycare Tradition

by Cathleen Collins

Grandma Evelyn provided daycare — but really so much more — for many of us and many of our children. In October, Evelyn Thompson's daughter-in-law Kim, and her daughter Ashlyn Pine opened Blue Mountain's Little Explorers licensed daycare in Kim and Greg's home in Blue. They currently care for eight children, from infants to age 12, serving the Blue Mountain, Indian Lake, and Long Lake communities.

Little Explorers has capacity for a few more toddlers and is renovating their basement space to accommodate those active bodies and all the toys.



Who Was Henry Eckford? and why was the Eckford Chain named for him?

by Andy Coney

The Eckford Chain (Blue Mountain Lake, Eagle Lake, and Lake Utowana) was named in 1834 by Ebenezer Emmons, New York State Geologist, for Henry Eckford, a prominent ship builder and New York politician. It was a time when Adirondack features were named for politicians, historians, and businesspeople, such as Mount Marcy, Street Mountain, and Tupper Lake. But why did Emmons choose to honor seemingly obscure Henry Eckford who had died two years earlier?



Courtesy US Navy Naval History and Heritage Command

Henry Eckford, after a youth as a carpenter in Scottish shipyards, emigrated as a sixteen-year-old in 1791 to apprentice with his uncle, a shipbuilder on the lower Saint Lawrence River, where he proved to be adept at both construction and design. In 1796, having completed his apprenticeship, he moved to New York City where his reputation grew for building fast and seaworthy ships. In 1803 he became a US citizen and travelled in 1806 to Oswego, NY to build a naval gunship to serve on Lake

Ontario, the new nation's northwestern frontier.

Returning to New York City, Eckford continued his shipbuilding enterprises and began a long relationship with John Jacob Astor, producing ships for Astor's fur trading business. He also built coastal patrol boats for the US Navy.

In 1812, at the start of the war with Britain, Eckford was asked to return to Lake Ontario and create a fleet at Sackets Harbor, barely a wilderness clearing. In a short time, the Sackets Harbor shipyard was producing naval vessels at a furious pace and by the war's end employed eight hundred shipwrights. That Lake Ontario fleet, and another on Lake Erie where Eckford was also instrumental, was essential to discouraging a British invasion from the north and a chief reason the United States was able to prevail in the war.

Eckford had built the navy's ships on credit and went bankrupt when only partially paid after a series of bills in Congress to restore his finances did not pass.

After the war, Eckford continued in shipbuilding and became a player in New York's Tammany Hall, then the political machine of the city. When Tammany came into disgrace, his reputation fell with it which further discouraged attempts in Congress to reimburse him for his losses building the Lake Ontario fleet.

In 1831, to help restore his finances, Henry Eckford agreed to help the Ottoman Empire rebuild its navy. He travelled to Constantinople where he died suddenly in January 1832, possibly of cholera.

Henry Eckford was an immigrant who made good and whose shipbuilding and organizing skills helped his adopted country survive the War of 1812. That Blue Mountain Lake, Eagle Lake, and Lake Utowana are still known today as the Eckford Chain is an honor to both him and our beloved lakes.

Remember always
CLEAN-DRAIN-DRY
Before bringing a boat to Blue