



MAY 2024

# THE UPPER SARANAC LAKE ASSOCIATION

# MAILBOAT

## History of Wenonah

Eileen Mansfield



Camp Wenonah

Camp Wenonah was built by Jules Bache in 1897. The camp is situated on the southwest shore of Upper Saranac Lake. We begin the story with Jules's father, Semon Bach, who was born in Bavaria in 1826 and immigrated to the United States in 1843. Semon settled in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1846, he moved to New York City and opened a glass making company named Semon Bache and Co. About this time an "e" was added to the name Bach to make it more American. Although the company produced a variety of glass products, it specialized in mirrored tops used by high-end furniture companies. In 1849, Semon married Elizabeth Van Praag and the couple had seven children. Jules Semon Bache was born November 9, 1861. Some of his siblings joined their father's business but Jules took another path. He was educated at Charlier Institute and in 1881 he started work as a cashier at Leopold and Cahn Co., a stock brokerage firm started by his uncle. In 1886 Jules was made a minority partner. On May 23, 1892 he married Florence Sckefel, they had three daughters. The same year Jules took full control of the brokerage firm and changed the name to JS Bache & Co. He built the company to become one of the top brokerage houses in the United States, outranked only by Merrill Lynch. In 1920 the firm financed a number of major projects including the construction of the New York subway system. Bache also had a sizable interest in Canadian mining and in 1923 he acquired a substantial position in Chrysler Corp.

As antisemitism was growing around the country Jules, like many Jews, looked to the Adirondacks for a vacation home. In

1895 he chose a site next to Isaac Seligman's Fishrock camp. Although the men were both Jewish and major players in the world of high finance, they were quite different. Seligman lobbied for income tax while Bache was anti-tax, parking his business offshore to avoid paying corporate tax. Bache believed that taxation was a hindrance to economic growth. He later published a booklet titled "Release business from the slavery of taxation". Seligman was a social reformer who fought to improve the lives of the poor. Bache supported numerous philanthropic causes, but perhaps his most valuable contribution was his multi-million dollar collection of Old Masters paintings, which were given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art after his death. Life magazine reported in a 1937 article on his art collection that "Bache is one of the few men who can look at a stock ticket and a Raphael with equal appreciation and understanding". The Bache collection is the second largest ever donated to the museum.

The design of Wenonah is centered around a sprawling Queen Anne style house. Over the years the camp was expanded resulting in an eclectic style ranging from Victorian to Japanese. It included a boathouse, teahouse, tennis house and several service buildings. Bache also added the Ziegfeld Room which has been described as the grandest playroom ever built. It was named for the Ziegfeld girls who often visited Wenonah. Later Jules built two lakeside cottages for his granddaughters. One cottage was nicknamed the Pershing House when his granddaughter, Muriel

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# Wenonah

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Richards married Warren Pershing. Warren was the son of General John Pershing and his wife, Helen Frances Warren.

The property remained in the Bache family until Jules died in 1944. It was sold and eventually purchased by Grayce Palanzo who ran it as a lodge until 1987. She is described as less than 5 feet tall with the voice of a drill Sargent. Grayce meticulously cared for the property, preserving much of its original flavor. The Wenonah Lodge hostess gained a reputation for being very selective about her guests. Travelers had to first win her approval before being allowed to rent accommodations at her facility. The bar at the lodge was open to lake residents who mostly arrived by boat. Grayce would turn on a light in the window indicating the bar



Jules Bache

was open. She was also mischievous. When Dr Hardy headed to the bar in his boat, she would turn off the light. When he was back at his dock, she would turn it on again. In 1988 the property was purchased by a Glens Falls Corporation headed by Dr. John Schutze. The corporation applied to subdivide the property into 20 parcels. You can read more about this effort at Historic Saranac Lake. [https://localwiki.org/hsl/Wenonah\\_Lodge](https://localwiki.org/hsl/Wenonah_Lodge)

The oldest structures in the camp originally had log and shingle exteriors. At some point, all the structures were covered in brown-stained brainstorm siding, a wavy-edged, rough-hewn clapboard. According to a 2005 issue of Adirondack Life, this siding was first installed in 1907 at White Pine Camp and has its origins in sixteenth century England. Although eclectic, the camp has gained continuity by exterior siding and color. The whole compound is capped by red roofs. This is unusual on the lake and is a warm contrast from the greens and browns of the forest. Currently the property is split between three owners who have lovingly and carefully restored and preserved the buildings. Stepping in Wenonah is stepping back in time.

Thanks to Ann Schoff and Michelle Maggs for their help and guidance.

## Government Affairs Notes

Larry Koch, Chair

The Government Affairs Committee continues to monitor local government/developer activities in the Upper Saranac Lake watershed. We have been told the Short-Term Rental law process had been fairly smooth with the most difficulty being some applicant properties need to update septic systems before rental permits will be approved. This is an intended outcome of the law and should be educational for all members. There are quite a few approved rental properties already to go for this summer season.

The committee sent a letter on April 25<sup>th</sup> to the APA responding to the Upper Saranac Marine application for development of the old Hickok's boat livery property. This application has been a long-term process, and we are sure there is more to come. USLA supports the development of the property but in a more modest way than proposed by the owner. You can find a copy of the USLA to APA letter in the News/Government Affairs section of [www.uppersaranac.com](http://www.uppersaranac.com).

This spring, two other local Lake Associations approached USLA requesting we support their endeavor to support the

Franklin County Sheriff's department to procure a patrol boat. Additionally, train two existing Sheriff's Deputies to periodically patrol the lakes of southern Franklin County. Both Tupper Lake and Simon Pond are having a lot of difficulty with unruly rental party boats and speeders in 5 MPH/no wake zones. We have our own issues with speeding in the Fish Creek to Saranac canal and near swimming areas around the lake. It is proven with law enforcement that periodic monitoring tends to minimize the dangerous activities when boaters think they can get caught and fined for not adhering to New York State boating rules. USLA is working with this group in support of the concept, but we are far from having a Sheriff's boat on the lake this summer. We will update you periodically when and if more information becomes available.

Government Affairs is never boring. Stay tuned!

*Members: Dave Powalyk, Anne Sheerin, Cindy Rosenwald, Neal Kolsky, Lynne Perry*

## Safety Committee Michael Franklin, Chair

### Boating Safety Course: Save the Dates



USLA will again sponsor the NYS Boating Safety Course in 2024, at the VIC at Paul Smith College.

It will be offered again twice in 2024 on July 20 (full day) and August 4&5 (2, 4-hour classes from 9am to 1pm).

To register for the Saturday, July 20th Boat Safety Class go to: <http://www.register-ed.com/events/view/213473>

To register for the Wednesday, August 2nd Boat Safety Class: <http://www.register-ed.com/events/view/213476>

### REMEMBER:

- By January 1, 2025, everyone will be required to have a boating license to operate a watercraft in New York State.
- If you were born on or after January 1, 1988, you must already have a license
- If you were born on or after January 1, 1983, you will be required to have a license by the end of 2023
- If you were born on or after January 1, 1978, you will be required to have a license by the end of 2025