



## ***In This Issue*** **Winter 2018**

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## **Needham History Center & Museum**

1147 Central Avenue  
Needham, MA 02492  
781-455-8860  
[www.needhamhistory.org](http://www.needhamhistory.org)



## **Museum Hours**

Tuesday – Thursday,  
10:00 am – 2:00 pm  
or by Appointment.

## **Gift Shop Hours**

Tues., Weds., Thurs.  
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

## **Research, Events & Rentals**

781-455-8860  
or see our Website.

Appointments required  
for Research & Archives.



## **Swimming in Needham (Part 2) – Putting it Over with a Bang! – by Steve Sauter**

*In our last episode...* It was 1930, the beginning of the Depression. The Needham Board of Trade took over the improvements of Rosemary Lake. With the help of local contractors, they cleared debris and old structures, dredged the bottom, and laid gravel and sand for a beach. "Let's make this a Needham community project," they said, "and put it over with a bang!"

At its completion in 1933, Rosemary Beach had a raft and diving board 150 feet from the shore, bath houses for men and women, outdoor showers, drinking fountain, a wooden walk with benches between the lake and the nearby hillside, and a roped-off area for small children. The Board of Trade treated the lake with copper sulphate to reduce vegetation, which also killed many of the resident suckers and turtles, but not the highly-prized trout, pickerel, and perch.

Although the project was not yet complete and the lake was still refilling, the extremely hot weather of June 1933 brought out many bathers, and it was decided to let them begin using the facility. On August 5, the Rosemary Beach Carnival celebrated the opening with a canoe race, exhibition diving, and swimming races for girls and boys of various ages.

By 1934, there are references to a large raft with two diving boards, with two more on a tower. A radio set had been installed "for baseball returns, music, etc." Men dredged the Rosemary Brook channels and drained the Rosemary Meadows to reduce the mosquito population. Some folks, though, still stuck to the old ways – as late as 1950, the town was urging the public to not use "the old swimming beach on South Street near Green Streets" and had posted "No Swimming" signs because of "broken glass and lack of maintenance and lifeguard supervision."

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In 1943, the Board of Trade declared it could no longer fund and manage Rosemary Beach on its own. The town purchased 47,000 square feet, including some additional property on the Garden Street side of the lake. The Needham Park and Recreation assumed responsibility for the swimming program. And in a sign of the times (it was World War II), a newspaper noted the acquisition would, "in view of war conditions, provide Needham youth with healthful recreations." Sundays frequently witnessed groups of convalescent soldiers at the beach. In 1944, the town voted to buy nine acres bordering Rosemary Lake, including the right of way to May Street for expanded recreation, but that never came to fruition. A 1949 newspaper article referenced the upcoming Fourth of July "novelty races" on the water, comparing them to the amusing tub races of prior years, and noted continued facility improvements to the cat walk and to the diving tower.

For the next few decades, swimming in the lake was Needham's summer pastime. But it was not without its challenges. A trademark of the swimming experience was the dark, murky water – a result of the deep silt, leaves from the surrounding trees, and algae. In the 1960s, the bottom was dredged again to remove some silt, and sand was brought in to improve the beach. In the summer of 1969, Park and Rec counted more than 54,000 visits.

By 1970, however, the heavy usage and increasing suburban development took its toll. The water's visibility fell below the state's lifeguard safety standards. Runoff from nearby homes leached fertilizers and household chemicals into the lake. In 1970, the Lake was closed for swimming.

As the Rosemary Lake Reclamation Committee considered various solutions, the town built a temporary swimming pool alongside the lake. However, the Committee ultimately rejected options to reopen the lake for swimming. Studies indicated the dominant plant life had changed from curly-leaf pondweed and American elodea to smartweed – a much heavier weed that fills the lake at a much faster rate and would eventually change it to a swamp. Also, the abundant leaves interfered with the nutrient balance. But the lake could still support some fish life so, with a bit of optimism and a lot of nostalgia, the Needham Times noted, "Still it would be nice to have that old swimming hole again!"

**Fast forward** – Rosemary Lake never got reclaimed for swimming, and the current plan is to return it to as healthy a pond environment as is possible, with silt mitigation, improved drainage, and runoff control. The "temporary" pool served the town for more than 45 years, with its annual maintenance requiring the lake to be drained so the weight of its water did not collapse the fragile pool walls. The systems were also showing their age, as failures in the filtration system necessitated long closures during recent summer seasons. In 2010, a citizens' group called The Community Center of Needham started working with the town's residents and administration to move forward on a plan to rebuild the pool and improve the recreational structures around it. This past August, those plans were realized, and the town opened its new lakeside facility.

**New Pool? So Cool!** Or, as they might have said in an earlier day – We made this a Needham community project, and put it over with a bang!

**Missed Part 1?** See it at <https://needhamhistory.org/features/gazette/>

## Looking for Needham Gifts? Find them Here!



The Needham History Center has a large variety of Needham-themed gifts for everyone on your list, including **T-shirts, hats, DVDs, ornaments, and books** – not to mention the treasures of the Heirloom Shoppe.

Join us for **our first-ever Holiday Shopping Day** and reception to celebrate the

### Grand Opening

of our new shop – See what we have in store!

**Grand Opening: Sunday, December 9, from 12-5pm**

**Regular Hours: Tues, Weds, Thurs, 10am – 2pm**

**Also online! [www.needhamhistory.org/Shop](http://www.needhamhistory.org/Shop)**

## Save the Date!

**Champagne & Chocolate is back!**

**February 9, Saturday, 7 – 11 pm**

at Knight Auditorium, Babson College

***Champagne & Chocolate: a Fundraiser to Benefit the History Center's Schoolhouse Programs***

And better than ever! Join us for a special evening featuring Needham's own Mike Riley as MC, live music from the Tom Nutile Band, hearty hors d'oeuvres, complimentary wine and beer, good food and decadent chocolate desserts, and of course – bubbly champagne!

Tickets are \$75 and can be purchased by check or online at [www.needhamhistory.org/Tickets](http://www.needhamhistory.org/Tickets). For information about the event or about Sponsorship, please call Gloria at 781-455-8860.



## Annual Appeal Thanks!

We are very grateful to the friends who have donated to the 2018 Annual Appeal. Your generosity supports our research and programs – with special focus this year on our schoolhouse programs and collections conservation. **Thank you!**

Natalie Andersen, Jeanette Anderson, Joe McCabe and Susan Anderson. Alison and Peter Atallah, Paul and Polly Attridge, Ellen and Joe Barnes, Jo and Peter Belval, Christopher and Rachel Busby, Michael Caine and Kiyoko Morita, Paula Caputo, Colin Coleman, Bob Lynch and Maureen Commene, Frank and Louise Condon, Kathryn D'Addesio, Carolin and Samuel Davis, Richard and Gail Davis, Kristin Casasanto and Jess Delaney, Marie Devine, Elizabeth Duhig, Janis Soma and Bruce Eisenhut, Jeffrey and Tsuneko Eustace, Adrienne Smith and Mark Gluesing, Amy and Howard Goldman, Don and Margaret Gray, Donald Reed and Risa Greendlinger, Maurice and Elizabeth Handel, Elizabeth and Steven Handler, Robert Heald, Jon Helman, Bruce and Helen Johnstone, Elaine Kile, Penelope Kirk, Robert Larsen, Martha Leiby, Theresa Lemaire, Ann MacFate, Norman and Janet MacLeod, James and Sarah Ann Mahoney, Bill and Mary Mahoney, Jean McCarthy, Ted and Mary McIntosh, Seth and Leslie Medalie, Steve and Dori Mock, Ruth and Joseph Nadol, Nancy Nemon, NHS Friends of Music, Mindy and Jay Pasco-Anderson, Richard and Lisa Petrie, Jaimie Scranton-Pomerantz and Todd Pomerantz, Jim Reulbach, William and Mary Riddell, Eleanor and Jay Rosellini, Tim and Katie Sanders, Steve and Leah Sauter, Joseph Scalia, Colleen Schaller, Claudette and Jack Shea, Nancy Simpson-Banker, Stanley and Karen Steinberg, Mary Supple, Ann and John Teachout, Leslie and Paul Tillotson, Richard and Sally Toran, Alice Ungethuen, Patricia Wiggan. *(as of 27 November)*

### And it's not too late to donate!

Make a donation through our website at [www.needhamhistory.org/donate](http://www.needhamhistory.org/donate) or by check to NHC&M, 1147 Central Avenue.

## HELP WANTED!

We are looking for Volunteers to assist with running the Gift Shop – **Tuesday thru Thursday 10-2, and Saturday 10-2**. At least one 2-hour shift per week.

If you are interested (or might be!), call Gloria for more information – [gris@needhamhistory.org](mailto:gris@needhamhistory.org) or 781-455-8860.

# Coming Up Next ~

**December 9 (Sunday), from 12 – 5 pm – Gift Shop Grand Opening**  
Our Grand Opening & Holiday Sale – Needham gifts for everyone on your list!

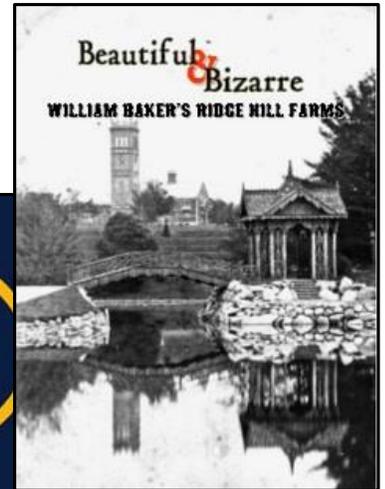
**February 9 (Saturday), from 7 – 11 pm – Champagne & Chocolate is back!**  
Tickets and information at [www.needhamhistory.org/tickets](http://www.needhamhistory.org/tickets)

**March 11 (Monday), 7 pm – Whiskey Talk & Tasting**  
*Donal from Glendalough Distillery, and The James Pub & Provisions.* An introduction to some fabulous whiskeys and the stories behind the distillery. Over 21 only please.



## SHOP FOR ~

- T-shirts
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