



Rhoads Hotel. Postcard: F.M. Kirby Co. 1908

III. Early Hotels

The earliest public house at the Lake was the Rhoads Hotel. Building of the hotel began in 1854 for owners Henry Hancock, Jonathan Husted and Almon Goss on land leased from Henry Worthington. Since 1806 the Worthington family owned a large tract of land at the Inlet area that was originally patented to William Nichols. Lumber to build the Lake hotel came from the Hollenback and Urquhart mill at the Outlet Mills. Although the Lake hotel was constructed near the Lake front, it was actually located in Lehman Township. Business was limited in the early years, but eventually the hotel gained wide popularity.

The hotel, originally named the Lake House, was opened in early July 1855 with Thomas Totten of Centermoreland as the manager. The three story structure, seventy-five feet in length and forty feet in depth, was located near the Lake's front where Carpenter Road now enters the Lake Road. The Lake House accommodated one hundred guests. It offered sail and row boats, along with fishing tackle, for use by the guests. It sported a porch and veranda the entire length of the hotel.

With the opening of the Lake House, a daily stage line to the Lake was also made available for the summer trade. The ride from Wilkes-Barre took at least three to four hours. Access to the Lake was severely hampered by poor roads that delayed the resort's development. Despite the advertisement of excellent fishing and hunting at the Lake, the Lake House apparently was not an attractive investment as ownership of the hotel changed many times within the next two decades.

In August 1857 Henry Worthington leased the Lake House to A. H. Emily who in turn leased it to Simeon Leland for \$425.00 until April 1, 1859, at which time Leland agreed to purchase the hotel for \$4,000.00. In the summer of 1859, the manager of the Lake House was James I. Clayton, whose young son John M. Clayton died in a fall at the hotel on October 1, 1860. A room was \$1.50 a day and \$5.00 to \$7.00 a week. Leland, however, was unable to maintain payments for the property, and it was sold at sheriff's sale in September 1864 to Hendrick B. Wright. Between 1864 and 1875, there was a succession of owners to the Lake House. Access to the Lake in these years had not greatly improved. A. S. Orr ran a line of coaches in the summer of 1868, but the roads were in terrible condition, and in 1872 the hotel was still not well known outside the Wyoming Valley.

In November 1873 the Lake House was acquired by Washington Lee who apparently engaged James W. Rhoads as the manager for 1874. A Lake House post office was opened on July 29, 1874, with Rhoads as postmaster. A year later, the Lake House post office was discontinued.

Lee sold the Lake House to James W. Rhoads in March 1875 for \$8,500.00. The purchase included the fifty acres upon which the hotel stood as well as 8,500 square feet of adjoining land. Rhoads was a retired Sheriff of Luzerne County, and under his management, the Lake House had increasing success. Rhoads renamed the hotel the Harvey's Lake Hotel, but eventually the hotel was simply called Rhoads Hotel.



Rhoads Hotel

Rhoads renovated the hotel by rebuilding and widening the front porch. Bath rubs were added and water was pumped into the hotel. Near the hotel, Rhoads built an annex that had a bar and billiards room. Eventually, two extensions with additional rooms were added to the rear of the hotel. For many years, the Rhoads Hotel burned tallow candles for light, and it was a local event when kerosene lamps were added. In front of the hotel a large reservoir held hundreds of catfish, which served as meals for dinner guests. The Rhoads children earned pocket change by catching the fish from the Lake.

The Rhoads family had a talent for publicizing the hotel with special events at the Lake. At one time, the elder Rhoads paid a stunt man fifty dollars to walk a tightrope across the Inlet near the hotel. For a time in the early 1880's, cash prizes were offered by Rhoads to winners of the July 4 boating races at the Lake. By 1881 the rates at the Rhoads Hotel were \$10.00 to \$14.00 per week or \$2.25 per day.

The Rhoads Hotel and the Lake Grove House, built in 1881, cooperated to attract guests to the Lake. The two hotels offered fishing contests and jointly sponsored holiday celebrations. Despite the stage lines running to the Lake, roads were still inadequate and resorts like Bear Creek and Lake Carey were more popular because access to them was easier. Although the original owners of the Rhoads Hotel had a steamboat, the Wingohocking, from 1860 to 1864, and James W. Rhoads had the steamer Emma serving the hotel in 1876, regular steamboat service at the Lake was not successful until Charles and Frank Rhoads added the Rose in 1887 and the Mistletoe in 1888.

The Rhoads Hotel, of course, benefited immensely when the Lehigh Valley Railroad opened a line to Alderson in 1887.

The small steamers picked up passengers at the station for a ride to the hotels at the Inlet. A new attraction was the Rhoads aquarium with fish from the Lake. The popularity of the Lake as a summer resort blossomed in 1887. Unusual soups were offered by a French cook. The Rhoads held dances with Oppenheim's Orchestra at an outdoor pavilion on Wednesday and Saturday evenings with the grounds illuminated by Japanese lanterns.

After the death of James W. Rhoads in August 1886, the hotel was managed by his widow, Caroline Rhoads, who died in June 1888. A son, Charles E. Rhoads, aided by his brother, Frank Rhoads, managed the property until 1902. When the Shawanese post office opened at the hotel on January 12, 1892, Charles E. Rhoads was postmaster. Frank Rhoads later managed the hotel from 1902 to 1908.

The Rhoads brothers completely repainted and remodeled the hotel in the spring of 1898, when the Oneonta Hotel was to open. An electrical generator for a lighting system was added. Despite the special attraction of the Oneonta, the Rhoads Hotel was still a popular resort. On July 27, 1898, after the Oneonta opened, the Rhoads Hotel was still filled, and some guests slept on the floor or in cots.

On January 4, 1908, the Rhoads Hotel completely burned to the ground. A defective pipe in the furnace caused the fire, which spread rapidly due to a strong northerly wind. Frank Rhoads was at the hotel and discovered the fire. He telephoned for aid, and although local caretakers and men from the Albert Lewis sawmill responded, there was no hose or pumping equipment available to halt the raging fire. An effort to save furnishings was also unsuccessful as only two trunks were saved. Since the hotel served as the local telephone exchange,



Early Lake Grove House - Log Bridge



Expanded Lake Grove House - Iron Bridge

telephone service to the Lake was disrupted. The loss was estimated at \$20,000.00.

After the fire, Frank Rhoads converted the Rhoads tavern, a separate facility built in 1883, into a small hotel. However, Frank Rhoads died in the spring of 1909. His daughter, Amy, managed the hotel and later married J. D. Carpenter. The hotel was eventually expanded into a two story twenty-room facility known as Carpenter's Hotel.

Lake Grove House

The Lake Grove House was built by Col. Jacob Rice in the spring of 1881, and it was ready for occupancy in June 1881. Rice, a Dallas merchant, was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the 115th Pennsylvania Militia, and later he served in the 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteers during the Civil War. The hotel, built on land leased from James Park, was on the site where the Hotel Oneonta would later be erected. When originally built, the Lake Grove House had a confectionary and general store, a picnic area, and stables for horses. The hotel benefited from the increasing popularity of the Lake in the early 1880's. One Sunday afternoon, in mid-July 1882, over three hundred guests visited the Lake Grove House. It had a good reputation for bass dinners.

Before the extension of the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1887, the Lake Grove House, like the Rhoads Hotel, depended on the stage lines for guests to reach the hotel. Because of the poor roads to the Lake, the stagecoach rides were unusually long. William L. Rice, a son of Col. Jacob Rice, served as the manager of the Lake Grove House. He began a state line on June 1, 1886.

A stage left the hotel at 7:00 A.M. and arrived in Wilkes-Barre three hours; the stage left the city at 3:00 P.M. and arrived at the Lake four hours later. Because of the long stage rides, it was often necessary to make overnight accommodations at the Rhoads or Lake Grove House to enjoy the Lake. For a short time in the summer of 1887, Rice had a steamboat available for his guests. The new railroad line to Alderson, ready for passenger service in mid-June 1887, ended the stage line services to the Lake Grove House.

In 1887 the manager of the Lake Grove House was S. B. Rood of Plymouth. The hotel was usually filled, but in December 1887 the Lake Grove House was sold to Mrs. A. M. Sweet of Lead City, Dakota. She and her father, Dr. Fred Fleschut, had planned to convert the hotel to an invalids' home, but her father died before the plan was completed.

Samuel Gottfried purchased the Lake Grove House in 1891, and in April 1892 he made an addition to the hotel. On July 4, 1892, two hundred people were entertained at the hotel. Fireworks crowned the evening. By August Gottfried was planning major renovations to the hotel, and eventually Gottfried added a second extension to the hotel. Gottfried was also responsible for securing county funds to help support the township's costs to replace the wooden Inlet bridge with an iron bridge for the 1893 season.

The Lake Grove House was sold to the Harvey's Lake Hotel and Land Company in 1897, which wanted the site to build the Oneonta Hotel. The Lake Grove House was used by construction workers while the Oneonta was built behind the older hotel. In late May 1898, after the Oneonta Hotel was completed, the Lake Grove House was torn down.