





White Pine

Osgood Pond

Osgood Pond, where White Pine Camp is located, was considered part of the St. Regis chain of lakes during the late 1800s, the years of the sportsmen's heyday. Physically it is distinctly separate, and in the early decades of camp building it was culturally separate as well. Once called Lake Osgood, the land around it was within the acreage amassed by hotel owner Paul Smith; when Archibald S. White bought nearly twenty acres from Smith in 1907, he picked a fairly remote site. White's point of land—at the northeast, undeveloped corner of the lake—gave nearly pure privacy compared to the number and proximity of homes on other St. Regis lakes at the time, where a very social community of summer residents existed from the 1880s onward. Osgood Pond offered good fishing, boating, and hunting as well, but on a different scale and at a different pace.

White was a wealthy Cincinnati and New York businessman and banker when he married Olive Celeste Moore in 1905. She was a singer with The Bostonians light opera touring company and a former Ziegfeld Follies girl; she entertained at private parties and salons well into their marriage. Though it's unknown what first brought the Whites to the Adirondacks, it's likely they were guests at Paul Smith's before buying land for a summer home, as this was the path to home ownership followed by many in the district. But, unlike others, the Whites seem to have had no desire for a log cabin-style rustic retreat with Swiss or Bavarian overtones, and they weren't particularly interested in roughing it. They reveled in the cosmopolitan, with a suite at New York's Plaza Hotel, a mansion in Paris, and German Ambassador Count Johann H. von Bernstorff among their close friends. Trusting the instincts and taste of their Manhattan architect William G. Massarene (1872-1941), the Whites were abroad while their camp was taking shape.

In 1907 Massarene had recently returned from abroad himself, from a Grand Tour of Britain and the Continent taken fresh out of graduate school. Some of his ideas about architecture, and inspiration for White Pine Camp, came from this journey. Brought to the Adirondacks, his forms and materials were nearly unprecedented and now appear exceedingly modern for the early 1900s.



"In cities one finds enough of mirrors, silk, and such," said Massarene years after White Pine Camp was completed. "Here we sought something different," he claimed, adding "we sought rather a change from the noise, garishness and turmoil of cities." But he also cautioned, "we were not hunting solely the new." To propose "new" just for the sake of being new would have been garish, tasteless, vulgar. The "something different" Massarene sought for the distinctly non-garish, wooded site took a serious search.

Massarene clearly studied country architecture during his Continental travels and applied his observations to White Pine Camp. The Whites, for their part, frequently cabled Massarene from Europe while he was designing, "telling [him] of discoveries they had made as they visited quaint spots."

Of the "quaint" that Europe had to offer, Massarene borrowed from village architecture. The several cottages sitting along the wooded ridge, he explained, were "patterned, more or less, after the curious shaped houses one sees in Italy." This freedom to work with "curious shapes" may have given rise to the unusual roof angles, as Massarene "put dormer windows in here and there to get special lighting effects" in interior rooms. His other borrowing was the signature look of White Pine Camp's wavy-edge exteriors—clapboards, called weatherboards, derived from the hamlets of southern England.

Massarene may have shared the Whites' love of quaint places, but he shied away from the nostalgic or typically woodsy. Instead of using bark-on spruce logs, either full, half, or slab cut, Massarene specified "weatherboards," a siding milled, as clapboards were, but from local trees and with a different look. "It was my aim to build of the things around me," he claimed years later. "Only in this way could I achieve harmony between building and site." This was the goal of Adirondack builders before him, achieved through the use of minimally processed trees. But Massarene disliked "all that is 'rustic,'" noted *The New York Times* in 1926, "such as the unhewn timber bridges one sees in parks. He had studied for years to avoid the trite in summer homes." And he succeeded.

With no idea how to make the siding he sought to use, Massarene turned to his builder Ben Muncil, who in turn engaged millwright Charles Nichols of Paul Smith's. Today, Muncil and Nichols are credited with solving the manufacturing problems needed to produce the siding—which is tapered like a true clapboard but with raw, uncut edges—and naming it "brainstorm," a newly coined and popular term in 1907, indicating an idea spawned with "irresistible force." Massarene went further away from standard rusticity at White Pine by staining the siding with synthetic, aniline dyes rather than letting it weather to gray. In later years, he called the camp an architectural paradox:



"It seems to be rustic, but in truth is civilization at its acme . . . civilization, but in the abstract."

Massarene's work was completed in 1908, but expanded upon in 1910–11 by a second designer, the somewhat eccentric "society architect" Addison Mizner. Born in California, Mizner later became famous for designing Mediterranean Revival estates in southern Florida during the 1920s. At White Pine, Mizner took care to work in the same aesthetic as Massarene and adhered to that first architect's site plan, which reminded Mizner of a typical mining town seen during travels in the West. Mizner sited a new service building to fit his sense of the village street and designed that building as if it were a mining town's hub, a combination storehouse, post office, and workshop.

All told, Mizner's additions were numerous. He designed a teahouse/bar adjacent to the clay tennis courts; added an enclosed bowling alley to a smaller playroom; built an additional guesthouse (later called the Hermit's Hut); built a second boathouse; and may have modified the original. He also built a Japanese-style teahouse on a tiny island created by digging a channel across the narrow tip of the C-shaped peninsula that juts out from the shoreline. A small Japanese bridge arched over the gap, but an additional 300-foot boardwalk led across the water from the new boathouse. These shoreline structures had a distinct Japanese flavor in their proportions and rooflines. All were built by local contractor Ben Muncil.

One of Mizner's most stupendous additions—and Muncil's remarkable engineering feat—was the Living Room, a building some

forty by sixty feet in dimension, with no floor posts or crossbeams, supported instead by trusses designed and built by Muncil. This space had two stone fireplaces, two platform areas for giving plays and sitting, and, at one time, a grand piano; it was the center of some famous summer and even winter house parties. Olive White had a known penchant for "the society of 'high-class bohemians'" as well as penniless artists, writers, and singers, in the opinion of her sister-in-law, a frequent visitor to White Pine Camp. And her husband was no stuffed shirt. He performed a stagecoach holdup for houseguests arriving from Paul Smith's in the summer of 1912, complete with masked men, whooping Indians, and a body lying in the road playing 'possum.

White's tenure at camp ended in 1920 (after he and Olive divorced), when he sold the property to Irwin and Laura Kirkwood, owners and publishers of the *Kansas City Star* newspaper. The Kirkwoods expanded the property to thirty-five acres and added a number of buildings to the area around the caretaker's home, including a gatehouse, gardener's cottage, and two greenhouses. The Kirkwoods hired French-born horticulturist Frederic Heutte (1899–1979) as their landscape gardener, who proceeded to create extensive and naturalistic plantings throughout the property. Today, White Pine is as renowned for its landscaping—its rhododendrons give the site a lush and exotic look—as for its camp architecture.

During the Kirkwoods' ownership, White Pine Camp became nationally known as the so-called Summer White House for President Calvin Coolidge, during ten weeks in 1926. His wife, Grace, was a good friend of Laura Kirkwood, who passed away in 1925. A









condolence letter from the Coolidges to Irwin Kirkwood prompted the invitation, in early 1926, to use White Pine Camp that summer. Newspapers across the country carried details about the president's plans and the camp's many amenities, while noting its remoteness at the same time; it was a sixteen-hour train ride from Washington, then a five-mile carriage ride through the woods.

Marveled at were White Pine's "electric lights, sunken baths, showers, deep-cushioned couches and easy chairs, fine rugs and furniture and rare prints and etchings," plus "a talking machine and a radio set." *The New York Times* was careful to say "the furnishings make it possible to 'rough it' in a fashion *de luxe*," lest readers think the president would be discomfited. All told, there were four sleeping cabins (each bedroom with a stone fireplace), quarters for fourteen servants, separate dining, kitchen, and laundry buildings (including "a pressing shop for the valets"), the Living Room, teahouses, boathouses, the bowling alley, tennis courts, storehouse, icehouse, stables, garages, and a separate caretaker's complex. When the Coolidges were in residence, fifty Marines camped outside the gatehouse to guard the property and offices were set up in a house at Paul Smith's Hotel for conducting presidential business.

White Pine Camp was next owned by two adult daughters of former Sears, Roebuck president Julius Rosenwald. The women and their families summered there from 1930 to 1948, then donated the property to Paul Smith's College, which had recently opened on the site of the hotel (which burned down in 1930). The college used the property for student housing and recreation until 1976—meaning nearly thirty years of typical student wear and tear, including a fire in 1966 that destroyed the Living Room building—then closed the site down.

The site lost its barn to another fire in 1977. By the time White Pine Camp was purchased by one of its current owners in 1983, roofs leaked, 200 windows were broken out of its buildings, and the front wing of Mizner's 1911 boathouse had sunk into the lake.

Since 1993, a consortium of people who recognize the camp's importance and uniqueness, and are dedicated to its ongoing restoration, has owned White Pine Camp. While the camp's two architects and early owners are recognized for the imprint each made, it is the work of Ben Muncil that is celebrated more, because it was Muncil's building talents which brought the site to life, and his brainstorm siding which ultimately brought aesthetic unity to this village in the woods. White Pine Camp has been open since 1995 for scheduled public tours, with cottages available for vacation rental since 1997.