

THE ZACHOW PONDS

By: Dean D. Proper

Winter was an active time in Zachow for the kids with sleigh riding, little hill skiing and skating. The village had the advantage of having access to two ponds. Dirk's Pond and Zernicke's Pond. They were very different in use with the Dirk's Pond being located west of the Zachow Feed and Lumber Co. and Zernicke's Pond being located just east of the Zernicke farm complex and on the south of Pensaukee Creek.

DIRKS' POND

The Dirk's Pond was initially created in the 30's when a bog used as a dump located next to the Zachow Feed and Lumber Co. was cleaned up and a spring on the north side of the tracks diverted to make a pond. This was improved in the late 40's when an artesian well was found under the mill during an expansion to larger equipment which necessitated digging a "basement". This water was diverted to the pond. There was a small dam to handle water overload from rain and the springs. The dam moved the water into a ditch that ultimately directed the water to Pensaukee Creek. This pond was used by the Dirks family to raise ducks and by the fishing community to soak their wood boats to stop leaks. It also provided some fire protection to the surrounding area.

The pond was a pretty place with willows on the south end and part of the west end and a cattail marsh in the northwest corner that had Red-winged black birds. For the kids in Zachow this was a great place to mess around in the summer and catch pollywogs in the spring as the frogs also found the pond attractive. The boats were constantly "pirated" by the kids and were a mess when the fishermen came to pull them out to go fishing. However, complaints were minimal.

In winter this provided a place to learn ice skating and play "fox and goose" and a little makeshift hockey. It attracted girls and boys alike and even some adults. A work activity drew many kids when it snowed on the pond since the snow had to be shoveled off. Since the pond was located right in Zachow it was used extensively.

Alas, the pond is now gone. When the mill was torn down and converted to a corn drying plant in the 70's/80's the pond was filled in and is only a pleasant memory today.

ZERNICKE'S POND

A short hike to the south of town one found a much larger pond that the Zernicke's had dug out to divert water from Pensaukee Creek so they could "make ice" in the winter time. This was done prior to refrigeration and this pond provided ice for ice boxes and coolers for the village of Zachow and for the surrounding farm community. The ice was cut into large oblong pieces with crosscut saws and pulled down the roads or across the fields to Zachow and elsewhere. Both the

Zernicke's and Albert Radtke's Garage in town had ice houses to store

the ice. The icehouse was then filled with sawdust to cover the ice. This insulation helped provide ice during the entire year.

This pond provided a very large area for ice skating and the games associated with skating and even some figure skating. It was where this writer learned to skate backwards and do backward figure eights. Snow cover was a constant problem since the folks that used the pond had to transport shovels and the actual skating area was dictated by the energy level of the folks doing the work.

Zernicke's pond was not used very much in the summer by the kids since there were no boats to mess with and the frog population was minimal.

It should be noted that both ponds were used day and night with many happy gatherings.



"ROY DIRKS SITTING ON DAM-EARLY 1940'S"



"JIM KLEVESAHL AND FRIENDS ENJOYING A SUMMER DIP! LATE 1940'S"



"DEAN PROPER & LEON WESTERFELD OUT FOR A LITTLE ROW! LATE 1940'S"



"WINTER ON DIRKS POND WITH THE GANG! LATE 1940'S"



"TWO ZACHOW BELLE'S ON ICE! SKATE ANYONE? EARLY 1950'S"

Sources: The Dirks Family, James Klevesahl, Nancy Strehlow