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# First Federal Researches Favorite Pleasure Spots Of Early East Haven

By  
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One hundred and forty years ago, in 1834, the townsfolk of East Haven complained to the authorities that "many persons are in the habit of riding for recreation and pleasure on our roads, and shooting in the fields on Sunday." They instructed the public officers to take notice of such violations of the Sabbath. At that time, it was the practice to draw a rope across Main Street from the corner of the Old Stone Church to the corner now occupied by the East Haven Town Hall, on a

Sunday morning while church services were being conducted. No travelers were allowed to pass through the town until the services were concluded.

But, though the citizens of early East Haven were strict observers of Sunday Blue Laws, they were not without amusement and by the middle of the 1800's more and more amusements were found to keep the fun-lovers occupied.

Lake Saltonstall was the place to be in the 1800's for both East Haveners and New Haveners. In December, 1860, as many as 14 carloads of people rode the train to Lake Salton-

stall to enjoy the ice-skating. On Jan. 7, 1861, a New Haven firm displayed a new ice boat that would accommodate 24 persons, and that worked admirably, much to the enjoyment of the winter crowd on the popular lake. In late October, 1869, a large crowd came from New Haven by train to Lake Saltonstall to view a boat race on the lake. Not only did the spectators enjoy themselves, but the owners of the train were ecstatic, as they counted the money paid by the pleasure-seekers.

In 1895, Lake Saltonstall became a spot of increased popularity with the advent of the

electric trolley from New Haven. Hundreds could enjoy the new steam boat, new pleasure grounds, trout fishing and hikes to the high lookout.

There were other social events happening in the town in the 1800's. By 1876, the Town rented the Town Hall for public dances at \$5.00 per night. (Curiously, while all those folks were dancing for \$5.00 a night, it was illegal for boys to play ball on the Green without a fine of between \$10 and \$15 for each offense.)

With the closing of Lake Saltonstall by the New Haven Co. in 1896, the latest

popular pleasure spot was Cosey Beach where the cool, refreshing breeze from Long Island Sound was enjoyed all through the hot summer months. Then, in 1899, the trolley line was extended to "Den Mansfield Grove," which an enterprising young man, Dennis T. Mansfield, had established at the mouth of the East Haven River in the early 1860's. The famous "shore dinner resort" became an especial favorite of state politicians.

By 1913, town officials had lifted their ban on performances by a circus or other public show, and in September, the

Linn Dog Show gave three animal performances, and showed some exciting "motion pictures" in a large tent erected on High Street.

The East Haveners of the past kept themselves entertained whether it was boating on Lake Saltonstall, relaxing at Cosey Beach or dancing in the Town Hall, and some of the best entertainment today is happening tomorrow in East Haven. Some rousing colonial, and nautical music by the colorfully authentic "Sailing Masters of 1812," Essex Fife and Drum Corps, a

radio broadcast by station WAVZ, lots of free gifts and prizes, lollipops, balloons, and pirate hats for the kids and treasure-chest shopping bags, all at the "whale" of a grand opening celebration of the "S.S. First Federal," the brand-new branch office of First Federal Savings of New Haven, at 260 Main Street, corner Thompson Ave., right in the heart of East Haven, across from the Old Stone Church. Come tomorrow, Saturday, May 11, at 10:30 a.m. for all the fun (and for ten days after that) as First Federal Sails East.