

100 Years at Linekin Bay Resort

Maine living. It's magical.
Always has been. Always will be.

*Linekin Bay Resort is a unique facility with a long history linked with one family for almost a hundred years. Most of that time, it has provided rest and relaxation and a good deal of enjoyment of the Maine coast to "people from away." For those interested in the history behind the American Plan destination resort, a member of the family, **Peter Branch**, has provided the following information:*



Cruising, circa 1930s



Making a splash, circa 1930s



Bathing, circa 1920s

Linekin Bay Resort is built on property which has been in the Branch family since 1909. At that time, Grove Ross Branch and his wife, Elizabeth Garrabrandt Branch, purchased "the Point" (i.e. Wall Point on Linekin Bay, just east of Boothbay Harbor, Maine) from Judge Kenniston. Grove and Elizabeth had been members of the Commonwealth Art Colony on Mount Pisgah overlooking Linekin Bay. They had admired the Point from the summer art colony but as teachers and artists were not in a financial position to purchase it outright. However, a wealthy acquaintance, Mr. Grover, indicated to them that he had an interest in the property.

One day, Mr. Grover informed Grove and Elizabeth that he had an appointment with the Judge to buy the property but he also was thinking about some land around a nearby small lake that also overlooked Linekin Bay. So he went out for a last look at both pieces of land before seeing the Judge. As a result, Mr. Grover was 20 minutes late for his appointment. But he had made up his mind and announced to the Judge as he entered the room, "Well, Judge, I'm here to buy the Point!" The Judge replied, "Well, I'm not here to sell it to you because I won't do business with anyone who can't keep his appointments." A few days later, the Branches met with the Judge, on time, and asked if they might buy the Point, but on a payment schedule. The Judge was most accommodating.

Soon after, the Branches built a two story cottage on the site, with a pier in front. The stairs and fireplace of that original cottage are to the right of the entrance of the Main Lodge of the Resort today. On the stairway post is mounted a brass plaque upon which Grove embossed the latitude and longitude of the Branches' new summer home. During the winter, when the cottage was shuttered and a stone was put on the chimney to keep out the squirrels, the Branches resided in Worcester, Massachusetts, where Grove taught ceramics and jewelry making at Worcester Academy and the Worcester Art Museum. He had grown up in Florence, Massachusetts, where his father owed a general store and his mother inherited a small tobacco farm. Elizabeth came from Newark, New Jersey, where her father, also a store proprietor and the owner of a brickyard, had been both a state Assemblyman and state Senator.

With large families and large family members, the Branches found that their new summer home was an attraction to which their relatives and friends flocked and at which they stayed for weeks, if not months. After all, trips from New Jersey and Massachusetts, in those days, involved train rides to Boston, the overnight steamboat to Bath, and a coastal ferry to the dock in Boothbay Harbor. Such a long trip required a long visit.

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Ida Branch rowing, circa 1930s



The big catch, circa 1930s

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However, of Huguenot ancestry, Elizabeth was not the sort of person to watch even her relatives eat her out of house and home. Recounting these events in later years, she would often complain of visitors who thought that picking a half full jar of blueberries was an adequate contribution to the larder.

As a result, in 1919, the Branches evicted the friends and relatives and founded Linekin Bay Camp, a summer waterfront camp for girls. Since both of them were teachers and artists, it was a natural use of a wonderful site and of their talents. Elizabeth was the organizer, the manager and the firm hand. Grove was the charismatic, gregarious, and spontaneous leader of the troupe. Drawing in campers, first from Massachusetts and New Jersey, Linekin Bay Camp became one of the best known of the summer residence programs that were established to provide invigorating and companionate experiences for girls and boys between the two great wars.

Always in control, Elizabeth, or Mrs. B, as she was known to the campers, wrote out the camp's name as LIN-E-KIN, to ensure the proper pronunciation. Her two children, Robert and Elizabeth, who were known to the campers as Bobby B and Betty B, had the run of the property though, as he grew older, Bobby B had to announce himself as he walked the path between the tents and cabins lest a girl camper be surprised in a state of undress.

The girls had many scheduled activities which included arts and crafts, fencing, horseback riding, paddling war canoes, fishing, rowing, sailing, playing tennis, performing musicales, and swimming. Every day involved swimming and diving in Linekin Bay, in water which rarely rose above the mid-50 degrees. The survivors of the Camp were a rugged lot with great affection for their summers of fun and challenge. They were treated with respect for their abilities and with much care by such counselors as Fitzie and Ilene, as well as the Branches.

In 1938, when Grove passed away, his son, Bob, left his employment as an engineer to help his mother continue to run the Camp. He entered the teaching profession. He would combine the two vocations until his retirement from teaching in 1968. Part of the job of running the Camp was recruiting campers through the use of reunions/recruiting sessions at the winter homes of Linekin veterans. Another critical aspect was visiting colleges to hire counselors for small salaries, room and board, and the benefit of the experience. One year, Elizabeth and Bob visited New England Conservatory of Music and interviewed a piano and voice student, Ida Bardwell, of Greenfield, Massachusetts, for the position of music counselor. When they left, Ida's roommate said, "You're going to marry that young man." Ida replied, "You're crazy! He just sat there like a lump and said nothing." Three seasons later, her roommate was proven correct and Ida and Bob were married on the coast of Maine.

During World War II, the Camp fell on difficult times as counselors became scarce and parents of campers became anxious about rumors that German subs might shell or invade the Maine coast. In 1944, a small number of campers appeared, some with their parents who stayed in empty cabins. In 1945, only a few family friends and old camper families summered at Linekin. During the war, Bob served as a naval lieutenant and engineering officer, on an LST in the invasion of Italy and southern France. War babies, Peter and Kristina, were born to Bob and Ida during those years. When Bob returned, he convinced his mother to reopen Linekin as a summer inn for families. The first season was 1946. Sailing and boating were the featured

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activities, as well as tennis and horseback riding. The lack of interest in the horses led to fat, under exercised horses and, ultimately, a discontinuation of this activity.

Over the years since 1946, Linekin Bay Camp became Linekin Bay Resort, added accommodations, developed a loyal national customer base, and continued to offer full service Maine hospitality at an affordable rate. Bob and Ida Branch became famous for the family atmosphere of the Resort, in which their children and grandchildren also have played a part. With Bob's death in 1996, the challenge of running Linekin was undertaken by Ida until 2001. Since her death in the spring of 2007, Linekin Bay Resort, has been owned by her children, Peter and Kristina, who, with their very supportive spouses, Paula Carreiro and Doug MacKay, work with the General Manager, Ron Brann. Peter's children, Mason, Sarah and Ross have all taught sailing and managed the waterfront. Ross, a boat builder, continues to maintain the fleet and the facilities. Doug and Kristina's children, Alex and Zoe, come from California each summer as LBR apprentices. Ron, the General Manager, worked at the Resort during college and met his wife Jessica there. They and their children, Cody and Morgan, are in residence during the summer.

In terms of amenities, the Resort has added a heated salt-water swimming pool on the edge of the bay, a second tennis court, kayaks, a pub, a beer and wine list in the dining room, a children's program, a conference center, a website, and, even, WiFi access. It has recently redecorated rooms, extended the season by offering bed and breakfast accommodations through Columbus Day weekend, and provided reception facilities for weddings and other celebrations both before and after the regular summer season.

Linekin Bay Resort is changing to meet the new expectations of its clientele but continues to serve its loyal guests with the same family and Maine atmosphere which has made it a welcoming destination for folks from away for 89 summers.



Mackerel fishing, circa 1950s

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