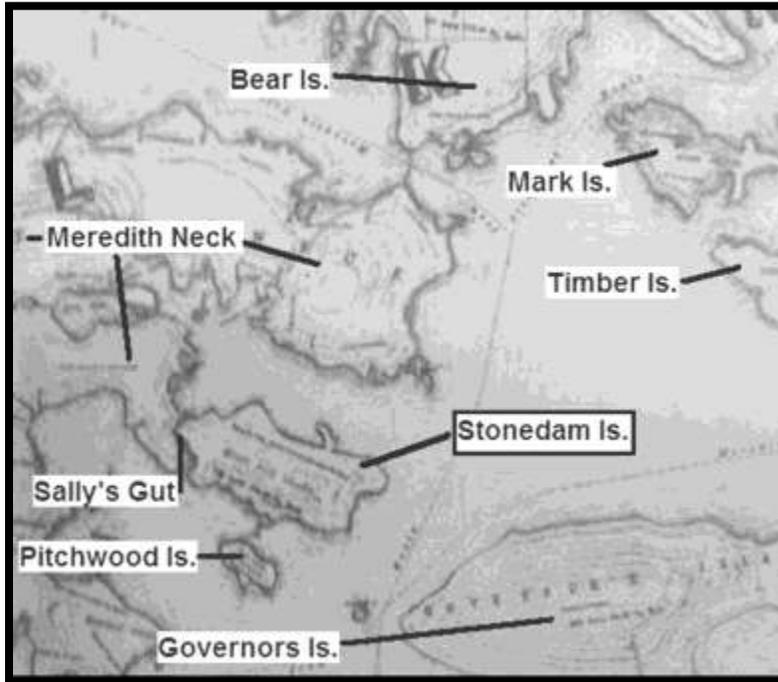


## Stonedam Island

Stonedam is the eighth largest island in the lake at 141 acres. It was included in the 1781 island lottery held by the Masonian Proprietors, becoming part of Lot # 12,

along with Pine Island. Lot #12 was drawn in the name of Jotham Odiorne who had died years before in 1751. Lot #12 ended up in the hands of Peter Pearce and William Treadwell, the husbands of Odiorne's daughters.<sup>1</sup>



Sometime before 1797, Stonedam was sold, presumably by Pearce and Treadwell, to Francis Adam Bowman. Bowman took up residence on the island, making him one of the earliest islanders on the

lake.<sup>2</sup> In 1797, Bowman sold 60 acres to Benning Wilkinson, a farmer from Alton.<sup>3</sup> Before 1799, one or both of these men built a dam (or perhaps a bridge with granite abutments on either side), connecting the island to Meredith Neck.<sup>4</sup> The dam gave birth to the name of the island which was in use in 1799 when the island was annexed to the town of Meredith.<sup>5</sup>

The ownership trail runs dry for many years thereafter. Some time before the 1840s, the island was purchased and divided equally between Ezekiel Dow and Josiah Perkins. Dow had moved to Meredith from Deerfield, NH, in 1810.<sup>6</sup> Perkins arrival in town had preceded Dow by several years. The two lived in the First Division, just north of the Weirs, a location that was in close proximity to each other and to the island. Presumably, they were interested in the island for seasonal grazing and wood.

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<sup>1</sup> The early deed trail for Stonedam after the lottery was not found. Odiorne's estate was divided amongst a handful of heirs in 1780, including his wife and two daughters. See B/P 9002/120-124. Their ownership of Pine Island is clearly documented. There is no deed trail including them for Stonedam, but it is assumed that they got ownership of it as part of the package.

<sup>2</sup> It made sense that Stonedam was the earliest large island to be occupied because it was located so close to the mainland.

<sup>3</sup> See B/P 9008/41. This is the oldest deed found involving Stonedam Island.

<sup>4</sup> The Neck property was part of Lot 80 which was not (at least legally) occupied at the time.

<sup>5</sup> See: Laws of New Hampshire, Vol. Six, Second Constitutional Period, pp. 620-621.

<sup>6</sup> See B/P 9006/10; 9006/175.

Dow died in 1849, leaving his share of Stonedam to his son, Lorenzo Dow, of Somerville, MA.<sup>7</sup> Lorenzo quickly sold his share to his brother, Jonathan G. Dow, who lived on part of their father's original farm in the First Division.<sup>8</sup> Perkins died a few years later, leaving his share to his sons, Abram and Josiah. In 1858, Abram sold his interest to Josiah.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the island was once again equally divided between Jonathan Dow and Josiah Perkins who were First Division neighbors on the mainland, just like their fathers had been.

This status quo was maintained until Josiah Perkin's death in the latter 1870s. His undivided half interest in the island was inherited by two wings of the family. In 1878, each group sold their shares to their relative, David P. Perkins of Manchester, NH.<sup>10</sup> David held onto his share of Stonedam for several years. The records become a little murky, but it appears that sometime before 1884 he sold half of his share (¼ of Stonedam) to two of Josiah Perkins daughters, Emeline and Sarah (Sally).<sup>11</sup> In late 1884, the Perkins family members all finally sold their interests in Stonedam to John Edgerly.<sup>12</sup> This was the inflection point for the island as it began the transition from the farming era to the vacation era.

John Edgerly (b. 1846) was a Laconia farmer who was born and raised in Meredith's Second Division. He acquired the family farm in 1868, just before his father passed away. He sold it soon thereafter and moved with his mother and siblings to Concord, NH. In the following years, he apparently became quite successful. By 1880, he was retired. His Meredith roots made him very interested in the lake for vacation purposes. In 1880, he had purchased a one acre mainland lot with more than 650' of frontage on Winnepesaukee from Josiah Perkins. The lot was located between the David P. Perkins portion of the Josiah Perkins farm and the farm of Jonathan G. Dow.<sup>13</sup>

John Edgerly and Jonathan Dow maintained undivided ownership of Stonedam for the next ten years. In 1894, Dow sold his undivided half to the Meredith Shook & Lumber Company.<sup>14</sup> Five years later, in 1899, Edgerly acquired the lumber company's half not for money but for "a lot of standing timber, (and) trees on Stone Dam Island, delivered to the corporation."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ezekiel had already sold his part of his mainland farm to Lorenzo in 1843. B/P 5/185 and 186.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Dow was a neighbor of John and Joseph Neal who bought Lot 9 on Bear Island in 1838.

<sup>9</sup> B/P 45/283.

<sup>10</sup> B/P 65/189; 65/190. David Perkins was related to Josiah but it is not clear in what way. David Perkins also bought half of the Josiah Perkins farm on the mainland at this time.

<sup>11</sup> These sales are suggested by transactions that occurred in 1884.

<sup>12</sup> B/P 73/432; 73/411; 73/413. David sold a ¼ share while Emeline and Sally each sold 1/8 shares.

<sup>13</sup> B/P 66/541. In 1883 and 1885, Edgerly also purchased three lots in the Methodist camp at the Weirs. B/P 75/30; B/P 74/530.

<sup>14</sup> B/P93/261.

<sup>15</sup> B/P 103/537.

John Edgerly and his wife, Emma, owned all of Stonedam Island for another 26 years. Finally, at the age of 80, Edgerly sold the island in 1925 to Robert D. Judkins of Long Beach, California.<sup>16</sup> Judkins was a banker who was raised in Manchester, NH. He owned the island until his death in 1933. The following year, his wife, Jessica, sold Stonedam to Thomas E. P. Rice of Meredith.<sup>17</sup> A wealthy town resident, Rice and his wife, Margaret, had also purchased the mainland property where the bridge to Stonedam had once stood and is now the eastern entry point to Sally's Gut.<sup>18</sup> They also owned various other properties on the lake, and Margaret was known for the Morgan horses she raised on the Neck on the original farm of Neck settler, Joseph Mead.

The Rice family owned the entire island for nearly 50 years before deciding in 1981 to sell it to developers who had plans to reconnect it to the mainland at the old bridge location. When word got out about the possibility of subdivision, the recently formed Lakes Region Conservation Trust, led by Birch Island's John Forbes, rallied in an effort to buy the property. Given less than a week to raise \$650,000, the LRCT quickly marshaled support and reached an agreement with the Rice family to buy about 80% of the island. The deal was closed in March 1982.<sup>19</sup> Members of the Rice family continue to own about 28 acres on the southern end of Stonedam.

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<sup>16</sup> B/P 173/173.

<sup>17</sup> B/P 215/449.

<sup>18</sup> As an aside, the use of the term 'gut' was common during the late 1800s to describe narrow waterways between islands or between islands and the mainland. It was not a reflection on Sally's appetite. See Hawkes, *Winnepesaukee*, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> B/P 820/20. See also, *Nature's Keeper*, pp. 150-154 for an account of the efforts made by John Forbes and the LRCT.