

served for many years on its Conservation Committee, the Wilderness Society of America, and the American Skate Sailing Association. He was a member of the Adirondack Moose River Committee, American Canoe Association, Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, Citizens Northway Committee, Constitutional Council for the Forest Preserve, Lake George Association, New York-New Jersey Trails Conference, and Schenectady County Conservation Council.

- John Apperson was also one of the earliest ski mountaineers and proponents of skiing in the Adirondacks and is considered by some to be among the earliest ski mountaineers in North America. Together with his friend and fellow General Electric co-worker, Dr. Irving Langmuir, Apperson pioneered some of the earliest ski ascents of several Adirondack High Peaks as well as many peaks around Lake George. Apperson and Langmuir can also be credited with very early ski treks into Tuckerman Ravine and Mount Washington in New Hampshire as well as early ski ascents of Mount Killington (Vermont) and Mount Greylock (Massachusetts).

Apperson's energy and enthusiasm for recreational adventures on Lake George and the Adirondacks was an inspiration to many others to enjoy skate sailing, skiing, boating, hiking and canoeing. Apperson never married but shared his love of the lake with his friends, many of whom purchased camps near his in Bolton Landing. His passion for Lake George and the Adirondacks filled his life with achievements deserving to be recognized by many future generations. In the early 1930s, Apperson became the mentor of and guru to the next generation of conservation activists, most notably, Paul Schaefer.

More information about Apperson can be found in books such as [Lake George Reflections](#), by Frank Leonbruno; [A Centennial History of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks 1901-2003](#), by Edith Pilcher; in many resources and personal affects within the Apperson collection at the Protect the Adirondacks (formerly Association for the Protections of the Adirondacks) Research Library; and at the Bolton Historic Museum, where you can see his personal belongs that include skate sails and creative inventions he used to support his love of a sportsmanship and conservation of Lake George and the Adirondacks.

A special thanks to the Research Library and its volunteers and countless others for their guidance and support in learning about all of Apperson's accomplishments.

John S. Apperson Jr. (1878-1963), known by his friends as "Appy", spent his working career as a supporting engineer and coordinator at the General Electric Company. Apperson was an avid sportsman and a life-long and tireless conservation activist whose efforts throughout the Adirondacks, especially on Lake George, successfully preserved much of what we love today about the region.

Apperson's key successes in the conservation of Lake George include: the preservation of island shorelines; the removal of squatters on New York State and private land; providing significant influence and pressure to include of Lake George into the Adirondack Park; the prevention of a highway proposed along the shoreline of Tongue Mountain; his fight to defeat an amendment that would allow cutting of Forest Preserve land for recreational purposes; his fight for the public's right to control water levels for Lake George; the preservation of Dome Island; and igniting the passion and inspiration in others to continue the fight to conserve the natural resources of Lake George and the greater Adirondack Park.

Following are brief details concerning Apperson's most monumental achievements on Lake George:

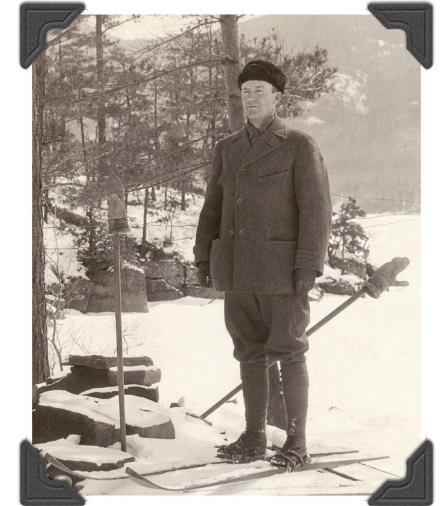
- One of his earliest and most important efforts began at the turn of the twentieth century. For years the water level of Lake George was controlled for purposes of commerce without consideration for the lake's environment, residents or recreational users. The extreme water level fluctuations caused significant environmental damage to the lake's shoreline and islands as well as financial damage to personal property. Apperson authored a brochure entitled "Lake George: A Mill Pond", that demonstrated the damage from the fluctuating water levels using his own photographic documentation. Remarkably, Apperson spent over 15 years in the New York State courts (40 years working on the whole issue) fighting for the public's right to control water levels for Lake George and other water bodies in the Adirondack Park. Eventually, the water levels of Lake George were controlled with the state's ownership of the Ticonderoga dam in 1974, but not without loss of some islands from erosion.
- In 1909, during his fight to moderate the lake's water level, Apperson began to place rip-rap (rock barriers) around the lake's islands to protect their sensitive shorelines. He carried out this work throughout his life, personally rip-raping parts of over 50 of the lake's islands. He also enlisted the help of countless others in this work, and over decades many hundreds of campers, General Electric employees, and Lake George enthusiasts and residents lent their time and sweat to haul rocks year round to control erosion. This volunteer effort and show of support had immeasurable influence as Apperson persuaded the state to pro-

vide both political and financial support for the lake's preservation.

- In the early 1900's Apperson led a relentless battle to enforce an 1885 law limiting or abolishing the use of state land by squatters. He personally evicted squatters still claiming rights to the Lake George islands, some of whom were executives at General Electric. Apperson's future at the company was saved thanks to the help of friend and colleague Dr. Irving Langmuir (a legendary General Electric engineer and the first industrial chemist to win the Nobel Prize for Chemistry) who helped to ease the friction between the executives and Apperson on many occasions. Not only did Apperson's personal crusade against squatters result in the protection of the fragile island ecosystems but it also spurred the momentum for future conservation efforts.
- In 1923, New York State purchased Tongue Mountain as well as over 8,000 acres of contiguous land that was later added to the Forest Preserve. This momentous conservation initiative was followed by a proposal to blast a highway along the shoreline of Tongue Mountain and up through the lake's scenic Narrows. Apperson fought hard against this plan, finally persuading New York's Governor Alfred E. Smith (tales say he actually kidnapped the Governor for a persuasive ride in W.K. Bixby's electric boat), Franklin D. Roosevelt and other notable people to build the highway over an inland route, thus preserving this large and priceless piece of Lake George to retain its ecological and aesthetic integrity.
- In 1930, the controversial Closed-Cabin Amendment would allow New York State to clear Forest Preserve land in order to construct various buildings for recreation purposes (ski lodges and warming huts, for example). It was during his fight against the Closed-Cabin Amendment that Apperson became well-known for his grass-roots activism in the preservation of the Adirondacks and Lake George. Apperson and the Association for Preservation of the Adirondacks created and sent out hundreds of pamphlets, talked to the press and enlisted the support of sportsmen's groups and other conservation-minded organizations to fight the Closed-Cabin Amendment. When it came time for the state's populous to vote on the measure in 1932, the proposal was defeated by a 2 to 1 margin.
- In 1931, thanks in part to Apperson's determined efforts, Lake George was incorporated into the Adirondack Park. Though the Adirondack Park was created in 1892, it was further strengthened in 1894 with the "Forever Wild" designation. Apperson so supported the protective amendment that he named his boat *Article XIV Section I*, for the state document in which the "Forever Wild" provision of the New York State Constitution was written. *Article XIV Section I* was the first inboard Chris Craft launched on the lake and was christened in

1927 at Dollar Island.

- In 1939, Apperson became concerned that a developer was planning to build a hotel on Dome Island. Dome Island was called the Centerpiece of Lake George and was one of the few islands on which no structures had been erected. With the encouragement and financial support of people such as William K. Bixby of Bolton Landing and Dr. Irving Langmuir, Apperson purchased Dome Island for \$46,000. In 1956, Apperson gifted Dome Island to The Nature Conservancy with a \$20,000 endowment for its continued preservation. To facilitate the transfer Apperson personally solicited funds from others around the lake and elsewhere who felt strongly about the need to protect the beauty of this icon of Lake George.
- In 1939, Apperson convinced General Electric to sell French Point (the tip of Tongue Mountain) at a fraction of its market value to the State of New York for inclusion into the Forest Preserve. General Electric had acquired French Point to enable its continued use by their employees for camping and other recreational purposes, as well as to provide a place for a girls' camp program.
- Apperson was involved in many other notable historic ventures:
 - In 1918, Apperson was involved with the placement of a commemorative plaque on Long Island, recognizing the establishment of The American Canoeing Association in 1881 on Lake George. In 1921, Apperson took lead on organizing the American Canoeing Association's regatta on Lake George.
 - Among the most notable of Apperson's organizations: Forest Preserve Association of New York State, organized 1934. New York state Trails Conference, Inc., organized 1936. Lake George Protective Association, Inc., 1944.
 - Apperson was a charter member of the Adirondack Mountain Club and



John Apperson captured during one of his favorite activities, skiing.