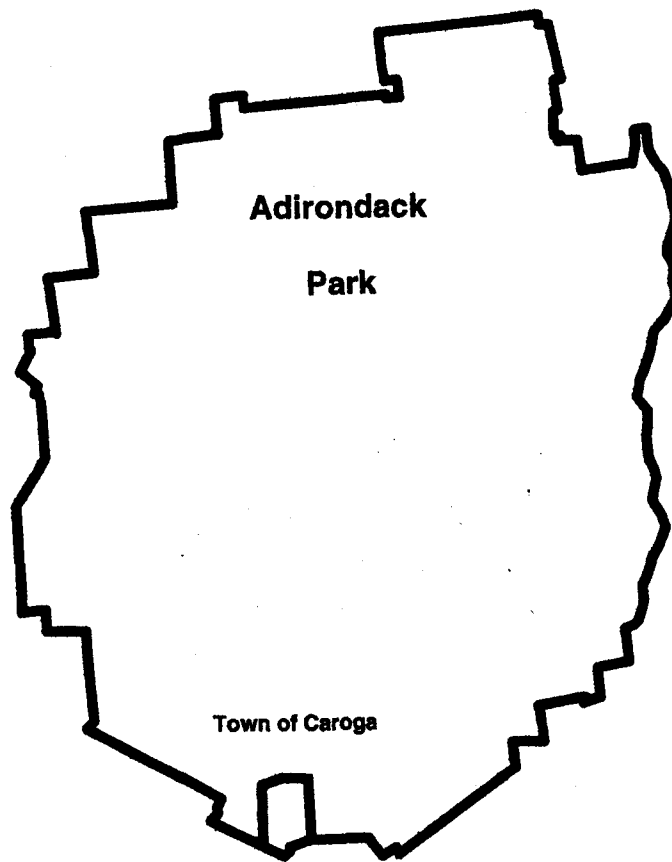


**Town of Caroga**  
**Revised**  
**Comprehensive Plan**



**July 2002**

## ***Letter to the people of the Town from the Comprehensive Planning Committee***

*The committee and its subcommittees have met regularly throughout the winter. They have prepared a draft for your consideration. We would like you to know how we worked to achieve this draft.*

*We tried to address all the issues identified in the public meeting last July. Members brought up additional concerns. We added some issues through discussions with town board and planning board members.*

*We looked at plans from several towns throughout the Adirondacks, to discover additional issues, discover a format for this document, and see how other communities had defined their towns and their town's needs. When we found issues that we shared with other towns, we looked at the solutions those towns offered. We consulted town and county officials, representatives of diverse organizations, the Adirondack Park Agency, and individuals both inside and outside the Park.*

*We first looked at the town's assets and discussed how we wanted the town to appear in the future and what we wanted it to offer its residents. These discussions and our research led us to formulate goals for the town.*

*The town has already started to implement some of our goals. Others may be done in the next few years. Many may have to wait for years until funds are available to complete them.*

*We hope we have achieved a broad vision for the future. We recognize that this is an ongoing process and we strongly recommend that other advisory and study committees be established. This plan will only be as effective as the results it generates and we recognize that continued public participation is essential to achieving those results.*

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## **Mission Statement for Caroga's 2002 Land Use Plan:**

The Mission for updating Caroga's Land Use Plan is to present a collective vision of our community as a tool for building on our current assets. This plan will guide us into the future as we seek to preserve and restore our environment while improving the health, safety, and quality of life of the residents and the economy and image of the Town of Caroga. The plan is intended to encourage growth in the town that is consistent with the town's natural resources and character.

## **The existing community and the assets the plan will build on:**

The Town of Caroga is known for the beauty of its ten lakes and numerous small streams and ponds bordered by forested slopes. A large portion of land in the town is Forest Preserve, which provides a protected setting for the lakeshores, the town center, and the small settlements, which are clustered along its roadsides. The lakes are known for the wonderful shoreline camps, most of which are occupied by seasonal residents. The town is a gateway to the southern Adirondacks.

The people of Caroga are a part of its economic base. The town is a community of both year round and seasonal residents. The population year round totals 1,400, and that number is tripled in summer by the addition of seasonal residents. Those who commute find employment in nearby cities, and the town is also easily accessible from the Thruway and is within an hour's drive of both Albany and Utica.

The town has a rich heritage in the Adirondack Park. In the second half of the nineteenth century it was a tannery town and several of the workers' homes as well as buildings from the tannery still stand. The rock walls of the tannery's ruins are among the few such large complexes preserved in the Adirondacks. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the open fields surrounding the site were turned into a lovely golf course. About the same time the Shermans built an amusement park, complete with a merry-go-round. The park was also famous for the great dance bands that attracted people from all over upstate New York. In recent years work has begun to restore the park to its former glory.

For further history and background on the town, consult the appendix to this document or the Caroga history, *Caroga - An Adirondack Town Recalls its Past*.

## Goals for Caroga:

**Goal 1** - Maintain and protect the natural resources of the town by encouraging land uses and activities that have few environmental impacts, while discouraging those that put the area's environment at risk. Special concern should be given to preserving and restoring if needed the natural quality of the lakes.

1 - Establish a new code by adapting the existing code so that it spells out a watershed and water management plan for the town. The town board should do this with the assistance of an advisory committee.

1.1 - Implementing the code will require

- a - regulations
- b - education
- c - inspections
- d - enforcement of all things in the plan

1.2 - The watershed management plan should include:

- a - management of run-off from roofs, lawns, driveways, roads, and construction wastes
- b - restoration of shoreline planting along roadways or other public property
- c - encourage restoration of shoreline planting with shrubs or trees on private land
- d - Research on the best types of shrubs or trees to use for shoreline planting and inform residents about them and about where to obtain them
- e - creation of shoreline buffers
- f - continued educational efforts to eliminate the introduction of invasive exotic species such as zebra mussels and milfoil or other weeds
- g - Continue the program of removing existing milfoil.
- h - Pursue new and innovative treatment for these conditions because they can have a deleterious effect on the recreational activities associated with the lakes.
- i - plans to remove invasive exotic terrestrial species
- j - ensure of the protection of wildlife, especially of nesting ducks and loons

1.3 - The water management plan should include:

- a - Water quality testing. For this the lake associations and the town should be involved and should continue to carry out testing to the standards developed by the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program or the Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks.
- b - Lake associations should communicate with each other and have representatives meet at least annually to coordinate their activities. The town should communicate with lake associations in order to assist in coordinating their activities within the town.
- c - The town should prohibit feeding of ducks and geese and enforce the prohibition.

d - Signs should be posted and information printed in town communications about the need to clean boats and acceptable methods to do so. All boats that are used in other waters should be so treated to prevent the introduction of noxious species

1.4 - Establish a town hot-line so residents can report watershed and water quality problems

2 - Manage water activities for the safety of all residents, giving attention to the quality of life of those living near the water

2.1 - Find a way to strictly enforce all current water regulations.

2.2 - If sheriff patrols prove inadequate, consider town patrols.

2.3 - Create a study group to study the issues raised by the use of jet skis. The study may include, but would not be limited to

a - investigate what the laws are with respect to town control of jet skis

b - inform shoreline residents of what the town can do from banning jet skis to limiting their use within set distance from shore or limiting their use to certain times

c - survey responses by other Adirondack communities and make this information available to shoreline residents

d - survey all shoreline owners of lakes within the town to determine objectively what those town residents desire.

2.4 - Residents need to know how to report problems and what information needs to be given in such a report.

2.5 - Neighborhood watch groups should be encouraged to include shorelines in their surveillance.

**Goal 2** - Encourage vibrant community life by providing recreational amenities that meet the needs of residents and potential tourists in a way that utilizes and protects our natural resources.

To do this the town needs first to establish recreation centers so that the diverse activities can be managed.

Sites to be considered could include:

1 - New York State Campground

2 - the vicinity of Shermans and the center of the hamlet

3 - the area adjacent to the town office and the golf course

4 - Pine Lake

5 - Wheelerville School

6 - Royal Mountain Ski Center

*Royal Mountain  
Ski Center  
Is one of the  
Town's  
Assets*



*What we will build on:* In addition to its natural resources, the town can build recreational programs around its golf course, the ski center, the amusement park at West Caroga, the beach at Pine Lake, the public boat launch site at West Lake, several private boat launch sites, a riding stable, snowmobile parking, trailheads, and groomed trails in the winter, a privately managed campground at Pine Lake and a Department of Environmental Conservation managed public campground at East Caroga Lake.

The opportunities listed below are a part of a broad vision, for the intended expansion of recreational activities. The list will be refined and prioritized by a recreational committee that can provide a framework for future actions. The list of recreational opportunities should be prioritized with respect to their benefit for residents, particularly the young. They should be evaluated also on their value for tourists and their ability to attract tourists and enhance and attract local businesses without reducing their value to local residents. The creation of additional recreational opportunities may attract individuals who will invest in the area, i.e. restaurants, bed and breakfasts, motels, etc. The establishment of a recreational committee is essential to guiding the recreational plan for the town.

The list should include, but not be limited to:

- 1 - visitors' center, including parking, and public restrooms. The visitors' center should have displays on the town's natural resources, its geology and waterways; its trails and amenities.
- 2 - a town beach, with public restrooms
- 3 - an ice skating rink
- 4 - local hiking, walking, biking tours and trails connecting as many of the lakes as possible

*Residents*

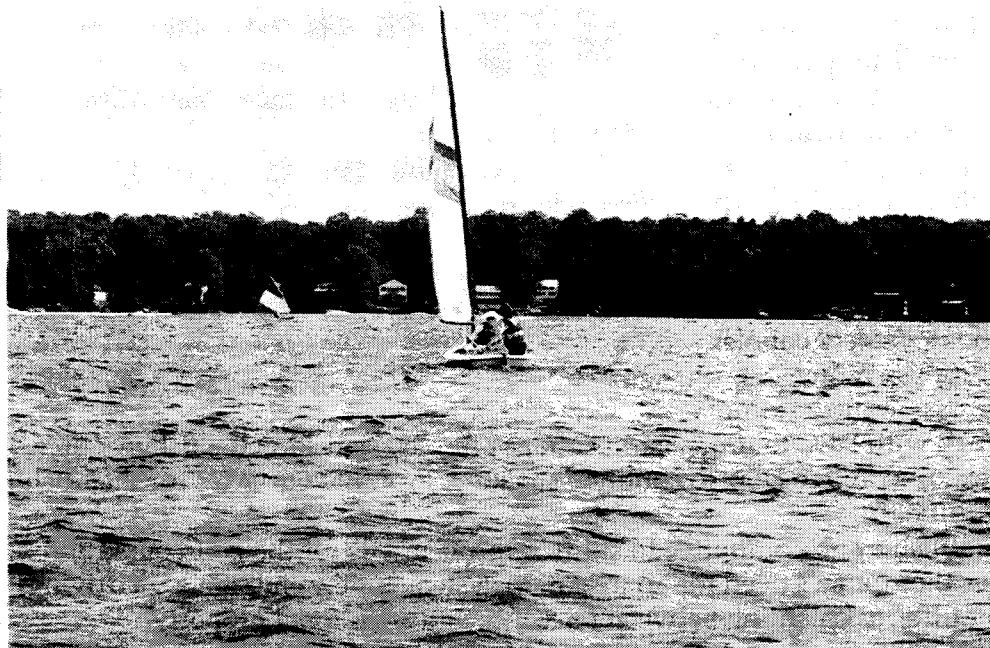
*Enjoy*

*Water*

*Activities*

*Such as*

*Sailing*



- 5 - promotion of areas of natural significance such as the wetlands at the northern end of Pine Lake, the hemlock site on pinnacle hill, the story of forest succession as demonstrated by Irving Pond
- 6 - a skate-board park
- 7 - tennis courts
- 8 - a town park that can serve as a center for a flea market or a farm market
- 9 - improved winter sport activities such as cross country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, etc.
- 10 - a multi-purpose recreational area - baseball, volleyball, soccer, basketball.
- 11 - public boat launch at Caroga Lake
- 12 - kayaking and canoeing tours
- 13 - coordinate and expand existing recreational activities such as:
  - 1 - the ski program at Royal Mountain
  - 2 - the summer recreation program at the state campground with swimming, activities, etc.
  - 3 - golf program
  - 4 - the summer motor events at Royal Mountain.
- 14 - The town should develop a plan for special events:
  - 14.1 The plan should establish the number and types of special events to be held annually based on the impact on the town and its residents, as well as, the economic impact on the business community of the town.
  - 14.2 Town residents should be informed of the event if it of substantial size as to have considerable impact on the life of residents.
  - 14.3 Guidelines should be developed to insure that proper facilities are available to provide sanitation, parking, law enforcement, insurance, and cleanup for these activities. Other controls may be needed depending on the type of event being held. Examples might be noise, air and water pollution, and impact on the flow of traffic through town.

- 15 - Integrate recreational opportunities for residents and visitors with activities provided by the Wheelerville School, the Historical Association, the Caroga Campground, and the lake associations; and expand these activities to include:
- 1 - programs to teach sailing, canoeing, kayaking, boating in general
  - 2 - library, possibly Wheelerville school site open to public
  - 3 - an historical trail to the tannery site
  - 4 - indoor and outdoor programs at the school
  - 5 - golf lessons
  - 6 - boater safety courses
  - 7 - exercise center
  - 8 - cross-country skiing
- 16 - Work with DEC to protect and enhance through stocking the fish resource of our lakes. Encourage DEC to continue stocking. Promote our lakes for their fishing opportunities.
- 17 - Establish a sub-committee to study improvements for the golf-course and consider the course's need for an irrigation system, a new club house, a driving range, additional planting between fairways, and additional property.
- 18 - Work with the Department of Environmental Conservation's Unit Management Planning (DEC's UMP) for the area to develop snowmobile trails that avoid roads and open water.
- 19 - Work with DEC's UMP to create new hiking and cross country ski trails.
- 20 - Work with DEC's UMP to designate biking trails.
- 21 - Work with the town to designate certain roads as bike trails in accordance with state, county, and local regulations.
- 22 - Consider dredging and deepening the channel between East and West Caroga Lake and other areas to accommodate boat launching.

*Both*

*Residents*

*And*

*Visitors*

*Enjoy*

*Snowmobiling*

*In the*

*Town*







**Goal 3 - Maintain, protect, and promote the town's historical heritage.**

- 1 - Create self-guided trails at the tannery site and provide simple brochures describing its history
- 2 - Promote the preservation and use of other areas of historical significance such as the Nick Stoner Inn, Shermans, and the Kane Mountain fire tower and observer's cabin.
- 3 - Promote the towns architectural heritage, identify historical buildings and significant "little great camps," and use that heritage to establish a visual image of the town that can be encouraged in all its buildings.
- 4 - Expand the Caroga historical museum to reflect early settlers and industry.
- 5 - Encourage volunteers to present workshops on our natural history including geology, forests, wildlife, flowering plants, etc.

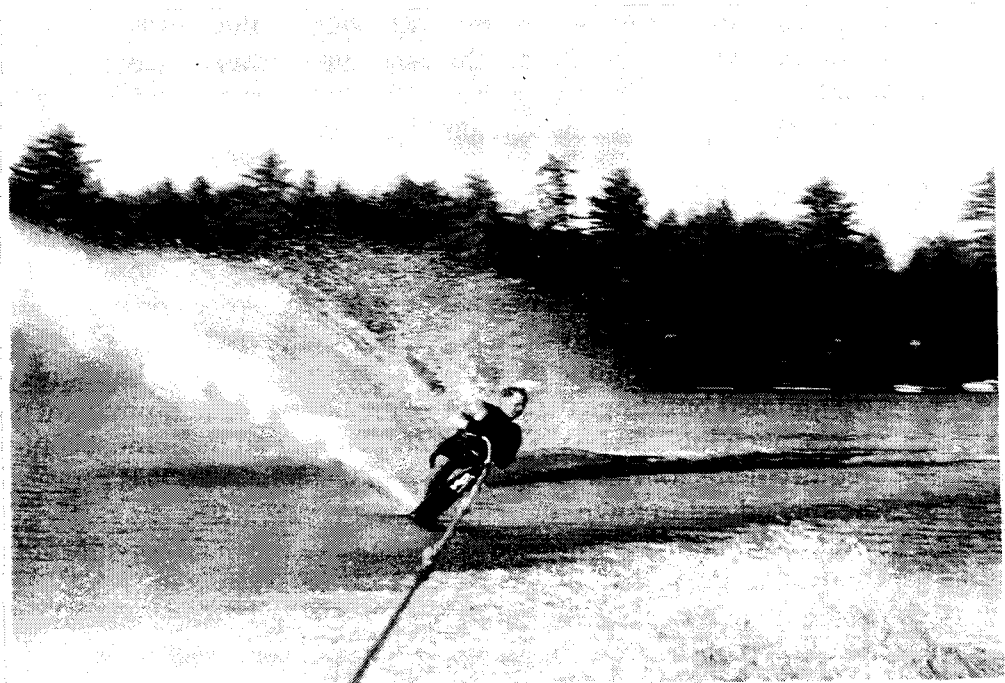
*Cross Country*

*Skiing and*

*Waterskiing*

*Are Always*

*Popular*



**Goal 4** - Improve the administration, implementation, and enforcement of land use and water regulations in order to encourage creative and compatible uses of the town's resources.

To accomplish some of the other goals, it will be necessary to revisit the town's zoning codes, building codes, and septic codes.

**New Codes:**

**1 - With Respect to freshwater/wastewater collection and treatment systems, continue feasibility study currently being conducted by the town.**

**2 - With respect to public utilities, the committee identified sewers and water sources as a critical need if any substantial development is going to take place in the town.**

**3 - With respect to septic regulations:**

3.1 Enhance the town's existing sanitary code to reflect not only additions to the codes of the NYS Department of Health but also the APA's new model code for towns, giving consideration to future growth.

3.2 Continue to study wastewater collection and treatment systems for applicable codes

3.3 Adopt a code that permits the town to acquire tax-sale lots or lots with abandoned buildings so that the buildings can be removed and the property divided by sale to adjacent landowners to increase lot size and available area for septic systems.

3.4 Adopt an ordinance that requires regular pumping of all septic systems; at one-year intervals for holding tanks, at three- to five-year intervals for all others. (To do this the town should work with the Canada Lake Protective Association to obtain, lease, or hire a barge, pump, and tank to pump out all those systems not served by roads, such as those at West Lake, Dolgeville Point, and the southwest shore of Canada Lake.

3.5 Adopt a code that allows two or more landowners to join together to construct septic systems and joint leach fields.

**4 - With respect to land use regulations:**

The land-use sub-committee determined that there currently is an adequate amount of land available for retail or commercial development in Caroga.

4.1 The town code should be amended to reflect the APA's new definitions and regulations, specifically with respect to boathouses.

4.2 The town should continue the program of tearing down abandoned or dilapidated buildings that are to be auctioned for non-payment of county taxes. Such lots can be resold but all building on them must conform to requirements for new structures, septic systems, etc. This process ought to be spelled out in town regulations.

4.3 Change regulations to improve appearance of the main corridors of entrance to the hamlet.

4.4 Assist the town in planning for the maintenance of and potential future relocation of town buildings and town sponsored activities.

**5 - With respect to potable water:**

- 5.1 Continue studies of wastewater.
- 5.2 Encourage lake associations and/or the town to continue testing the lakes or expand that testing where needed.

**6 - With respect to quality of life issues:**

- 6.1 - Enact a code that limits noise pollution.
- 6.2 - Create a standard for dealing with light pollution and enact codes for those standards. Apply it to both town and private sources.

**Enforcement:**

**1 - With respect to shorelines and water activities:**

- 1.1 - Ensure that all boating regulations are observed and enforced.
- 1.2 - Enforce all litter laws and encourage volunteers or lake associations to conduct highway clean-ups as the Canada Lake Protective Association has done in the past.
- 1.3 - Continue checking whether DEC's regulations for permanent docks, piers, and structures on shorelines and in the water are enforced.
- 1.4 - Enforce shoreline cutting restrictions; the town zoning ordinance has adopted with modifications APA's cutting restrictions.

**2 - With respect to land use regulations:**

- 2.1 There should be strict enforcement of existing codes  
The code enforcement officer can discuss any violation informally with the property owner in the hope that the situations can be corrected before formal notice is given. All formal notice of violations should be presented to the landowner in writing by the code enforcement officer. This step begins a timed process for compliance as outlined by the notice. Owners who disagree with such a notice can appeal for an interpretation to the zoning board.
- 2.2 The town should actively encourage the improvement of the appearance of private property. This should include enforcement of junk car regulations, etc.
- 2.3 The town should codify standards for the appearance of new commercial and recreational buildings so that they conform to standards to be adopted by the planning board that reflect the spirit of the town's Adirondack scale architectural look. The planning board should exercise its power to enforce these standards.
- 2.4 - The town planning board should develop criteria for site plan review based on appearance standards for applications affecting residential structures, with emphasis on building along lakeshores and major roadside areas.

**Education for town board and committee members and for employees:**

- 1 - Encourage town officials to participate in continuing education programs such as APA's Local Government Days and DOT's workshops for constructing and maintaining roads, particularly dirt roads.
- 2 - Educate the public on all codes and regulations using the communication networks identified in Goal 7.

**Goal 5 - Maintain and/or develop high quality services, especially *effective* law enforcement for both lakes and highways, fire protection, emergency rescue, public works such as roads and winter care of the roads, phones, electric service, cable TV, and so on .**

- 1 - Work to fulfill the need for good day-care in the community.
- 2 - Work toward a cell or wireless phone system within APA guidelines, and in particular encourage satellite phones.
- 3 - Time Warner Cable has built a cable network throughout the town that includes high speed internet service "Road Runner." The town should seek a partnership with Time Warner Cable to promote this service as a means of encouraging new business to locate in the town.
- 4 - Work with the Sheriff's Office and neighborhood watch groups to ensure that speed regulations are enforced both on roads and on the water.
  - 4.1 - Continue the 40 mph speed-limit year round on NY 29A and NY 10 through the town and see that it is enforced.
  - 4.2- Ensure that 25 mph speed zones on residential/recreational roads are strictly enforced.
  - 4.3 Study the need for a substation in Caroga.
  - 4.4 Study the value of the town's having a speed check trailer.
- 5 - Develop a schedule for repairing and paving dirt roads, giving consideration to the desires of residents along the affected roads.
- 6 - Follow the guidelines established by DOT in "Policies and Standards for Entering State Highways."
- 7 - Maintain the high quality of fire protection and emergency service the town has at present. An advisory committee may be needed to help the town and the fire company evaluate the need for and timing of the following changes:
  - 6.1 - moving the fire company
  - 6.2 - the need for dry hydrants along new roads
  - 6.3 - the need for additional volunteers
  - 6.4 - increased funding from the town
  - 6.5 - placing fire prevention information on the town's web site
- 7 - Expand the "Adopt a Highway" program to all roads in the town by working with the town, DOT, and local groups.
- 8 - Continue black fly treatments.

**Goal 6** – Encourage public and private partnerships to provide the above goals.

*The situation the town faces:* The town has a limited economic base. It has limited amenities, either for residents or tourists, other than its wonderful natural setting, its lakes, and its forests. Even though there are few hospitality and retail sources, we recognize their importance for the community and for tourism, which is the basis of the town's economy.

We recognize that the lakes are almost fully built-out, with almost no room for new shorefront homes. At present there is little interest in development of the larger undeveloped and roadless areas of the town. Residential development is still possible along existing roads. Commercial development should be clustered in the two major areas as it is now, that is Caroga hamlet and Pine Lake.

Hence, the town must develop other ways of supporting growth, tourism, and hospitality amenities. The current committee believes that a private-public partnership, strong town leadership, and grants can enhance the fulfillment of all the goals listed above, which we see as the best methods of encouraging growth.

- 1 – Obtain grants from public or private sources to accomplish the above goals.
- 2 – Encourage the work of such groups as AMERICORP to help townspeople accomplish specific goals.
- 3 – Encourage community volunteers to accomplish this and other goals.

**Goal 7** - Promote the committee's vision for the town to its residents and potential tourists through improved communication and in particular promote activities in the town to summer residents and tourists.

- 1 – Establish a hot-line for the town so residents can report abuses and problems. The hot-line can back up complaints to the Sheriff's Office and serve as a check that they are being addressed. The hot-line can direct problems to the proper town department, code enforcement, sanitary, highway superintendent, etc.
- 2 – Establish a web site for the town
- 3 – Develop a brochure describing the town and its recreational amenities
- 4 – Create a newsletter for all residents
- 5 – Prepare a calendar of events and use the Fulton County Chamber of Commerce as well as the above venues to disseminate it.
- 6 – Use the town's logo on newsletters, promotional material, and so on
- 7 – Make use of the town's visitors' center so that everyone views it as a source of information.
- 8 – Encourage the establishment of a business association.

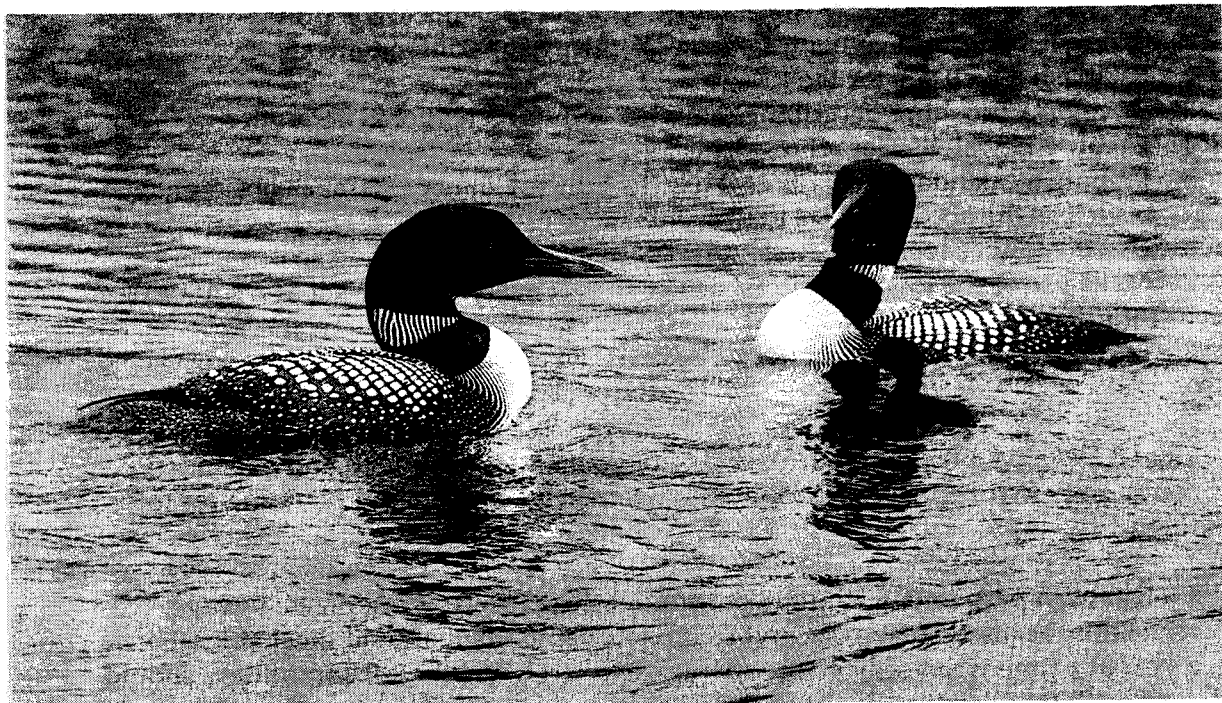
**Goal 8** Develop a means of encouraging or promoting continued and expanded community involvement and input into the management of and planning for the town.

- 1 – Establish permanent committees for navigation, natural resources, sewage, recreation, aesthetic planning, and so on. The committees should meet at least once a year at a time when seasonal residents can attend, and the subcommittees should meet with the planning board or the town board as needed.



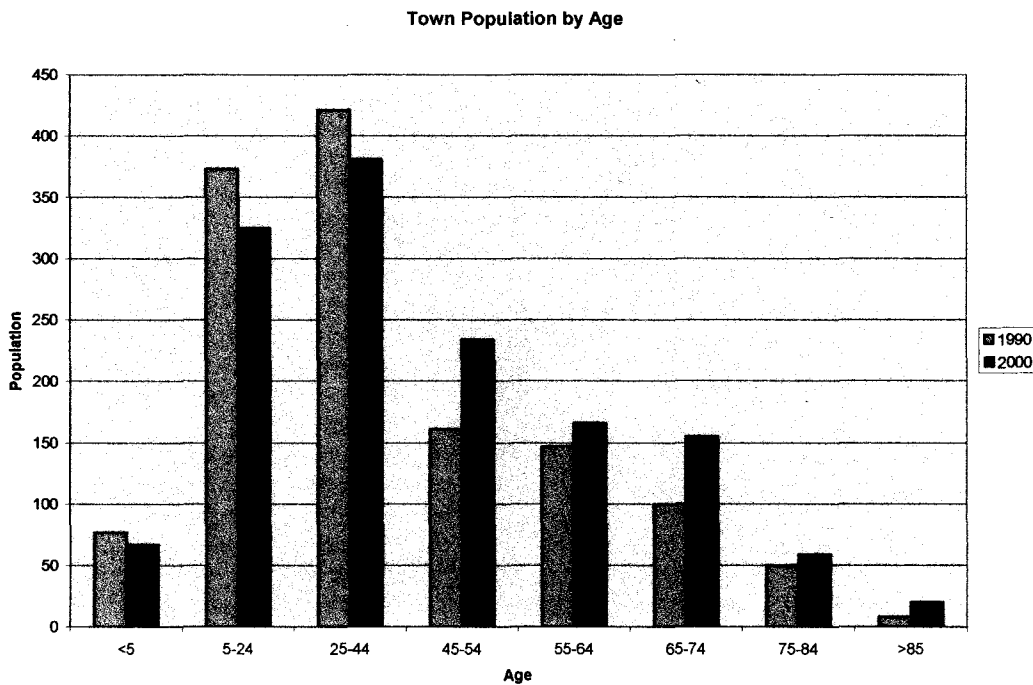
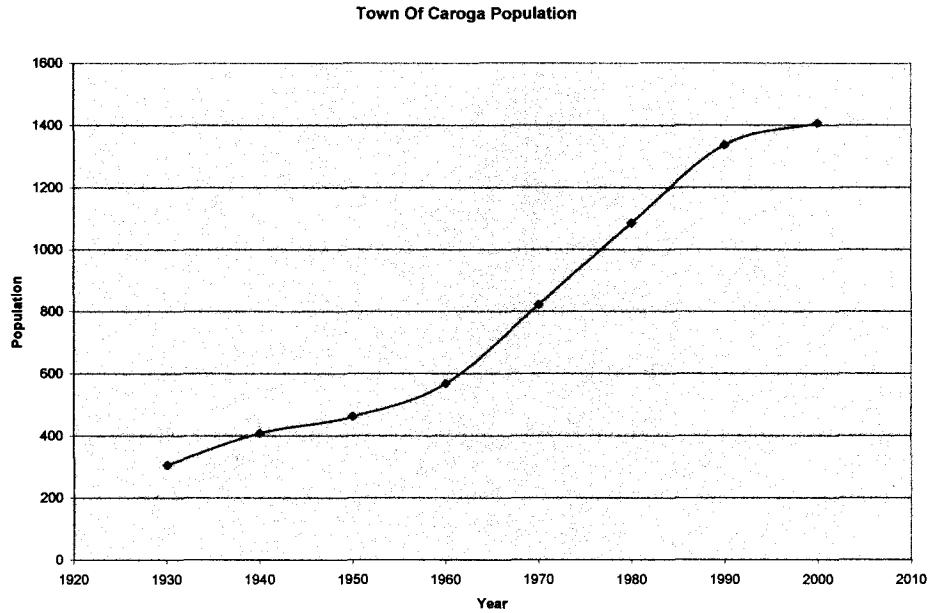
*Protecting the health and beauty of the Town's lakes is a concern of all its residents*

**Goal 9** - In all the above goals, the town should be aware of the need to enhance the health, safety, and quality of life of all residents, both year round and seasonal, and visitors.



The population of the Town of Caroga, after steadily increasing for most of the 1900s, remained fairly constant in the 2000 Census (See Figure xx). At the same time, the median age of the population increased significantly from 1990 to 2000, from 35.5 to 41.7 years of age, with a general shift across all age ranges (see Figure yy).

To help ensure the town remains a strong vibrant community, the plan looks to provide high quality of life to retain current and attract new residents, with a particular focus on activities and interests of younger families.








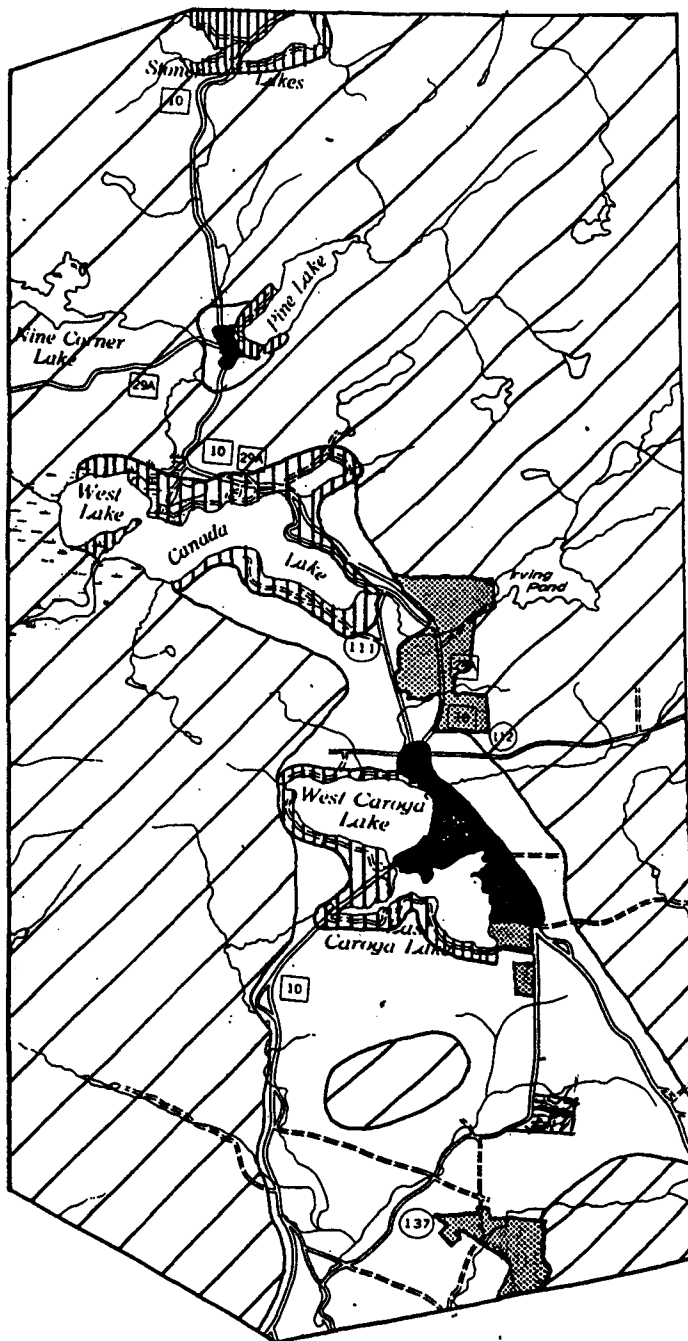
TOWN OF  
CAROGA, N.Y.

LAND USE PLAN

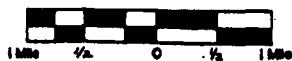


Legend

-  RESORT
-  DEVELOPED LAKESHORE
-  CONSERVATION
-  RURAL RESIDENTIAL
-  PUBLIC FACILITIES

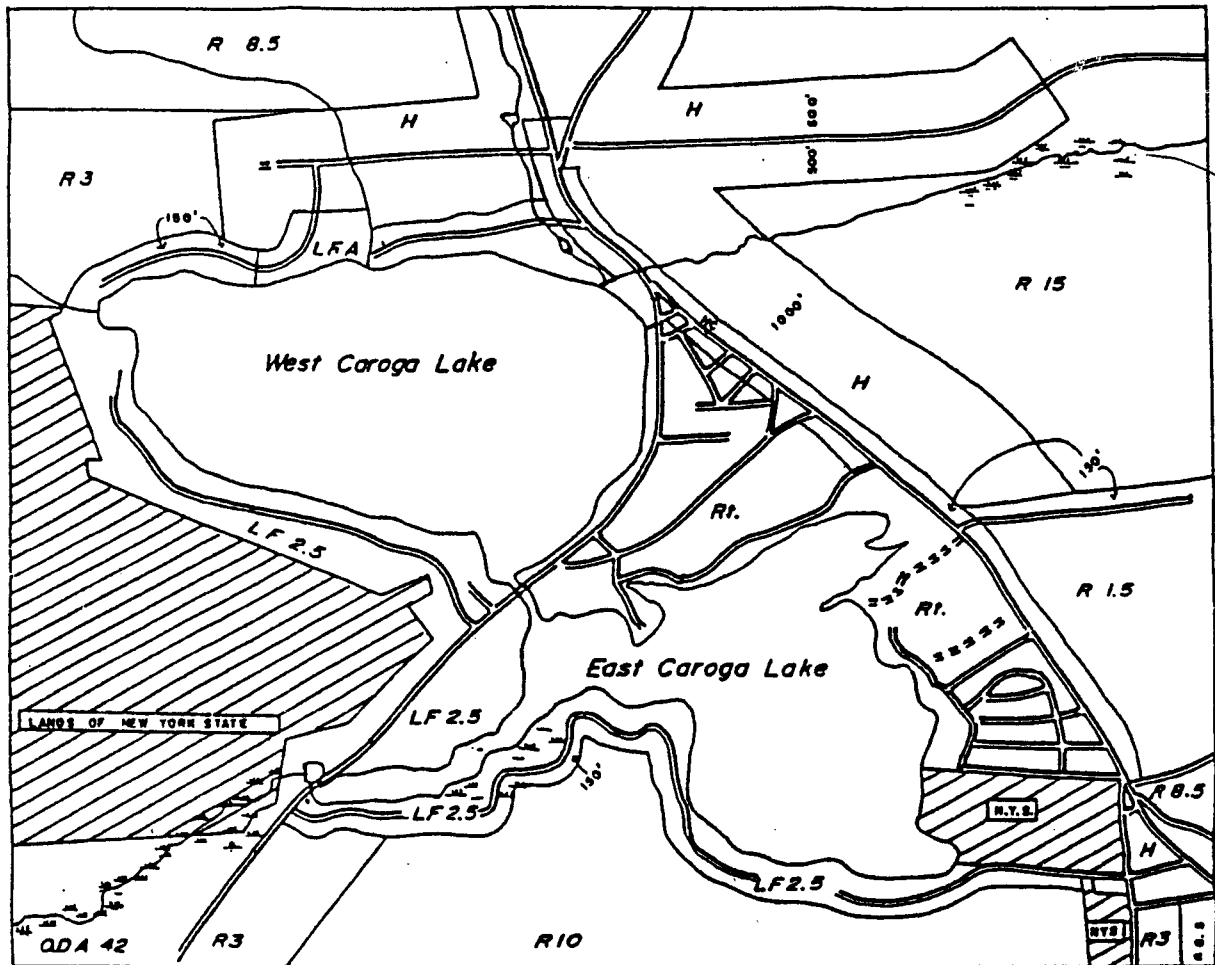


Scale



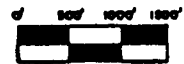


# ZONING MAP



NOT FOR OFFICIAL USE

APPROX. SCALE



ARTICLE 4

Zoning Districts and Regulations

Section 4.010: Zoning Districts. The zoning districts established by this ordinance, subject to future amendment, including an aggregate of all the area of the Town, are and shall be as follows:

- RT        Resort: 25,000 square feet per principal building.
- H        Hamlet: 25,000 square feet per principal building.
- ODA      Open Development Area: 42 acres per principal building.
- C        Conservation: No development.
- LF-1     Lakefront Residential: One acre per principal building.
- LFA      Lakefront Residential: 25,000 square feet per principal building.
- LFB      Lakefront Residential: One acre per principal building.
- LF-2.5   Lakefront Residential: 2.5 acres per principal building.
- R-1.5    Residential: 1.5 acres per principal building.
- R-3      Residential: 3 acres per principal building.
- R-8.5    Residential: 8.5 acres per principal building.
- R-10     Residential: 10 acres per principal building.
- R-15     Residential: 15 acres per principal building.
- HC       Highway Commercial/Residential: 25,000 square feet per principal building.
- HC-1     Highway Commercial/Residential: One acre per principal building.
- HC-2.5   Highway Commercial/Residential: 2.5 acres per principal building.

Section 4.020: Schedule of Regulations: The restrictions and controls intended to regulate development in each district are set forth in the attached schedules, which are supplemental in other sections of this ordinance.

Section 4.030: Application of Regulations: Except as hereinafter provided:

4.031: No building or land shall hereafter be used or occupied and no building or part thereof shall be erected, moved or altered unless in conformity with the regulations herein specified for the districts in which it is located.

4.032: No building shall hereafter be erected or altered:

- (a) to exceed the height or bulk;

# Town of Caroga

## A Brief History

Indians, who visited this area in summer to fish, gave Caroga its name. It means "by the streams or waterways," an apt reflection of its scenery. And, it was the lakes, streams, and creeks that built the town - farming, logging, tanning, and tourism.

After the State bought land from the Indians, the territory was patented in 1794, as the Glen, Bleecker and Lansing Patent, covering 89,000 acres of land, which included Caroga as well as part of what are now Bleecker, Johnstown, and Stratford. The Patent came with an incentive to buy land at 18 cents per acre, which precipitated a slow, but steady influx of settlers. It was hardly an easy beginning.

It was dense woodland, no roads, no lights, but the light of day, and long, cold winters. But these settlers were a hardy group with a pioneering spirit and no fear of hard work. They saw the forests were rich and plentiful and had an abundance of wildlife, and the lakes had a variety of fish. So they set out to clear the land with saws and axes. They built log cabins, acquired livestock, and cultivated the soil. The land and climate made farming difficult even in the south part of the town, North Bush, where the early settlers clustered. Only wheat and potatoes yielded a fairly good harvest. One of the early settlers, was the grandfather of a prominent politician. Senator Isaac Peckham Christiancy, who grew up in Caroga. His many articles about his neighbors in North Bush are an enduring early history of the town. Christiancy moved to Michigan; most of the town's farmers from the early nineteenth century also moved west to better farms.

Some stayed and their names can be found in the old North Bush cemetery and are mentioned in the Caroga history book: McClellan, Brookins, Foster, Gage, Durey, Mills, Mason, Mead. But the most well-known and illustrious name from that era, is no doubt Nick Stoner, who fought in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 and was known as an expert woodsman, trapper and hunter.

He was memorialized in the biography by Jephtha Simms, in *Trappers of New York* and later by Cyrus Durey in the article he wrote for the dedication of the Stoner monument erected on the golf course in 1929. This municipal golf course is named Nick Stoner as are many other landmarks in Caroga. Joseph Durey came from England in 1842 and settled in North Bush and became a most successful lumberman. He with his wife Anna raised seven children there, one of whom was the very influential and wealthy Cyrus Durey who bought large tracts of land and started the Durey Land and Lumber Co.

The oldest schools in town were located in North Bush: the Wiley school where Isaac Peckham Christiancy was a student, and the Shaw school east of the old cemetery where Dr. Palmer's (a former Fulton County historian) grandmother taught. The third oldest school was the Fern Dale school, better known as the Durey school because of the many Durey children who attended.

The farmers worked hard, tending their livestock and plowing the fields, which contained an enormous amount of rocks that they put to use by making stone fences to mark their property borders. Many would supplement their meager incomes by lumbering as well. The wives of these farmers were hardly ladies of leisure. Most of the homesteads raised their own cattle, hogs, sheep and chicken and it was the chores of these women to milk the cows, churn the butter, shear the wool off the sheep, card and spin the wool into yarn on large spinning wheels, before they could knit or crochet the yarn into wearable garments for their families. Socializing was often limited to events like quilting bees and corn husking.

They were isolated in small and remote clusters, joined only by dirt roads and paths, traveled by horse and buggy or wagon. One community, Newkirk, grew around a favorable site on the banks of the Caroga Creek (or Garoga creek as it was then called). It thrived because of

energetic and enterprising Garrett A Newkirk, who proceeded to build a dam, sawmill, and tannery. Within 10 years it became the largest of the area communities, with 20 buildings, a Dutch Reformed Church, a school and a post office, where Newkirk served as postmaster from 1839 to 1858.

In 1842 a big change came about, the Township of Caroga was formed with new borders incorporating parts of Bleecker, Stratford and Johnstown, and its own local government. Garrett A. Newkirk, who served as Supervisor of Bleecker, which contained Newkirk Mills before 1842, became the Supervisor of Caroga from its establishment through 1855.

Settlers continued to trickle into the community. In 1845 the population in Caroga had reached 342 of whom 79 were farmers. There were six sawmills, three schools, and one grocery store. Ten years later, the population had more than doubled and the number of farmers had declined by half. The growth of the lumber industry caused the shift and brought with it a number of skilled tradesmen such as a farrier, a cobbler, a shingle maker, and a carpenter. A plank road was completed from Fonda to Newkirks in 1849, facilitating the transport of lumber and other products to and from the railroad in Fonda.

James Irving came from Sammonsville with his wife Rosa and son William in 1855. He built a dam, house, and sawmill; he raised nine children, eight of whom attended the Wheelerville School, which was built in 1856.

In 1865 a monumental and sweeping change took place in the town. William Claflin, who with his father owned many shoe factories in Massachusetts, sent agents to Caroga to seek out land for a hemlock bark tannery to produce shoe and boot leather for his factories. Within two years he acquired 20,000 acres, two-thirds of the township's land, and hired Jonathan Wheeler to oversee the building and operation of a large tannery complex. He had constructed a four story hotel on the shore of Canada Lake and arrange to sell lots around the lake, thus creating the first planned community in the Adirondacks. A site along the inlet of Canada Lake became the tannery

and the settlement of Wheelerville. The woods had an ample supply of hemlock which was needed to secure enough tannin and the stream provided the necessary water. Hemlock bark was hauled to the tannery site to be dried, ground and steamed in large vats to leach out the tannic acid solution necessary to cure the leather. The horses and oxen would be housed in a large barn, which is still intact and has functioned as a lodge and restaurant named Nick Stoner Inn. Lots of smaller homes were built for the tannery workers. A company store was built that carried most of the products the workers needed.

The tannery sheds were among the largest tannery buildings in the Adirondacks. Every year its vats consumed 7000 cords of hemlock bark to process 25,000 skins could be processed at one time and produce 250 tons of leather. A sawmill was built at Pine Lake to produce lath from the hemlock, which otherwise would have been left in the forest to rot after its bark had been removed. It was a time of booming prosperity, especially in Wheelerville where work was readily available for everyone.

The hotel, the Canada Lake House, with its broad porches and other amenities attracted many vacationers. The structure burned in 1884 and was rebuilt. If the Wheelerville tannery provided a period of prosperity to the community, it was not without negative consequences: according to Rufus Alex Grider, whom Barbara McMartin quoted in her book *Hides, Hemlocks and Adirondack History*, "the bottom of the lake became coated with a brownish deposit, which destroyed the food upon which the young fish live, also the sawdust entered the gills and interfered with their breathing and killed them. Also the introduction of Pickerel and Perch which fed on other specimens cleared the lake of 'the speckled beauties.'" The pollution of the lake would certainly have been more severe had the waste not been biodegradable.

At the end of the 1880s, turmoil in the tanning industry and in banking resulted in the closing of almost all the tanneries in the Adirondacks. Claflin put the tannery up for sale, but there were no buyers. In 1888 operations had ceased entirely and

the equipment was sold piecemeal or just taken away. Logging was still profitable but the population declined due to lack of available jobs. Even the pace of logging declined as there was less demand for building material.

The town entered a period of low growth from the 1890s through the early twentieth century. The Auskerada (the Canada Lake House rebuilt in 1893) and the Fulton House (built by James Y. Fulton in 1888) thrived; cottages were built around the Caroga lakes as well as Canada Lake. For a few years the town's lakes were the nucleus of a developing summer resort. Steamers plied the waters of scenic Canada Lake. The Fulton House burned in 1914, the Auskerada burned in 1921.

Joseph Sherman was the first to build a hotel in the area of the Caroga lakes. He was a carpenter by trade and, having worked for other hotels, knew the business. He was also active in politics; as Town Clerk, then Justice of the Peace, and later Town Supervisor. The Caroga Hotel was built in the triangle between the Johnstown and Gloversville roads in 1878 and was run by Sherman and his wife Elizabeth. Their son Frank joined the business in 1894; that hotel burned in 1899.

The first Vrooman hotel was built on the shore of West Caroga Lake by two brothers, Orville and Ed. It had a small amusement park, including a large slide extending into the water. The Pine Lake Post Office, which served the town and had several different locations, was located in the hotel. Like all its forerunners, it burned. Ed Vrooman bought Nate Oathout's large farm and turned it into a hotel with beautiful porches added. That hotel survived and is still a popular tavern.

In the lean years around the turn of the century, there were only a few hundred residents left, but the number of summer residents and tourists grew slowly. New roads were added to serve them: the Gloversville to Caroga road was blacktopped in 1909. The Auto Stage Company ran a regular service along this road and a bus service started in 1917.

The North Bush Methodist Church was built and incorporated in 1899 and with the exception of a few years has been in continuous year-round

service to its congregation.

Commercial activity picked up with the increasing summer population. Puntty Sowles ran a store on 29A, opposite Garlock Road and sold the best ice cream. Mrs. Garlock became postmistress. John Bedford owned the store between the Caroga Lakes; it had a reputation for its peanuts and firecrackers for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration. By 1920 enough automobiles were bringing visitors that Berghoff's country store put in gas pumps. It was run by Bruce Yates and it too burned. Shutts bought the property and turned it into a service station.

An artists' and writers' colony grew at Canada Lake in the early twentieth century. Among them were Paul Bransom, known as the dean of American animal artists for his superb animal drawings, which illustrated many books and magazines. Charles Sarka was known for his outstanding watercolors of the natural surroundings and some of his friends and family. Clare Victor Dwiggin was a cartoonist for newspapers and many books. Margaret Widdemer won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1919.

Frank Sherman, who had moved away after the fire, returned to Caroga, bought a sawmill and built a two-story pavilion and dance hall. He bought a merry-go-round and hired many name bands. People flocked to the new Sherman Amusement Park. His sons took over after his death in 1955 and ran it until it was later sold to the Morris family.

In 1922, Cyrus Durey, founder of the Durey Land and Lumber Co. tried to build another recreation park and a landing field in the abandoned tannery fields in Wheelerville. He began the construction of a golf course. Six holes were ready to be played, free for all, in 1925. The following year three more holes were added and yearly fees were established: \$25 for men, \$10 for women. The last nine holes were completed by 1929, the year a monument to Nick Stoner was erected on the course. With much fanfare, speeches, and music, the monument was placed in the Caroga Recreation Park, known later as the Nick Stoner Golf Course. His estate sold the land to the town for \$650 and it has been maintained as

a municipal course ever since.

Electricity came to Caroga in 1925, to Pine Lake in 1936. The Wheeler-Claflin barn became the Nick Stoner Inn in 1927 and in the early 1930s the store became the Golf Club building. It later shared its quarters with the town offices.

Pine Lake was also part of the building expansion of the 1920s when Joseph Groshans bought lumber company land from Frank Sherman. Groshans built a large dance hall, which opened in 1925.

The Town of Caroga Fire Company was incorporated on March 20, 1951. Charles Putnam, then Town Supervisor, had made establishing a fire company his political platform, a wise move given that almost every communal of public building had burned at one time. He had his opponents nevertheless. When Putnam proudly paraded his gleaming white fire-engine on Caroga roads, Emma Krause, partner in the Unger House and future town supervisor, quipped, "There goes Charlie with his milk truck. He is going to milk the taxpayers with it."

## Associations and Clubs

As a result of shoreline camp building in the first quarter of the twentieth century, it was natural that associations were formed. They focused on the lakes—protection of the lakes from misuse and pollution and concern for safe boating, fishing, and swimming. It is the lakes, more than ten of them, and the streams and brooks that have made Caroga into a resort and tourist area.

East Caroga Lake Protective Association, formed in 1917, is the oldest of the lake associations. It has operated continuously up to the present. It has evolved into a very social organization sponsoring teen-age dances, a children's Day, boat parades, and a dinner dance at the end of the season. Through the 1970s you could spot a colorful sail regatta every Saturday morning in the summer.

Canada Lake Protective Association was formed in 1922, with 39 charter members who were concerned about the power company's raising and lowering of the lake. After an agreement was

reached, the association became inactive for the next 30 years. It was reactivated in 1952 in order to allow for the purchase of Nick Stoner Island, to maintain the island, and to control speed boats. Since it was incorporated it has grown to more than 200 members, has numerous concerns and activities, including the publication of a newsletter, complete with history, family news, and summer event schedules.

Kirchens Grove Association is also old, formed in 1920. It is a small association formed by the residents of this peninsula, mainly for the purpose of maintaining the road into the grove as well as the commonly owned center area, where tennis was played. An annual meeting is held in midsummer.

The majority of the town's associations and clubs have been established in the past 25 years, with increased focus on environmental issues, civic concerns, special interests, or simply to enjoy the fellowship of social congregation.

West Caroga Lake Association was formed in 1988 with Kevin Grygiel as its chairman. It focused on lake issues such as unsafe boating, excessive speeds, noise, and the effects of feeding the ducks. The association holds an annual meeting as well as a family evening at Sherman's

Pine Lake Civic Association is a relative newcomer. It was formed in 1997 with Lucille Hunt as president. It was formed to protect the lake as well as a reciprocal way of protecting the property of members. It holds 4th of July beach parties.

Stoner Lake Association began in the 1960's as Stoner Lake Fish and Game Club with the primary mission of improving fishing in the Stoner lakes. It became inactive in the 70s and 80s, but was reactivated in the early 90s. Its main activities are monitoring of water quality, improving the fish habitat, a fishing contest, canoe and paddle-boat races

The Caroga Fish and Game Club was organized by Claude Burch in the late 40s. It is still active with 135 members. Members meet the first Tuesday of each month at the clubhouse. The club is active in stocking trout.

Caroga Historical Association & Museum was

born on the coattails of the 1976 bicentennial celebration. Interest in history, inspired locally by the publication of *Caroga, The Town Recalls Its Past*, by Barbara McMartin, spurred the formation of the Historical Association. At its first meeting in January of 1977, Lena Durey was chosen to be its charter president and Barbara McMartin became the museum director for four years.

Mike Steciak donated space in the old Unger Ice House for the museum, and the first year was spent with a hectic search for historic artifacts to exhibit. Many memorable displays including exhibits of the art works of Canada Lake artists Paul Bransom and Charles Sarka. Summer of 1980 featured a large, impressive exhibit of historical and traditional quilts. Visitors came by the thousands.

In 1981 the association found permanent quarters in the old Arnst homestead. The main building had been a tanner's house, which had been moved from its original site near the tannery and reassembled on its present site. The rustic cobbler's shop was the most authentic. The garage, with the help of the Argersinger Fund was converted to a charming replica of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century General Store. The barn was not in good shape, and on a windy night, a couple of years after the association assumed ownership of the property, the barn collapsed. Not long after, Mary Tasheff, an association trustee, learned from Martha Kunkel, a leader of the former Girl Scout Camp Kowaumkami, that the camp's barn was available and would be donated, if the Caroga Historical Association could supply the manpower to disassemble the barn, relocate it to the museum site, and reassemble it. This was a truly historic pegged barn, built in 1860, in Bleecker by the Rhinehart family, and in 1902 sold to Peter Stock, who relocated it to East Caroga, off Fisher Rd. In the 1920s it became the property of the Girl Scout Camp on Martha Kunkel Road. With the aid of the Arnst brothers and a score of generous volunteers, the traveling barn was again transplanted, plank by plank laboriously to its present location on the museum grounds, a site that honors its illustrious past by having a good deal of history on display, from old farm tools, to tannery exhibit to the

glorious colorful quilts, each piece a landmark of Caroga, composed and quilted by association members.

Lectures by historians, musical entertainment, and art exhibits are held in the barn, which offers a permanent display of the tanning era and associated agricultural tools and implements. The museum is open in July and August, Thurs. through Sundays, 1 - 4 pm. The current President is Shirley Holliday.

The Nick Stoner Senior Citizen Club is a social club for seniors, organized in 1979 with Richard Port, Peggy Althiser, Eva Sweet, and Virginia Edick as officers. The club receives help from the Fulton County Office of the Aging, which offers transportation and sponsors many events and programs. The club organizes trips and tours and provides dinners, picnics, movies, health lectures, and a summer fair. Meetings are semi-monthly, the first and third Tuesday at 1:00 pm at the Municipal Building.

The Caroga Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary was organized shortly after the Fire Company was incorporated in 1951. It serves to assist to the fire company by providing refreshment needed by firemen and by fund-raising by selling cook books and staging events. In 2002 it was temporarily inactive.

Nick Stoner Trailers Snowmobile Club is a winter sport club formed in 1974, at the height of the popularity of the snowmobiles. Funding is provided in part by snowmobile license fees distributed by the N.Y. State Office of Parks and Recreation. These funds are used for grooming and maintenance of the trail system. The club sponsors a local Poker Run every winter.

Apart from incorporated organizations and clubs, there have been ad hoc committees formed dedicated to the solution of specific issues. As any resident of the Adirondack Park can affirm, the black flies have been a scourge to comfort and well-being in late spring and summer. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) put pressure on communities to stop aerial spraying, especially the use of the very toxic DDT. In 1990 Supervisor Busch appointed a committee to study the problem. On advice of the committee, the town

decided to stop the aerial spraying and to adopt a program of applying the much less toxic substance abbreviated BTi. It required mapping and testing of all streams and waterways for quantities of black fly larva before applying BTi. Ron Staring of Pine Lake conducted the program. Weather is a factor in its effectiveness of the program from one year to next. By 1997, to everyone's relief, the black fly problem seemed to be under control.

A group from Canada Lake petitioned Supervisor Surace to appoint a Navigation Committee, which concerned itself with spreading information on proper navigation regulation and a plea for courtesy on the lakes. Three women from the East Caroga Lake Protective Association, Dona Goldman, Florence Smeland and Dori Nicholson, initiated a campaign to force the Department of Environmental Conservation to remove the pipe that carried effluent material from the campground into the lake and replace it with a new septic system. This effort took many meetings, state and local, including a colorful protest parade in front of the campground. The campground built a new septic system back from the lake and the APA approved harvesting the weeds. Howard Sherman and Frank Bohlander were instrumental in getting a grant for a weed harvester and in implementing the dredging of the lake to clear it of the nuisance of aquatic weeds, milfoil.

Of the more memorable recent events in Caroga, the 4th of July celebration in 1991 was one of the town's largest and most colorful parades with over 5000 people attending and a fantastic fireworks display at night, all dedicated to honor the late Staff Sgt. Harold P. Witzke III, a Caroga man who died in combat during Operation Desert Storm. The Old State Rd. was renamed after him, a plaque in his honor was placed at the Wheelerville School lawn, and a scholarship fund in his name was established.

## **Structural and Physical Changes to the Town**

The Wheelerville Union Free School, built in 1856, was in continuous operation as a school until the fall of 1991, when the student body moved to the new school building located on Route 10, close to the East Caroga Lake Outlet. The old school had been enlarged several times, but in 1988 it was faced with mandates from the Board of Education for more space and modern class rooms. Several public meetings took place before the referendum vote which passed the bond issue by a close margin. Construction started in January of 1990, and the new school was completed in time for the fall semester of 1991. It was no longer located in Wheelerville, but it kept its old name.

The old school building remained vacant, while everyone was speculating on what its future use would be. Supervisor Busch appointed a committee to supply recommendations for its functions. Bill Fielding chaired the committee. As a result of its recommendations, the Municipal Offices moved into the old school building in June of 1992. In addition to providing room for Town Board meetings and office space for all town officials, the new Municipal Building has a nicely built court room and space for the medical clinic administered by Dr. John Glenn. The Nick Stoner Senior Citizen Club holds their meetings in the old cafeteria and the North Bush Church holds its popular, twice yearly, fund raising roast beef suppers there as well.

In 1989 the old landfill or "dump" was closed, the county built a new transfer station nearby. The Irving Pond Dam was dismantled to the displeasure of many, in the fall of 1996, and a new London Bridge was constructed the following year. But the biggest change in the "downtown" Caroga Lake occurred in 2001 with the closing of the old log cabin post office and the move into the newly constructed post office building, "just up the road apiece" from the old one.



## Town Government

The Town of Caroga has an almost perfect rectangular shape, situated in the southern most tip of the foothills of the Adirondack Park, just northwest of center in Fulton County. It borders Hamilton County on the north, Bleecker on the east, Johnstown, Ephratah on the south, and Stratford on the west. The Town comprises an area of about 30,000 acres, 50.8 square miles. Two thirds of the Town is N.Y. State land.

The Town government has its office in the Municipal Building in the old Wheelerville School. Fees from the golf course are a major source of revenue for the town. The Town Board has five members, a Supervisor and four Councilmen. They have the power to legislate new town laws, provided they are in compliance with the laws of New York State, and since the town is located within the borders of Adirondack Park, new laws also require the approval of the APA, which regulates the densities of development and other environmental issues.

The Town Board appointed a Planning Board on September 24, 1968. The purpose of the Planning Board was to serve as an advisory group to the Town Board, concerning all issues affecting the future growth of the town. (Initially the Planning Board had five members; it was increased to seven members in 1970.) Currently five members have five year terms, one has a four year term, and one a three year term. There is no set meeting schedule. Meetings are conducted when there is an agenda.

The Town of Caroga still has no central water system or sewer system, but it was the first step in the right direction when a Sanitary Code was adopted in 1968. (Regulation of sanitary and plumbing facilities followed the serious pollution problem in Caroga in 1968.)

The next code to be adopted was the Building Code in 1972. (The code regulated the construction and design of buildings in order to provide safeguards from fire and health hazards and structural deficiencies)

The third code to be adopted also in 1972 was the Mobile Home Park Ordinance aimed at

regulating the occupancy and maintenance of mobile homes.

The Sanitation and Building codes have been amended and adopted as a uniform code by the Town in 1985, in compliance with the requirements of the New York State Fire Prevention and Building Code.

The present Mobile Home Ordinance requires a permit and Site Plan Review for any additions or alteration to an existing mobile home.

The Caroga Town Planning Board began in 1974 to develop a comprehensive and realistic Town Plan that would permit the town to take over responsibility for approving Class B projects from the APA. In order to prepare a statement of community goals, which would serve as a basis for such a plan, the planning board sought input from Caroga residents via a comprehensive survey prepared by the Planning Board in the fall of 1974. In February, 1975, 1600 questionnaires were sent to both seasonal and year-round residents. It is estimated that 275 survey forms were mailed to local addresses, the remaining (1325) were mailed to out-of-town locations.

The Board felt that the opinion survey had served the following general purposes:

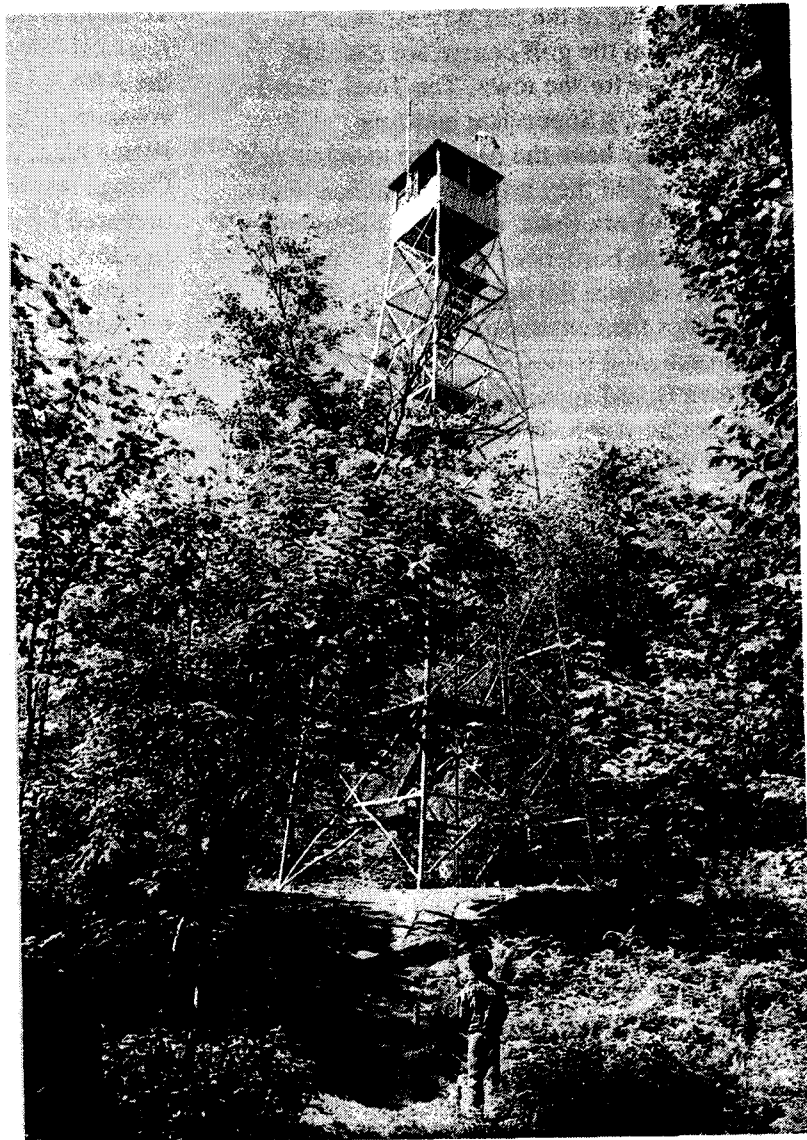
1. Provided valuable information on the opinions and attitudes of townspeople on local services and conditions.
2. Provided a channel of communications for the residents to make comments and suggestions to the Town government.
3. Increased the awareness of residents that the Town Planning Board is "open" to their participation.
4. Provided a learning experience for the Planning Board through analyses of citizen opinions.

The Town adopted a Land Use and Development Plan, which resulted in the adoption of the Town of Caroga Zoning Ordinance on July 17, 1979. The Adirondack Park Agency conditionally approved the planning program, stating that certain technical difficulties needed correction in the Zoning Ordinance.

A Zoning Board of Appeals was appointed by

the Town Board at that time, a chairman was appointed on Sept. 26, but to serve retroactively from July 17, 1979, for a term of one year.

The Zoning Board of Appeals consists of five members; it has all the powers and duties prescribed by statute and by this ordinance. The purpose of this ordinance is to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community, and protect the property values and aesthetics of the community, directing growth and regulating and restricting the height, number of stories and size of buildings and other structures.



## Town of Caroga Businesses

**1978**

### **Entertainment & Recreational**

Four Seasons Hotel  
Maple Tree Knoll  
Iron Kettle Motel  
Nick Stoner Inn and Restaurant  
Pine Lake Amusement Park  
Pine Lake Lodge  
The Outlet Restaurant  
Lakeside Motel  
Red Wing Lodge  
Pinnacle Restaurant  
Sherman's Amusement Park  
The Jammer  
The Outlet Restaurant  
Royal Mountain Ski area  
Vrooman's Hotel

### **Retail Outlets**

Campside Store  
Canada Lake Store  
Candle Shop  
Caroga Curl Beauty Parlor  
Mobile Home Sales  
Chuckwagon Snack Shop  
Shutts Gas Station  
Coffee Shop and Deerpatch Boutique  
Thee Country Store  
Joe's Barber Shop Laundromat  
"Morris" Foodarama  
Pottery Shop  
The Tree Gift Shop  
Kelly Lumber Company  
Coven Hoven  
Willie's Pizza  
Yesterday Shop

**2002**

### **Entertainment & Recreational**

Countryside Café  
Iron Kettle Motel  
Laker, The  
Lakeside Motel  
Maple Tree Knoll  
Nick Stoner Inn and 19th Hole\*  
The Outlet Restaurant  
Pine Lake Amusement Park  
Pine Lake Lodge  
Pinnacle Restaurant and Motel  
Red Wing Lodge  
Roger's Place  
Royal Mountain Ski Area  
Sherman's Amusement Park  
Vrooman's Hotel

### **Retail Outlets and Services**

Adirondack Crafts  
Boat Launch (Jackie Thomas)  
Canada Lake Computer Service  
Canada Lake Store and Marine  
Center of Attraction (beauty salon)  
Foodarama\*  
Grooms (Store and Gas Station)  
Mark Kane, contractor  
North Country Wash and Dry  
Northeast Snowmobiles, Sales and Service  
Pine Lake Stoves  
Shutts Service  
Stuff and Such\*  
Traveling Scissors (beauty salon)  
Whispering Pines (mobile homes sales)  
Jim Zeitler's Antiques and Storage

*\* closed or for sale in 2002*



*Shermans Amusement Park with its merry-go-round and the Nick Stoner Golf Course are two of the town's landmarks*



**Town of Caroga**  
**Comprehensive Plan**  
**2002**

**Comprehensive Plan Committee**

George Lake, Chairman

George Abdella  
William Fielding  
Gay Lefebvre  
Elizabeth Mowrey  
Eric White  
Barbara McMartin

Carol Barker  
Doreen Ford  
Frank Malagisi  
Douglas Smith  
Donna Goldman  
Alec Reid

John Blackmon  
Ed Jutras  
Jim McLelland  
Robert Sullivan  
Inger McDaniel