

Crom Pond, *by Boat and by Boots*

Growing up in Buchanan, once I was old enough to drive I became aware that "Crompond" Road headed out of Peekskill (past the Beach Shopping Center) towards Yorktown. Recently Kath and I discovered there was a "Crom Pond", east of Mohansic Lake in Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park. A quick look at Page 108 in my trusty 2011 DeLorme New York Atlas & Gazetteer showed me that "Crompond" Road headed out of Peekskill towards Yorktown, and ended up, surprise surprise, near Crom Pond: who'da thought!!!

by **Ralph J Ferrusi**



As I've said (and written) many times before, we are always on the lookout for new, interesting, reasonably-nearby bodies of water—rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, swamps, marshes, wetlands—to paddle and explore. Over the years we'd passed Mohansic Lake in FDR on the Taconic probably something like 40,000-50,000 times, and often glanced longingly at the big, interesting-looking body of water.

Finally, years ago, we pulled off the parkway and up to the entrance gatehouse with our trusty dark green We-no-nah Sundowner strapped to the roof rack, and the grumpy guy inside the gatehouse just about immediately snarled something like "You can't put THAT THING on the lake." He went on and on that it had to be sterilized, or pasteurized, or something like that: we just about always wash down our boats, inside and out, after we use them, and, they then dry off before our next outing. We tried to explain this to The Grump, but he would have none of it, and, very disappointed by this unexpected negative encounter, we drove away: and, never came back, until:

June 22, 2018, on a beautiful blue-sky morning: "How's about we give Mohansic a whirl again??? The 18-foot Kevlar Jensen would be an ideal boat, and, it's squeaky clean." Down we went, like—as Mom used to say—a herd of turtles,



and to abide by New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Rules, first went to the Park Office to see what it would take to make ourselves “legal” on their very-inviting lake. The office staff was very polite, helpful, and informative. They even gave us some silver reflective stick-ums to put on our paddles to make us more visible.

We filled out a Boat Permit form and forked over 30 bucks, giving us permission to use our boat not only on Mohansic Lake, but Canopus and Stillwater Lakes and John Allen Pond in Fahnestock, Lake Taghkanic, Rudd Pond, and “The Lake at Olana” (!!!) until March 30, 2019. No mention was made that our gleaming yellow, squeaky-clean Jensen would have to be clinically sterilized...

FDR Park is a VAST 960 acres, and we followed signs to the boat ramp, and gazed out over a vast, inviting, 108-acre no-other-boats-on-it lake. “Clockwise or counter clockwise???” We headed along the north shore, counter clockwise, the super-efficient, super-light (54 pounds) Jensen slicing/gliding through the clear, calm water. We swung around, over by the Taconic (the ROAR never ceases any more, and it was an intrusion, but not as bad as I feared it would be), and Kath spotted some “white things” floating by the shore.

One was a big white fishing tackle box filled with lots of (some of it brand new) fishing gear, and food. There was a smaller white cooler floating nearby, and, two small canoe paddles. Yikes!!! No overturned boat, no, gulp, bodies... We hauled everything into our boat, and continued south to the far end of the lake. I was surprised at the number of fishing boats in the woods on the bank in the southwest corner of the lake.

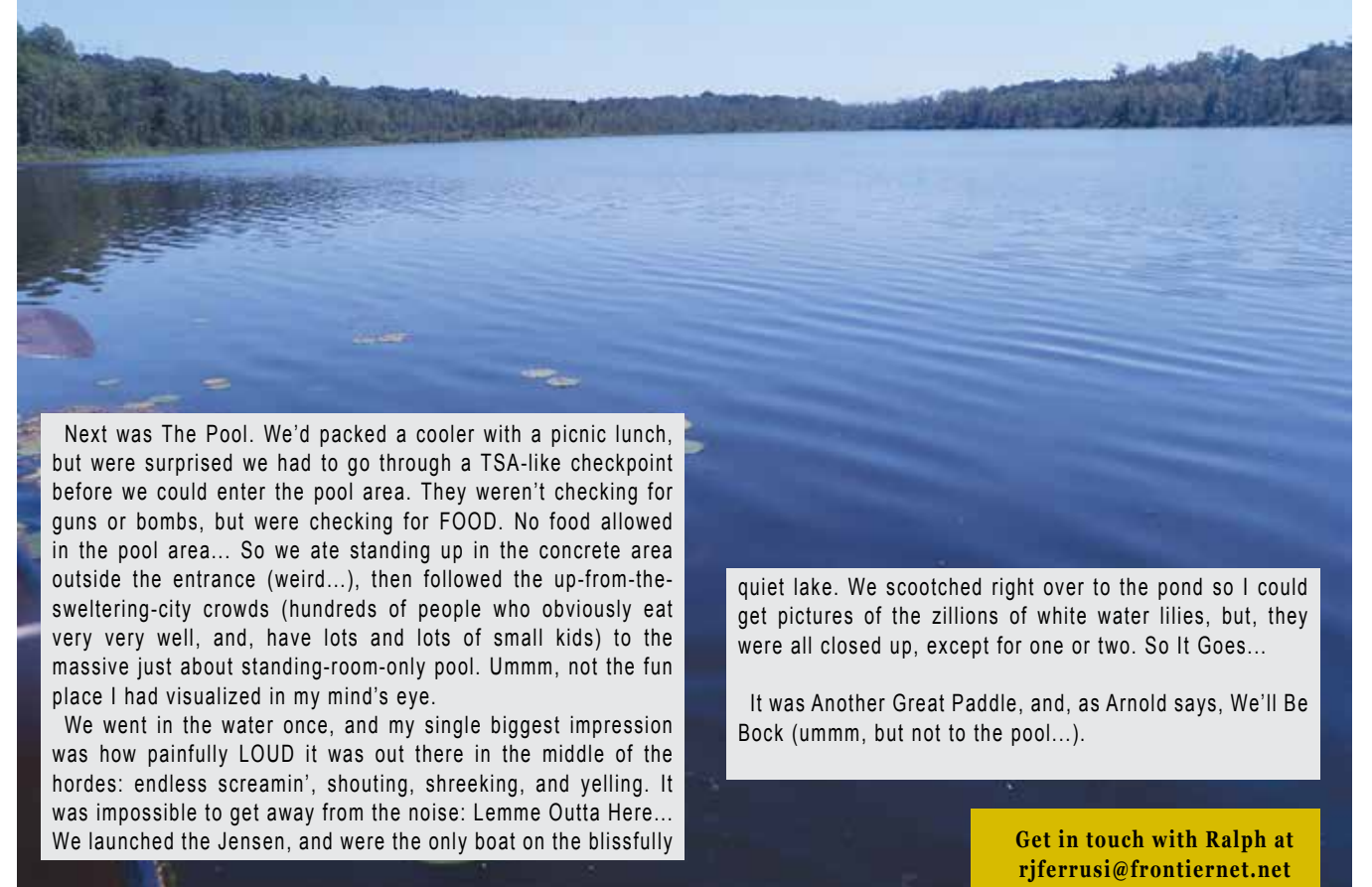
OK, let’s find the passage to Crom Pond. It took some lookin’, but it was a deep, twisting, narrow channel through endless

white blossoming water lilies (and me without my camera). It was fun paddling, leaning and steering the 18-footer: what Canoeing is All About. Finally there was Crom Pond: pristine, idyllic, just about out of earshot of the Taconic, and, all to ourselves. WOW!!! Paddling Paradise! And, I’d bet, one heckuva fishin’ hole.

When leaving the park, we stopped at the Park Office to report our flotsam finds, and found out two “70-year-old” fisherman had capsized the day before (they weren’t wearing life jackets (now called PFD’s: Personal Flotation Devices...)) and had been rescued. And, it turned out they were delighted we’d found their gear. Kath suggested the Park Service make them promise to wear PFD’s the next time they went out...

In early July we stopped at the wonderful Information Center/book store on the north end of the Palisades Parkway just before Bear Mountain and picked up the latest (free) issue of the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference’s “Trailwalker” magazine and there was a small article about the Crom Pond Trail being fixed up!!! OK, how’s about this: let’s go back, walk the trail, then go to the swimming pool, then paddle back to the pond with my camera this time.

Ahhh, another fine day. The about-a-mile trail (marked by round red DEC disks) was very pleasant, easy walking through mostly open woods, across some nicely-constructed boardwalks and bridges. It was a bit buggy, and, very surprising to me, never really did go all the way down to the shore of the pond; there were a couple of short fishermen’s trails, but you had to keep your eyes peeled to spot them. We walked to the end and back, and determined to come back in the fall, when the bugs are dead.



Next was The Pool. We’d packed a cooler with a picnic lunch, but were surprised we had to go through a TSA-like checkpoint before we could enter the pool area. They weren’t checking for guns or bombs, but were checking for FOOD. No food allowed in the pool area... So we ate standing up in the concrete area outside the entrance (weird...), then followed the up-from-the-swelting-city crowds (hundreds of people who obviously eat very very well, and, have lots and lots of small kids) to the massive just about standing-room-only pool. Ummm, not the fun place I had visualized in my mind’s eye.

We went in the water once, and my single biggest impression was how painfully LOUD it was out there in the middle of the hordes: endless screamin’, shouting, shrieking, and yelling. It was impossible to get away from the noise: Lemme Outta Here... We launched the Jensen, and were the only boat on the blissfully

quiet lake. We scootched right over to the pond so I could get pictures of the zillions of white water lilies, but, they were all closed up, except for one or two. So It Goes...

It was Another Great Paddle, and, as Arnold says, We’ll Be Bock (ummm, but not to the pool...).

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