

## **Martin Monohon**

Martin Monohon was one of the earliest white settlers on the eastern shore of Squak Lake, today (2007) known as Lake Sammamish. In 1877 he built a log house on 160 acres near what is now the intersection of SE 24th Way and E Lake Sammamish Parkway in the city of Sammamish. A ferry landing at the site soon became known as "Monohon's Landing," and a town sprang up which was named after Monohon. Monohon lived in his log house until 1906, devoting much of his attention to raising livestock, although he was also active in Republican politics in King County. Blessed with good health, Monohon lived well into his 90s, dying in September 1914, the month before his 94th birthday.

### **Early Years**

Martin Monohon was born on October 26, 1820, in Madison County, Ohio. In 1821 his family moved to Tippecanoe County, Indiana, located in the west-central part of the state. Monohon grew up in the backwoods and never went to school; he did not learn to read and write until he was in his 30s. But he became a strong outdoorsman with a fiercely independent streak, capable of holding court with any of the educated intellectuals of his day.

In June 1841 Monohon married Sarah Routh and they settled on her father's farm. In July 1844 they had a daughter, Samantha. But Sarah died six weeks later, leaving young Monohon to raise Samantha alone. Evidently this did not suit him, and, as fate would have it, his father-in-law had been encouraging Monohon to go west shortly before Sarah died. Monohon soon followed his father-in-law's advice and late in 1844 headed west, leaving Samantha behind with his in-laws. But he only made it as far as Fort Des Moines, Iowa (now Des Moines), where he remained for most of the next decade.

Monohon's interest in politics must have started early, because he is said to have played a role in the transition of Iowa from territory to state when Iowa became a state in December 1846. He owned a livery stable for most of the time he lived in Des Moines. On October 16, 1851, he married Isabelle Speer (1824-1912). It was the second marriage for both, and Isabelle also had a daughter, Henrietta (1847-1926), from her prior marriage. Henrietta accompanied the Monohons when they moved to Oregon Territory in 1853.

### **Going Northwest**

Monohon's independent streak shone in his move to the West. Although many people who traveled across the West in the 1850s did it in wagon trains, Monohon "refused to be captained by anybody" (*Seattle Post-*

*Intelligencer*, January 28, 1906, magazine section, p. 1) and took just four of his best horses and a few of his best wagons for the trip. This was an incredibly risky venture, but the Monohons safely made it after three months of trials and tribulations, arriving in Oregon in July 1853 and spending their first winter in Benton County. The following year the Monohons moved to Douglas County and settled on 640 acres near Roseburg (then known as Deer Creek), Oregon.

Monohon seems to have hit his stride during his Oregon years. He and Isabelle had seven children during these years, six of whom survived into adulthood: Asenath (b. 1854), Augustus (b. 1855), Emma (1857-1935), Leander ("Lee") (1858-1951), Cassius ("Cash") (1861-1928), and Frank (1862-1933). He taught himself to read and write so he could better understand what was being written about the approaching Civil War. And he continued to go out and court danger. He volunteered for service in the Rogue River Indian War in southern Oregon in the mid-1850s. Also during the 1850s, Monohon carried the U.S. mail from Roseburg to Eureka, California, (a distance of 200 miles over rugged terrain) and warded off his own Indian attacks.

Monohon was elected to the first Oregon State Legislature in 1860 (representing Douglas County) and took an active role in Republican politics that year. After one term Monohon left the legislature and in 1863 sold his ranch in Douglas County and moved his family to Silver City, Idaho, where he engaged in mining and ran a livery stable for several years. But schools in Silver City were lacking, and in 1866 or 1867 the Monohons returned to Oregon and settled in Oregon City so their children could attend school there.

### **To Washington and to Squak Lake**

In 1871 the Monohons moved to Washington state, traveling via the steamer *Gussie Telfair* and landing at Yesler's Wharf in Seattle. For several years they lived near Georgetown, then moved to the east end of Madison Street in Seattle to land owned by Judge John McGilvra (1827-1903) on Lake Washington. In 1877 Monohon took up a homestead on 160 acres on the eastern shore of Squak Lake, now known as Lake Sammamish. He built a log house north of the future site of the town of Monohon, east of the present-day intersection of SE 24th Way and East Lake Sammamish Parkway in today's city of Sammamish. Plat records describe his 160 acres as being in the northeast quarter of Section 8, Township 24, North Range 6 East. Today, this acreage lies in the Brookemont subdivision and the northern part of the Rockmeadow Farm subdivision in Sammamish. Monohon was either 56 or 57 years old when he moved to his new home on the eastern shore of Squak Lake. By nineteenth century standards he was

fast approaching old age. And in fact he seems to have semi-retired during the nearly 30 years he lived on the lake, devoting most of his attention to farming and raising livestock. But he did not drop out entirely. He was involved in the transition of Washington from territory to state in 1889, and was a "familiar figure at every Republican county convention" (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 25, 1909, Sec. 2, p.1) from the 1870s into the early twentieth century.

During the 1880s Monohon maintained a ferry landing on the lake near his home known as "Monohon's Landing." This landing was located near today's intersection of SE 32nd Street and East Lake Sammamish Parkway in Sammamish. In October 1887 he drafted a petition to build one of the earliest roads up into the Sammamish Plateau, which was officially named the Martin Monohon Road (but became known as Monohon Hill Road). Part of this road is today SE 24th Way in Sammamish. Monohon Hill (now called Waverly Hills) was named after Monohon, and so was the town of Monohon.

### **Last Years**

Monohon enjoyed a long life and good health into the twentieth century. But he apparently enjoyed it alone: Wife Isabelle lived in son Lee's Renton home from the 1880s until her death in 1912. It is not presently known if Martin and Isabelle divorced or simply separated -- the 1910 U.S. Census for the city of Renton lists Isabelle as "widowed," but this is wrong; Monohon was still hale and hearty in 1910. He moved back to Seattle in 1906 and participated in "Octogenarians Day" at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Expedition in August 1909, getting a fairly impressive write up in the *Seattle P-I* two days before the event.

Monohon died in King County Hospital in Seattle on September 8, 1914, at the age of 93. His obituary in the January 1915 issue of the *Washington Historical Quarterly* aptly described him as "a talker, and strong of mind and will." The town of Monohon survived for another decade before being destroyed in a fiery inferno on June 26, 1925.

Martin Monohon's son Lee became even more well-known than Martin. He had a very successful career as an engineer, first in Alaska and the Yukon in the first decade of the twentieth century, and thereafter in Renton.

### **Sources:**

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By Phil Dougherty, November 25, 2007