

Viking Village



Early Sunday River logo pin designed by Jack Harvey, Augusta

Sunday River Skiway became incorporated on April 28, 1958. On June 7, 1965 a plan for Viking Village was filed with the State of Maine Registry of Deeds. This plan showed 46 house lots. Over a period of time Sunday River installed a water distribution system to each lot. The water system was designed with the storage facility above the Village that offered a "maintenance-free" gravity feed system.

In the fall of 1971, Helen and I bought lot #26 on what is now known as Walter's Way. Sunday River was selling lots at that time for \$2000. Neighbors were aghast at that price since some of the "pioneers" paid either \$350, \$500 or \$750 for their lot and some had paid \$1000 "just last year". Some of those pioneers also purchased 100 shares of Sunday River stock for \$1000 and that included a lifetime season pass.

All of the property owners in the Village, before the founding of the Association, paid Sunday River \$200 for the "right" to hook on to the water system. I cannot justify current property prices, but the water hookup fees have been raised over the years to reflect monies that the Association has invested in the system. The current hookup fee is \$2400.

Walter's Way, in 1971, was a partially overgrown, clear-cut swath that had been roughed out for a future road. Sunday River had buried a water line along the edge with shutoffs at each surveyed house lot. The "road" was in no way prepared for year-round travel. In May 1973 we built our house with the "help" of black flies and Old Woodsman's fly dope. Walter's Way and the bottom of the Viking Village Road, in the spring, was virtually unpassable to all but a 4wd vehicle. We usually had to park at the top of Walter's Way and carry our 2 small children and weekend provisions down to our house.

One of the perks of that era was the free plowing of our roads. P.H. (Phil) Chadbourne was one of the directors of Sunday River at that time and his company plowed the Skiway parking area, which consisted of the Barker Mountain lot and roads. It was a simple task for their road grader to sweep through the Village roads. In big storms, they would kindly drop the wing at the end of each driveway and clear out the big wall of snow usually left behind.

Another early member of the Sunday River board of directors was Claus Wiese. Claus and Jackie owned the Norseman Inn. The symbol on pins and signs around the ski area was a picture of a Norseman sporting a fully horned headdress (photo top of page 1). Howard Cole recalls that image being the logo or "mascot" of Sunday River before the current sunrise logo. Claus, being of Nordic heritage, likely had an influence on the establishment of that logo and the naming of Viking Village. Helen and I happened to stop in a ski shop in Falmouth, Maine in the late 70s. They had a box of miscellaneous ski pins in which we found a couple of the discontinued Norse pins, which we still have.

*After the November 2000 annual Association meeting, Pat Irons asked me if I would write a history of the Viking Village and of the Association for the benefit of some of our newer residents. The following is my attempt to chronicle key events and some of the facts and reasoning behind some of the actions that have transpired. Also, attached to this document is an article reproduced from the Oxford County Citizen on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Sunday River in 1984.
Pete Cunningham*

The Bethel Journals—Bethel Maine History—Viking Village

Dave Irons adds this paragraph about the possible naming of Viking Village.

“If you recall the hottest image of skiing in the sixties was Stein Ericson and many ski areas were looking for the Norse theme. In the early sixties preceding Uel Gardner, the head of the ski school was a tall slim guy with some kind of accent. I think his name was Nils. I have no idea if he was Norwegian, Austrian, Swiss or just talked funny, but his blonde hair always looked as if he were walking into a gale or skiing very fast. It was my impression that half the women in Bethel were in love with him. Of course, Claus certainly had an influence on the Skiway board in those days and that might have contributed to the name. I can't say for sure, but I suspect that the Norse themes at Sunday River were just following the skiing trends of the sixties. For the record, Pat and I have skied with Stein and he is still as pretty a skier as ever even in his seventies. The only disappointing part is that he is not the tall Norwegian he looks to be in pictures. He is about 5-8, but one of the truly nice guys in skiing. Hope this helps. Dave.”

On an absolutely beautiful mid-week spring day in April 2001, Helen and I had the great opportunity to take several runs with Les Otten. Now, he's a fine skier! I asked him about the origin of the name Viking Village. Without hesitation he volunteered the name of Claus Wiese as the motivating force along with some of the rationale that Dave pointed out above.



Photo was taken in April 2008 to show the modern styles used in the contemporary Viking Village. From the snow depth of the photo one can see that the winter of 2007 and 2008 was an excellent skiing winter.

The water system for Viking Village in those early years consisted of four 15-foot deep “dug” wells in the area where Sunday River’s maintenance garage now sits at the base of Barker Mountain parking lot. The four interconnected wells were lined with 4’ concrete tiles to form a holding system of about 5000 gallons. A pipe crossed the Barker Mountain Access

road and fed the distribution pipes throughout the Village. The wells were strategically located to provide water to all homes by gravity. Well, most homes. The Fullers and the Stackhouses, the top two homes, installed pumps to boost their pressure.

The water system “worked” most/some of the time. During the week, there was generally water for the few occupied homes. But, come the weekends, there were usually the haves and the have-nots. Those homes at the bottom of the Village usually always had water, unless the underground pipes froze. Those at the top rarely had water. For those of us half way down the Village, ...it was a dice roll. In the early 70s, Viking Village residents pitched in and added a fifth dug well. But, as it turned out, the water source was not the main problem at that time.

Throughout the winters of the 70’s, there was a continuous parade of Village residents to the Sunday River office complaining about the water situation. In the spring, the residents were parading to the office complaining about the water AND the road quagmire.

In 1972 Killington bought Sunday River and placed 23 year old Les Otten as manager. Les was trying to cope with the disastrous ski conditions of those mid to late-70s winters AND build a viable ski business. The last thing he needed was repeated complaints from Viking Village. He “strongly insisted” that we form an Association and then he would deal with representatives of it. That made sense and we put together some meetings of those residents that came up regularly on weekends. On January 1, 1977 we held our first organizational meeting at the Wescott’s chalet. Attitudes ranged from “that #!\$%&! ski area owes us roads and water” to a more moderate temperament of “lets deal with it”. Warren Bishop had experience with Associations and he cut and pasted (before computers) and put together a proposal for our bylaws. He worked with attorneys in Portland and was instrumental in finalizing our bylaws and, on February 9, 1977, getting our Association incorporated as a non-profit organization.

It was determined at the time that the Association had no legal authority to “force” residents to join the Association, and that membership would have to be voluntary. Hence, the Enrollment Form was generated which, when signed by one lot/house owner, declared the owner’s intention to join the Association and the owner would thereby agree to abide by decisions of the Board of Directors. Most residents joined the Association. Almost everyone has paid all levied assessments over the years whether they were signed members or not. At nearly every annual meeting the issue of how to deal with those few in arrears comes up. **It has generally been felt that we are fortunate to still have a strong community spirit and that the clear majority is willing to voluntarily cooperate.** If a miniscule few choose to not be a part of our fine community then so be it. It is my view that it is not worth the legal fees to go after them...no matter how much you might really want to.

I think that most of the Village residents will agree that forming the Association was the right thing to do. Les cooperated with us to the extent that he could, given the financial position of Sunday River at the time. He agreed that Walter’s Way was not a completely finished roadway, but as I recall, his position was that we did buy lots there with the road in the unfinished state and that we, as owners, should be partially liable for completing it. So, in the spirit of working together, Walter’s Way was rebuilt in the fall of 1977 and the Association coughed up \$1250, as did Sunday River. Bryce Yates did a great job building the road to rival an Interstate (compared to what it had been).

As the first president of the Association, I signed a Letter of Agreement with Sunday River on February 19, 1978 that details the relationship between Sunday River and Viking Village Association. This was necessary since there is nothing in our deeds with respect to an Asso-

ciation and it was vague about who was responsible for what. Mike Lynch has a copy of the Agreement and I would think that Sunday River has a copy. Details about ownership and maintenance of our water supply and roads are covered in that document.

So, what about the water? Serious water problems continued for years and they still go on, although usually not as serious. Les's position on the water is that Sunday River never "guaranteed" us water for our \$200. That "non guarantee" has been a bone of contention with some early residents. The Association agreed to assume maintenance of the water system. Sunday River agreed to cooperate with us in locating sources of water and providing us with mutually agreeable sites to locate wells as necessary.

It was easily determined that the main reason that we were out of water was that the distribution system was full of leaks and the shallow wells could not keep up with the leaks plus the household demand. Throughout the mid 70s and 80s, residents of the Village would get together on summer weekends and, along with a hired backhoe operator, try to methodically determine the location of leaks and fix them. We'd fix some and then find more and fix some more. These work efforts actually created long-lasting bonds within our community.

There were frustrating moments, but there were also some funny memorable times. At the risk of offending those who believe in dowsing, I make light of the time we had a couple of dowzers assist us in locating leaks and possible water sources. Up near the shallow wells, the dowzers "located a vein of water just missing the wells and diverted it by striking the side of a metal rod driven into the ground to increase the supply to the wells." Did this work? Some maintain that it did because, the next day, the wells were full of water. Of course, concurrently with the dowsing activity, the "doubting dowzers" who continued with "real" work, completed repairs of the major leaks. ☺

The leaks were caused by rusted/corroded metal parts, broken plastic/nylon fittings, breaks in the PVC pipes caused by careless backfilling with large rocky gravel, sections freezing, leaky toilets and faucets, and anything else you can imagine.

I remember one Friday night we were out of water. Hank Fuller, Ted Stackhouse, and I walked around with a flashlight peeking into windows of chalets where no one was home in the "hopes" of discovering the problem. Walter and Nancy Whittier's chalet had ski boots floating in several inches of water in the cellar. When we opened the door and released a flood of floating debris, we noticed there was an electric space heater sitting in the water struggling to heat their house! It turns out the primary oil heating system failed and all the plumbing froze. The main water shutoff inside the house had been left on, and when the pipes froze and broke...whoosh, the wells emptied into their cellar. A shame too, because the floor was carpeted and the ceiling and walls were all paneled.

Turning off the water main inside your house when you leave for home is strongly recommended!

Once the major leaks in our distribution system were repaired, the shallow wells filled to the top for the first time in a LONG time. Then we had water *quality* problems. Contaminants consistent with decaying organic matter plagued our water system. Of course, the shallow wells were located immediately below a very busy Barker Mountain lodge and parking lot and were subject to runoff and curious critters. The curious critters were primarily snakes. The shallow wells had poorly fitting concrete lids. The tops of the wells were close to ground level allowing easy access by anything of small diameter seeking a cool respite from

the hot summer sun. Oops! It was easily a foot or more (way more than a foot when the wells were near empty) down to the water surface with no way out. When we removed the lids to do some work on locating the reason for our water problem, we could see several immobile, decaying, squiggly shaped objects lying on the sand at the bottom of the wells. Yuk! Some Village residents freaked out at the sight of the snakes and one even got sick on the spot! **Rest assured that our present water system holding tanks are sealed TIGHT against any surface contamination and periodic water tests and treatment are done per State of Maine requirements.**

In 1984, we contacted Goodwins Well Co. They did (and I think still do) all of the well work for Sunday River and are very familiar with the area. They recommended a well site uphill and adjacent to the Fuller property. The well was drilled 383 feet and produced 8 gallons per minute. A 2000-gallon holding tank was installed as the reservoir. Soon after this system went on line, Sunday River erected their maintenance garage on the old well site. No going back to the old wells! Everyone in the Village was assessed \$300 for this new \$8200 well. It generally worked very well for us for a few years, but then it appeared that it's production rate dropped to about 3 gal/min. It was suspected that our well was tapped into the same vein that supplied the Sunrise and Cascade condos. They had supply problems as well and it seemed like when they were out of water, we were out of water. Too many straws sipping out of the same glass! In 1988 we had Goodwins drill the well 195' deeper and add a 6000 gal. holding tank beside the original one.

In 1991, it was determined that the 1984 artesian well was inadequate to meet our growing needs even with no leaks in the system. A group from Viking Village Association met with Les and his engineer, Joe Aloisio. They told us of a water vein below our Village that Sunday River has several high production wells tapped into. Les agreed to provide us a piece of land and access to it if we could identify a site. Ike Goodwin, Joe Aloisio, and D.A. Wilson for land excavation, were contacted. We located a mutually agreeable site just off the South Ridge access road. The resulting gusher well produces in excess of 30 gal/min! Wilson ran the pipe and control wires across Barker Brook and past Olson's chalet. The control wires run up the middle of Walter's Way to the holding tank next to the Fullers. There are float switches in the 6000 gal holding tank that signal the pump when the water level is low and high. The 2000-gallon tank has been converted to a dry control tank that houses valves and flow meters. The water line from the gusher well taps into the distribution lines at the bottom of the Village near Olson's and "backfeeds" water up the distribution pipes to the 6000 gal holding tank. When the well is cycled on, you may notice that the water pressure is significantly higher than the normal gravity feed pressure that exists when the well is cycled off. This new water source was well worth the \$40,000 or so cost which each chalet owner shared equally in.

The flow meters, which were added as a part of the upgrade were a much longed for and much needed enhancement to the water system. For years, we had to guess if there was a leak, guess how big it was, and guess where it was. Allan Olson and I were OBSESSED with these wonderful new devices. We'd check them at all hours of the day and night and compare our readings. We concluded that the only way that we might determine if there was a leak was to take readings in the wee hours of the morning, when, hopefully everyone was sleeping....or at least not using the water. One night/morning, both of us in near perfect synchronization awoke about 3 A.M. , couldn't sleep, got bundled up and into our respective vehicles and headed up the hill to read the meters. Of course, the windows were all frosted up but who cares, there's no one on our roads at this crazy hour. We had a near collision at the intersection of Walter's Way and Viking Village Rd that scared the dickens out of both of us!....And all to read the meters! I can't remember the outcome of the readings...but I do remember that Jeep flying by!

In 1990, it was agreed that the Village could use a full time resident manager. Sunday River presented an offering for a variety of services. But Mike Lynch also stepped up. Who better to fill that requirement than Mike, a long time, full time resident in the Village? Mike has proven invaluable in the care of the roads and water, as well as with interactions with the town of Newry and Sunday River. Mike has the water tested regularly, administers recommended treatments, and takes care of the financials and tax forms. Enough cannot be said for the support that he gives to us part time resident homeowners in return for the modest compensation that we give to him.

How were the roads named? In the late 80's, the name Walter's Way was chosen in honor of two "Walters" in the Village. Walter Cherry built the first house in the Village, now the Fuller house. This was built with hand tools, I'm told, because there was no power available to the Village at the time. The other is Walter Whittier. He was a director of Sunday River and had significant influence in the early growth of the Skiway. His wife Nancy still owns their chalet. With the adoption of E911 in Newry in 1999, our two road names had to be formally assigned with the town. Walter's Way, which was originally assigned to the loop road, was re-assigned to the middle road and Viking Village Road was assigned to the more visible loop road.



There is a footbridge across Barker Brook that leads to South Ridge. It is located between the Knowles and Whittier chalet. This bridge receives no publicity because of liability concerns. But, it is understood that it may be used at the passer's risk if they want to walk to South Ridge. About 1990, Charlie Little built the present bridge out of pressure treated material and it is a fine piece of work. He built it in two pieces at his home in Falmouth and trucked it up. As usual, a gang of Viking Village volunteers helped install it.

I have a notebook full of Association-related documentation that I accumulated over the years when I was heavily involved in the Association. I also have several Oxford County Citizen/Bethel Citizen articles relating to Sunday River developments. I will be glad to make my book available should anyone need it for reference. Mike Lynch has an extensive library of Association material.

I hope that this history of events that have transpired show why the Viking Village Association has survived successfully for over 23 years. It is clearly because of the village-like spirit of all the property owners and all of us working together as a community. There have been many "volunteer" residents of our Village step up to the plate over the years. Several have held offices and some have even repeated their terms of office a few times. It is not the intent of this report to list all those persons for there are many and, surely, I would forget someone. Their contributions to the well-being of our community are many and widely varied, and I wish to conclude with THANK YOU.

Respectfully submitted with contributions from the following people: Hank and Sunny Fuller Pat and Dave Irons, Mike Lynch, Michael Cunningham, Melissa Cunningham Theberge, Helen Cunningham, Mike Thurston, Howard Cole, Avery Angevine, Natalie Timberlake and Barbara Douglass

Peter Cunningham