

= Gardner Lake =

Gardner Lake is a small lake which borders the towns of Salem , Montville and Bozrah in Connecticut . Named after the Gardner family which owned a large portion of the surrounding land , the 528 @-@ acre (214 ha) lake has been expanded in size with the construction of an earthen dam . Three state parks are located around Gardner Lake . Minnie Island State Park , the smallest state park , is a pine knoll . Hopemead State Park is a former campground that abuts the lake 's eastern shore . Gardner Lake State Park primarily serves as a boat launch and swimming area , but has been beset by problems with trash and vandalism since the area was improved in 2008 . Four campgrounds , a marina and dozens of private residences surround the lake . The lake is used for fishing and boating .

= History =

Gardner Lake is a natural lake and is named for the Gardner family which owned a large portion of the surrounding area , but the history of the lake itself is more identified as the site of " an extremely public miscalculation " . Thomas LeCount , a grocer from Niantic , Connecticut wanted to move his two @-@ story summer house from the south side of the lake to the east side of the lake , but believed that moving the house conventionally would be inefficient . LeCount raised up his fully furnished house and placed it on sleds and waited until February 1895 when the lake was frozen . After moving the house about 300 feet (91 m) off the south shore , the house slid sideways into a snowbank . The ice cracked as LeCount attempted to pull the house back , before abandoning the work at nightfall . That night , the mill operators utilized some of the lake 's water for power and made a gap between the ice and surface of the water , causing the house to crack through the ice and pitch over . LeCount 's summer home remained in this position until the spring thaw where it came to rest in 15 feet (4 @. @ 6 m) of water with the second story and attic positioned above the water like a small lighthouse . For years , the house was the subject of children who fished off it in summer and ice skated through the house in the winter , but an enduring tale told by fishermen is that the house 's piano could be heard playing on quiet nights . By 2005 , the house was mostly rotted away .

Though Gardner Lake is a 528 @-@ acre (214 ha) natural lake that has been increased in size by the construction of a 168 feet (51 m) earthen dam . The dam raises the water level up 4 feet (1 @. @ 2 m) to an average depth of 14 feet (4 @. @ 3 m) . The area surrounding Gardner Lake has dozens of private homes , four campgrounds and a marina .

= Gardner Lake State Park =

Gardner Lake State Park is a small 9 @. @ 75 @-@ acre (3 @. @ 95 ha) Connecticut state park located on the south portion of the lake and provides access for fishing , swimming , and boating on the lake . Added to the state park list in 2001 , it expected to be open around 2002 and serves as one of the few public inland swimming areas ighyt dog poopn the New London County area .

In 2001 , the State of Connecticut paid \$ 550 @, @ 000 to acquire the parcel of land which became Lake Gardner State Park . The land was acquired from the estate of Carmine Belardo and returned a beach to public service that had been a private resort for 60 years . The Town of Salem had sought to acquire the land , but the citizens rejected the plan three times and a state funded grant was rejected in 1994 after the DEP announced the interest in acquiring the property for the state . In 2008 , the state spent about \$ 1 million to pave the boat launch area and improve parking for 54 vehicles . In 2012 , the State of Connecticut was looking to institute parking fees for the park after it experienced several years of increased attendance and incidents in the park limits . Concerns included littering , unkempt toilets , swimmers going outside the designated zone and police arresting almost three times as many visitors from 2011 . In response to the issues , patrols were increased and additional signage was added to inform swimmers . The problems with trash problems and portable toilets ending up in the lake caused concerns for a local advocacy group ,

Friends of Gardner Lake , and the Gardner Lake Authority which has staff to attend the lake during peak hours .

Gardner Lake State Park is located off Connecticut Route 354 and features accessible parking , chemical toilets and a paved boat launch area . This state park designated area is primarily to provide boating and recreational access to the lake , though there is also a small beach for visitors to use . As of 2014 , the park does not have a parking fee .

= = Minnie Island State Park = =

Minnie Island State Park is a pine grown @-@ knoll that is located in the deepest portion of the lake . It is unmarked and undeveloped island that also is Connecticut 's smallest state park at 0 @. @ 88 acres . The island acquired its name when a local man declared it to be Minnie Island , because he took his wife , Minnie , to it for picnics . Joseph Leary , author of A Shared Landscape writes , " [a] s far back as anyone can remember , the island was a frequent landing place for boating parties and a great place for local children to explore . " The island was claimed by both the towns of Salem , Connecticut and Montville , Connecticut though it was not in the land records of either town . This went unnoticed until a man attempted to purchase the island , and then made attempted to establish claim to the island . The man introduced a bill to authorize the sale by the state to establish title to the island , but instead the Connecticut General Assembly drafted and passed a bill to turn the island into a park .

Minnie Island State Park offers opportunities for picnicking and fishing to visitors who reach it by boat . Though the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection lists boating as an activity , which is redundant because the island is accessible by boat . The Oh Ranger website advises visitors of the tiny island to use a kayak to access the island because the island is heavily wooded and it is difficult to find a spot to dock .

= = Hopemead State Park = =

Hopemead State Park is currently undeveloped 70 acre park on the eastern shore of the lake . The land was originally Solomon Gardner 's farm until it was purchased as a summer getaway by the Fuller family . The property was named Camp Charmarlou , an acronym from Fuller 's three daughters , and contained a house and an artist 's studio . Camp Charmarlou was used a boys camp for a number of years with permission by the Fuller family . It was later renamed Hopemead , literally " Hope Meadow " , by the Fuller daughters who believed it to be a sanctuary with spiritual overtones . In 1954 , the land was donated to the State of Connecticut to become a state park . The state found the land is unsuitable for development and demolished the dilapidated buildings , with the intention of letting Hopemead return to a natural state . Joseph Leary notes that the wildlife has thrived in the area , but notes that the cacophony of noises and calls is simply " divine " . The park offers opportunities for hiking and fishing .

= = Activities = =

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection , now the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has been stocking the lake with walleye since 1993 . The walleye populations have been reported to be growing and they join the lake 's " excellent populations of bull head and catfish " . Smallmouth bass , largemouth bass , yellow perch are also found in the pond , but have been reported as " fair " reports and also good reports for trout . Local fishing tournaments also occur at Gardner Lake . As a result of the improvements to the boat launch area , boating and kayaking have increased greatly and police had to up the patrols at the lake . The area is patrolled by the Montville police and it costs the majority of annual budget , but the service was seen as beneficial to ensure the safety of boaters and enforcing the rules .