

# North Lakes Serpent Tales Die; U.F.O. Replaces Them

By JOHN W. OVERACKER  
Staff Writer of The Times

Legends do sometimes die or they just fade away.

This is easily illustrated by the lack of present day knowledge concerning the fabled monster of Trout Lake, the serpent that some said was 12 feet long with the head of a large cat, dog, puma, lynx, or whatever the beholder fancied at the time he saw it.

In the late 1880's and 1890's and during the early part of the 20th century, many there were who swore they saw these slimy denizens of the deep, lurking on the darkened shores of northern New York lakes. Today it is unidentified flying objects which take up the slack caused by the demise of lake serpents.

One of the better known lake serpents in northern New York was the one which lurked in Trout lake, that lovely mountain loch not far from Edwards. It was seen quite often, so 'tis said, on the waters off the rock at Carpenter's island on which the summer camp of Mrs. Ruth E. Adams and the late Dr. Charles Adams, Edwards dentist, was located. Dr. Adams often told the boys and girls of summer campers the story of the slimy monster. He always had it slithering over the rocky end of the island and into the depths below.

Mrs. Ruth E. Adams, who now lives in Watertown where her son, Dr. Edward P. Adams is an orthodontist, recalls that her husband did tell some stories of the serpent years and years ago.

But perhaps the best recollection of this hideous water monster is an article which appeared in a Canton newspaper Aug. 22, 1894.

This is a vivid account of the ridicule heaped upon Trout Lake guides by city folk just because the guides told tales of the great snake "which really did dwell in the lake."

The story relates of how John Hunkins, game protector, saw the monster in a tangle of lily pads. The fins or flippers of the serpent were as large as an oar blade, Hunkins said, and the head was that of a lynx with a body as thick as a man's waist.

Many other hunters and woodsmen of that era claimed to have seen the "varmint."

One of the most vivid descriptions of this serpent in 1894 was that of C.E. Holt, Gouverneur businessman. A guest of the Trout Lake hotel, he was rowing down the lake when he saw what he thought was a large fish.

The thing approached within fifteen feet of the boat, arched its head three feet out of the water. Holt continues, "Its head was as large as that of a big dog and its body at least 18 inches in diameter. I fired at it and missed."

Later that year this reptile was seen by Rev. Dr. S. Thomas Williams, pastor of the Canton Baptist church. He saw it between the hotel and his cottage. Rev. Dr. Williams said the head was as large as that of a good sized dog and covered with coarse hair. He fired at it, but did not hit it.

For the rest of 1894 young persons and women kept off the water and away from the lake shore, and city sports and guides carried guns with them at all times.

The legend of the Trout Lake serpent was told and retold for a few years, but now it is known no more.

In 1924 another serpent appeared in the waters of the Black river near Dexter and was known as the Dexter serpent. Villagers at first reported a ten-foot-long serpent with a flat head and red nose. This turned out to be a long piece of rubber garden hose, a head made of a portion of red inner tube stretched over a board, all of which was operated by a string in the hands of a practical joker.

Another report puts a giant sea serpent in Black Lake in 1863. The St. Lawrence Republican, Ogdensburg, stated Nov. 24, 1863, "The great monster snake which has in turn made his appearance in Massachusetts Bay, on the coast of Africa, in the St. Lawrence river, Silver lake at the mouth of the Genesee, has turned up in the turbid waters of Black Lake.

"On this last occasion a hunting party from Ogdensburg has solemnly sworn they saw this giant snake in Black Lake.

"There is but one way for the skeptic to explain the appearance of this wonderful visitation and that is upon the well known fact that the water of Black Lake is not suitable for drinking purposes and that by the use of something else to slake their thirst, the vision of the party

was affected to that degree where things get mixed up and sticks become snakes."

Not to be outdone by the Trout Lake serpent, Sylvia Lake, located about seven miles from Gouverneur, also had its "Red Headed Monster" according to an article appearing in 1916.

By an odd quirk the description of this reptile which reportedly slithered through the spring fed waters of Sylvia Lake, the names of those who saw it, the names of those who shot at it, coincide exactly with a description which appeared in a Canton newspaper article in 1894.

This includes the name of the esteemed Rev. Dr. S. Thomas Williams, the name of the game protector, John Hunkins, the name of the Gouverneur business man, C. E. Holt, and the Overlook boys.

Evidently plagiarism was not unknown to St. Lawrence county reporters.

Although the U.F.O. has now replaced the sea serpent as a watcher's favorite past-time, in March of this year the National Geographic News had an article on "Monsters in Ocean Depths Are Stranger Than Legend."

And in August, 1963, a 40-foot-long jelly fish, sea serpent, or monster was reportedly sighted off the New Jersey coast.

Reports had this monster sighted and a research vessel was dispatched to investigate. The monster disappeared