

Lakemont Park Timeline Compiled by the Blair County Historical Society 1754-2022

Compiled from

A History of Lakemont Park, William Pine, ed., *Lakemont Park Historical Museum*, 1990,
the Blair County Historical Society Archives, and the *Altoona Mirror*.

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1754	William Penn's sons, John and Richard, obtain the land by treaty with the Six Nations Indian tribes at the Treaty of Easton.
1762	Samuel and Robert Johnson of Cumberland County obtain the deed and they, in turn, sold the tract to William Coxe in 1762.
1777	Deed is transferred to William Trent of Bedford County.
1779	Thomas Smith, Robert Elliott, and William Holliday acquire the deed in January.
1779	The tract is sold in April to Robert Morris of Philadelphia, the famed financier.
1786	The land is conveyed to James Hart, who fails to carry out his contract.
1794	Andrew Henderson takes ownership by exchanging four tracts of land in Luzerne County with Morris.
1811	Attorney Henderson of Huntingdon and his brother-in-law Robert Allison, built Allegheny Furnace.
1813	Henderson dies and Robert Allison operated the furnace until 1818.
1836	Elias Baker, newly arrived from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, purchases the land that is now Lakemont Park as part of his 3,373 acres for his new Alleghany Iron Furnace enterprise with Roland Diller, and reactivates the furnace.
1844	Elias Baker becomes sole owner upon the death of Roland Diller.
1864	Sylvester Baker, son of Elias, takes over operation of the furnace and land upon his father's death; he builds a narrow gauge railroad to extract ore from the hill at the site and to haul it to the furnace. The railbed later becomes the "Lover's Lane" of Lakemont Park. Four mines are in the vicinity, two of which are in the future Lakemont Park.
1876	Armand Willis presents the idea of the ground to be ideal for a park and for picnics to a George Akers, printer at the <i>Altoona Tribune</i> . He organized 55 volunteers to clean up the area and names it "Oak and Pine Grove," the beginning of the future Lakemont Park.
1879	Swimming is permitted for men and boys only.
1889	Prior to the opening of Lakemont Park, the Pavilion is built, later to be called the Casino.
1890	Volunteers continue to work at the site until plans are formulated for Lakemont Park.
1891	The City & Park Railway company is chartered to build a trolley line from South Altoona into Lakemont where it plans to build an amusement park. Sylvester Baker agrees to have timber cut on the 13 acres of land intended for an artificial lake.

1892	Lakemont Park opens with two buildings, the Casino and the theatre. The theatre is one of the first summer theaters in the U.S. The City Passenger Railway, a horse-drawn trolley company, obtains a charter in 1882 and operates its first electric trolley in July 1891. In October, its competitor, the City & Park Railway, purchases enough of its competitor's stock to control the company. Two other trolley companies come into being in 1882, the Tyrone Electric Railway, to run from Bellwood to Tyrone, and the Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway, with lines from Hollidaysburg to Lakemont.
1893	John Lloyd, President of the Altoona and Logan Valley Electric Railway, obtains a 95-acre tract of land for the future park from Sylvester Baker. He also acquires enough stock in both the City Passenger Railway and the City & Park Railway to control them and the park, which was under construction.
1894	John Lloyd purchases an additional 13 acres from Sylvester Baker for a total of 113 acres. The deed called for the land (park) to revert to the Baker Estates should it ever be terminated. Concessions are introduced including a gravity railroad, carousel, and a 25-foot electric launch provided as the first amusements.
1895	The park gardens are planted with 10,000 hyacinths, tulips, crocus, snowdrops, pansies, violets, carnations, sweet williams, roses, narcissus and honeysuckles.
1901	A switchback gravity railway is added. It is a precursor to a roller coaster. Cars go up on a track. People switch to another car, and ride back down on a straight track using gravity.
1902	Leap the Dips roller coaster is built to replace the Gravity Railroad which burned. The roller coaster is 48 feet high with a top speed of 9 mph. By the late 20 th century, it becomes the oldest operating wooden roller coaster in the world. A new carousel, built by the E. Joy Morris Co. of Philadelphia, is installed to replace the original one.
1903	American Railways purchases the Tyrone Electric, City Passenger, City & Park, Altoona & Logan Valley trolley companies as well as Lakemont Park and retains the name Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway with 50 miles of track and 91 trolley cars to service the area and bring customers to the park. To handle the crowds, the famous trolley track loops are built to circle the greenhouses and traverse on the crest of the lake dam.
1906	"Shoot the Chutes" is installed. It is 325 feet long and 90 feet high. Boats climb the height and slide down into the lake.
1915	The first alligator is introduced to the park. Over time up to seven alligators made the park their home. In the winter, they lived in the greenhouses.
1916	Fred Waring makes his first professional appearance at The Casino as part of a 4-piece band.
1918	Lake water begins to get muddy due to continued building in the area. Silt accumulates in the lake and a new spillway is built. The lake is stocked with leatherback, silver carp, and catfish. Black bass were the primary species in the lake when it first opened.
1920	Bible conferences begin to use Lakemont Park as a venue and continue for 59 years.

1932	The Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway goes into receivership due to financial difficulties arising from the 1929 financial crash.
1933	The theatre at Lakemont presents the last show and the theatre closes. Sara Bernhardt, the Barrymores, and Lillian Russel were among the vaudeville and early stars that performed at the park.
1936	A great flood following heavy rain, swept through the park causing much damage. An article in the <i>Altoona Mirror</i> stated "Shall Lakemont Park be Abandoned?" The amount of damage is so great and finances so depleted, that the county commissioners accept ownership of the park from the trolley company for one dollar. The greenhouses and flower beds are all gone. The Lakemont Citizens Advisory Council is formed to undertake restoring the park.
1937	Lakemont Park formally reopens after the 1936 flood. The principal events are a concert by the Altoona Catholic High School band and dancing sponsored by the park management. Sitting by the fireplace in the winter at The Casino is no longer provided. Elias Burket, who leased the theatre in the early 1930s, converts it into a roller skating rink.
1938	The park is entirely refurbished. The cost is covered by the Works Progress Administration appropriation (WPA) which paid for dredging Brush Run, constructing a reinforced concrete bridge, rebuilding six rustic bridges, macadamizing the walkways, building a children's wading pool, converting the Casino into a community and sports center, constructing the children's playground, a bobsled and toboggan run and major infrastructure improvements.
1939	The Blue Island swimming pool opens and brings back crowds to the refurbished park, making it financially successful.
1942	The trolley company ceases to use a red ball on a trolley indicating that ice on the lake is frozen 8 inches or more for ice skating. Private individuals rely on donations to keep the ice plowed. Skating is free and a trolley ride costs a nickel. Games on the ice include "cake walk" and "crack the whip." Local skaters entertain crowds with their fancy moves.
1943	Rides include the Leap the Dips, whip, shooting gallery, scooter, carousel, swings, miniature railroad, pony ride, childrens carousel, penny arcade and the largest roller skating rink in central Pennsylvania. For water enjoyment, there are the paddle wheel boats, regular and old-fashioned rowboats, a 550,000 gallon swimming pool on the island and the 13-acre lake. The garden walks are now surfaced with macadam and the park benches restored.
1945	A large metal planter, dedicated to Medal of Honor recipient Robert E. Lawas, is installed.
1948	A restaurant opens in The Casino with 15 tables and 10 booths.
1950	A winter ice storm causes \$30,000 worth of damage.
1950	In the summer, a memorial fountain that sprays jets of water is dedicated to Blair County's veterans of both World Wars. It is named "Memorial Island." During the decade, the lake is dredged and two small islands removed. The state stocked the lake with rock bass from Allegheny Reservoir.

1954	The last trolley ride from Hollidaysburg and Altoona to Lakemont Park takes place. All the trolleys are retired and replaced by buses.
1957	The upper part of the lake is dredged for the showboat, a \$6,500 reproduction of an old Mississippi River sternwheeler.
1960	Ice skating on the lake is discontinued due to the expense of upkeep and the roller skating rink closes later in the decade.
1979	Showboat is put into drydock due to repairs and the lake needing dredging. It is eventually retired due to the expense of dredging needed on a continuing basis. The last Bible conference is held at Lakemont Park.
1982	After 30 years of financial difficulties, the Lakemont Park Citizens Advisory Council, which manages the park, sells the carousel for \$225,000 to reverse its financial decline. The Casino is badly deteriorated. A citizens group, the Blair County Heritage Inc., removes the veranda before it can fall into the lake and patches the roof. The arcade buildings from the early days of the park are demolished during this decade.
1984	The large metal planter, fabricated by the Penn Central Railroad shops and dedicated to Medal of Honor recipient Robert E Lawas is removed.
1985	The Blair County Commissioners lease the park to Anthony Forgione, president of Altoona's Boyer Candy Company. The theatre building, scheduled to become a candy factory, is unsuitable and is torn down and burned. The grandeur of the famous park gardens since 1895 is gone. The century old trees are felled and the pre-World War atmosphere of the park disappears.
1986	Anthony Forgione renames the park Boyertown USA on Memorial Day. Construction of the Skyliner roller coaster begins. The entrance price is \$12.95.
1988	Forgione, after two years of operating the park, runs into financial difficulty and cannot fulfill the terms of the lease. The Blair County Commissioners sell the park to contractor Ralph Albarano and Donald Devorris for \$1 million. The park is renamed Lakemont Park.
2018	The management of Lakemont Park begins investigating ideas for restructuring the park by installing basketball courts, ballfields, and other outdoor activities.
2019	Sand volleyball, the Kiddie Tree House, and craft beer and wine at the Trolley House are introduced while the water slide does not open.
2020	COVID-19 causes delays in the opening. Features included in the season are Motorway go-carts, Keystone Falls Mini-Golf, Rabbit Hole Mini-Golf, batting cages, as well as basketball and volleyball.
2022	The American Coaster Enthusiasts celebrated World Roller Coaster Appreciation Month at Lakemont Park along with 21 other parks across the country enjoying the Leap-the- Dips and the Skyliner coasters.