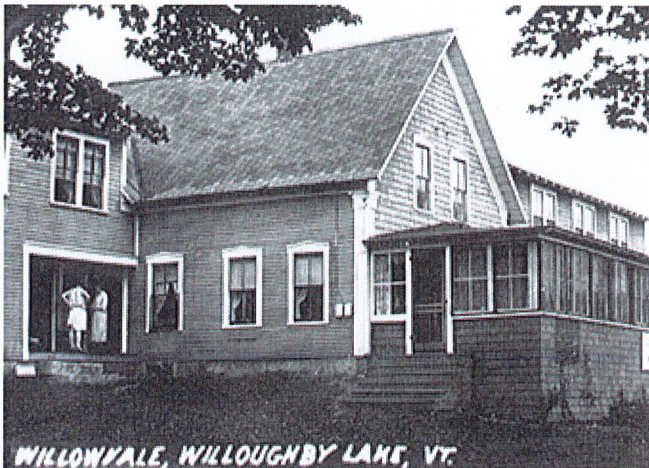


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## History of the WilloughVale Inn & Cottages



Willoughby Lake has inspired many people to poetic expression, including Robert Frost.

In 1909 before Frost had attained fame and fortune, he and his family camped in tents on the George Conley farm. A Doctor Wells owned the farm, which later became the WilloughVale Inn. The Conleys ran the farm for Dr. Wells.

Frost hoped to avoid hay fever from ragweed by spending the summer outdoors in northern Vermont. He had also heard that the Willoughby Lake region was a wonderful place for botanists, though he later gave up his botany expeditions because the summer pollen brought on his problem.

Frost's four children made friends with other children at the lake. One vacationer at the Myers homestead (Willoughby Farm) remembers that she and her sister played with daughter Lesley who was ten years old and son Carol who was seven.

Frost would go to the Conley farmhouse for milk and eggs. Conley was road foreman then, and some of the workmen boarded at the farm. Mrs. Conley was a hard-working person. Frost apologized for taking her time, but she told him it was good to "rest a mite." The woman in his poem "A Servant to Servants," published in *North of Boston* in 1914 was, he said, a composite of three women; Mrs. Conley was one of them.

### How did Willoughby Lake get its name?

One story is that two brothers named Willoughby, early settlers of Westmore, gave the lake their name. But there is no one by that name listed among the settlers in the town records. Neither does the name Willoughby appear in the list of Westmore proprietors in Abby Maria Hemenway's 1877 Gazetteer. However, it must be remembered that the settlers temporarily abandoned Westmore about the time the 1812 war broke out, so there were a few years when no town records were kept.

Another story is that many years ago a man named Willoughby was crossing the ice with a horse-drawn sled. When the horses broke through, Willoughby and his driver were drowned, and the lake was called Willoughby in his memory.

For more information on Lake Willoughby, visit [willoughbylakevt.com](http://willoughbylakevt.com).



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