



Summer Dreams: The Story of Bob-lo Island (Great Lakes Books Series)

Patrick Livingston

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Located twenty miles south of Detroit where the Detroit River meets Lake Erie, Bob-lo Island was the ultimate summer playground for families from Detroit and Windsor for nearly one hundred years. In its heyday, the island housed an amusement park with one of the world's largest dance halls, an elegant restaurant, and a hand-carved carousel. It also employed two large Frank Kirby-designed ferry steamers—complete with dancing and other entertainment—to transport patrons to and from the island, which was not accessible by car. In *Summer Dreams*, author Patrick Livingston tells the story of Bob-lo from its discovery by French explorers to its subsequent use by missionaries, British military men, escaped slaves, farmers, and finally the wealthy class, who developed the island as a summer resort.

It was not until the Detroit, Belle Isle, and Windsor Ferry Company, looking to expand its business ventures, bought the island in 1898 that Bob-lo became known as a destination for Detroit's burgeoning middle class. The park provided the perfect place for Detroiters to dance and play and simply escape the whirlwind of what was rapidly becoming an industrial and mechanized city. Livingston notes that operation of the park presented special challenges to management teams over the course of the century, particularly in the running of its U.S.-based steamers and competition with modern amusement parks that could be reached by car. Livingston chronicles the island's recent history, including the final closure of the park in 1993, the auctioning of its steamers and rides, and its redevelopment as a community of multimillion-dollar homes.

With illustrations and personal profiles added to its historical narrative, *Summer Dreams* recounts the phases of Bob-lo's history and its importance to natives of Detroit, Windsor, and Amherstburg. Local historians and anyone with roots in Detroit and the Border Cities will enjoy this informative volume.

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