

Old Swimming Hole, "Sandy Bottom," at Woodside Park



"Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the long lazy days When the humdrum of school made so many run-a-ways,"
—James Whitcomb Riley

"Cinnamon seed and sandy bottom" was the song that was sung by the Stamford boys some 50 years ago as they approached an old swimming hole at Woodside Park, which was commonly called "Sandy Bottom." Today the title is almost forgotten, yet the old swimming hole is still going strong.

Indeed, one may ask almost any old Stamford boy about a swim at "Sandy Bottom" in the early days and one will receive an amusing story, so rapidly told, that it cannot all be remembered by the listener at one time.

"That was the swimming hole,

where all of us boys first learned to swim," said one native, "and when we graduated from Sandy Bottom Pool and received a rather watery diploma, we were told to go further up the stream to try the more daring stunts at a place known as 'Deep Hole'."

It was here, so tradition states, that the boys who became expert swimmers at "Deep Hole," were at last allowed to go down to the harbor front and dive off a side-wheeler, that was anchored at Knapp's Dock, a swimming place that was dear to the hearts of all Stamford boys during that period.

In returning to the days spent at Sandy Bottom, however, during a hot Summer's afternoon one loves to listen to the exciting stories of how Silas Ferris, the brother of Theodore Ferris,

had placed Woodside Park under strict regulations, for no one was supposed to enter the swimming hole there, without a proper covering and the boys, who dared to do otherwise, were in extreme danger of having their clothes gathered up by Silas Ferris and thrown into the water. Often hasty costumes had to be made with large hickory leaves, having their stems woven together, in order to recover the lost garments, that had floated down the stream.

Woodside Park was first opened to the public in the year 1898, by T. I. Ferris and S. H. Ferris, jr. It was not until May 2, 1927, that it was taken over from Theodore Ferris by the city as a part of Stamford's Park system and at a cost of \$200,000.

Whitman Bailey.