

## Building the Kentlands Lakes

By Marie O'Donnell

I don't know how my grandfather met Otis Kent, but I know he was a major influence in our lives for many, many years. My earliest memories are of living at Kentland Farms. At the time we lived there Uncle Otis had a secretary named Ruby. Helen came along later.

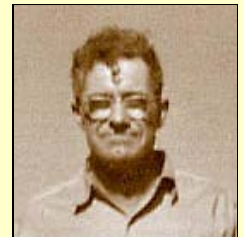


Otis Beall Kent, about 1950,  
taken on back steps of Manor House

My grandfather worked for Kent as a heavy equipment operator, construction worker, surveyor, chauffer, friend, and confidante. He practically worshipped the ground Uncle Otis walked on. He built all of the lakes except Inspiration Lake up to the time we moved to West Virginia to establish Kentland Orchards.

My grandfather, David Bean, was a self-made man. He had a 3rd-grade education, yet he could operate, maintain, and repair any piece of heavy construction equipment you put before him. He was an avid reader and had a near photographic memory. One of the reasons he wanted to move to West Virginia was to try cultivating grapes for wine. He had read several articles about the climate being so good for grape growing. Several acres of grapevines were planted; unfortunately, my grandfather did not live to see them mature and bear fruit. Now, however, there are several excellent wineries in that area of West Virginia—a testament to his foresight.

David Bean designed and built those lakes himself, and did all of the surveying, grading and everything with the help of my grandmother and me.



David Bean

I remember when Uncle Otis got an Army-surplus weapons carrier. We (my grandfather, grandmother, Uncle Otis, and I) would all pile into it and go bouncing out over the back roads and through the fields to see where Uncle Otis wanted to put another lake or put a road to access areas of his property. When I was just big enough to hold a surveyor's stake I was drafted into the job of 'assistant.' And, I loved every minute of it. I can still hear my grandfather yelling to me to hold the stake steady so he could get an accurate reading. It was a great time while living there, riding on the bulldozer with my grandfather while he dug and graded the sides and spillways for the lakes or cut a new road out and spread gravel on it.



1949 - Building Inspiration Lake



1950 - Inspiration Lake and Lake Lynette Lower left, Under construction  
(named after Marie O'Donnell's grandmother).



1950 view of Inspiration Lake and Lake Nirvana in foreground.



Kodachrome Air View of Inspiration Lake and Lake Lynette  
Kentland Farm, Maryland [OBK]

1952 - This is the first of Uncle Otis's Christmas cards in color.  
[MO'D]



1961 view of Lake Varuna (lake #7) and Sanctuary Island.



1962 - Lake Varuna in foreground  
and recently completed Lake Elysium



1963 - Inspiration Lake (center),  
Lake Lynette (upper right), Lake Helene (lower right)



1965 - Lake Vishnu (19 acres: 90,000,000) Largest of 14 lakes  
on Kentland Farms. Last lake constructed by David Bean.





*Sunset over Inspiration Lake*