

Port Oneida

Sleeping Bear Dunes
National Lakeshore
Michigan



A Publication of
Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes

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This booklet was compiled by Kerry Kelly, ***Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes***.

Much of the content for the brochure comes from Farming at the Water's Edge, Marla J. McEnaney, William H. Tishler, Arnold R. Alanen, Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, Omaha, Nebraska, 1995. It is available at Cottage Bookstore in Glen Arbor.

Additional content was provided through interviews with people who lived in Port Oneida. These interviews are being documented as oral history of the area by Tom Van Zoeren.

Photographs by Kerry Kelly, 2007.

Charles Olsen Farm

This is the newest farm in Port Oneida. The parcel of land was purchased from Fred Dechow in 1915. He had owned the land since 1857. The house and barn were built in 1918 by Paul Popa. The house was the most modern and the first to eventually have indoor plumbing.

The barn is a good example of the hillside barn. The lower level was for livestock and the upper level for hay storage. The wooden silo indicates an early dairy operation. The house is being adaptively restored by Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear.



This is one of the largest and best barns in Port Oneida. Initially, water was pumped by hand from a well near the barn and carried to the house for washing and cooking. By 1929 a cistern was built on the hill behind the house to supply water to the farm. They used a gas engine-driven pump to fill the cistern and gravity to pressurize the water system. The Olsens were dairy farmers, but like others in Port Oneida, Charles had side occupations to supplement his farm income. He was an expert horseman and used his team to maintain a section of M-22 when it was just a 2-track road. He also used them to plow gardens and haul logs.



The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail winds behind the barn & house along the edge of the woods. It's now easy to ride your bike to Port Oneida from Glen Arbor.



Behind the barn is a steel and wood stave silo, which was recently restored. Take time to get out of the car and walk around the farm buildings.

Dechow Farm

Get back in the car and turn left on M-22. Drive about 0.2 miles to Port Oneida Road. The Dechow farm is on your right south of M-22.

Frederick and Fredericka Dechow purchased the farm and built a log cabin in 1857. Sons John and Charles built the barn around 1890. This farm has some of the best soil in Port Oneida which explains why it was one of the most productive farms. Grandson Frank Dechow built the new house about 1910 which was a showplace of modern style. A few years later, he was able to buy the neighboring farm from the Behrens just to the east and add it to his land. The house and other buildings were removed, but the barn remains in the field to the east of the main buildings.

This farm is a good example of a working farm of the late 1940s with old structures adapted for new methods. The concrete silo and milking parlor indicate a commitment to dairy production. The large granary building



and the small corncrib are typical for farms this far north. These farmers grew less corn because of the short growing season. A large chicken coop for raising fryers for market and another coop for a laying flock round out the barn yard buildings.

Kelderhouse Cemetery

Head north on Port Oneida Road. Just after leaving M-22, you will see the cemetery on your right. Park the car and walk among the pioneers and early residents of Port Oneida.



William Kelderhouse Farm

You'll find the Kelderhouse farm next to the cemetery. The parcel of land was owned by descendants of Thomas Kelderhouse from 1863 until its acquisition by the National Park Service in 1970. A log cabin was built by his son, William, around the late 1880's. The Kelderhouse sawmill was located behind the present location of the house. It is near the setting of the former Evangelical Lutheran church and the Port Oneida School and Community Club. The house is surrounded by sugar maple trees that were planted by students. The Kelderhouse family tapped the trees to make maple syrup. Remains of the once extensive orchards, planted by Roland Kelderhouse in the late 1920's can be seen to the east and south of the farm.

The house was built by William around 1910. The barn was torn down in the late 1940's or early 1950's. Demonstration fields and gardens are growing here again thanks to Jim Kelderhouse and the Port Oneida Community Alliance (POCA).



Port Oneida School

The Port Oneida School is across Port Oneida Road from the Kelderhouse farm just north of M-22. The Port Oneida School began in the 1860s but this building was built in the 1890s. The hand pump and privy recall earlier days. The school was the social centerpiece of the community after the store near the dock closed around 1900.



The school is owned and maintained by the Glen Lake Community School District. Elementary students learn about local history and education methods when they visit the school. Older students help in the preservation of the building.

John Burfiend Farm

The John Burfiend Farm is located at the corner of Port Oneida Road and Miller Road about 0.1 miles north of the school. The barn is owned by the Park Service, but the **house is privately owned**, so please respect their privacy.

Several Port Oneida families have owned this farm over the years. The farmhouse was once located near the Port Oneida dock and moved to the farm by John Schmidt many years ago.

The barn is a good example of a four-bay, English style ground barn. Inside the big doors is the wood threshing floor. When the barn was built in the 1890s, stalks of wheat and oats were piled on the floor and beaten with sticks to separate the grain from the straw just as it had been done since biblical times. Inside, you see one of the first machines that automated this process. A hay wagon could be pulled in one side and out the other side. Overhead, you see the track with a hayfork for taking large bites of loose hay from the wagon and moving it to other parts of the barn. Because of the long winters, a big barn to store hay was essential.



Photos taken from the Bay View Trail behind the buildings.



Frederick Werner Barn (Sometimes known as the Miller Barn)

Turn left on Miller road and go 0.5 miles to the Frederick Werner Barn at the end of Miller Road. There are no other buildings at this site, but if you walk around the area, you will see some of the trees that used to be part of the yard. This large barn was built on 202 acres of land purchased by Frederick Werner in 1855. Note the use of boulders as the foundation upon which the large wooden beams are set.

The 1891 plat map lists John Miller, husband of Frederick Werner's daughter Margaret and an 1881 immigrant from Germany, as the owner and shows one structure. The land was later farmed by his son, Charles, who supplemented his farm income by working as a surveyor.



The farmhouse burned in 1940 and was then rebuilt. The National Park Service removed the second house along with other outbuildings following acquisition by the Park Service. Beyond the barn is a black locust grove that was used to supply wood for fence posts and wagon tongues.

This site is on the **Bay View Hiking Trail**. Walking along the trail at the edge of the field gives you a sense of what the farm looked like when it was in operation. Take the trail west from the site and you will come to the top of the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan through the trees. Wander around the barn and you will find some old farm machinery.



Baker Pig Barn

Return to Port Oneida Road, and turn left and go 0.5 miles. You will see a small barn in the field on your right. This is the Baker Pig Barn. It was built by Fred Baker and his son-in-law, Jack Barratt in 1945 and is constructed of timbers from the Boarding House and other buildings near the dock that was located at the original Port Oneida town site.

The former town site was located across the road directly west of the barn by a large clump of lilacs, which marks the Carsten Burfiend family burial plot. If you walk over to the lilacs you can walk down to the Lake Michigan beach through the cut in the bluff that was made to create access to the dock. Some pilings are still visible. As you walk around the area, imagine this busy little community when a ship was tied up at the dock taking on its cargo from Port Oneida.

Mr. Barratt stated that black chalk markings from Buffalo, NY were on the timbers and the structure contained remnants of newspapers from the 1860's. The small, gambrel-roofed barn sits several hundred feet from the eastern side of Port Oneida road at the edge of a large wetland.



This building blew down in a wind storm in 2009 and was rebuilt as part of a Barn Restoration Workshop in the summer of 2010.

Carsten Burfiend Farm

Just up the road 0.3 miles is the Carsten Burfiend farm. This farm was settled by Carsten and Elizabeth Burfiend, Port Oneida's first settlers. They emigrated from Kootenhold, Germany and arrived in New York state, where Mrs. Burfiend remained while her husband continued on to North Manitou Island. The Burfiends built a large log house about 50 feet south of the big clump of lilacs you can see in the field south of the current Carsten Burfiend house. The lilacs mark the family burial plot.



The house, garage, and other out-buildings are on the west side of the road on the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The current Port Oneida Road looks at the back side of these buildings because the original road was located on the other side of the buildings near the Lake Michigan bluff.

On the east side of the road, you will find the foundation of the barn, silo, and milk house, which burned down in 1982. On the northeast side of the barn is the chicken coop and machine shed. The granary/corn crib and the butcher shed are located on the south side of the barn. The butcher shed was used to process pigs for meat. The rack to hoist the pig carcasses and the pit used to collect the blood is still in the shed.



Carsten and Elizabeth Burfiend's son, Peter (b. 1861), built their first frame house in 1893. The house contains hand-hewn timbers.

Peter and Jennie (Goffar) Burfiend's son, Howard (b. 1895), and his wife, Orpha (Fralick), came to the farm in 1926. At one time, Orpha Fralick Burfiend had a land grant from President Franklin Pierce and a deed for the property signed by President Abraham Lincoln.

In 1930, Howard and Orpha Burfiend hired a Lake Leelanau contractor to build the second house next to the first frame house.

Martin Basch Farm

Turn right on Baker Rd. and drive 1.1 miles on the dirt road beside the fields and through the woods to the Martin Basch Farm, which will be on your left (north).

Martin Basch, a former German soldier and political prisoner, arrived on North Manitou Island with his wife in 1868. They left several children in Germany and had two children while on the island, Anna (or Ella) and Martin. Basch's brother, Niclous, had already immigrated to the United States in 1859.

Martin and Niclous (Claus) Basch and Carsten Miller were immigrants from Hanover, Germany who first settled on North Manitou Island and later farmed at Port Oneida. Martin Basch purchased this land from another German farmer, Martin Haft, a 110 acre parcel of land for \$500 on 18 August 1883. At its largest, the Basch farm was a combination of several smaller homesteads.

Basch was a skilled blacksmith and worked for many of the farmers in the vicinity of Port Oneida. He also was a carpenter, who helped to build farms and churches in Port Oneida, Good Harbor, and Arcadia. The shed and corn crib have recently been restored.



Note the use of fieldstones in the foundation of the porch and pillars. This was a common practice in Port Oneida. The Baschs raised corn, beans, potatoes, and approximately 50 head of beef cattle on their 110 acre farm.

Eckerdt Farm

As you leave the Basch Farm, turn to your left and drive 0.3 miles to Kelderhouse Rd. Turn left and drive past the Yield sign at the intersection where Basch Rd goes south, and continue to the intersection where Basch Road goes north. The Eckerdt Farm is located on your left at the corner of Kelderhouse Road and Basch Road.



Henry and Catherine Eckerdt emigrated from Bohemia to the U.S. between 1850 and 1855, arriving in Michigan in 1857. In 1862, the Eckerdt family purchased and settled on their farm in Port Oneida. Their original log cabin is now owned by the A.I.R. Foundation and has been moved from its original location near the farm.

Mr. Eckerdt was listed as a farmer as early as 1860 on the manuscript schedules for the federal population census. Henry's brother, George, who was married to Catherine's sister Mary, also had a farm on Baker Road northwest of this farm. There are no buildings remaining at George's farm.



Henry & Catherine's farm was the site of many dances enjoyed by community residents. The Bours bought the farm around 1940 - 1950. According to Elsie (Eckerdt) Bartunek, her father, Henry Eckerdt Jr., grew corn, potatoes, and a variety of grains.

Ole Olsen

The Ole Olsen Farm is located right across the road from the Eckhert Farm at the end of Kelderhouse Road and 0.2 miles further on the driveway. Take a drive down to this secluded farmstead and walk around the buildings and imagine what life would be like living and working here.

The original owner of 80 acres of this parcel was Andrew Tuffner, who sold it to Thomas Kelderhouse on 19 September 1865. Kelderhouse sold it to Ole Olsen on 24 January 1877. Mr. Olsen then sold the property to Carsten Burfiend in 1879, and bought it back two years later.



The land was settled by Olsen, who emigrated from Kristiansand, Norway, and landed on North Manitou Island before coming to the mainland, where he met his wife, Magdalena Burfiend. Although the boundaries of this 120 acre farm have remained constant, ownership changed many times, for most of the time, however, it was owned by the Olsen family.

After Ole Olsen built the farm, his son Charles bought it in 1891 and farmed there until 1915 when he married and built a farm on M-22. He later sold this farm to Albert and Ida (Dago) Prause. In 1954, Prause sold the farm to Howard Olsen, a grandson of Ole and a nephew of Charles. As of 1995, Howard Olsen's widow, Bertha, lived in the house. The main crops were wheat and potatoes.

If you are interested in exploring the area, hike 1/3 mile out the old farm Lane along the old fence line heading east to the back side of Narada Lake. Herons, geese, and loons are often seen here.



Schmidt Farm

Leaving the Olsen farm, turn right (north) on Basch Road 0.5 miles. The Schmidt Farm is on a hill on the west side of the road. The buildings overlook an open field and former orchard. Take the long driveway in.

Forty acres of this property were first settled in 1861 by a German immigrant named George Hessell, who arrived in the United States from Hanover, Germany in the late 1850s or early 1860s. By 1880, he had sold the land to George and Flora Schmidt, who were from Prussia.



They built the farm, which was devoted to general agriculture, cultivating a vineyard, and raising cattle. Some traces of their apple orchards remain. The original house burned shortly after construction (1890's). The Schmidts then lived in their barn while the present house

was being built. A large barn either burned or has been removed.

After George Schmidt's death, his son, John, ran the farm. He sold the farm to a local realtor around 1958-1959. The Hayms then bought the house for a summer cottage. They later sold to the National Park Service.

Note the unique use of asphalt shingles used as siding. The resulting patterned appearance is striking. Also, the basement door and stairs are typical of construction in the area. The lean-to entryway on the back of the house is also common.



Weaver Farm

When you leave the Schmidt place, turn left (north) on Basch Rd. and drive up the hill 0.4 miles. Stop at the scenic turn-out at the top of the hill and enjoy the view of Lake Michigan over the trees and valley.

As you continue north 0.15 miles, look closely on your right for the Weaver house. It is in poor condition and is easy to miss. The house is weathered and is falling down.

For your safety do not enter the building. You can see the house from the road. This parcel was first owned by Jacob Mantz, who purchased it in the early 1860's. He later sold it to Harrison and Almeda Weaver in the 1880's. The house dates to the early 1890's.



Unfortunately, The Weavers faced some difficulties as farmers. The farm was poorly located. Water draining from the top of the barn roof caused a huge washout that can be seen today along the ridge south of the house. The farm was inundated by water on at least two occasions in the 1910's and 1940's. It is believed that there was a barn on the site, but there is no documentation as to its construction or location.

Mr. and Mrs. Weaver had three daughters, Bertha, Eva, and Florabelle. Mr. Weaver remarried after his wife passed away. He and his second wife adopted a son, Archie. After Mr. Weaver's death, Mrs. Weaver and Archie operated the farm. Around 1940, however, they lost the farm due to delinquent taxes. Although they were able to keep the farm buildings and forty acres, they were forced to sell part of their acreage to repay the debt.

Peter Burfiend Farm

O.K., it is time to head back to M-22. Head south on Basch Road 1.1 miles to Kelderhouse Road, turn right 0.1 miles, turn left 0.2 miles. The Peter Burfiend Farm is located on the west side of Basch Road just north of M-22.

The early history of this farm can be traced to Joseph Brunson, who owned the property in the 1860's. Eighty acres of the farm were then purchased by Peter and Jenette (Jenny) Burfiend from August Kemener on 31 August 1882. Three years later, the Burfiends bought the remaining land from the Kelderhouse estate on 15 July 1885. They built a log cabin on the land where their daughter Laura (Jack Barratt's mother) was born. Martin Basch built the present farmhouse for the Burfiends in the 1890's, while the outbuildings date to 1900. The log cabin that was located to the west of the present house was dismantled in the 1960's and the barn, which was located about 100 yards north of the house was torn down in 1978. The Burfiend family did not live on the farm for a very long period of time. They moved to the Carsten Burfiend farm in 1891.



Ole Olsen then purchased the farm, eventually selling it to his daughter and son-in-law, Ellen and Fred Miller. Their daughter, Leone Miller Adair, was born in the house. The farm has had several owners since that time. Milton Basch lived in the house from the early 1940's until his death.

North Unity School

The North Unity School is not on the Driving Tour of Port Oneida, because there is not good parking or turnaround, but it is located just east of the Basch Rd. and M-22 intersection. The North Unity School is located on the north side of M-22 0.5 miles from Basch Road and just west of Narada lake.



There is no entrance to the school property, so you have to park on M-22 and walk in. The school was built by Bohemian immigrants about 1870 and used to have clapboard siding. It wasn't until recently when the siding was removed and the impressive log structure was revealed. Read the **Farms & Cabins** book for more information about the families who settled North Unity.

Lawr Farm

When you get back to the intersection of Basch Road and M-22, turn right (west) and go 0.15 miles. You will see the Lawr farm on the right.

This parcel of land was bought by Thomas Kelderhouse in 1861. After his death in 1884, his son, James, inherited the property and in 1889, deeded 40 acres to George and Louise Burfiend Lawr. Louise was the daughter of Port Oneida pioneer Carsten Burfield. They purchased the adjacent 80 acres and built this farm in

the 1890s. George Lawr was the son of a Scotsman and his mother was from New York. George came to the U.S. from Canada in 1871. He and his wife farmed there until 1945. Since that time, the farm has had several owners.



Brunson Barn

Drive west 1.4 miles to Thoreson Road, turn right and drive 0.6 miles. The Barn is on the right. This structure is all that remains of the Joseph and Margaret Brunson farm. Mrs. Brunson was the daughter of Thomas Kelderhouse. The gambrel roofed barn is sited in a small field with a gentle wooded slope that rises to the north.



Thoreson Farm

Continuing on Thoreson Rd 0.3 miles, just past Sunset Trail, you will see the Thoreson Farm.

This parcel of land had two early owners, William Foster and John Hartel. Both men sold their land to Thomas Kelderhouse, who owned it until 1881. The 1891 plat map reveals three owners: Fred and John Anderson, and Lisbet Johnson. All three parcels were bought by John Thoreson in the late 1890's.

John Thoreson and Ingeborg Sakariasdatte emigrated from Norway in 1877. Although they crossed the Atlantic on the same boat, family lore has it that they never really met on the boat. Ingeborg resided with the higher-priced ticket-holders, while John remained below deck with the lower- fare travelers.

They first settled in Suttons Bay, and arrived in Port Oneida in 1880. The family initially rented the Kelderhouse/Baker farm until 1883, when they moved to Minnesota for one year. After returning to Port Oneida, they rented the old Burfiend house. Around 1900, along with their sons Ole and Fred, they built their farm on 160 acres of land purchased from the Andersons.



Three generations of Thoresons (John, his son Ole and Ole's son Leonard) ran the farm at different times. Leonard farmed from 1947-1952 after he returned to Port Oneida from service in the U.S. Army. Electricity was brought to the farm in February 1945. The Thoresons bought their first tractor on 1 April 1947, and obtained a milking machine in 1949. Ole Thoreson sold the farm to Art Huey in the 1960's and Huey then sold it to the National Park Service. The Thoresons operated a general farm with livestock, small grains, and hay. With 75 trees, they were the first Port Oneida farm to raise cherries for market. They also owned sheep, pigs, chickens, and a few dairy cattle.

Many hands have been involved in restoration efforts of the buildings since 1999, including volunteers with the Glen Arbor Art Center, Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, and the National Park Service VIP program. National Park Service maintenance crews restored the main barn, and the Park leases the rehabilitated machine shed to the art center for classroom and studio space.

The Thoreson farm is situated in a beautiful area near the Lake Michigan bluffs. From the **Bay View Trail**, you can get a panoramic view of the farm, Lake Michigan, North and South Manitou Islands, and Sleeping Bear Point.



Richard Werner Farm

Turn around and return to M-22 and turn right 0.15 miles. The Werner Farm is located on west side of M-22 just west of the intersection with Thoreson Road.

This farm was part of a 204-acre parcel of land claimed by Frederick and Margretha Werner, who arrived from Germany on 18 September 1855. The property was later divided into the two existing Werner farms. The Werners, who were related to Elizabeth Burfiend, were the second family to move to the Port Oneida area. Their farm dates to the late 1850's or early 1860's.

In 1885, the Werner's son and daughter-in-law, Richard and Katie (Portner) Werner, were farming at this site. After Richard Werner's death in 1890, Katie married Benjamin Holland, who took over the farm. Ben was known for being very particular. "He had the straightest corn rows of anyone in the area!" By 1891, Frederick and Margretha Werner had divided their parcel, ceding the northern 122 acres to their daughter and son-in-law, Margarete and John Miller.

Frederick and Margretha Werner's great-grandson, Franklin Basch, was raised on the farm and purchased it in 1943. According to Franklin Basch, their farming activities ceased around 1930 because they were unable to produce adequate crops.



Historical Overview

Human occupancy of the Leelanau Peninsula began at approximately 9000 BCE – the time of the glaciers' last retreat. Little specific information about prehistoric or early historic activity in the Port Oneida area is known. People were initially drawn to the area because of the fisheries and forests. Later, agricultural development was benefited by the longer growing season provided by the lake effect along the shoreline.

Carsten Burfiend, Port Oneida's first European resident, departed Hanover, Germany in 1846 and landed in Buffalo, NY before traveling by steamship to one of the Manitou Islands. His wife, Elizabeth, remained in Buffalo. Upon reaching the island, he built a cabin and worked as a fisherman until 1852, when the U.S. Government opened mainland Michigan to settlement. He then purchased 275 acres of land on the west side of Pyramid Point and moved his wife and small children to what later became Port Oneida. Continuing to work as a fisherman, Burfiend also ferried early settlers between the islands and mainland on his fishing boat. According to one account, one of his passengers, John E. Fisher, was the first settler on the mainland and the founder of Glen Arbor. The Burfiend family lived in a three-story log cabin. They faced extreme hardships in their early years, including the deaths of three sons from pneumonia or drowning.

Frederick and Margretha Werner, who were also from Hanover, Germany and were close friends and related to Elizabeth Burfiend, joined them in September, 1855. Several other early settlers were from Hanover. By the 1860 census, the population of the Pyramid Point area was 87 people; most of them were immigrants from Hanover and Prussia.

The arrival of Thomas Kelderhouse was an important event in Port Oneida's development. He was responsible for developing most of the economic opportunities related to logging in the area. Born in 1821 in Albany, NY, he was a successful businessman who owned ships that carried cargo on Lake Michigan. During one of his trips, Kelderhouse landed on South Manitou Island and reportedly admired the mainland, undoubtedly sensing the economic opportunities provided by the dense

forests. Striking a deal with Carsten Burfiend, Kelderhouse agreed to build a dock if Burfiend provided the land, and by 1862 the dock was completed. The community of Port Oneida was named after the SS Oneida, one of the first steamships to stop at the dock.

With the completion of the dock, the mainland's extensive hardwood forest was harvested. Kelderhouse continued buying land and began to produce lumber by building a sawmill near what is now the William Kelderhouse farm. Over the next 30 years, Port Oneida grew to include a blacksmith shop, a boarding house, general store and post office, two barns, and the Kelderhouse residence. Kelderhouse owned most of these buildings as well as nearly half of the land in Port Oneida. In 1866, he bought a gristmill on the Crystal River from John Fisher.

Lumbering drastically altered the appearance of the landscape. By the 1890's, most of the land had been logged off and most Great Lakes steamships were burning coal. Unable to compete with larger operations such as that of D.H. Day in Glen Haven, the dock and mill were sold. The loss of this industry and the death of Thomas Kelderhouse in 1884 led to the demise of the Kelderhouse fortune.

By 1908, all the buildings at the original Port Oneida town site, except the Kelderhouse residence, had been abandoned. The Kelderhouse family lived in this house until 1934, when it was sold to Fred Baker. In 1944, the boarding house was torn down, and by 1952 the other buildings and apple orchard were removed.

Farming in Port Oneida was marginal at best. The sandy glacial soils and unreliable water supply limited the success of most farms. Farmers grew an assortment of crops with potatoes as the primary cash crop. Grain was used to sustain small herds of dairy cattle. Most of the people were employed outside their farms, usually in seasonal jobs.

From 1890 until World War II, Port Oneida was a closely-knit, modest, and quite ordinary farming community set in an area with extraordinary beauty. The cooperative nature of farming was maintained through seasonal harvests and threshing, when neighbors worked together by going from farm to farm to gather and harvest the crops of each family building family and community bonds.