

# Ghost Towns

Sleeping Bear Dunes  
National Lakeshore  
Michigan



Edgewater Sawmill, compliments of Benzie County Historical Society

A Publication of  
**Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes**

© 2011, ***Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes***,  
P.O. Box 545, Empire, MI 49630  
[www.friendsofsleepingbear.org](http://www.friendsofsleepingbear.org)  
[info@friendsofsleepingbear.org](mailto:info@friendsofsleepingbear.org)

Learn more about the ***Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes***, our mission, projects, and accomplishments on our web site. Support our efforts to keep Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore a wonderful natural and historic place by becoming a member or volunteering for a project that can put your skills to work in the park.

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

Photos of and information about Edgewater were obtained from the Benzie County Historical Society.

Photos of and information about Aral were obtained from the National Park Service, the Empire Area Museum, and the Benzie County Historical Society.

Photos of and information about Good Harbor came from the Erhardt Peters Collection of the Leelanau Historical Society.

Photos of and information about Port Oneida and Crescent came from The National Park Service.

Typical logging camp operations are described below based on first-hand interviews from *Daylight in the Swamp, An oral history of logging in Northwest Michigan* available at the Benzie County Historical Museum in Benzonia.

A ghost town is a once thriving town that has been completely abandoned. Many of the logging or mining communities of the 1800s are ghost towns today. In some cases you may find abandoned buildings or ruins of infrastructure that tell a story of past cultural and economic activity. In Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, little evidence remains of many of the little towns that were once the center of economic activity in the area but couldn't adapt to meet changing economic conditions. Some villages in the area were able to adapt and are currently thriving tourist destinations (e.g. Empire and Glen Arbor). Glen Haven became part of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and is being restored to help visitors get a glimpse what these little logging villages were like. You can learn more about Glen Haven by reading the **Glen Haven Village** booklet.

Ghost towns captivate our imagination as we stand in the midst of a town site and look around us trying to envision the bustling activity of the people who lived and worked here. Who were these people? How did they live? What were their dreams and aspirations? What happened to dash their hopes and plans? Can we avoid their mistakes? As you explore the site of a ghost town you may find evidence of the town and its people in the remains of a stone foundation, artifacts, or a few old pilings from the dock. While you are encouraged to examine these things and take photos, please do not take artifacts or damage the historic structures. Leave them for other visitors and future generations to find and contemplate.



Glen Haven circa 1900

An historical perspective will help you appreciate why so many little towns and docks sprang up along the Lake Michigan shoreline in the late 1800s. As you read about each ghost town in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, we invite you to visit the sites and imagine what life might have been like for the people who lived and worked here. Many raised their families in these towns, so you will find that each little village had its own school. What was life like for the children growing up in this north woods wilderness? This booklet will give you some background and introduce you to a few of the families who lived here. You will learn about life in a logging camp and the rigors of life in the lumber industry in the late 1800s. Perhaps some of the lessons we learn from earlier generations about overuse of our natural resources and abuse of our environment can be applied to our 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

## Historical Background

The area of the northwestern lower peninsula of Michigan, which now makes up Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, was first settled by Native Americans, who migrated into this area about 8,000 years ago as the last glaciers were melting. They lived in small settlements around rivers and lakes, and had only a small impact on the natural environment around them. The virgin pine and hardwood forests were lush, and the lakes and streams were clear and cold. The natives lived on fishing, gathering wild berries, hunting/trapping, and a little gardening, which provided corn, potatoes, squash, and pumpkins. They thought it would stay this way for ever, but European settlement would change their world dramatically.

The first Europeans entered the area in the mid-1600s through the mid-1800s to explore, evangelize the natives, and acquire furs. Opening the Erie Canal in 1825 resulted in a dramatic increase in the use of the Great Lakes for shipping to transport people and goods to the growing Midwestern part of the continent. The initial Great Lakes ship traffic was made up of schooners (2-masted sail boats), but with the advent of the steam engine, sails were quickly replaced and the more dependable steamships dominated shipping.



Steamship at Glen Haven dock

The early steamships used wood for fuel, and the long trip from Buffalo, NY to Chicago or Milwaukee required ships to stop for wood along the way. In 1838, William Burton built a dock on South Manitou Island and sold cord wood to the passing steamships. The business grew and in 1842, Nicholas Pickard built a dock and cord wood station on North

Manitou Island. Small villages grew up around these docks, populated by the loggers and dock workers who supplied the firewood to the steamers. Because of the constant steamer traffic, these little ports became the transportation and commerce centers of the area.

As the forest of the Manitou Islands was being depleted, the steamship companies began looking to the elsewhere for a supply of wood for fuel. A few enterprising men moved to the uninhabited mainland to set up cord wood businesses, and several docks were built to supply the steamships. As coal became the preferred fuel for the steamers, the cord wood business declined. It wasn't long before the plentiful pine and hardwood forests were tapped to supply lumber for the building industry in the West. Sawmills were set up to cut the logs into lumber which was shipped to market from the same piers used to supply cord wood. Demand escalated dramatically after the 1871 Chicago fire.

Lumber camps moved inland from the port villages and docks. Lakes and rivers were used to move the logs to sawmills where they were cut up into lumber and loaded on flatcars to be taken to the dock. Hemlock bark was peeled off logs and shipped off to be used in tanning leather. The first flatcars rode on wooden or steel rails but were pulled by horses or oxen. Later the steam locomotive was developed and provided a more efficient way of moving the logs and lumber.

Several logging villages sprang up along Lake Michigan. Each village had a dock to load the cord wood or lumber on the steamships, one or more boarding houses where the workers would sleep and eat, a general store where they could buy whatever they needed, and a blacksmith shop to make and repair the metal tools and parts. There were also barns for the work animals (horses and oxen) used in the logging camps. After the lumberjacks and teamsters worked in a camp for a while they would bring their wives and children to the village. As the families moved in, small shacks, houses, and a school would be built. A logging village would have 100-500 residents, a couple of stores, post office, and school, which was often used as a community meeting place and church.

By 1910 most of the trees were gone. Old pictures of this area after the lumbering era show the devastation of the forest. In most cases, when the trees were gone, the logging business was over. The sawmill would be torn down and the equipment put on a ship and moved to a new location. Then everyone would move out of town. Often the buildings would be



Typical clear-cut circa 1905

torn down and the lumber would be used for other purposes. These little villages would remain only in the memories of the people who lived there. You might be able to find a few remaining foundations or a dock piling along the beach to mark the spot. In some cases, the community was able to transition to farming, fruit orchards and canning, or tourism to survive.

We can learn from our experience with the logging industry in Michigan. Uninhibited exploitation of a natural resource results in an unsustainable business or industry, which creates only short-term wealth and jobs. And ultimately when the resource is depleted, the business shuts down and the jobs and people move away. Today we know that businesses dependant on the use of natural resources must be managed in a sustainable manner to create long-term prosperity and minimize the impact on the environment. D. H. Day (Glen Haven) established one of the first forests managed for sustainable lumber production. He also transitioned his business into agriculture and tourism.

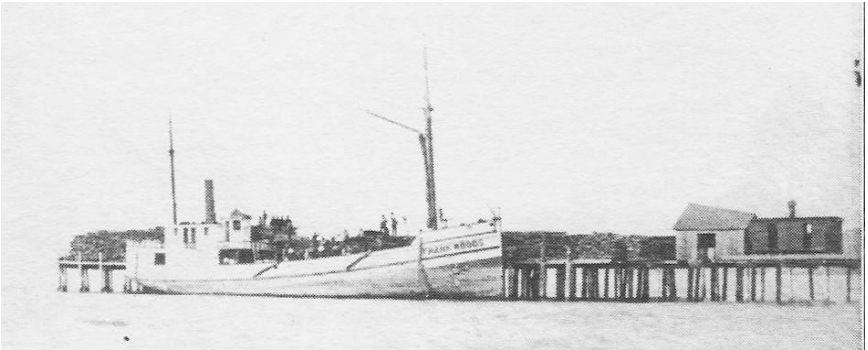
## Driving Tour

There are five ghost towns on the mainland and four on the Manitou Islands that this booklet will lead you to. The little logging village of Glen Haven, which was similar to the other ghost towns, is being restored by the National Park Service and provides a good example of this type of logging village. There is a separate Visitor Guide Booklet entitled **Glen Haven Village** that describes the village and its history. While on the Ghost Town tour, stop at Glen Haven and see a typical logging village with its blacksmith shop, general store, boarding house, and other buildings.

Let's start our tour at the southern end of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Drive to the Platte River Campground on Lake Michigan Drive near where M-22 crosses the Platte River, and park in one of the designated parking lots at the campground.

## Edgewater

The Edgewater village and sawmill were located on the West end of Platte Lake, which is not part of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, but the railroad grade from the sawmill to the dock on Lake Michigan runs along the edge of the Platte River Campground. In fact, the hiking trail from the campground to Lake Michigan follows the old railroad grade. Take a walk to the back of any of the campground loops and take the trail to Lake Michigan and look for pilings that remain of the Edgewater Dock.



Steamer "Frank Woods" loading lumber from Edgewater sawmill at the dock on Lake Michigan. The "boxcar" locomotive is on the far right.

Unfortunately, there is essentially nothing left of the Edgewater sawmill and village today. The site is on the northwest shore of Platte Lake just north of where the Platte River exits the lake. The property is privately owned now. Please do not trespass.

The Edgewater sawmill was owned by a man named Little and his two sons. It was probably first built around 1880 and shut down around 1900. One son was the Head Sawyer for the mill, and one day he was putting a belt on one of the pulleys in the sawmill and his thumb got caught between the belt and pulley. He grabbed onto something to keep himself from being pulled into the machine and held on for dear life! His thumb was pulled right off his hand, but it likely saved his life. The other son ran the boarding house in town. He also raised pigs and had a pig pen in the woods, so the pigs could eat the beechnuts and the waste from the boarding house.



Crew of the Edgewater Sawmill and Lumber operations. The Little Brothers (owners) are on the far left with the big black beards.

The town that developed to support the mill included a school, large boarding house, and about 20 single family homes. At its peak, the population was about 100. The lumber operation involved logging camps upstream along the Platte River, which would cut the logs and roll them into the river to be driven down to Platte Lake. They would then be tied together into a flotilla and be pulled by a little tugboat to the sawmill for processing. The lumber would then be loaded onto flatcars and pulled by a very unique locomotive to the dock on Lake Michigan, where it would be loaded onto schooners or steamships to be shipped to market in Chicago or Milwaukee.

The locomotive was built by Robert Blacklock, a master mechanic at the iron foundry in Elberta, MI where it was used to haul hardwood to the furnaces at the foundry for conversion into charcoal. After the foundry was closed, the locomotive was taken to Edgewater to haul lumber from the mill to the dock.



Boxcar Locomotive at Edgewater Lumber Yard

The locomotive consisted of an upright steam engine mounted in a boxcar with chain drive. Rumor has it that one day the locomotive took off on its own and rolled down the slope to the end of the dock and right into the water where it disappeared and probably rests to this day.

When the mill shut down, the loggers moved away and the equipment from the mill was removed. Local farmers bought the buildings and tore them down for the lumber. The dock was left to the ravages of Lake Michigan and lasted another 15-20 years. Today, only a few pilings remain off the shore.

## Aral

Now let's head for Aral and one of the most interesting stories of intrigue, murder, and near-lynching! Drive north on M-22 to Esch Road. Turn west (left) and drive to the end of the road, which ends at Lake Michigan. Otter Creek empties into the Lake just south (left) of the road. Today this is one of the most popular swimming beaches in the Lakeshore, but in the 1880s, Aral was a booming lumber town!

When the United States acquired land, it first had to be surveyed before it was made available to individuals. In the summer of 1849, Orange Risdon was one of the surveyors assigned to the area around Grand Traverse Bay. In 1853 soon after he finished the survey, Risdon and his wife, Sally, bought 122 acres where Otter Creek emptied into Lake Michigan.

The US Civil War began in 1861, and to induce able-bodied men to join the Union forces, the US government offered \$100 bounty to men who enlisted. By 1863 the bounty was increased to \$300, and finally a draft was instituted. An interesting provision of the draft act allowed drafted men to avoid service by hiring a substitute or by paying \$300. One of the men receiving draft notice was Robert F. Bancroft, who was married and 30 years old. He chose to take advantage of this provision by hiring a German immigrant to take his place as a soldier, but interestingly he followed his replacement to the battlefield. Instead of carrying a gun, he brought his camera and became one of the first battlefield



photographers. Following the war, the veterans returned home, and Robert Bancroft settled with his wife Julia and daughter Anna in Traverse City. He began buying land in Platte and Lake townships as investments and in late 1864, he bought the 122 acres from Orange and Sally Risdon of Saline, MI.

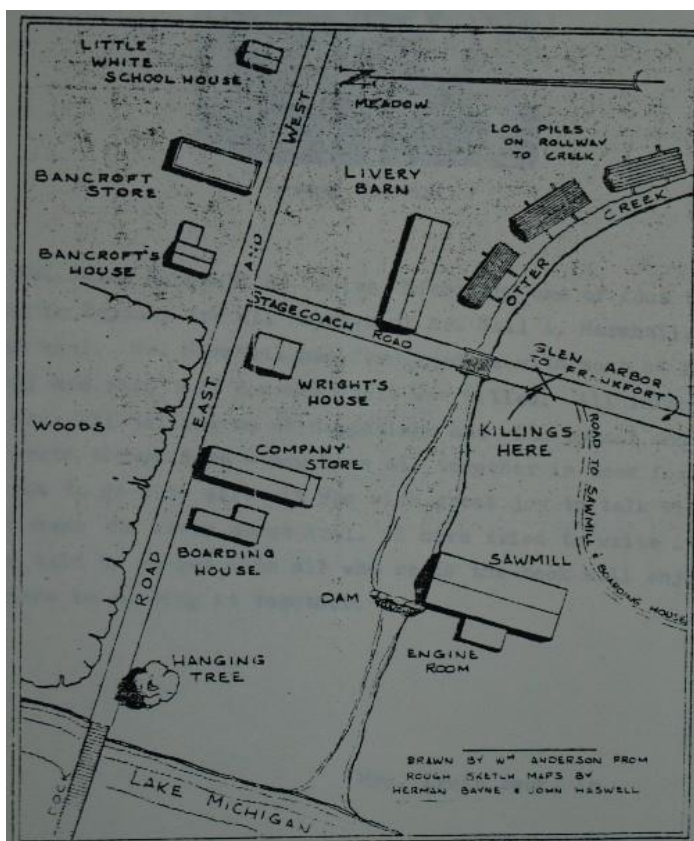
Bancroft cleared 20 acres and built a log cabin for his family to live in. Then he planted some black locust trees and an apple orchard around the cabin. Lumber speculators soon arrived looking for stands of white pine. Most of the forest in this area was hardwood, but there were some stands of white pine inland from Otter Lake. By the late 1870s Daniel Thomas bought a 5-acre parcel on Lake Michigan south of Otter Creek, but he decided to build a house across the road from the Bancroft's. Lumber speculators were on their way north as the forests near Grand Haven and Muskegon were harvested.



Julia, Robert & Bertie Bancroft, 1890

Dr. Arthur O'Leary, a distinctive looking man of Irish descent (5'8" tall, rather stocky, with a full beard) recognized the financial potential of the lumber around Otter Creek. He began buying up large tracts of forest and made plans to build a sawmill. O'Leary didn't have any experience in the lumber business, so he began looking for someone who could manage his enterprise. He found Charles T. Wright, who had grown up in New Mexico, but eventually moved to Racine, WI and started a lumber operation with his brother. Charles Wright would become the manager of the lumber operation at Otter Creek and a central figure in the first murder in Benzie County. In 1879 Daniel Thomas and William Woodward built a dock on Bancroft's property on Lake Michigan just north of Otter Creek.

The sawmill was built on the south side of Otter Creek not far from Lake Michigan. It was a 2-story wood building typical of sawmills of that time. The creek was dammed to create a mill pond right in front of the sawmill. The logs were floated down the creek to the mill pond and then lifted from the pond up an inclined ramp with a chain loop powered by the steam engine through a belt and pulley system that was also used to run the saw blade. The sawing was done on the second floor. The mill was connected to the dock with an elevated roadway called a timber tramway built about 8 feet above ground. It led from the second floor of the sawmill to the dock down a slight slope so the wagons loaded with fresh-cut lumber were easily moved to the shipping area along rails on the tramway. A bridge was built upstream of the pond to carry traffic to the mill. A boarding house was built south of the mill, and horse barns were built north of the creek. Mill operation began in 1881 producing white pine lumber.



John J. Tweddle was hired as bookkeeper and C. F. (Fred) Cossett, Wright's wife's brother, as manager of the company store, which was located on the south side of Main Street. He later took Mr. Tweddle's place as bookkeeper. Wright also hired a good blacksmith, Isaac Raymo, for metal work and repairs. Peter Stormer, Sr. was hired to ride the sawmill carriage and operate the setworks and dogs to adjust for the desired thickness. Tweddle later built a farm just north of Aral and Peter Stormer harvested lumber from North Manitou Island. Raymo later moved to Glen Haven to be the blacksmith for D. H. Day, and his daughter Donna would become Bertie Bancroft's wife.

The mill was idle during the winter, but the woods were alive with loggers working the logging camps. Wright employed about 150 workers throughout the winter and about 50 in the summer to run the sawmill and dock. Many of the other men went home to run their farms during the summer. Wright commuted between Wisconsin and Aral for several years, but by 1888 he built a house across from Robert Bancroft and he and his wife of four years moved in.



Aral Mill ca 1885

By 1883, the lumber business was booming and the town was growing. A post office was required. The community was known as Otter Creek - the "Krik" by locals. When they applied for a post office, their name was rejected because there was already an "Otter Creek" in

Michigan. "Bancroft" was the next suggestion, but again the name had already been used. One of the workers suggested the name "Aral" because of the beautiful Aral Sea in Europe. Locals continued to call it Otter Creek though. Dr. Frank Thurber was named the first postmaster. Keep his name in mind, for he too would play a central role in the murder.

In 1886, Robert Bancroft deeded one acre just east of the Bancroft home to the community for a log schoolhouse. It was situated at the base of the bluff just before the road curved to go up the hill. The building was replaced later by a wood-frame building using lumber from the sawmill. It was used as a church every Sunday and as a community meeting hall. Bancroft also decided to build a new house in front of his original log cabin. The front portion was eventually used as a post office beginning in 1888. They also built and operated the first general store in the area. Bancroft owned all the land on the north side of Main Street but other buildings were built on the south side of the street. Sometime before 1889 the mill burned down, but O'Leary paid to have a new, bigger mill built. In 1888, O'Leary sold the mill to Helene Davis of Brookline, MA, but Wright retained the lease on the mill.

Charles Wright managed the lumber operation well, but he had a bad temper and a reputation for fighting. Business at the mill went on as usual until 1889, when a rivalry developed between the sawmills at Aral and Edgewater. The political details behind the situation are not known, but the taxes on Wright's sawmill operation increased to a rate he believed to be unreasonable, and in protest he did not pay his taxes that year. A writ of attachment was obtained by the sheriff of the county to apply to the mill yard's logs. This would have brought the operation to a halt and forced Wright to pay his taxes.

Benzie County Sheriff, A. B. Case, handed the writ of attachment to his deputy, Neil A. Marshall of Benzonia. Marshall was a big man standing about 6'6" tall and heavy set. On the morning of August 10, 1889, Wright heard that the deputy sheriff was on his way to Aral to implement the writ.



Neil Marshall

Wright picked up his Marlin rifle and went with his crew to the rollway just above the bridge to start rolling logs into the creek which would carry them to the mill. About 10:00 AM, deputy Marshall arrived and ordered Wright to stop moving the logs. A confrontation occurred, but Wright's men continued working, and around noon Marshall went to the hotel for dinner. After dinner, Marshall was joined by Dr. Frank Thurber, a practicing physician and Lake Township Treasurer, who was responsible for issuing the writ of attachment for the logs. They headed toward the log rollway and mill yard. From the company blacksmith shop, the blacksmith saw them approaching and told Wright who was

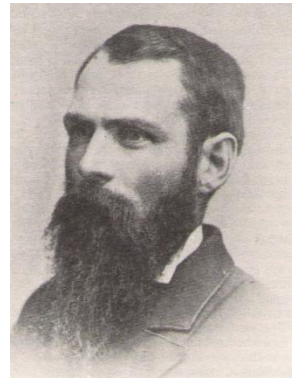
there on an errand. Wright picked up his gun and went out to meet them. A struggle developed between Wright and Marshall. Wright released his grip on the rifle, took a few steps back, raised the gun and fired, killing Marshall with a single shot. Thurber then struggled with Wright for the rifle. After a short struggle, Wright released his grip on the rifle and pulled out a revolver from his pocket and shot Thurber in the head. He then shot Thurber again in the chest killing him.

The murders occurred about 2:30 PM. The shootings were witnessed by a few of Wright's workers, but they were warned not to say anything. The bodies of the two men lay where they had fallen, but someone did put two umbrellas over the bodies to keep them out of the direct sun in the hot afternoon. The mill kept running for a short time, but Wright soon shut it down and paid his employees before disappearing into the woods. At this time there was a telegraph line between Aral and Frankfort with a branch line going to Benzonia. Prosecuting Attorney, George Covell, received a wire in Benzonia about the murders. Sheriff Case and Covell, accompanied by the local newspaper editor and photographer went immediately to Frankfort where they commandeered the steamer *Dewar* to take them and a posse of 20 men to Aral. They arrived just as the sun was setting and the full moon was rising.

The search for Wright was unsuccessful and the crowd found one of his employees, Lahala, an Indian handy man, who was suspected of knowing where Wright was hiding. Lahala wouldn't tell where Wright was, so the crowd got a rope from the *Dewar* and tied it around Lahala's neck and strung it over a branch of a nearby pine tree. He was told that if he didn't talk, he'd be lifted toward the sky. He was lifted off the ground twice, and just before the third time he decided to talk. At that moment, Wright emerged from the woods held by two other men. Wright was permitted to spend one hour with his distraught wife in privacy

before being taken back to Frankfort on the *Dewar*. The following Wednesday, the trial of Charles T. Wright got underway. He was convicted on April 30, 1890 of the murder in the first degree of Dr. Frank Thurber. Wright was sentenced to state prison at Jackson, MI for the remainder of his natural life. He spent the next 10 years in prison at Jackson working as the bookkeeper in the prison's office. In a strange turn of events, on December 31, 1900, as one of his last official acts, Michigan Governor Hazen S. Pingree, for reasons known only to himself, commuted the sentence to 17 years and Wright was immediately paroled in spite of vehement protests by friends and relatives of the slain men. After his release, he found his former wife, who had divorced him and remarried. Wright made things so uncomfortable for her new husband that he left town. It was rumored that the Wrights left the area for the Western U.S.

Dr. Thurber had lived partway up the hill east of the schoolhouse, and everyone in the area knew him well. So the murder was a shock to the little town of Aral and the surrounding area. The mill kept running with C. F. Crossett managing the operation for a few years. The valuation of the mill continued to decline during this time. In 1894, Dr. O'Leary bought the mill back from Davis. He offered the new lease to his niece's husband, a commercial sawyer named William R.



Dr. Frank Thurber

Montgomery, who accepted and moved to Aral, occupying the same store as Wright had lived in. He also sold a few groceries. In the fall of 1899, on a Sunday, when the mill was typically shut down, at 3:00 PM the alarm was raised that the mill was on fire. Arson was suspected but could never be proven.

The Mann brothers owned a company called Two Rivers Manufacturing from Manitowac, WI. Their Aral operations began in 1893 and lasted until 1911. They owned 3.34 acres west of Aral along Lake MI where they shipped basswood and elm logs to Wisconsin to be made into barrels, buckets, tubs etc. They didn't operate the mill, but floated large rafts of logs to Wisconsin. In later years, they used a scow to ship the logs. Sometime after the Montgomery mill burned probably around 1903, they built a shingle mill. The post office was discontinued between 1900 and 1902 and closed down for good in 1904.

In 1908, a new group arrived in Aral. They were a religious group called the Israelite House of David, and except for the Bancroft family they made up the whole town. While they did a little farming, their main activity was lumber. They rebuilt the sawmill on the site of the previous ones, and the steam engine was located on new concrete footings. The dock hadn't been used for a few years and was in disrepair but they fixed it up and were in business. They produced lumber, shingles, fence posts, telegraph poles, and railroad ties. The men lived

in a boarding house south of the mill and the women lived in the boarding house on Main Street near Lake Michigan.

The House of David maintained a barge on Otter Creek and a schooner called *The Rising Sun* on Lake Michigan. The group would often take the schooner for a trip along the Lake Michigan coast. Sometimes their band would be aboard wearing their bright red uniforms and playing for their own entertainment as well as the enjoyment of those along the beach near town. They had a baseball team which was the best in the area.

By 1911, the forest was depleted and the House of David had to shut down the sawmill and leave. They dismantled the mill and sold the lumber. Bertie Bancroft bought most of the land and buildings in Aral. He and his family were the only ones living there until they finally left in 1922. They moved to Muskegon but in 1925, Bertie and Donna Bancroft moved back to the area and built a restaurant and rooming house called the *Ken-Tuck-U-Inn*. You can learn more about the inn in the **Farms and Cabins** booklet.

### **Port Oneida**

It's time to move along to Port Oneida. Follow M-22 north through Empire and Glen Arbor. About 3 miles past Glen Arbor, turn left on Port Oneida Road. Drive about 1 mile to the Carsten Burfiend farm, which you will recognize as the group of white buildings on the left near the line of trees along the bluffs overlooking Lake Michigan. Park by the road and walk back to the buildings, and then walk left along the bluff until you reach the large patch of lilac bushes. You will find the dugway through the bluff down to the beach. This was the old road used to reach the dock. Alternatively drive to the end of Lane Rd and take the steps to the beach and walk to the right 100 yards to get to the dock pilings.

Carsten Burfiend, Port Oneida's first European resident, departed Hanover, Germany in 1846 and landed in Buffalo, NY before traveling by steamship to North Manitou Island. His wife, Elizabeth, remained in Buffalo. Upon reaching the island, he built a cabin and worked as a fisherman until 1852. 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. The Burfiend family lived in a 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. 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.



Thomas Kelderhouse home

With the completion of the dock, the mainland's extensive hardwood forest began to be harvested. Kelderhouse continued buying land and began to process cordwood for sale to passing ships by building a sawmill near what is now the John Burfiend 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 on Pyramid Point.

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 and the village of Port Oneida.



Port Oneida Boarding House

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. The wood was used in constructing the Barratt barn and the Burfiend pig barn. Read the **Port Oneida** Visitor Guide Booklet to learn more about the other farms in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District.

## North Unity (Shalda Corners)

Head back to M-22 and drive a couple of miles north to County Road 669. Turn left on CR 669 and drive to Lake Michigan Drive which is the dirt road just before you reach Lake Michigan. Turn left and drive 0.8 miles to Shalda Creek, where you will find a vault toilet near the roadside. Hike back along the creek to Lake Michigan. Alternatively, you can park at the end of CR 669 by Lake Michigan and walk to the beach. Turn left and walk along the beach to Shalda Creek. This is the site of North Unity. There is no evidence of the little village, but as you read the story of these hardy immigrants, you can imagine what it might have looked like.

Francis (Frank) Kraitz, his wife Antonia, and their family arrived in Chicago from Pelhrimov, Bohemia in August, 1855. Shortly before their arrival several German families and a few Czechs formed a society they called “Verein” which is the German word for club or association. The Verein hired a sailboat to take them north in search of land to settle. They selected a site along the shores of Good Harbor Bay across from the Manitou Islands, which they named North Unity. A typhoid epidemic in Chicago caused the Kraitz family and their friends, the Vaclav Muzil family and the Krubner family to leave quickly for North Unity, which they did in October, 1855. Their ship ran aground off Racine, WI, but fortunately they were picked up two hours later by the *Lady Elgin* and taken to North Manitou Island. After a few days they were able to take a small boat to North Unity.

A barracks was built about 150 by 20 feet and divided into sections to provide temporary housing for families until they could select farm sites and build their own cabins. Some families or individuals built their own temporary shelters near the barracks to get them through the first winter. The Muzils moved into the barracks, but the Kraitzs and Krubners moved near the Krubners’ Uncle Stepanek’s shelter. These shacks were intended to be replaced by permanent structures during the next summer. Some houses were all covered with hemlock branches, leaving small openings for windows. They looked like little bear huts instead of homes for humans. Some of the log houses were built so low it was difficult for a tall man to stand up in one.

Food supplies became low during that first winter, and the community was near starvation. Frank Kraitz, Vaclav Muzil and a few other men set out for the Manitou Islands across the frozen Lake Michigan to seek food. They were able to buy a few bushels of potatoes, which they carried back across the lake on a sled. The trip nearly cost the men their lives because the ice was cracking and breaking apart as they neared shore.



The village thrived during the next few years as more people arrived. It had a schoolhouse, sawmill, and store. In 1859, it was awarded a post office. John Shalda built a gristmill on the Lake Michigan outlet of Shalda creek. In 1871 (the same year as the Chicago Fire) the village was destroyed by fire, so the villagers moved inland to Shalda Corners (M-22 & CR 669). The original Shalda store at Shalda Corners was built on the Southeast corner by Joseph Shalda. After a few years, he built a larger store on the Southwest corner which had a dance hall above the store and an ice house for cooling dairy products and beer.



North Unity School 2008



Shalda Cabin 2006

As you drive back out to M-22, notice the little restored log cabin at the corner of M-22 and CR 669. This is called the Shalda Cabin. It was built in the mid-1860s. Another interesting original building of North Unity is the school. It is a log building located just west of Narada Lake on M-22. You can learn more about some of the remaining cabins by reading **Farms and Cabins** booklet.

**Good Harbor**

Now we're ready to go to our last ghost town on the mainland. Drive back to M-22 and turn left (north) and drive a couple of miles to County Road 651. Turn left and drive to the parking area at Lake Michigan. You are now at the site of Good Harbor village. Walk to the beach, and you will see the old dock pilings.

The earliest logging activity in the area was in 1863 just two miles west of this site, H. D. Pheatt, a partner in Fayette and Thiess built a dock on the bay and began cutting cordwood fuel for passing steamers. He was a veteran seaman retired here having sailed the Great Lakes for 41 years. Wood and logs were cut between Lime and Little Traverse Lakes and taken across Little Traverse Lake on scows pulled along a cable stretched from shore to shore. A tramway extended from the shore of Little Traverse Lake to the company dock on Lake Michigan. In 1869 Pheatt sold the business and bought 200 acres about a mile down the bay. He built a gristmill in 1882 powered by Shetland Creek, which connects Lime Lake and Little Traverse Lake.

The village of Good Harbor was started in the mid-1870s when a man named Vine built a small sawmill and dock. He got white ash logs from the surrounding area, which he cut into 4" lumber for wagon tongues and shipped it by boat to Milwaukee and Chicago. His mill was in operation for a couple of years before he sold out to Henry Schomberg of Milwaukee and Jake Schwartz of Leland, who began making barrel staves, headings and hoops to supply packaging for shipping pork, fish, apples and other products around the Great Lakes.

Shortly after 1880 Schomberg bought out Schwartz's interest and built a big sawmill which had a capacity of 30,000 feet in a 10-hour day. T. D. Wilce organized the Lime Lake Lumber Co. and built a 3-mile plank road from Lime Lake to Good Harbor and hauled his lumber to the Schomberg dock. After about four years of business Henry sold the



Good Harbor School

mill and dock to his brothers, Richard and Otto. They organized the Schomberg Hardwood Lumber Company of Good Harbor and expanded their business. Richard managed the operation in Good Harbor and Otto stayed in Milwaukee handling the sale of their products and bought supplies for mill and company store. The dock was expanded to 500 feet, so up to four schooners could be loaded at a time. They shipped potatoes and other agricultural products from the area as well as lumber and forest products.



Good Harbor Boarding House Ruin

The Schomberg Lumber Company ran a hotel, two stores which became a shopping center for the local farmers, and a saloon. The township line between Centerville and Cleveland townships ran down the middle of Main Street in Good Harbor. Centerville did not allow saloons, so Good Harbor's saloon was built on the Cleveland township side of the street. The Schombergs had a novel idea for attracting business to their stores. Otto would buy merchandise at bankruptcy or fire sales and offered them as premiums to customers. One interesting example was derby hats! One day Otto bought 500 derby hats and they offered them to customers who bought at least \$10 (about \$100 current value) of merchandise. The hats became quite a hit and all the men in the area were wearing them!



Charlie Kropp, Blacksmith in Good Harbor

The Schombergs bought several sections of timber in Kasson Township south of Maple City. They built logging camps and hauled the logs to their mill in the winter over a 14 mile long road, which they built. The road was kept iced by crews working at night. Logs were hauled on sleighs 8' wide that could hold the equivalent of 3,000 board feet of logs. The Kropp farm located on M-22 and Townline Road next to the St. Paul's Lutheran Church was used to board the horses.

Crews would stay at the Kropp house and keep the horses in the barn overnight. They would make the trip to the logging camp the next day to pick up a load of logs. They would stay at the logging camp that night and make the return trip the following day. At the height of the lumber business, the mill worked day and night during the winter and during the day in the summer. As many as 75 teams of horses were used hauling logs to the mill, lumber to the dock, and supplies to the camps. The lumber company owned some of the teams and the rest were owned by local farmers and rented to the lumber company. At its peak, the mill cut 8,000,000 board feet of lumber per year.

The schooners were loaded by farmers who were called to work at the dock when the ships arrived. Good Harbor had no protection from storms with a northwest wind, so ships had to leave the dock and sail to the Manitou Islands for protection when a storm would come up. Sometimes storms would come up too fast and the ships were driven aground.

After 1900 the supply of timber gradually decreased and in 1905 the mill and about 1,000,000 feet of lumber in the yard burned. The mill wasn't rebuilt and most of the villagers moved away. The post office closed in 1907. In 1924, John Peters, who had worked for Schomberg, bought most of the remaining buildings including the barn, hotel, stores, a dwelling, and the blacksmith shop for \$475. He and his sons tore the buildings down and sold the lumber.



Inside the school at Good Harbor ca 1900

## **Island Ghost Towns**

You won't be able to drive to our next four ghost towns. To visit these sites, you will have to make a trip to the Manitou Islands . Both islands are part of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and are managed by the National Park Service. Ferry service from Leland is available to both islands during the summer. Day trips are available to South Manitou Island, but you need to plan to spend the whole day, so bring a lunch. Trips to North Manitou Island require an overnight camping stay in the backcountry.

### **South Manitou Island - Original Village**

South Manitou Island was originally settled in the mid-1830s by William Burton to provide cord wood to fuel the Great Lakes steamships. His dock was built in the middle of the crescent-shaped bay on the eastern side of the island, which offered the only natural deep-water harbor between Chicago and Buffalo. In 1847, the village included Burton's Wharf, a house, blacksmith shop, grocery store, barn, and a wooden tamarack railroad track extending from the dock inland to haul wood for the steamers. When the first post office opened in 1870, it was located here. Walk to the site of this first village by hiking about half a mile along the shore north of the current dock where the ferry arrives. When you get to the middle of the bay, look for the remains of the old dock pilings near the beach. Alternatively, hike along the trail that goes through the Bay Campground until you get to the Old Dock Road. Turn right to go out to the old dock. The ruins of the old general store can still be found along the old Dock Road. Graves of some of the early residents are also marked in this area.

### **South Manitou Island Village**

The site selected for the lighthouse on South Manitou Island was at the southeastern shore to mark the dangerous straits in the Manitou Passage. Like most lighthouses, it was developed as an independent entity. The Lifesaving Station complex required a location that would allow easy launching of rescue boats as well as proximity to the most dangerous parts of the passage. That is why it is located in the southern tip of the harbor relatively near the lighthouse. The location near these installations became an important community center, and when logging operations ended and the dock fell into disrepair, the original island village dwindled in size and importance. Burdick's moved their general store from its original location near the old dock to a site near the Lifesaving station in 1923, and that marked the shift of the island community to the current village site located at the present dock where the passenger ferry arrives.

Island residents made up a close-knit community. Over time, members of several farming families served in the Lifesaving Service or as lighthouse keepers. As island families grew, these career opportunities allowed islanders to

make a living without having to leave the island. The houses provided a place for families to live together, since the Lifesaving Station provided housing for single servicemen only. The village houses provided a place for crew members to live year-round on the island. Most of the houses in the village were built between 1908 and 1920.

After the logging ended, the island became home to several family farms. Island agriculture moved into a new phase in 1918 when South Manitou Island was chosen by Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University) as a site for growing Rosen rye seed. Compared to wheat and barley, rye has been cultivated for a relatively short time. Its principal use is for making bread. Rye depends on light, sandy soils typical of northern Michigan. It is easily fertilized and cross-pollinates like corn. Developing and maintaining a pure strain of rye is one of the most difficult problems in growing rye seed, so South Manitou Island was ideal because of its isolation from stray rye pollen. Eventually as roads and transportation developed on the mainland and ship traffic on South Manitou Island ended, the economics of farming on the island made it too expensive, and the families began to leave.

### **North Manitou Island Village**

The main village on North Manitou Island is located near the present location of the NPS dock where the passenger ferry lands. The island was first settled in the mid-1840s by Nicholas Pickard who started a cord wood business to supply the Great Lakes steamships with fuel. The dock was about 150 feet long and 60 feet wide. Eventually the ships turned to coal for fuel and the logging operations switched to lumber production.



North Manitou Island Sawmill

Several sawmills existed on the island, but the last one still remains. It was built in 1927 using traditional technology. The steam engine and equipment date to around 1875 and the method of construction and style of layout are typical of sawmills of that era. You can see the sawmill by following the trail at the backcountry check-in station to the north past the photovoltaic solar array.

The Manitou Passage was one of the busiest and most dangerous shipping channels on the Great Lakes. This created a business opportunity as a fueling and transportation hub. To provide safe passage, a US Life-Saving Station (USLSS) was established in the village. Many of the remaining buildings near the beach were part of the USLSS.

A lighthouse was also established on the southern tip of the island at Dimmick's Point in 1898. This lighthouse fell into disrepair and is no longer standing. After the logging era, the cleared land was used for agriculture. Several fields were cleared



North Manitou Island Life-Saving Station

and crops and orchards were planted. The village became the center of the community and was later used as the lodge for the Manitou Island Association, which by 1942 owned 70% of the island. The Association used the island as a hunting and fishing resort. The cottages that remain were used as summer cottages and guest houses.

### **North Manitou Island - Crescent**

Crescent, located on the west side of North Manitou Island, was named after the shape of the shoreline where the dock was built. To get to the village site, take the trail that cuts through the center of the island to the Swanson Barn and make your way to the beach. As you walk along the beach to the north, you will find some of the old dock pilings.

The village of Crescent was built in 1906 when Peter Swanson leased a portion of his beachfront property to the Smith and Hull Company, which also bought 4,000 acres of prime timber land on the island. Work on the dock began in 1907. Trees were cut for the dock pilings and hauled to the beach by horse drawn Big Wheels. The dock was about 600 feet long and was built by the Monroe Dock and Dredge Company of Charlevoix, MI using a pile driver mounted on a scow and a steam powered tug boat. The dock was completed in the fall of 1908.



Crescent Hotel/Boarding House and Sawmill ca. 1910



The sawmill provided lumber to build the houses and decking for the dock. Smith and Hull also built a railroad grade about 6 miles extending to the northwest corner of the island with spurs around the area known as the Big Field. The current hiking trail is along part of this old grade. Crescent had a saloon, which eventually was converted into a school and was used as a church on Sundays. There was a boarding house, blacksmith shop, and general store like all of the little logging villages. Each fall when the ship loaded with winter supplies arrived, the mill was shut down and everybody pitched in to move the supplies to the store and warehouse.

The sawmill generated electricity for the village as well as for the mill. Electric lines were strung to all of the houses and barns but not to the dock. Crescent had a couple of baseball teams. One team claimed all Native Americans - members of the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes. Visiting teams came over from the mainland for games.

The mill closed down in 1915 when the timber was all cut and processed into lumber. Smith and Hull abandoned Crescent and dismantled the mill and shipped the equipment to their next logging job. The Manitou Limited locomotive was loaded on a ship and sent to Virginia for more logging duty.

### **Logging Camps**

There were many logging camps which were essentially temporary villages in the forest where the trees were harvested. In most cases, the logging camps were run in the winter because it was easier to move the logs to the streams, rivers, or lakes, where they would be floated to the sawmill. In some cases, the logs were moved on horse-drawn sleighs over ice-coated roads. Life in the logging camps was hard, but it gave many farmers a source of income during the winters.



Loggers with team of oxen bringing logs to a roll-way

The day at a logging camp would start well before 5:00 AM with the teamsters going out to the barn and feeding the horses, and the cooks would start getting breakfast ready. Around 5:00 AM the camp horn would be blown to wake up the rest of the crew and the lights would come on. The men would file into the dining hall and sit at benches along the long tables. After breakfast, the men would go back to the men's shanty to talk and smoke until it was time to work.

After they put in 6 or 7 hours of hard work in the winter forest, it was time for dinner. The men worked another 5 or 6 hours before supper. After a long day of working in the cold, the men would walk back to camp for a big supper. They always get plenty of good food for every meal.

One of the most important employees in the logging camps was the cook. If the crew didn't like the food, they could stop the camp operations until a new cook is brought in. The other employee that could shut down a camp was the saw-sharpener. If the saws weren't sharp enough, a lot more work would be required to cut down a tree. The men knew right away if the camp had a good sharpener.



Loading gang and team after loading a sleigh

The loading gang loaded the sleighs. They would load 30-40 loads each day. They would be out loading sleighs early in the morning by torchlight. Two of the men worked on the ground and one worked on the top. He was called a "top loader". Each hauler used his own jockey team to pull the logs on the skids.

After supper, the men could relax for a short time. There would be talking, singing, and card playing, but it didn't last long. At 9:00 PM it was "lights out" and you'd better be quiet! It was dark in that bunkhouse. There was no light at all, so you'd better remember where your bunk was if you had to get up in the night. There would always be 2 men in a bunk and sometimes the bunks would be 3 high. There were no mattresses, just straw in a bag - called a straw tick. These were pretty comfortable, but the problem was lice! Many of the men would wear the same clothes all winter during logging camp. You can imagine what the bunkhouse smelled like! After spending a night on a lice-ridden bed, the men used a trick to get rid of the lice. They would take their shirt off and lay it on the sunny side of a log and wait for the lice to crawl off. Then they would put their shirt back on.

## **Conclusion**

When you stand at the site of one of these ghost towns, remember the people who lived and worked here. Their hard work, sacrifice, and drive to create a good life for their families and community created the foundation from which we now build. Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is dedicated to keeping their story alive for the benefit of park visitors for generations to come. We hope that when you learn of the dedication and determination of these pioneers, you will be inspired to create a better future for your world.