

Piering into the Past: Lost Ports of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee Counties



State Archaeology and Maritime Preservation Program
State Historic Preservation Office
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**Piering into the Past:
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and Ozaukee Counties**

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Cover photo: Fisherman's Pier and Shanty at Amsterdam, 5 August 1939 (Image No. 261-15-2).
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Abstract

In 2024 and 2025, the Wisconsin Historical Society's State Archaeology and Maritime Preservation Program conducted research on a sample of rural coastal commercial ports on the Lake Michigan shores of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee Counties. Funding was provided through a grant from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program.

Archival research identified five high-potential targets along the Lake Michigan coastline where submerged traces of lost rural port facilities might survive: Two Creeks, Norheim, Centerville, Amsterdam, and Ronksville. Maritime investigations in mid-summer 2024 confirmed that remnants of nineteenth-century port facilities are extant at four of the five locations. Staff also had time to investigate one target of opportunity at Lintz's Pier, locating pier ruins at that former port community. Due to the scope of the project, development, and shoreline erosion at many of the pier sites, no terrestrial survey was attempted. Abundant debris was noted on the beach at Centerville, Lintz's Pier, and Norheim North.

One location – Two Creeks – was determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A nomination will be prepared.

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Leitz's dedicated research helped us "flesh out" the ghost ports of Wisconsin's maritime past, one community at a time.

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Chapter 1: Ghost Ports on the Mid-Lake Michigan Coast

Introduction

Vanished pier communities, or ghost ports, are located all along Wisconsin's Lake Michigan and Lake Superior shorelines. These vanished villages cannot be found by mapping services and even most area residents cannot offer directions to places with intriguing names like Grimm's Pier, Foscoro, Pigeon River, Lintz's Pier, Port Ulao, and Bohemia Town. Several years ago, Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) researchers with the Office of the State Archaeologist and Maritime Preservation and Archaeology Program started what would become a series of investigations into former Wisconsin pier communities. In 2019, Society staff conducted research and fieldwork on Ronksville, a vanished port about 12 miles north of Port Washington that focused on forestry products like cordwood, lumber, and staves (Thomsen et al. 2020). This research was grounded in previous pier community investigations conducted by the Wisconsin Underwater Archaeology Association (WUAA) and by the Maritime Preservation and Archaeology Program at stone quarry sites on Lake Superior (Boyd et al. 2020, Thomsen and Zant 2015). In 2022 and 2023, WHS staff completed fieldwork on numerous former pier communities in Kewaunee and Door counties (Rosebrough et al. 2023; Rosebrough et al. 2026). Much of this work was funded with grants from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program (WCMP), supported by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's Office for Coastal Management, which offers annual grants that support projects related to Great Lakes coastal wetlands protection, habitat restoration, pollution control, coastal community planning, education, public access, and historic preservation.

Another grant from the WCMP facilitated research into ghost ports along the central portion of the Lake Michigan shore in Wisconsin. During the summer of 2024, WHS archaeologists and volunteers conducted fieldwork at vanished port communities in Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee counties. Historical research in 2024 and 2025 fleshed out the stories of these villages that once dotted Wisconsin's mid-Lake Michigan coast. This report offers the results of archaeological and historical research into on the ghost ports of Centerville, Northeim, and Two Creeks in Manitowoc County; Amsterdam and Lintz's Pier in Sheboygan County; and Ronksville in Ozaukee County (Figure 1.1).

History

Before railroads and paved roads, water travel provided the most efficient form of transportation worldwide, including in Wisconsin. Native Americans first traveled these waterways with a variety of small watercraft, like the dugout canoes found in Lake Mendota in Madison (Wisconsin Historical Society 2025). As Americans and Europeans flocked to the Upper Midwest in the 1830s and 1840s, many newcomers traveled to the region via the Great Lakes and inland waters. Unsurprisingly, early American and European residents established villages and towns along waterways to capitalize on the ease of waterborne transportation. Some of these villages and towns became the Wisconsin waterfront cities we know today – Milwaukee,

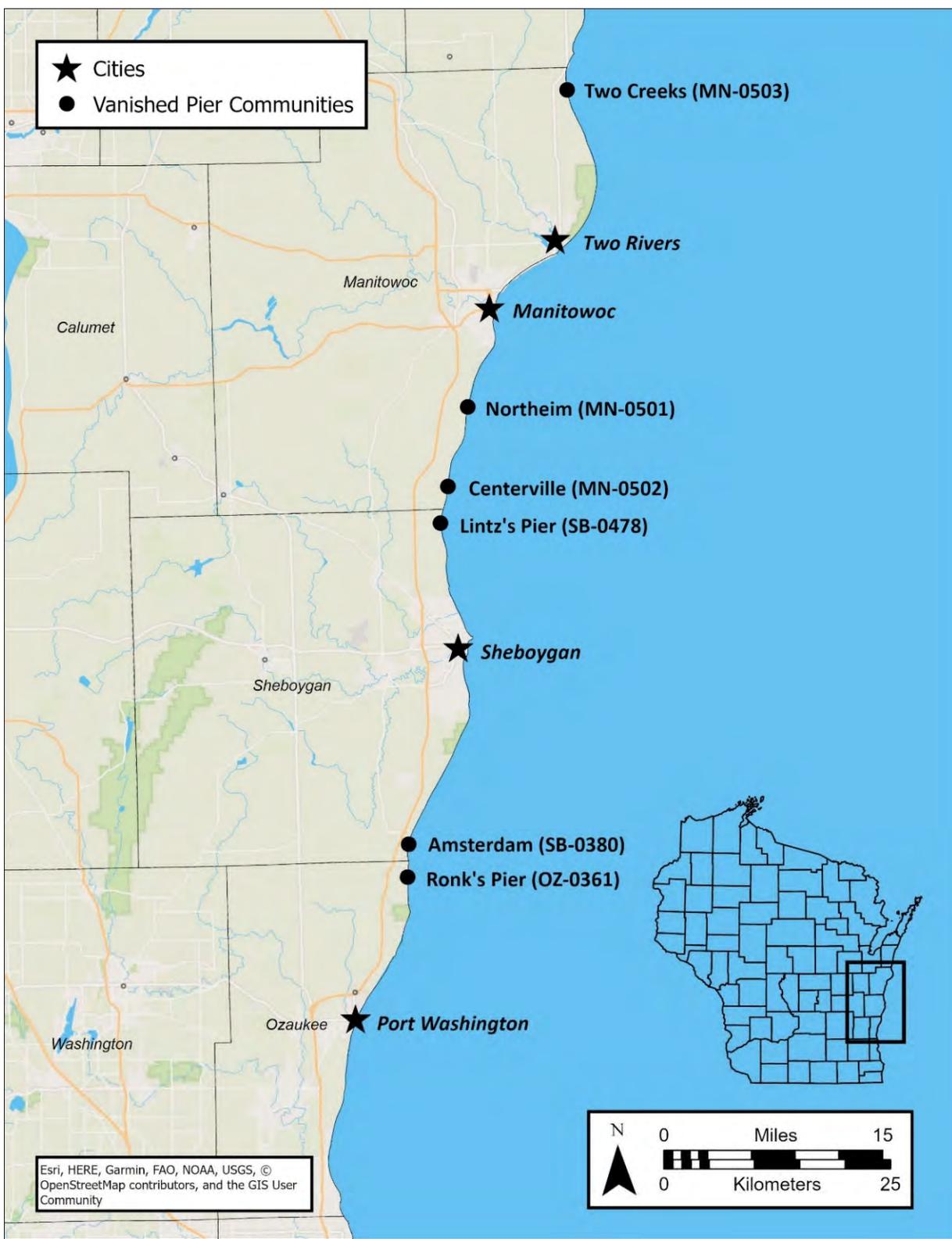


Figure 1.1: Map of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee County Ghost Ports

Racine, Kenosha, Port Washington, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Green Bay, Sturgeon Bay, Ashland, Bayfield, Superior. Other communities prospered for a short period of time – extracting and shipping out local resources like timber, stone, and fish from bridge and crib piers that extended into deepwater – and then faded away when these resources declined. These latter are the vanished pier communities or ghost ports the Society has formally studied since 2019.

These vanished pier communities represented different things to different peoples. For Native peoples of Wisconsin, these small pier communities hastened the exploitation and devastation of natural resources upon which Native peoples depended for their livelihood and often resulted in their dispossession from the land. The extreme changes to Wisconsin’s environment wrought by the overharvesting of trees, fish, animals, stone, and other resources persist today in the vastly different landscapes and waterscapes found in the state compared to those found before American and European settlement. For American settlers and European immigrants, the pier communities offered opportunities to sell natural resources harvested from their new lands as they cleared those lands for farming. For those who established the piers and associated businesses or managed them from afar, the pier communities provided the chance to accumulate wealth and prosperity. For maritime merchants, ship owners, captains, and crews, the pier communities offered additional trade, anchorage, refuge, and respite opportunities. Before the railroads came through, these small rural piers represented one of the most efficient ways to get goods and people to and from other parts of Wisconsin and the Midwest. Most significantly, rural ports contributed to Wisconsin’s transition from a lumbering economy to a farming economy, an economy which persists today.

A thorough treatment of early Wisconsin history relating to the vanished pier communities – including the histories of Native peoples who lived along Wisconsin’s coasts, an account of early immigrants and American settlers to the Badger state, the importance of the lumber industry in Wisconsin, and the significance of lake shipping to the state and the pier communities – can be found in Chapters Two to Five of *Bridging Worlds: The Ghost Ports of Kewaunee County* (Rosebrough et al. 2023), the final report completed for a previous pier communities grant project.

2024 Investigations: Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee Counties

The WHS’s Office of the State Archaeologist and Maritime Preservation and Archaeology Program has prioritized investigation of vanished pier communities. These ghost ports represent an overlooked rural story that transformed the State of Wisconsin and the United States. Despite their importance, their stories have been nearly forgotten, to the point that the location of some piers had been entirely erased from memory. Thanks to the generosity of the WCMP and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Coastal Management, from July 2024 to December 2025, archaeologists and volunteers with WHS’s State Archaeology and Maritime Preservation Program conducted a study to investigate the lost coastal communities of the mid-Lake Michigan coast.

Staff hoped that findings in this region would be useful for comparison to the WHS’s earlier studies in Kewaunee and Door Counties and the Wisconsin Underwater Archaeology

Association's study of Clay Banks Township in southern Door County. Additional investigation into the ghost ports of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee counties provides information from which to paint a fuller picture of the role of maritime trade in rural commerce and economic development. Wisconsin's mid-Lake Michigan coast was chosen for the relatively early date of the pier communities and for their participation in economic networks beyond the timber trade. Though sometimes referred to as "lumber piers," the piers of the mid-Lake Michigan shore were used to import and export cordwood and other forestry products, along with a wide range of agricultural products, hides, fish, and other commodities. Small, unincorporated communities lacking commercial buildings remain at some of the investigated locations in Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee counties, in contrast to areas further north where rural ports were fully abandoned (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2: Former Centerville House Hotel, Looking South Across Centerville Creek, December 2024

Initial research identified five high-potential targets along the Lake Michigan coastline where traces of lost rural port facilities might survive: the Ronksville pier in Ozaukee County, the Amsterdam Pier in southern Sheboygan County, two piers at Centerville in southern Manitowoc County, two piers at Northeim in southern Manitowoc County, and the Pfister & Vogel tannery pier at Two Creeks in northern Manitowoc County. Staff also had time to investigate one target of opportunity at Lintz's Pier in northern Sheboygan County. Maritime investigations in summer 2024 confirmed that remnants of nineteenth-century piers are extant at 5 of the 6 locations. Features identified as crib fill at Ronksville proved—upon fuller investigation—to be of equivocal origin; natural forces seem to be responsible for at least some of the structure formerly identified as belonging to the pier (e.g., Thomsen et al. 2020). Pier remains have, however, been found washed up on shore at Ronksville, confirming the pier's location. Sadly, shoreline development and erosion along the coast has made relocation of significant terrestrial resources belonging to these communities unlikely at most sites.

The project team conducted archaeological survey at the five sites where pier remains were identified – Two Creeks, Northeim, Centerville, Lintz's Pier, and Amsterdam. Survey included in-water investigation and measurement as well as use of a laser transit on shore to plot the locations of pilings and related features. Researchers also used terrestrial photography and underwater photography and videography to capture data about the sites. The number and extent of remaining pilings at each site varied widely with some sites having only a dozen pilings and others having over 300 pilings (Figure 1.3). The remaining pilings terminated anywhere from 575 feet to 700 feet offshore in about 10 to 15 feet of water. At some sites, the pilings were worn down and deep under the water while at others they came quite close to the surface or even protruded from it. Some sites had numerous fallen pilings laying amongst the remaining upright pilings while fallen pilings were absent at other sites. Several of the sites had collections of potentially related artifacts – bricks, ceramics, metal items – on shore or nearby (those having been relocated by adjacent landowners) while artifacts were completely lacking at other sites. Since visibility, sand cover, and other factors varied at each site, there may be additional pier components and related artifacts that were not recorded during the 2024 fieldwork. In addition, future terrestrial investigation at some of the sites that have not experienced severe erosion or where inland components could be present may reveal additional archaeological data.

During fieldwork, several local residents spoke with the team and suggested community members and groups that could provide additional information about area history. WHS staff followed up on these suggestions. Some suggested informants were pleased to speak with WHS staff while others were reluctant and some never responded to multiple communication attempts. Even so, WHS archaeologists communicated with several people who provided memories, information, and, in one instance, firsthand experience related to operation of the ports.

Along with archaeological investigation of the pier communities, archaeologists and volunteers conducted research into archival and historical records. Records ranged from accounts, maps, deeds, and photographs in local historical and municipal collections to biographies, nautical charts, and reports in regional and national repositories. Historical newspapers from nearby cities – since none of the pier communities had their own newspapers or, at least, none have survived – proved crucial for providing tiny glimpses into these vanished communities that,

compiled together, shone a light on their residents, commercial activities, social happenings, and community events.



Figure 1.3: Submerged Pilings at Two Creeks, July 2024

One location – the Pfister & Vogel pier at Two Creeks – was determined to be potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The mid-Lake Michigan ghost ports project – focusing on three communities in Manitowoc County, two communities in Sheboygan County, and one community in Ozaukee County – resulted in detailed histories of all six communities that reveal the development of the communities, the people who founded and operated businesses at each port, and the commerce that took place around the piers. Project members presented the results of research at a variety of venues that included members of the public, historians, archaeologists, and divers. Information compiled during the project was added to WisconsinShipwrecks.org and used to

produce an interpretive sign for placement at Amsterdam Park near Cedar Grove in Sheboygan County. The information will also be added to the Lake Michigan State Water Trail's interactive map viewer and WHS's museum kiosks hosted at museums all over the state.

This mid-Lake Michigan rural pier community project, and the vanished pier community projects that came before, will help ensure that what was once forgotten is now remembered and celebrated. The pier communities and those who lived and worked there contributed to the growth of the State of Wisconsin. These ghost port projects honor their contributions to Wisconsin's history and illuminate the many stories once shrouded by time, oblivion, and the often-turbulent waters of Lake Michigan.

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Chapter 2: Norheim (MN-0501)

Introduction:

The historic center of unincorporated Norheim consists of a small cluster of single-family homes, barns, and other outbuildings on either side of Norheim Lane. The oldest maps of Norheim (then known as Nordheim) show approximately 20 buildings, with three more structures nearer Lake Michigan on the north bank of Pine Creek. The biggest difference between modern and historic Norheim is not the number of buildings but rather their nature. The 1878 plat map of Manitowoc County suggests that more than half of the notable buildings in old Norheim were commercial in nature—two general stores, a saloon, and a brickyard (Nash 1878). Later maps and accounts add a hotel, two dance halls, a creamery, a school, and a church (Foote 1893, Ehlert 1973). Offshore, separated from the little cluster of buildings by about a quarter mile, were two piers serviced by pier roads. Norheim still exists today, but the village no longer looks to the lake to see its future.

Location and Setting

The Norheim piers are located in Sections 25 and 36, Township 18 North, Range 23 East, in the Town of Newton, roughly 7.5 miles south of Manitowoc in southern Manitowoc County. They are situated one-third of a mile east of the intersections of modern Lakeshore Drive, Norheim Road, and County Highway U. County Highway U runs due east towards Lake Michigan, intersecting first with the southern terminus of Norheim Road and then Lakeshore Road 160 feet further on before terminating another 330 feet eastward at its intersection with Norheim Lane. Norheim Road extends due north from County Highway U, Lakeshore Drive crosses County Highway U at a northeast angle, and Norheim Lane extends northeastward as well. This road configuration is recent, bypassing the historic center of Norheim.

Previously, Norheim Road continued due southward past County Highway U while Norheim Lane served as the lakeshore road. Together, County Highway U, Norheim Road, and Norheim Lane formed a triangle around which historic Norheim was situated. A building housing Pair-a-Dice Tours sits within this former triangle. The building shows signs of extensive rebuilding, with newer siding, a boomtown front merged awkwardly into a newer addition, and an oversized-brick chimney protruding from the western wing (Figure 2.1). Maps suggest that this building incorporates the structure of the former saloon. Blue Heron Way leads southeastward into a more recent residential lakeshore development from the east side of Norheim Lane approximately 175 feet southwest of its intersection with County Highway U. Portions of Blue Heron Way originally served as the road serving the Mann/Mathaus brickyard and southern pier.

Pine Creek (also known as Point Creek) flows eastward into Lake Michigan just south of Norheim. The waterway currently actively flows for no more than a mile or two before reaching the lakeshore but was mapped as a more extensive watercourse in the 1830s (Kilbourn 1834, 1835a). Neither pier is situated near it. The southern pier is located about 600 feet north



*Figure 2.1: Front Elevation of Building on County Highway U, Norheim, December 2024
(Possible Former Tavern and/or Cheese Factory)*

of the mouth of the creek, while the northern pier is 1360 feet away. Historic maps (e.g., Harney 1872) confirm the separation between the waterway and the piers. The northern pier intersects the shore a bit north of the line of County Highway U. The southern is nearly due east from the intersection of Lakeshore Road and Norheim Lane. The two piers are separated from one another by approximately 750 feet.

The lake bluffs at Norheim are steep and high and are made up of stratified glacial sediments. The beach is composed of drifts of gravelly sand interspersed with larger till cobbles and boulders, with the proportion of larger stones rising closer to the lake bluffs. Sand and gravel drifts run parallel to the shore, covering the lake bottom for a distance of at least 650 feet before dropping into deeper water. The shore slopes downward at a relatively shallow angle, reaching a depth of approximately 10 feet at the end of the piers before dropping to a depth of 15–20 feet further from shore. Beyond that distance, clay and sand shoals rise back up into shallows.

General Land Office records indicate that this stretch of coast was originally under a canopy of deciduous forest, with groves of birch, some sugar maple, ash, cedar, a smattering of oak, basswood, and beech. Today, the land is open and dominated by landscaped lawn and ornamental tree species. A series of larger lakeside homes have been built on the summit of the lake bluffs, overlooking the pier locations.

History

A General Land Office map and notes from 1834 prepared by Byron Kilbourn show the forerunner of Pine Creek (labeled Point Creek on the plat) extending inland for approximately four miles, draining small wetlands and kettle ponds in the interior. The Chicago trail passed by the headwaters of the creek, and the lakeshore trail intersected the creek roughly one-eighth of a mile inland from its mouth, extending roughly along the course of modern Norheim Lane

(Kilbourn 1834, 1835a). As noted above, the land was forested with a mix of deciduous species intermixed with cedar.

With the opening of Euro-American colonization, the land around Pine Creek was rapidly snapped up by Yankee land speculators, including William Trowbridge, an early settler of nearby Sheboygan County. Northeim's beginnings can be traced to the arrival of the Dumke family from Prussia in the early 1850s. Histories of the Town of Newton suggest that siblings of the Dumke family purchased extensive timberlands along Pine Creek and set up a sawmill and grist mill along its banks (Falge 1912[1]:326). These siblings were probably Frederick, Carl, August, and Franz Dumke. August purchased a farm in the Town of Newton in 1853 and his brother Franz, or Frank, did likewise sometime between 1850 and 1855. August Dumke farmed in the Town of Newton for five years, before moving to Manitowoc to work as a millwright and miller; he later established a foundry. Franke Dumke, originally a miller by trade, continued to farm in Newton until 1881, when he retired and moved to Manitowoc (Western Historical Company 1881:526-527; Falge 1912[2]:123). Although it is unclear when Frederick, the oldest of the four siblings, arrived in Wisconsin, the 1860 census records him residing in the Town of Newton and lists his occupation as lumberman. His brother Carl, or Charles, arrived in the U.S. in 1854 and is listed as a farmer in Newton in the 1860 census (U.S. Naturalization Record 1859, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860a). In 1869, Carl built a mill in the Town of Newton and, by 1870, both Frederick and Carl are listed as millers in the township. Franz is still listed as a farmer (Western Historical Company 1881:182, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c).

The Town of Newton was rapidly settled by fellow Prussians and other European immigrants, most of whom took up farming. Within a decade, the area was cleared and settled, achieving a character that contemporary newspapers likened to the farming districts of New England, with grain fields, orchards, and "fine white dwelling houses" (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1868a). When Polish settlers arrived in the early 1860s, the Dumke brothers sold off their cut-over lands to the new arrivals, and the newcomers settled in near the lakeshore (Falge 1912[1]:326).

Despite selling off large portions of their landholdings, several Dumke siblings remained in the area. An 1872 wall map of Manitowoc County labels a 36-acre parcel along Pine Creek on the northwest corner of the intersection of County Highway U and Northeim Road with the text "Dumke & Bro" (Figure 2.2). This is probably the location of Carl Dumke's 1869 mill complex where Carl, his wife Caroline, and their six children may have lived. Based on the "Dumke & Bro" label, his brother Frederick, wife Mathilde, and their six children may have lived there as well since Frederick also worked as a miller by 1870. Alternatively, Carl and/or Frederick may have lived two properties to the north in the northeastern portion of Section 26 just north of Northeim's historic core on a parcel labeled F. Dumke, which belonged to either Franz or Frederick Dumke. A 40-acre farm owned by P. Robartcick separated the two Dumke parcels (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c, Harney 1872). An 1878 map of the Town of Newton reveals that the "Dumke & Bro" parcel had been split and sold to A. Groelle (29 acres) and F. Kersch (7 acres). The parcel in the northeast corner of Section 26 is still labeled F. Dumke (Nash 1878). Although uncertain, it is likely that the F. Dumke represented on the map was Franz Dumke since Carl had moved his mill to Reedsville in 1874, Frederick was running a hotel in Chilton in Calumet County by 1880, and Franz continued to live in Newton until 1881 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1880b, Western Historical Company 1881:182, Falge 1912[2]:123).



Figure 2.2: 1872 Map of Norheim, Newton Township (Harney 1872)

The piers at Norheim were established during the late 1850s or early 1860s. The southern of the two, referred to as Pier Newton or Bode's Pier, was built by the company of Otto & Bode in 1864 or earlier (*Daily Milwaukee News* 1864; Falge 1912[1]). Exactly how involved Mr. Otto was in the construction and utilization of the pier is unclear; his last name appears infrequently in historical documents about the pier and even his first name is uncertain. Although conjectural, Bode's partner may have been Frederick William Otto, an early landowner in Centerville Township who owned a general store in the village during its beginnings (General Land Office 1848a, Western Historical Company 1881:186). Otto's partner Emil Bode, another Prussian immigrant and also previously a resident of Centerville, appears to have been far more involved with the pier, which became known as "Bode's Pier" as early as 1866 (*Chicago Republican* 1866). Otto may have been an initial partner on the pier who sold out shortly after its construction.

Not long after the earliest recorded mention of Pier Newton, the schooner *Sea Gull* hit a rock departing the pier and sank soon afterwards. The vessel was raised, towed to Manitowoc, sank again near the mouth of the Manitowoc River, and was raised again. Repairs began soon after (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1864a, 1864b). Although possibly the first vessel to wreck at Norheim, the *Sea Gull* would not be the last vessel to come to grief off Bode's pier.

In the spring of 1865, Emil Bode claimed to have discovered petroleum near his store and formed a joint stock company to take advantage of the find. The newspapers described Bode as a "gentleman of character and veracity" and proclaimed that he could not perpetrate a hoax (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1865). Whether the petroleum discovery panned out is uncertain. It is certain

that in coming years, Bode shipped cordwood and other timber products from his pier rather than oil. Bode's shipping business fared so well that he bought his own vessel for \$3,000 – the scow schooner *Swallow* – in 1867 from Nels Theodore Nelson of Manitowoc (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1867c, Labadie 2025a, Wisconsin Maritime Museum [WMM] 2025a). Just a few weeks later, *Swallow* pounded on the bottom while loading cordwood at Bode's Pier and sprang a leak. The vessel's crew was able to keep *Swallow* afloat until they reached Manitowoc, at which point the vessel sank between two piers (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1867d, *Daily Milwaukee News* 1867b). By May 1868, *Swallow* had been raised and repaired and was back shipping to and from Norheim (*Daily Milwaukee News* 1868). Unable to complete a season without incident, *Swallow* picked up wood from Bode's Pier in November 1868 and was involved in a hit-and-run with the scow barque *Lewis Day* not long afterwards. *Swallow* suffered significant damage and was towed into Milwaukee by the tug *Kitty Smoke* (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1868d). Apparently having had enough of owning his own vessel, Bode sold *Swallow* to A. Carlson and J. Johnson of Milwaukee the following April. Bode's period of ownership had not been kind to the vessel; he sold *Swallow* for only \$1,050, a 65 per cent reduction from what he had paid less than two years previously (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1869a). Even though Bode had sold his vessel, his pier was not immune to further marine disaster. Around the same time Bode was selling *Swallow*, the scow *Granville* ran ashore at Bode's Pier. Fortunately, the scow got off the beach without much damage (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1869a). In August 1875, the schooner *Mariner* struck a rock just after leaving Bode's Pier with a fresh load of wood. The tug *Kitty Smoke* towed the vessel into Manitowoc, where it promptly sank in the river, and had to be raised so it could be towed to the drydock (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1875b, 1875c).

The northern pier at Norheim was constructed by Austrian immigrant Solomon Mann in 1865 or earlier and quickly took on the appellations of "Mann's Pier," "Mann's Landing," and "Seven Mile Pier" (*Chicago Republican* 1865, *Semi-Weekly Wisconsin* 1867, *Manitowoc Tribune* 1869c, *Manitowoc Pilot* 1869c). An 1877 chart depicts a cluster of between 16 to 20 buildings situated around the intersection of County Highway U and Norheim Lane, a possible trail leading to Mann's Pier, and two pier roads leading to Bode's Pier (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE] 1877a; Figure 2.3). The northernmost of the roads – the forerunner to Blue Heron Way – angled northwestward from Bode's Pier while the other extended due west from the base of the



Figure 2.3: 1877 Map of Norheim (USACE 1877a)

pier to the lakeshore road. Both piers are shown as simple lines with no terminal platforms. Bode's Pier extended due east into the lake while Mann's Pier angled slightly southeastward. The area around the piers complex is shown as agricultural, with some patches of forest and woodlot. The exact same configuration – fields and all – is shown on succeeding lake charts from 1880, 1906, and 1909 (USACE 1880, 1906, 1909). It is unlikely that the shoreline portions of the charts were updated until 1916, when the scope of the map changed and the level of detail and accuracy of shoreline areas diminished sharply (USACE 1916).

Although the Dumke brothers were prominent and early residents of the Town of Newton, Solomon Mann, Emil Bode, and Jacob Matthaus were the local movers and shakers by 1870. The trio are listed as “General Retail Dealers” in the census records, whereas most residents other than the Dumkes were listed as farmers. The trio's real estate and personal assets were notably larger than those belonging to other residents of the Town of Newton (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c). The three businessmen all served as postmasters for the post office then known as Mann's Landing. Solomon Mann was postmaster from October 1866 to June 1868. Emil Bode was postmaster from June 1868 to January 1870, when the name of the post office changed to Nordheim or Northeim. From January 1870 to 1875, Bode continued to serve as postmaster of Northeim; he then passed the reins to Matthaus in September 1875 (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1870a, U.S. Post Office 1875).

Solomon Mann was the eastern neighbor of the Dumke & Bro company in Section 25. His substantial farm (50 to 60 acres) included the northern pier and a general store that fronted the east side of Northeim Lane north of County Highway U. He presumably lived there with wife Lottie, six children between the ages of 7 and 18, and servants Frederick Martens from Mecklenberg and Joseph Huddena from Switzerland. The family's estate holdings totaled \$7,500 and they boasted \$4,570 in other assets. An older Frederick Martens, possibly the younger Frederick's uncle, appears on the 1870 census as a laborer and lived either next door or very close by with his wife and two children. Since the Martens family are not listed as owning any real estate and do not appear on the 1872 wall map, it is possible they lived as tenants on the Mann property (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c, Harney 1872). Mann had done well since 1860, when the census lists him as a farmer in Centerville with \$1,500 of real estate and \$100 of other assets (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860c). Mann's move to Northeim had been a propitious one.

Emil Bode was Solomon Mann's neighbor to the south, just over the line in Section 36. He owned less in the way of real estate (\$4,000 worth and around 50 acres) but his other assets were worth more (\$5,750). Bode's parcel, labeled Bode & Co., encompassed the lower reaches of Pine Creek, the southern pier, and a general store that fronted Lakeshore Road; the parcel extended from Lakeshore Road eastward to Lake Michigan (see Figure 2.2). Bode shared the property with wife Wilhelmina, five children under the age of 12, laborer Joseph Rauber from Baden, servant Frank Knauf from New York, and servant Frederike Krieger from Lippe. The 1872 wall map shows the faint outlines of what might be a schoolhouse, another store, or possibly an impressive personal residence on the parcel (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c, Harney 1872). Bode's 1870 assets represent a significant improvement from his fortunes in 1860, when he was listed as a farm laborer in Centerville with no landed property and only \$150

in personal assets (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860c). Bode had certainly prospered in the intervening ten years.

Jacob Matthaus's listed assets were exactly equal to those of Emil Bode – \$4,000 worth of real estate and \$5,750 worth of other assets – and there is reason to believe that the two were business partners just as Frederick and Carl Dumke were (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c). Bode and Matthaus appear as co-plaintiffs in a suit against Ambrosius Ehrat for debts owed in June 1870 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1870). Matthaus's household is enumerated immediately after Bode's, which would suggest that they lived in proximity. Matthaus's name does not appear on the 1872 wall map at or near what would become Northeim, but his co-ownership may be represented by the "& Co" on the Bode parcel (Harney 1872). The closest match for Jacob Matthaus on the 1872 Harney map – one "J. Mathews" – owned a farm approximately 5 miles inland. Based on the 1870 census lists and the owners of neighboring parcels on the 1872 map, this property most likely belonged to farmer John Matthis and his wife Caroline (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c, Harney 1872). Accordingly, Jacob Matthaus, wife Friederike, and their five young children probably lived on the Bode & Co. property.

Bode's southern and western neighbor in the early 1870s was farmer Frederick Leiders, who had a home fronting the east side of Lakeshore Road south of Bode and a 20-acre parcel in Section 35 across from Bode's store. To Leiders's north, also bordering Bode to the west and the Dumke & Bro. parcel to the south, was a 20-acre property and residence owned by farmer Nicholas Klein (incorrectly labeled "N Ktein" on the map; Harney 1872). Prussian immigrants Paul Kluscheski, Paul Sukalski, Walter Nitha, and Peter Nalletz resided in the vicinity and worked as laborers, as did Anton Silsemeyer from Lippe and John Ekelhof from France (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870c). These names do not appear on the 1872 wall map, and they may have lived as tenants on the Bode/Matthaus, Mann, or Dumke properties.

Just like Bode's Pier, Solomon Mann's Pier was no stranger to shipwreck. In November 1869, the schooner *Union*, loaded with wood from Mann's Landing, was caught by a storm and crashed through the pier with the loss of the vessel's headgear. The ship was refloated and towed to Manitowoc for repairs (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1869c, *Manitowoc Pilot* 1869c). The double topsail schooner *A. B. Moore* was caught in a gale in 1873 while being towed by the tug *David Ballantine*. Although *Ballantine* made it safely back to Chicago after casting its tow adrift, *A. B. Moore*'s captain realized his vessel was in a precarious position. After ordering that both masts be cut away, the captain and crew watched helplessly as *A. B. Moore* dragged anchor until finally coming to rest off Mann's Pier with the vessel's stern in only 15 feet of water (*Chronicle* 1873). On a smaller scale, a Mackinaw boat crewed by Tellisford StPeter and Joseph LaClare was driven ashore at Mann's Landing during a March 1878 windstorm but managed to return safely to Manitowoc two days later (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1878a). In 1882, the schooner *Thomas Jones* was damaged off Mann's Pier during a February storm that carried away the vessel's topmast and main boom. The vessel was towed to Manitowoc for repairs (*Chronicle* 1882a). The scow *Williams* went ashore at Seven Mile Pier with a load of brick in May 1884 but appeared to have suffered minimal damage (*Chronicle* 1884, *Lake Shore Times* 1884). Clearly, the business of shipping from Lake Michigan piers was not without risk.



Figure 2.4: Advertisement for “Großer Ball” or Grand Ball (*Der Nord-Westen* 1874)

Emil Bode’s and Solomon Mann’s piers were the economic drivers and social core of Northeim. Numerous dances and picnics held at the piers brought different ethnicities of the community together. An 1874 “Grand Ball,” advertised in a German-language newspaper by resident August Ziglinski, included a cordial invitation to the public to attend the ball at “Mann’s and Bode’s Pier on the Lake Road” to partake of the “best arrangements, brilliant music, and good food and drinks” (*Der Nord-Westen* 1874; Figure 2.4). Not to be outdone, the Pulaski Guards – captained by Polish immigrant, organist, and music teacher Anthony Mallek – held a grand picnic in Northeim for both local and

Manitowoc residents in August 1876. The event included free transportation to Northeim for residents of Manitowoc, which had a substantial Polish community, as well as a grand dress parade and drill, entertainment by Weinschenk’s Band, and unlimited refreshments for all attendees (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1876a, 1876b; Nash 1878; Rappel 1948:20). In September 1876, August Ziglinski held a Grand Harvest Ball and then a “Fastnachtsball,” or Mardi Gras Ball, in January 1877 (*Der Nord-Westen* 1876, 1877). Economic development continued as well. In early 1878, a Manitowoc newspaper reported that a cheese factory had been established near Mann’s Landing. This may have been H. Hoecke’s cheese factory, which is shown just over two miles directly east of Mann’s Pier in the southeast corner of section 28 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1878b, Nash 1878).

Although Emil Bode, Jacob Matthaas, and Solomon Mann were the primary businessmen in Northeim in the early 1870s, changes were on the horizon. The Milwaukee, Lake Shore & Western Railway (later the Chicago & North Western Railway) arrived in the area in 1873, with the nearest depot located at Newton Station (Timothy Post Office) about three miles due west of Northeim (Nash 1878, Foote 1893, Falge 1912[1]:327). In July 1875, Bode purchased the docks, warehouses, commission business, and stocks (coal, salt, cement, and more) of Reid & Hinckley in Sheboygan. Bode probably left Northeim in late 1875, when he surrendered his status as postmaster to Matthaas. By June 1880, Bode had established himself as a coal dealer in Sheboygan, ostensibly leaving Northeim to his former partner Matthaas. Bode lived in Sheboygan with his wife and five children under 21, three of whom are recorded as working with Bode in the family business (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1875a, U.S. Post Office 1875, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1880a). Whether the arrival of the railroad near Northeim played any part in Bode’s decision is unknown.

The 1878 plat map depicts both changes and continuities (Figure 2.5). County Highway U still terminated at Norheim Lane, in line with the 1877 coastal chart, but the pier's service roads are omitted (USACE 1877a, Nash 1878). S. Mann still owned and operated the northern pier and the general store situated northeast of the intersection of County Highway and Norheim Lane. The Bode & Co. property, larger Leiders property, and southern pier had transferred to J. Matthaus, with the exception of two small parcels fronting Norheim Lane and Norheim Road, respectively.



Figure 2.5: 1878 Map of Norheim, Newton Township (Nash 1878)

The southern of the two is situated roughly at the location of the former Bode & Co. store and is annotated with the initials “A. J.” The building on the parcel is not identified as a store. The second parcel with a building, just east of the intersection of Norheim Road and Norheim Lane, is unlabeled. Leiders retained ownership of his 20-acre parcel west of Norheim Road. The Klein property transferred to F. Kersch, who had also purchased a narrow 7-acre frontage bordering the north side of County Highway U on land formerly owned by Dumke & Bro. The remainder of the Dumke & Bro. property had been sold to A. Groelle. Three new buildings of unclear ownership are shown within and north of the triangle formed by County Highway U, Norheim Lane, and Norheim Road: a store on the south side of County Highway U, which may still be extant (Figure 2.6); a saloon north of County Highway U opposite the new store (see Figure 2.1); and a building south of the new store. P. Rgbarczyk (or Robartcick) retained his farm. The southern portions of the F. Dumke parcel were subdivided and split between A. Matysik and F. Bonin (Nash 1878). Even with all the changes, the piers continued to do a steady



*Figure 2.6: Front Elevation of Building on Norheim Lane, Norheim, December 2024
(Possible Former General Store)*

business in cordwood (*Chronicle* 1879a). Timber products were clearly still a mainstay of Norheim's economy.

Despite an active business in sale of timber products and bricks, Mann sold out to Matthaus and left for Milwaukee in early 1880, making Matthaus the primary merchant in Norheim (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1879a, 1880b). In February 1884, Matthaus in turn sold his land and business interests in Norheim to aforementioned social organizer August Ziglinski, surrendered his postmaster status to tavern and hotel owner John D. Cichy, and moved to Kiel (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1884a, 1884b; Ehlert 1973). Ziglinski, who was known as "Big August," ran the general store and attached tavern formerly owned by Matthaus, which functioned as a central gathering place of Norheim (Ehlert 1973). Whether Ziglinski's store was Solomon Mann's former store or Matthaus's former store is unknown. Since Matthaus eventually owned both stores, it is not clear which store he maintained and continued to operate after buying out Mann's business.

Tragedy and scandal occasionally rocked Norheim's small town calm. In August 1868, a man's decomposed, headless body was found about a half mile south of Bode's Pier (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1868a). Whether the body was ever identified is unknown. In October 1870, Captain Torry (possibly Thor) Thompson of the schooner *Franklin* fell overboard and drowned while off Mann's Landing. Captain Thompson had gone aloft to secure the gaff topsail. As he leaned against the rigging, the fore deck shroud gave way, and he fell overboard. The captain's brother, Herman Thompson – the only other crewmember – attempted to turn the vessel about and locate Captain Thompson, but foggy conditions and heavy seas prevented Herman from ever seeing his brother again (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1870c). In a sad repetition of fate, Herman Thompson, now Captain of *Franklin*, fell ill onboard his schooner less than a year later and died onshore in

Kenosha after two days of intense suffering (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1871). Shipping from Lake Michigan's ports was an industry rife with dangers.

Bodies continued to accumulate in Northeim. In August 1873, the remains of an approximately 25-year-old man was found a half mile south of Bode's Pier. Although a small memorandum book was found with the body, a newspaper article indicated that the man's identity could not be determined (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1873b). Four years later, the body, which had been buried in a grave on the beach, was uncovered when waves washed away the sand. The event caused a stir in the Town of Newton when officials realized that the remains were the same as those discovered four years previously. Reexamination of the memorandum book and pictures found with the remains – items that had been distributed amongst those who had buried the body – revealed the man to be David Meyer (or Myers or Meyers), a sailor who had drowned after falling from the mast head of the schooner *Sea Gem* in May 1873. The schooner had been lying at anchor off Manitowoc at the time of the incident. David Myers's brother, John Myers, had posted a reward for discovery of the body in the *Manitowoc Pilot* on 8 May 1873, but Northeim's residents had failed to make the connection. The Newton Justice of the Peace who handled the matter did not hold a valid inquest, did not report the event to the proper authorities, and apparently authorized burial without a coffin. Following the 1877 rediscovery, authorities were finally able to notify David Meyer's parents, residents of nearby Sheboygan, that his body had been found (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1873; *Manitowoc Tribune* 1877b, 1877c). Whether John Meyers ever paid out the reward is not known.

Tragedy followed tragedy and scandal was not far behind. In October 1874, a woman was killed by lightning near Bode's Pier and in December 1874, Peter Ponowsky's house, barn, and stable near the pier burned down. Although there was \$600 in damage, Ponowsky fortunately had \$500 of insurance coverage (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1874a, 1874b). In early July 1880, a young boy named Cadow fell off Mann's Pier and drowned. The boy had been fishing off the pier (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1880c). On 21 July 1880, fire destroyed the original St. Casimir's Church, built by Polish Catholic residents of Northeim in 1868 (Betley and Piontek 1943). With fierce resilience, the congregation began requesting bids for building of a new church less than a month after the fire (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1880d). As plans progressed, the rebuilding committee requested bids for roofing from two entities, Rand & Roemer and E. Wagner & Son. Not long after the work was awarded to E. Wagner & Son, the *Manitowoc Tribune* published a scathing article alleging that E. Wagner had hired an outside party to visit Rand & Roemer in the guise of a St. Casimir committee member and convince the firm that the work specifications were changing and the bid deadline was being extended. Accordingly, Rand & Roemer awaited the new specifications and did not bid on the project before the deadline expired. E. Wagner & Son, however, submitted their bid on time, effectively preventing Rand & Roemer from competing for the project (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1881). E. Wagner & Son rebutted the story in an issue of the *Manitowoc Pilot*, asserting their innocence and claiming



Figure 2.7: St. Casimir Church, Northeim, Built 1881 (Wisconsin Historical Society 2011)

they had a sworn statement from the outside party that contradicted the claims of Rand & Roemer (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1881a). How the matter was resolved and what firm eventually completed the roofing of the new St. Casimir church is unknown, but scandal and dubious ethics were clearly not exclusive to the larger cities of Manitowoc County. Despite the scandal, the new St. Casimir's Church was completed in summer 1881 (Betley and Piontek 1943; Figure 2.7). Northeim's Polish Catholics were once again able to gather in community.

As the last two decades of the 1800s progressed, Northeim continued to ship out quantities of timber products while the village evolved. According to an April 1885 issue of the *Manitowoc Pilot*, "What is known as Seven Mile Pier, south of this place still ships considerable cord-wood notwithstanding that it is in a town containing the oldest and best farms in the county" (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1885a). Saloon and hotel proprietor John D. Cichy surrendered his position as postmaster to August Ziglinski in 1889 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1889d). Only four years later in 1893, Ziglinski surrendered the office to Peter Kuffel, who ran a hotel and saloon in Northeim. Kuffel may have taken over the businesses formerly owned by Cichy since Cichy is conspicuously absent from an 1893 directory of Newton Township (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1893c, 1908; *Weekly Wisconsin* 1893; Foote 1893). Sad news reached Manitowoc County that same year; Solomon Mann, who formerly ran the northern pier at Northeim, died in Kansas in March (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1893b). Mann had participated in the establishment of piers in both Centerville and Northeim but died far from any lakeshore.

Cartographic sources depicted the changes in Northeim. Neither pier is shown on an 1893 plat map of Newton Township, which may indicate that the piers were no longer in use. Mann's former property was under the ownership of John Leschke, and a creamery is shown roughly where Mann's store was formerly located. Two unlabeled buildings belonging to "M. R.," probably general store owner Martin Rhoda (or Rhode or Rohde), stand across Northeim Lane from the creamery, at or just east of the 1878 saloon, which is not depicted. Continuing southward, the former Matthaus property as far as Pine Creek belonged to August Ziglinski. A schoolhouse stood at or near the former location of the 1872 Matthaus store and the 1878 building belonging to "A. J." West of Northeim Road, F. Sitkowiz had purchased the Lieders, Kersch, and Groelle properties, retaining only the Groelle residence; no other residential structures appear on the Sitkowiz parcel. Frank Bonin, local wagonmaker, had purchased the Rgbarczyk farm and retained the small 10-acre parcel to the north. The Matysik farm had been purchased by A. Fruzina. Peter Kuffel's hotel is depicted on the other side of Northeim Road north of the church and cemetery on land that had belonged to N. Laskowsky in 1878 (Harney 1872, Nash 1878, Foote 1893, R. L. Polk & Company 1895:796). The Polish residents of Northeim continued to celebrate their national heritage; Anthony Mallek – former captain of Northeim's Pulaski Guards and conductor of the Union of Polish Singers in America – established a Polish national singing society among the farmers of Northeim as early as 1893 (Nash 1878, *Zgoda* 1893). Community dances continued but sometimes took a dark turn. In April 1894 at a dance in Northeim, Tady Syviert was stabbed multiple times. Warrants were signed for the arrest of the alleged offenders, brothers Albert, Paul, Walter, and Frank Tomshek (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1894). In 1898, Kuffel surrendered the office of postmaster to Nicholas J. Webber (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1898, U.S. Post Office 1931).

By 1901, it appears there was little timber left in the surrounding area. A note in the *Manitowoc Pilot* mentioned that young Northeim men were buying wood in nearby Meeme and selling it in Manitowoc. There was likely no timber to be had, at least to sell for a profit, in Northeim (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1901). The piers are also missing from a 1903 map. By that time, the entire lake frontage – including the Mann/Leschke and Matthaus/Ziglinski parcels and the creamery – was under the ownership of A. Pikaski. The two small parcels and buildings identified with ‘Mrs. J. H.’ in 1893 are present, but their ownership is not denoted. F. Sitkowiz retained ownership of the western half of Northeim, except for a small parcel on the northwestern corner of County Highway U and Northeim Road that he had sold to the village for a schoolhouse. Ownership of the remaining properties north of Northeim remained the same, though the Kuffel hotel was no longer identified as a hotel (W. W. Hixson & Co. 1903; Hartlaub 1948).

A pea factory was also in operation in Northeim in 1903 although its location is unclear (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1903a). In the same year, Gustave Kluczinski (or Klucinkse), who ran a general store in Northeim, succeeded Nicholas J. Weber as postmaster in April and then quickly resigned, with Martin Rhode appointed in his stead in November (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1903b, *Kewaskum Statesman* 1903, U.S. Post Office 1931). Kluczinski probably resigned after selling his Northeim store to Frank Stefaniak and purchasing property in Centerville (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1903c). These major transactions may have been the cause or only symptoms of the financial troubles that finally caused Kluczinski to take his own life on 21 June 1904 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1904, FindAGrave 2025a). In mid-September 1904, service to the Northeim post office was suspended and all mail redirected to the Timothy post office at Newton Station, marking the end of almost 40 years of postal service to Northeim (U.S. Post office 1931). In December 1905, beloved priest Reverend Ignatz Paluch died after fourteen years of service at St. Casimir’s in Northeim (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1905, Betley and Piontek 1943). Northeim was transitioning away from its bustling past.

In 1907, two mysteries rocked the foundations of what had probably become a quiet, small, Wisconsin town with little connection to Lake Michigan. First, 23-year-old Northeim school teacher Peter Duvenek (or Duvenik) inexplicably disappeared on Sunday, 24 March 1907. Duvenek has been teaching at the school for several years and was the son of a prominent farmer in Northeim. No one knew of a reason for his sudden disappearance, which was reported as far away as Wauzeka, 200 miles away on the other side of the state (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1907a, *Times Press* 1907, *Wauzeka Chief* 1907). Over a month later, the *Manitowoc Pilot* reported, without any reference to his late disappearance, that Duvenek was working for the Chicago & North Western Railway in New London Junction, 70 miles west of Northeim (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1907b). Duvenek’s obituary indicates that he moved to Green Bay to work as an engineer on the Northwestern Railroad and married Ida Howes in 1912 (*Green Bay Press-Gazette* 1968). No mention is made of his mysterious disappearance, but his long tenure with the railroads suggests he may have simply decamped for a more lucrative, interesting career than small town Northeim could offer.

In the fall of 1907, newspapers reported on several efforts to exhume the two-year-old interment of Reverend Ignatz Paluch in Norheim (Figure 2.8). In early November, Schubert Brothers, an undertaker firm from Milwaukee, made the third attempt to remove the remains and take them to the Cream City at the request of Paluch's former housekeeper. The firm's employees were met by a mob of Norheim farmers and villagers carrying clubs and possibly pistols, determined that the grave would not be disturbed. Although Paluch was beloved by local residents, his housekeeper did not share the village's affection. Later reports revealed swirling rumors that Paluch had been buried with the fortune he "was known to have" and which could not be located after his death (*La Crosse Tribune* 1907a, 1907b:13). The would-be grave robbers did not give up easily. In August and September 1909, thieves were still attempting to desecrate Paluch's burial. They succeeded in removing the slab over the grave, which necessitated the posting of a guard once the damage was discovered (*Kenosha News* 1909, *Watertown News* 1909). In the end, foolish efforts to locate the unlikely treasure of a rural, small town Catholic priest were unsuccessful. No fortune was ever recovered from Reverend Paluch's tomb at St. Casimir Cemetery in Norheim (FindAGrave 2025b).



Figure 2.8: Reverend Ignatz Paluch (FindAGrave 2025b)

Although Reverend Paluch's gravesite remains, the once thriving village of Norheim and its two piers faded away. In agreement with the 1893 and 1903 maps, both a 1921 map and a 1922 map depict no piers along Norheim's shoreline. Nor does either map label any businesses or public institutions in Norheim other than the school (George A. Ogle & Co. 1921, Pentzien 1922). By the 1920s, even St. Casimir's Church had been abandoned (Rappel 1948:84). The once thriving pier community of Norheim had become just another rural Wisconsin crossroads, although one with a fascinating, dynamic history that had once centered upon and benefited from its proximity to Lake Michigan.

Findings

Norheim North (Mann's Pier, Mann's Landing, Seven Mile Pier)

Pier

The northern pier is located in Section 25. The 1872 plat map of Manitowoc County depicts an "L"-shaped pier with the loading platform angled to the south, whereas the 1878 plat map depicts an "L"-shaped pier with the loading platform angled to the north (Harney 1872, Nash 1878). The 1877 coastal chart simply depicts a straight pier with no loading platform (USACE 1877a). Three 1938 aerial photos of the site capture a dense array of pier pilings extending at right angles from the shoreline. No obvious loading platform is visible (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] 1938). A small number of apparent pilings are visible in Google Earth imagery from 2011 (Google Earth 2011).

Offshore survey conducted in 2024 identified a scatter of 27 pilings in two rough and irregular rows, extending into the lake at a bearing of 105 degrees. Two pairs of pilings were observed at either end of the pier ruins; all other pilings were single. Pilings are located along the interior line of the pier ruins in several places, with one notable set appearing to form an interior support just west of the midpoint of the ruins (Figure 2.9). The posts averaged about one foot in diameter.

Terrestrial

The terrestrial portion of the Norheim complex may be divided into two sections – the likely location of the pier complexes and “downtown” Norheim where the pier stores and contemporary commercial buildings were located. The most likely area of the pier complex (pier yards, outbuildings, warehouses, etc.) is currently occupied by large, landscaped, late-twentieth-century residential lots. The lots are planted in ornamental shrubs, shade trees, and turf grass. Prior to residential development these lots were agricultural fields (USDA 1938). These fields may have been surveyed by archaeologist John Halsey in the early 1970s. Halsey reported scatters of stone tool manufacturing debris dating to the pre-Contact period north of the lots in question and evidence of a larger pre-Contact village to the south near the mouth of Pine Creek, but no archaeological materials in the fields in question (Falge 1912[1]; Halsey 1972).

The 1938 aerial photo shows the faint line of a possible pier road cutting east-northeastward through the field from “downtown” Norheim to the vicinity of the base of the pier (USDA 1938). Based on historic maps, the portion of Mann’s property on the east side of Norheim Road hosted Mann’s store, then later a creamery, then a residence, and later a tavern complex (Harney 1872, Nash 1878, Foote 1893, George A. Ogle & Co. 1921, Wisconsin Land Economic Inventory [Bordner Survey] 1939). A farmstead complex and mid- to late-twentieth-century residential lots occupy the general location of Mann’s store today. Two residential structures are shown on the east side of the road in the vicinity of the Mann store in the ca. 1939 Bordner Survey maps, along with a tavern (Bordner Survey 1939). One building on the southwest corner of the intersection of County Highway U and Norheim Lane may date to the historic period of Norheim; this building is in the same location as a store, possibly belonging to Jacob Matthaus, shown on the 1878 map of the community (Nash 1878; see Figure 2.6). Three buildings on the north side of County Highway U may date to the period of the lake trade – a barn north of the former location of Mann’s store on the east side of Norheim Lane, a small wooden stable/outbuilding west of Norheim Lane, and a heavily modified structure on the northwestern corner of County Highway U and Norheim Lane (see Figure 2.1). This latter structure stands where a late-nineteenth-century plat map places the community’s tavern and where a Bordner Survey map identifies a cheese factory (Nash 1878, Bordner Survey 1939). The current building is a composite of additions of different ages and incorporates the framework of two separate buildings, including a boomtown-fronted former commercial structure. No terrestrial survey was undertaken at the site due to scope of the project and the area’s history of agricultural and residential disturbance.

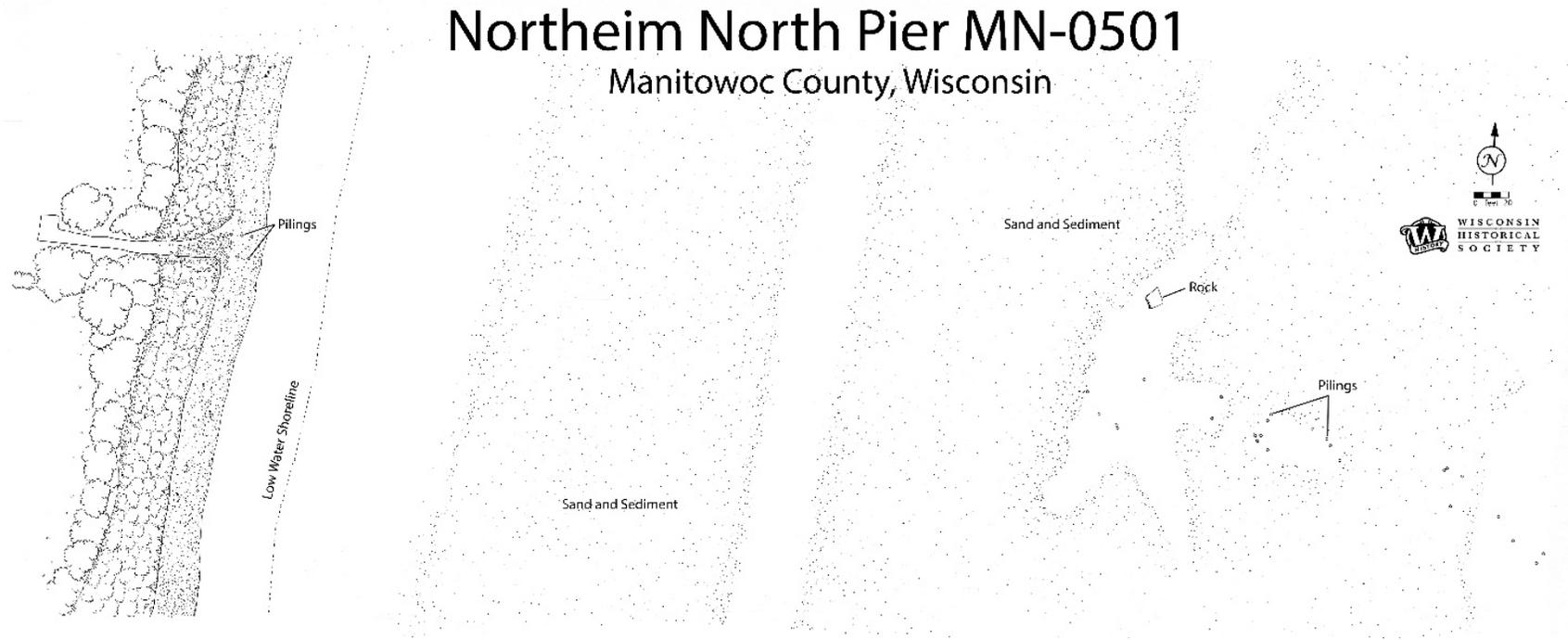


Figure 2.9: Norheim North Pier Site Plan (Wisconsin Historical Society)

Beach

A small gully leads down to the beach at the location of the northern pier. This feature may represent the cut of the former pier road. It has been filled with gravel and riprap in the last few years in an attempt to stop erosion. The riprap extends a short-distance north and south of the gully but is mainly limited to it. The beach is characterized by drifts of sand covering rounded till and beach cobbles. Walkover of the beach identified some fragments of cream brick – possibly originating from the Mann/Matthaus brickyard – interspersed among the cobbles (Figure 2.10).

A set of six pilings that would have supported the bridge section of the pier was observed on the beach and near shore (Figure 2.11). The pilings are arranged in pairs. Two sit immediately adjacent to the edge of the riprap, two more are located at the 2024 surf line, and two more are situated just outbound of the surf line. Other pilings may be present further out, but suspended sediment obscured the shallows beyond that point. The largest of these six surviving pilings (the southern in the middle pair) is angled with the base towards the lake and the top towards the shore. The remainder of the pilings protrude from the sand and gravel from just a few inches (the southern piling of the western pair) to approximately a foot (remaining pilings). The pilings are about a foot in diameter.



Figure 2.10: Brick Fragments on Beach at Norheim North Pier



*Figure 2.11: Pier Pilings on Beach, Norheim
North Pier, July 2024*

Norheim South (Pier Newton, Bode's Pier)

Pier

Norheim South pier is located in Section 36. As with the northern pier, the 1872 map of Manitowoc County depicts an “L”-shaped pier with the loading platform angled to the south, and the 1878 plat map depicts an “L”-shaped pier with the loading platform angled to the north (Harney 1872, Nash 1878). The 1877 coastal chart simply depicts a straight pier with no loading platform (USACE 1877a). The 1938 aerial photos of the site capture a dense array of pier pilings extending nearly due east from the shoreline (USDA 1938). No obvious loading platform is visible. The clearest pilings are on the western section of the pier. Google Earth imagery from 2011 clearly shows the line of the pier, obscured by sand drifts and shoals at various points. Pilings emerge from the sand approximately 237 feet offshore in this imagery, continuing to a point at least 680 feet offshore. The nearshore end of the pier is obscured by sand and two sand drifts cross the pier along its midsection. The far end of the pier is impossible to trace in the imagery (Google Earth 2011).

Survey in 2024 identified about 100 pilings in roughly three, irregular rows at a bearing of about 95 degrees (Figure 2.12). The pier had a minimum width of 45 feet, and the decking likely approached a width of 50 feet. Based on Google Earth imagery, the pier had a minimum total length of 685 feet.

Terrestrial

The likely location of the pier complex (pier yards, outbuildings, warehouses, etc.) is currently located within recently cleared and landscaped land associated with a new (post-2005) residential subdivision. The clay pit associated with the Mann/Matthaus brickyard is visible on LiDAR imagery south of Pine Creek, in an area where similar residential development appears to be underway. Both sections of the former Bode/Matthaus property were under cultivation in the 1930s and no structures are visible. A field road following the likely course of the northern pier road to the Bode/Matthaus pier is visible in 1930s aerial photographs. The road cuts southeastward from “downtown” Norheim, curves around an abandoned horseshoe bend in an earlier course of Pine Creek (now cut off from the main stream by lake erosion), and drops northeastward down the bluff to the pier. A second field road parallels the south side of Pine Creek before curving northward at the lake bluff and dropping down to the beach at the creek mouth (USDA 1938).

Looking westward to Lakeshore and Norheim Roads, no structures are apparent on the 1930s aerial photographs at the location of the 1870s Bode & Co. store and the area is currently under cultivation. The 1878 store location is occupied by a farmstead complex, which includes a handsome late-nineteenth-century cream brick home that is still extant. The 1938 aerial photographs show several buildings on the east side of Norheim; one is identified as a tavern in the Bordner Survey maps (USDA 1938, Bordner Survey 1939). No terrestrial survey was undertaken due to the project scope and the area’s history of agricultural/residential disturbance.

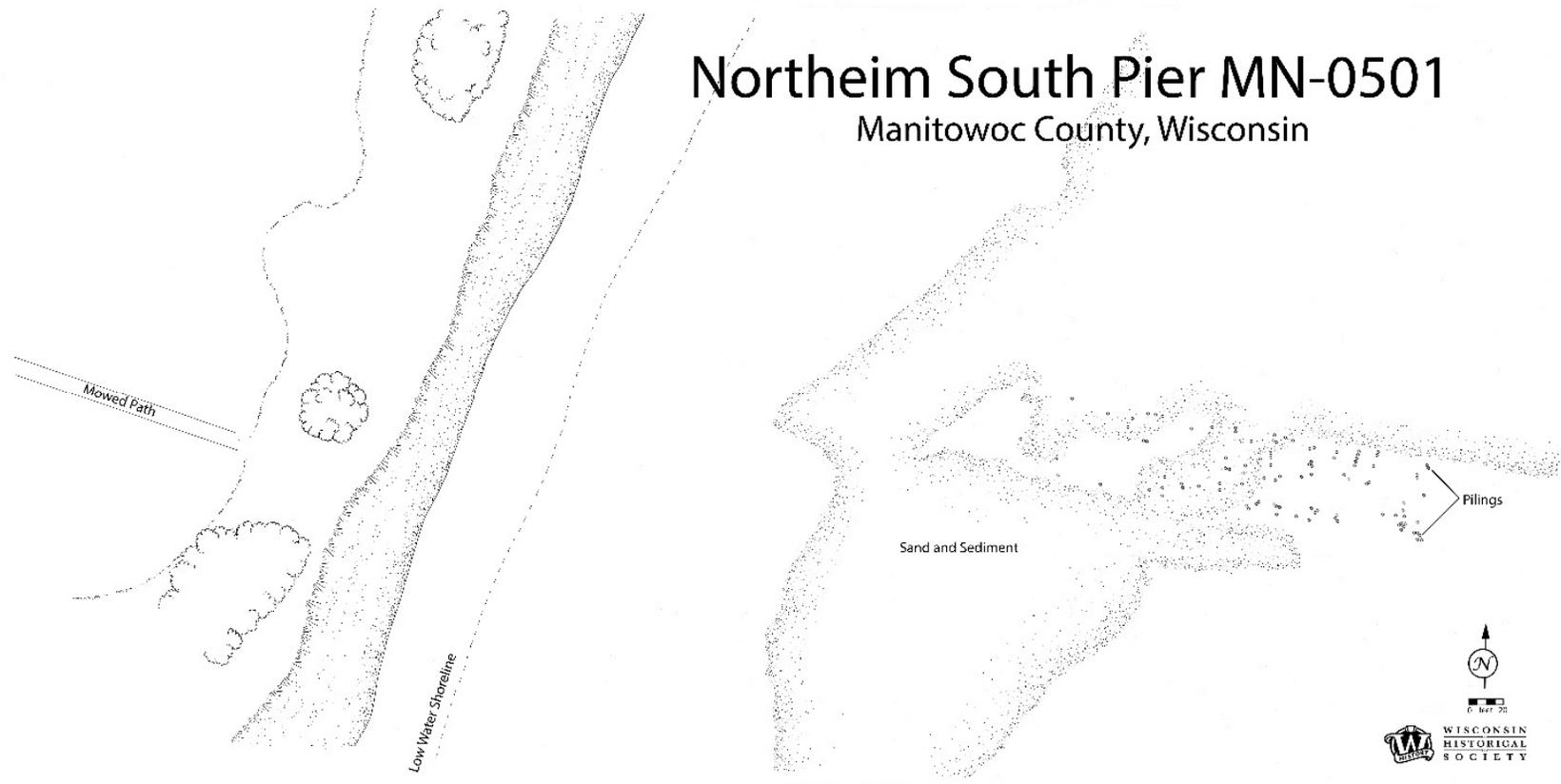


Figure 2.12: Norheim South Pier Site Plan (Wisconsin Historical Society)

Beach

The beach at Northeim South is sandy with a scattering of pebbles and gravel. The lake bluff is relatively low and well-vegetated. A drainage culvert/pipe surrounded by riprap is present nearer the creek mouth. Walkover of the beach area identified numerous fragments of cream brick, presumably deriving from the Mann/Matthaus brickyard. Local residents have gathered some of the brick and used it to construct a fire circle on the beach (Figure 2.13). One fragment of potentially worked wood was noted on the beach but could not be definitively linked to



Figure 2.13: Modern Fire Pit Made of Historic Cream Brick Near Northeim South Pier, July 2024

the pier. No extant pilings or other features of note were observed. One couple who own a nearby lakeshore home have gathered numerous artifacts that have washed up on the beach and piled them next to their garage. These artifacts cannot be definitively related to the pier, but they are consistent with items found on the beach during survey in July 2024 (Figure 2.14 and Figure 2.15).

Interpretation: Melting Pot

Northeim is a classic example of a later stage lumber port that focused on shipping of timber products extracted as American and immigrant farmers cleared the forested land to establish their new farms in the woods of Wisconsin. Northeim began as a majority German and Prussian village, but soon added a large influx of Polish immigrants. Although similar to Centerville slightly to the south, the existence of two commercial piers operated in close proximity to each other by two different merchants is less typical of Wisconsin's vanished pier communities. That two such dual pier communities existed so close to each other may testify to the density of pre-settlement forests in Manitowoc County and the arable quality of the land. Even after the railroad came through the area, Northeim was still shipping out copious loads of timber via the piers at a time when other pier communities began to switch to shipment of fish, agricultural products, and other goods.

Both the northern pier – Pier Newton or Bode's Pier – and southern pier – Mann's Pier, Mann's Landing, or Seven Mile Pier – are partially extant, but there are limited pilings. In addition, there are no known, intact archaeological features on land besides a few pilings on the beach. Additional terrestrial research at Northeim may add to knowledge of the site and its

archaeological remains. Currently, the Norheim site is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.



Figure 2.14: Metal Drift Pins, Bolts, and Hardware; Cream Bricks; and Wood Post Collected from Beach Near Norheim South Pier, August 2024



Figure 2.15: Metal Fasteners and Hardware; Cream Bricks; and Wood Post Collected from Beach Near Norheim South Pier, August 2024

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Chapter 3: Centerville (MN-0502)

Introduction

Of the six mid-Lake Michigan vanished pier communities investigated during this project, the village of Centerville – also called Hika because that was the name of the post office – came closest to surviving as a port community in Wisconsin, like nearby Manitowoc and Sheboygan. Several historic buildings of cream brick still line Main, Washington, and Kossuth Streets, now Lincoln Avenue, Washington Avenue, and Beech Street. The buildings appear to currently serve as residences, but two of the extant buildings were formerly the Centerville House Hotel and the Red Arrow school (see Figure 1.2). Several frame buildings on Lincoln Avenue, including Hika Bay Tavern and a residence that is likely a former blacksmith shop and wagon shop, also appear to date to the heyday of Centerville. Although the post office, general store, dance halls, brewery, mills, churches, and piers are now gone, Centerville still evokes some of the ambiance associated with its former glory. Had blazing fires and torrential storms not devastated the village time and time again – torching the lakeshore tannery, burning the profitable brewery, wiping out the productive mills, and gutting the popular resort – Centerville might have been a well-known Lake Michigan coastal port, rather than the sleepy extension of a small Wisconsin village that it is today.

Location and Setting

Centerville is located in Section 27 of the Town of Centerville, Town 17 North, Range 23 East, where Centerville Creek flows into Lake Michigan. Today, the former port is an eastern extension of Cleveland, Wisconsin, an inland railroad town that rose to prominence as Centerville declined. Six or so residential blocks are still present west of the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Lakeshore Drive along with a small cluster of commercial buildings that represent the remnant of Centerville's commercial heart: a modern automotive shop, a 1920s-era boomtown-style concrete block building converted into a residence, the Hika Bay Tavern, and a residence that once served as the Centerville House hotel. The streets are shaded by a mix of native and ornamental tree species and are bordered by landscaped lawns. Lincoln Avenue leads eastward to Hika Park, which fronts the lakeshore.

Centerville Creek, which flows into Lake Michigan at Centerville, begins in a marshy area near the intersection of Centerville and Union Roads about three miles west of the lakeshore. The creek courses for about 5.5 miles, running first southeast, then northeast to a point north of Cleveland, then southeast to where it drains into Lake Michigan just north of Hika Park (Figure 3.1). The creek serves as the northern border of Hika Park. The northern pier would have been located about 300 feet south of the mouth of Centerville Creek while the southern pier is about 1000 feet south of the outlet.

The shoreline at Centerville is much lower and more rolling than many other areas along the mid-Lake Michigan coast. The narrow beach at Centerville is composed of drifts of gravel and sand. Gravel drifts run parallel to the shore, covering the lake bottom for a distance of at least

700 feet before dropping into deeper water. The shore slopes downward at a relatively shallow angle, reaching a depth of approximately 10 feet at the end of the southern pier before dropping to a depth of 12 to 15 feet further from shore. Land in the area is mostly residential with landscaped lawns and ornamental tree species as well as some agricultural areas. Several lakeside homes line the shore of Centerville south of Hika Park, overlooking the southern pier location. A new coastal home built between 2022 and 2024 is located on shore where the southern pier used to originate.

History

In 1834, Centerville Creek was a prominent feature of the lakeshore, though at the time of the survey, the creek entered Lake Michigan in Section 22, not in Section 27 where Centerville was eventually founded. The various branches of the small but notable Centerville Creek drained an area of about ten square miles, cutting a winding ravine through the old beach ridges and moraines that parallel the coast. General Land Office records describe rolling and sometimes swampy terrain, particularly in Sections 33 and 34 south of Centerville. The area was shaded by a canopy of birch, elm, tamarack, pine, ash, linden, sugar maple, oak, and cedar. Surveyor aByron Kilbourn was impressed by some of the trees in the area. He took particular note of a cedar that was 22 feet in circumference along Fisher Creek in Section 16 northwest of Centerville, leading the General Land Office mapmaker to sketch a little tree at that location on the official map of the township. He also noted the presence of a north/south trail and “Indian Huts and burying ground” in his description of the section line between Sections 22 and 27, north of where Centerville was founded, though he did not include them on the map (Kilbourn 1834, 1835b).



Figure 3.1: Lake Michigan and Mouth of Centerville Creek, July 2024

Sometime between 1834 and 1872, probably before Centerville was founded in the 1850s, Centerville Creek had meandered southward until it drained into Lake Michigan in the central eastern portion of Section 27. The ravine surrounding the creek widened as it approached the shore, forming an opening in the lake bluffs where historic Centerville was founded (Harney 1872). Land speculator Benjamin Field purchased the western half of the Section further inland. Young lawyer and Sheboygan settler David Taylor bought the bounty-land warrant of veteran Jackson Baker and gained possession of the coast at Centerville using Baker’s warrant in 1848 (General Land Office 1848a, 1848b, 1849a).

The lakeshore trail, and its proximity to the coast, guided Centerville's early development. The creek was a logical place for travelers to pause. Situated at the midpoint between the emerging cities of Sheboygan and Manitowoc, the location gave the future settlement its first name – Centerville. The appellation was quickly adopted by the surrounding township (Falge 1912[1]:331-332; Greater Centerville Historians [GCH] 2016). Travelers came, paused, and stayed or fanned out into the township to establish farms. The land that would become Manitowoc County was rapidly settled by Americans and Europeans. Between 1848 and 1850, the population of the county increased by 200 per cent. During those two years, the number of established farms jumped from twelve to two hundred. Lumber and cordwood, which formed the basis of the region's economy during the initial years of colonization, swiftly ceded pride of place to agriculture (*Kenosha Telegraph* 1850). The village of Centerville was platted out into blocks and lots in 1849 (GCH 2016).

The 1850 census for Centerville is dominated by farmers and laborers. Notable exceptions include the shared household of miller Charles Kohler and merchant Edward Neuhaus (who later moved to Lintz's Pier, a few miles south of Centerville), and carpenter William Nolleau (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1850). According to an 1894 biographical sketch, Edward Neuhaus had emigrated from Germany in 1848 "with two friends, a miller and a carpenter" (Northern Furniture Company 1894:272). According to the biography, the three friends set out from Sheboygan to find a place to establish a water-powered sawmill, eventually settling on Centerville in Manitowoc County. Whether Neuhaus's friends were Kohler and Nolleau is not definitive, but Neuhaus and Kohler lived together, as friends might, and Kohler and Nolleau were the only miller and carpenter listed in Centerville in 1850. In any case, Neuhaus and his friends built their Centerville mill in part from lumber salvaged from the wreck of the schooner 76, which had stranded five miles south of Centerville. The three friends also built a nearby sawmill. Neuhaus sold out his mill interests quickly, bounced around the region for a time seeking new employment, and then returned to Centerville to establish a general store, which burned down a year later. In 1851, Neuhaus left Centerville and moved to the Town of Hermann (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1850, Northern Furniture Company 1894:272-273). The mill was likely still in operation since a July 1851 article mentions that a flour mill had been active in Centerville Township for more than a year (*Manitowoc Herald* 1851).

A tavern arrived in 1851, rising a few hundred feet west of the lakeshore trail south of the mill pond near the intersection of Centerville's Main and Kossuth Streets (now Lincoln Avenue and Beech Street). Originally offering nine upstairs bedrooms for boarders and weary travelers, the tavern – variously known as Schurrer's Tavern, Union House, and Hika Bay Tavern – still stands today. The tavern was the oldest continuously licensed tavern in Wisconsin until a fire damaged the building in early October 2022 (Ertel 1976, Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission [BLRPC] 1985:15, Schafer 2022; Figure 3.2). By 1852, the area's immigrant and colonial population had reached a point where there was a demand for other services. Families voted to establish a school that year, putting up a small building in Lot 6 of Block 9 close to the waterfront near the northeast corner of the intersection of Manitowoc Road and Main Street (now Lakeshore Road and Lincoln Avenue). A hotel went up not long afterwards on the south side of Main Street in Lot 2 of Block 6 (Ertel 1976, BLRPC 1985:15-17).



*Figure 3.2: Hika Bay Tavern & Union House, Centerville, December 2024
(Note the boarded-up door on the second floor, damage from the October 2022 fire)*

The following year, more than fifty German families set up a fund to build a Catholic church west of Centerville in the southeast corner of Section 29, an area that became known as Saint Wendel after the name of the congregation. The little schoolhouse in Centerville, in the meantime, was leased out to George Leismer for six months provided that he kept one room available for students if classes were held (Nash 1878, Foote 1893, Ertel 1976). In 1855, the first post office was established in Centerville. Since there was already a post office named Centerville in Wisconsin, the name Hika was chosen for the Centerville post office. The origin of the name is unclear but may have been bestowed by Manitowoc Judge Albert Schmidt who enjoyed “hiking” in the area with local youth (Ertel 1976, GCH 2016). Although the names Centerville and Hika were used interchangeably to refer to the community, Centerville was the more common term for the village.

The early construction, character, and contemporary names of both piers at Centerville remain elusive. At least one pier was probably in operation by the summer of 1855 when Milwaukee papers record three vessels – schooners *Steinhart*, *Charlotte*, and *Happy Go Lucky* – routinely arriving from and clearing for Centerville. The cargo the vessels carried, when mentioned, included cedar posts from Centerville and sundries for the village (*Daily Milwaukee News* 1855a, 1855b, 1855c, 1855d, 1855e; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1855a, 1855b, 1855c). The pier may have been in operation as early as March 1855 when Captain N. Baker of the vessel *Lady of Sheboygan* considered routinely stopping at Centerville on his way from Milwaukee to Manitowoc (*Manitowoc Herald* 1855). An 1867 real estate advertisement mentions “the new Centerville Pier,” but newspaper accounts through 1870 mention only a singular pier at

Centerville (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1867a; *Manitowoc Tribune* 1870b, 1870d). If the 1867 advertisement relates to the renovation of a pier at Centerville rather than construction of a new pier, which may have been necessary since the pier had already been in operation for at least 12 years, then these references suggest Centerville had only one pier for a decade or more until another was constructed sometime after 1870.

One of Centerville's piers may have been built by merchant Peter Werner, who came to Centerville in 1854 with his parents from Germany at the age of 16 or 17. Werner is generally credited with building one of the piers and a nearby general store, but whether he actually built one of the piers, which pier he built, and when he built it is not certain. Per the state census, Peter Werner was head of household in 1855 in Centerville with a family consisting of two males and a female who had all been born abroad. Since Peter Werner's father shared the same name, it is not certain which Peter was the head of household in 1855. By 1860, the younger Peter Werner was listed as head of household with household members Phillopene Werner, age 22 – who was probably his wife since she was born in Nassau instead of Prussia like Peter and his parents; Peter Werner, age 53; and Catharine Werner, age 48. Peter Werner's occupation is recorded as farmer and he held \$500 worth of real estate and \$200 in other assets. According to a short historical biography, Werner bought an interest in F. W. Otto's mercantile business and soon took sole ownership of the business (Figure 3.3). This likely refers to early Centerville landholder Frederick William Otto who also served as a justice of the peace. Werner's obituary states that he briefly taught school in Centerville, then took up the life of a merchant and wood dealer (General Land Office 1848a, Wisconsin Department of State 1855, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860c, Nash 1878, Western Historical Company 1881:186, Ertel 1976, FindAGrave 2025c).

The builder of another pier at Centerville is even less clear. Solomon Mann (sometimes referred to as Samuel), who later ran a pier at Norheim, was an early pier operator in Centerville. By 1850, Mann was already living in Centerville with his wife Charlotte. When he began operating a pier in Centerville is unknown. Mann had moved to Norheim and begun operating a pier there by 1865 so his pier in Centerville was likely one of the early operations in the village (*Chicago Republican* 1865). Interestingly, Mann is listed in the 1850 census directly after Edward Neuhaus, the only person designated as a merchant in the 1850 Centerville census, and one of the early mill operators in Centerville (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1850, *Manitowoc Pilot* 1893b, Northern Furniture Company 1894:272-273). Neuhaus is known to have operated a pier later in life at Lintz's Pier in Sheboygan County (Sheboygan County Register 1870, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:43, *Chronicle* 1880, Foote and Henion 1889). Whether Edward Neuhaus and his neighbor Solomon Mann operated the earliest pier at Centerville is unknown, but their early residence in Centerville and the fact that both later operated piers elsewhere suggest that they may have gotten their start as pioneer pier operators in Centerville.

One local history states that the two piers at Centerville were named Bode's Pier and Farmer's Pier (Falge 1912[1]:332). This reference may confuse Emil Bode's Pier at Norheim with one of the piers at Centerville. However, Emil Bode resided in Centerville in 1860, though he is listed as a farm laborer, and a farmer named Phillip Bode also resided in Centerville in 1855 and



Figure 3.3: Illustration of Peter Werner's Store, Centerville (Nash 1878)

1860. In fact, Phillip Bode is listed directly under Peter Werner in the 1855 Wisconsin census and only a couple households apart in the 1860 federal census. In 1860, Phillip Bode had wealth similar to Peter Werner, with \$400 worth of real estate and \$100 in other assets (Wisconsin Department of State 1855, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860c). Although it seems unlikely, it is possible that two piers in Manitowoc County were established by Bodes – one at Centerville and one at Norheim. Family relationships are often difficult to reconstruct using available historical records, but Emil and Phillip Bode may be related. Emil Bode was 33 in 1860 and Phillip Bode was 63 so Phillip may have been Emil's father or uncle. If Phillip Bode established or assisted Werner in establishing a pier in Centerville, it would not be surprising if Emil Bode used the knowledge gained working for his relative to strike out on his own and establish his own pier at Norheim. Werner, Mann, Neuhaus, and/or Bode may have constructed a pier with merchant Jacob Leisen, who formed a joint stock company with unspecified others in 1858 to build a pier (Brown 1888:364).

The history of the piers at Centerville is made only muddier by early maps of Manitowoc County, Centerville Township, and the village of Centerville. Harney's 1872 wall map of Manitowoc County depicts two piers off Centerville, with one extending east off Main Street (now Lincoln Avenue), and the other extending east off Washington Street (now Washington Avenue). Both piers have L-shaped loading platforms at the end with the northern pier's platform on the north side of the pier and the southern pier's platform on the southern side of the pier (Harney 1872; Figure 3.4). An 1877 nautical chart shows two piers at Centerville with the northern pier extending east off Main Street and the southern pier extending southeast slightly south of Washington Street. Both piers are depicted as straight piers with no platforms

Washington Street (George A. Ogle & Co. 1921:11,36). The number, location, and configuration of Centerville's piers are highly variable between maps and even within the same map volumes, leading to significant uncertainty about the history of the piers.

Regardless of exactly when, where, or how each pier was built, the presence of at least one pier in Centerville by 1855 resulted in expansive growth in the village over the next few years. Brewer Simon Kraus built a brewery in Centerville by 1857 at the northeast corner of Washington and Kossuth Streets and began brewing the township's first beer. Some sources suggest Kraus was in business as early as the 1840s, but this is unsubstantiated (Western Historical Company 1881:539, Foote 1893, Ertel 1976, Hoverson 2019:388-384). In 1858, the school district purchased the southern half of Lot 9 in Block 1 from John Sachse and built a school on the parcel. Sachse had come to Centerville in 1852 and opened a shoe store. The schoolhouse, which was completed in 1859, was two parcels south of the post office at the intersection of Main and Kossuth Streets (Foote 1893, Rappel et al. 1948:53, Ertel 1976). A. Knorr or a predecessor established a tannery in 1860 on the north side of Centerville Creek, near its outlet. In 1861, both St. John's Evangelical Lutheran church, along the south bank of Centerville Creek on the west side of Kossuth Street, and St. George's Catholic church, at the northeast corner of Main and Kossuth Streets, opened their doors (Western Historical Company 1881:539, Ertel 1976, BLRPC 1985:16-18). Both churches were very close to Hika Bay Tavern, with the Catholic church directly next door. Whether early travelers and visiting sailors were encouraged by local believers to visit the churches on Sunday, and not just the tavern, is unknown.

The outbreak of the Civil War paused Centerville's growth. The newspapers were full of accounts of battles and rebellion. In 1862, the Dakota uprising captured a share of the headlines as well, and readers of the coastal newspapers were horrified to recognize names known to them among the dead in Minnesota. It may have seemed that war threatened them on all fronts. Tensions and paranoia rose. By that point, most Indigenous people had left the region, either voluntarily or under duress. The few that resisted removal and endured the hostility and distrust of their new neighbors were, at least outwardly, resigned to the situation and kept their heads down. But in early September 1862, a small group of Indigenous residents fishing near Cedarburg, Wisconsin, set fire to an "old mill" – whether on purpose or by accident is unclear. As the story of the fire passed across the countryside, it grew into a tale of a full-fledged uprising involving thousands of Indigenous fighters hell-bent on exterminating the colonists and immigrants who had made the Lake Michigan coast their home. By the time a frantic telegram reached Governor Solomon, the hostile force was said to have burned the entirety of Cedarburg to the ground (Quaife 1920, Stout 1932).

The population of several counties in Wisconsin panicked. Non-Indigenous residents armed themselves with whatever they had or could find, gathered at taverns and public buildings for safety, or loaded their belongings onto wagons and fled to larger settlements. Those fleeing spread the rumor further, carrying it like contagion across the countryside. Centerville wasn't immune (Stout 1932). The uncertain residents initially looked to the lake for safety, suggesting that the women and children barricade themselves on the pier. Not long after, however, a wiser head noted that piers burn and the families sheltering there would have no escape route if

attacked. Centerville's residents abandoned the plan, loaded their wagons, and set out for Sheboygan instead (Falge 1912[1]:332-333).

Within a few days, after arriving militia failed to turn up anything more threatening than women with a baby and a man with a fishing pole, Centerville's residents returned home. Some marched off again over the next two years, enlisting to fight for the Union. As the Civil War drew to a close, Centerville's upward trajectory resumed. Cordwood was regularly shipped from Centerville just as it had been in 1855. A shipment of 45 cords of cordwood to Milwaukee on the schooner *Wayne* in May 1864 is typical of the community's exports during the height of the cordwood era (*Semi-Weekly Wisconsin* 1864).

Also in 1864, merchant Solomon Mann convinced brothers Godfrey (also referred to as Gottlieb) and John Mill to move their milling business from Fisher Creek to Centerville. By 1867, John Mill & Bro. had built a large steam grist mill in Centerville (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1867b, Ertel 1976). According to other sources, August Mill & Company completed or began operation of a grist and planing mill with a lumber yard in Centerville in 1867 or 1868 (Western Historical Company 1881:539, Ertel 1976; Figure 3.5). These two mills were likely the same operation. August, Godfrey, and John Mill, who were probably all brothers, were involved in the operation of a mill on Fisher Creek in Centerville Township. The 1872 wall map of Manitowoc County shows a sawmill in operation on Fisher Creek in the southeast quarter of Section 15 on land owned by A. and G. Mill with the adjacent parcels belonging to J. Mill and C. Mill (Harney 1872). Either when the Mill brothers began operations in the village or earlier, Centerville Creek was dammed and the waters rose to form a mill pond near the rear of Hika Bay Tavern (Ertel 1976). Despite Mann's invitation to the Mill brothers to move their milling operations, the brothers may have maintained their mill operation elsewhere in the township while operating a new mill in Centerville since the 1872 Harney map still depicts the Mill sawmill in Section 15.

In 1866, the Centerville school received a new stone foundation and woodshed. The same year or the next, brewer Simon Kraus sold his brewery. Christian Scheibe arrived from the former Hottelmann Brewery in Manitowoc and took over Kraus's operation (Figure 3.5). Scheibe rechristened the business the "Centerville Brewery" and it became Centerville's star business for many years (Western Historical Company 1881:539, Ertel 1976, GCH 2016, Hoverson 2019:388-389). In 1867, Hermann Schlueter and Peter Werner dissolved their partnership, which had operated under the name of Schlueter & Werner. This left Peter Werner in sole control of their store – "the old stand" – in Centerville (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1867a). Whether Schlueter and Werner had co-operated the pier as well as the store is unclear. There are very few references to Hermann Schlueter in Centerville and none found thus far that predate the 1867 dissolution of Schlueter & Werner. In April 1869, August Mill, Gottlieb Mill, and Carl Kenne purchased a number of lots in Centerville including Lot B, Lot 10, and Lot 1 of Subdivision D (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1869b). Historic maps depict Lot B as the large triangular parcel to the northeast of the Mill Pond while Lot 10 is along the shoreline at the location of the southern pier. The location of Subdivision D is not clear although there is a Lot D south of Jefferson Street (Nash 1878, Foote 1893; Figure 3.6). Lot B is adjacent to the planing and grist or flour mill on Centerville Creek so the Mill brothers' and Kenne's purchase of this lot may represent their intention to expand their milling operations. Since Lot 10 is along the shore and

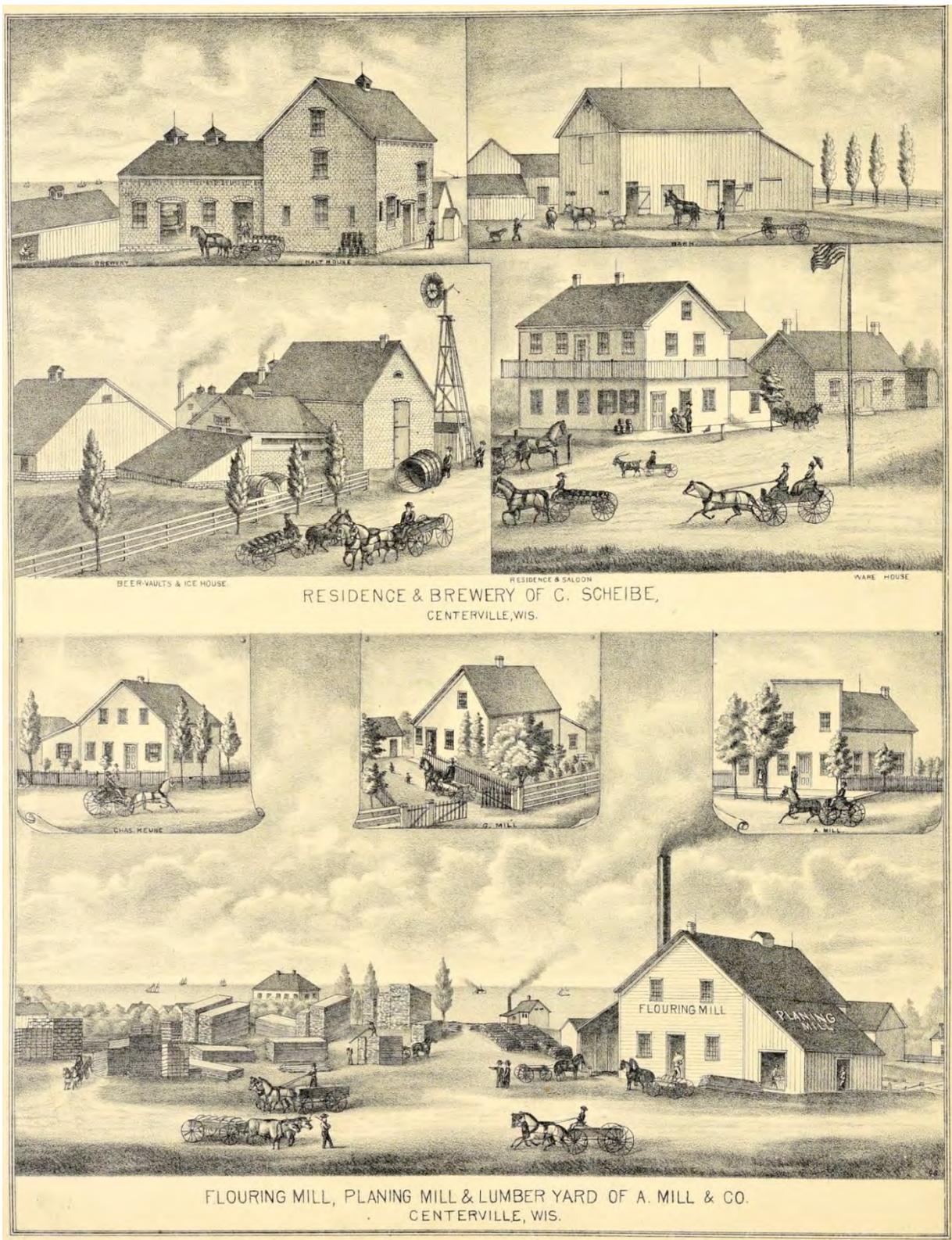


Figure 3.5: Christian Scheibe's Centerville Brewery and August Mill & Company's Mills and Lumberyard (Nash 1878)

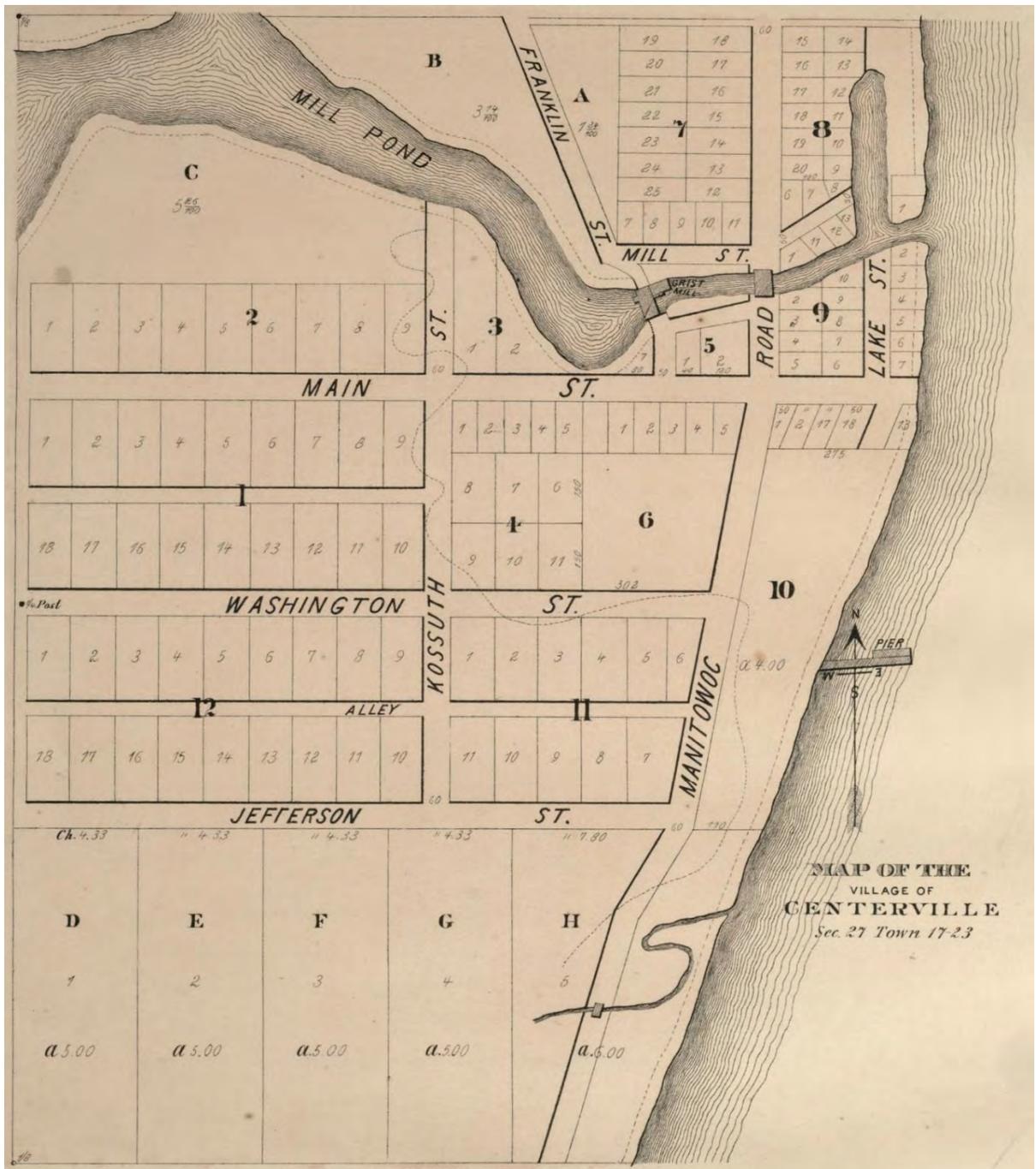


Figure 3.6: Map of the Village of Centerville (Nash 1878)

was the present or future location of Centerville’s southern pier, the Mill brothers and Kenne’s purchase of this lot may represent their intention to ship out milled materials from an existing pier or a future pier that they planned to construct.

Centerville entered the 1870s as a small town with big promise. Business was so good that Peter Werner purchased a half interest in the schooner *Island City*. Nicholas Stone of Sheboygan was

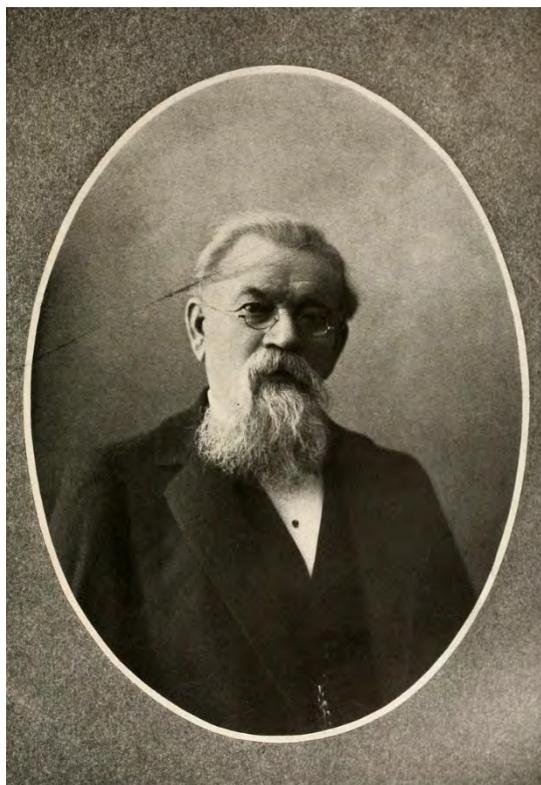
the other half owner and the vessel's master. The lakeshoring schooner *Island City* was built in 1859 at Harsens Island, Michigan, by Peter Perry. The two-masted vessel measured 54.5 feet in length, nearly 17 feet in beam, and had a nearly 6-foot depth of hold (Thomsen et al. 2010). Werner must have decided that he would benefit from having his own schooner to ship wood from his Centerville pier rather than depending on other vessels to conduct his trade. And trade was booming. Teamsters and farmers drove wagons full of wood down the lakeshore road and Main Street to at least one pier. Some transported cordwood from the countryside. Others brought milled lumber from the August Mill & Company planing mill. It was hard work and the pier was starting to show its age. In May of that year, 22-year-old Jacob Wilbert drove a team out onto the pier to drop off wood, sitting atop the load as most haulers did. The wheel of the wagon rolled over a rotten patch of planking and broke through. The jolt sent Wilbert flying off the wagon and into Lake Michigan to drown. His body was recovered soon afterwards (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1870b). A few months later, the schooner *Elb*, loaded with wood for Racine, headed south, promptly struck a rock and sank. The tug *Kitty Smoke* tried twice to raise her before finally succeeding on the third try (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1870d).

Federal census records for 1870 demonstrate the extent to which the regional economy had diversified. Records for Centerville Township list laborers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, millers, ministers, carpenters, domestic servants, teamsters, wagon makers, merchants, brewers, tailors, tavern keepers, a doctor, a mason, and a fire insurance agent. The movers and shakers in the village of Centerville are noted in the records as well. Peter Werner appears as a general retail dealer worth \$7,200 – split in half between real estate and other assets – living with wife Christine; young children Louise, Hedwig, Clelia, and Alwine; parents John and Catherine; and servants Louise Wilbert and Henry Brenner. Ernst Rossberg, hotel and tavern keeper, owned \$4,000 in real estate with no other recorded assets (Figure 3.7). His household included wife Louise, one-year-old daughter Clara, and domestic servant Auguste Mill. Mill owner August Mill – living with wife Johanne and young children August, Emma, and Arthur – owned \$3,083 in real estate and \$300 in personal assets. His associate, Carl Kenne, owned \$2,300 in real estate and \$300 in other assets. Kenne's household included wife Caroline; young children Emma, Carl, and Ida; mill worker



Figure 3.7: Ernst Rossberg's Centerville House Hotel (Nash 1878)

Andrew Cado; and 13-year-old August Kenne, who may have been a nephew or cousin (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870a).



Jacob Leisen

Figure 3.8: Jacob Leisen (Sawyer 1911)

A few households away, Martin Roth, also a tavern keeper, lived with his wife Barbara and children Elisabeth, Anna, and Johanna. Roth had \$1,200 in real estate and \$200 in personal assets. Tailor Jacob Weller – wife Elisabeth; children Agatha, Johanna, and Louis; and relative or tenant 14-year-old Caroline Schneider – owned \$900 of real property and \$200 in personal assets. Miller Gottlieb Mill owned \$3,083 in real estate and \$250 in other assets, nearly identical to August Mill suggesting that they were still partners. Gottlieb Mill lived with his wife Catherine, children Hugo and Hulda, and 25-year-old carpenter Carl Mill, possibly a younger brother. Blacksmith George Ziesemer had substantial assets, including \$2,600 of real estate and \$200 of personal property, and lived with his wife Caroline and six children under the age of 15. Tanner Ernst Nebel – who lived with his wife Elisabeth; six children under the age of 12; 68-year-old Christian Nebel, probably Ernst’s father; and domestic servant Emilie Glatz – owned a substantial \$3,550 in real property and \$500 in other assets. Nearby lived the wealthiest resident of Centerville at the time, Jacob Leisen, general retail dealer with \$4,205 in real estate and \$3,955 in personal property. Leisen lived with his wife Mary and six children under the age of 12 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870a). Although Leisen is listed as a

farmer in the 1860 census, various biographies indicate that he arrived in Centerville in 1855 or 1856 (Figure 3.8). There, he worked as a carpenter until 1858, when a joint stock company was formed to construct a pier with Leisen in charge of the effort. He became a merchant in 1859 or 1860 and continued that work until 1873, when he moved to Menominee, Michigan (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860c, 1870a; Brown 1888:364, Sawyer 1911:1284-1286). From 1861 to 1872, Leisen also served as the postmaster for the Hika post office (U.S. Post Office 1872). While Leisen served as a captain in the Civil War, his wife, Maria Verena Fehrenbach Leisen, served as postmaster and managed his business interests. At various times while in Centerville, Jacob Leisen also served as town clerk, justice of the peace, and notary public (Brown 1888:364, Sawyer 1911:1284-1286).

In 1871, Centerville replaced the wood frame schoolhouse in Lot 9 of Block 1 with a more robust brick schoolhouse. Later named the “Red Arrow” school, the facility boasted the first rural playground setup in Wisconsin – homemade swings and a whirligig – and a drinking fountain fed by an artesian well (Ertel 1976). Although a new school was built in 1959 and the

Red Arrow school building was sold, the building still stands in Centerville at 1030 Beech Street and serves as a residence.

The 1870 census records of extensive commercial activity in Centerville are born out by the 1872 wall map of Manitowoc County. That year, Centerville boasted at least one pier, two stores (one owned by Peter Werner and the other by Jacob Leisen), Rossberg's hotel and tavern, John Sachse's boot and shore store, the Mill brothers' mills and lumberyard, Scheibe's Centerville Brewery, Roth's tavern, three carpenters, two blacksmiths, two wagon makers, two butchers, a brickmaker, a harness maker, a tailor, a cooper, and a photographer (Harney 1872). Scheibe and the brewery's three employees were shipping out 450 barrels of beer per year as the decade opened (Hoverson 2019:388). Some of the barrels undoubtedly made their way over the short distance to the tavern. The rest would have been hauled down to the pier to be loaded onto vessels.

Vessels came and went routinely at the pier throughout the early 1870s. Cordwood was the most common cargo, but vessels also carried lumber, bark, stave bolts, barrel hoops, wheat, corn, potatoes, and stone to Milwaukee and brought sundries, corn, and salt back to Centerville. In most cases, no cargoes were listed for vessels returning to Centerville, suggesting that they ran light (i.e., empty; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1870, 1871, 1873b, 1873c, 1874b; *Daily Milwaukee News* 1870a, 1870b, 1870c, 1870d, 1870e, 1872c; *Manitowoc Pilot* 1875). This may indicate that residents of Centerville were generally self-sufficient and required few goods from outside. It is also possible that port officials or newspapers were not as concerned with what was leaving their port as with what was coming in and did not routinely record the cargoes of departing vessels.

In 1873, competition for shipping arrived when the railroad came to Centerville Township. The line ran due northward, missing Centerville by a mile. The township depot – Centerville Station, later renamed Cleveland – was built due west of Centerville. Business interests began to eye properties around the station and soon a small cluster of buildings stood near the tracks (Ertel 1976). Centerville was not far from the depot, however, so while lake traffic continued, the town enjoyed ready access to two methods of transportation. Although it would be facile to assume that rail traffic negatively impacted lake shipping, records suggest this was not the case. Lake shipping continued well past 1873 and was still so lucrative that pier owner Peter Werner purchased the other half interest in the schooner *Island City* from Nicholas Stone in February 1874, becoming the schooner's sole owner. Captain Anders Gunderson became the vessel's new Master (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1874a, Thomsen et al. 2010). *Island City*, which had shipped goods from Centerville for Werner since at least 1870, continued to run cargos of cordwood and occasional other goods from Centerville to Milwaukee through at least 1875. Werner was owner or part owner of the vessel until 1880, but there are few records of later cargos (*Daily Milwaukee News* 1870c; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1874b, 1874c, 1874d, 1874e, 1875a, 1875b, 1875c; Thomsen et al. 2010). Although Centerville's tannery burned to the ground in 1875, the Centerville Brewery upped its annual production to 1,000 barrels that year (BLRPC 1985:19, Hoverson 2019:388).

Centerville continued to prosper in the late 1870s. In 1876, August Witte opened a brickyard in Centerville and welcomed the birth of his fifth child, also named August Witte (Buckley

1901:96-97, FindAGrave 2025c). An 1878 map of Centerville Township shows a brickyard along the waterfront south of Jefferson Street and not far from the southern pier (Figure 3.9). A later map depicts this lakefront property as belonging to August Witte so this was likely the location of the Witte brickyard (Nash 1878, George A. Ogle & Co. 1921). According to a history of clay industries in Wisconsin, Centerville had ample raw material for brickmaking with five to ten feet of clay, under four feet of sand and gravel, exposed along the lake bluffs. At the Witte brickyard, the clay was mixed with one-third sand, tempered in wooden horse-drawn pug mills, hand moulded, dried, and then fired in scove kilns. The end product was a white or cream-colored brick. About 100 cords of wood were needed to fire a load of 180,000 bricks, the equivalent of two typical cordwood cargoes for the schooner *Island City*. When the younger



Figure 3.9: Map of Centerville, Centerville Township (Nash 1878)

August Witte joined his father in the business, the brickyard was renamed August Witte and Son (Buckley 1901:96-97; Ertel 1976; FindAGrave 2025c, 2025d, 2025e).

By 1878, Scheibe's Centerville brewery was churning out 1,500 barrels of beer per year and the village was bustling. Peter Werner had become the sole merchant after Jacob Leisen and family moved to Menominee, Michigan, in 1873. Ernst Rossberg was still running the Centerville House hotel and tavern, John Sachse was still selling boots and shoes, and August Mill and colleagues were still running a gristmill, sawmill, and lumber yard (Nash 1878, Sawyer 1911:1284-1286, Ertel 1976). In October, Peter Werner's vessel, likely the schooner *Island City*, was damaged during a severe storm when lightning struck one of the masts while the vessel sat at anchor near Centerville, sending splinters flying. One of the houses in Centerville was also hit and considerably damaged (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1878c). Although no one was hurt by flying splinters from Werner's vessel, the incident may have caused Werner to reassess his future. While cordwood was still occasionally dispatched from the pier, records show far fewer shipments. In March 1879, Peter Werner sold a one-quarter stake in the schooner *Island City* to Andrew Gunderson of Sheboygan for \$750. In March 1880, he sold another one-quarter interest to Gunderson for \$400 and his last half interest to John Miller of Sheboygan for \$800 (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1879, 1880a, 1880b; Thomsen et al. 2010). In 1880, Werner moved with his family to Brillion, purchasing the store and business interests of N. Knauf (Western Historical Company 1881:186). As shipping from Centerville declined, Werner may have pivoted in order to support his family and continue to prosper.

In May 1881, the pier at Centerville was damaged, whether by storms or ice is unclear, and had to be rebuilt. In addition, the Lake Shore Cheese Factory was completed in Centerville (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1881b). By that year, Rossberg had sold the Centerville House to John Doersch, but Doersch did not manage it for long (*Chronicle* 1881). In early 1882, Doersch sold the hotel again, possibly to the Mill family; he was reportedly planning to move to Minnesota (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1882, BLRPC 1885:15). The Centerville Brewery continued to ship beer, mostly to Wisconsin cities like Sheboygan and Milwaukee, but requests even came in from Chicago (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1883a, 1883b). Despite the brewery's success, business owners continued to leave Centerville. In 1883, George Doersch sold his blacksmith shop intending to move northwest (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1883c). In 1884, August Mill sold his grist mill in Centerville but retained his sawmill and lumber yard. Albert Schneider, saloon keeper, sold his business as well with the intent to relocate (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1880c, *Manitowoc Pilot* 1884c). Christian Scheibe continued to prosper. In late 1885, he began remodeling Peter Werner's former hay warehouse into a beer depot and added malting and bottling to his operations by 1887 (*Lake Shore Times* 1885, Hoverson 2019:388).

Despite the exodus of business owners, village officials in Centerville were determined to bolster the community. In 1887, village members tried to secure funds to improve Centerville's harbor. Local businessmen Christian Scheibe, Charles Keune, George Mill, G. Baumann, August Knoll, and Alois Kraus formed the Harbor and Dock Association of Centerville to organize and finance improvements. At the invitation of local residents, Congressman Thomas R. Hudd visited Centerville and promised to secure a government engineering survey of the waterfront (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1887a, 1887b; USACE 1889:2102-2103). Wisconsin Governor William Hoard also visited Centerville and expressed his support for the project. By January 1888, village residents had subscribed \$4,000 for improvements, were actively pushing for survey of the existing harbor, and had obtained the signatures of 42 lake captains and vessel owners on a petition for the same (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1888a, Ertel 1976). By August 1888, the

River and Harbor appropriation bill, which included funds for an engineering survey of Centerville, had passed the U.S. House and Senate (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1888b). On 7 November 1888, the Centerville Brewery burned in a massive fire resulting in a \$40,000 loss; Scheibe had less than \$20,000 of insurance coverage (*Chronicle* 1888, Plumb 1904:67, Ertel 1976, Hoverson 2019:388). The future of Centerville suddenly did not look so bright.

Local histories and lore insist that government assistance for harbor improvements did not arrive because of the loss of the Centerville Brewery, the village's most successful industry (Ertel 1976). Historic records indicate otherwise. On 1 November 1888, a week before the fire ravaged Centerville's brewery, Major Charles E. L. B. Davis sent a letter report to the U.S. Engineer Office in Milwaukee about his preliminary examination of Centerville Creek. Major Davis noted that the piers at Centerville, like many on the western shore of Lake Michigan, were bridge piers that suffered severely from storm and ice damage, resulting in high maintenance costs. At the time of Davis's survey, only the southern pier at Centerville received regular maintenance and upkeep (USACE 1889:2102-2103; Figure 3.10).



*Figure 3.10: Centerville Pier, 10 July 1900 (Village of Cleveland 2025)
(Likely the northern pier based on the pier's condition)*

If government piers were to be built at Centerville, Davis suggested “pile-piers with double sheet piling on the lake side to render them sand-proof, like those at Kewaunee” (USACE 1889:2103). He also noted that, to reach a depth of 14 feet of water, the piers would need to be about 1,600 feet long. For construction of two such piers, dredging of the channel, dredging of the creek, and ten percent for contingencies, Davis estimated cost to improve Centerville's harbor at \$133,795.47. Davis went on to state that he did not recommend improvements to

Centerville Creek because of low population – “Centerville Township contains less than 2,000 inhabitants, while the village itself has between 300 and 400 only” – and limited commerce. According to the engineer, “The [village] has a brewery, grist-mill, lumber-yard, and one or two brick-yards, while the township is mainly devoted to raising dairy produce. During the year 1887 the entire shipments by rail were 4,000 tons of export and 2,000 of import, the former mainly farm products, such as cheese, grain, and cattle. By water the imports and exports for the same period amounted to 2,030 and 740 tons respectively” (USACE 1889:2103). Davis’s final words were explicit, “I do not think [sic] the commerce present or prospective would warrant the expenditure of so large a sum as \$133,000” (USACE 1889:2103). Centerville’s residents believed their harbor worthy of improvement, but a preliminary government examination did not provide support for their lofty goals and federal funding never materialized.

Centerville certainly reeled from the double punch after receiving such unsatisfactory news of the government survey and then losing the village’s major industry. The future of brewing in Centerville was in doubt after the fire and fundraising difficulties abounded, but the brewery was finally rebuilt and reopened in June 1889 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1889a, 1889b, 1889c). Christian Scheibe and his oldest son Emil decided to concentrate on their brewing operations in Marshfield and Grand Rapids. But Alois Kraus, son of former Centerville Brewing Company owner, Simon Kraus; Gustave A. Scheibe, youngest son of Christian Scheibe; and Henry Gutsch rebuilt the Centerville Brewery in the same location. Sometime between 1890 and 1899, brothers Emil and Otto Gartzke became involved in management of the brewery (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870a, Hoverson 2019, FindAGrave 2025f; Figure 3.11).

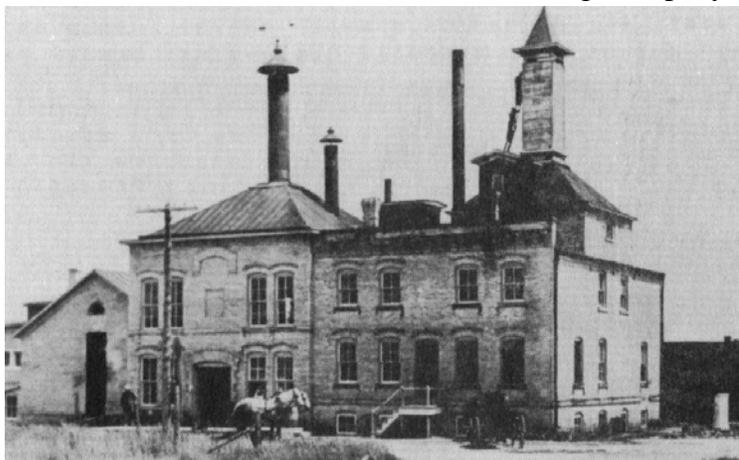


Figure 3.11: Centerville Brewery, Post 1890 (Ertel 1976)

An 1893 atlas and business directory reveals several changes, as well as some continuities, in Centerville. The Centerville Brewing Company was still in operation, but Hugo Mills had joined the company board as secretary and treasurer. F. J. Dieringer was the local blacksmith and wagon maker. Charles Keune & Sons ran the flour and feed mill; Charles Keune is likely the same person as Carl Kenne, who co-owned Centerville’s mills with August Mill in the late 1860s, 1870s, and early 1880s. F. A. Keilsmeier ran a grocery store as well as a creamery and cheese factory. August Knoll & Son ran a general store. Martin Kohn was the village’s carpenter and joiner. F. H. Luecke owned the Lake Shore Cheese Factory in Centerville. John Sachse was still running a store in Centerville, though it appears he had elected to trade in general merchandise rather than boots and shoes. Centerville also had two hotels, one in the same location as Rossberg’s Centerville House south of Main Street in Lot 2 of Block 6 and one at the location of Hika Bay Tavern, which continued to host a tavern. The southern pier, the only pier shown on the village map, extends from a 10-acre parcel belonging to C. Fischer (Figure 3.12). No Fischer appears in the atlas directory for Centerville

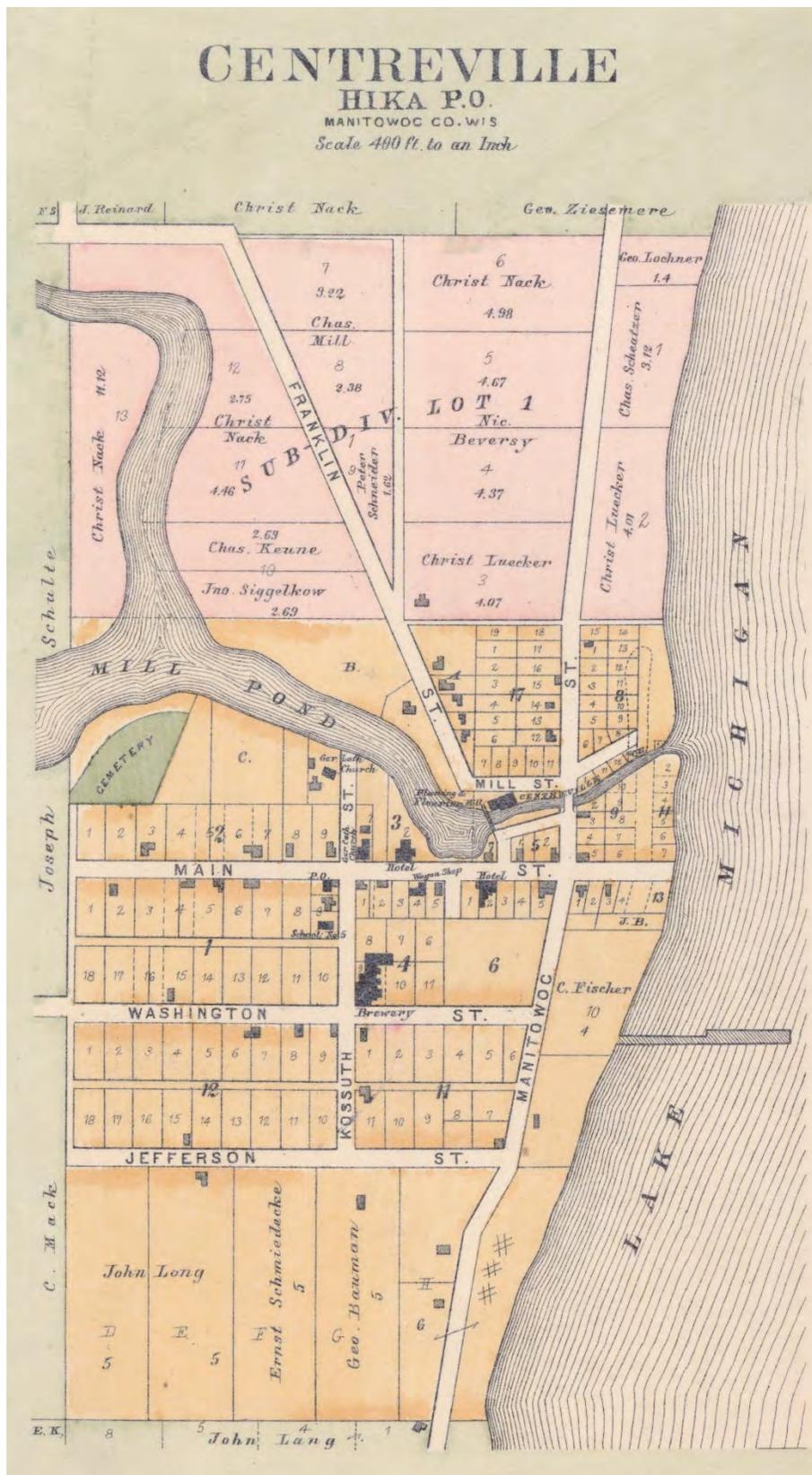


Figure 3.12: 1893 Village of Centerville Map (Foote 1893)

and all C. Fischer individuals in the 1880 census of Centerville – the closest existing census record – are farmers or retired farmers. So it is difficult to determine how C. Fischer used the property (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1880c, Foote 1893:34,68). Around 1895, Louis Dassler began working as a blacksmith in Centerville. His son, Alfred Dassler, later joined the business (FindAGrave 2025g, 2025h).

By the late 1890s, the brewery was in financial trouble. In 1896, a Manitowoc County circuit court judge handed down a judgment of foreclosure against the Centerville Brewery and connected parties, resulting in notice of a planned Sheriff’s sale of the brewery’s real estate holdings and facilities, including the boiler, engine, and all machinery. The public notice lists numerous parties financially involved with the brewery. This included owners Alois Kraus and Gustave Scheibe, but also August Knoll, Centerville merchant; Gottlieb Mill, one time co-owner of August Mill & Company; and Peter Hoffman, who formerly ran a store at Saint Wendel in Section 29 to the east of Centerville (Nash 1878, Foote 1893, *Manitowoc Pilot* 1896b, Hoverson 2019:388). In 1899, the Gartzke brothers took over the brewery, which was renamed Gartzke Brothers Brewing Company for about a decade, but later reverted to Centerville Brewing Company (Figure 3.13) During the later years of its operation, the brewery made Hika’s Pride Beer, Weno Beer, and Noch Eins Beer (i.e., “Another One” or “One More”). The brewery operated until sometime between 1914 and 1917. Accounts suggest that, after it closed, the building was dismantled and the bricks used to build the Mikadow Theater in Manitowoc (Ertel 1976, Hoverson 2019:388, Tavern Trove 2025). The year 1899 also saw Hugo Schurrer take over operations of the Union House tavern; at the time, the building housed the tavern, upstairs lodging rooms, and a dance hall (Ertel 1976). Local lore suggests that the rooms on the upper level doubled as a brothel for sailors stopping at the port overnight.

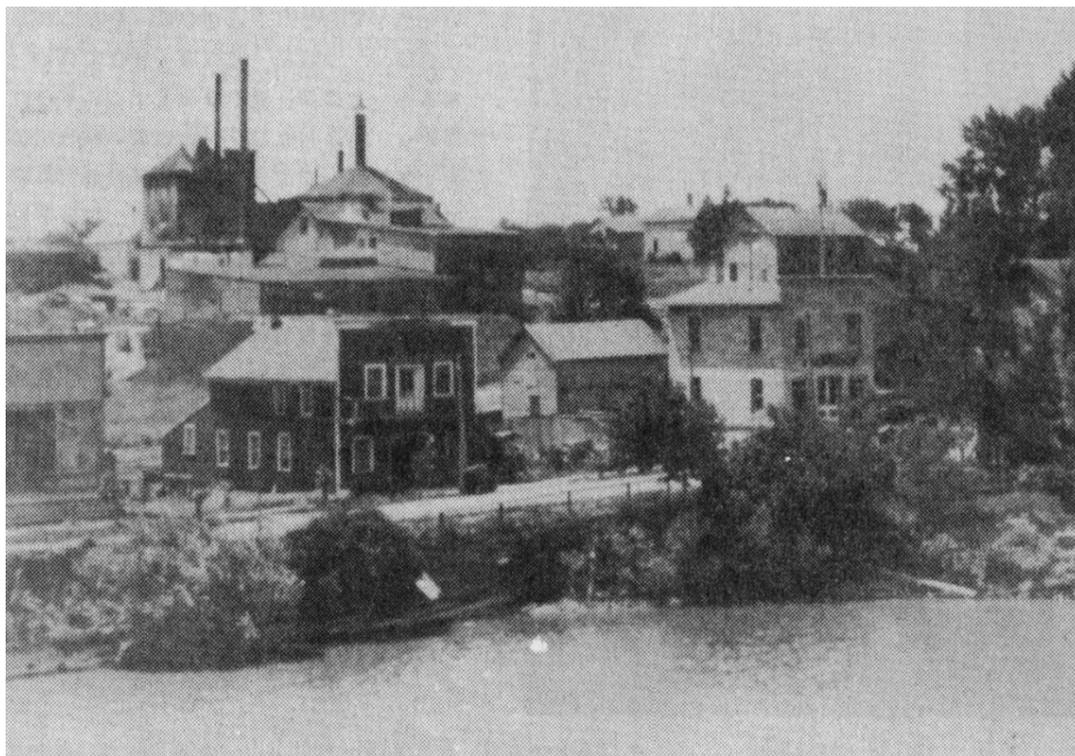


Figure 3.13: View of Centerville, ca. 1900 (Ertel 1976)

In 1897, Frank Strattman opened a general store in Centerville (Dippel 2021). The August Witte & Son brickyard continued to operate in the village until about 1903 when the firm exhausted the clay pit near Centerville. The Wittes, along with partner Charles Doersch, moved their brickyard to Cleveland where they purchased property west of the railroad tracks. The business finally closed in 1918 (Buckley 1901:96-97; Ertel 1976; FindAGrave 2025c, 2025d, 2025e). Another brickyard owned by Albert Kohn was located just to the south of the Centerville Witte brickyard. Exactly when the Kohn brickyard opened is unknown, but the 1880 census lists 24-year-old Albert Kohn as a brickmaker living in the household of his father, Martin Kohn. Albert Kohn may have been operating his own brickyard by 1880 or he could have been working at the Witte brickyard since Witte's household is listed only three entries below the Martin Kohn household (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1880c, Buckley 1901:96-97; FindAGrave 2025c). The 1878 and 1893 maps show a parcel labeled "A. K" south of the Witte brickyard in Lot 7 of Block 4 in Section 34, slightly south of Martin Kohn's property in Section 27. Several other properties next to the A. K. property are owned by other possibly related individuals like "E. Kohn" and those with initials M. K., H. K., S. K., and J. K. The 1878 map shows an unlabeled building on the A. K. property (Nash 1878, Foote 1893). If the parcel did belong to Albert Kohn and he lived with his parents, the building may have been his brickyard. The Kohn brickyard was still in operation in 1901 (Buckley 1901:96-97).



Figure 3.14: Centerville Grist Mill, Sawmill, Dam, and Millpond, 1908 (Village of Cleveland 2025)

In 1903, the Keune Brothers, probably Charles's sons, were running the flour and feed mills in Centerville. Named the Lake Shore Roller Mills, an advertisement on a 1903 wall map claimed the business was "The Largest and Most Complete Custom and Merchant Mill in the County" (W. W. Hixson & Co. 1903). Interestingly, no other Centerville business elected to advertise on the

map. While the map does not show any piers at Centerville, the map's terrestrial focus could mean this was simply an omission. In 1904 or 1906, the wooden dam in Centerville was rebuilt with concrete (Ertel 1976; BLRPC 1985:18-19; Figure 3.14).

In 1919, Frank Stratman's son, Louis and Frank, took over the Stratman general store at the corner of Main and Manitowoc Streets (now Lincoln Avenue and Lakeshore Drive). Only two years later, in 1921, they added a dance hall and transformed their property into a local, seasonal resort named Stratman's Winter Garden. The venue hosted weddings, anniversaries, dances, and picnics for over 25 years. A 1921 platbook of Manitowoc County shows the Stratmans had significant landholdings in Centerville, including all of Block 6, where the general store and resort were located; all of Block 10 along the waterfront south of Main Street; and all of Block 14 along the waterfront north of Main Street (George A. Ogle & Co. 1921, Dippel 2021). In 1924, the dam on Centerville Creek and the sawmill on the northern bank of the creek washed away during heavy rainfall. The dam was not rebuilt until 1936 (Ertel 1976, BLRPC 1985:18-19).

In 1941, the Stratman brothers sold their resort to Bill and Jessie Rutherford of Manitowoc and hosted a farewell dance in early December (Figure 3.15).

The Rutherford's remodeled and reopened in April 1942 as Rutherford's Modern Tap Room and Dance Hall. Only a few months later, on 28 June, a massive storm hit Centerville and washed out the wings of the dam, severely damaging the remaining grist mill, part of which collapsed into the mill pond and washed into the lake along with 300 chickens. Mill owners Hugo Rahn and his wife barely managed to leap to safety thanks to timely warning from local merchant Edwin Hinz (Ertel 1976, BLRPC 1985:18-19). Centerville's milling days had finally come to an end.



Figure 3.15: Rutherford's Surf Motel Pool, 1959 (Manitowoc County Historical Society [MCHS] 1959; 2015.3.2273)

In May 1948, Rutherford's resort was expanded and renamed Rutherford's Surf Motel and Dinner Club. Rutherford's was well known in Wisconsin and the region and continued to serve as a popular venue for events until a fire devastated the establishment in late December 1963. The fire, whose origins were never determined, caused \$300,000 worth of damage; the resort never reopened (Ertel 1976, Dippel 2021; Figure 3.16). Throughout the Stratman and Rutherford eras in Centerville, Hugo Schurrer continued to operate the Union House. In 1961, at the age of 94, Hugo Schurrer died, leaving the tavern to his family. When he died, Schurrer was the oldest tavern license holder in the state of Wisconsin. The Schurrer family continued to operate the tavern until 1972 when they sold the property. The new owners continued to operate the tavern, renaming it Hika Bay Tavern and Union House (Ertel 1976).



Figure 3.16: Rutherford's Surf Motel, Fire Damage, 1963 (MCHS 1963; 2015.3.2279)

Today, Centerville remains, although it is now part of Cleveland, its former neighbor to the west. Lawrence Dassler continues to run Dassler Sales and Service across from Hika Bay Tavern. The firm was founded by Eugene Dassler, son of Centerville blacksmith Alfred Dassler and grandson of Centerville blacksmith Louis Dassler (FindAGrave 2025g, 2025h). While Rutherford's Surf Motel and Dinner Club succumbed to its 1963 fire, Hika Bay Tavern did not suffer the same fate after its 2022 fire. Following the blaze, Hika Bay Tavern was purchased by new owners and completely remodeled, reopening for business in March 2025 (Ertel 1976, Schafer 2022, Knapp 2025). Visitors can still enjoy a refreshing beverage at the tavern and amble along Lincoln Avenue, formerly Main Street, south of Centerville Creek to Hika Park along the lake. Gazing out at Lake Michigan, no visible evidence of Centerville's piers remain above the surface, but the history of the area still runs deep in Centerville, also known as Hika.

Findings

Terrestrial

What would have been the base of the northern pier is currently occupied by a paved, concrete boat launch and a small metal dock at the south side of modern Hika Park. The shoreline and mouth of Centerville Creek have been riprapped (see Figure 3.1). Relatively modern residential structures flank Lincoln Avenue, which likely served as the road to the northern pier. A road to the southern pier is visible in 1938, 1961, and 1967 aerial photographs, branching southeastward off Lakeshore Road approximately halfway between Lincoln Avenue and Washington Avenue/County Highway XX, formerly Washington Street (George A. Ogle & Co.

1921; USDA 1938, 1961a, 1967a). The course of this road is now occupied by landscaped residential lots with modern structures. The lot west of the entrance to the southern pier road is currently vacant, but once was home to Strattman's Winter Garden. Onshore areas immediately adjacent to the southern pier are now home to a landscaped and terraced lot with a newer residence built between late 2022 and early 2024 (Google Earth 2022a, 2024a). Due to the scope of the project, modern disturbance, and low potential for significant terrestrial archaeological remains directly associated with either pier, no terrestrial survey was undertaken.

Beach

A survey datum was set up between the two pier locations, approximately 350 feet north of the base of the southern pier and 250 feet south of the probable location of the base of the northern pier. Recent redevelopment of this stretch of the shoreline was accompanied by the placement of riprap, which buried the southern pier base and areas around and near the northern pier base and made the topography at both locations unsuitable for setup of survey equipment. Aerial images pre-dating riprap installation show a narrow beach of cobbles and sand drifts at the southern pier location, below the northern slope of a moderate bluff marking the south edge of the valley of Centerville Creek (Google Earth 2011). A similar beach seems to have been present at the northern pier location, which is within the valley of the creek and nearer the creek's mouth.

The datum site is separated from Centerville proper by a low escarpment less than four feet high. This escarpment also has been riprapped, but the beach is exposed. The upper section of the beach is covered with cobbles. Sand dominates the lower beach and the water line. Walkover of the beach at the datum point identified a dense scatter of water-worn artifacts. Some beach glass and ferrous sheet metal was observed, but the most abundant items were tumbled bricks (cream, red, and gray) and fragments of glazed stoneware jugs or crocks (Figure 3.17 and Figure 3.18). The presence of brick is not unexpected given the presence of a brickyard in the community near the datum site and the demolition of multiple structures from Centerville's heyday. The crockery may reflect debris from the taverns and resorts that characterized southeastern Centerville in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the nearby Strattman's Winter Garden and Rutherford Surf Motel and Dinner Club. This material is intriguing but cannot be directly associated with either pier.

Centerville Northern Pier

Centerville's northern pier was located in Section 27, a short distance south of the mouth of Centerville Creek. The 1877 lake chart and the 1872 and 1878 plat maps depict the pier leading directly off of Main Street, now Lincoln Avenue. The lake chart shows a straight pier with no loading platform. The 1872 wall map shows an L-shaped terminus with the platform on the north side while the 1878 atlas of Manitowoc County offers contradictory evidence. The atlas's map of Centerville Township depicts two piers in the same location and configuration as the 1872 map, but the map of the village of Centerville shows only a southern pier (Harney 1872, USACE 1877a, Nash 1878:27,38). Nautical charts from 1880, 1906, and 1909 show two piers in



Figure 3.17: Slipped Stoneware Sherd on Beach at Centerville, July 2024



Figure 3.18: Ferrous Sheet Metal Fragment and Unglazed Stoneware Sherd on Beach at Centerville, July 2024

the same location as the 1877 nautical chart, but the updated 1916 nautical chart does not depict a northern pier (USACE 1880, 1906, 1909, 1916). Nor does the northern pier appear on county maps and atlases after 1878 (Foote 1893, George A. Ogle & Co. 1921:11,36). No signs of the northern pier are visible in 1938, 1961, or 1967 aerial imagery or various years of Google Earth imagery even though the southern pier is visible in all the imagery (USDA 1938, 1961a, 1967a; Google Earth 2005, 2011, 2022a, 2024a). Maritime survey in 2024 failed to find surviving traces of this pier. Major Davis's government engineering survey report noted that the northern pier was not receiving regular maintenance by 1888 (USACE 1889:2102-2103). Based on the 1878 and later maps that show only a southern pier and the 1888 engineering report, it seems likely that the northern pier at Centerville went out of usage prior to 1878 while the southern pier continued to be maintained and used long afterwards. Without regular maintenance, the ravages of storms and ice over a longer period may have decimated remnants of the northern pier such that very little remains to the present day.

Centerville Southern Pier

Centerville's southern pier is also located in Section 27. The 1877 lake chart, 1872 wall map, and 1878 township map depict the pier leading directly off Washington Avenue/County Highway XX, which has not led directly to the shoreline since at least 1938 (USACE 1877a, Harney 1872, Nash 1878:27, USDA 1938). In fact, village maps of Centerville never show a road leading directly to the southern pier and township maps after 1878 do not show a road either (Nash 1878:38, Foote 1893:10,34; W. W. Hixson & Co. 1903; George A. Ogle & Co. 1921:11,36). As regards the pier, the 1877 lake chart shows a straight pier with no loading platform. Both the 1872 wall map and 1878 township map show an L-shaped terminus with the platform on the south side. But the 1878 map of the village of Centerville shows a southern pier with an L-shaped platform on the northern side, extending east northeast from shore about half a block south of Washington Street (USACE 1877a, Harney 1872, Nash 1878:27,38). The 1893 atlas map of Centerville Township shows no piers off Centerville while the map of the village depicts a single southern pier, with an L-shaped platform on the northern side, extending directly east from shore slightly south of Washington Street (Foote 1893:10,34). Nautical charts from 1880, 1906, and 1909 depict two piers in the same locations and configurations as shown on the 1877 nautical chart, but the 1916 nautical chart shows only the southern pier, with no platform, extending southeast from shore just south of Washington Street (USACE 1880, 1906, 1909, 1916). The 1921 plat book of Manitowoc County shows no piers off Centerville on the Centerville Township map, but the map of the village illustrates a pier, with an L-shaped platform on the northern side, running directly east from shore slightly south of Washington Street (George A. Ogle & Co. 1921:11,36). The pier is clearly visible on 1938, 1961, and 1967 aerial imagery. The 1938 photos show a series of four crib features extending out from shore with intact pilings further out while the 1961 and 1967 aerial photos show only the offshore pilings (USDA 1938, 1961a, 1967a). Google Earth imagery from 2005, 2011, 2022, and 2004 captures the same crib features while the pier pilings are obscured by water clarity or sand drifts in all but the 2011 imagery (Google Earth 2005, 2011, 2022a, 2024a).

Survey in 2024 identified about 20 pilings in two to three, irregular rows at a bearing of about 112 degrees (Figure 3.19). The pier had a minimum width of 48 feet, and the decking likely

approached a width of 50 feet. Based on the survey and Google Earth imagery, the pier had a minimum total length of 673 feet (Figure 3.20).

Interpretation

Centerville was one of the most successful of the mid-Lake Michigan ghost ports and one that nearly transcended the plight of its neighboring vanished pier communities. Although the village began by shipping cordwood and timber products like so many others small ports, Centerville quickly diversified. The founding of several industries in the village – including a brewery, a tannery, a grist mill, and a sawmill – provided opportunity for the village to flourish and grow. But time and time again, fires and storms decimated or halted these industries. In the end, as shipping changed, natural resources declined, and new industries failed to replace the old, Centerville faded into the quiet, municipal extension of Cleveland that it is today.



Figure 3.19: Volunteer Chris Spoo Records a Piling at the Centerville South Pier, July 2024

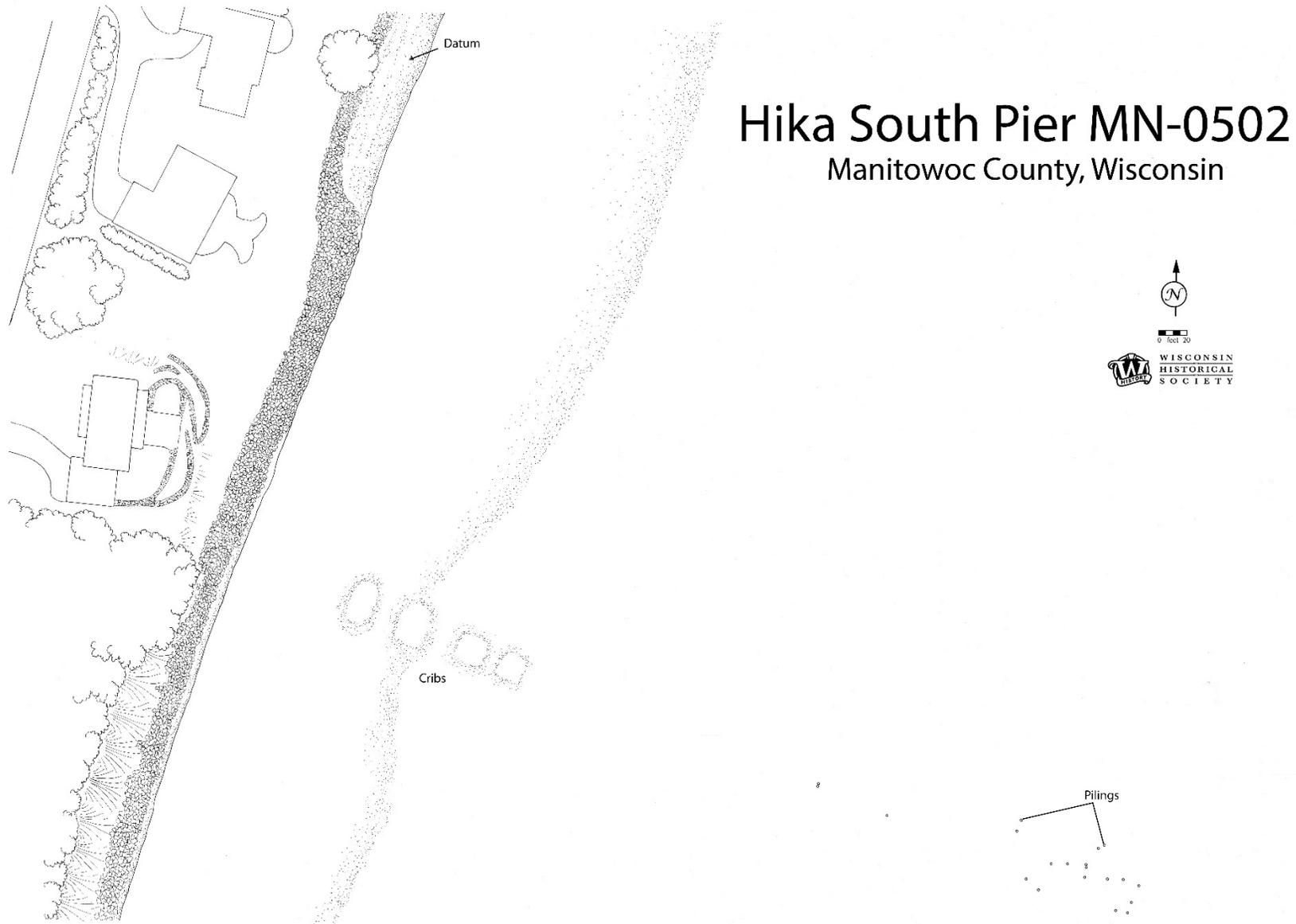


Figure 3.20: Centerville South Pier Site Plan (Wisconsin Historical Society)

Even now, some of Centerville's history remains shrouded in mystery, still clouded as if by thick smoke or heavy rainfall. Despite extensive historical and maritime research, the exact character, configuration, and ownership of Centerville's piers remain unclear. Additional research at Centerville, including survey of terrestrial archaeological resources dating to the village's heyday, offers the potential to increase knowledge of the site. Currently, the Centerville site is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Chapter 4: Lintz's Pier / Linzville (SB-0478)

Introduction

Lintz's Pier represents a port community that started out as an investment between two neighbors – Frederick Lintz and Theodor Wunsch, but quickly became a commodity traded from one businessman to the next. Lintz's Pier had numerous owners over its short existence. The pier appears to have traded almost solely in forestry products. Once those were exhausted, the pier vanished and with it any remnants of the small community that existed there. Some of the community was likely taken by the lake during shoreline erosion events. Even so, a visit to the site of Lintz's Pier today is surprising for how little remains of a small community that existed for about 40 years. No road to the lakeshore and no older structures remain on the landscape. Only a few submerged, extant pilings and a few waterworn brick fragments on shore hint at the thriving business that once stood at the location of Lintz's Pier.

Location and Setting

Lintz's Pier, also known as Linzville or the Lintz Pier, is located in Sections 3 and 10 in the Town of Mosel, roughly nine miles directly north of Sheboygan harbor and one mile south of the Manitowoc County line. The base of the pier is located approximately 725 feet northeast of the current intersection of modern Orchard and Lakeshore Roads. The pier road once connected with the old intersection of Orchard and Lakeshore, located 400 feet further east. Lakeshore Road was rerouted inland and away from the eroding lake bluffs in the mid-2010s, and the portion of Orchard Road extending east of the new intersection was abandoned.

Though at least one map shows a short drainage stub at the pier site less than an eighth of a mile long, no stream empties into the lake at or near the pier (Foote and Henion 1889). Instead, Meeme Creek passes about a half mile southwest of Lintz's Pier before turning south and draining into Sevenmile Creek, which enters Lake Michigan two miles south of the pier. Meeme Creeks drains areas of swampy ground to the west of Lintz's Pier. The Pigeon River, a much more formidable body of water, flows southward three and a half miles west of Lintz's Pier, emptying into Lake Michigan six miles to the south on the south side of McCrea's Pier, north of Sheboygan.

The lake bluffs at Lintz's Pier, as elsewhere along the mid-Lake Michigan coast, are steep, high, and composed of glacial sediments (Figure 4.1). Aerial and LiDAR imagery testify to the impact of erosion on this section of shore, including mass wasting and coastal retreat. Drifts of alternating gravel and sand form a narrow beach studded with larger till cobbles and boulders. Similar drifts run parallel to the beach offshore. The shore slopes downward at a shallow angle, reaching a depth of approximately 10 to 13 feet at the end of the pier. Rocky shoals and boulders parallel the shore further out, rising within three or four feet of the lake's surface.



Figure 4.1: “Lakeshore Bluffs North of Sheboygan” by A. J. Baum (Baum 1945a)

General Land Office records indicate that this stretch of coast originally was sheltered by a forest cover of beech, tamarack, ash, elm, and sugar maple (King 1835a). Today, the landscape is a mix of forested wetlands, woodlots, farm fields and pastures, farmsteads, and a few coastal homes.

History

General Land Office maps and notes from 1835 depict an unremarkable section of coastline (King 1835b). If a lakeside trail ran across the property, it was overlooked by surveyor Nehemiah King. There was nothing of note to draw the attention of the colonists and speculators who pored over

the maps in the government land offices and, in the opinion of King, the land was only third rate. Nevertheless, large swaths were purchased by Benjamin Field, two separate parcels totaling 80 acres were picked up by Frederick Gustav Lintz, and a parcel up against the Manitowoc County line was selected by Christian Raab (General Land Office 1849c, 1849d, 1849e, 1850, 1852, 1854).

Benjamin Field, a wealthy resident of Beloit, Wisconsin, enters history as the first recorded non-Indigenous owner of the area that became Lintz’s Pier. He used his riches to buy up as much land as possible in east-central Wisconsin, often brokering with soldiers and widows who had been promised land in exchange for service in the War of 1812 and other conflicts. In 1847, Field retained the services of Wilhelm Ostenfeldt, paying him to write articles extolling Wisconsin’s farmlands in the *Itzehoer Wochenblatt*, a German-language newspaper targeting potential emigrants. Field’s strategy was clear: buy government land cheap, shamelessly advertise it to the wave of German immigrants about to break upon American shores, and sell it to those immigrants at a profit (Strohschänk 2005:124-125).

Christian Raab, a German immigrant himself, was another such speculator, though never to the same scale as Field. Raab had more reason to look for coastal properties. His father was a ship owner engaged in the grain and produce trade. After arriving in Sheboygan County in 1848, Raab followed in his father’s footsteps. He entered the grain and produce trade and started up a shipyard, contributing several vessels to the lake fleet. His son, George Raab, became a notable landscape artist and sculptor (Northern Furniture Company 1894:693-694; AskArt 2025; Figure 4.2).

Neither Field nor Raab, however, built the pier. Lintz’s Pier was founded by German immigrant Frederick Gustav Lintz, possibly aided by fellow German immigrant Theodore Wunsch, sometime between 1848 and 1849 (State of Wisconsin 1859:258). Lintz arrived in Sheboygan

County with his wife, Anna Maria Kornreich, in 1848 from Germany by way of the Great Lakes (Northern Furniture Company 1894:548,710-711; Zillier 1912:104). Their first child, Anna, was born on Lake Erie on August 21, 1848, on the steamer *Queen City* while the Lintz family was traveling to Wisconsin (*Sheboygan Press* 1931).

In Sheboygan County, Lintz purchased portions of Section 3, Township 16 North, Range 23 East, directly north of the section line along which the pier road (now Orchard Street in the Town of Mosel south of County Line Road) would be established (Sheboygan County Register 1848, General Land Office 1852). Neighbors Theodore Wunsch and his wife, Helena (or Lena), arrived the same year as the Lintz family. The Wunsch family bought Lots 1 and 2 of Section 10, Township 16 North, Range 23 East, directly south of the section line that would become the pier road (General Land Office 1849b, 1852; Zillier 1912:647-648).

In addition to the pier, Lintz also established a general store and began accepting loads of forestry products from area farmers for shipment elsewhere, like so many other Wisconsin ghost ports. Although the contributions of women to Wisconsin's vanished pier communities are seldom mentioned in historical documents, Frederick Lintz's wife, Anna Maria Kornreich Lintz, is a rare exception. According to an 1894 book of biographical sketches on notable Sheboygan County residents, Frederick Lintz came from a wealthy background and was more interested in travel, writing, and the arts than running a successful business. Anna Lintz was the true entrepreneur behind Lintz's Pier. She conducted all the buying and selling, managed the operation, and was known as a woman of excellent judgment and business acumen (Northern Furniture Company 1894:710-711, *Sheboygan Press* 1926). Without Anna Lintz's leadership, it seems unlikely that the pier business would have proven as successful; some sources report that \$24,000 worth of wood products were shipped from the pier in just one year (Northern Furniture Company 1894:710, Zillier 1912:104).

In 1853, Frederick and Anna Lintz moved their family to the City of Sheboygan (*Sheboygan Times* 1884). There they opened another general store on Michigan Avenue, which they operated for over thirty years. The Lintzes continued to specialize in the sale of timber products from their Sheboygan store (Northern Furniture Company 1894:711, *Sheboygan Press* 1927a). Whether those timber products were brought to Sheboygan from Lintz's Pier is not clear.

The 1862 Palmer and Harney wall map of Sheboygan County provides a glimpse of Lintz's Pier after the Lintz family's departure. The pier is shown slightly northeast of the intersection of Orchard and Lakeshore Roads, sporting a T-shaped staging and loading platform. The nearly

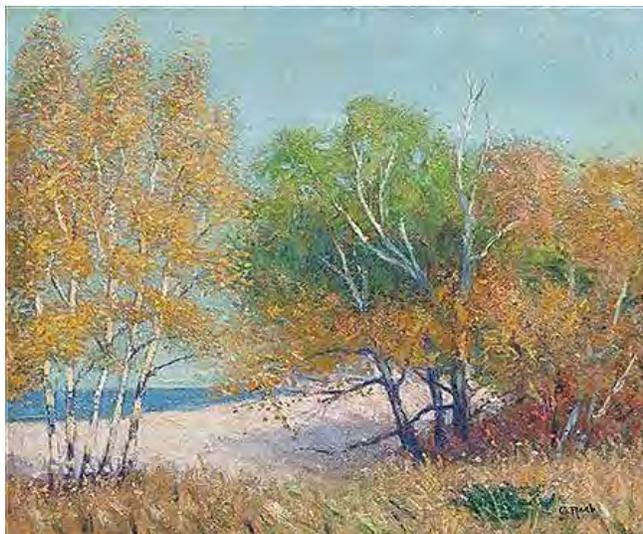


Figure 4.2: "Lake Michigan Shoreline" by George Raab (AskArt 2025)

480 acres of surrounding land north of Orchard Road – including a large section of forested wetland west of the pier site – was owned by Lintz. A single structure is depicted on his land one-half mile north of the pier on the coastal bluffs. Lintz also owned a second parcel some distance south at the mouth of the Pigeon River. Despite that location's better potential as a shipping point, no pier was built there. Theodor Wunsch owned just over 240 acres and maintained a residence on the coast about a quarter mile south of the pier (Palmer and Harney 1862; Figure 4.3).

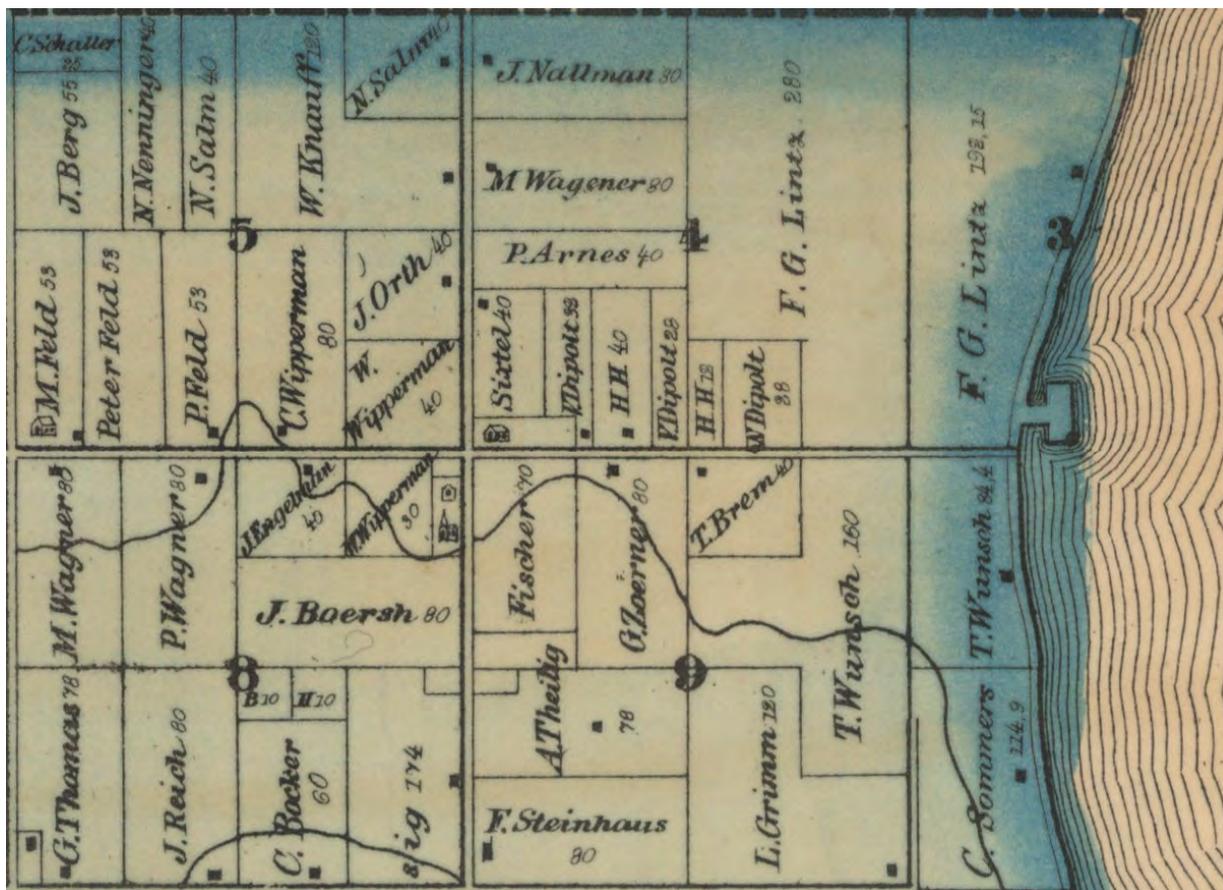


Figure 4.3: 1862 Map of Lintz's Pier, Mosel Township (Palmer and Harney 1862)

In 1866, Frederic and Anna Lintz appear to have tired of running the pier from a distance. That January, they sold about 10 acres of land abutting the pier and the pier itself to their former neighbor, Theodor Wunsch, and another pier speculator, Henry Grimm (Sheboygan County Register 1866). Grimm would eventually become very familiar with operating a pier on Lake Michigan. By late 1867, Grimm was running a store and building a pier at a location that would become known as Grimm's Pier, about four and a half miles north of Kewaunee in the Town of Pierce in Kewaunee County (Rosebrough et al. 2023).

Henry Grimm's tenure at Lintz's Pier was short lived; he likely decided to focus on his pier in Kewaunee County instead. In September 1867, Grimm sold Lintz's Pier and the accompanying 10 acres to Alexander Fisher (or Fischer) of Houghton County, Michigan (Sheboygan County Register 1867). The 1867 property deed does not mention Theodor Wunsch so it is unclear if he continued to own any interest in the land and the pier. It appears that Wunsch may have gotten out of the pier business between 1866 and 1867 and concentrated instead on expanding and improving his family's farmlands (Figure 4.4). A biographical sketch of Wunsch, published

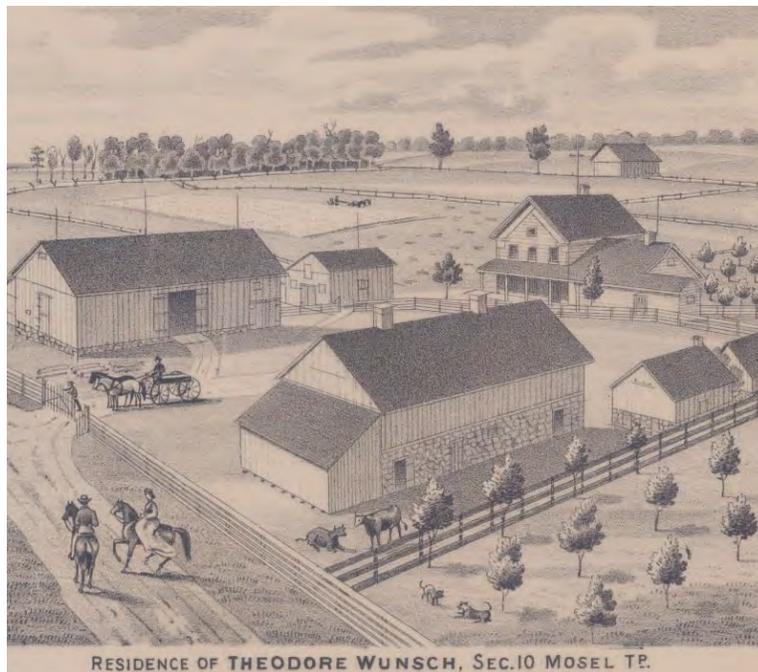


Figure 4.4: Wunsch Farm near Lintz's Pier
(G. A. Randall & Co. 1875)

much later, describes him as “an agriculturalist” who “devoted his time and energies [to cultivating and improving his farm] during the remainder of his active life” (Zillier 1912:648). Wunsch's children, grandchildren, and subsequent generations followed suit (Zillier 1912:504-505,647-648). Today, the Wunsch farm in Sheboygan County is still family-owned and -operated and has been since its purchase by Theodore and Helena Wunsch in June 1848. Mary Calkins, a sixth generation Wunsch descendant, and her husband, Nate, own and operate the Lake Orchard Farm Retreat on the Wunsch family working farm (Lake Orchard Farm Retreat 2025).

Alexander Fisher, also a German immigrant, and his wife Louise operated the pier from 1867 through 1870. They were assisted in running the pier store by Austrian immigrant George Heller, who came to America at a very young age and was engaged as a clerk at Lintz's Pier. Despite the multiple property transfers and new management, the Lintz name continued to be associated with the pier. Various newspaper articles suggest that the family was still involved with the pier in some way. Though the Lintz family did not own the property directly adjacent to the pier, they continued to own the rest of Lot 4 in Section 3, which bordered the pier property to the north and west (Sheboygan County Register 1870, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870d, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:43, *Chronicle* 1880, Foote and Henion 1889:11, *Sheboygan Press* 1935).

In September 1870, the Fishers sold the pier to local merchant, Edward Neuhaus (also spelled Newhaus or Newhouse) (Sheboygan County Register 1870, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:43, *Chronicle* 1880). Neuhaus, also from Germany, arrived in Wisconsin in 1848 and served as the first town clerk of Centerville. Neuhaus and two companions established a water-powered mill

and a sawmill near Centerville, but Neuhaus soon sold his share of the business. He later established a store in Centerville, but it burned down within a year, after which he moved to the Town of Herman near Lintz's Pier in 1851 (G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:85, Northern Furniture Company 1894:272-273, Falge 1912:332). There, Neuhaus opened a general store in a small community called Edwards on the Green Bay Road (now State Trunk Highway 42) about four miles north of Howards Grove. He took full advantage of Lintz's Pier, which was only about six miles distant via the Green Bay and pier roads; he even owned a vessel that took cargos of forestry products from Lintz's Pier to Milwaukee and Chicago, though the name of that vessel has not yet been uncovered. When Alexander Fisher decided to sell out and move to Colorado, Neuhaus must have jumped at the chance to own the pier (*Chronicle* 1880, *Sheboygan Press* 1927c).

G. A. Randall & Co.'s 1875 plat map of the Town of Mosel in Sheboygan County depicts the pier with a wide staging or loading platform. Two structures are shown – one at the northeastern intersection of the pier road and Lakeshore Road and another to the north. Lintz's holdings had been reduced to a little less than 40 acres near the pier. The land at the base of the pier is identified as belonging to "E. M.," probably a simple typo for "E. N" since Edward Neuhaus owned the pier complex by that time. Another small and unlabeled parcel with a building is situated immediately southwest of the intersection of Orchard and Lakeshore roads. Theodor Wunsch's holdings, in the meantime, expanded in size south of Orchard Road (G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:43). The plat map shows plenty of timberland left in the immediate area, and even some on the Lintz parcel itself, so there was still raw material to ship out via the pier. But by this time, the pier had competition. The Milwaukee, Lake Shore & Western Railway – which Frederic Lintz had helped bring to Sheboygan County – had come to the Town of Mosel. A new train station stood just four miles southwest of the pier (*Kenosha Telegraph* 1852, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:43; Figure 4.5).

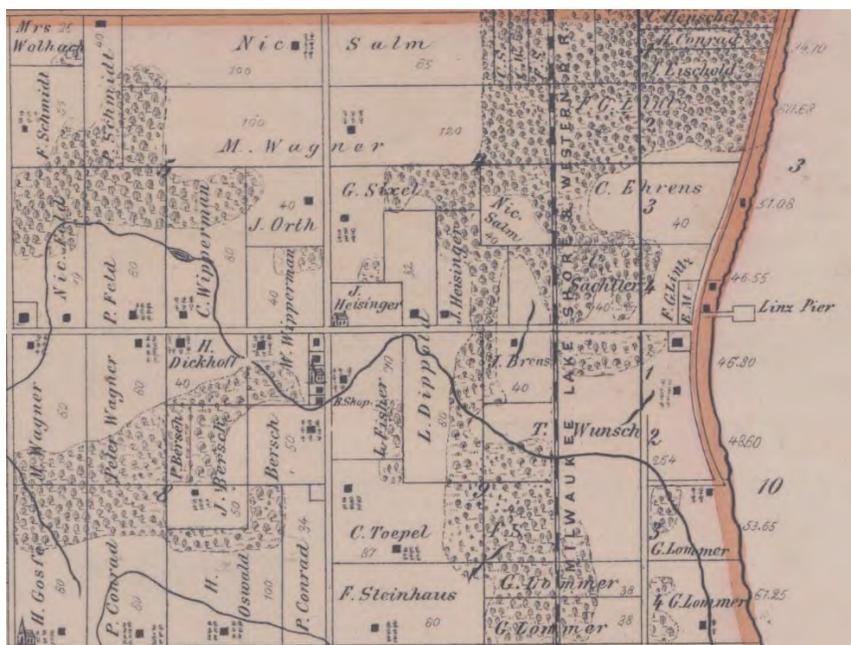


Figure 4.5: 1875 Map of Lintz's Pier, Mosel Township
(G. A. Randall & Co. 1875)

An 1877 coastal chart shows a thin strip of cultivation only one farm field deep along the coast, with forested lands a short distance inland. Forest and pasture extended only to Lakeshore Road on the north side of Orchard Road, and a large field or pasture belonging to the Wunsch family had been cleared on the south side. The chart depicts the pier road angling northeastward down the steep bluffs from the intersection, passing a group of five buildings – presumably the main Lintz’s Pier complex. Two buildings fronted Lakeshore Road immediately north of the pier road, another stood slightly north and inland closer to the pier, a fourth was situated on the bluffs immediately above the pier, and a possible fifth building (or smudge) appears just south of the base of the pier on the west side of the pier road (USACE 1877a).

Plötzlicher Todesfall. — Am Dienstag Morgen starb unser alte und geachtete Mitbürger Hr. Friedrich Gustav Lintz ganz plötzlich am Herzschlage. Als Frau Lintz ihren Gatten um 7 Uhr des genannten Tages wecken wollte, entdeckte sie, daß derselbe bereits in den letzten Zügen lag, und trotz der sofort herbeigeholten ärztlichen Hilfe, verschied er bald darauf. Er hatte bereits am Montag über Brustbeklemmung g.klagt, jedoch hatte weder er noch seine Angehörigen hierauf weiter geachtet, und war deshalb sein so plötzlicher Tod ein schwerer und unerwarteter Schlag für Alle, die ihn kannten. Hr. Lintz war gebürtig aus Minden, Westphalen. Er erblickte das Licht der Welt am 5. März 1814, erreichte somit ein Alter von über 70 Jahren. In seinem 19. Jahre bereits reiste er nach Amerika, kehrte jedoch nach zwei Jahren wieder in die alte Heimath zurück, um dort seine einjährige Militärzeit abzudienen. Im Jahre 1847 vermählte er sich mit seiner ihn jetzt überlebenden Gattin Anna Marie, geb. Kornreich. Ein Jahr später wanderte er zum zweiten Male nach Amerika aus, und ließ sich sofort in Sheboygan County nieder. Zuerst wohnte er auf einer Farm, in 1853 siedelte er in unsere Stadt über in welcher er seither sein allgemeines Store-Geschäft betrieb. Hr. Lintz war von Allen, die ihn kannten, geehrt und geachtet. Er hinterläßt eine tranerde Gattin und sechs Töchter, von denen drei bereits verheirathet sind. Zwei Kinder gingen ihm im Tode voran. Das Leichenbegängniß fand gestern unter sehr zahlreicher Theilnehmung statt. Friede seiner Asche.

Figure 4.6: Obituary for Frederic Gustav Lintz (Sheboygan Zeitung und Sheboygan Tribun 1884)

The Lintz family retained ownership of their parcel near the pier after Lintz’s unexpected death from sudden heart failure at 70 years of age in September of 1884 (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1884, *Sheboygan County News* 1884, *Sheboygan Zeitung und Sheboygan Tribun* 1884, *Sheboygan Times* 1884; Figure 4.6). But Edward Neuhaus may have been the last owner and operator of Lintz’s Pier. Neuhaus continued to operate his Edwards store and serve as Edwards’ postmaster through 1894; at one point he even ran a hotel in Edwards (Northern Furniture Company 1894:272-273, *Chronicle* 1882b). Neuhaus’s activities at Lintz’s Pier are less clear; exactly when Neuhaus ceased to operate Lintz’s Pier and/or when he sold the property is not known. The pier is not depicted on an 1889 plat map of Sheboygan County and the 10 acres of land adjacent to the pier belonged to Christian Ahrens by that time; Ahrens also owned Lot 3 of Section 3 just to the north (Figure 4.7). Despite extensive review of deed indices from Sheboygan County, no deed could be located for Neuhaus’s sale of the pier property to Christian Ahrens. By 1889, Otto and Edward Wunsch, sons of Theodor and Helena Wunsch, were farming on their parents’ old farm on Section 10 and running a cheese factory as well (Foote and Henion 1889:11).

In 1896, Neuhaus moved to Milwaukee and died a year later in April 1897. He is buried in Forest Home Cemetery in Milwaukee (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1896a, Foote and Henion 1889:11, Wisconsin Department of Health Services 1897). Whether Christian Ahrens operated the pier at any point after he purchased the property from Neuhaus is unknown. No records have been identified that indicate Ahrens ran a store or the pier and the 1889 business directory for the Town of Mosel does not list Ahrens or any business operating in Section 3 (Foote and Henion 1889:41). Based on the 1900 federal census, Ahrens made

his living as a farmer (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1900). Whether Neuhaus or Ahrens was the last pier operator is relatively inconsequential. In the end, forty years after springing up on Wisconsin's frontier lakeshore, Lintz's Pier disappeared, leaving only sandy beaches and lapping waves where a bustling business and pier once stood.

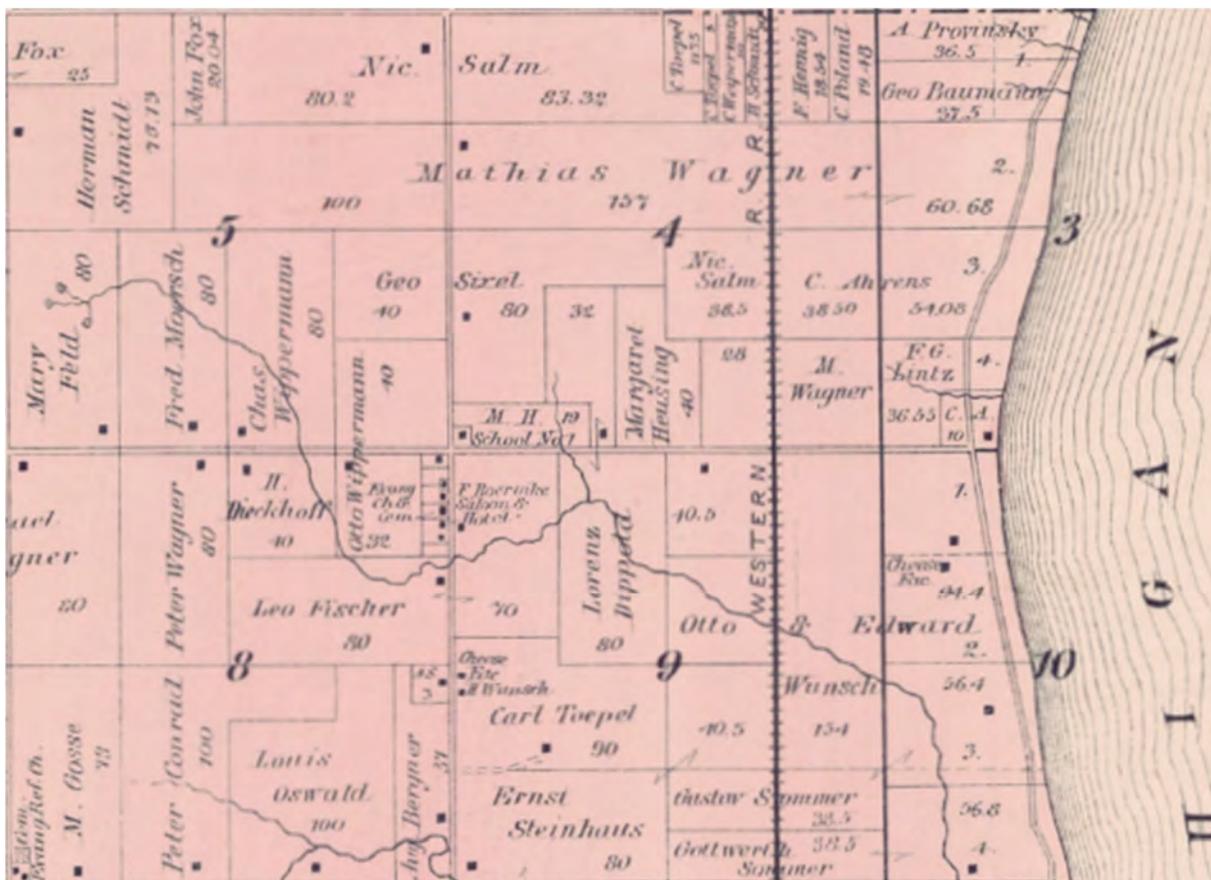


Figure 4.7: 1889 Map of Lintz's Pier, Mosel Township (Foote and Henion 1889)

Findings

Pier

The remains of Lintz's pier extend into Lake Michigan at a bearing of about 80 degrees. The observed pilings extend from 160 to 700 feet from shore. Forty pilings, averaging around one foot in diameter, were directly surveyed by the team. Other pilings are visible on Google Earth imagery dating from 2011 but were missed due to current, visibility, sediment coverage, or other factors (Google Earth 2011). Eight of the observed pilings are grouped in pairs, suggesting reinforcement or repair of the pier at some point in its history. At least one piling at the terminus of the pier has fallen and others are leaning at notable angles towards the shoreline.

The observed arrangement suggests that the pier was at least 700 feet long and approximately 45 feet wide (Figure 4.8). Historic maps show T-shaped, widened loading platforms (Palmer and Harney 1862, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:43). The preserved arrangement of posts confirms

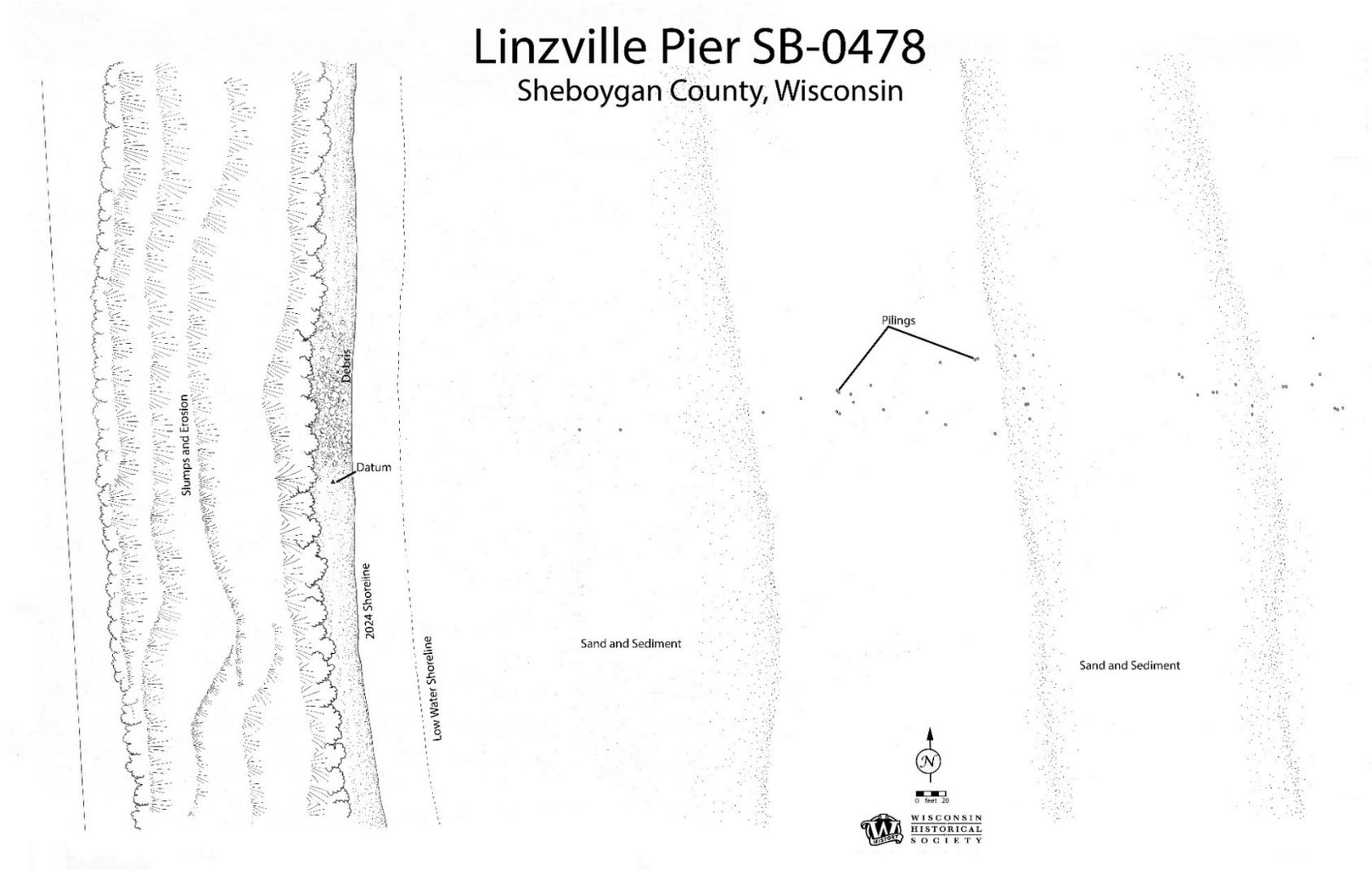


Figure 4.8: Linz's Pier Site Plan (Wisconsin Historical Society)

that the far end of the pier was up to 70 feet wider, though whether it had an L-shaped configuration with the platform extending south or the preserved posts only represent the south half of a T or widened loading platform cannot now be determined. The main structure of the pier appears to have been built with four-post bents spaced about twelve feet apart. In other words, the outer edges of the pier were each supported by single rows of posts and the center by two rows. The spacing of posts within each bent is difficult to determine, but a wider spacing seems apparent between the outer supports and the inner supports (16 to 18 feet) than between the two inner supports (about 12 feet).

Terrestrial

No terrestrial survey was undertaken at Lintz's Pier as there is little reason to believe that significant archaeological deposits belonging to the onshore complex remain. Period maps, when georeferenced to modern aerial photographs and LiDAR imagery, reveal notable coastal erosion. 1937 aerial photographs clearly show the pier road angling northeastward down the bluffs to the beach, arriving at the base of the bluffs somewhat north of the pier. Notably, the road does not join Lakeshore Road on the former Lintz property or at the intersection of Orchard and Lakeshore Roads but intersects just south of Orchard Road on the grounds of the Wunsch farm. Whether this configuration reflects the original course of the pier road cannot be determined, but it conflicts with that shown on older maps of Lintz's Pier. The 1937 aerial photographs capture a small complex of at least four buildings on the bluff top between the pier road and Lakeshore Road: one larger building, possibly a barn, fronting Lakeshore Road, a smaller building that might be a residence to the east, and then two smaller outbuildings in a line extending to the lake bluffs (USDA 1937b).

By 2011, only the larger building remained. The ground beneath the rest of the buildings had collapsed. Erosion ate into the right of way of Lakeshore Road on the Wunsch farm south of the pier, compelling its relocation as 400 feet inward in the area around 2015. By that time, barely 50 feet separated the pavement from the edge of the lake bluffs at the Lintz's Pier complex location. The large building along Lakeshore Road was also demolished at that time (Google Earth 2011, 2015). If any traces of the complex remain, they are undoubtedly fragmentary and will soon vanish into Lake Michigan. Most of the complex, if not all of it, has been destroyed.

Beach

Walkover survey was conducted on the beach at Lintz's Pier in July 2024. Researchers looked for any traces of the pier that might have washed ashore or fallen portions of the terrestrial complex above. The survey datum was set up roughly in line with the northern edge of the pier, south of the point where the pier road dropped down to beach level. Walkover south of the datum failed to identify much of interest besides a single, waterworn cream brick (Figure 4.9). Walkover north of the datum, however, identified a large, post-2015 material dump, including portions of a concrete block foundation or wall, foundation stones, concrete slabs with rebar reinforcement, oil



Figure 4.9: Cream Brick on Beach at Lintz's Pier, July 2024

drums filled with cement or concrete, and the remains of concrete/cement posts and walls (Figure 4.10).

Together, this material suggests that debris belonging to one or more buildings post-dating the Lintz's Pier complex were thrown down slope in an attempt to slow the bluff's erosion. There were no concrete buildings on the blufftop directly above prior to 2015, and the larger building removed from the Lakeshore Road right of way closer to Orchard Road was demolished well before the appearance of the dumped material. The origin of this debris is unknown, but it does not appear to relate to Lintz's Pier.



Figure 4.10: Debris Field on Beach at Lintz's Pier, July 2024

Interpretation: Individualism and Interconnections

The history of Lintz's Pier provides a fascinating insight into the variety of individuals who owned and operated pier sites. Frederic Gustav Lintz was no cut-throat capitalist clawing his way up in the world, but instead was a wealthy, philanthropic lover of the arts who used the cordwood and retail industry to provide a continuing income stream. His wife Anna Lintz was not a retiring frontier housewife, despite the "keeping house" notation in official census records, but an educated and competent woman who kept the family's fortunes grounded in the realities of Wisconsin's settlement-era economy.

Lintz's Pier also demonstrates the existence of connections between pier communities all along Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coast. Lintz sold his pier to Theodor Wunsch and Henry Grimm. While Wunsch lived out his life on his farm in the Town of Mosel just south of the pier, Grimm did not spend much time running Lintz's Pier. Instead, Grimm chose to operate a pier in Kewaunee County, appropriately named Grimm's Pier. Lintz's Pier eventually ended up in the hands of Edward Neuhaus, who may have been involved in early pier operations at Centerville in Manitowoc County. Those few who operated piers along Lake Michigan clearly were part of a small community with deep interconnections. Future research may reveal more such connections, increasing understanding of early transportation and commerce in coastal Wisconsin. Currently, with the limited remaining extant pilings, the Lintz's Pier site is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Chapter 5: Amsterdam (SB-0380)

Introduction

The vanished community of Amsterdam tells a different story from that of other vanished pier communities in Wisconsin. The pier at Amsterdam began as a transshipment point for forestry products, such as cordwood and staves, like so many of Wisconsin's ghost ports. But the village was also home to numerous fisherfolk who gained their livelihoods from Lake Michigan. Over time as farms were cleared and stands of timber dwindled, fishing became the main occupation for many residents around Amsterdam.

Location and Setting

Amsterdam is located in Section 30 of Township 13 North, Range 23 East, in the Town of Holland. The village was about 15 miles south of the City of Sheboygan in Sheboygan County and 15 miles north of Port Washington in Ozaukee County. The base of the pier was located approximately half a mile east northeast of the intersection of modern Amsterdam and Sauk Trail Roads and about 275 feet north of where Amsterdam Road currently meets Lake Michigan. According to old plat maps, the pier road was known as Maine (or Main) Street in the village of Amsterdam, one block north of Muller Road, which is now Amsterdam Road.

No streams empty into the lake at Amsterdam. There is an intermittent, unnamed drainage that empties into Lake Michigan about 900 feet south of Amsterdam and Barr Creek, a named intermittent stream, empties into the lake just over a half mile north of Amsterdam. The Onion River flows northward about three miles west northwest of Amsterdam, eventually emptying into the Sheboygan River near Sheboygan Falls.

The shoreline at Amsterdam is low and rolling without the steep lake bluffs found elsewhere along the mid-Lake Michigan coast (Figure 5.1). Sand forms a wide beach with only occasional drifts of pebbles and gravel. The shore slopes gradually downward, reaching a depth of approximately 10 feet at the end of the extant pier pilings.

General Land Office records indicate that the area boasted a forest cover of beech, sugar maple, linden, burr oak, elm,



Figure 5.1: Amsterdam Beach, Facing South, December 2024

and ash. The landscape today is composed of forested wetlands, woodlots, and farm fields with the occasional residence. Numerous coastal homes line the shore both north and south of Amsterdam.

History

The village of Amsterdam was established by the progenitor of one of Wisconsin's most famous fisheries. Gilbert H. Smith – father of Herbert, Delos, and Roy Smith of the long-lived Smith Brothers Fish Company of Port Washington. Smith and his father, William, came to Wisconsin in 1847 from the area around Pulaski, New York, near Lake Ontario. They briefly lived in Port Washington but moved to the area that would become Amsterdam in 1848. Soon after, William Smith died, leaving the fishery to his son. Gilbert Smith purchased and platted the land that would become Amsterdam in 1850, submitting the official plat map to Sheboygan County in May 1852 (*Sheboygan Press* 1945, *Ozaukee Press* 1960, Dykstra and Premo 2014; Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2: 1875 Map of Amsterdam, Holland Township (G. A. Randall & Co. 1875)

Some written records state that there was a community of Ohioans living in the area around 1845 before it became Amsterdam. These early residents, who may have only been seasonal occupants, reportedly came to fish in Lake Michigan because they could no longer make a

living fishing in Lake Erie. Very little information has been uncovered about these early residents and the exact nature of their contribution to early Amsterdam history (*Sheboygan Press* 1946, Dykstra and Premo 2014).

Following the establishment of Amsterdam, early residents built a pier in 1851 to bring in goods from elsewhere and ship out local products. Exactly who built the pier is uncertain. Some sources suggest that Dutch immigrant Hendrik Walvoord and his son, Gerrett Jan (or Henry) Walvoord, constructed the pier while others credit Gilbert H. Smith as the pier builder. Hendrik and Gerrett Walvoord came with other family members to the Town of Holland, within which Amsterdam is located, in late 1849. Hendrick Walvoord purchased shares in the Holland Trading Company, whose earliest trustees were J. R. Muller, H. J. Traas, S. Burn, A. Stokdyk, G. Berschat Dae-Groot, Patrick Maccanville, and William Williams (Sheboygan County Register 1852). Other investors included Van Tilberg and Hoyt. The Walvoords began trading in forestry products, opening a general store to provide groceries and general merchandise in payment for cordwood, staves, and other products from local farmers. Since both Smith and the Walvoords benefited from use of the pier, it is possible that both may have participated in its construction. Records indicate the pier extended 1,000 feet offshore from Main Street, now Amsterdam Road, and had a water depth of 22 feet at its end, adequate for docking most vessels of the day (*Sheboygan Press* 1927b, 1927e, 1934; Buchen 1944:267-268; Dykstra and Premo 2014:8).

On July 11, 1856, tragedy struck the Walvoord family. Historical accounts vary, but early that morning Gerrett Walvoord was either hurrying to meet a government dredge that had been hired to increase the water depth at Amsterdam or he was measuring cordwood on the pier in expectation of an arriving vessel. The cordwood may have shifted and thrown Walvoord into the water as he scrambled over it. Or he may have painfully ruptured a boil on his arm, possibly by hitting it against the cordwood or pier, and fallen off the pier in shock. In either case, Walvoord was pinned underwater when several logs toppled in after him. Gerrett's wife, Anna Maria Engel Nolton Walvoord, and Gerrett's father continued to operate the general store after his death. But other disasters soon followed. The Walvoord store burned down in January 1857 and the Walvoords did not rebuild. Another general store owned by a Mr. Wood continued to operate (Northern Furniture Company 1894:524; *Sheboygan Press* 1927d, 1927e, 1934). In early June 1858, fire also consumed a steam sawmill at Amsterdam run by three men with surnames Thompson, Tinsler, and Watser (*Manitowoc Herald* 1858).

Despite these setbacks, Amsterdam appears to have flourished for some time. Exactly how many establishments operated in the village is not certain, but there were at least two general stores, a blacksmith shop, a tavern, a cooperage, and a school at the village's height. In 1872, when the Milwaukee, Lake Shore & Western Railway became the first railroad to pass through the area, the town's fortunes began to change. The railroad was built further inland, passing through the nearby town of Cedar Grove. This new shipping option, combined with depleted timber stocks in the region, reduced the need for lake shipping and use of the Amsterdam pier. Several Amsterdam residents moved to Cedar Grove at this time. Some even placed their homes on skids during the winter and hauled them to Cedar Grove with teams of oxen. But not everyone left Amsterdam, especially those who fished the waters of Lake Michigan. An 1889 plat map of Amsterdam depicts ten buildings in the town, including a fish house on the pier road

near the lakeshore. The pier is conspicuously absent from the map (Figure 5.3). It is unclear whether the map makers simply failed to depict the structure or whether the pier had become so dilapidated that it was no longer in use (Dykstra and Premo 2014:11,95-101; Foote and Henion 1889:8). It is possible that another pier had been built elsewhere, perhaps closer to active fisheries.



Figure 5.3: 1889 Map of Amsterdam, Holland Township (Foote and Henion 1889)

Throughout the history of the village of Amsterdam, fishing was an important industry. Early resident Gilbert H. Smith and his sons Herbert and Delos fished near Amsterdam for years, possibly as late as the 1880s. Other fisheries operated at Amsterdam included the Amsterdam Fish Company, owned by Jimmy and Adolph Stokdyk, and the Smies & Zurmond Fish Company, operated by Edgar Smies and Peter Zurmond. White fish and sturgeon were the most abundant fish early in the community's history. As fish stocks declined, fisherfolk moved from seine net fishing near shore to pound-net fishing, which allowed harvesting of fish in deeper

waters. White fish were no longer as abundant, but chubs, herring, and trout still filled the nets (Figure 5.4).¹ Gilbert H. Smith died in July 1892 and is buried in small, rural Amsterdam Cemetery off Hawe Road north of where the village once stood. In 1896, Herbert and Delos Smith moved the Smith Brothers Fishery to Port Washington where their brother Roy joined them in 1900. On March 18, 1906, while fishing off Amsterdam on the Smith Brothers Fishery tug *Tessler*, Captain Delos Smith and his crew made headlines when they rescued over 60 people from the burning Goodrich steamer *Atlanta* and then beached the burning steamer on shore not far from Amsterdam (*Sheboygan Press* 1920, 1945, 1947, 1957; *Sheboygan Press-Telegram* 1924; Roerdink et al. 2001:139-140; Wisconsin Shipwrecks 2025a).



Figure 5.4: Sail-powered and Gas-powered Fishing Boats near Amsterdam, ca. 1895 (Sheboygan County Historical Research Center [SCHRC] 1895)

After moving to Port Washington, the Smith Brothers Fishery gained national fame. They started a small fish sandwich shop that evolved into the renowned Smith Brothers Fish Shanty restaurant, which was rated highly by national food critic and travel writer Duncan Hines. The Wisconsin restaurant was so popular that members of the Smith family established a west coast Fish Shanty near Los Angeles, flying Great Lakes fish to the restaurant daily to supply eager diners (*Sheboygan Press* 1945, 1948; Wilson 1948). By 1965, the Smith Brothers Company operated three restaurants – two in Port Washington and one in California; two fish markets – one in Port Washington and one in Milwaukee; and a caviar packing and spiced fish canning

¹ The known fishermen in the picture include Eernisse (first name not listed); John DeWitt; John Groats; Jimmy, Adolph, and John Stokdyk; Lou Ingelse; and the Smith Brothers.

operation. The fishery also sold smoked fish, pickled herring, frozen chowder, sauces, and more (*Ozaukee Press* 1960, Barr 1965). Although the Port Washington Fish Shanty restaurant closed in 1988, the Smith Brothers Food Service processing plant closed in 2001, and fishing has since disappeared as an industry in the City of Sheboygan, the history of fishing continues to be important to city and county residents (Bernier 2016, Heimdahl 2025). In addition to the original Smith family operation, many other fishing companies operated out of or near Amsterdam. Family names associated with fishing in the area include DeWitt, DeZoute, Grotenhuis, Huibregtse, Ingelse, Kobes, Kolste, Moennig, Nath, Roerdink, Smies, Stokdyk, Van Der Jagt, VanDrieste, Weiskamp, Westerbeke, and Zurmond (*Sheboygan Press* 1911, 1947; Dykstra and Premo 2014:10-11; Figure 5.5).

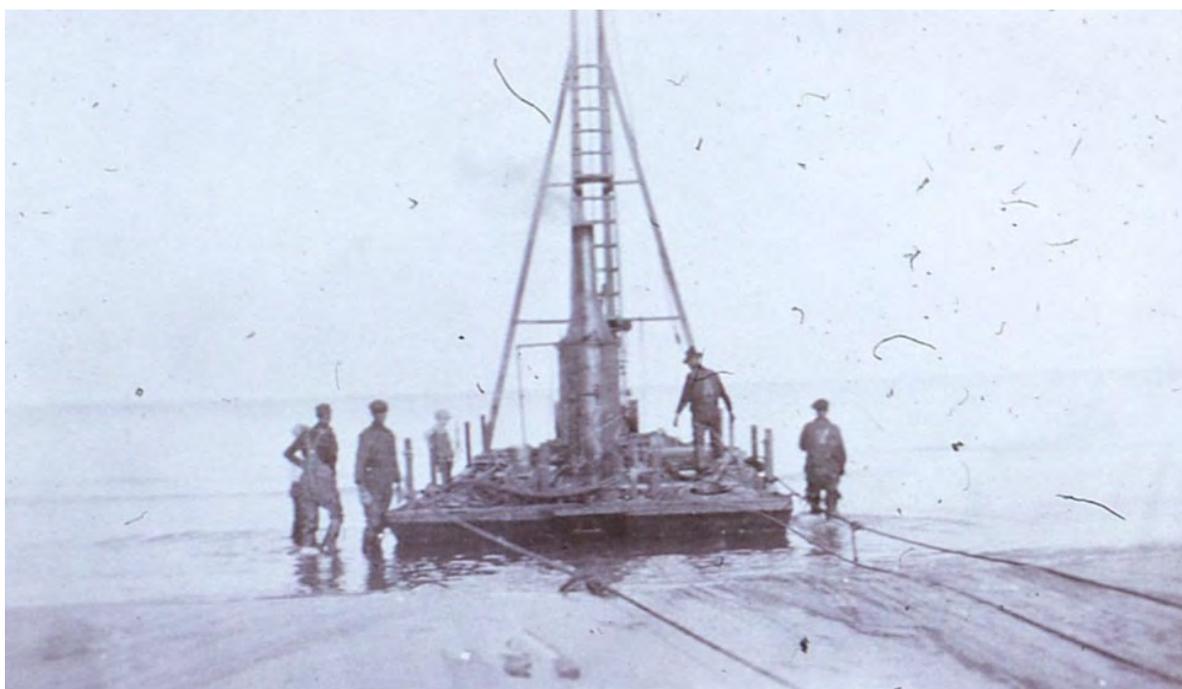


Figure 5.5: Stokdyk and Ingelse Scow with Steam-Powered Pile Driver, ca. 1900 (SCHRC 1900)

Fishing was a challenging profession. Some years were fraught with difficulty. Storms destroyed pound nets and reduced hauls (*Sheboygan Daily Press* 1910, *Sheboygan Press* 1911). Other years resulted in record breaking catches, such as the 6,000-lb daily catch recorded by the Stokdyk Brothers in April 1915 and the 7,000-lb daily catches of trout reported by the Smies family in 1942 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1869b; *Sheboygan Press* 1915, 1942). While the earliest days of fishing in Amsterdam were conducted close to shore using sailboats and seine nets, as the industry evolved, fisherfolk set off from shore in motorboats and drove their pound net stakes into the lakebed with gasoline powered pile drivers (*Sheboygan Press* 1942; see Figure 5.4; Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7).

Besides the Smith Brothers and Stokdyk Brothers, the Smies were a well-known fishing family in Amsterdam. Daniel Smies, Sr., began pound-net fishing in Amsterdam in 1871 and shipped salted fish in barrels from the pier until the railroad came to Cedar Grove. Daniel Sr.'s sons

John, Abram Sr., Peter, and Daniel Jr.; grandson Jannes; and other relatives worked in the fishery (see Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7). Several sons continued to operate the Smies fishery after



Figure 5.6: Pound Net Pocket, D. Smies' Sons Fishery (Arendt 1956a)



Figure 5.7: Abram Smies, Sr., Shovels Fish into the Boat from the Pound Net Pocket, D. Smies' Sons Fishery (Arendt 1956b)

Daniel Sr. died in April 1931. In 1938, Daniel Smies, Jr., and Jim Weiskamp took over the Amsterdam Fish Company from Jimmy and Adolph Stokdyk (Figure 5.8). Local resident Abram Smies, Jr. – grandson of Daniel Smies, Sr. – who still lives on Smies Road not far from the former site of the village, recalled working in the pound-net fishery with his uncle Dan Smies, Jr., and transporting fish from Amsterdam to the railroad depot in Cedar Grove (*Sheboygan Press* 1946, Roerdink et al. 2001:139-140, Smies and Smies 2024; Figure 5.9).



Figure 5.8: Amsterdam Pier, Fish Shanty, and Icehouse, ca. 1940s (SCHRC 1940)

As native fishing stocks declined, particularly after the introduction of the sea lamprey into Lake Michigan in the 1930s and alewives in the 1940s, the once thriving fishing industry around Amsterdam collapsed. Most of the commercial fisheries around Amsterdam had closed by the mid-1950s (Roerdink et al. 2001:140, Madenjian et al. 2008, Great Lakes Fishery Commission 2025).

Founder Gilbert H. Smith had ambitious goals for the village of Amsterdam and, for a time, the settlement grew due to the abundant nearby natural resources of timber and fish. But as these resources declined and alternate transportation networks, like the railway in nearby Cedar Grove, beckoned, the settlement of Amsterdam plateaued. Envisioned by its founder as a



Figure 5.9: Pushing Fish in Cart on Pier, D. Smies' Sons Fishery (Arendt 1956c)

gridded, bustling village of farmers, fisherfolk, and business owners, Amsterdam never fully lived up to its platted potential.

Findings

Pier

The remnants of the Amsterdam pier extend at an approximately 100 degree bearing from the lakeshore. The 15 observed, extant pilings extend from about 500 feet to 575 feet from shore. The pilings average around one foot in diameter (Figure 5.10). Based on aerial imagery, additional pilings may be present between 325 to 360 feet from shore but were not visible at the time of survey due to water visibility, sand coverage, or other factors. Four of the mapped pilings are grouped in pairs. These paired pilings are on the southwestern edge of the observed pilings, suggesting either that these were heavy duty supports or reinforcement or repair of the pier.

Based on the extant pilings, the pier was at least 575 feet long, but the limited number of remaining pilings prevents estimation of the width of the pier or the shape of its terminus. A



Figure 5.10: Amsterdam Site Plan (Wisconsin Historical Society)

historic wall map from 1862 shows a “T”-shaped ending while an 1875 plat map shows a straight pier and 1877 and 1880 coast maps show an “L”-shaped terminus (Palmer and Harney 1862; G. A. Randall & Co. 1875; USACE 1877a, 1880). Further research may clarify the shape of the pier’s terminus, if enough extant pilings remain and sand coverage and water visibility allow for additional documentation.

Terrestrial

Although it appears Amsterdam was never as dense or structured as numerous early maps suggest, the village did host the pier and a number of buildings. An 1889 map of Amsterdam shows a platted village with 11 blocks each divided into between four and 19 lots. But only 10 buildings are depicted on the map, suggesting that most of the blocks and lots had never been improved (Palmer and Harney 1862, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875, Foote and Henion 1889). Today, the former village of Amsterdam is occupied by a township park with a seasonal metal boat launch and metal catwalk pier, parking lot, benches, large picnic shelter, small playground, and wide beach that attracts beachgoers and fishing enthusiasts alike. There is a small concrete foundation in the woods in the northwestern corner of Amsterdam Park adjacent to modern Marine Drive, but the inclusion of a modern wire nail in the concrete suggests the foundation is of more recent construction.

Besides the coastal homes fronting the lake north and south of Amsterdam Beach, there are only scattered homes in the area along Amsterdam and Sauk Trails Roads. One structure with possible ties to historic Amsterdam is the large home south of Amsterdam Road at W2055 Amsterdam Road (Sheboygan County Parcel ID 59006077160; Figure 5.11). Based on historic maps, this home may have been built and owned by Amsterdam founder Gilbert H. Smith and his wife, Minerva, or by an early resident named Muller. This early resident could be John R. Muller, postmaster of Cedar Grove from 1853 to 1861, for whom Muller Street in the early village of Amsterdam was likely named (Palmer and Harney 1862, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875, Foote and Henion 1889, Dykstra and Premo 2014:72-73). The undeveloped character of the area is mostly due to the 328-acre Amsterdam Dune Preservation Area that stretches both north and south of Amsterdam Park (Sheboygan County 2025).

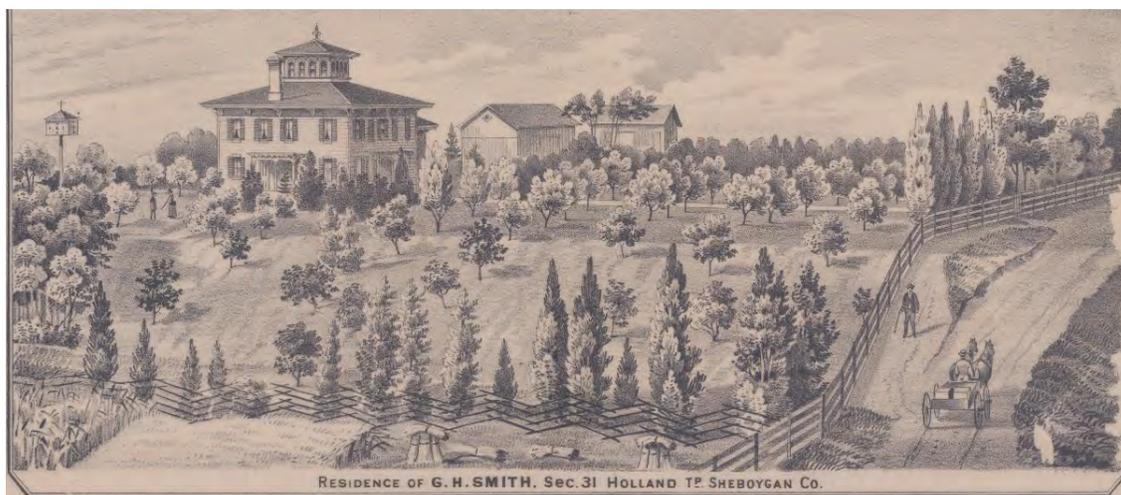


Figure 5.11: Home of Gilbert H. and Minerva Smith (G. A. Randall & Co. 1875)

No terrestrial survey was undertaken at Amsterdam due to the scope of the project. Future research into the terrestrial archaeological component of Amsterdam may reveal more about the density of the community and clarify whether it was ever as fully improved as Gilbert H. Smith intended when he platted the village into 11 blocks and 131 lots.

Beach

The survey datum was established on the beach near the waterline next to the modern boat launch. Walkover survey in July and December 2024 revealed no traces of the pier nor any remains of village buildings, structures, or infrastructure. Unlike many other mid-Lake Michigan beaches, very little riprap is in evidence at Amsterdam and erosion is minimal compared to other areas.

Interpretation: From Timber to Fish to Conservation

Amsterdam is a classic example of a vanished pier community that began with ambitious, but eventually unrealized, plans. Like several other such communities, Amsterdam initially focused on the shipment of forestry products derived from its wooded environs and hinterlands. But the village's founder, Gilbert H. Smith, was a fisherman by trade so it is unsurprising that Amsterdam residents switched to exploiting the rich fish stocks in nearby Lake Michigan when local timber was exhausted (Figure 5.12). Regardless of its ambitious beginnings and ability to pivot, Amsterdam still suffered the same, though later, decline as other ghost ports when fishing stocks were depleted. Although many Cedar Grove and county residents still remember Amsterdam and its contribution to Wisconsin history, little is left to commemorate the rich fishing history of the village besides a charming place name and a jumble of submerged pilings.



Figure 5.12: "Fish Shanties at Amsterdam" by A. J. Baum (Baum 1945b)

While extant pilings surveyed thus far at Amsterdam are limited, the site offers significant potential for further offshore and onshore archaeological research. Aerial imagery suggests that more pilings are extant than were surveyed in July 2024. In addition, both the immediate village of Amsterdam and large surrounding areas are managed as park or preserve land by the township and county. Depending on the extent of previous agricultural disturbances, current land uses may protect intact archaeological deposits. And the possible presence of Gilbert H. and Minerva Smith's residence, if the home at W2055 Amsterdam Road dates to the beginnings of Amsterdam, offers potential for understanding the lifeways and circumstances of the village's founder. Currently, with the limited remaining extant pilings, the Amsterdam site is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Amsterdam's beginnings and history centered on the exploitation of local natural resources such as timber and fish (Figure 5.13). Once those resources were exhausted, the village ceased to exist. Today, the name of Amsterdam is associated with a township park and a large county land preserve. Fittingly, Amsterdam's name will live on and its future will revolve around conservation of major natural resources – land, lake shoreline, and the many animals and plants that call the area home – instead of the unmitigated depletion of both terrestrial and lacustrine abundance.



Figure 5.13: Fisherman's Pier and Shanty at Amsterdam, 5 August 1939 (SCHRC 1939)

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Chapter 6: Ronksville / Ronk's Pier (OZ-0361)

Introduction

Unlike other vanished pier communities investigated as part of this project, Ronksville was solidly a family affair. Brothers Nicholas and Paul Ronk established the Luxemburger Pier Company, built Ronk's Pier at Ronksville, and operated the pier. Like many of the other ghost ports along Lake Michigan's eastern shore in Wisconsin, timber products were the mainstay of Ronk's Pier. Paul Ronk owned and ran a store, tavern, and hotel in nearby Lake Church, which likely obtained needed goods from shipments to the pier. Nicholas Ronk purchased his own vessel to ship cordwood and other forestry products from Ronk's Pier and elsewhere. The pier and adjacent lands were sold to or inherited by Ronk family members through the early 1900s. In 1916, the waterfront property finally left Ronk family ownership. Exactly how long Ronk's Pier continued in use is unclear, but the pier was likely no longer in operation when the Ronk family sold their last family lands in the Town of Belgium.

Location and Setting

Ronksville is located in Section 30 of Township 12 North, Range 23 East, in the Town of Belgium in Ozaukee County. The base of the pier was probably located about 2,000 feet southeast of the intersection of modern Jay and Sauk Trail Roads and approximately 500 feet south of where Jay Road meets Sauk Trail Beach Road about 200 feet inland of Lake Michigan. Access to Lake Michigan from Jay Road is limited; although a small access path exists between the end of Jay Road and the lakeshore, there is no parking, no facilities, and no accessible public beach.

No streams currently empty into the lake at Ronksville. A small, unnamed, intermittent drainage empties into Lake Michigan opposite Jay Road about 500 feet north of the base of Ronk's Pier. Another such drainage enters Lake Michigan about 1,100 feet south of the base of Ronk's Pier. Historic aerial images suggest another very short, intermittent drainage emptied into Lake Michigan about 200 feet south of the northern drainage until the mid-1960s (USDA 1937a, 1956, 1964, 1967b). Based on early historic maps, the northern or central drainage may once have emptied into Lake Michigan at Ronk's Pier (Burt 1835, Foote and Henion 1892). About one and a quarter miles directly west of Ronksville, Sucker Creek flows southward for almost eight miles before emptying into Lake Michigan about three miles north of Port Washington.

The shoreline at Ronksville is characterized by a beach of fluctuating width bounded by a roughly four-foot-high sandy bluff on the west (Figure 6.1). Some sections of the beach have riprap and other erosion control measures. Based on historical data and previous investigations, the beach is routinely submerged during storm events. A higher, relic shoreline bluff, or terrace, is located about 650 to 700 feet west of the beach. The sandy beach is composed of fine to coarse sand with drifts of pebbles along the water line. The lakebed slopes gradually downward. In 1834, surveyor William A. Burt described the beach as "broad and smooth" and noted that

the water generally shoaled near shore, likely describing a long stretch of shallows before drop-off into deeper waters (Burt 1834).



Figure 6.1: Beach and Shoreline at Ronk's Pier, July 2019 (Thomsen et al. 2020)

General Land Office records indicate that the area had a forest cover of beech, sugar maple, linden, elm, white ash, black ash, white oak, and burr oak (Burt 1834). Today, the landscape is composed of forested wetlands, woodlots, and farm fields with small housing developments to the north and coastal homes lining the shore both north and south of Ronksville.

History

The founding of Ronksville in Ozaukee County dates to the same period as its closest ghost port neighbors, Amsterdam and Lintz's Pier in Sheboygan County. In July 1849, brothers Nicholas and Paul Ronk arrived in New York from their native country of Luxembourg. The brothers quickly set out for Wisconsin, living briefly in Port Washington before moving to Belgium Township. Nicholas's first wife, Maria Hemmer Ronk, died on 15 September 1849 and is buried in St. Mary Cemetery in Lake Church in the northwest quarter of Section 24 in Belgium Township (Thomsen et al. 2020:27, FindAGrave 2025i).

After arriving in Wisconsin, Nicholas quickly purchased 80 acres in the southwest quarter of Section 1 in the Town of Belgium, north of what would become Jay Road and less than a mile northwest of the eventual location of Ronk's Pier (Thomsen et al. 2020:27). In 1850, Nicholas sold 40 of those acres to Paul. In January 1852, Nicholas married Katharine Marie Ellenbecker, but she died less than three years later on 3 June 1854. Katharine is also buried in St. Mary Cemetery in Lake Church (Family Search 2025, FindAGrave 2025j).

By 1855, both Nicholas and Paul were living in the Town of Belgium and Paul had been appointed the Town Clerk. Paul's household consisted of four individuals – two males and two

females, with two born abroad. Nicholas's household had three individuals – one male and two females with all three born abroad (Wisconsin Secretary of State 1855, Thomsen et al. 2020:27). In 1856, Paul purchased a lot in Section 13 directly across from St. Mary's Church and cemetery in Lake Church (Figure 6.2). Although a store, tavern, and hotel occupied the property in later years, it is unclear if Paul built all three establishments or took over their operation when he purchased the property. By 1874, Paul is listed as the proprietor of the hotel on a county wall map and a building labeled "hotel" is depicted on his property across from the church (Nash and Tucker 1874, Thomsen et al. 2020:28).

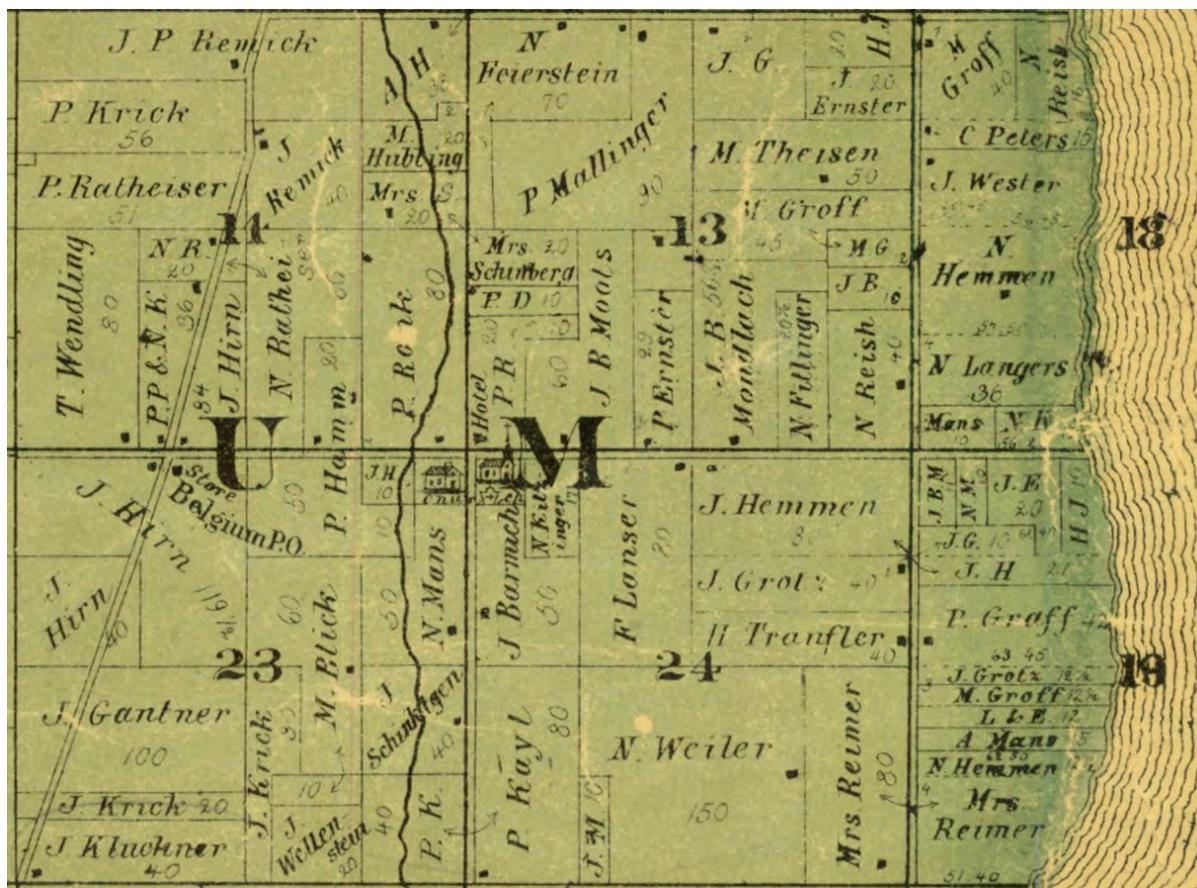


Figure 6.2: 1874 Map of Lake Church, Belgium Township (Nash and Tucker 1874)

The same year that Paul purchased property in Lake Church, both brothers bought lakeshore real estate in the northwest quarter of Section 7 from Barnum Blake (Figure 6.3). Blake, who had come to Port Washington with his family in 1848, owned several businesses in Port Washington and at least two area piers – one in the city of Port Washington and one at Blakesville in Section 1 of Port Washington Township. Blake is often credited with building the Amsterdam pier, but research conducted for this project proved that incorrect, although it is possible that Blake may have owned the Amsterdam pier or had a financial interest in it at some point in time. After coming to Wisconsin, Blake purchased large tracts of land along the nearby lakeshore and sold cleared timber from those lots via his piers, before selling the cutover lands to arriving immigrants like the Ronks (Barr 1965:46-47, Thomsen et al. 2020:28).



Figure 6.3: 1874 Map of Ronk's Pier, Belgium Township (Nash and Tucker 1874)

Considering their purchase of waterfront property and Paul's businesses in Lake Church, it seems likely the Ronk brothers had maritime aspirations as early as 1856. In 1858, they realized these aspirations when they established the Luxemburger Pier Company, built Ronk's Pier off their Section 7 properties, established a public "forever road" between their properties leading to the pier from what is now Sauk Trail Road, and began trading in forestry products just like Blake (Thomsen et al. 2020:28; Figure 6.4). The pier probably also served as a supply point for Paul's businesses in Lake



Figure 6.4: Ronk's Pier with Nicholas and Paul Ronk and Company Workers, ca. 1860s to 1870s (Thomsen et al. 2020).

Church, though the overland trip of more than three miles from the pier to Lake Church must have been daunting at certain times of the year.

By 1860, Nicholas and Paul were well established in Belgium Township. According to census records, each worked as a “dealer in cut wood” and had \$3,000 worth of real estate holdings. Nicholas had \$300 worth of personal assets and lived with his third wife, Mary Schumacher Ronk; two teenage daughters; and two 8-month-old infants who were likely fraternal twins. Paul had \$200 in other assets; he lived with his wife, Anna, and five children under the age of eight. His household also included 72-year-old Maria Riesch, who may have been Paul’s mother-in-law (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860b; FindAGrave 2025j, 2025k). The 1860 census agricultural schedule for Wisconsin provides additional detail. Nicholas’s farm included 80 acres worth \$1,000 with 30 improved acres and 50 unimproved acres. He owned \$100 in farm tools and \$130 in livestock – three milk cows, three oxen, two other cattle, five sheep, and three pigs. Within the last year, his farm had produced two tons of hay, 50 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of rye, 10 bushels of corn, 50 bushels of oats, 20 bushels of peas and beans, 50 bushels of potatoes, and \$40 worth of butchered meat. Paul’s farm of 56 acres, also worth \$1,000, included 20 improved acres and 36 unimproved acres. He owned \$80 worth of farm tools and \$120 worth of livestock – three milk cows, two oxen, three other cattle, and four pigs. His farm produced a more diverse selection of agricultural products including four tons of hay, 97 bushels of wheat, 50 bushels of oats, 30 bushels of potatoes, 70 pounds of butter, 12 pounds of maple sugar, and \$20 worth of butchered meat (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860d). The agricultural schedules do not give any insight into the Ronk brothers’ pier business, but their farming success suggests they were doing well economically.

Business was so good, Nicholas Ronk decided to purchase, with his neighbor Nicolaus Kanton, the lumber schooner *Northerner* from W. A. Parker and D. G. Parker of Chicago. Ronk and Kanton each owned a half interest in the vessel and Fred Edmonds was the vessel’s master. Edmonds had recently served as master during the Parkers’ ownership of the vessel. Nicholas Ronk likely intended to use the vessel to facilitate shipment of forestry products from his pier. Measuring 81 feet in length and 18 feet in beam with seven feet in depth of hold and two masts, *Northerner* was already 15 years old at the time of Ronk and Kanton’s purchase in September 1865. In December 1866, at the end of the next shipping season, Nicholas Ronk bought out Kanton’s half of *Northerner* for \$1,283, temporarily becoming the vessel’s sole owner; Edmonds continued to serve as master. By May 1867, Ronk had sold one third of the vessel to Milwaukee resident Andreas Ryerson and retained two thirds for himself. Captain Markers Gunnerson replaced Edmonds as master. The same year he became part owner of *Northerner*, Ryerson captained the schooner *Guido* of Pfister and Vogel and then took over as master of *Northerner* for the 1868 shipping season (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1867, Meverden and Thomsen 2009, Thomsen et al. 2020:31-37, Leitz 2025a).

During Nicholas Ronk’s ownership of *Northerner* – which included a partial 1866 season, a full 1867 season, and a nearly full 1868 season – *Northerner* shipped at least 1,849 cords of wood, 60 cords of bark, 50 bushels of potatoes, two cargoes of shooks, and another unspecified cargo of lumber and bark. These numbers represent only the cargoes carried by *Northerner* from Ronk’s Pier. During the vessel’s career under Ronk’s ownership, *Northerner* also carried cargoes to or from Algoma, Bode’s Pier, Centerville, Clapper’s Pier, Davis’s Pier, Janison Pier,

Long's Pier, Manitowoc, Mann's Landing, Parson's Pier, Robinson's Pier, Turner's Pier, and Sand Bay, all in or likely in Wisconsin, as well as Grand Haven, Holland, Muskegon, Manistee, St. Joseph, and White Lake, Michigan. Many other vessels also called at Ronk's Pier to pick up cordwood and other products during this period (Leitz 2025a). It is important to note that the above accounting of *Northerner's* cargoes from Ronk's Pier during Nicholas Ronk's ownership is necessarily incomplete. Some newspapers reported only marine arrivals and clearances of vessels without enumerating the cargoes they carried. In addition, this tally is based on research into digitized, searchable historic newspapers available from major databases. Since numerous historic newspapers are not yet available digitally, more information on *Northerner's* shipping activity from Ronk's Pier undoubtedly remains to be discovered. Regardless, Nicholas Ronk's investment in *Northerner* clearly brought copious dividends.

But as demonstrated by Emil Bode's experience at Norheim, owning a lake vessel was a risky endeavor. Nicholas Ronk learned this lesson at the tail end of the 1868 season. On 28 November 1868, while loading a cargo of wood at Amsterdam, *Northerner* pounded heavily on the bottom. After setting sail, Ryerson and his crew discovered that the vessel was taking on water. Thinking to lighten the load, Ryerson came ashore one of the piers in Port Washington and had the vessel's deck load of wood removed. Thus lightened, Ryerson engaged the propellor *Cuyahoga* to tow the damaged vessel to Milwaukee to deposit the remainder of its cargo and probably come in for repairs. Despite Ryerson's efforts, *Northerner* again began to fill with water while in tow and capsized off Port Ulao about four and a half miles southwest of Port Washington (Figure 6.5). *Northerner's* crew made it safely onboard *Cuyahoga*, which immediately returned to Port Washington. Plans were quickly made to look for the abandoned vessel, but foul weather prevented any searches until early December. No traces of *Northerner* were located and the vessel was registered as a total loss (Meverden and Thomsen 2009, Thomsen et al. 2020:31-37). While Emil Bode of Norheim sold the scow *Swallow* at a significant financial loss, Nicholas Ronk was not even afforded that indignity. Ronk's entire investment simply sank beneath the waves. Whether he carried insurance on the vessel or its final cargo is unknown, but it was common for owners of older vessels in the lumber trade to forego insurance on the vessel or the cargo or both.

Despite the loss of *Northerner*, Ronk's Pier continued to ship out cargoes in other lake vessels. But the cargoes started to decrease as the 1860s came to a close (Leitz 2025a). Maybe Paul Ronk began to notice the changes or maybe he just became restless. In 1869, Paul started selling his properties in Lake Church and the Town of Belgium, most of which his brother purchased. The 1870 census lists both brothers as farmers, instead of dealers of cut wood. Nicholas had \$3,000 in real estate and a hefty \$2,000 in personal assets while Paul had \$4,000 in real estate, despite his recent sales, and \$500 in other assets. Nicholas lived with his third wife, Mary; seven children ranging from 10 years old to 1 year old; and an 18-year-old laborer from Luxembourg named Peter Schumacher. Since Mary's maiden name was Schumacher, Peter was likely her relative, but their exact connection is not clear. Paul lived with his wife, Anna; five children between 18 and 2 years of age; and a 10-year-old boy from Luxembourg named Nic Gater (name and spelling uncertain due to legibility of record). Since no occupation is listed for Nic Gater, his relationship to Paul Ronk is unknown. He may have been the child of a relative or friend from Luxembourg whom Paul agreed to sponsor in America or he could have been living

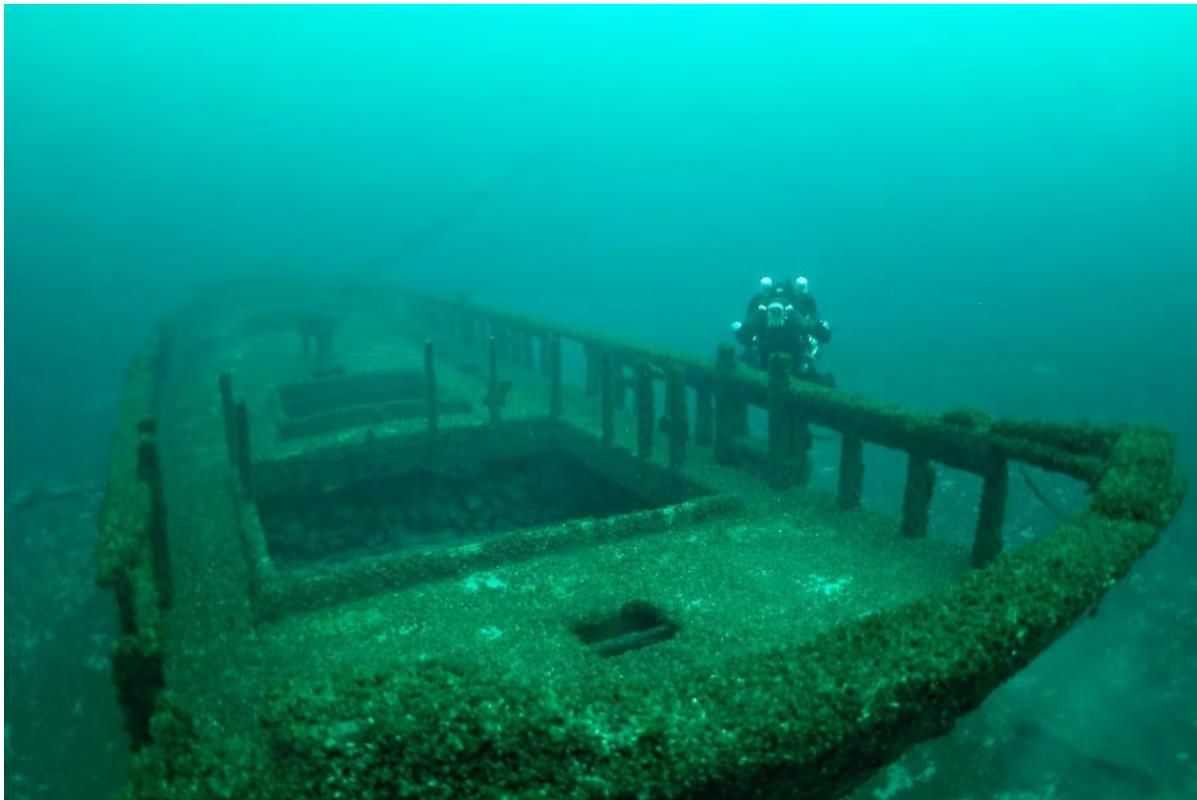


Figure 6.5: Northerner Shipwreck with Cordwood in Hold (Wisconsin Shipwrecks 2025b)

in the household with the understanding that he would serve as an apprentice, clerk, or servant in the future (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870b, FindAGrave 2025k).

As in 1860, the 1870 census agricultural schedule for Wisconsin provides additional detail about the Ronk brothers' farms. Nicholas Ronk had increased his real estate holdings by 40 acres, for a total of 120 acres – including 70 improved acres and 50 unimproved acres – worth \$3,500. He also possessed \$300 worth of farming tools and \$800 worth of domestic animals – including five horses, five milk cows, six other cattle, four sheep, and five pigs. His farm produced 300 bushels of wheat, 400 bushels of oats, 100 bushels of potatoes, 15 tons of hay, 12 pounds of wool, and \$90 worth of butchered meat. He had also paid out \$1,000 in wages within the past year, some of it possibly to his tenant laborer, Peter Schumacher. Paul Ronk had a farm of similar value, including 110 acres of real estate – 70 improved acres and 40 unimproved acres – worth \$4,000. The worth of any farm tools he had is not recorded, but he owned \$500 worth of domestic animals, including eight horses, three milk cows, two oxen, three other cattle, three sheep, and six pigs. His farm produced \$90 worth of butchered meat, 210 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of oats, 35 bushels of barley, 35 pounds of butter, and six tons of hay. He paid out only \$200 in wages, which is low compared to his brother, but typical of wage payments by farmers in the area (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870e). The Ronk brothers owned significant real estate and had productive farms, but the status of their pier business is not clear from census records. However, the complex of eight pier buildings and the pier shown on the

1877 coastal chart suggest that shipping was still a part of the Ronk family livelihood (USACE 1877a; Figure 6.6).

Marine news from larger cities like Milwaukee, Chicago, Kenosha, and Racine suggest that timber exports from Ronk's Pier continued to gradually decline as the 1870s pressed on (Leitz 2025a). Although records of marine incidents at Ronk's Pier are rare, the schooner *Gertrude* was driven ashore at Ronk's Pier in April 1874. Reports suggest the vessel was refloated not long afterwards (*Inter Ocean* 1874). By 1879, Paul Ronk had sold all his Lake Church and Belgium Township properties and moved to South Creek in Dixon

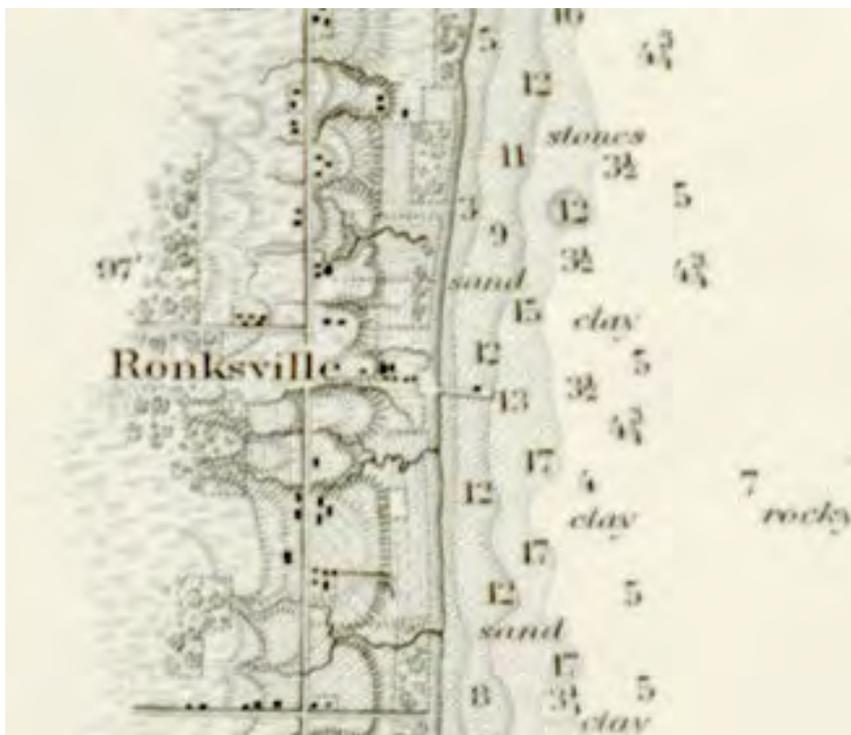


Figure 6.6: 1877 Map of Ronk's Pier, Belgium Township (USACE 1877a)

County, Nebraska. He died there on 29 December 1880. That same year, the census records Nicholas Ronk as still farming and living with his wife, Mary. The household also included his three grown children who were working on the farm or in the home, three children under 17 who were attending school, and Nicholas's 80-year-old mother-in-law, Catharine Ferber (or Herber). The 1880 census no longer listed property values or personal assets (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1880d). Only four years later at the age of 68, Nicholas died on 14 February 1884. Like his three wives, he is buried at St. Mary's Cemetery in Lake Church (Thomsen et al. 2020:35; FindAGrave 2025i, 2025j, 2025k).

Nicholas Ronk's son – also Nicholas Ronk – and his wife, Mary Hubing Ronk, inherited the roughly 80 acres of lakefront property adjacent to Ronk's Pier (Foote and Henion 1892). The younger Nicholas Ronk died in October 1891 (Thomsen et al. 2020:35). Whether he operated Ronk's Pier from 1884 to 1891, or whether there was even a pier to operate at that time, is unknown. Extensive research in historic newspapers revealed no references to nor any record of shipping to or from the pier in the 1880s or 1890s (Leitz 2025a). Although the younger Nicholas Ronk appears as the owner of the lakefront property in Section 7 on an 1892 Belgium Township map from an Ozaukee County atlas, neither he nor any other Ronk family members appear in that atlas's directory for Belgium Township (Figure 6.7). Since Nicholas Ronk had died the previous October, his absence from the directory says little about his occupation in the

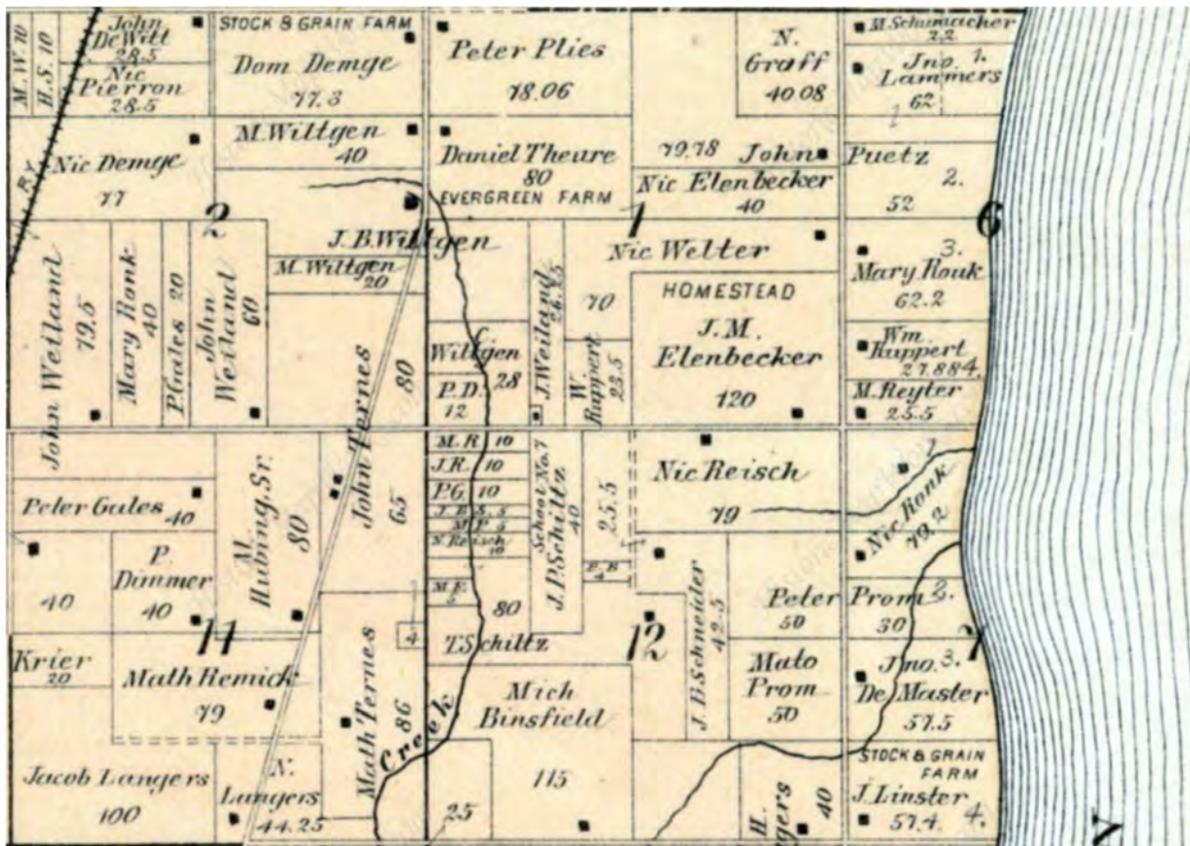


Figure 6.7: 1892 Map of Ronk's Pier, Belgium Township (Foote and Henion 1892)

preceding years. Mary Hubing Ronk sold the lakefront property to their son, Peter N. Ronk, in 1914. Two years later, Peter sold the waterfront acreage to Alvin G. Weldboom of Lima, Wisconsin (Thomsen et al. 2020:35). For over 60 years, the Ronk family maintained their shoreline property from which Ronk's Pier extended for 18 years or more. As the timber was harvested and the area's economy changed, the Ronk brothers turned to farming. But even as the Ronk family cast their eyes inland and down to the fertile lands of their agricultural fields, their hearts still yearned for the coastal horizon of Ronksville. The final land in Belgium Township to leave Ronk family hands was the shoreline property in Section 7 that, for a time, was known as Ronk's Pier.

Findings

Pier

Sidescan sonar survey by Crossmon Consulting, LLC, and subsequent investigation of anomalies by Tamara Thomsen in July 2019 revealed a swath of angular stone with occasional wood fragments extending east from the possible location of Ronksville and forming a loose L-shape at some point offshore (Thomsen et al. 2020:51-53). Whether this feature represents the remains of cribbing from Ronk's Pier is unknown.

During survey in July 2024, no evidence of extant pilings or cribbing were found offshore of Ronksville. Water visibility, sand coverage, or other factors may explain the lack of findings, but remote sensing imagery is also of little assistance. Aerial imagery captured on relatively calm days over the course of a decade shows no indication of pier remains offshore of Ronksville (Google Earth 2005, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2015). Earlier aerial imagery also fails to reveal evidence of Ronk's Pier (USDA 1937a, 1964, 1967b). One possible exception is aerial imagery from 1961, which shows a line of unusual wave disturbance extending almost due east to about 425 feet offshore opposite the hypothetical location of the "forever road" between the properties of Nicholas and Paul Ronk (USDA 1961b; Figure 6.8). It is possible this wave disturbance was caused by extant remnants of Ronk's Pier in 1961, but whether any pilings or cribbing are extant today is unknown.



Figure 6.8: 1961 Aerial Photograph of Ronk's Pier (USDA 1961b)

The length and width of the pier and the shape of its terminus is uncertain due to the limited survey findings in 2019, the lack of survey findings in 2024, and the dearth of maps that include the pier. An early coastal chart, the only one that depicts Ronk's Pier, shows an L-shaped ending with a structure on it. But historic photos of the pier do not show enough detail to verify this configuration (USACE 1877a, Thomsen et al. 2020:41-42; Figure 6.9). Further research may help identify extant portions of the pier offshore of Ronksville and clarify the shape of the pier's terminus.

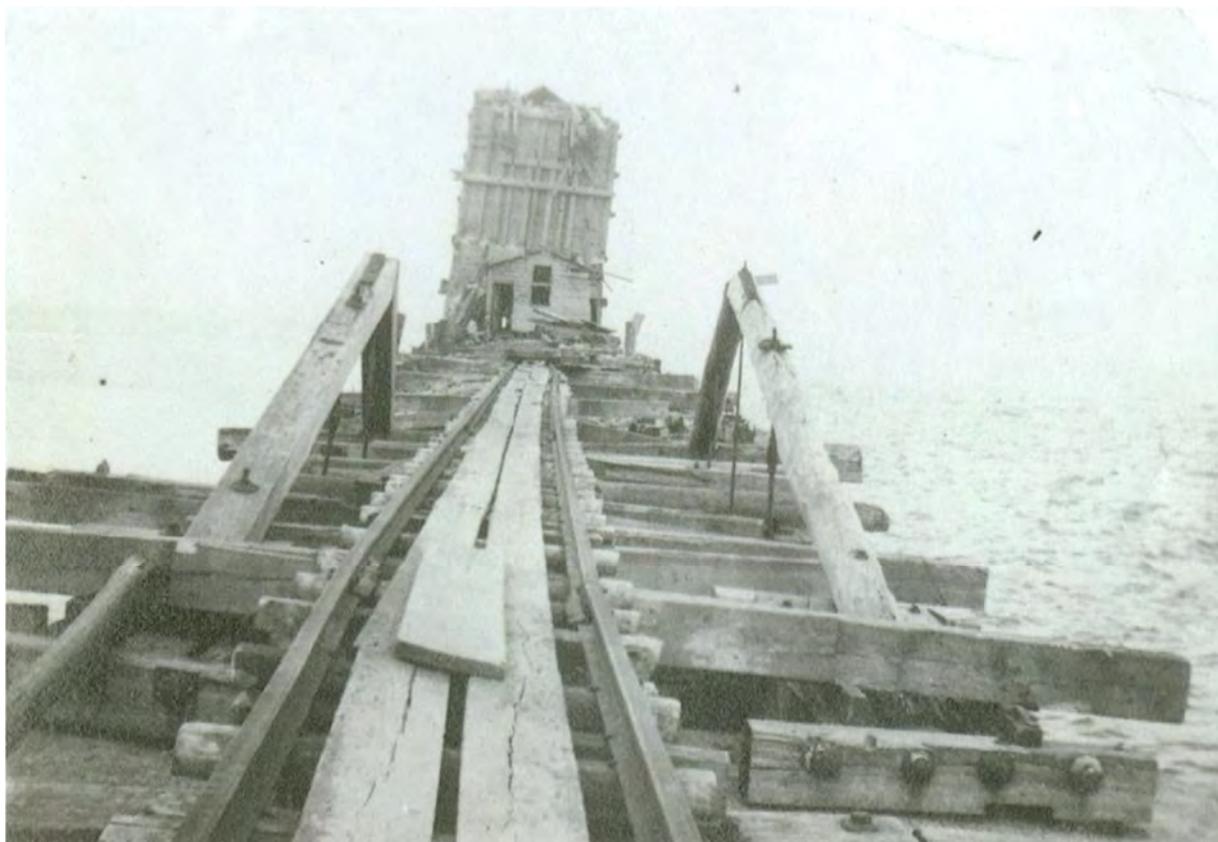


Figure 6.9: Ronk's Pier with Rail System and Building, ca. 1860s-1870s (Thomsen et al. 2020)

Terrestrial

The terrestrial component of Ronksville is not well understood since few maps show any buildings in the area and none are labeled, unlike maps for several other ghost ports studied during this project. A map from 1873 to 1874 shows only two structures on either side of the property boundary that formed the “forever road” that led to Ronk's Pier (Nash and Tucker 1874). An 1877 nautical chart provides some additional information about structures at Ronksville during the operation of the pier. The chart shows several buildings along the “forever road” that led to the pier between Nicholas and Paul Ronk's properties, including one structure on the upper terrace, four structures directly fronting the road, and two structures behind the four that front the road. One structure is also shown on the end of the L-shaped pier (USACE 1877a). Since none of the structures are labeled nor shown on other maps from the time period, it is not possible to determine how the buildings were used.

Today, the area along the beach where the base of the pier would have been located is occupied by coastal homes. The forever road is no longer visible and its former route east from what is now Sauk Trail Road is occupied by scrub land, which shows clear evidence of disturbance in late 2022; a farm field; and wood lots (Google Earth 2022b, 2024b). Since the farm field and wood lots appear to have experienced minimal disturbance, besides agricultural activity, the area holds potential to contain archaeological features associated with the several structures shown along the “forever road” on the 1877 nautical chart (USACE 1877a).

No terrestrial survey was undertaken at Ronksville due to the scope of the project and the lack of offshore findings in July 2024. Future research into the terrestrial archaeological component of Ronksville has the potential to illuminate cultural resources along the “forever road” leading to the pier, including archaeological components that may be associated with the Ronksville pier complex.

Beach

Shoreline survey in July 2019 revealed at least two worked timbers connected with metal fasteners north of the possible pier location (Figure 6.10). These timbers could be part of Ronk’s Pier. Other similar timbers were reported by landowners and interested parties but were not directly observed. Ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey, metal detector survey, and walkover survey were conducted on the beach in July 2019 by Dan Joyce, Amy Rosebrough, and Tamara Thomsen as well as Ronk descendants David Hirn and Jonathan Ronk. While several GPR anomalies and metal detector anomalies were identified, ground truthing did not occur so the exact nature of these anomalies cannot be determined. Two historic artifacts potentially dating to the period of Ronksville – a well-worn fragment of porcelain and a surf-polished horse molar – were identified during the walkover survey but could not be definitively associated with the pier (Thomsen et al. 2020:45-51). Due to the lack of any findings offshore in 2024, no survey datum was established and no walkover survey was conducted in July 2024.



Figure 6.10: Worked Timbers Connected with Metal Fasteners on Beach near Ronk’s Pier, July 2019

Interpretation: A Family Affair

Ronk's Pier represents a vanished pier community that appears to have been operated by only one family without the web of connections demonstrated by operators of piers at other pier communities along the Wisconsin mid-Lake Michigan shore. Nicholas and Paul Ronk founded the pier company, built the pier, and operated it. Although they certainly had assistance from clerks, laborers, and others, the Ronk brothers never sold the pier outside of the family. It is even possible that the pier ceased operation completely once Nicholas Ronk was no longer able to operate it. As such, Ronk's Pier offers the potential to study a pier site with few owners and a limited period of operations, allowing for investigation of an archaeological resource with highly defined parameters. Additional survey may reveal intriguing information about pier communities in Wisconsin if intact deposits remain either on shore or offshore. Currently, with the limited archaeological findings at the site, the Ronk's Pier site is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Chapter 7: Two Creeks / Pfister & Vogel Pier (MN-0503)

Introduction

Where a small, quaint county park now exists, stood once the bustling tannery town of Two Creeks. At the intersection of Two Creeks and Lakeshore Roads, there were warehouses, a store, a tavern and hotel, a brickyard, a manager's house, a tannery, and more. Directly offshore was a sturdy, working pier. Commercial shipping from the pier helped build the tanning empire of the Pfister & Vogel Leather Company in Milwaukee (Figure 7.1). Today, two small playground structures and a picnic shelter exist next to a boat launch and forested woodlot with a few homes scattered in the area. No visitor today would suspect the scope of the industry once supported along this bucolic, secluded shoreline.



Figure 7.1: Schooners Docked at the Pfister & Vogel Leather Company in Milwaukee, Stacks of Hemlock Bark Are Piled Next to the Dock, ca. 1880 (Gurda 2021)

Location and Setting

The historic village of Two Creeks was located in Section 11 of Township 21 North, Range 24

East, in the Town of Two Creeks, about 12 miles north of Two Rivers and 1.5 miles south of the Kewaunee County line. Historic Two Creeks should not be confused with the later town of Two Creeks (originally West Two Creeks) that straddled Sections 10 and 11 at the intersection of Two Creeks Road and State Trunk Highway 42 (formerly the Green Bay Road).

The base of the Two Creeks pier is located approximately 570 feet northeast of the intersection of modern Two Creeks and Lakeshore Roads. Although portions of Lakeshore Road were rerouted inland and away from the eroding lake bluffs in the mid-2010s, the intersection of Two Creeks and Lakeshore Roads did not see significant changes.

When the county was originally surveyed in 1834, only one creek drained into the lake at the future site of Two Creeks (Hathaway 1834, 1835). At that time of its establishment, Two Creeks was appropriately the location where two unnamed creeks drained into Lake Michigan. One creek was just north of the pier while the other was just south of it. Both creeks drained an area of swampy ground in the central southern portion of Section 11. Currently, two creeks still drain into the lake near the former site of Two Creeks, but the outlet of the southern creek has meandered farther south than during the heyday of the village (Figure 7.2). The northern creek still drains into Lake Michigan very close to the remains of the pier. The East Twin River, the closest named drainage, flows southward five miles west of Two Creeks and eventually empties into Lake Michigan at Two Rivers.



Figure 7.2: South Creek at Two Creeks, Looking East, July 2024

The lake bluffs at Two Creeks, as along much of the mid-Lake Michigan coast, are steep and composed of glacial sediments. Erosion has impacted the shoreline with evidence of mass wasting and coastal retreat (Figure 7.3). The narrow beach is composed of alternating drifts of gravel and sand. Similar drifts run parallel to the beach offshore. The shore slopes downward at a shallow angle, reaching a depth of approximately 12 feet at the end of the pier.

General Land Office records indicate that this stretch of coast was originally sheltered by a forest cover of hemlock, beech, and sugar maple. Today, the area is composed of forested wetlands, woodlots, farm fields, and pastures with the occasional farmstead and coastal home.



Figure 7.3: Volunteers Bob LaViolette and Chris Spoo Examine Pilings at Two Creeks, Shoreline Bluffs and Beach Are Visible in the Background, July 2024

History

Although Two Creeks was visited by Northwest Fur Company agent Jacques Vieau with his family and crew in 1795, Americans and Europeans did not begin settling in the area until the early 1840s. Milwaukee firm G. Pfister & Company (later known as the Pfister Leather Company and then the Pfister & Vogel Leather Company) bought significant tracts of land around Two Creeks and established a large tannery and a pier into the lake to take advantage of the area's abundant hemlock tree bark, which provides the tannins needed for the eponymous tanning process. G. Pfister & Company also imported trained workers for the tannery, constructed worker housing, and built a sawmill and planing mill (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1860, Falge 1912[1], Wojta 1941, Spevacek 1985).

Guido P. Pfister and Frederick Vogel, Sr., were titans of industry in Milwaukee in the late 1800s. The pair originally met in Buffalo, New York, while working in a tannery owned by Vogel's cousin, J. F. Schoelkoff. Pfister and Vogel moved to Milwaukee separately in 1847 and opened their own businesses. Pfister ran a leather retail store while Vogel built a tannery on the Menomonee River. In 1848, Pfister and Vogel went into business together and convinced Schoelkoff to invest in their new firm, G. Pfister & Company. The company prospered; within a year, G. Pfister & Company was producing half of the leather in Milwaukee. When Schoelkoff sold his shares in the company in 1857, he made nearly four times the amount of his original investment (Rosebrough et al. 2023:163-164, Encyclopedia of Milwaukee 2025). Considering the company's meteoric success, it is no surprise that Pfister and Vogel began looking to expand operations elsewhere in Wisconsin.

Exactly when the pier and other facilities at Two Creeks were built is uncertain, but research into marine shipping records shows that tanning bark, lumber, and shingles were being exported from Two Creeks to Milwaukee as early as 1856 and general merchandise, including flour, was being imported to Two Creeks that same year (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1856a, 1856b, 1856c, 1856d). An 1857 account of a missing boy, son of Lee F. Woodward of Two Rivers, notes that Two Creek had a steam sawmill, pier, and interior railroad – which terminated two miles west of Mishicot – by that year. This railroad was likely the gravity- and oxen-driven rail line mentioned in later sources, which stretched three to five miles from the Two Creeks pier into

the forested interior. The article also mentions that a Mr. Wasmer was in charge of the G. Pfister & Company operations at Two Creeks (*Manitowoc Herald* 1857, Spevacek 1985). Whether Lee Woodward's son was ever found is not known.

The same year as the disappearance of Woodward's son, the schooner *Guido* is recorded as shipping cordwood, shingles, lumber, bark, and lath from Two Creeks to Milwaukee (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1857a, 1857b; Leitz 2025b; Figure 7.4). The schooner *Guido* was built in Manitowoc by Elias Sorenson in 1856 for Guido P. Pfister, owner of G. Pfister & Company. In 1856, *Guido* had two masts and measured 102.5 feet long with a beam of just over 24 feet and a depth of hold of 7.5 feet (Labadie 2025b, WMM 2025b). Pfister owned the vessel through 1869. During his ownership, the schooner routinely stopped at Two Creeks and occasionally at Sandy Bay, which was also owned by G. Pfister & Company (Rosebrough et al. 2023:163-164, WMM 2025b). Throughout its career, *Guido* continued to ship out forestry products from Two Creeks and bring in goods for Two Creeks residents (Leitz 2025b).

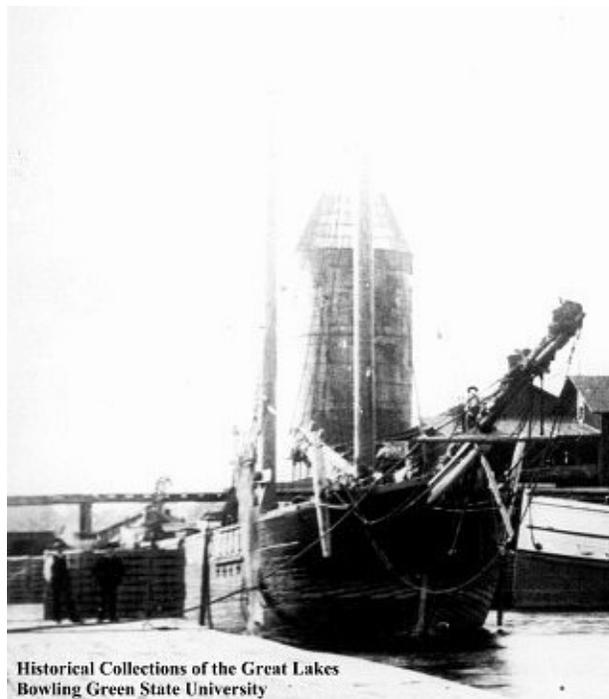


Figure 7.4: Schooner *Guido* (Bowling Green State University 2025)

In 1859, tragedy struck at Two Creeks when Peter Purdy, originally of Centerville, was killed in the sawmill (*Kenosha Times* 1859). Once again, an industrial accident revealed the dangers of life in a frontier pier community. In 1860, a post office was opened in Two Creeks under the name Nero (Manitowoc County Wisconsin Genealogy 2025). Although the reason for the name of Nero is unclear, it seems likely that the name Two Creeks was already in use somewhere else in Wisconsin when the Nero post office was named, similar to what happened at Centerville where the post office was named Hika. By June 1860, J. Henry Lubke had taken over management of G. Pfister and Company operations from Mr. Wasmer. Two Creeks contained a store, a sawmill, the pier, a hotel, and twenty or thirty houses. According to an article in the *Manitowoc Pilot*, “Mr. Lubke is purchasing large quantities of Bark from the farmers around there, paying them \$2,50 (sic) per cord. He has now over 1,000 cords piled up, and expects to ship three or four thousand cords during the season” (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1860:2). The timber products industry in Two Creeks was booming.

The Two Creeks tannery may have been in operation as early as 1862. That year marks the first time marine shipping articles record hides being shipped to Two Creeks, after which shipment of hides – sometimes further described as “green hides” – to Two Creeks became a regular occurrence (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1862, 1863a, 1863b, 1863g, 1864b, 1864c, 1865a, 1865b). Shipments from Two Creeks still included cordwood, bark, and fence posts, but now tanned hides and leather were added to the village's exports (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1863b,

1863d). Vessels arrived at Two Creeks daily. Two- and three-masted schooners, scows, and steamers routinely called at the pier, bringing goods for residents and accepting cargoes for Milwaukee and other ports. Goods shipped from the pier included many forestry products such as hemlock bark, railroad ties, fence posts, shingles, cordwood, and lumber along with furs, hides, bales of hay, dried peas, barley, wheat, and other grains (Falge 1912[1], Wojta 1941, Spevacek 1985). Imports to Two Creeks became much more diverse in the 1860s; vessels were now bringing in lime, pitch, whiskey, wagons, nails, mill feed, apples, salt, iron, grease, kerosene, pork, soap, rice, coffee, hay, brick, and even three boilers, presumably for the tannery or another of the village's industrial facilities (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1863c, 1863e, 1863f, 1863g, 1864a, 1864d, 1864e, 1865a, 1865c).

Probably in part to supply the new tannery, Pfister and Vogel purchased another vessel to assist with their operations in April 1863 (Figure 7.5). The schooner *Josephine Lawrence* was built by George Barber in Milwaukee in 1854. The vessel, which was slightly smaller than *Guido*, had two masts, measured 85 feet long, was about 22 feet in beam, and had a 7-foot depth of hold. August Thorsen was listed as the vessel's master. In 1865, Pfister bought out Vogel's share in the schooner and became sole owner; Thorsen remained the vessel's master. Pfister continued as owner through at least 1867 and possibly as late as 1878, when the vessel was purchased by James A. Boyd of Port Washington (U.S. Bureau of Navigation 1863, 1865, 1867, 1878; Labadie 2025c; WMM 2025c). Just like *Guido*, *Josephine Lawrence* carried materials to and from Two Creeks. Cargoes included cordwood, bark, hides, leather, general supplies for Two Creeks, and much more (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1863a, 1863b, 1863c, 1863d, 1863e, 1863f, 1863g, 1864a, 1864b, 1864c, 1864d, 1864e, 1865a, 1865b, 1865c).

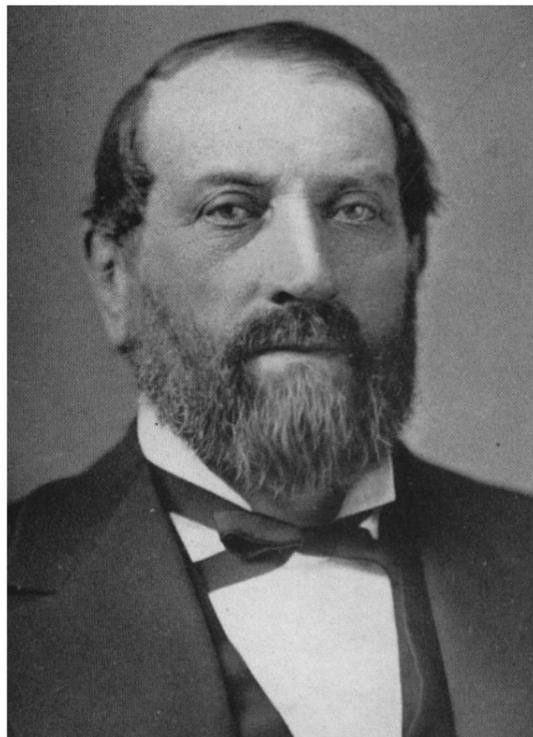


Figure 7.5: Guido Pfister (Fay 2023)

By 1866, Two Creeks boasted a population of around 200 people and facilities that included the tannery, pier, sawmill, and planing mill as well as the company general store, school, boarding house, tavern, blacksmith shop, shingle maker, wagon maker, tailor, shoemaker, telegraph office, meat market, post office, and dance hall (Falge 1912[1], Spevacek 1985, Rosebrough et al. 2023). A February 1866 article from the *Manitowoc Pilot* provides additional details,

We found a large and well-kept Hotel managed by Capt. Albert Wittenberg – a hotel that would be a credit to larger towns. Mr. Hugo Reuss has a large and extensive stock of goods, and is doing a fine trade, and Mr. B. Waegli is purchasing bark and wood on an extensive scale. But the most notable feature of the village is the large Tannery owned by Messrs. Pfister & Co., of Milwaukee. There are between thirty and forty

tanners constantly employed in this establishment, under the charge of Mr. Chris Anstaett, a first class Tanner, who manufacture on average 1000 sides of sole leather weekly. Mr. Waegli pays out about \$800 for tan bark and wood daily. During last year's season of navigation there were shipped from the pier at Two Creeks 2,000 railroad ties, 50,000 fence posts, 2,100 cords wood, 1,500 cords bark, and 22,000 sides sole leather, besides other articles produced in that locality. The village contains several nice residences and a good school-house (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1866:1).

The mention of B. Waegli in the 1866 article almost certainly refers to John Waegli, a Swiss immigrant who later managed Pfister and Vogel's operations at Sandy Bay (Rosebrough et al. 2023:166-167). Prior to working at Sandy Bay, Waegli assisted with operations at Two Creeks. Although his exact role at Two Creeks is not clear, Waegli was at least the resident carpenter from about 1859 to the late 1860s when he began managing Sandy Bay (*Kewaunee Enterprise* 1916, 1936). Considering Waegli's purchases of tan bark and wood, he probably managed the forestry operations at Two Creeks. Hugo Reuss was the manager of the Two Creeks tannery besides running the general store (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1867b). The tannery operation in the village continued to expand and, by 1867, the Two Creeks tannery employed 60 people and featured 290 tanning vats that produced 30,000 to 40,000 sides of leather a season (*Daily Milwaukee News* 1867a).

While not a fishing town, limited seine and gill net commercial fishing did take place at Two Creeks and the pier was a popular fishing spot. Fish were occasionally shipped out along with cordwood, lumber, and posts, but quite rarely compared to the scale of trade in forestry products (*Daily Milwaukee News* 1867c; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1868a, 1869; Spevacek 1985). In early October 1868, as might be expected at a busy port like Two Creeks, the scow *L. B. Goldsmith* and/or the scow *L. B. Nichols* ran ashore during a storm (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1868b; *Manitowoc Tribune* 1868b; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1868b, 1868c). It is unclear whether both vessels beached or whether some newspapers confused a single vessel's name because of matching initials. The *Manitowoc Pilot* even reported in different issues two different stranding locations for *L. B. Nichols* – below Two Rivers Point and Sandy Bay – rather than Two Creeks (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1868b, 1868c). The fate of *L. B. Goldsmith*, if it did beach at Two Creeks, is not clear. Extant reports indicate the vessel was ready to be refloated, but no mentions of the *L. B. Goldsmith* were identified in historic newspapers post-1868. Online databases suggest *L. B. Goldsmith* changed ownership in 1869 so a review of the vessel's enrollments may resolve this uncertainty (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1868b, Labadie 2026a, WMM 2026a). Two newspapers reported that *L. B. Nichols* was successfully refloated and brought to Manitowoc for repairs (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1868c, *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1868c). Subsequent accounts indicate *L. B. Nichols* continued to operate in the area until early November when the vessel ran ashore at the foot of Pennsylvania Avenue in Sheboygan (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1868c). The vessel was eventually registered as a total loss (Labadie 2026b, WMM 2026b). Although *L. B. Nichols* was refloated, it is possible that *L. B. Goldsmith* came to its end at Two Creeks.

Changes came to Two Creeks in 1869 when Pfister sold his entire interest in Two Creeks, including the industries and village, to Vogel. Pfister retained the Sandy Bay pier and its adjacent hemlock lands. The *Kewaunee Enterprise* reported on the sale,

[The village] consists of the Two Creeks Tannery, one of the most extensive tanneries in the State, 1 school house, 1 store, 1 hotel, 1 blacksmith shop, 1 wagon shop, 1 shoe shop, and 31 dwellings. All this property, with the exception of the school house, was owned until recently by Mr. G. Pfister, of Milwaukee, who has just sold it to Mr. Fred. Vogel, together with the Two Creeks pier, about 4,000 cords of bark, and 2,000 acres of hemlock lands, situated in Manitowoc and Kewaunee counties. The amount paid by Mr. Vogel is said to be \$40,000 – a remarkably low figure. Mr. Vogel was a former partner of Mr. Pfister's, but retired from business about three years ago, and has since resided in Europe. Mr. V. designs putting new boilers into the tannery and making other extensive improvements and repairs, and will run it at its full manufacturing capacity – 60,000 hides per annum. The dwelling houses are occupied by the families of the operatives in the tannery – about 60 hands being at present employed. Mr. Hugo Reuss, who has been for years the efficient resident manager of the concern, will continue to act in the same capacity for Mr. Vogel (*Kewaunee Enterprise* 1869).

Vogel clearly intended to ramp up operations at Two Creeks (Figure 7.6). And although the article reports that Pfister had sold the entire village to Vogel, he retained at least one business. In 1870, the *Door County Advocate* reported that Pfister owned a store at Two Creeks, which was managed by Albert Brandt, formerly of Kewaunee (*Door County Advocate* 1870).



Figure 7.6: Frederick Vogel, Sr.
(*Forest Home Cemetery* 2025)

In October 1871, devastating fires ripped through northern Wisconsin and other parts of the upper Midwest. Although the best known of these fires is the Peshtigo Fire of Marinette County, itself overshadowed by the Great Chicago Fire, Manitowoc County suffered as well. Large stands of hemlock burned and entire stores of cordwood, bark, rail ties, and fence posts – which farmers had cut to sell at Two Creeks and other ports – went up in flames. Houses, farm buildings, stored grains, cut hay, furniture, clothing – anything residents couldn't bury in rivers, lakes, or already burned-out fields was consumed by the raging inferno. The pier at Two Creeks survived the flames and then became a beacon of aid as schooners arrived over the next several months with relief supplies for devastated families, including clothing, shoes, quilts, hay, flour, potatoes, and other provisions (*Daily Milwaukee News* 1871, 1872a, 1872b; Vogl 1986).

Although the village of Two Creeks suffered from the fire, Sandy Bay in Kewaunee County farther south was spared the same fate. Accounts from April 1872 record the winter of 1871 to 1872 as a very good season for Sandy Bay, which shipped out 1,050 cords of bark, 1,400 cords of wood, 24,000 railroad ties, and 5,000 cedar posts. The same article announces another corporate change. Pfister and Vogel decided to renew their partnership and reincorporate, combining their businesses and facilities in Milwaukee, Two Creeks, and Sandy Bay. Together with new partner Gottlob Bossert, they formed the Pfister and Vogel Leather Company with Pfister as President,

Vogel as General Manager, and Bossert as Secretary (*Kewaunee Enterprise* 1872, *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1872a). It is unclear whether Pfister reached out to Vogel in dismay over his former partner's reduced fortunes from damages at Two Creeks or whether the leather goods titans decided to capitalize together on northern Wisconsin's reduced forestry resources. In any case, the "dream team" was back together and the tannery at Two Creeks did not fold following the ravages of the 1871 fires.

In August 1872, the schooner *Josephine Lawrence*, still likely owned by Pfister, was carrying a load of wood from Two Creeks to Milwaukee. Such a dense fog hung over the lake that the propeller barge *Favorite* ran directly into the schooner. Shortly after, *Josephine Lawrence* filled with water and capsized. Within four days, the vessel was refloated and brought to Manitowoc for repairs (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1872b). Not to be deterred by maritime disaster, Pfister and Vogel, along with N. A. Nelson, had yet another company schooner built in 1873. Built by Jasper Hanson and Hans Scove of Manitowoc and launched in May, the vessel was christened *Guido Pfister*, which newspapers report was a surprise to Pfister himself. The three-masted schooner was significantly larger than *Guido* and *Josephine Lawrence* at 198 feet long and 33 feet in beam with a 13-foot depth of hold. J. Wright served as the vessel's master (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1873a, Labadie 2025d, WMM 2025d). Records found thus far do not indicate that the schooner *Guido Pfister* shipped cargoes from Two Creeks (Leitz 2025b). The vessel likely facilitated other interests of the Pfister and Vogel Leather Company.

In the early 1870s, forestry products continued to flow out of Two Creeks with routine shipments of cordwood, bark, posts, railroad ties, and lumber (Figure 7.7). Hides were regularly shipped to the tannery and sundries delivered to the village (Leitz 2025b). But disasters still beset the village. In June 1873, heavy rains swelled the creeks in the village and flooded the tannery to a depth of three feet. About 270 vats were impacted by the floodwaters, causing around \$8,000 to \$10,000 in damages (*Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1873a). Flooding occurred in spring 1874 as well so company workers dug a canal from the tannery, through the village, and down to the lake in order to drain the area and reduce future flooding (*Chronicle* 1874b). In April 1874, Vogel was at the company store in Two Creeks and noticed a fine pair of horses, with their wagon, hitched to a post outside the



Figure 7.7: 1872 Map of Two Creeks, Two Creeks Township (Harney 1872)

store. The outfit belonged to Thomas Lahey of Two Creeks. Lahey being absent, Vogel asked a Mr. Glant to drive the team around so he could determine if he would like to purchase the horses, but the horses quickly spooked and ran. Mr. Glant was thrown from the wagon and seriously injured. The horses, now dragging only the front part of the wagon, thundered down the pier and plunged into the lake at the end of the pier into a depth of 36 feet of water. The horses became entangled in their harness and drowned. Fortunately, Pfister and Vogel paid Lahey \$450 for the loss (*Chronicle* 1874a). Although the newspaper recorded this as a magnanimous gesture, Vogel hopefully felt embarrassment over test driving Lahey's horses without his presence or permission.

Visitors to Two Creeks in August 1874 were impressed by the village and its production, perhaps overly impressed. One visitor on 8 August – C. B. – reported several large bark piles of about 1,000 cords each at a value of \$6,000 and a workforce of around 200 men and boys under the supervision of a Mr. Peterson. C. B. reported that the tannery produced mostly sole leather for shoes and had a capacity of 50,000 to 55,000 hides per year. The general store and post office occupied the same building and were both attended by Hugo Reuss, who was also in charge of shipping from the pier. An artesian well, which would supply the tannery's boilers and vats, was being dug and had reached a depth of 300 feet at the time of the visit. C. B. also noted that Frederick Vogel, Jr., Vogel's son, was the general manager at Two Creeks, Joseph Bartosch ran the Two Creeks tavern, and L. H. Treudner ran the Union tavern. Taking issue with these numbers, another visitor – F. M. – reported on a visit to Two Creeks two months before in June 1874. At that time, the tannery employed 50 to 55 men and boys and produced about 20,000 to 22,000 hides per year. The artesian well had only been dug to a depth of 150 feet in June, but a friend of F. M. had passed through Two Creeks only the day before (19 August) and noted that the well had reached a depth of 163 feet. Clearly, there were some differences between the two reports and F. M. openly wondered if C. B. had partaken of too many libations at Treudner's tavern before making his report (*Chronicle* 1874b, 1874c). Although the less extravagant report was likely more realistic, Two Creeks was still clearly a booming business in 1874.

As the second half of the 1870s progressed, conditions began to change and fortunes waivered. In July 1875, Pfister and Vogel laid off some of their workforce and curtailed business at both Two Creeks and Sandy Bay due to difficult economic conditions (*Semi-Weekly Wisconsin* 1875). Readily available timber was becoming ever scarcer and the post-fire building boom in Chicago was nearing an end (Rosebrough et al. 2023:168). During a late November storm, the schooner *Davis* or *Diana* carrying a cargo of shingles, lost its sails and went ashore near Two Creeks (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1875d, *Kewaunee Enterprise* 1875). Whether the vessel was refloated is not clear from available records, especially since the name of the vessel is uncertain. A visitor to Two Creeks in late November of the same year described the state of the town. The Truettners were still running the Union House and the village had about forty dwellings; a large tannery, which included a sawmill and gristmill; a large store, a hotel (ostensibly the Union House where the visitor was staying), a schoolhouse, a wagon and blacksmith shop, and a butcher shop. The tannery had a capacity of 50,000 hides per year and employed 45 men and five teams of horses. Besides hides, company shipments from Two Creeks that year include 20,000 railroad ties, 20,000 cedar posts, and many cargos of wood. Mr. Peterson was the foreman of the tannery and L. Seidel was the engineer. Hugo Reuss was still managing the store

and company business. The company also had 200 hundred acres of cleared land and had produced 3,000 bushels of oats, 500 bushels of wheat, 400 bushels of peas, 350 bushels of carrots, 350 bushels of potatoes, and a “considerable quantity of hay” that year (*Kewaunee Enterprise* 1875). Exactly when the Pfister and Vogel Leather Company began producing agricultural products at Two Creeks is unclear, but the firm had clearly made significant progress in their farming enterprise by 1875.

At first, the economic downturn appeared to be temporary. From the winter of 1875 to the spring of 1876, the Pfister and Vogel Leather Company purchased about \$800 worth of bark per day while snow facilitated movement of products by sleigh. In spring 1876, Lorenz Seidl resigned as engineer of the Two Creeks tannery after eight years in the position and a Mr. Vogt of Milwaukee became the new engineer (*Chronicle* 1876). But as the once vast stands of timber dwindled, the tannery operation became less and less profitable. In early 1877, Pfister and Vogel prepared to sell Two Creeks and concentrate instead on their operations in Milwaukee (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1877a). In late April and early May 1877, a major snowstorm severely damaged the pier at Two Creeks (*Door County Advocate* 1877a). Reports from August and early September indicated that Pfister and Vogel had sold Two Creeks to a Milwaukee party for \$16,000. By late October, it became clear that these reports were false and Pfister had simply purchased all interest in the business from Vogel. Hugo Reuss left his position as manager of the business and moved to Manitowoc to run the Williams House hotel. William Zerlout (or Zoehrlant) took over as manager and purchased 50 cows by December 1877 with the intention of opening a cheese factory at Two Creeks. Although there was some discussion about closing the tannery, management decided to continue running the operation either on a smaller scale or until the raw materials on hand had been used up (*Manitowoc Tribune* 1877d, 1877e; *Door County Advocate* 1877b; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1877a, 1877b; *Chronicle* 1878).

Despite the changes and uncertainty in 1877, the tannery continued to operate, and significant improvements were made in 1878. According to an article in the *Manitowoc Pilot*,

The owners of the tannery at this place are making some extensive repairs on their property. The old engine-house has been torn down and a new and commodious structure is in process of erection in its place. The supply of water having become inadequate to the wants of the tannery, an immense trench eight hundred feet long with an average depth of about eight feet has been dug, into which has been laid a three inch (sic) cast-iron pipe to conduct the waters of the lake to feed the boiler and vats. Under the supervision of Mr. Smith of Milwaukee, pipes have been laid throughout the entire building and it will, hereafter, be heated by steam. Other improvements have been made in the interior of the building which will tend to better and cheapen the work as well as conduce to the comfort of the workmen (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1878d).

A map and directory of Two Creeks township from an 1878 Manitowoc County atlas sheds little light on the village (Figure 7.8). The map shows only the pier and the village area without denoting any buildings. In the directory, Pfister is listed as the owner of the tannery. The only hotel shown and mentioned in the directory is the Two Creeks Hotel run by I. A. Immler farther to the west at the intersection of what are now Two Creeks Road and State Trunk Highway 42 in the community known as West Two Creeks (Nash

1878:6,51,76). Regardless, large piles of bark, cordwood, fence posts, and railroad ties were being hauled to the village in January 1879 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1879b).

On 23 March 1879, the scow *Alaska*, which was running light for Ahnapée (now Algoma), is reported to have gone ashore near Two Creeks. Captain E. M. Christenson went to Milwaukee for assistance. The scow was no stranger to Two Creeks; between 1870 and

1875, *Alaska* routinely called at the Two Creeks pier, bringing forestry products to Milwaukee and cargoes of untanned hides and sundries back to the village (Leitz 2025b). After running aground in March 1879, at least two tugs – including *Kitty Smoke* of Manitowoc and *Hagerman* of Milwaukee – attempted to free the vessel multiple times without success. The beached scow, which was not insured, was seized by U.S. Marshals and sold at auction to satisfy claims against its owners (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1879c, 1879d, 1879e, 1879f, 1879g; *Door County Advocate* 1879b; *Kewaunee Enterprise* 1879; Labadie 2025e; WMM 2025e). The *Two Rivers Chronicle* reported that the

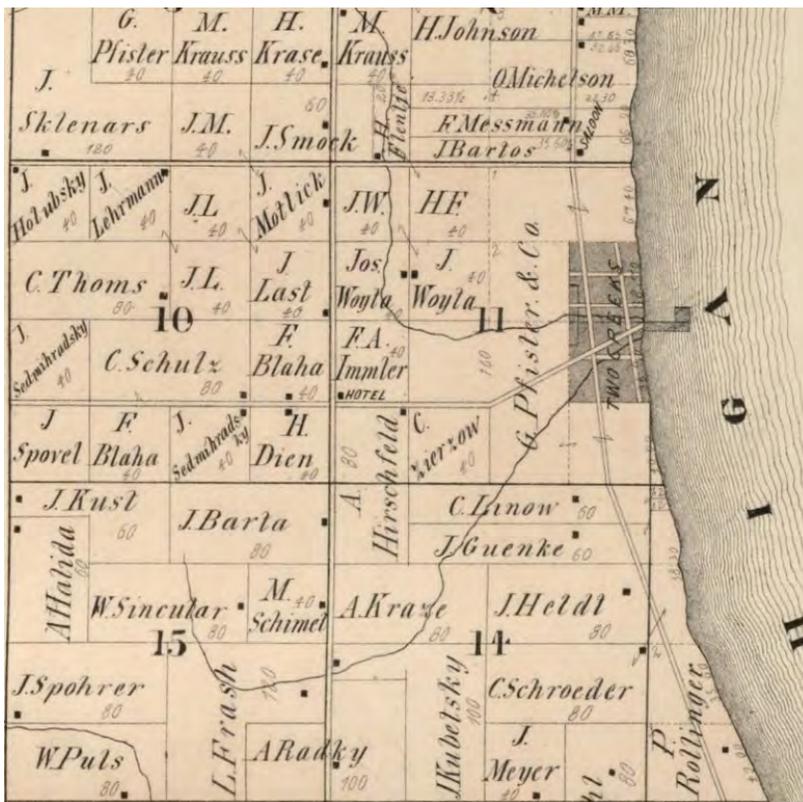


Figure 7.8: 1878 Map of Two Creeks, Two Creeks Township (Nash 1878)

creditors probably would not make much on their claims since “the scow is likely to remain in her present condition until she goes to pieces” (*Chronicle* 1879c:3). Built by S. Neville in Sheboygan in 1869, the scow schooner had two masts, one deck, a tonnage of 85.14, and an official registration number of 105090. The vessel was finally registered as a total loss in 1881 (Labadie 2025e, WMM 2025e).

Although the scow schooner *Alaska* was never refloated and may have broken up on the beach at Two Creeks, previous research by the Wisconsin Historical Society placed the wreck of *Alaska* in a different location. In May 2015, a local history enthusiast identified a wreck off Two Rivers Point and Point Beach State Forest north of Two Rivers about eight miles south of Two Creeks. In July 2015, society archaeologists documented the wreck over the course of two days and determined the wreck to be the scow schooner *Alaska* based on the wreck’s scow characteristics, extrapolation of the vessel’s length, and elimination of other vessels known to have wrecked in the area. The wreck was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 2015 (Kiefer et al. 2015). As when *L. B. Nichols* went ashore in the area in 1868, some

Wisconsin newspapers reported *Alaska* ashore near Two Rivers or Two Rivers Point (*Chronicle* 1879b, 1879c; *Daily Milwaukee News* 1879; *Door County Advocate* 1879a, 1879b). Most Wisconsin newspapers reported the wreck ashore at Two Creeks (*Ahnapee Record* 1879a, 1879b; *Door County Advocate* 1879c, 1879e; *Chronicle* 1879d; *Manitowoc Pilot* 1879c, 1879d, 1879e, 1879f, 1879h). If *Alaska* went ashore near Two Rivers, then the wreck nominated in 2015 is likely *Alaska*. However, if *Alaska* went ashore near Two Creeks eight miles north of Two Rivers Point, then the hull fragment at Two Creeks may be from *Alaska* if pieces of the vessel's hull came to rest against the pier as the vessel broke up.

Despite improvements made at Two Creeks in 1878 and the accumulation of forestry products during the winter, fortunes began to turn in May 1879. Pfister considered renting the company farm to another operator but decided to continue running the farm that year (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1879f). The tannery did not fare so well. Wages were so low, employees of the tannery began leaving for better pay elsewhere, and Pfister shuttered the operation (*Door County Advocate* 1879d, 1879e). The *Door County Advocate* reported that, "The workmen have nearly all left and the deserted houses make the place look dreary indeed" (*Door County Advocate* 1879e:2). The farm appears to have had a good year. In one week, almost 2,000 bushels of peas were shipped from Two Creeks (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1879i).



Figure 7.9: Looking West from Pier Area, Two Creeks, ca. 1880s (MCHS 1880)

As the 1880s dawned, Two Creeks continued its downward trajectory (Figure 7.9). High winds blew down 20 feet of the tannery's smokestack in January 1880 (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1880a). On 15 January 1881, the tannery burned to the ground, a loss of \$10,000. The other buildings and outbuildings escaped the blaze. Arson was suspected (*Door County Advocate* 1881). The farm and some village businesses continued in operation after the tannery

was gone. In August 1883, August Rhoda became the manager of the large farm at Two Creeks (*Chronicle* 1883). In May 1885, a local newspaper reported that Joseph Miller had moved to Kewaunee. Miller was described as the recent proprietor of the Union House at Two Creeks, indicating that the lodging house and tavern had continued in operation after the fire (*Door County Advocate* 1885). Although Pfister's business was significantly reduced, the company continued some operations with Robert Reinhold as the business manager, possibly taking over from Rhoda (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1885b). On 2 February 1889, Guido Pfister died in Milwaukee at 71 years of age after a two-week bout of typhoid fever (*Chicago Tribune* 1889). On 23 October 1892, Frederick Vogel followed his business partner in death. Vogel, who had been spending

the summer in Europe, died onboard the steamship *Lahn* while returning to the U.S. (*Milwaukee Journal* 1892, FindAGrave 20251).

Operations at Two Creeks continued despite the death of the company patriarchs. According to a local history, from 1890 to 1900, Two Creeks was considered one of the major shipping ports on the western shore of Lake Michigan for farm products like hay, dried peas, and grain (Wojta 1941:145; Figure 7.10). Otto Busch took over as manager from Reinhold in August 1890 and continued to sell farm products from the company store (*Chronicle* 1890, *Manitowoc Pilot* 1893a). Even though the farm continued to operate, the village of Two Creeks was a shadow of its former self by 1893,

Two Creeks proper now may be compared with Rome and its downfall. Between twenty and thirty years ago it had a population of 900 but to-day it has about 25 inhabitants all of whom reside there and manage their own business. This decline is largely owing to the removal of the tannery and saw-mill which were located here and owned by Pfister & Vogel Co.... When all wood supplies were exhausted, its laborers sought work elsewhere, leaving it with a store, post office, two saloons, blacksmith shops and wagon shops, a shoemaker and three cheese factories.... The Company's property was successfully managed by different parties for certain periods of time and is at present under the able management of O. Busch, who in connection with the store deals in all kinds of farm produce (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1893a:2).

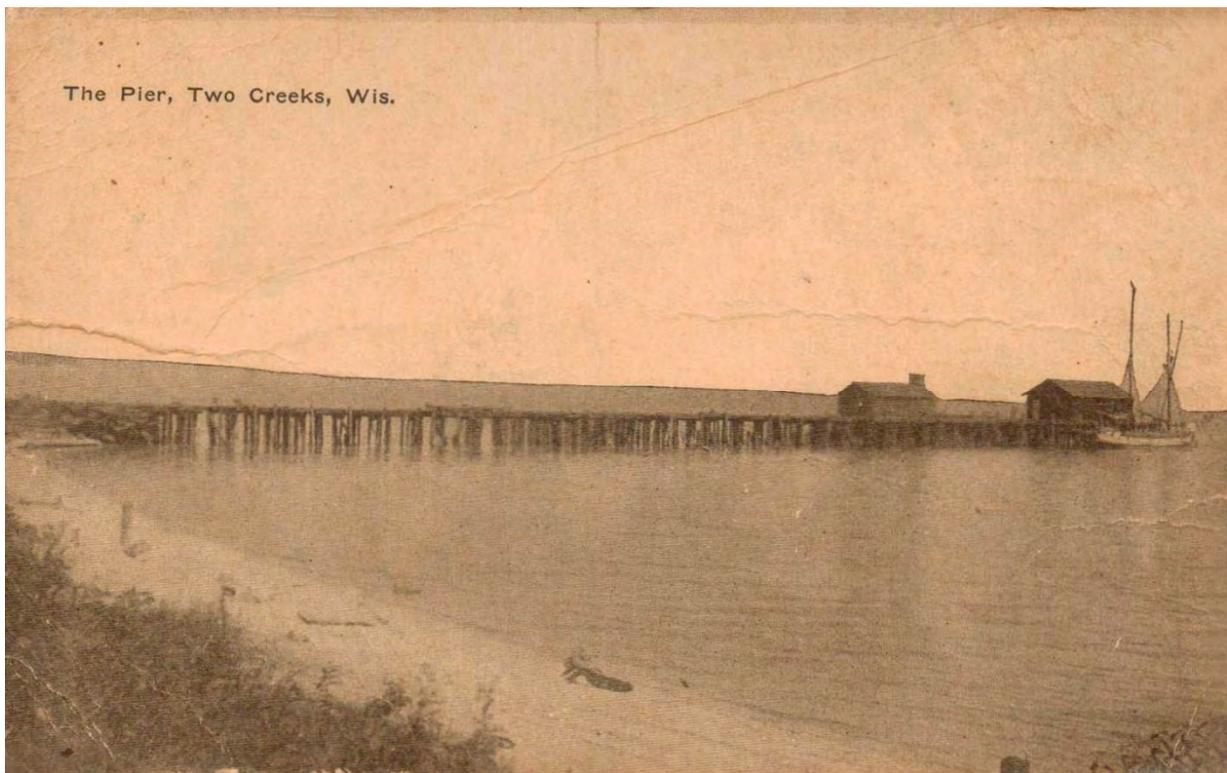


Figure 7.10: Two Creeks Pier with Sailboats and Warehouses, ca. 1890
(MCHS 1890, 2011.58.39)

According to the Two Creeks township directory in an 1893 atlas of Manitowoc County, one of the cheese factories was managed by August Erdmann and Joseph Lodl was managing the Union House (Foote 1893:78; Figure 7.11). The 1893 map of Two Creeks township shows the pier at the end of what is now Two Creeks Road off property still owned by the estate of Guido Pfister (Foote 1893:28; Figure 7.12). In March 1895, longtime Two Creeks manager Hugo Reuss died in Milwaukee, where he had been working as a bookkeeper for the Pfister and Vogel Leather Company (*Manitowoc Pilot* 1895).



Figure 7.11: Union House at Two Creeks, ca. 1913 (MCHS 1913)

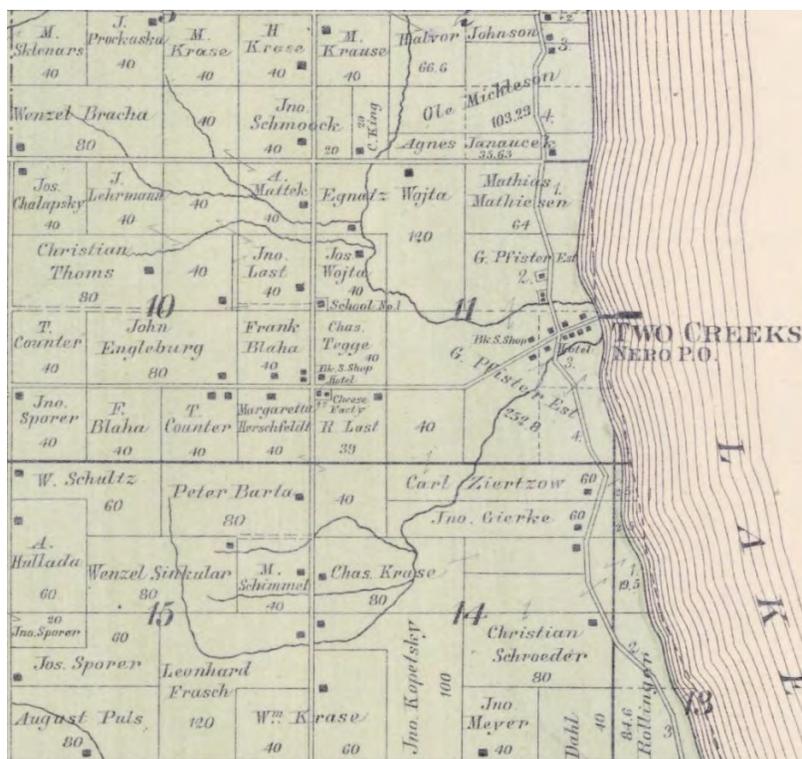


Figure 7.12: 1893 Map of Two Creeks, Two Creeks Township (Foote 1893)

By the early 1900s, local and regional newspapers rarely mentioned Two Creeks. Hay seems to have been the primary export from the village (*Advocate* 1904, 1910a, 1910b, 1910c). After 1910, references to shipping from Two Creeks appear to mostly vanish from Wisconsin newspapers (Leitz 2025b). Despite the nonexistent shipping records, local histories contend that Two Creeks continued to be a major shipping port for farm products (Spevacek 1985; Figure 7.13). Then in the fall of 1918 during a period of severe heat and drought, fire tore through the community. Sparks or an improperly extinguished fire, possibly originating at the blacksmith shop, started a blaze that consumed the blacksmith shop, general store, tavern, dance hall, and five other buildings.

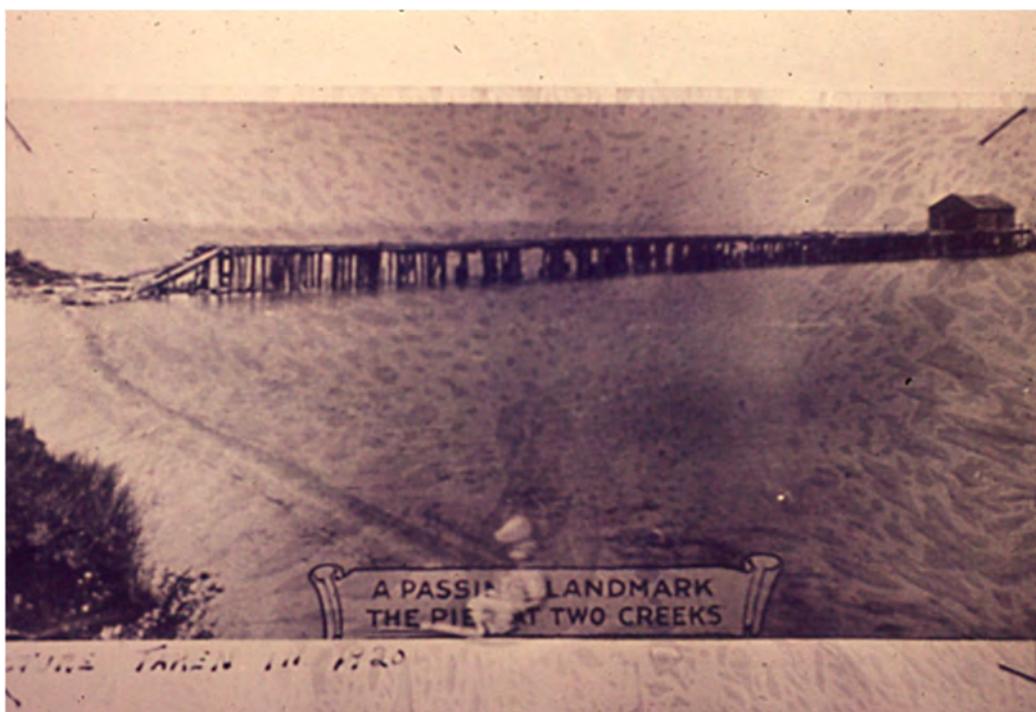


Figure 7.13: Steamer Loading Baled Hay or Grain at Two Creeks, ca. 1900 (Wojta 1945)

Although residents initially attempted to rebuild, their efforts were unsuccessful (Wojta 1941:145-146, Spevacek 1985). The Two Creeks pier survived the blaze but may have already been unusable as early as 1916. By then, the landward end of the pier had collapsed, and the pier was no longer usable even though a warehouse still stood on the pier's far end (MCHS 1916, 1920; Figure 7.14 and Figure 7.15). The pier is conspicuously missing from a 1921 township map but is still shown on a 1922 map of the township (George A. Ogle & Co. 1921:31; Pentzien 1922). Whether the pier still stood in the mid-1920s is unclear, but it was no longer functional and lake shipping was no longer an important aspect of Two Creeks. Farming continued in the township, and does to this day, but after 60 years of existence, the small company town of Two Creeks passed into obscurity.



Figure 7.14: Broken Pier at Two Creeks, ca. 1916 (MCHS 1916)²



*Figure 7.15: Broken Pier at Two Creeks, ca. 1920
(MCHS 1920; 2006.11.1406)*

² First row: Alice and Clara Wojta; Second row: Mayme Wojta, Lester Trossen, and Annie Wojta; On pier: Anton Wojta.

Findings

Pier

The pier is located in Section 11. Both the 1872 plat map and 1878 plat map of Manitowoc County show an “L”-shaped pier with the loading platform on the north (Harney 1872, Nash 1878). The 1877 coastal chart shows a straight pier with no loading platform (USACE 1877b). Two 1938 aerial photos of the site reveal significant remains of pier pilings extending at right angles from the shoreline. Two lines of pilings stretch into the lake, although some of the nearshore pilings are obscured by sand or water quality. A third line of pilings, possibly relating to a loading platform, is visible on the lakeward end of the pier (USDA 1938). Numerous pilings are visible in Google Earth imagery from 2005 and 2013 (Google Earth 2005, 2013).

Offshore survey conducted in 2024 identified over 300 pilings in three parallel rows, extending about 705 feet into the lake at a bearing of 74 degrees. Pilings were scarcer near shore, with only two intermittent rows present. Farther out, more intact pilings were present with three rows in evidence. Numerous clusters of two to five pilings were observed, particularly along the central row of pilings (Figure 7.16). The posts averaged about one foot in diameter. Several pilings have fallen over and lie horizontally on the lakebed, pinned in place by extant vertical pilings (Figure 7.17). A roughly 30-foot section of hull, consisting of frames and inner and outer hull planking, is present to the north of the pier near the lakeward end, suggesting that a vessel was seriously damaged near the pier at some point in the past (Figure 7.18). The scow schooner *L. B. Goldsmith*, which may have gone ashore at Two Creeks in 1868, is one candidate for the Two Creeks wreck. But conflicting accounts and incomplete information suggest that *L. B. Goldsmith* was confused with *L. B. Nichols* and may never have gone ashore at Two Creeks (Labadie 2026a, 2026b; *Manitowoc Pilot* 1868b, 1868c; *Manitowoc Tribune* 1868b; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* 1868b, 1868c; WMM 2026a, 2026b). Alternatively, the scow schooner *Alaska*, which reportedly went ashore near Two Creeks in 1879, is another candidate for the Two Creeks wreck. However, previous research by the Wisconsin Historical Society resulted in identification of the wreck of *Alaska* about eight miles south of Two Creeks near Two Rivers Point (*Ahnapee Record* 1879a, 1879b; *Chronicle* 1879b, 1879c, 1879d; *Daily Milwaukee News* 1879; *Door County Advocate* 1879a, 1879b, 1879c, 1879e; *Kewaunee Enterprise* 1879; Kiefer et al. 2015; Labadie 2025e; *Manitowoc Pilot* 1879c, 1879d, 1879e, 1879f, 1879g, 1879h; WMM 2025e). Additional research into the hull fragment and any other extant portions of the wreck near the pier may clarify the identity of the Two Creeks wreck.

Terrestrial

The former location of the landward end of Two Creek’s pier now consists of a concrete boat launch terminated by a metal grated surface that extends into the water with extensive riprap, particularly on the northern side due to a receding bluffline. The boat launch has no associated pier. The southern bank of the northern creek’s outlet has also been lined with riprap, but the northern bank has not. The southern creek has been altered with a large culvert allowing the creek to pass under Lakeshore Road. There are also some fallen wooden posts and cross beams that may have once been a structure, possibly a pier or dam. A few modern homes line the

Two Creeks Pier MN-0503

Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

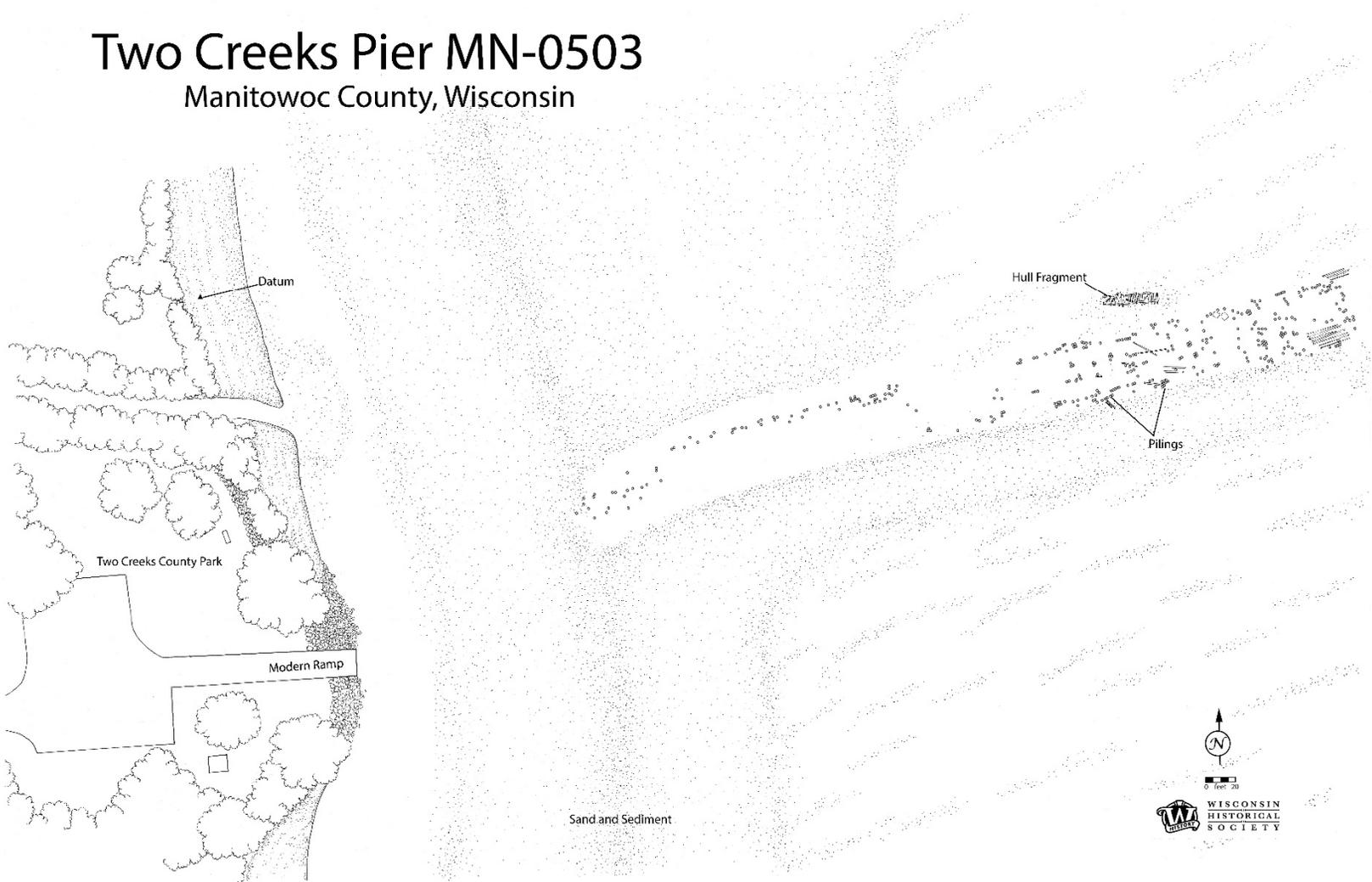


Figure 7.16: Two Creeks Site Plan (Wisconsin Historical Society)

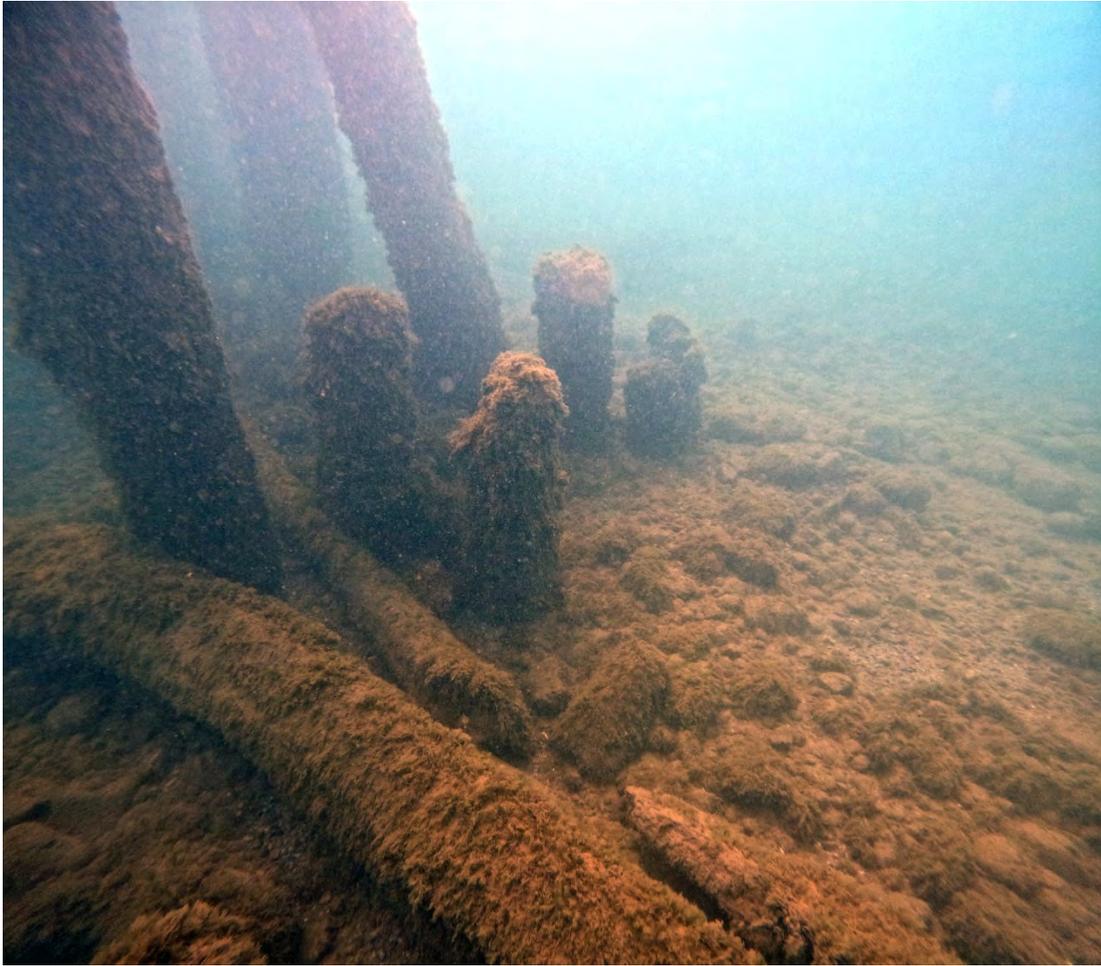


Figure 7.17: Underwater Pilings at Two Creeks, July 2024



Figure 7.18: Hull Fragment Near Pier at Two Creeks, July 2024

northern side of Two Creeks Road west of Lakeshore Road. The onshore areas to the north and south of Two Creeks Road immediately adjacent to the pier consist of a small county park and a forested woodlot. No terrestrial survey was undertaken at the site due to the scope of the project and the area's history of agricultural disturbance.

Beach

A survey datum was established just north of the northern creek's outlet into Lake Michigan about 200 feet northwest of the base of the pier (Figure 7.19). The narrow beach is sandy with drifts of pebbles and gravel and sits below a vegetated, moderate bluff with evidence of extensive erosion. Riprap along the bluffs north of the boat launch consists of limestone and large chunks of concrete, some still with inclusions of truncated metal pipes/supports and bored holes. The origin of the concrete debris is unknown. South of the boat launch, the beach is sandier with fewer pebbles. The bluff is moderate and shows extensive evidence of erosion; a drainage pipe is present in the bluff face just south of the launch. Walkover of the beach did not identify any artifacts that could have been associated with Two Creeks.



Figure 7.19: WHS Maritime Archaeologist Kendra Kennedy and Volunteer Kimberly Gorchels Record Locations of Pier Pilings with the Laser Transit at Two Creeks, July 2024

Interpretation: A Company Town

Two Creeks stands apart from other mid-Lake Michigan vanished pier communities due to its origins as a dedicated company town. Established by Pfister and Vogel in 1860 to serve their tannery business, shipping of hemlock bark and other forestry products from Two Creeks continued through the late 1870s. Even after the tannery ceased operation in 1879 and burned down in 1881, shipments of agricultural products from the company store helped maintain the village. But a devastating fire in 1918 finally ended the history of coastal Two Creeks. The numerous pier pilings that remain offshore at Two Creeks provide an opportunity to study the archaeology of a company tannery town and the commerce that fueled the rise of Pfister and Vogel's tannery business in Milwaukee. An oft-repeated adage maintains that the forests of northern Wisconsin rebuilt Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871. But without the seemingly endless hemlock forests of Manitowoc County, the tanning industry of Milwaukee, which helped fuel its rise as a major Midwest city, would not have been possible.

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Chapter 8: Conclusions

The ghost ports of Wisconsin's mid-Lake Michigan coast have varied and disparate histories along with several common features (Figure 8.1). Archaeological and historical research combined provided a renewed understanding of the individual histories of each vanished pier community, allowed for comparison between communities, and revealed interconnections between these ports and ports in other Wisconsin counties.



Figure 8.1: Pilings at Two Creeks, July 2024

Port Success May Vary

Like many of the vanished pier communities studied in Kewaunee and Door counties, the pier communities of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee counties were all originally established by American or European settlers to ship forestry products from the ports and their hinterlands to larger markets like Milwaukee or Chicago. Amsterdam transitioned to fishing exports and Two Creeks transitioned to farming exports while the other pier communities maintained their emphasis on timber products. Regardless, none of the ports evolved into Lake Michigan cities that exist today. Some of the mid-Lake Michigan pier communities still feature small business districts with limited businesses and residences, like Norheim and Centerville, while others –

Ronk's Pier, Amsterdam, Lintz's Pier, and Two Creeks – reveal almost no hint of the bustling communities that once existed there.

Except for Centerville's south pier and possibly for Ronk's Pier, all of the mid-Lake Michigan piers were bridge piers, consisting of pilings driven into the lakebed with a wooden deck placed over the pilings, rather than crib piers, which consisted of large boxes built of interlocking logs or timbers that were filled with stone and over which a wooden deck was placed. Bridge piers tended to decay faster and suffer more damage from ice and storms because their construction was not as sturdy as crib piers. Even so, bridge pier construction was favored along the mid-Lake Michigan coast. It may be that bridge piers were cheaper and easier to build than crib piers and easier to repair. The ready ability to drive pilings into the lakebed in an area where bedrock was well below the sand/sediment and the more limited availability of stone to fill crib piers, as compared to Door County, may also have contributed to the choice of pier style.

Despite these commonalities, the vanished pier communities of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee counties were strikingly dissimilar in many ways. Ronk's Pier and Two Creeks were established and operated by one family or company – the Ronk family and G. Pfister & Company, respectively. Based on sources identified so far, Norheim's two piers were each established by individuals – Emil Bode and Samuel Mann. Amsterdam and Lintz's Pier were founded and/or operated by co-investors or neighbors, specifically Gilbert Smith and the Holland Trading Company for Amsterdam and Frederick Lintz and Theodor Wunsch for Lintz's Pier. At least one of the piers at Centerville was reportedly established by groups of individuals or multiple investors, but more research is needed to fully understand the beginnings of Centerville's two piers.

Ronk's Pier lasted only about 20 years while the pier at Two Creeks may have operated for 60 or 70 years. The operative period of other piers fell somewhere in-between. Some piers seem to have met the full fury of Lake Michigan's storms and whims, such as Bode's Pier and Mann's Landing at Norheim where multiple ships experienced difficulties over the years, while others like Lintz's Pier attracted few maritime casualties. Whether this was because of the level of commerce at each pier, shipping routes, environmental conditions, lack of marine reporting, or a mixture of all four is unclear. In any case, every pier experienced damage because of the necessary degradation of submerged wooden structures in the face of storms and ice on Lake Michigan. What bound all the pier communities together – Lake Michigan – also frequently brought the piers crashing down and necessitated endless maintenance.

Maritime Strategies

At most, if not all, the mid-Lake Michigan ghost ports, pier operators managed not only the pier, but also an accompanying general store that served as a clearinghouse for goods imported to and exported from the community. It was an ingenious system. Farmers brought in their cordwood, shingles, fence posts, and logs for shipment to other places or milling into lumber. They brought the forestry products to the pier, obtained payment or credit from the pier operators, and used the funds or credit to purchase much needed necessities or luxuries directly from the associated general store. In some pier communities, like Centerville, there may have been other general stores that were not associated with a pier, but this was atypical

In addition to general stores, many of the pier operators owned their own vessel at one time or another. Nicholas Ronk of Ronk's Pier in Ozaukee County owned the schooner *Northerner* for a few years until it sank off Port Ulao. Edward Newhouse, owner of Lintz's Pier in Sheboygan County is reported to have owned a vessel that he used for shipping from the pier. The name of that vessel has not yet been identified. Peter Werner, owner of one of Centerville's piers, owned the small schooner *Island City* for 10 years, from 1870 to 1880. Emil Bode of Bode's Pier at Norheim in Manitowoc County owned the scow *Swallow* for several years before selling it to two individuals from Milwaukee. Guido Pfister owned several vessels used by Pfister and Vogel Leather Company or its predecessors; *Guido* and *Josephine Lawrence* routinely stopped at Two Creeks to obtain or discharge cargoes. Later owners of the pier at Amsterdam owned one or more vessels used for fishing, though these smaller boats do not appear to have been used to transport fish to nearby ports.

This propensity for mid-Lake Michigan pier owners to also own a lake vessel is similar to other pier operators in Door and Kewaunee counties. Anna Porth, wife of Appelport owner Henry Charles Porth in Door County, owned the schooner *Oneida*. Henry Porth's firm also owned an interest in the schooner *Black Hawk*. William Hitchcock and Vojta Mashek, owners of Alaska pier in Kewaunee County, owned the schooners *Hansen Rand* and *Beloit*. Various owners of Dean's Pier at Carlton in Kewaunee County – including John J. Borland, Elisa B. Dean, and Joel Vissivius Taylor – owned all or part interest in several schooners, including *Ithica*, *A. Baensch*, *Driver*, and others. Captain Charles Lewis Fellows, owner of the pier at Foscoro in Kewaunee County, purchased the scow schooner *Sea Star* during his tenure at the pier (Rosebrough et al. 2023; Rosebrough et al. 2026).

As pier owners are identified during research into various ghost ports, review of maritime databases – such as the Gerald C. Metzler Great Lakes Vessel Database hosted by the Wisconsin Maritime Museum and the C. Patrick Labadie Collection hosted by the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library – is advisable to ascertain whether the pier operators also owned lake vessels. While this may reveal some of the pier operators who were also vessel owners, other avenues of research are also needed. For example, the *Manitowoc Tribune* faithfully records Emil Bode's purchase and sale of *Swallow*, but Bode is not listed as an owner of the vessel in either the Metzler or Labadie databases (Labadie 2025a, WMM 2025a).

Interconnections

As the saying goes, "It's a small world." Running into that classmate from elementary school decades later on the other side of the world or meeting a new colleague whose cousin knows a close relative happens more than might be expected in today's world. From the mid-1800s to the early 1900s when the Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee County ghost ports operated, the world was an even smaller place. Research into the mid-Lake Michigan ports demonstrated that interconnections between communities were common and sometimes even revealed connections to other ports in nearby counties.

Both Solomon Mann and Edward Newhaus are ideal examples of these interconnections. Mann first gained an association with port communities when he operated a pier at Centerville in

Manitowoc County sometime between about 1850 and 1865. By 1865, Mann had moved to Norheim, also in Manitowoc County, and begun operating a second pier opposite Bode's Pier in that village. Based on the 1850 census of Centerville, Mann was the neighbor of fellow Centerville resident Edward Neuhaus.

Neuhaus came to Centerville between 1848 and 1850 with two friends - possibly miller Charles Kohler and carpenter William Nolleau - and established the first flour mill and sawmill in Centerville, probably on Centerville Creek. Neuhaus moved to Herman Township in Sheboygan County in 1851 and operated a general store in the small community of Edwards for decades. In 1870, he purchased Lintz's Pier in Mosel Township, also in Sheboygan County, and operated it for at least five years and possibly as long as 19 years (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1850, Sheboygan County Register 1870, G. A. Randall & Co. 1875:43, *Manitowoc Pilot* 1893b, Northern Furniture Company 1894:272-273). Lintz's Pier was also very briefly owned, before Neuhaus's tenure, by Henry Grimm. Grimm is better known as the owner of the eponymous Grimm's Pier in Kewaunee County.

Emil Bode spent at least some of his early years at Centerville before moving to Norheim and establishing Bode's Pier with a partner named Otto. This partner may have been Frederick William Otto who owned a general store in Centerville before selling out to Peter Werner. Werner is credited with building a pier at Centerville, but it is possible that Werner bought both the general store and associated pier from Frederick Otto. In addition, some sources record one of the piers at Centerville as Bode's Pier. Although this may simply be a case of confusion about the location of Bode's Pier at Norheim, it is possible that a Bode's Pier existed at Centerville as well. Philip Bode, who may have been Emil's father or uncle, lived in Centerville and could have been an early pier operator there. Alternatively, Emil Bode may have gotten his start with pier operation in Centerville and then sold out to start again in Norheim.

At Two Creeks, the company town certainly had numerous connections to the Pfister and Vogel Leather Company's headquarters in Milwaukee. Representative of Two Creeks importance to the company, Frederick Vogel, Jr., son of company founder Frederick Vogel, lived at and managed Two Creeks in the 1870s. In addition, before managing Sandy Bay in Kewaunee County for Pfister and Vogel, John Waegli oversaw purchasing of forestry products at Two Creeks. Finally, Gilbert H. Smith was the founder of the village of Amsterdam, but also the father of Herbert, Delos, and Roy Smith of the well-known and long-lived Smith Brothers Fish Company of Port Washington.

Many more such connections like those above likely existed between the port communities of mid-Lake Michigan and nearby counties, especially connections that are harder to track such as through intermarriage and other familial relationships. These many connections have been hidden by incomplete records, the loss of archival sources over time, and the difficulties in finding local informants willing and able to share their family's oral histories. Additional research into the port communities of Wisconsin has the potential to reveal how pier owners and operators were related to each other, invested with or in each other, or bought each other out as opportunities for advancement and enrichment presented themselves.

Summary

The ghost ports of mid-Lake Michigan studied for this project include Two Creeks, Northeim, and Centerville in Manitowoc County, Lintz's Pier and Amsterdam in Sheboygan County, and Ronk's Pier in Ozaukee County (Figure 8.2). Remnants of other ghost ports in these counties also likely exist, based on historic maps and accounts. As befits the name "ghost ports," none of the studied pier communities exist as pier communities today. Two of the vanished ports – Centerville and Northeim – have small, unincorporated communities with residences and a few businesses. Centerville, with its historic cream brick buildings and wide main street, is the most readily recognized as a community that was once more prosperous and prominent. Northeim consists now only of a small cluster of buildings, some of which hint at the businesses they once fostered. Ronk's Pier, Amsterdam, Lintz's Pier, and Two Creeks no longer betray any hint – besides the pier remains themselves, which are mostly submerged and unremarkable from shore – of the communities that once flourished there and commercial interests the areas once facilitated.

All these ports failed to endure because of the exhaustion of the natural resources on which they were founded. The decimation of the vast forests that once provided cordwood, bark, shingles, cedar posts, barrel hoops, railroad ties, and – in those communities with mills – finished lumber for export doomed many of the communities to oblivion. As farmers cleared their fields and began to till the land and as industrialists exhausted the timber on their massive landholdings, forestry products became so scarce that ports had to pivot to other resources or quickly fall to the wayside.

At Two Creeks, Amsterdam, and Centerville, the story was slightly more complex. At Two Creeks, the Pfister and Vogel Leather Company realized the importance of dwindling forestry resources and closed the tannery but continued to operate the company farm and export its products. Although shipping appears to have been far less ambitious than during the timber heyday, the port survived. Had the 1918 fire not devastated the community, it is possible Two Creeks would have continued for a time as a small agricultural port. At Amsterdam, residents who had already been fishing, even while timber products were stripped from the surrounding forests, continued to gain their livelihoods from the lake rather than the fields. Accordingly, Amsterdam survived long after the forests were cleared. But Amsterdam too fell victim to the exhaustion of a natural resources – in this case, fish – that had originally appeared to be nearly endless in its bounty.

Finally, Centerville too suffered from the depletion of timber products from the village and its hinterlands. But residents established and maintained other industries in the community that did not depend solely on the forests, including a brewery, brickyards, and a cheese factory. In addition, local farmers shipped agricultural products from the pier just like at Two Creeks. Centerville also had a motivated population of business owners unwilling to let the community fade into obscurity. Movers and shakers in Centerville contacted their representatives, reached out to the governor of Wisconsin, gathered support of lake captains and vessel owners, and lobbied for the appropriation of government funds to promote harbor improvement at Centerville. These business owners shared a common goal: to create a new destination on the lakeshore to rival, or at least contend with, local ports like Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Two

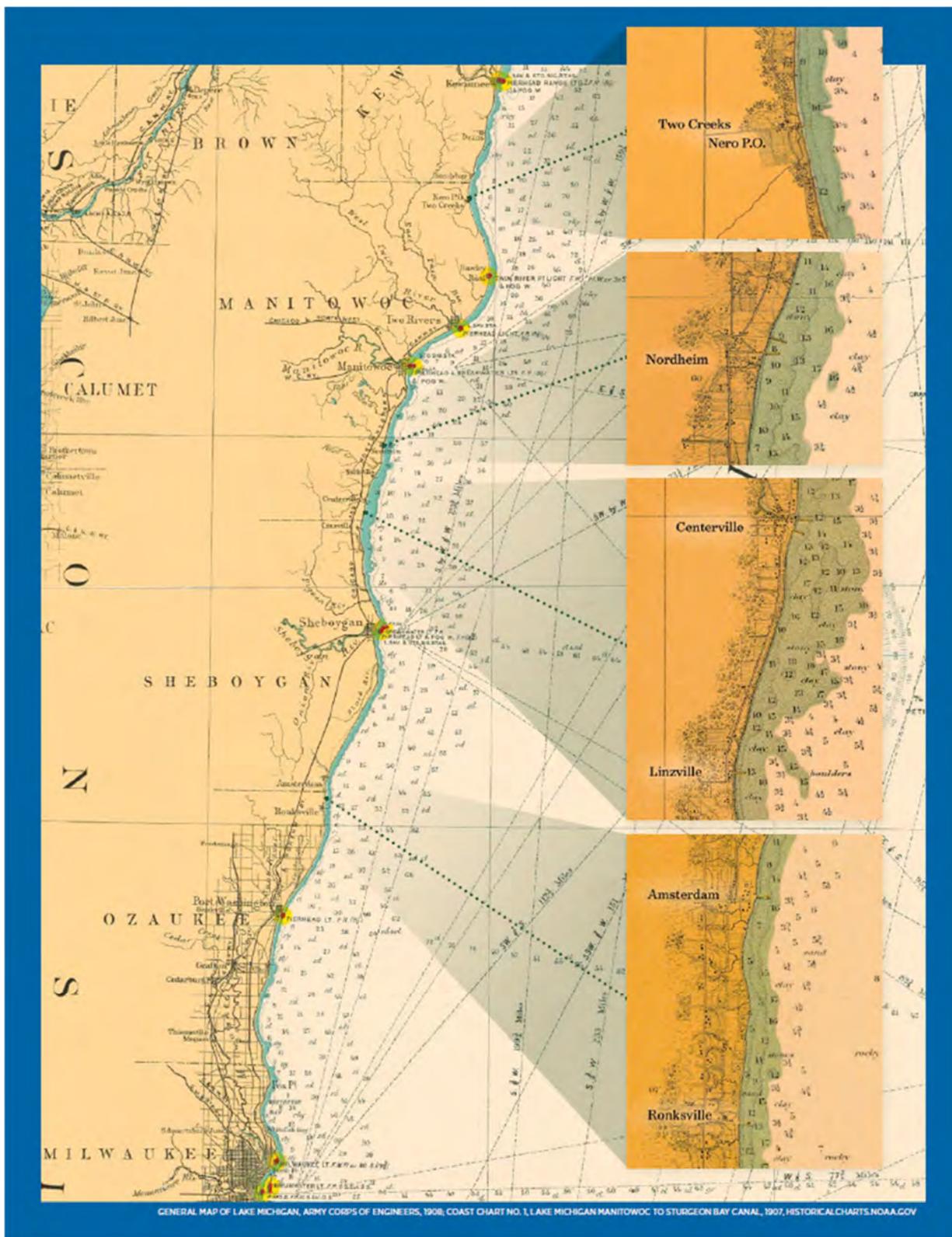


Figure 8.2: Map of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee Ghost Ports by Steve Biel (Kennedy 2025)

Rivers. Despite their best efforts, a government surveyor tasked with the preliminary examination of Two Creeks did not share their enthusiasm and recommended that the village did not merit the expenditure of funds required to create a harbor at Centerville. With that recommendation, the government funds were not dispersed and the citizens of Centerville finally gave up the fight. Just like the other five mid-Lake Michigan ports, Centerville declined, the piers fell into disuse, and the dreamed-of rival port never materialized.

Final Reflections

Although the ghost ports of Wisconsin's mid-Lake Michigan shore no longer display the bustling activity of yesteryear nor, in most cases, the buildings and structures that once defined them, their impact on the history of Wisconsin and the region remains. Although physical remains of the ghost ports lie submerged and weathered under the waters of Lake Michigan and the sand of the nearby shore and references to the vanished pier communities are scattered in historic newspapers, old biographies, yellowed maps, discolored photographs, and faded memories, these tangible and archival remnants remain to be found by archaeologists, historians, and anyone interested in learning the broader story of Wisconsin's dynamic Lake Michigan shore. Look deeper, past the reflection of the sun on the lake's surface and past the opening pages of those tattered volumes – the history of the mid-Lake Michigan ghost ports still shimmers just beyond that first, casual glance.

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