

Pentwater was designated a Federal Harbor in 1867 and built this lighthouse on the head of the old slab pier.

A BEACON TO PENTWATER HARBOR

By Ed Bigelow

Have you ever wondered what Pentwater would be like today if this area of Michigan had been void of towering virgin pine trees? It seems as though civilized progress can be related to the needs we humans create in one fashion or another. Why did Charles Mears come to the Pentwater area? A compelling need for lumber was a driving force that led Charles Mears to become a major figure in developing our quaint village of Pentwater. If you can imagine this area of Michigan being void of pine trees, then perhaps there would not have been a "need" to develop a channel from Pentwater Lake to Lake Michigan, or much less a need for a lighthouse keeper! The Pentwater channel in fact became a gateway for vast numbers of ships to move a variety of products and lumber produced in Pentwater to destinations such as Chicago. In the early days of Pentwater, travel by land was difficult as roads were few. In 1871, railroad lines were being surveyed and constructed with service to Pentwater in 1872.

In 1855, lumber mills were established by Messrs. Cobb, Rector and Mears and our channel was not sufficient for shipping. In 1858-9 under Charles Mears' leadership, the original outlet was closed to Lake Michigan. A new channel was dug and what was then known as a "Slab" pier was built from Pentwater Lake to the shoreline of Lake Michigan. In 1862, the pier was advanced 200 feet into

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VISIONS OF OUR NEW MUSEUM

"FOR GOOD, FOR EVER"

We are going to try to keep a "Visions of our New Museum" article as part of each newsletter for the foreseeable future. Ideally, different people will share their visions of our new museum in this space.

When I think about our museum, I envision a place where people come together to interact with the history of Pentwater. We need to tell our story in a unique way. How did this place come to be? What were the elemental forces that shaped this place? Without the junction of the river and the lake, there would be no Pentwater. What caused Lake Michigan to form? Why is there a river here? Where does the river come from, what are its sources? Can these be the questions asked and answered in a possible future display? How many of you know the answers? Could a display such



The future new home for PHS.

as this tell the larger story and then sharpen the focus to Pentwater? I have visited many, by no means, all of the museums throughout the region and I have never seen the story told quite this way. This concept may be combined to form a display unique to our museum.

There have been three great storms on the Great Lakes since the early nineteen hundreds. Do you know about them? One of them, the storm of November 1940, sank three ships off the port of Pentwater. We have a display in our current museum about one of those ships, the

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NEW MUSEUM BUILDING FUND DONATION SUPPORT

Ninety-Two Thousand Dollars and Counting!

We have a total of \$92,000.00 from all sources to help us reach our goal of creating a new Pentwater Historical Society Museum. Our vision is to create an interactive museum that tells our story in a unique way with number informative displays. We envision a museum that is always growing and changing. One that serves as a gathering place for our community and serves as a destination point for visitors.

Membership Campaign

We are encouraging all Society members to reach the Ruby level of contribution! If each member contributes \$400.00 dollars toward our museum project by the first of August, we will get a huge boost in reaching our goal. Contributions can be made in installments or by credit card. We need to have as many members as possible reach the Ruby level so that we can show potential patron level donators that our membership is contributing a significant amount toward this project.

Public Campaign

Donation Stations are in place throughout the community. They offer a brief explanation of what we are doing and provide a donation envelop. As more businesses open in the spring, more donation stations will be placed. These stations offer the public a chance to contribute to our museum project.

We are seeking assistance with our museum project by making grant applications to appropriate organizations. We are seeking grants in both the private and public sector.

Patron Campaign

We are in the process of contacting individuals and organizations who have the resources to make a significant donation to our museum project. The Museum Relocation Committee is working on a presentation package to be used when seeking donations. We anticipate that most of the presentations will be made during the spring and summer. We are pleased to report that we currently have several donations at the patron level.

Membership Input

Your comments, your feedback, and your suggestions are welcome! We need your involvement! You can get in touch with us by contacting our President or by dropping us a line at P.H.S., P.O. Box 54, Pentwater, MI, 49449 or email them at the address on our website (<https://pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org>).

LAKE MICHIGAN LEVEL PATRONS \$40,000

CHARLES MEARS LEVEL PATRONS \$20,000

PENTWATER LAKE LEVEL PATRONS \$10,000

PENTWATER DUNES LEVEL PATRONS \$5,000

Jean Russell & Robert Childers

Dolores Samuel

PENTWATER OAK LEVEL PATRONS \$1,000

Jim and Pat Alfredson

Charles Bigelow

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Herbert and Nancy Greenfield

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Norman & Ronda Shotwell

Richard & Sylvia Wagner

DIAMOND LEVEL PATRONS \$800

RUBY LEVEL PATRONS \$400

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GOLD LEVEL PATRONS \$200

Equipment Rentals & Service L.L.C.

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Red Wing Service & Supply

Suzanne & George Richey

Arthur L. Walker

Jerry & Sheryl Wygant

Irene Zaik

Gail Zink & Norman Booth

CORRECTION: In the last issue, the captions under the pictures of the First Baptist Church incorrectly identified the church building as "The former Baptist Church" it should have read "The current Baptist Church". We apologize for the error.

NINETY-TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS AND COUNTING!

SILVER LEVEL PATRONS \$100

Roger & Ruth Bailey
Mary and Harold Bannasch
Bruce Bates
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Greg Stutes
Shirley & Nena Stutes
Arthur Susan
Jane A. Verduin & Dr. Craig K. Matheson
Veterans Ladies Club

Funding Goal \$225,000
Fund balance \$92,000
Balance To Go \$133,000

Here's how you can make a contribution to the Building Fund:

● **By sending a check** made out to "Pentwater Historical Society". Indicate Building Fund on the memo line.

Mail check to:

Pentwater Historical Society
P.O. Box 54, Pentwater MI, 49449

OR give it to any PHS board member.

● **By Credit Card.**

Visit the Community Foundation for Oceana County Web Site at:

<https://www.cffmc.org/give/online-giving>

Locate the Pentwater Historical Society Building Fund account, complete the form and click on the "Donate" tab.

The screen will allow you to chose between:

● General Gift ● Memorial Gift
or ● Honorary Gift

In the "Specific Fund" area you can type in Pentwater H (at this point the box will display the name of our fund) OR move the curser down to the box and scroll to the fund name "Pentwater Historical Society Building Fund" in either case you must click on the fund name. It will appear right below to confirm that you have selected the correct fund.

Complete the rest of the form and click on "Donate"

● **Check out our web site at:**

<https://pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org>

Click on the link and follow the instructions for "Credit Card" in the column to the left.

The Historical Society may also accept donations of stocks, bonds, real estate, and property. However, the Society reserves the right to accept all gifts.

Novadoc. How can we enhance this display in our new museum? How can we impart the danger faced by Great Lakes mariners in days gone by, and of the bravery of those who rescued them? One possible future display may tell the story of the dangers faced by sailors and rescuers through the story of the storms. The display may depict the larger story, sharpening its focus to Pentwater and what happened here. I am unaware of such a display in another museum. It would be unique!

Do you have any photographs of a Pentwater sunset? How about pictures of big waves on the lake, the heavy dark clouds rolling in, or the awesome specter of a midsummer nights electrical storm? People are attracted to Pentwater because of the natural beauty of the place and because of the raw natural power on display here. Why not have a display of that beauty and power in our new museum? The technology exists to store and display images. Using multiple screens, it may be possible, in some small space within the new museum, to create an image display center. An image would display on a screen for a few moments and then cycle through the story. The museum has historically significant images and I know that many of you do too. Let us make your treasurers part of that display. An annual themed photograph contest may be held. A small entry fee may be charged. All photographs submitted would become the property of the museum. Winning entries may earn a small cash prize. Selected photographs would be added to our image display. Why would this be a unique display? Lots of museums have photographs; a few even have image display centers. However, I am not aware of any museums that host an annual themed photograph contest and then use selected photographs to update their display. That would be unique!

I have shared just a few visions of our new museum. here are many many more that have been discussed and thought about by the people touched by this project. Have you thought about what you would like to see in our new museum? We would love to hear your ideas. You can send them to us at PHS, P.O. Box 54, Pentwater 49449 or email them to the address on our website:

<https://pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org>
or contact any member of the museum committee.

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Thank You! **LUDINGTON MEMORIAL
MEDICAL CENTER**

The Pentwater Historical Society sent a "Hearty Thank You" to the Ludington Memorial Medical Center of West Michigan for the recent donation of five cabinets for our future new museum! In the photograph for this article you will see the three large display cabinets along with two storage cabinets that are now located in the Pentwater First Baptist Church basement.



Display and storage cabinets from Ludington Memorial Center.

These cabinets are most welcomed and will certainly be needed, once we relocate our museum. Perhaps you may recall having seen the display cabinets in the gift shop area when entering into the Memorial hospital lobby.

A special thank you goes to society member Sally Ouweneel, who is a hospital volunteer, for her foresight to acquire and arrange for these cabinets to be donated to the Pentwater Historical Society. It was a pleasure to work with Patricia Ezdebski, Memorial's Director of Marketing and Volunteer Services, who coordinated the donation project. These cabinets became available to us because the hospital is undergoing a building project that will improve services and will also, in the near future change the main entrance location.

Many Thanks go to Bob Childers, Bill and Diane Gardy, Nick Fekken, Bill O'Donnell and Pete Lundborg for assisting with the muscle / transportation used in relocating these cabinets. By the way, we are still hoping to have an old roll top desk donated that could be used in the Information Booth presently located at Snug Harbor Marina! Any ideas?

DUES ARE DUE

Membership dues for the 2011-2012 year were due September 1, 2011. If you see "11", or an earlier year following your name on the mailing label, it is time to renew your membership. The dues amounts are shown on the Membership Application form on the last page of the newsletter. Please send your check to the Pentwater Historical Society at P.O. Box 54, Pentwater MI 49449

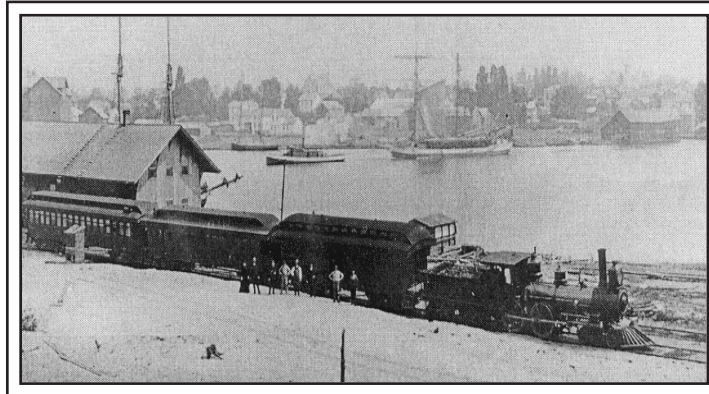
BOB'S CORNER by Bob, of course

“THE RAILROAD IS COMING, THE RAILROAD IS COMING!”

For years, I've thought about writing an article about the railroad, i.e., the Chicago & Michigan, Lake Shore Railroad arriving here. Interested? Great! Ah, not so fast there. First we have to build it. “Ok, let's get building. It's down in Montague, how difficult would it be just to run it up the 25 odd miles to Pentwater?” First you have to survey the land. Once that's done, we have to buy the land or get a right of way. That secured let's get started clearing the land. Put an ad in the paper looking for workers. At one time, there were over 300 men clearing the land, filling in the gullies, flattening the ridges and building the railroad bed between Montague, Mears and Pentwater. “Mears? But I thought the railroad came through Hart first then on to Pentwater.” Sorry pal, not the case. It was not until later a spur line was run into Hart. Today you can still see where the spur line left the main line. There's nothing left there but if you're interested, just south of the stop sign in Mears off Center St. where the bicycle trail crosses the road is where the spur switch was. Today this is now the bike trail. North out of Mears the line went up Center St. to about a 1/8th mile north of west 1st Street then cut north west across some fields and generally followed 52nd Street north with a detour around Round Lake then across the Pentwater Plains on its way to Pentwater.

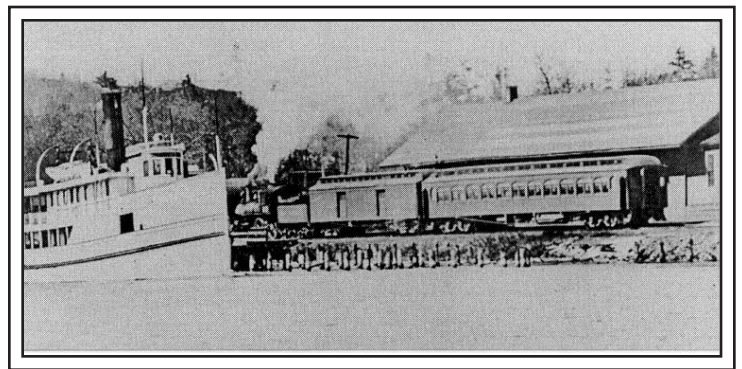
I think everyone knows, but if you don't, the old train station was on the west shore of Pentwater Lake on what is now Orange Street between Long Bridge and Ware Street. But, did you know there was one big controversy as to just where the station was to be built before the railroad even got here? One faction wanted it built on the west shore near where the old ferry crossed the channel. There was even a faction that wanted the train to come all the way into town. Not such a good idea. The town was too established by that time. An idea was proposed to have the railroad come in on the west side of the Lake and the depot on the north side by the ferry crossing so there could be quick access of all the businesses along the channel and in the area. Still another faction wanted it built in about where Apache Hills subdivision is today. The problem here was the ground was a marsh. Not good enough for the weight of a railroad engine to unload and load at the Depot. Another point, the water was not

deep enough and some companies already had their own loading docks on the north side of the Lake. Early on, the railroad went thumbs down on that location because of the amount of dirt that would have to be moved, i.e. cost factor to accommodate this location. All parties finally settled on “In accordance with instructions therein contained, grounds for the depot were selected Wednesday last on the west side of Pentwater Lake, about three-quarters of a mile from the village, on land owned by Dr. O. J. Vincent.” I should note here it was a matter of little consequence to the honorable



Note the older style locomotive in this old photo of the Pentwater RR Station.

Charles Mears, the good Doctor and the Pentwater Lumber Company as to whether it was placed on the north, south, or west side of the Lake since all three owned adequate properties in all these locations. The good Doctor finally ended the debate by giving the land to the railroad as long as the railroad kept the depot in that location. This way the depot could handle all kinds of freight like the logs coming to town to be cut into boards to be shipped out. It was at this time farming got to the point where farmers had more than enough crops and they could send some to market. For a short time there were still two sawmills on the south side of the lake.



Early transportation in Pentwater was primarily by boat and train.

Since we already had the ferry going across the channel, passengers could be transported to and from town to the Depot or the Depot back to town. Remember, the bridge at Long Bridge Road crossing the Pentwater River was light years in the future. One thing you might find interesting, as early as the early 1860's there was a grocery store and some crude dwellings on the west shore of the lake to accommodate

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Lake Michigan and in 1865; the channel was dredged to a depth of 7 feet to allow more efficient shipping. In 1867 Pentwater became a Federal Harbor with a lighthouse on the south pier to guide ships. Also in the year of 1867, Pentwater became an Incorporated Village. During the period of 1867 to 1917, the Federal Government took over Pentwater harbor maintenance. By about 1905, most of the area's timber had been cut and the lumber mills were closing.

Thanks to society member Newell Wright and his recent donation of pictures and documents, we can share a portion of the story of a "Pentwater Lighthouse Keeper". Andrew Jackson Davenport (1854 - 1929) served as the lighthouse keeper in 1911 and 1912. Mr. Davenport had been the keeper for five years from 1882 to 1888 at the Twin River Point Light at Two Rivers, Wisconsin. Then lighthouse keeper at Calumet Pier Head Light in South Chicago, Illinois from August 6, 1888 until he became Pentwater's Lighthouse Keeper on January 3, 1911. Andrew Davenport made his home



Lighthouse Keeper Andrew Jackson Davenport and wife Clara Hamann.



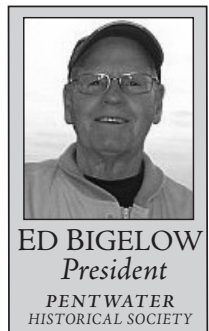
A view from across the channel of 176 Green St.



One hundred years ago the Davenports lived at this home at 176 Green St.

at 176 Green Street in Pentwater; now the summer home of Newell Wright. Included in this article is a picture of Andrew Jackson Davenport in uniform and his wife Clara Hamann taken in 1874. Also included is a 1911 picture showing the house at 76 Green Street where Davenport's daughter Elsie married Louise Emil Dietrich on June 28, 1911. Accompanying this article, are two more pictures, one of the channel Ferry with a view of his home on Green Street, and an early photo of the Pentwater Pier Head Lighthouse. Over time, there have been changes to improve our piers. In 1938 the U.S. Corp. of Engineers' Harbor Improvement Project upgraded the piers from wood to concrete. In 1987, a new 6-ton light tower with foghorn was installed on the North pier by the U.S. Army and U.S. Coast Guard. In 1998 - 2002, again the U.S. Corp. of Engineers reconstructed the piers with

people friendly wide concrete piers and steel plating below the water line. In addition, safety guardrails were installed and in the past year interval lighting was added for boater safety. No longer is a lighthouse keeper needed for Pentwater Harbor, but in the early days it was essential to have an experienced lighthouse keeper such as Andrew Jackson Davenport to keep the Beacon shining a guiding light to Pentwater.



FUTURE EVENTS

SPRING DINNER

Wednesday

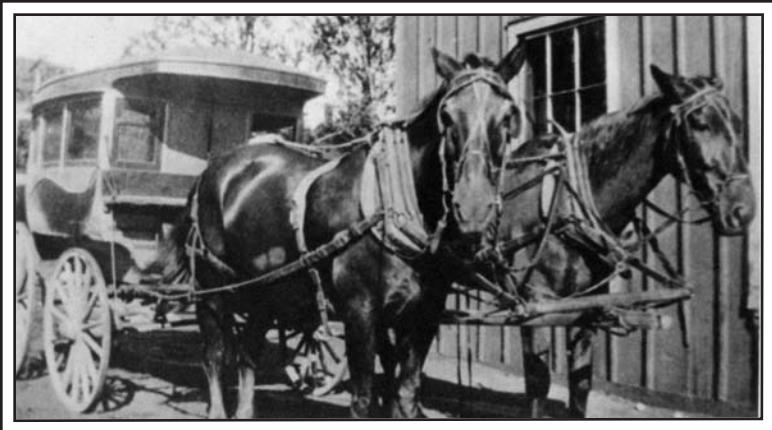
May 23, 2012

SUMMER DINNER

& MEETING

Wed. Aug. 22, 2012

commercial fishermen and men working in the sawmills. "Ok, why do we even need that there railroad anyway? Can't we just heap the stuff into a wagon and haul it out that way?" A couple of problems there, big problems! The roads outside the village were nothing more than very rutted mud two-tracks and single-track Indian trails. For that matter, some of the roads inside the village were not much better. A loaded freight or farm wagon had narrow, large diameter steel banded wheels with a minimal amount of road contact and could easily sink down to it's axles in the muddy roads just outside the village. Compare your car tire to a wagon wheel and you will see what I am talking about. "Hay, we got tons of sawdust over there at the sawmills just collecting dust. Why don't we just get some of that stuff and put it down to rise up the roadbed?" Well, guess what friends? That is exactly what they did. What do you think was used to fill the ruts on Hancock Street? You mean sawdust? Yep, genuine Pentwater sawdust. There was talk about building a log road going east out of the village using small diameter logs with little or no commercial value but I'll get into that at a later date. By about



The horse drawn depot carryall brought you to town, hotel or your summer home. 1889 the logging and lumber business was all but over. All the close in timber had been harvested and it was getting too expensive the keep going further out to find timber to cut. Another point, the ships coming in and out of our harbor were taking much of this business. If you are interested, a big bunch of the lumber not just from Pentwater but also from Ludington went to Chicago because of the huge fire of 1871.

The railroad continued to operate with less and less service to Pentwater for the next 61 years. What killed the railroad? Part of it was the large amount of boat traffic coming in and out of the harbor on a daily basis. Another part was the modern highways. By the late teens, early 1920's highways had finally improved, i.e., blacktop, concrete, etc. It was cheaper and faster to take lumber, produce, farm crops and what have you out by truck. "The final point being that during the first six months of 1932 the branch was used for the movement of only 30 cars, 938 tons of carload freight, and 43 tons of merchandise. A total of just 979 tons"

In conclusion, I had fun researching and writing this article. I'm still trying to find who brought the first automobile to Pentwater. If you have an idea for a story you would like to see written, contact me.

NEW MEMBERS

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 ROBERT J. O'BRIEN, JR. JOAN ROSEMAN,
 AGNES ETHEL ROUGHT

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 CHARLES MAYEUX TED & MAGGIE LASCARI
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 RED WING SERVICE COMPANY GREG STUTES
 SHIRLEY & NENA STUTES VETERANS LADIES CLUB
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In Memory Of: HELEN M. (STERNS) CLUCHEY

From:

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IRENE D. ZAIK
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From:

**JANE VERDUIN &
 DR. CRAIG K. MATHESON**
In Honor of:
DAMON & CATHY CRUMB

USE THIS FORM TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE PENTWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HOME ADDRESS _____ SUMMER ADDRESS _____ From _____ To _____
 NAME _____ NAME _____
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 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____ PHONE _____

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP: • Patron \$500* • Life \$125* • Sustaining \$40*
 • Annual \$10* • Student \$3 (* Includes Spouse)

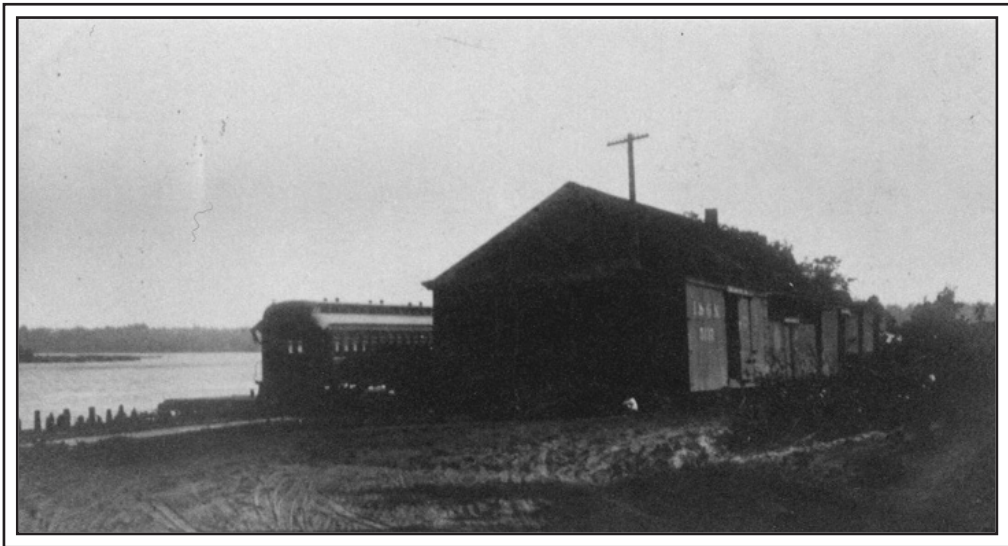
STATUS: New
 Renewal

Would you like to be contacted to participate in society activities? If so, your area of interest is: _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:
 The Pentwater Historical Society, P.O. Box 54, Pentwater, MI 49449

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE _____

A passenger car is waiting at the Pentwater Depot. This view is looking southward with the town across the lake.



The old Pentwater depot and boat docks with the town in the background.



PENTWATER
 HISTORICAL
 SOCIETY
 P. O. BOX 54,
 PENTWATER,
 MICHIGAN 49449

BECOME A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE NEW HOME OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY