



PENTWATER PRIDE

Past Present Promised

Winter
2023

MYSTERY SOLVED OR DOUBTS CONTINUE?

by Ron Beeber

I recently walked into a friend's home for the first time, and a large, frame map on a wall caught my eye. I sort of recognized three of the Great Lakes, but they weren't in the familiar shapes we know. So, I leaned in to take a closer look.

It was a print of a map of the territories of Michigan and Ouisconsin (not Wisconsin!) published by someone in Detroit named John Farmer. It was dated 18-something-so small I couldn't make out. I grabbed my cellphone, snapped a photo of the date, and zoomed in. Wow, 1830!



I took a closer look at Michigan's west shoreline. The print was small, but I could make out four rivers: the Pere Marquette, White, Muskegon -- and Pent Water -- rivers.

Pent Water, not Pentwater! I had once noticed this spelling on another map, but recall it being dated years later. This 1830 map was drawn almost 20 years before the arrival of Pentwater's earliest European settlers -- Edwin Cobb and Andrew Rector. And it was some 25 years before Charles Mears showed up and really kickstarted development here.

So, who named the river Pent Water and when? In the 1820's? Earlier?



There are several popular theories about the origin of the name Pentwater, or Pent Water. One is that there are five bodies of water here. Another is that Pentwater Lake was once practically "penned up" or "pent up" from Lake Michigan. I once heard someone speculate that while the channel was dug to connect it to Lake Michigan, the small lake was blocked, and this inspired the name. A friend once read that "pent" was similar to the Indian word for dark or black, hence dark water or pent water. There's a theory I've heard expressed about the river being darkened by the blood of Native Americans in battles with other tribes. In addition, a 1921 Muskegon Chronicle article reported that the Wyandotte tribe of Native Americans once camped around our lake, and its leader was "Chief Pentaloolah." I've found no information about him on the internet, but this 101-year-old newspaper article might support the theory.

The internet says John Farmer was an American educator and map maker. For 24 years, he produced dozens of maps of Michigan, Wisconsin, and several cities -- continuously revising them and releasing new editions. This map appears to be credible. I searched the phrase "John Farmer Map of Michigan 1830" on the internet, and it took me to where it's posted on the Yale University Library's Website at <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/15604165>.

Maybe Farmer's map is based on the travels of an early explorer; but who? I found on the internet that there was an expedition in 1820 of the western part of the Michigan Territory by its then-governor, Lewis Cass. Perhaps he roamed through these parts and named our river. Or maybe French explorers came up with the name. I searched the word "pent" in an online French-English dictionary and found that "pente" means "slope." But there seems nothing noteworthy about sloping around any stretch of the Pentwater River, is there?

What do you believe? Let us know by sending an email to newsletter@pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org and we'll post the responses we get in a future issue.



Volunteers are the Heart of the Museum!

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all our volunteers. You make our museum work, and work well!



You staffed the museum during visitor hours, you transported items behind the scenes, you maintained the building and grounds, you installed historical panels in businesses around town, you helped setup and cleanup at PHS dinner events, you did setup and pricing and cleanup at the garage sale, you helped lead tours and tourists, and we know you'll help again.

More projects are coming! We already have several volunteers that are kicking off a project to digitize the documents that we have in our archives.

This means that we can someday make our collection viewable and searchable via the Internet to make it accessible to those that wish to research Pentwater's history.

Stay tuned..... We can't wait to see what you'll do in 2024!

thank you!

THE EXPLOSION FELT AROUND PENTWATER

The crisp autumn day was like every other Friday in Pentwater during October, until an explosion shattered the afternoon silence. Before she could think about where the blast had originated, another loud boom shook the ground. A charred brick landed at her feet with a thunk. She froze in confusion. Billowing smoke filled the air. Francis Palmer's first thought was the location of her two children, Mary and Frank aged 14 and 12. Her rising panic dissipated only slightly when she remembered her children were back at the house; the opposite direction from where bright orange flames lapped the sky. She coughed as the smoke grew thicker around her. She covered her mouth and nose with her sleeve and looked around. Suddenly her heart fell into her stomach as she realized the origin of the devastation. The Pentwater Bedstead Company, where her husband, Timothy, worked as an engineer, was engulfed in flames. Francis didn't know it at the time, but two boilers had exploded, the stack was blown down, the powerhouse was completely wrecked, and a large opening was blown in the side of the main building near the powerhouse.

Francis ran frantically into the dense smoke. She heard yelling and felt other people swarming around her. She heard the words, "explosion" and "survivors" and had a difficult time staying upright. She felt someone take her arm and gently lead her to a nearby tree, which she gratefully leaned against for support. She heard a siren sound and soon the men from the fire department were on their way towards the devastation.

Two bodies were carried by wagons out of the wreckage. Francis knew right away who they were; L.O. Tupper, an electrician, and Miller Sorensen, an assistant fireman.

Next came Fred Girard and Oattie Green, who both looked shaken, bruised, and severely scalded, but alive. Francis breathed a sigh of relief. If the dead and wounded were already being attended that must mean that her husband was one of the lucky ones.



Timothy Palmer

Francis slowly became aware of hushed whispers and the feeling of eyes overtly looking her way. It wasn't long before Francis learned that her husband, Timothy Palmer, aged 41, was not one of the lucky ones.

Timothy had been found severely burned. He was able to describe to rescuers where to locate some of the other injured men before becoming unconscious. Tim lived one more day before succumbing to his injuries.

Days became weeks. Weeks turned into months. The people of Pentwater rebuilt and moved forward. Francis felt like the world was spinning around her faster than she could take it all in. She was drowning in her grief. Eight months after the explosion and the loss of her partner, Francis was buried in the Pentwater Cemetery next to her beloved husband. Whether it was during a moment of extreme grief or an accident, Francis drank carbolic acid and joined her husband in death.



Pentwater Furniture Factory

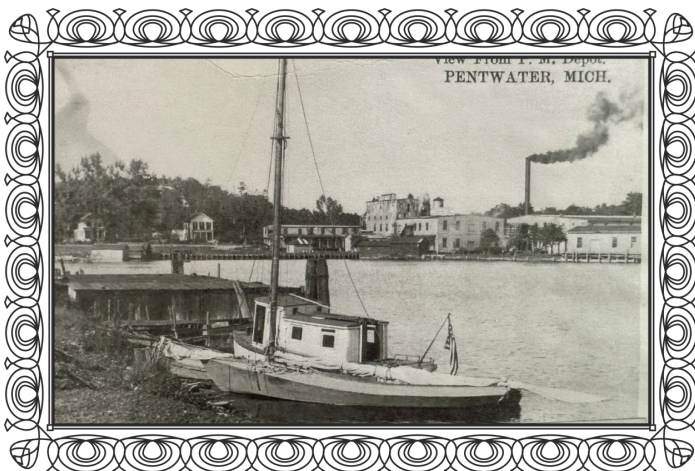


The Pentwater Bedstead Company was a complete loss. It was never rebuilt. All that remains of the building today are pieces of its foundation along the channel. The community was blessed to have a booming business which supplied jobs and revenue. The Pentwater Historical Society is fortunate to have pictures of the factory on display in the museum as well as a well-crafted piece of furniture by the company. Other pieces of furniture have survived the years and can be found spread across the United States.

In the early 1880s, the Pentwater Furniture Company was formed, and a boarding house owned by Charles Mears was purchased as the site of the business. The site was along today's Bridge Street. \$300 in cash exchanged hands, in addition, \$2,000 in stock completed the sale. Furniture from Pentwater became very popular and was shipped all over the United States. The company employed between 50 and 100 men. The Pentwater Furniture Company was sold in 1886 to the Sands and Maxwell Lumber Company, which renamed the furniture business the Pentwater Bedstead Company. After the boiler explosions on October 21, 1889, the damaged section of the building was rebuilt, and business went on as usual. On the night of February 16, 1900, the building was again engulfed in flames.



A piece of furniture from the factory found in the museum



"The snow which covered the buildings probably had much to do in helping to save the balance of the town from destruction.

The firemen did good work in saving H.C. Flagg's residence just across the street north of the factory.

The origin of the fire will of course never be definitely known, but the general opinion seems to be that it probably originated from a hot box in some of the machinery or blowers, which ignited the dust and shavings."

Taken from the Archives of the Pentwater Fire Department -To read the full account of the fire, visit the Archives at www.pentwaterfiredepartment.com

Memorials

In Honor of Dan Filius

Debbie Deward
Rose Wiersma
Eric & Elaine Christrup

In Honor of Raymond Dewyer

Lee & Nancy Brower
Steven & Beverly Brower

In Honor of Fred Cisler

Robert & Mary Stiphany

In Honor of Sara "Sally" Snyder

Shepherd Foundation
Roderic & Virginia Kronk
David Hume
Oceana Beach Association

In Honor of Ulli Steinecker

Robin & Roy Martens
Lesly Murray
Thomas & Karen Theibert
Sean & Julianne Coughlin

In Honor of Harold Sandberg

Rise Rasch & Samuelson Family

Expansion Update

BY NORM SHOTWELL & ELIZABETH RUSSELL

Work continues in the background on our expansion planning. Steve Bass, a Pentwater homeowner who has helped in the redesign of Park Place and the Yacht Club, was kind enough to enhance and embellish the original plan for the expansion. His imaginative ideas have been enthusiastically received! They make the expansion to the museum a beautiful space; where it will be a delight to host events, attend programs, and see exhibits.

In addition to the work on the design, Steve also participated in a creative session with a Grand Rapids exhibit designer and a PHS museum docent in creating ideas for new exhibits at the museum. These new exhibits connect history to experiences that can be enjoyed by all ages. The intent is to create memories across friends and generations using Pentwater's history as a tool for understanding the experiences of our predecessors and ourselves.

This visionary approach to Pentwater's Museum has excited and inspired the initial donors. Our initial fundraising has gathered over \$400,00. We continue to hold meetings with individuals that we hope will make significant contributions to the long-term vision and success of the museum.

Our expansion design focus group continues to study various aspects of the building design such as requirements for lighting, security, heating & ventilating, and access/egress as well as structural systems and exterior appearance. There is much work to be done before we can even break ground, but the momentum of community support is already building. We're looking forward to the future! For additional information go to tinyurl.com/phs-expansion or send an email to letsgrow@pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org.

Building Expansion Donations

David & Sandra Kersten
Kathy Elhart
Daniel & Jennifer Sheehan
Jim & Yvonne Reinsch



Summer Dinner guests enjoying dinner

Thank you to our Summer Dinner Sponsors



- Shelby State Bank
- Anonymous



Our amazing guest speaker!



Houses going up on the old Nickerson Inn property



Dredging the Channel



Renovations happening!

Museum Updates

BY DANIEL HOEKSTRA, SR.

Hello and thank you to all of you who made this year quite a success for the Pentwater Historical Society Museum. We had a strong showing this year with many visitors and great comments on the exhibits. Thank you to all the docents that made time contributions, the Board for their guidance, and the many other hands that helped throughout the year.

The Spring and Summer dinners were such a success! Thank you to our committee who organized the top-notch speakers and the delicious food. To all that attended; thank you! Our sponsors, [Shelby State Bank](#) and an anonymous donor, deserve our gratitude. The scrumptious desserts were provided by [Homebaked by Roxann](#) with coffee from [Green Issaac's](#). If anyone would like to sponsor one or both of our dinners for next year, please contact Karen Way at info@pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org

Our current larger exhibits will be enhanced with more items from the Department of Natural Resources. They have agreed to help us with older Uniforms and artifacts from their storages in Lansing. We also will be making smaller exhibits about the streets of Pentwater. Street name changes as well as what the streets have looked like in years past will be displayed through postcards and other media. In addition, the Nickerson Inn will be featured in an exhibit showing it's history until it's untimely demise. We invite you to experience the artifacts that were rescued from the embers of the Inn. We especially want to thank the residents of our area. Without you sending friends, family, and visitors in our direction we would not be as strong as we are.

Thank you!

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Craig Matheson & Jane Verduin
Mark Coscarelli
Manistee County Council on Aging
April Addleman



HOMECOMING



The class of 1973 had its 50th class reunion on August 8th at the Channel Lane Park in Pentwater. We had 29 graduates and 18 attended! That was the average graduating size back then. Unfortunately, 3 of our classmates have passed away.

We had 1 classmate that showed up that no one had seen since graduation and that was a wonderful surprise! No one knew who she was!

I think it's interesting that 8 of us live in Pentwater and 2 more have a 2nd home here and 7 more live within 40 miles.

The Clutch Food Shop catered a wonderful lunch for us and a classmate and her daughter did all of our decorations.

By Karen Way



Front row

Cindy Macksam, Sue Cutler, Pam Schlee, Judy Kokx, Glenda Lombard, Colleen Flynn, Kay Mustard, Susan VanBoxel, Kevin Christensen, Richard Smith, Mike Stewart, Laura Ewing, Debbie Alvesteffer, Kathe Spychal, Verna Hood, Monica Masse, Karen Brower

Back Row

Rick Blamer, Steve McKee, Harry Barter, teacher, Marcia Barter, teacher, Gary Malburg, Don Lamb.

Not Pictured in the 1973 Photo

Robert Jeffries, Mark GeBott, Matt GeBott, Timothy Scovill, Amado Vega, Daniel Peterson, Cathy Peterson, and Patrick Mullen

Welcome New Members!

Matthew & Gina Muffet
Ken & Elaine Konyha
Dan & Jenny Lynn Girvan
Ken & Kimberley Black
Dana and Bob French

Homecoming Queen: Then and Now

By Karen Way and Elizabeth Russell

The 2023 Homecoming Parade welcomed Judy Jernudd, a graduate of Pentwater High School and Pentwater's 1961 Homecoming Queen.

Judy was a product of Pentwater, arriving early in her childhood and graduating from Pentwater High School. Her class of 1961 was the last class to graduate from the old three-story school in the block bounded by Rutledge, Rush, 1st and 2nd streets.

Her parents, Jerry and Ruby Settington, came to Pentwater to follow her grandparents, owners of the dry cleaning shop in the 1940s, where Judy remembers being set up on the counter with the radio on so she could sing and dance. Lou and Doug Settington also owned the A&W franchise in the location that is now Gull Landing. Eventually Judy's family operated their own businesses as well, including the Lakeside Inn near the site of what was the Brass Anchor.

Her family first settled into a log cabin located on the south end of town, on what is now Business Route US 31. They then purchased the Carrie Mears home in the village. That is the house that Judy thinks of when she thinks of home.

The idyllic childhood growing up in Pentwater included playing with friends, walking everywhere you wanted to go, and other adults in town knowing who you were, your parents, and where you lived. You played in the woods, built forts, and made it home in time for dinner. When you were older it meant having a job in town during tourist season and swimming in the lake after work on warm days. It wasn't without worry. With so many strangers in town, and being of a gregarious and trusting nature, Judy's mother constantly reminded her not to get in the car of strangers, or even of people she knew but did not know well.

Judy was the drum major for Pentwater's high school band, and then the Homecoming Queen in her final year of high school. With her parents being in the restaurant business, Judy began working in the restaurant at the age of 12; initially in the back making salads for the customers, she pestered her mother until very soon she was taking orders, serving food, and running the cash register. She learned the value of hard work and developed her attitude of customer service while serving food. She began to develop her management skills when, at the age of 16, her mother put her in charge of managing their Lakeside Inn. In the meantime, her mother was running a second restaurant that they had purchased, The Pink Elephant, in Hart.



After graduating in 1961, Judy followed her high school sweetheart, Rich Jernudd, out to California. She initially worked in the entertainment industry in a production office. Her love of discussion and learning people's stories led her to eventually become a talk show host and news anchor in the LA area. She credits much of her success to friends and co-workers such as Larry King. Judy continues to work even 60+ years after her high school graduation; mentoring and advising aspiring TV personalities in the entertainment industry, as well as corporate executives that are learning the intricacies of communicating with the public.

Judy's love and enthusiasm for Pentwater has not waned, and has radiated through during her visit back home this summer.

The Wannatee

Around 1890 a vessel known as the Wannatee met its demise on the west side of Pentwater Lake just north of the intersection of South Beach Street and Chester Street. Unlike the majority of shipwrecks found scattered on the bottom of various bodies of water, the sinking of this ship was no accident.

The Wannatee has a history passed onto Denny Powers by his grandfather George, and by Dave Noble's grandfather Elmo. The following is information Denny heard from both gentlemen.



The Wannatee was owned by several Pentwater businessmen. It traveled between what was known as French Town and the railroad station across Pentwater Lake to the stores on Pentwater's main street. As a 36-foot cargo hauler, the Wannatee carried many different materials and goods back and forth. In time, she also became known as a place of refuge and relaxation among loggers who visited the village. Their particular brand of relaxation included the gambling away of paychecks and the drinking of spirits.

"HELL HATH NO FURY LIKE A WOMAN SCORNE"...

This did not go over well with the wives of the owners of the Wannatee. In fact, the women were so outraged that they conspired to have the boat burned and sunk while it was anchored.

120 years later the remains of the Wannatee can be seen in her watery grave when the water levels are low. Barrel staves, medicine bottles, and clap pipes were all found in her wreckage over the years. Evidence of the reason behind the Wannatee's demise can be seen in her burned and blackened cabin and deck area.



Spring Dinner
May 22, 2024

Garage Sale
June 8, 2024

Summer Dinner
August 21, 2024

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Check your mailing label or newsletter email; it shows the date your annual membership ends as of the time of printing, or a simple (L) for Lifetime members. Renew by sending a check to PHS, P.O. Box 54, Pentwater, MI 49449. Or, go to our Membership web page at <https://pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org> to renew online.

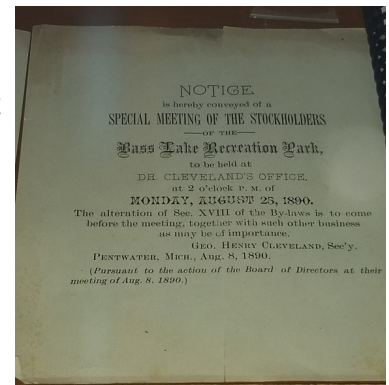
Bass Lake Property Owners Association Seeking History, Memories

by Pam Chapman

One of my favorite things to do at the Pentwater Historical Society Museum is to peruse the plethora of artifacts in its display cases. As a summertime Bass Lake resident, I'm always on the lookout for items about Bass Lake.

Tucked away in a museum display case is an 1890 notice of "Special Meeting of the Stockholders of the Bass Lake Recreation Park." I'm familiar with the Bass Lake Property Owners Association (BLPOA), but not the Bass Lake Recreation Park. Now I know more, thanks to a June 30, 1990 article I recently discovered by Ludington Daily News columnist, James Cabot. He wrote about the beginnings of Bass Lake Recreation Park.

According to the newspaper article, in 1886 William E. Ambler, Martin S. Perkins, and George H. Cleveland were interested in starting a resort at Bass Lake, just four miles north of Pentwater. They approached lumberman Charles Mears, who owned property at Bass Lake. "As a result," the column reads, "the Bass Lake Park Association was organized less than a week after the initial visit to see the property. The association had a capital of \$1,000 ..." and 25 stockholders. Hence, there was a need to conduct stockholders' meetings and agree how the approximately 77 acres would be used.



In its early days, the primary purpose of the Bass Lake Recreation Park was to provide a private recreational area. "... A number of buildings were erected, including a pavilion and kitchen, a boathouse and dock, two bath houses and an icehouse," the newspaper article states. "Provided for the boathouse were 10 towboats. Other improvements made in 1886 included two croquet grounds, swings and rustic benches, and a water well and pump." How long the Bass Lake Recreation Park stayed private and was used as a recreation park for stockholders is unknown. Today, lake cottages and woods are where the park once stood on the southwest side of Bass Lake.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, more families discovered Bass Lake and more cottages dotted the shores. Property owners felt the need for an organization that would promote their physical and social welfare and help protect their property. So, in 1915, the Bass Lake Park Improvement Association (BLPIA) was formed. Later in 1964, the name was changed to the Bass Lake Property Owners Association (BLPOA), as it's known today. While BLPOA members are not stockholders of the association, we do hold a lot of "stock" in what goes on at Bass Lake, and we treasure its history and future.

Generations of families have visited Bass Lake for decades ... some for more than 100 years. For example, in 1896 Chicago-area resident Wallace B. Gilbert recorded "Gilbert's Addition to Bass Lake Park" on the north west side of Bass Lake. Since then, more than five generations of Wallace B. Gilbert's family have enjoyed summer vacations at the lake.

The BLPOA is on a mission to document the area's history and Bass Lake families' memories. If you have Bass Lake information you'd like to share, please reach out to the BLPOA's Bass Lake History Committee via email: info@basslakepentwater.org.

Time with
TIM

Seven Little Stinkers



I think everyone will agree there is nothing cuter than a baby or maybe seven babies. My story begins as my brother, Todd, and I embark on one of our many adventures growing up in Pentwater. One fine day in June, we rode our bikes to Watson Creek to camp for a couple of days and enjoy some brook trout fishing. We had great fun exploring the area which included; Sandy Bend, Squaw Point, and the new overflow campground under construction in what we knew as the Boy Scout Field. Vaults had been set here to put outhouses on and as we checked out the site. We found that there were seven baby skunks that had fallen into one of the vaults.

I lowered my brother into the vault, he handed out the babies. Getting him out was the real chore. Anyway, there were some planks that the DNR left on site which worked well for an exit plan. We took the babies back to camp and had fun playing with them for a couple of hours.

If you have ever seen or interacted with baby skunks, you would know they are cuter than puppies or kittens- BEFORE they develop the scent gland. Well, these babies had no scent. It seems they tired of us before we tired of playing with them and one little stinker bit Todd.

Now we had a dilemma. At this time there were rabies in the skunk population, or so it was believed. We put the babies in the tent, rode our bikes to the nearest phone, and contacted Mom, who contacted Grandad, who sent Uncle Orvel, who came to get us in the lumber company delivery truck. When Dad got home from work, he contacted the DNR who told him the baby skunks needed to be quarantined for 10 days. Back to camp, we went to get the seven, only to find that their mother was looking for them and her scent gland was working. We rounded the little cuties up and took them to the forest warden who had a cage to keep them for 10 days. One of the babies died the next day and was taken to MSU to be checked for rabies. The Hart Hospital also ordered the vaccine. On the day Todd was to start injections the results came back ... no rabies. Meanwhile, the babies, still in captivity, had started to develop scent and were returned to the wild. It was kind of a stinky situation.

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