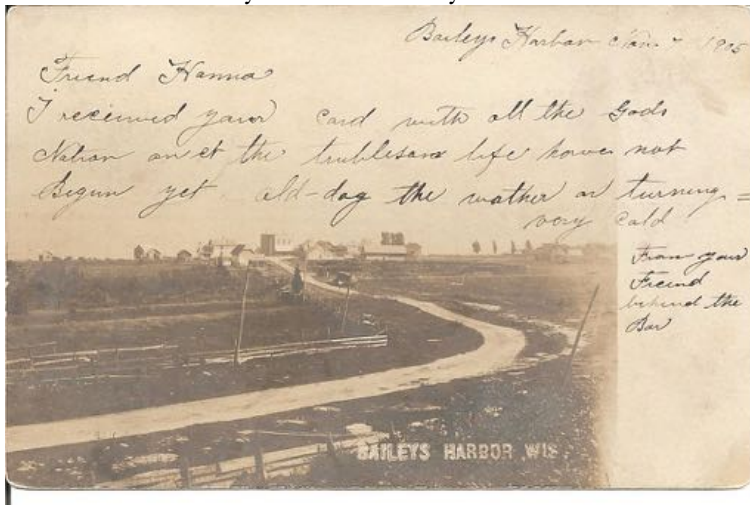


Baileys Harbor, the First Hundred Years

In the fall of 1848, Captain Justice Bailey discovered the harbor that was to bear his name as he searched for a safe mooring during a violent storm on Lake Michigan. The storm was so severe that he risked entering an uncharted harbor; luckily, he found it to be of sufficient depth. He remained overnight, and decided to explore the next day; he found an abundance of limestone and timber, and he took back samples to his employer, Milwaukee businessman, Alanson Sweet. Mr. Sweet envisioned great business opportunities for the new area and sent a crew of men in 1849 to harvest timber and stone and build a pier. They also began to carve a road to the other side of the peninsula that is known as County Road F today.



In 1851, Mr. Sweet induced the government to build a lighthouse on a small island on the east side of the harbor. This was one of the first lighthouses built on the west side of Lake Michigan. It operated until 1870 when its ineffectiveness caused

a change to the range light system. This first lighthouse can still be seen from the water or by looking across the harbor from the town. It is now privately owned and cannot be approached by land.

Mr. Sweet also convinced the state legislature to grant county status to the peninsula in 1851, and to make Baileys Harbor, due to its central location, the first county seat under the name of Gibraltar. Unfortunately, Alanson Sweet met with business reversals, and the settlement was abandoned. Eventually, Sturgeon Bay exerted its will and the county seat was moved in 1858, no county business having ever been transacted in Baileys Harbor.

After a somewhat dormant period, settlers began arriving again. These settlers were of many nationalities. The Poles populated an area around

County Road E & EE called the Polish Settlement. The Irish were concentrated around Kangaroo Lake. English, Germans and Scandinavians were scattered in various areas of the township. All these groups established farms. The town grew also, as the growing population needed goods and services.

Logging became one of the leading industries. In 1869, over 8,000 cords of wood and 650,000 feet of pine lumber left Baileys Harbor for Chicago, Milwaukee and other lake ports. If that cordwood was put in one 4'x4' woodpile, it would reach all the way to Sister Bay and then some. Farmers clearing land also



brought wood not needed for building to the piers. They could be paid for the wood, or they could trade it for the goods found in general stores which were often associated with the shipping piers.

Stone quarrying and fishing were also significant to Baileys Harbor.

Tourism began in the early days, and consequently, in the 1870's, hotels were built: The Peninsula House in Frogtown near Higgins Pier (later Lakeside Lodge), Anclam's Scenic Grove Resort across from the present Anclam's Park, The Baileys Harbor House near Florian's, The Globe Hotel at the foot of Howard Avenue. These provided lodging for tourists and travelers from the cities, but also for people in nearby communities who had business in town but couldn't make a round trip in one day.





Other institutions that are the hallmark of a thriving community began to make an appearance.



In 1874 a little white Catholic church with a bell tower was the first church built in Baileys Harbor. Twenty families came together to build the church, some even mortgaging their farms to defray costs. In 1886 the parish



of Saint Mary of the Lake received its first resident pastor. In 1892 fifteen Lutheran families met and decided it was time for them to have a place to worship. Immanuel Lutheran Church was established in 1893. The land for the church and cemetery was donated, and this church too was built, with sacrifice by the families who started it. Both congregations continue today, although St. Mary's is now part of the consolidated Stella Maris Parish.



The old Baileys Harbor School was situated just North of the Catholic Church. It burned in the winter of 1916 while the children were in class. All were removed to safety, and school continued at the old town hall that was located at the site of the present Post Office on Bluff Road. A new school was erected on Guy Street at Howard Avenue; classes resumed there in 1917 and continued until the northern Door County schools were consolidated.

In 1913 the women of the town formed the Cemetery Club out of concern for the condition of the town cemetery. Grass and weeds were not cut, graves were not cared for, and occasionally some of the neighboring farmers pastured there. Eventually, the land was fenced, stone gates were erected, & lawn equipment was purchased. As the cemetery work was completed, the club members turned their efforts to other areas of need, and the club became the Baileys Harbor Women's Club that exists to this day.



World War I came and, several Baileys Harbor boys served with Wisconsin Company F. After the war, instructors from the Art Institute of Chicago started a summer art colony in Frogtown which was supported by the U.S. government to benefit veterans of the war.

The 1930's brought some major improvements to the town. In 1931, the Maxwellton Braes Resort Club opened, and was compared to the finest buildings of its kind in the country.



During the Depression, caddying for the golfers provided much needed employment for young men in the area. In 1936, the new St. Mary of the Lake Catholic Church was built. It was contributed to the congregation by the same man who built Maxwelton Braes, Michael McArdle. In 1938, he also contributed a new Town Hall containing the McArdle Library.



These buildings have provided beauty as well as utility to Baileys Harbor, and are quite recognizable by their natural stone facades.

In 1934 the Bureau of Lighthouses deeded the Range Lights and about 30 acres to the Door County Park Commission who planned to transform this area into a trailer park. Many people were outraged by this proposed ruination of the natural area, and in 1937 formed The Ridges Sanctuary which secured a

lease from the DCPC for the buildings and surrounding acreage. It now continues the lease, but also owns and manages over 1,000 adjacent acres. The Ridges Sanctuary is dedicated to preservation as well as environmental education.

World War II called many Baileys Harbor boys to fight, and many other residents worked in the shipyards at Sturgeon Bay. Logging, shipping and stone were no longer major industries in the town. There were several gas stations, a car dealership, two grocery stores, and at least a half dozen taverns. Tourist rooms and cottages proliferated as tourism became an even bigger part of the economy. Soon after the war, a Quonset hut appeared on the main street as a motion picture theatre owned by two local men, Elton & Orville Voeks. Many local residents claim to have had their first kiss at the Lake Theater.



Baileys Harbor continues as a hometown to many, a vacation destination for others. The Baileys Harbor Historical Society hopes to explore and illuminate the stories of our past for the enjoyment and education of all.