



Echoes Echoes Echoes

Newsletter of Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society

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Baseball on Old Mission Peninsula

By Jill Swan

Special to Echoes

In 1860, the game of *base ball* – yes, it was commonly written as two words – had already dug its roots into American soil. An offshoot of English cricket and other bat-and-ball games from across world history, baseball by the end of the nineteenth century was the most recognized sport in America. The game had initially been a pastime for boys, but it soon evolved into a popular type of gentlemen’s club.

As the general population grew to love watching the game, and young men began to see it more as a career, official organizations and a draft were created. Rules, which varied by town, were made uniform by 1900. This very brief history of professional baseball is to set the stage for our topic: Amateur teams that popped up anywhere there were inhabitants, including the Old Mission Peninsula.

In 1860, the sixteen miles of Old Mission Peninsula had less than 500 residents and few were probably interested in, knew how to, or had time to play baseball. Peter Dougherty had built the first wooden framed structure not even twenty years before at Old Mission. Thanks to neighboring Traverse City’s steady industrial growth in lumber and agriculture -- with Hannah and Lay and Oval Wood Dish being the top two employers – the population of the Peninsula grew and more households were established. Much of the land was dedicated to farming potatoes, apples, and cherries, and local families began to open inns to attract those traveling by the Great Lakes

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Newsletter Staff

Mary Johnson

Carol Lewis, Co-Editor

Stephen Lewis, Co-Editor

Flo Schermerhorn

Banner drawn by Terilee Johnson

Photographer, Tom Maguire

From the President’s Desk

Surely spring on Old Mission Peninsula has always been joyously welcomed. Imagine living in a crude dwelling, life in survival mode, after a long winter greeted by warm blue skies, an opening bay, increased wildlife activity, bird song, and miniscule dots of color on the forest ground. And not many biting insects in early spring!

The bay—historically, between 1850-1950—100 years, froze 92 winters; 1950-2000, 32 times, and only twice in the last ten years. The melting ice would bring ease to a primitive life style, from travel to food. How many more species of fish were there 150 years ago?

Wildlife on the peninsula is mating, building nests or dens. Past years would have included bears, minks, wolves, bobcats, cougars, beavers, and badgers, among others.

Today’s wildlife I’ve seen include chipmunks, squirrels, ground hogs and their sort, mice and voles, coyote, deer, fox, opossums, porcupines, raccoons, skunks; and the flying ones: eagles, hawks, Canadian geese, seagulls, loons, ducks, owls, cranes, herons, bitterns, bats, and over 30 different song birds at our feeders. Robins! Others?



And the first forest flowers – spring beauties, hepatica, trout lilies, bloodroot, starflowers, Dutchman’s breeches, trillium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, violets, lady slippers, wild geranium, and of course edible morel mushrooms.

Other than the exciting yearly breaking up of the crystallized lake ice, Old Mission spring perhaps really isn’t that different today as 150 years ago!

Reminders: June 3 OMPHS annual potluck. June 27 Log Cabin Day & Dougherty-Rushmore site open house -- icehouse, rebuilt 3-holer outhouse, and new backyard trail. Also, volunteers for spring clean-up at the Dougherty-Rushmore site, call Tom Maguire.

—Nancy Warne



Planning and Historic Preservation

By Gordon Hayward
Special to Echoes

The character of Peninsula Township is the result of consistent and careful planning over a number of years.

The decision to take a proactive role in this process has resulted in a number of specific actions.

Preservation of the agricultural industry that provides jobs, protects the rural character of the Peninsula, Identification and preservation of high value scenic views including the Carpenter Hill (Underwood Farms), Kelly Hill (Scenic Turnout at Chateau Grand Traverse) and Hogback as well as other scenic views through the use of Planned Unit Developments and the Purchase of Development Rights Program..

From the Lighthouse Township Park at the extreme north end of the Peninsula to the recent purchase of the Center Road Natural Area Park near the south end and in between the Old Mission Point State Park, Hazerot Beach Park and launch site, the Mission Church, the Pyatt Lake Natural Area owned by the Grand Travers Regional Land Conservancy, Bowers Harbor Township Park, Grand Traverse County's Power Island Park, Archie Roadside Township Park a wide variety of public spaces have been created for the enjoyment of Peninsula residents.

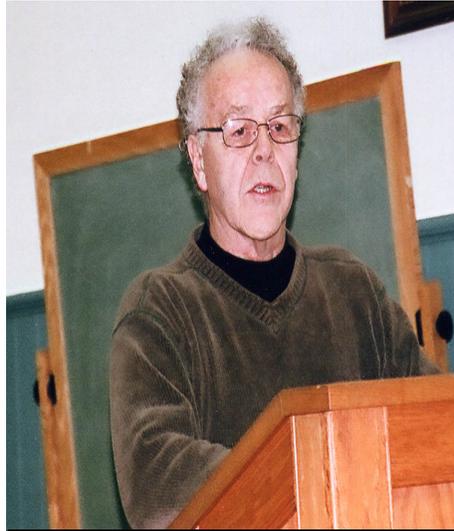
Specific Historic Buildings including the Hessler House, the Dougherty Historic Home Site and House, and the Log Church are in public ownership. In addition, the Bowers Harbor Inn has a conservation easement on the property to preserve the building facade and grounds.

Even Center Road itself was recently declared a Historic Scenic Route by the Michigan Legislature and a local committee is responsible for maintaining or enhancing the scenic qualities of the road..

The Township Board has adopted a Dark Night Sky ordinance to preserve the dark sky so that the views of the stars and celestial events are visible to the public.

The Township Planning Commission is in the process of revising the Township Master Plan to take into account all the above activities as well a plan for the next 20 to 50 years to protect and enhance the character and quality of life in the Township. The specific goals

include overlay zones for the Neahtawanta and Old Mission historic areas, a natural features overlay zone, and a shoreline overlay zone along with the actions required to be sure the future use and qualities of these areas is consistent with the overall goal of preserving the character and high quality of life on the Peninsula.



Gordon Presenting at Our Meeting
Photo by Tom Maguire

Looking Back ... 100 Years Ago in Old Mission

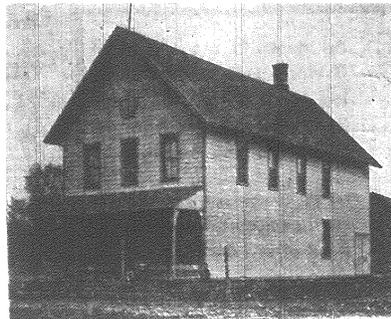
Enjoy our new feature culled and presented by our archivist Ann Swaney.

"The summer session of the Grand Traverse District Grange was held with the Peninsula Grange in the grange hall at Old Mission. "Among the topics considered were Government Seeds, The Ideal Home, Grand Traverse Fruit Interests, Grange Legislative Policies, Rural Telephones and Daily Newspapers." [Traverse City Evening Record, June 2, 1910, p. 4]

The Grange movement , the nation's oldest national agricultural organization, was formed in the years following the Civil War to unite private citizens in improving the economic and social posi-

tion of the nation's farm population. George Heddon (Heddon Hall) was actively involved in starting the first Grange movement in Old Mission.

"The misses Gertrude Hannen, Edna Jahraus, and Grace Hannen walked to Old Mission yesterday, leaving the city at 8 o'clock in the morning and arriving at Old Mission at 2:45 in the afternoon. The young ladies did not attempt to make any record time, stopping at Bowers Harbor and resting en route. They remained at the Porter House last night, and walked back today. The distance from this city to Old Mission is about 18 miles, with numerous hills to climb both ways." [Traverse City Evening Record, August 11, 1910, p. 2]



PENINSULA GRANGE HALL, OLD MISSION.



Baseball

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waterways from Chicago, Buffalo, and the Wisconsin shore.

The earliest reference to baseball was found in *Story of Old Mission* by Elizabeth Potter. In her book, she has the journal entries of Mrs. J.H. Roberts of Chicago, a summer tourist. One of Mrs. Roberts's entries was from August 1892 in which she writes: "George took the boys to see the baseball game – Old Mission boys beat the Elk Rapids." The visiting Elk Rapids squad traveled into Old Mission Harbor by boat for the game – a nine-mile crossing compared to the 33-mile trek on land.

At the time, the water was the primary motive of transportation between settlements. Going by train was also a popular way. From looking through microfilm, it seems plausible to say that matches were not on a strict schedule; it really depended on when, where, and which teams could gather. Other Northern Michigan teams, some of which played Old Mission, were Northport, Queens

City, Oval Wood Dish, Traverse City High School, TC Alumni, Silver Lake, Duck Lake, Cedar, Lake Ann, Williamsburg, Acme, Interlochen, and Karlin. Even the peninsula itself had multiple teams. According to an interview of Axel Ostlund recorded by Julianne Meyer in *Reflections of Yesterday*, "Old Mission and Ogdensburg and Mapleton had their own teams." Like summer little league, teams were sponsored by a settlement or a busi-

ness. To pay for uniforms and supplies, they most likely passed the hat.

With baseball being an outdoor sport, players and spectators were at the mercy of the Northern Michigan weather. As is the same now, baseball began in the spring, reached its height during the summer, and relaxed again in the fall. *The Evening Record* gives a reference to spring ball on April 15, 1905. However, within that same edition, mention was made of how the car carrier *Missouri* was unable to make the passage into Petoskey harbor be-

cause the ice was too thick. The uniforms, typically made of flannel, wool, or a wool-cotton blend, were good at keeping the players warm during those cool spring days. During the summer, some professional leagues – it's doubtful that Northern Michigan teams did the same – wore silk uniforms.

Competitions took place at the baseball diamond just before turning up Ridgewood Road near Old Mission Harbor. Games were also played at Bowers Harbor, which was much

closer to the base and a sort of halfway point. On June 12, 1905, *The Evening Record* reported the battle between the Old Mission baseball team and Pierce's Corn Huskers at Bowers Harbor. "12 Innings were Played," read the headline. The article goes on to report, "A crowd of 200 went over on the *Columbia* [a two story steamboat with a single stack] and the game was witnessed by 500 people.

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Old Mission Baseball Team 1905 Top Row: Robert Sheppard, Lew Swaney, Robert Swaney
Center Row: Ted Dana, Harry Dana, George Swaney, Jack Swaney, Bert Ekstine
Front Row: Will Carroll, Steve Lardie
Photo in Memories Hidden, Memories Found by Julianne Meyer



Baseball

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Play was snappy throughout.” Old Mission lost the game 6-5.

Newspaper writers at the time commonly referred to players simply by their last names. In the case of relatives playing on the same team, first initials would be provided for distinction purposes. In the article about the game versus the Corn Huskers, the names of Lardie, the catcher for Old Mission, and McIntyre, the Old Mission pitcher who “struck out four men and let no man walk” are the only two members remarked upon in the article. It’s safe to say that the teams were relatively small, perhaps 12 players with nine on the field at the time plus the opposing batter. photo on page 3, from 1905, shows only nine players total.

Fred Dohm, another individual interviewed by Julianne Meyer, remembers going to games at Bowers Harbor “when they played Fife Lake, Acme, and when they scheduled the teams they tried to get one to come here on the Fourth of July.” Fourth of July was one of the major celebrations of the summer, and apart from weekends, a popular day for baseball. The most well-attended athletic competitions took place at 12th Street Park (current Thirlby Field location). But games were played all over the place. Families would pile into their wagons – automobiles later on – with picnic baskets and blankets and head to the game. It was pretty much an all-day event, and a time to spend with neighbors and friends. According to one Old Mission resident, the drive into Traverse City by horse and wagon took about three hours before the automobile. Even with cars, the journey was fairly lengthy, so the size of the crowd depended on the location and the competition. For instance, in 1905, the *Evening Record* reported 1500 people at a game in Silver Lake. Baseball was *the* sport of the early decades.

Games weren’t just against teams made up of men who lived in the area, however. The influx of summer tourists brought more young men who loved to play the game. A 1907 journal entry by Mrs. Roberts describes one of the temporary summer squads: “Somewhat later another club was formed, the Old Mission Athletic Association, which had a baseball team, the Old Mission Summer Coons. They played against the year round residents, who also played the neighboring communities. Everyone gathered on Saturday afternoon at the ‘ball park’ where a small grandstand was erected, back of Hill’s store, by Mr. Brinkman’s fruit drying stands.” The store belonging to Earle Hill, based on *Reflections of Yesterday*, was “located at the corner of Mission and Brinkman roads.”

Besides being a favorite pastime to play and watch, the sport also provided some relief during World War I. Teams continued to play, even though most of the young men either volunteered or were drafted overseas. Games were fewer and even more sporadic. But the Fourth of July was the exception. In June 1918, the *Record-Eagle* commented that the Bowers Harbor Committee was arranging a Fourth of July celebration, including a baseball game. On July 1, 1918, the written words by the newspaper, though they are about the upcoming game between the Traverse City team and the Northern Michigan Stars, perfectly describes how important baseball was during that time: “As there have been few games this spring, the fans of the national sport will have something to anticipate.”

In my research, I went only as far as 1918 and there is still more to tell, but you can be assured that baseball was played on the Old Mission Peninsula for many years after that. Baseball was an activity for young men that spectators enjoyed to watch, and the tradition of America’s sport continues to this day.

Jill Swan is author of the book about the history of Trojan, Titan, and St. Francis football: Traverse City Football – Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow. www.traversefootball.org

Dougherty Fundraiser

“The Peter Dougherty House Fund Raiser this year will be a joint event with the Michigan Historical Preservation Network on the evening of Friday, June 11 at the Bower's Harbor Inn. There will be a live and silent auction as usual. Hors 'doeurves and beverages. Details to follow. For more information, please contact Gretchen Soutear at 223-8752.”



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Where Was Spring Park?



*By Susan Feiger
Special to Echoes*

Was this park on the Old Mission? And if so Where?

Many, many old timers have not been able to help me with this mystery. A post-mark of 1909 is on the postcard showing the boat with a flag. The postcard with a shadowy view of "Ford" / "Marian" / "Power" Island is postmarked 1920. The postcard that shows a gravel — or probably sand— road states that it is "Peninsula Road near Spring Park, Traverse City, Mich." The most interesting card I feel, is the one with the "twig sign," published by The Hannah & Lay Mercantile Co.



I plan to publish a book of Old Mission postcards, and welcome the chance to see any that you might have that you would like to be included in my book. I am looking for more postcards with people, older farms, schools, and places of business —like a blacksmith! I know they are out there !

[Editor's Note: Susan Feiger 's huge postcard collection includes these, which one way or another suggest that Spring Lake Park might have been on Old Mission Peninsula. We present them in the hope that somebody in the society can provide a definite answer.]



PENINSULA
ROAD NEAR
SPRING PARK
TRAVERSE
CITY, MICH



Spring Park, TRAVERSE CITY, Mich.



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