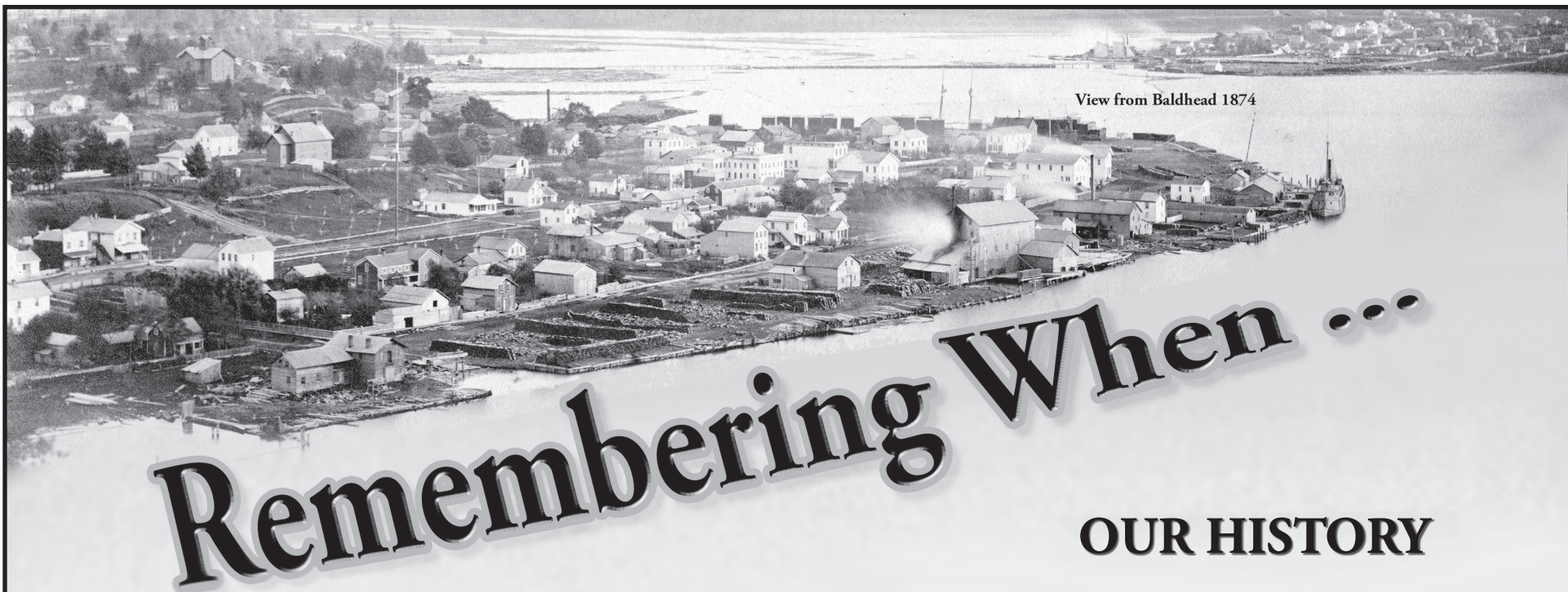




Left - The Benson and Johnson families on the front steps ca 1899. James Johnson is the man in the front row. His wife, Phoebe Johnson is sitting just behind him.



Above - "The Porches" looks the same today.

Below - There were many children to pose on the old mill wheel.

SECOND OF A SERIES - "THE COVE" BEGINS TO GROW

Last week we told of O. C. Simonds starting the summer community at Pier Cove. Simonds's college buddy at the University of Michigan was James Butler Johnson who was an engineer and surveyor with the U. S. Geological Survey. In the early 1880s Johnson and Simonds were engaged in survey work in the Pier Cove area and fell in love with the place. By the 1890s Simonds was a prominent landscape architect and Johnson had become a college professor at Washington University in St. Louis and later was the first dean of the Engineering School at the University of Wisconsin. In 1896 the Johnson family built the home "The Porches" which remained in the Johnson family until just two years ago. It stands today--a historic bed and breakfast--overlooking the beach.

Included in one of the many family scrapbooks is a handwritten letter which is a good short history of "The Cove". It was probably written by Phoebe Henby Johnson, grandmother of Bob Johnson and Mary Ann Johnson Curtis, current residents of Pier Cove :

"The land at the The Cove was located April 28th 1836 and became the site of the prosperous village of Pier Cove. The land was originally covered with a forest and the stream which runs through it, Mill Creek, was used as water

power for mills located in the village. A saw mill, grist mill, slaughter house, hotel, two saloons and many houses were built in the village which was platted in 1862. After the timber was all cut away and the Railroad built through Fennville, the business of the village decreased and many of the buildings were moved to the Railroad. The only inhabitants remaining in Pier Cove in 1889 when Mr. O. C. Simonds purchased the land by the lake, from the heirs of Joseph Edridge, were the Jones family and a few old soldiers whose chief support was the pension paid them by the Government. "Deserted Village" was one of the names suggested when they were trying to christen the place. Sven Benson and his wife, Louisa, moved to the cove from Chicago in April 1892.

The locusts and silver poplars were planted, between the orchard and the warehouse in 1894. The ash leaved maples, ashes, elms and birches in the sand across the road from the house were planted 1893; the catalpas in 1891 or 1892.

J. B. Johnson and family and W. S. Curtis and family spent the summer of 1897 in the

Spafford cottage and the Melchers lived in the little cottage now used as the Johnson kitchen and dining room. We moved into "The Porches" in 1898".

By Jack Sheridan



The Remembering When feature is the creation of Jack Sheridan and Jim Schmiechen of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. Please visit the Society's museum – this years exhibit "Lincoln's Ready-Made Soldiers: Saugatuck Area Men in the Civil War is open through the fall. The museum is located on the west side of the Kalamazoo River at the foot of Mt. Baldhead, and is open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. There is no admission charge.

We welcome your comments on Remembering When. Call 269 857-7901, email us at sdhistory@accn.org or write to Box 617 Douglas, Mi 49406. SDHS historical images can be seen on the SDHS web site at www.sdhistory.com and all historical photos are available for purchase in print sizes up to 12x17. Our historical image database is growing through your contributions. We scan your old photos—you keep the originals—and we then provide you with a CD of your digitized images.

