

# Remembering When ...

## OUR HISTORY



**NEW RICHMOND – ON THE FRINGE** The memories are a piece of our history. Like many new-born settlements existing on the frontier fringe, New Richmond had its good and bad days. The 1860s sawmill died along with the supply of sawable white pine. In the early 80s a breath of new life came with another mill that produced hardwood veneer for the Grand Rapids furniture makers. The Fennville newspaper reported that up to 60 men were employed in a factory powered by a large steam engine with double boilers. Hardwood logs could be brought in by train, sled or floated down the river when there was a sufficient water level.

In July of 1877– the Commercial reported that a large portion of the 1856 wooden bridge: “fell into the river while the stage, driven by Rast Billings, was passing over it. He had one lady and four gentlemen passengers, all of whom, were precipitated into the river. Fortunately no lives were lost and no very severe damage was done.” In 1879 a metal swing bridge was built to replace the structure that had collapsed.

About 1904 the railroad replaced their wooden bridge with a new steel span.

In 1901 the veneer mill closed and the machinery was moved to a new plant in Paw Paw. The old-timers tightened their belts and hung on. In 1903 a fire devastated much of the town's little business area. But it was rebuilt and the village began to attract the same tourists that were drawn to the Saugatuck area. They came to enjoy the quiet serenity and to fish for northern pike.

The river boats brought tourists until the 20s. Dick Hoffman revived the tradition when he brought the Carousel and the Island Queens to the sleepy little village in the 50s and 60s.

Today the track is still there—when the wind is right you may hear a train in Saugatuck—and the buildings, bridges and the beauty are still there. Head down Old Allegan Road --five miles or so-- until you reach the old swing bridge. Stroll across and along a main street of our history... *By Jack Sheridan*



*Top left - The village before the fire ca 1900*

*Top right - Ca 1910 mill is closed - village is just down river around the bend*

*Above - New Richmond House ca 1920 - Now a B&B*

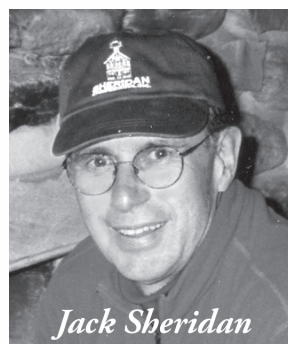
*Center - The swing bridge is restored and looks like this today*

*Right above - Working on the railroad - note the lunch pails and jug*

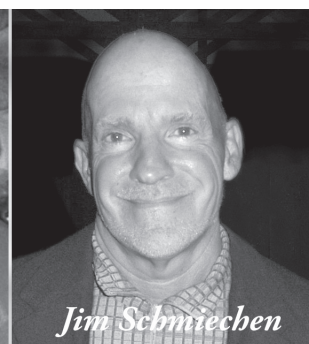
*Right - Looking north ca 1910*

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](mailto: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](http://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.



*Jack Sheridan*



*Jim Schmiechen*