

City Dock – Tourist Camp – Trailer Park - Goodrich Park

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In early 1870, Albert Mears built a General Merchandise store at the foot on Colby street in the area now known as Goodrich Park. In 1873, he constructed a warehouse in connection with his store.

Mears remained at this location until 1886 when he built several new stores on Colby Street. He then moved his business into one of them.

Albert Mears was the youngest brother of Charles Mears for whom the town of Whitehall was originally named.

When the Goodrich Steamships started coming to White Lake with their passengers during the early 1900's, there were several docks that could be used to discharge those passengers.

There was a dock at Sylvan Beach, Michillinda/Lakeside Inn, Whitehall City Dock. There was also one at the Tannery, but that was mostly used for freight. Harvey's Dock at Maple Grove in Montague was reconstructed for use in 1921 by S. A. Gritzner.

Michillinda Dock by Sylvan Beach & the Lakeside Inn was built in early 1906. Robert Love, of Muskegon, hauled piles to the Michillinda dock and as soon as the ice moved out of White Lake, he began building a fine new dock for the Michillinda Dock Co. The dock extended along the sand hills just west of George Mason's store and was built for the purpose of giving the big Chicago boats a landing place at Michillinda. Frank G. Allen of Moline, IL who owns a large handsome cottage at Michillinda was president of the company and George Mason, the J. R. Austin estate and W. D. Pyne are among the stockholders. The water at the place where the dock was built was very deep to within a few feet of the sand hills and any large boats would be able to land with little difficulty.

The Goodrich boats abandoned their Whitehall landing in 1920 because there was not a sufficient depth of water so consequently, they only stopped at the Sylvan Beach/Michillinda dock. The boats did not come up to the head of the lake at all. This proved unsatisfactory to the two towns and very inconvenient to a great majority of passengers who were bound for other parts of the lake. They had to rely on the ferry boats which were often too crowded to accommodate them all.

S. A. Gritzner had purchased the former Harvey property some years before which allowed for the Goodrich Dock at Harvey's to be built in Montague in 1921. In connection with the 4th of July Celebrations, the new Goodrich Boat Dock at Montague was also dedicated.

A Tourist Camp at Goodrich Park was started in 1921. This was mostly used by people who pitched a tent. By 1927, it was reported that over 1,000 cars and nearly 5,000 tourists came during the past three months at the Trailer Camp.

In 1937 a push was made to provide electric connections for cooking and lights in the trailers and improved sanitation and recreational facilities. A survey of other trailer camps in the area indicated a fee of from \$1 to \$5 was being charged. It is unclear what fee, if any, was charged at Goodrich Park. A bath house and store were also available.

In November 1940, it was reported that 246 trailers used the park during the last season for a total of 1,202 trailer days. A boat livery was established with most of the boats being reserved for the use of the people camping at the trailer park. The Boat Livery at the Trailer Park was located at the City Dock which was formerly used by the launches that transport the steamship passenger from place to place on the lake.

In July 1943, the constant rainfall in the area caused concern not only to property owners around White Lake, but also the city of Whitehall. The previous year, the dock at the City Park was three feet above the water level. Now it is hardly a foot out of the water and waves of any size at all wash over the dock.

In 1944 there several families who remained at the Trailer Park even during the winter months.

In 1950, most of the allotted trailer spots were taken up by people working in the area and about ¼ was used by tourists. Only the south side of the park was being used for trailer parking. Twenty trailers could be accommodated at a time. The other side of the trailer park was set up with 15 picnic tables. This was particularly popular with people just "out for a Sunday Drive". Usually all the tables were in use on Sundays.

In 1952, the high-water levels were a problem again. Damage estimates along the shoreline were estimated to reach \$150,000 or more. There was no way to estimate the damage caused to the trailer park of the city dock, which was mostly under water.

There were different caretakers hired by the city to maintain the grounds and facilities. Some of these included: Albert Balongue, Henry Zellar, George Goethe, George Gross and Leo Mooney.

It appears that the trailer park was still in use until the early 1960s.