

Lumber Mills and the Lakeside Inn

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Dalton Mill ca1880

The area at the southwest end of White Lake between the White Lake Yacht Club and the site of the former Lakeside Inn has a long and varied history.

The first individual to own the land was William Barnhart who bought the land from the Federal Government and used it as farmland.

In 1856, Barnhart sold the land to George A. Rodgers, who constructed and operated a small steam-powered sawmill there.

Rodgers died unexpectedly and the property was sold at a Sheriff's Sale in 1859 to William I. Wells and his wife. They quickly turn around and sold the property to Amos Rathbone in January 1860.

Amos Rathbone was born in New York in 1808 and moved to the Grand Rapids area in 1839 where he went into various businesses. He eventually ran a grocery store with his nephew Gouverneur B. Rathbun. Amos then became interested in the lumbering business and bought several sawmills in Grand Rapids. He also took interest in several mills in the White Lake area. Perhaps it was while his nephew was in charge of the mill here that it became known by the name "Governor's Mill". Shortly after, however, it appears that Amos Rathbone sold 2/3 of his interest in the mill to Cone & O'Brien, and by 1862 Amos had sold his remaining share to them as well.

Hubble B. Cone and Michael W. O'Brien were from Chicago and operated the mill together until 1865 when O'Brien turned over his share of the mill to Cone. In 1870, Hubble Cone took on George Green and together they formed Green and Company. When Cone died, his share of the mill was sold to Denison Kelsey in 1874, and it became Green, Kelsey and Company. The property then consisted of the mill, a store, an office, a boarding house, a blacksmith shop and some shanties for the laborers.

In February 1879, Denison Kelsey turned over his share of the mill to George Green. The same year, George Green sold the property on a contract to James Dalton (from Short Point). Dalton operated the mill until 1883, when he moved the mill equipment to another mill that he had in Menominee.

A general store and the post office remained in the area, along with some other outbuildings.

When James Dalton died in 1885, the property and buildings became the ownership of the Dalton family heirs.

Emma Dalton, daughter of Peter and niece of James, had married George H. Mason in 1885. They had two sons: George Dowling and William Lawrence. Together, over a period of time, they were able to buy out the other heirs. They continued to operate the General Store and Post Office. George H. Mason became the Postmaster of the Post Office in 1899, which took on the name Michillinda Post Office. He died in 1908.

George H. was a storekeeper (with a store in Montague and branches at Lakeside and other places) and businessman (associated with Montague Iron Works). It is believed that Emma is the one who may have started renting rooms over the store. When George H. died in 1908, George D. came home from college to help his mother with the family business interests.

In 1912, George D. married Nettie Tallant. They had their first child in 1913, which coincide with the opening of the Lakeside Inn. A couple of rental cottages were added. George D. became the postmaster there in 1913 and held the position until 1915, when his mother Emma was appointed. George was then appointed postmaster in Montague in June 1916.

In 1917, the property was sold to Mr. & Mrs. Glen Tallant, brother of Nettie Tallant Mason. They remodeled the building into 17 rooms and 3 cottages. Early rates were \$8 to \$10 per week with an average of 25 to 35 guests. Mr. Tallant died in 1936 and in 1940 Mrs. Tallant sold the Inn to Mr. & Mrs. Louis Groessl.

After over 70 years of operation by members of the Groessl family, it was sold in 2013 to Buzz and Nan Kaehler and became known as Buzz's Lakeside Inn.

In 2018, the property was put on the market and sold in June 2020. All of the contents of the buildings were auctioned off, and the buildings were torn down to make room for the next chapter in the history of the Lakeside property.