

The Dalton Family Journey

From Ireland to White Lake

1830 to 1900

Legan Townland, County Roscommon, Ireland

- Middleman Farm family in the early 1830s – leased land from absent Lord (landlord).
- 2 farms on 22 acres in Legan townland, with sublease to a tenant for part of this acreage.
- Family literate, but Catholic: limited economic opportunities, particularly for children.
- Left 15 years before Potato Famine - deliberate relocation, arrived in U.S. with capital that positioned them for economic success in American midwest where land was just becoming available to settlers.

St Joseph, Michigan

- In 1832, James Sr (age 51) and daughter, Catherine (age 13) arrived. Bought lot 220 in newly platted Village on the mouth of the river in sight of Lake Michigan; bought additional land - likely for farming.
- In 1834, Edward (age 21), his mother, Margaret (age 47), and the rest of the family Mary (age 22), Joseph (age 14), James Jr (age 9), Peter, (age 6) and Andrew (age 4) arrived.
- **From Home on Lot 220, witnessed first shipment of lumber from St Joseph to Chicago in 1833.**
- Built and ran hotel in 1838; Within a year moved North to Grand Rapids and entered Lumber Business.



Mary Lynn Mason
White Lake Historical Society
October 16 2025

Grand Rapids, Michigan / Sand Creek Mill, Talmadge Township, Ottawa County, Michigan

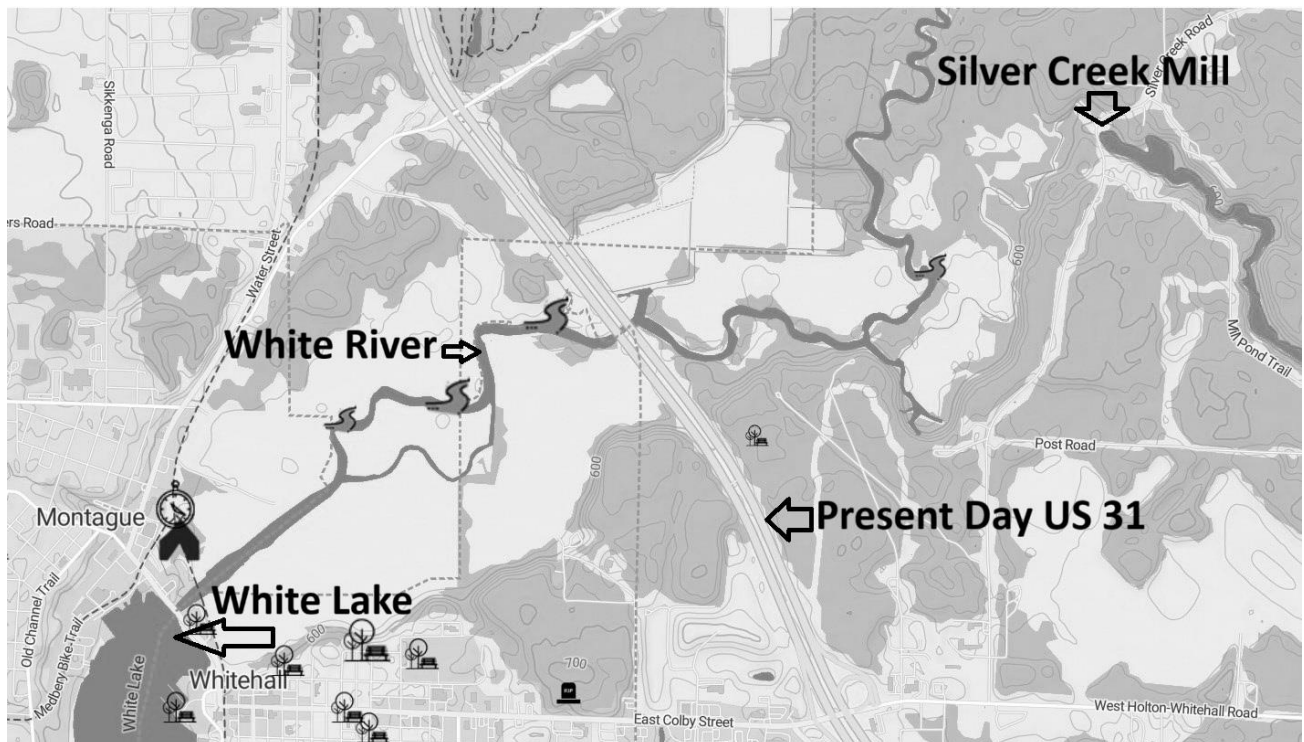
- James Sr obtained his first land patents in Grand Rapids area in 1839.
- Family living in Talmadge Township, Ottawa County, Michigan as of 1840 Census.
- Obtained Patents in 1841: Part of Section 32; all of Section 33; Talmadge Township. It contained:
 - White Pine; and
 - Mouth of Sand Creek, where it entered Grand River.
- Dammed Sand Creek to build mill pond - used to provide water power for saw mill - by 1845.
- Edward Dalton returned from Chicago to run Lumber Mill and to Farm in 1846.
- Margaret Dalton (1787-1847) died at Sand Creek before James, Sr., moved to Chicago in 1847.

Chicago, Illinois

- Edward opened Lumber Yard in 1845 – corner of Clinton and Randolph
- James, Sr (1781-1873) took over Lumber Yard in 1847 after death of Margaret, his wife.
 - Operated this Lumber Yard for balance of his life.
 - Lumber yard survived Great Chicago fire of 1871 - West of the South Branch of Chicago River.

White Lake, Michigan

- In 1845 Edward (then 31) and James (then 20) traveled down the Grand River; At Grand Haven headed north along Lake Michigan with the destination of Manistee, searching for a location to erect a new Dalton sawmill.
- When they arrived at Whitehall, they stayed with Charles Mears at his Mill pond on White Lake.
- Purchased the Silver Creek Mill site from Charles Mears, and contracted with Eric C Putnam of Grand Rapids to build a Sawmill in 1846 – James, Jr. and his brother, Peter (then 18) operated this Sawmill.



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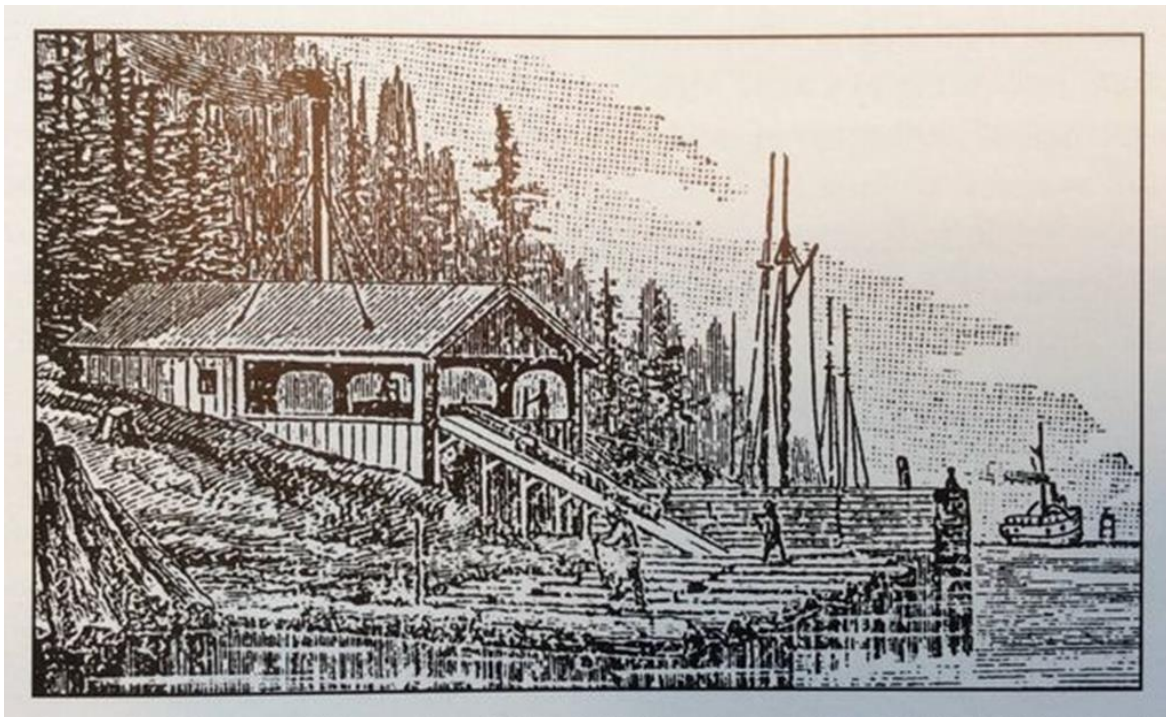
Captain James Dalton

- On July 4, 1848, the first 4th of July celebration on White Lake, James Dalton, Jr. was Orator of the day.
 - Spoke in the presence of about fifty Indians and twenty whites.
- James Dalton Jr's role in the family's business became the transport of lumber from their Sand Creek Mill (Talmadge Township) and Silver Creek and Short Point Mills (White Lake) to their Chicago lumber yard.
- Built and operated the first steam boat on White Lake - known as the Two Sisters or Mosquito - to bring lumber through White Lake to Lake Michigan ships.
- Spent years captaining the Blue Bell, a two masted schooner - shown here with a full load of lumber.
- He was proud to be known as Captain James Dalton, including this title on his gravestone.



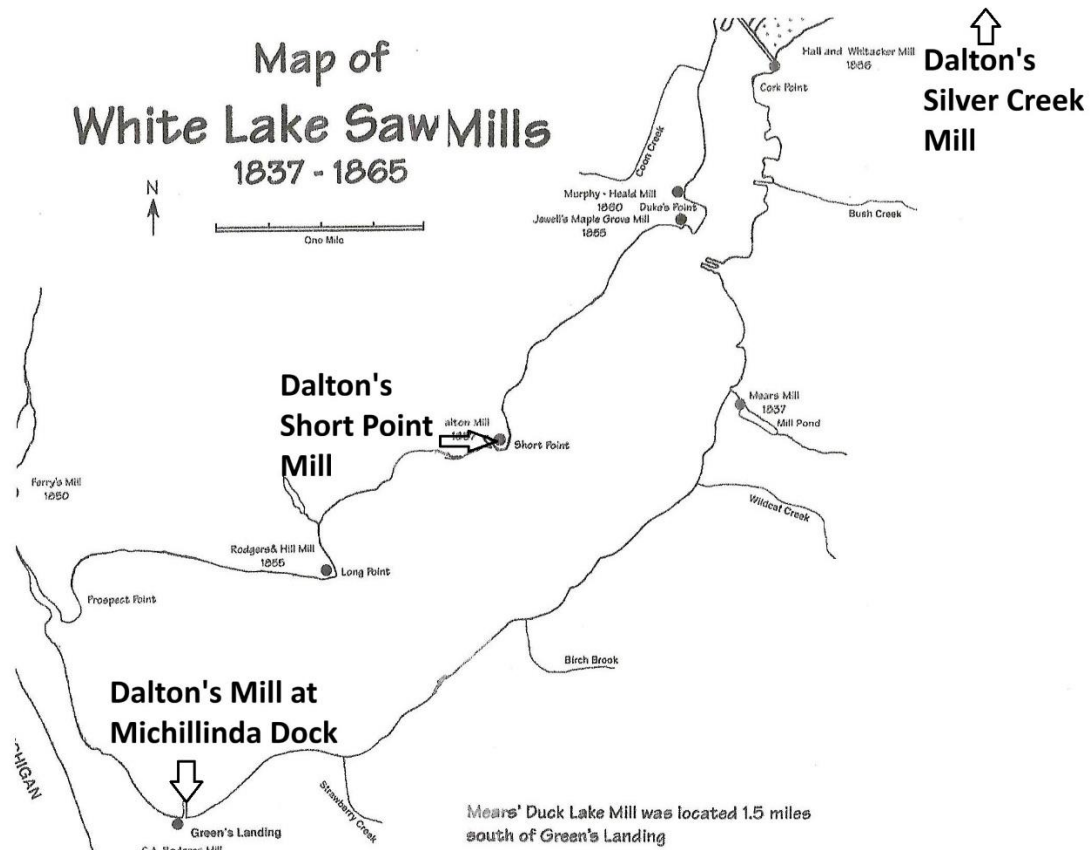
Short Point Mill - 1857

- Dalton Brothers (James and Peter) built a steam mill – the Short Point Mill – on White Lake in 1857.
- Peter and James each had 10-acre Homestead parcels near this mill where they built their homes.
- This mill location later became known as Dowie Point, and is now known as Blueberry Ridge.

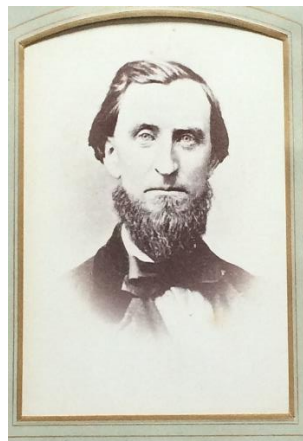


The Green/Dalton Mill at Michillinda Dock - 1879

- The Short Point Mill burned in 1878. James Dalton (Peter having died in 1876) moved the family's sawmill operation across White Lake to the Green Mill property. The Green Mill property included all of the land currently occupied by the Yacht Club and White Lake Golf Course, south to Michillinda Road.
- James operated this sawmill until his death in 1885.
 - To the west of the sawmill, about 1913, Peter Dalton's daughter, Emma Dalton Mason, started a resort at Michillinda Dock at what became known as Lakeside Inn, a resort that operated at the site until 2020. Three homes now occupy the site.



Captain James Dalton



Peter Dalton