Blendon Landing

The village of Blendon Landing was on the top of a steep bluff overlooking the river, with a saw mill at the base beside the river. The village contained a large boarding house, general store, schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, a saloon and a number of cabins. From the bluff top a long stairway led down to the landing below and to the sawmill and shipyard. There were sluices and a spillway for delivering the logs from bluff top to the log yard of the mill. Every building and the long stairway were all painted red. The village even boasted an ice house!

The Blendon Lumber company, which was owned by Messrs. Brainard, Leonard and Whipple and managed by Alvin C. Litchfield, also operated a steam tramway some eight miles long almost to the present site of Baur, where it turned west to Cole's Sawmill and horse tramways extended even further.

This tramway was powered by a steam engine, called "Old Joe" and was rather a unique feature for such early days in the logging industry.

In the shipyard four schooners were built - the *Wright*, the *Eveline*, the *Lumberman* and the *George W. Wescott* and lumber was cut for the *United States bark Morgan*, for the government, which was built at Mill Point by ship builder Robert Medler. The specifications called for "live oak" and the oak lumber was accepted as such. The ship building activities were about 1864.

The Blendon Lumber Co. made a specialty of shipping selected logs cut for schooner masts. These were made into rafts and towed across the lake to Chicago.

Blendon Landing and the village overlooking it, was unique in several respects, for there was employed a tramway with a steam engine to hawl the log trains, whereas other tramways in the area used horses for motive power. Blendon also had the first brick making industry

Site of Blendon Landing Village, now a deserted field.

along the river. The building of schooners was carried on there too, for a time, although schooners were also built along the river near and in Grand Haven.

Mr. Leo C. Lillie in his book "Historic Grand Haven and Ottawa County" strangely failed to mention Blendon Landing, Haire's Landing or the Luke Lowing Landing, or any of the men who made them possible, although these men played a large part in the story of lumber and landings on the river, so this is, as far as is known, the first published story of Blendon Landing, as well as of Ohio Dock and Luke Lowing Landing.

There are still a few people living in Blendon and Georgetown townships who personally knew of some of the inhabitants of the river landings, and in some cases they are decendents of those pioneers. A Mrs. Van Westenburg, now ninety years old, was born near the Blendon Landing. She remembers hearing from her parents about the people who were the first settlers there. She recalls hearing of the Blendon saw-mill manager, Mr. Alvin Litchfield and Mr. Dennis, who was the blacksmith and the village schoolmaster, Mr. Smith. A Mr. Baldwin made bricks there and later had a brick-making business in Grand Rapids. She also knew of a Mr. Mosier and a Mr. Rogers.

Mr. J. W. Reister, now eighty-two years old, who used to be a blacksmith at Allendale came from Germany with his parents in 1882, via boat to Blendon Landing, from where they walked to a place near Allendale. He remembers the buildings which were still standing at Blendon, but which, when he saw them were very old and dilapidated, and were occupied by a few Indian families and their horses.

One of the Indians, a Pete MeDowis, had married the widow of Chief White Pigeon. She was an expert basket weaver. A large monument marks the grave of Chief White Pigeon, at a town called White Pigeon in Southern Michigan, because the Chief gave his life to save a small settlement of whites at this place. White Pigeon's feat was his almost incredible run, from Detroit where he had learned of a planned assault by Black Hawk on the white settlement located at what is now White Pigeon, a distance of about 125 miles. He died after accomplishing his mission.

Pete MeDowis and his family left Blendon to live on an Indian Reservation near Holland, Michigan and from there Mr. Reister lost trace of them.

The Blendon Landing site is now owned by Mr. Andrew F. Reister. The ridge where the village stood is not wooded nor is the field leading to it from the main road. No trace of the old buildings remain but the tramway cuts can be plainly seen and the roadway connecting Blendon Landing with the Luke Landing is discernible. The tramway was burned in 1861, long after its use was discontinued.