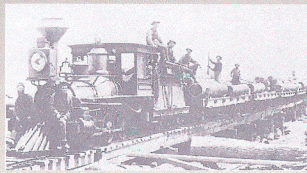


Blendon Landing

Why settle here?

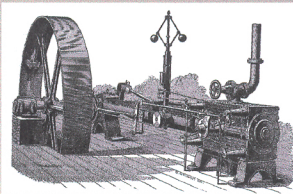
LOGGING

Logging operations began at Blendon Landing in 1856. The operation was staffed by a 35 man team. They were able to process over 100,000 board feet of lumber per day. Lumber was transported to and from the mill by train, boat, and floated down the Grand River. The company harvested White Oak, Hickory, Ash, Cherry, Black Walnut, and White Pine that grew in the area. The mill burned to the ground in a forest fire in June of 1864 and the land and remaining timber was sold a year later.



STEAM ENGINES

The mill at Blendon Landing was operated by a pair of steam engines. These engines ran the 4 circular saws that cut milled the lumber down along with the other tools the workers used. There are no physical remains of the engines at the site, however historical research tells us they ran on 3 boilers, 24 feet long and 4 feet in diameter. The smoke stacks were 80 feet tall and 4 feet in diameter. The size of the engines tells us valuable information about the scope and capabilities of the operation.



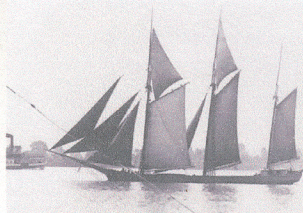
LOCOMOTIVE

Blendon Landing is unique in that it is the oldest documented use of a steam locomotive in a lumber operation in the United States. The engine, nicknamed "Old Joe", was built in 1880. The original track was laid 3 miles long and later expanded to 8 miles. It would pull 6 to 8 cars carrying 3 to 8,000 board feet in each. The train would make 5 trips per day hauling lumber.



SHIPPING

Ships were also built at Blendon Landing to assist in the transport of lumber. Schooners such as the Lumberman, the Eveline, and the Major Anderson were made from lumber the workers cut down. These schooners were large vessels, the 3 masted Lumberman was 126 feet long and displaced 160 tons. Many other vessels were built or refit at the Blendon ship yard.



Who was here?

CLOTHING

Fabric unfortunately does not preserve very well when exposed to the elements. That does not mean all evidence of fashion is destroyed. Buttons, suspender clips, shoe eyelets, and jewelry all preserve well and can tell us a great deal about who was there at the time. Can you decide by looking at them which buttons a laborer would have worn verses a more dress style? Is there a button that might have been worn by someone who served in the military? A button with the date stamped on it helps archaeologists and historians narrow down the dates people were at the site.



CHILDREN

Porcelain doll fragments have been found at Blendon Landing. These artifacts might seem out of place when thinking about a logging camp, however it proves that this was a fully functional community. Evidence of slate tablets and pencils like those used by school children have also been found at the site. These pieces might have been used by parents to give their children lessons. These artifacts show researchers that the laborers' families lived in the settlement along with them.



PIPES

Kaolin pipes are useful for dating a site. They are a common artifact that had a short use life and can be found in sites dating back from the 17th to the 19th centuries. A majority of these pipes were imported from Europe. The stylistic variations that can be seen imprinted on the sides can be used to show development over time. The popularity of pipe smoking at the site is evident by the large number of pipe fragments found. This must have been a common pass time for the workers of the mill.



HOUSEHOLD/UTILITY GOODS

Household goods tell researchers about not only who was there, but how people lived. They can see what type of materials and technologies might have been available at the time. The thimble and scissors might have come from a sewing or mending kit. The latch and hinge may have come from a chest. Can you tell the difference between the serving spoon and the table spoon. Wood stove fragments show cooking and heating capability. Musket balls and firearms casings illustrate what weapons were available to the residents.



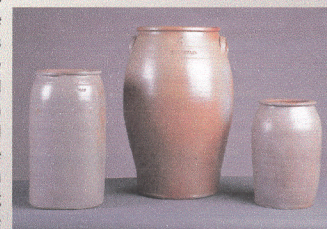
GLASS

Glass is used in many common aspects of life. It is made into windows, storage containers, and decoration. Fragments found and the context they are found in can give the researchers a great deal of information about the site. Large amounts of very thin and flat glass fragments might denote a window was in that location. The base of a bottle can show the basic size and shape of the vessel. The shape of the rim can help identify how the container was used. Imprints on the glass can be used for diagnostic purposes. They can reveal the manufacturer, contents, or date of the object.



CERAMICS

The Blendon Landing site contains 3 different types of ceramics. Earth ware was commonly used for storage. This coarse type of ceramic was made into large vessels with thick structures. Stone ware can be made into thinner structures and would commonly be glazed. Fragments made from stoneware were often plates, bowls and cups. Porcelain was an expensive alternative to stone ware. This was used on special occasions it impress the person being served. Decorations on the ceramics can be used to decipher changes in style throughout occupation of the site. Some ceramics have a makers mark printed or pressed on the bottom. This shows researchers the origin and possibly the date the vessel was made.



Why Do We Dig Up Past Peoples Junk?

Researching historical sites is similar to mending a plate. Archaeological artifacts are fragments of a past society. The same is true of historical documents that give bits of information about the site. They are like the shards of a broken plate that has been buried for years. Each individual piece yields only a small amount of information about the people who lived there. A left over receipt or a news article will explain an individual event in the whole of the history. It is only by combining all the information available that a more complete history starts to form. When mending the plate the researcher finds the edges of the pieces that match and fits them together.

Documents and artifacts can be combined to paint a picture of the past. In many cases portions of the plate might be missing, either destroyed by time or lost to another location. Similarly the objects of the past sites such as Blendon Landing may have been sold and moved to another place or destroyed in a fire. The shards that are found can give us the basic size, shape, and color of the plate, just like the artifacts and documents found give researchers an idea of who was there and why they lived there.

History is rarely complete, new evidence is constantly being found and altering researchers' ideas about the society in question. The following exhibit displays some of the artifacts that were found during the 2010 GVSU Field School. Take a close look at the objects and see what conclusions you can come to about the people who lived and worked at Blendon Landing.