

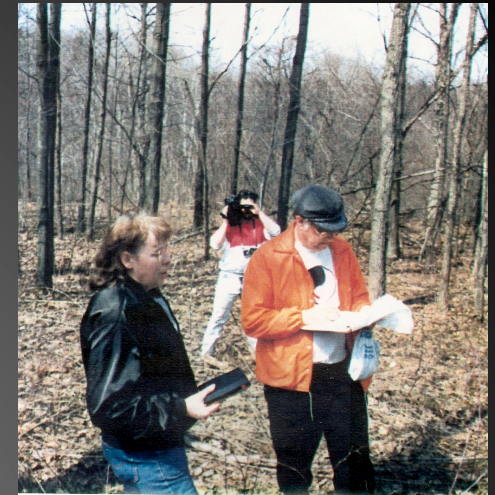
# Blendon Landing: A 19th-Century Settlement at Grand Valley State University



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*Grand Valley State University*

# Acknowledgments

- Carl Bajema
- Richard Flanders
- 2010 GVSU Field school students (n=29)
  - Especially Jared Yax and Stephanie Gasko
- 2010 GVSU Field school staff
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# Why Blendon Landing?

- Part of larger GVSU 'Campus Archaeology' project
- Continuing care of collections
  - Sort out records of the past and update files and field work
- Long term interest in logging communities
  - Structure of logging communities re: gender
  - Context of logging industry re: larger events of history and industrialization in US

## Location (1969 USGS Quad Map)



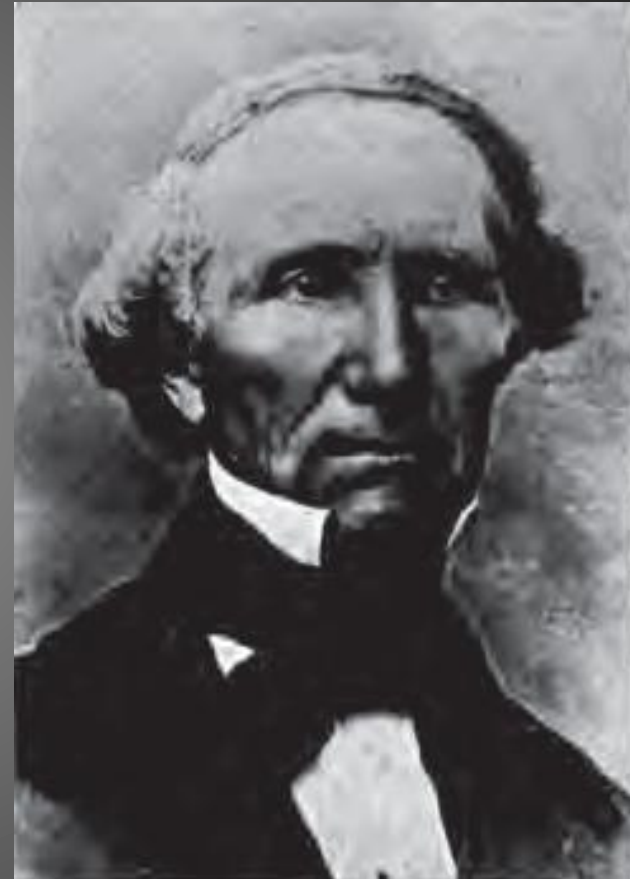
# Location





# Settlement History

- John Ball timber cruiser and lawyer
  - bought 2500 acres of pine and oak in 1836
  - economic panic prevented development for 15 years
- Town of Blendon Landing organized 1854
- Logging Railroad built 1857
  - 4<sup>th</sup> railroad in Ottawa county
- First logging railroad in US (Bajema 1991)
  - The Old St. Joe (no photos)
- Mill, dock, boat yard, and town
- Most gone by 1870



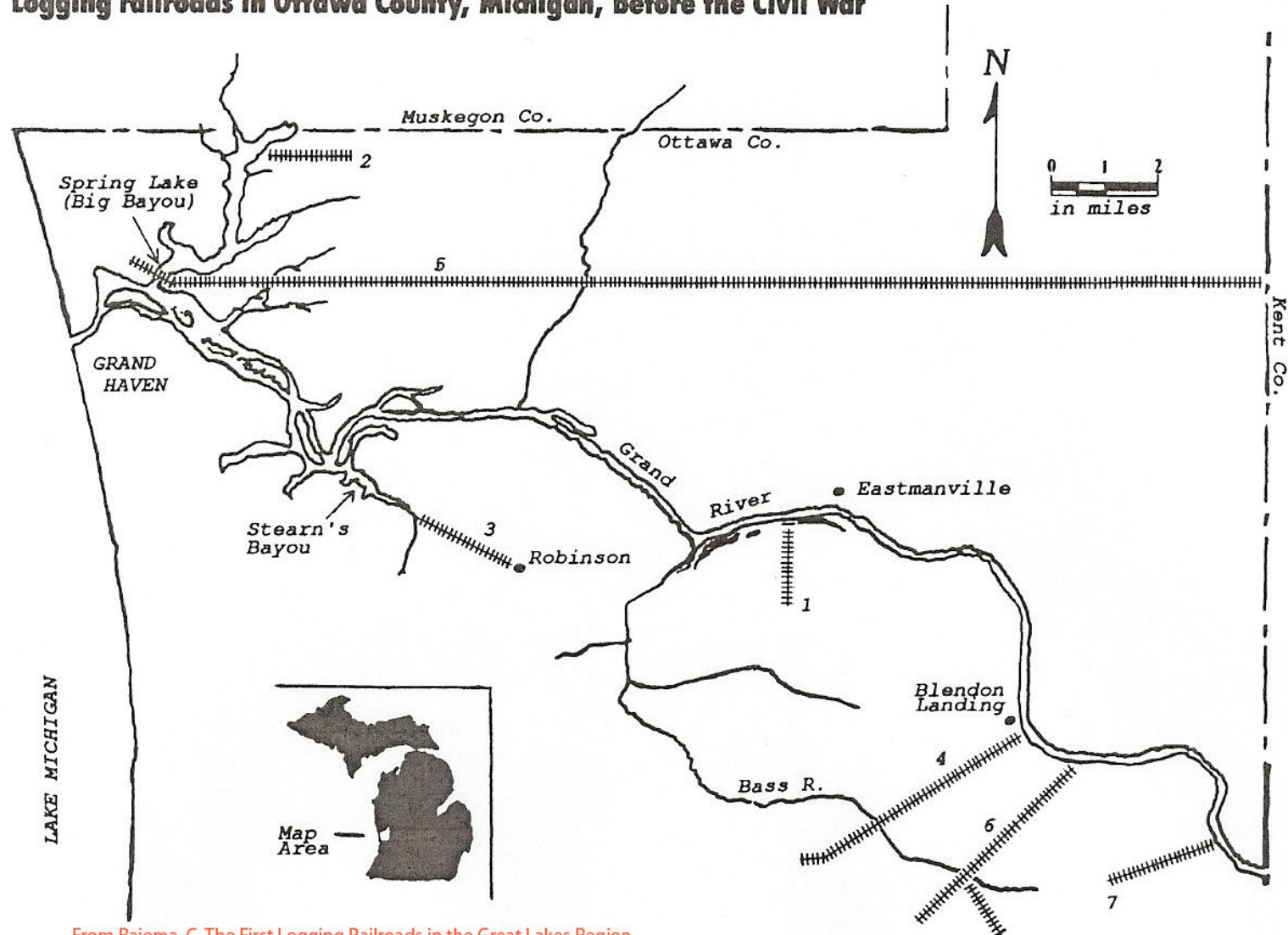
John Ball

# The Railroad

- 7 miles
- Originally on wood rails
- Then strap iron on wood rails

# Logging Railroads In Ottawa County

Logging railroads in Ottawa County, Michigan, before the Civil War



From Bajema, C The First Logging Railroads in the Great Lakes Region  
in Forest and Conservation History 35(2): 76-83



# Strap rail on ties



# The Mill

- Operated between 1857 and 1864
- 30 million board feet/year
  - The entire cut for a year of some National Forests
- Fed the desire for timber as the settlement of the area west of the Mississippi began
- Burned in 1864

# Litchfield

Mill owner, 4<sup>th</sup> Michigan Cavalry

- mill sold in 1864 when he was a pow

22 OCTOBER 1890  
PETOSKEY RECORD  
p. 5

General A. C. Litchfield left yesterday to attend the re-union of his old command, the 7th Michigan Cavalry, at Battle Creek.

We have no occasion to tell this story, but we are going to tell it all the same and take our scolding afterwards if necessary. Last week the first re-union of the 4th Michigan Cavalry was held in Battle Creek, though a small meeting for organization was held last year. This year about 200 survivors of the old regiment met there for the first time since the Command was mustered out of service. Most of them were gray headed, but all were as frisky as a lot of boys. On the second morning Gen. Litchfield once Colonel of the regiment stepped into the wash room of the hotel office and saw a comrade sitting in the boot-black's chair waiting for the coming of that fuctionary to black his boots. The General bethinking himself of the New Testament account of how the brethren washed each others feet, grabbed up a brush and proceeded to polish his comrade's boots, finishing off one in good style before the regular operator returned.

That evening at the banquet, among others called out for speeches was Mr. Albert Crane the law partner of Mayor Uhl, of Grand Rapids, and he proceeded to make an eloquent speech full of telling points. Among other things he said that once after days of fatigue he was stationed at Germania Ford on special duty with orders to keep his eyes open sharp all night on the ford and approaches. He kept awake and watched until daylight came, when overcome by fatigue he dropped on the ground and went fast asleep.

Presently up dashed Colonel Litchfield and roused him from his slumber, and, said the Speaker, "never in the whole course of my life was I talked to as I was on that occasion. The words sharp and severe cut me like a knife, for I had reached as I thought the limit of endurance by way of fatigue and want of sleep, and ever since then the memory of those words has been with me, and has made me feel sore. I've been sore for more than twenty-five years. I was sore this morning, but somehow when I saw that same Colonel kneeling down before me blacking my boots this morning the soreness all left, and I'm a sound man once more."

Only an old soldier can understand why, when he told this, there was an old kind of a jumble of cheers, and laughter and wet eyes withal, for only an old soldier can understand how much the stern necessity of military discipline cost sensitive and proud men sometimes. The one thing that made the American soldiers of the late war the best the world has ever seen, was the intelligence which enabled him to recognize for himself the necessity of discipline and the subordination of personal pride and independence to that necessity. Yet today while the soreness is gone, we can remember how much it cost us sometimes to efface ourselves at the call of duty.

19 AUGUST 1864  
GRAND RAPIDS EAGLE  
p. 1

<b>BLENDON SAW MILL MA-</b>	
CHINERY FOR SALE.	
Three boilers, 24 feet long, four feet in diameter, with two 16-inch flues in each; Fire Fronts, Grates, Cast-Iron Steam and Mud Pipes, all in good order. Also a Smoke Stack, 80 feet long and four feet in diameter, with all the stay irons.	
<b>TWO ENGINES.</b>	
Shafting and other machinery in a damaged condition. Also a quantity of brick. The property will be sold	
<b>AT A GREAT BARGAIN.</b>	
Apply to a1962w	W.M. HOVEY, Grand Rapids, Mich.

*Advertisement located  
by Professor Carl Bojema*



# The Shipyard 1861-1864

- Eveline
  - built 1863
- George W. Westcott
  - built 1863/refit at Blendon 1864
  - Dismantled 1918
- Major Anderson
  - Built 1861
  - Sank 1864
- And, the Lumberman->

## The Lumberman

Built at Blendon Landing 1862, sank  
1893 near Milwaukee



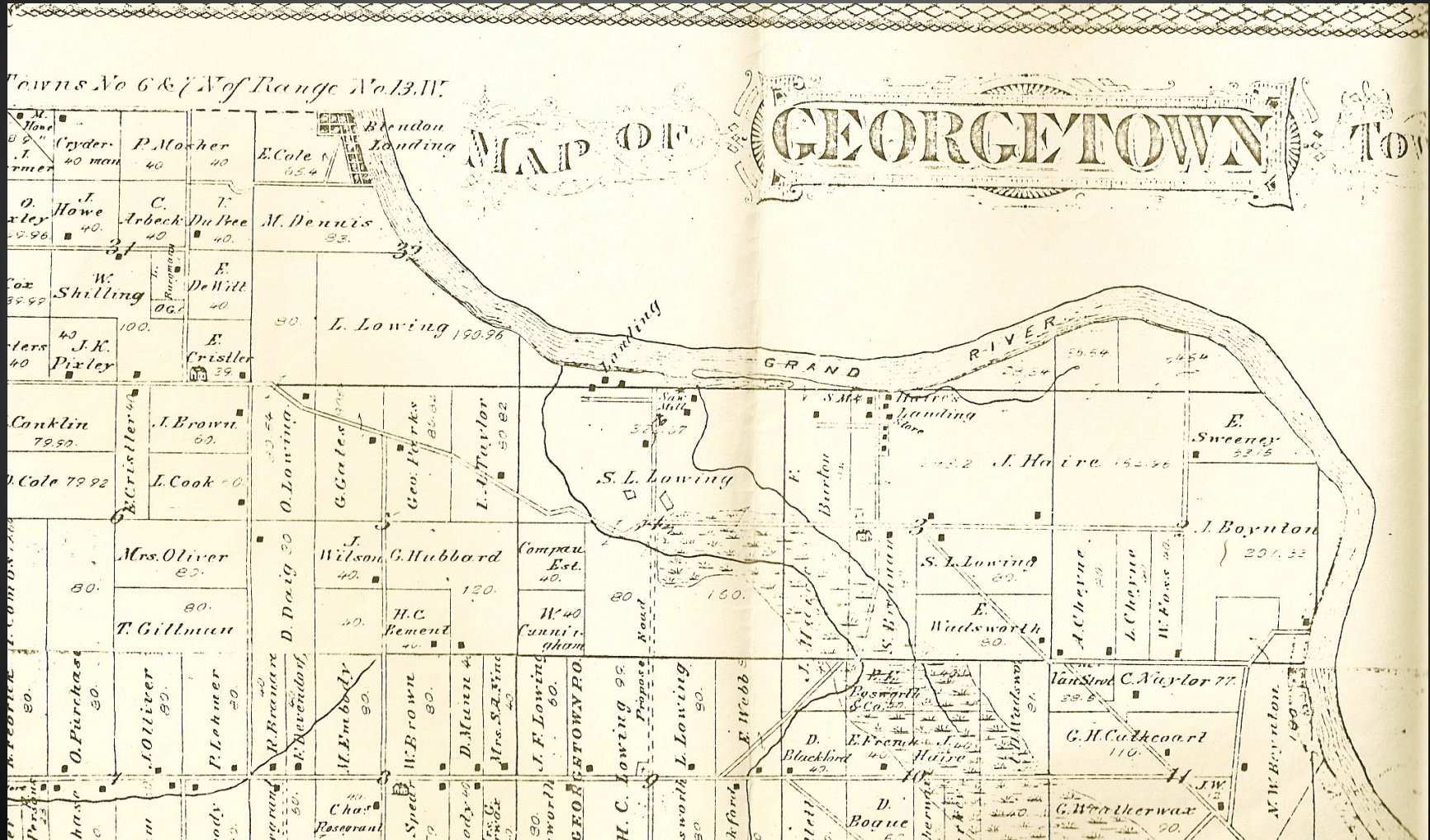
[http://www.lockwoodmuseum.com/  
lumber.html](http://www.lockwoodmuseum.com/lumber.html)

# The Town

- 200 residents
  - Some 35 worked in the mill and ship yard
- Blacksmith, hotel, saloon, store and other buildings
- Mill burned and some buildings 1864 - decline
- Most people left after the railroad was abandoned in 1870
- Some buildings moved to other locations



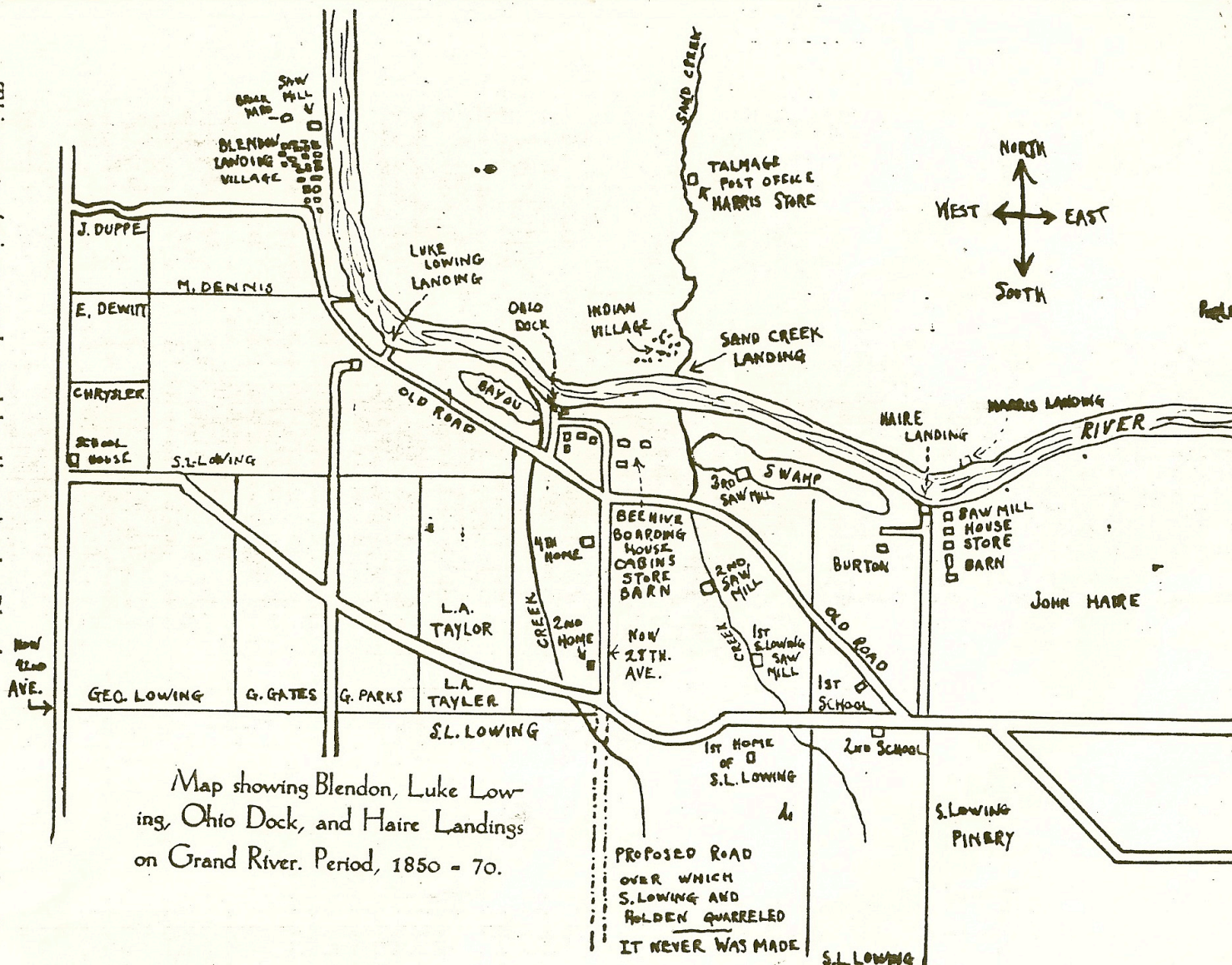
# 1860s plat of Georgetown Twp





# Skinner sketch map

This map of river roads and landings in the Blendon area was made by Mrs. A. V. Skinner. Mrs. Skinner, in her girlhood lived in a house originally built by Stephen Lowing and which overlooked the Luke Lowing Landing. Mrs. Skinner's Grandmother taught school in Blendon Village and she was the wife of Luke Lowing. She was but fifteen years old when she started to teach and received seventy-five cents a week for her services!









# Blacksmith shop





# Hotel



BLENDON'S  
LANDING HOTEL  
(MOVED TO BAUER)  
PHOTO BY JIM  
PONSCHAIK  
FALL, 1965

# Hotel



# Excavations and analysis

- 1970s to late 1980s (Flanders
  - Public archaeology
- 1990s – two small surveys
- 2010 – assessment of earlier collections and new excavation
- Analysis just beginning



1980s





1980s





1980s







ca. 1987

2010 Work















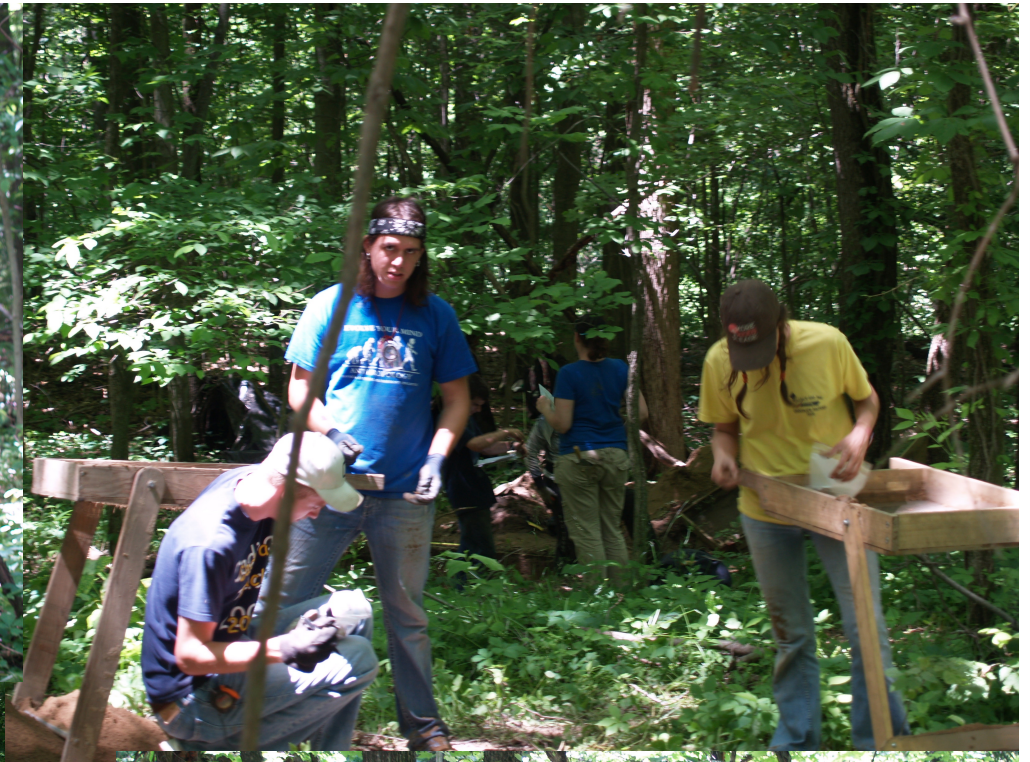




## 2010 Field school









## Features







WALL PROFILE  
BLENDON LANDING  
200773  
30 N OE  
06/18/2010

100  
cm















Artifacts





An artifact from  
earlier  
excavations and  
the 'Man in the  
Moon  
Controversy'

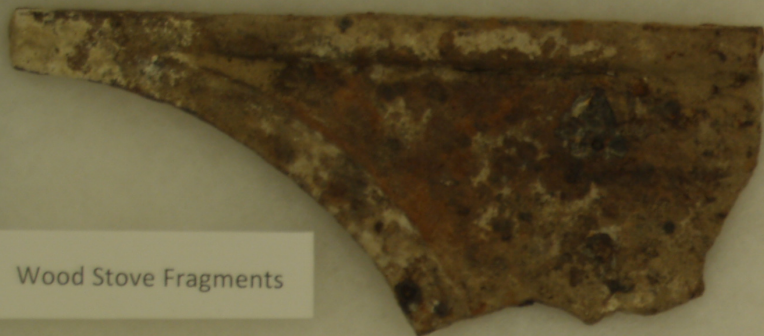




Plus several  
coins, tokens and  
other diagnostics







Wood Stove Fragments



Metal Pot Fragments

### Utility goods

Researchers can look at what type of materials and technologies might have been available at the time. Utility goods paint a great picture of these attributes of society. Wood stove fragments show cooking and heating capability. What type of vessel did they prepare their food in? Musket balls and firearms casings illustrate what weapons were available to the residents. Researchers must also be careful to note the provenience of the artifact when found, otherwise a modern day hunters shotgun shell left from a hunting trip might get mixed in with older artifacts.



Firearm casings



Musket Balls





Thimble



Jar Lid Fragment



Metal Latch



Hinge Strap



Scissors Handle



Spoon Fragments

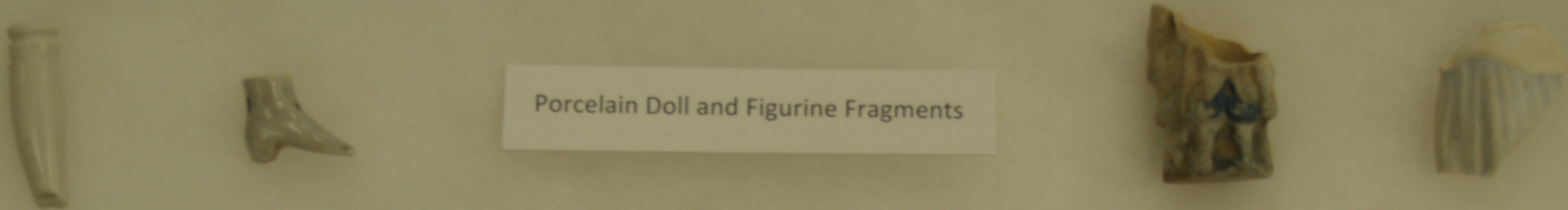


Bone Handle Fragments

### Household Goods

Household goods tell researchers about not only who was there, but how people lived. 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? Utensils were often plain; however some of them had decorative bone handles. Finding artifacts like this can show where the wealthier members of society lived and what types of materials they thought were valuable.






Porcelain Doll and Figurine Fragments

## 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.



Slate Board and Pencil Fragments





Various Buttons

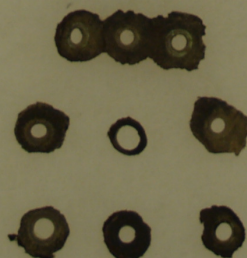
## Clothing

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 versus 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 to narrow down the dates people were at the site.

Union Eagle Military Coat Button



Shoe Eyelets



Various Suspender Clasps



Dated Diagnostic Button



Black Glass Jewelry







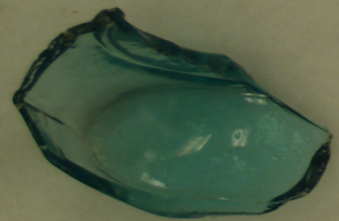
Decorative Glass



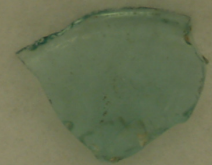
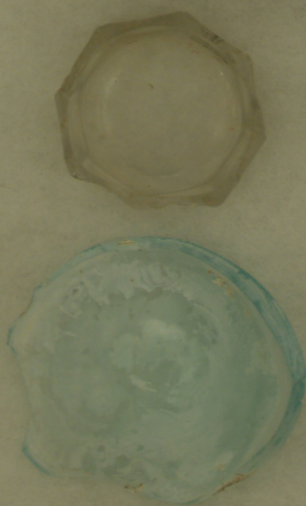
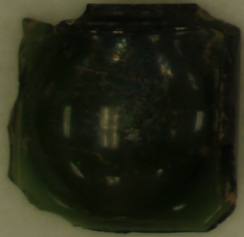
Bottle Tops

**Glass**

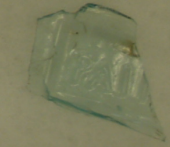
Glass is used in many common aspects of life. It is made into windows, storage containers, and decoration. Fragments found and the context they are found in can give the researchers a great deal of information about the site. Large amounts of very thin and flat glass fragments might denote a window was 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.




Bottle Bases




Diagnostic Glass








Stoneware




Decorative Ceramic

## Ceramics


The Blendon Landing site contains 3 different types of ceramics. Earthenware was commonly used for storage. This coarse type of ceramic was made into large vessels with thick structures. Stoneware 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 stoneware. This was used on special occasions to 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. These marks show researchers the origin and possibly the date the vessel was made.




Ceramic Spout



Earthenware



Porcelain



Makers Mark






Decorative Ceramic



Stoneware








Pipe Bowl Fragment

### Kaolin 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 pastime for the workers of the mill.



Pipe Stem Fragments



- State Historic Marker on Campus

