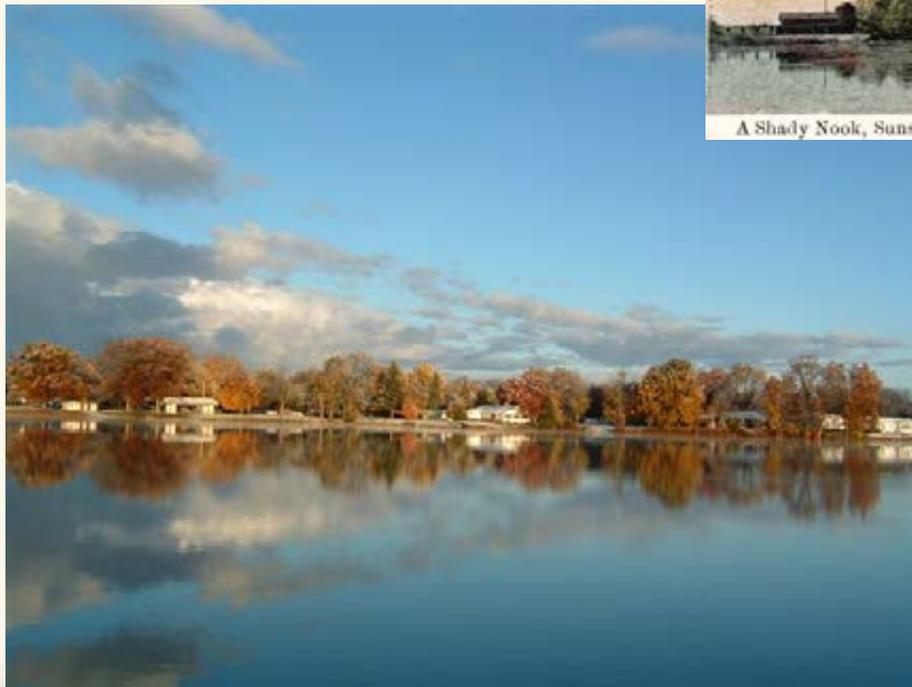


Sunset Lake Then and Now



A Shady Nook, Sunset Lake, Vicksburg, Mich. O. B. Donning & Son, Pharmacists. Photo by Koons.



History, Use
and Riparian Rights

Introduction



- Purpose: Increase appreciation for how Vicksburg's history and well-being has been tied to that of Sunset Lake
- MC: Ron Smith
- Panelists:
 - ◆ Lloyd Appell
 - ◆ Don DeBruin
 - ◆ Matt Crawford
 - ◆ Kent McCauley

Topics of Discussion

- Brief historical overview
- Panel Discussion
 - ◆ Origin and stability of the watershed
 - ◆ Impact of past and ongoing development
 - ◆ Weed control - maintaining the appeal and utility of the lake
 - ◆ Costs and benefits for the Village
 - ◆ Riparian Rights ...Who actually “owns” the lake?

Background

Factual data drawn from several sources:

“Water Over the Dam”

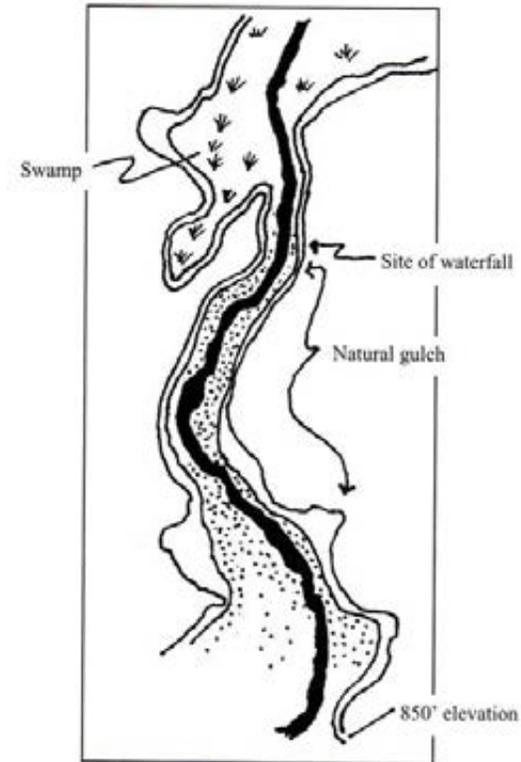
“A Tale of One Village”

Maggie Snyder’s research and writings

Lee Paper Dam Inspection Report for The
Mill of South County, LLC - 2003

1826 Kalamazoo County Survey

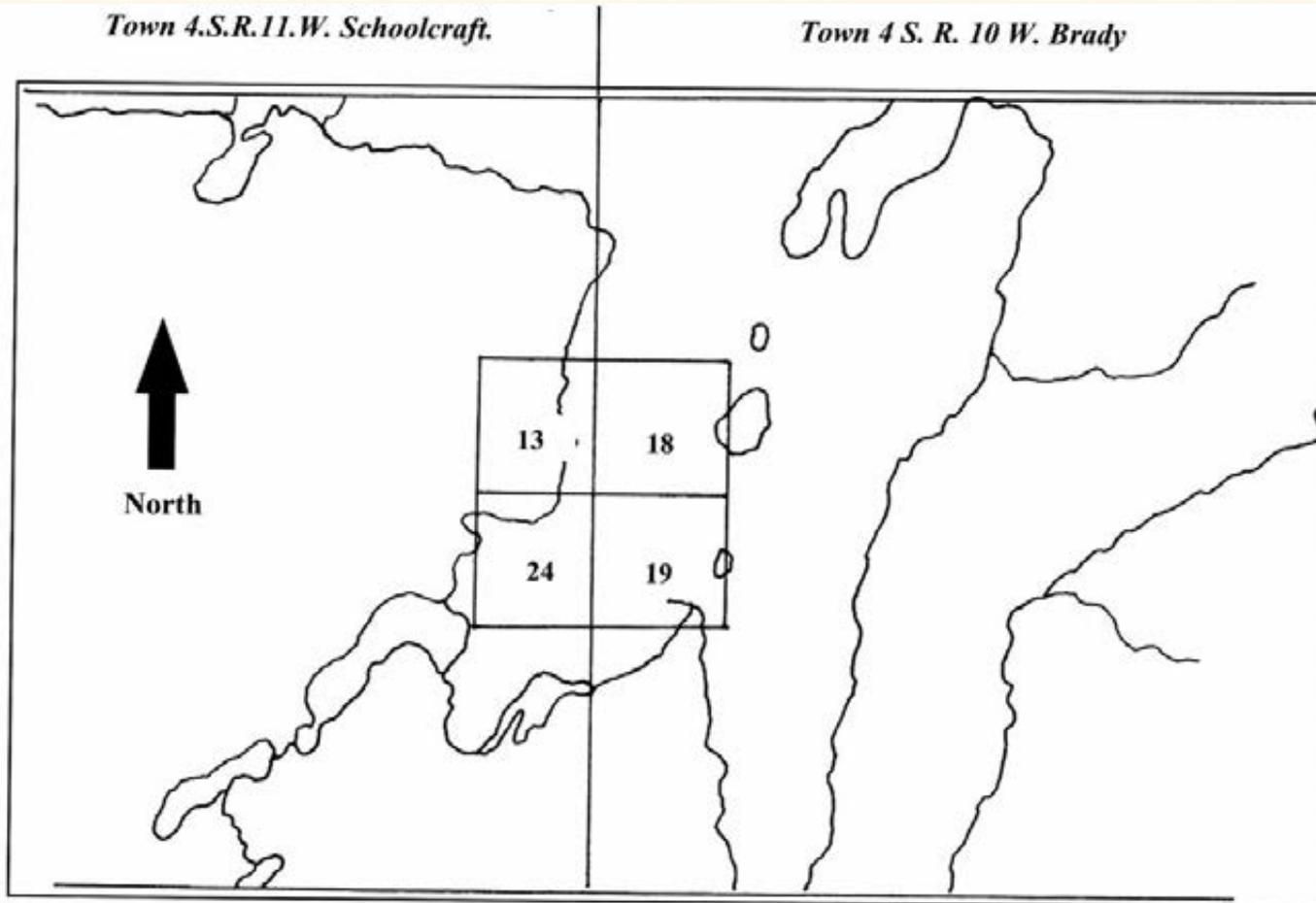
- Described Portage Creek's path from Gourdneck to Barton Lake
- Flowed through swamps
- 8 foot drop into a gully, then more swamps
- Coursed over land belonging to the Nottawa-Seepe tribe
- September 27, 1833, tribal claims to all holdings in the southwestern Michigan Territory surrendered, including the Nottawa-Seepe reservation



An unknown artist's conception of the Portage Creek Waterfall, combining the original surveyor's map with a topographical view.

A small gulch had eroded into the eastern side of the lower southeast quarter of Section 13, where Portage Creek had its course. The eight foot fall of the creek from its marshy bed into this small gulch furnished enough water power for Vickers' Mill to function. Over time the headwaters of his dam created a lake north of the dam and flooded the western arm of the swamp, which became known as the Mill Pond.

1826 Survey Map

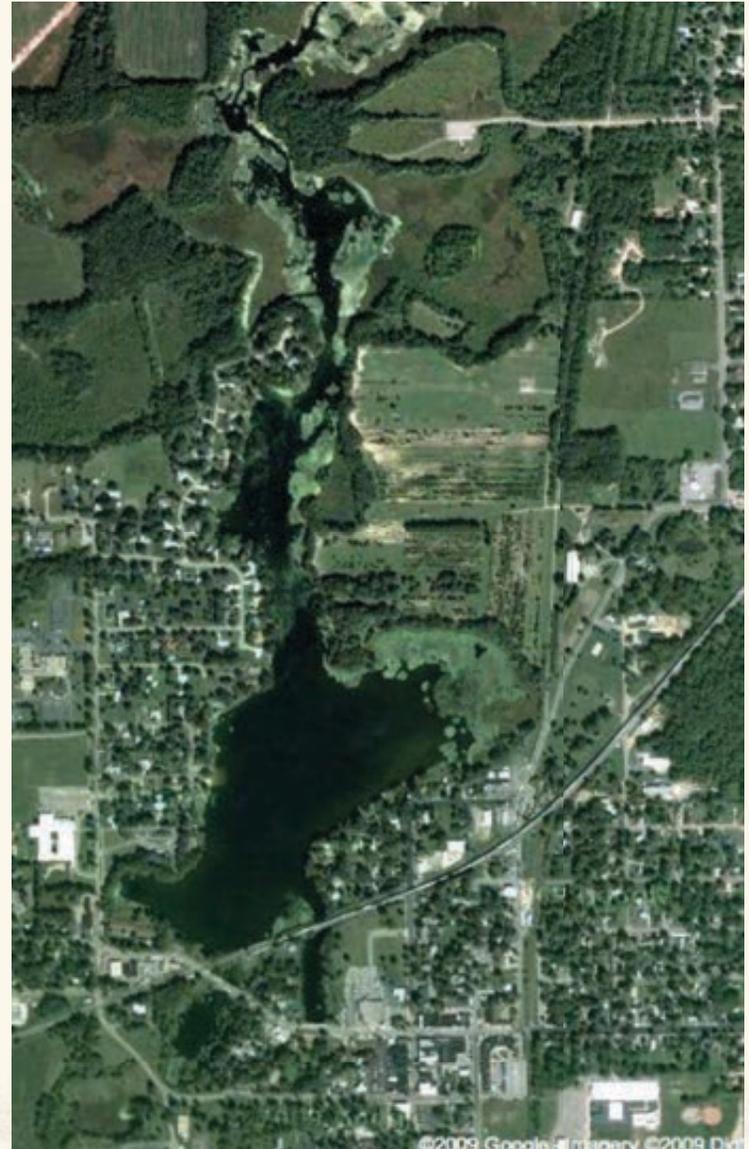
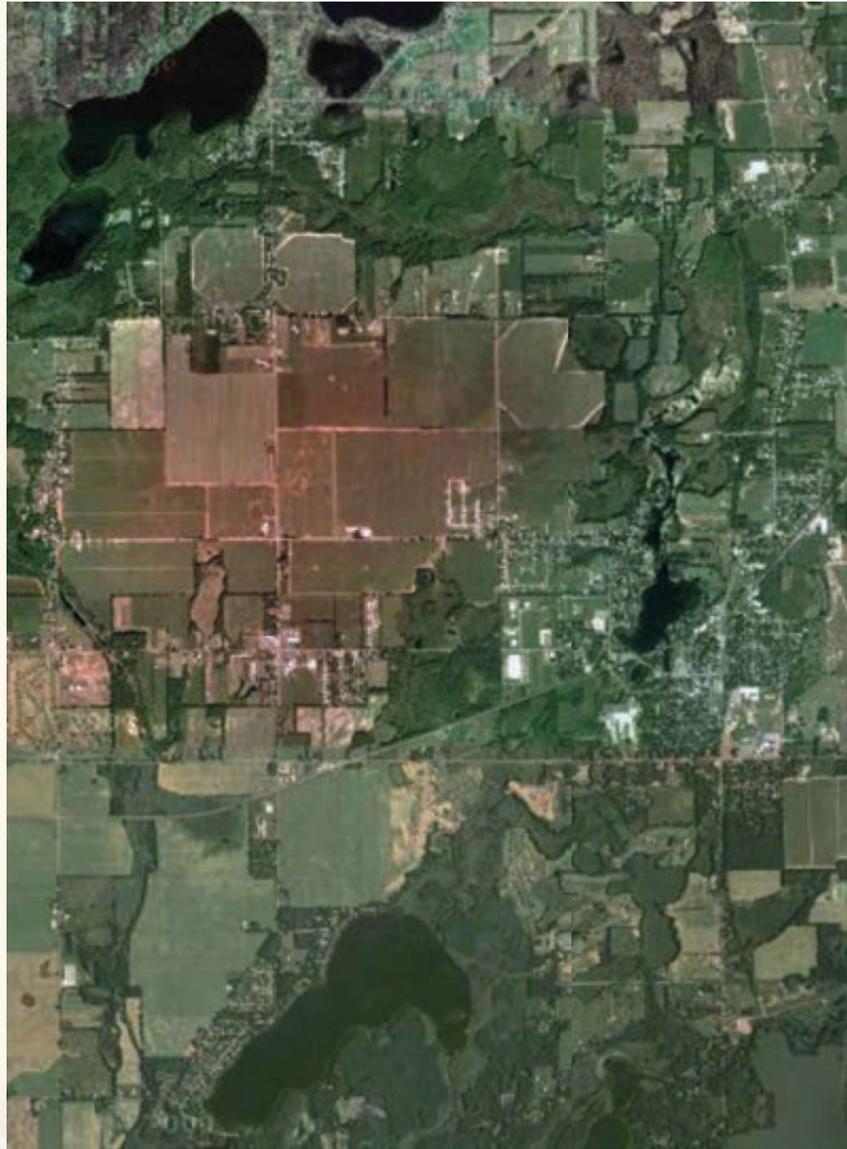


Surveyed in 1826 by Robert Clark, Jr.

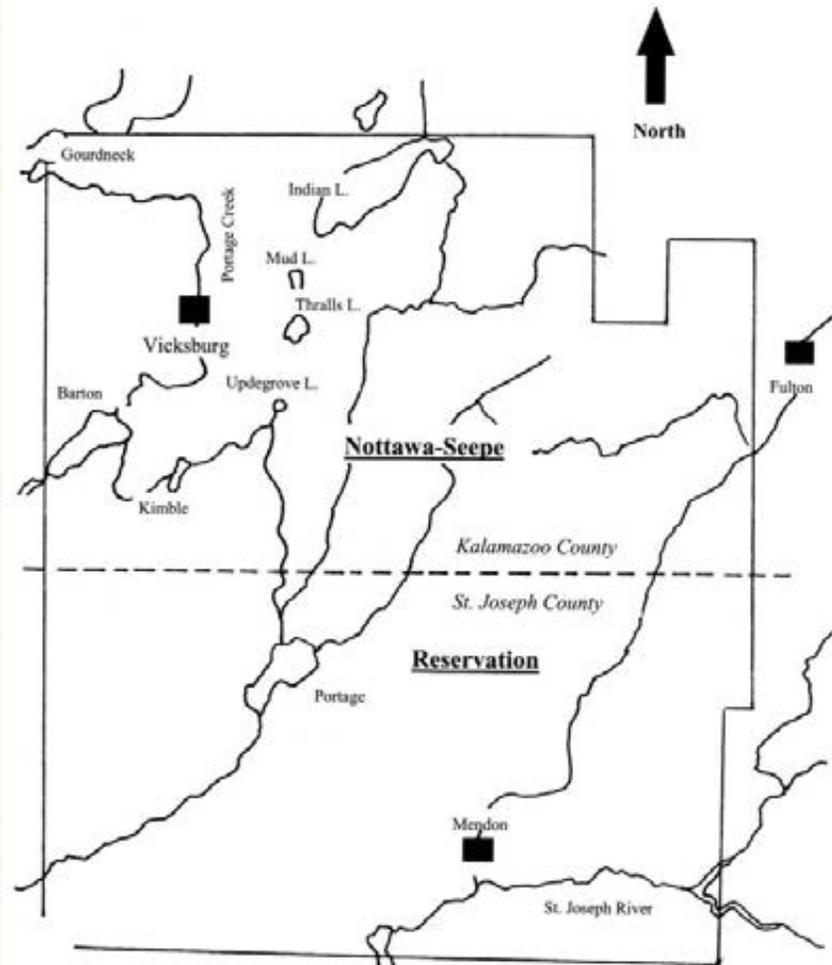
The original 1826 survey map shows a creek (Portage Creek) flowing from a lake at the North (Gourdneck) southerly through the southeast quarter section of Section 13 into the largest (Barton) of a series of lakes. Since no dam had yet been built on Portage Creek, there is no Sunset Lake nor a Mill Pond.

The pertinent blocks of township sections have been overlaid on this map. Vicksburg lies mainly in the southeast quarter, Section 13 of Schoolcraft Township.

Satellite Views



Nottawa-Seepe Reservation



Archeological Atlas of Michigan

(Sites of Vicksburg, Fulton and Mendon added to aid orientation.)

Fire on the Water

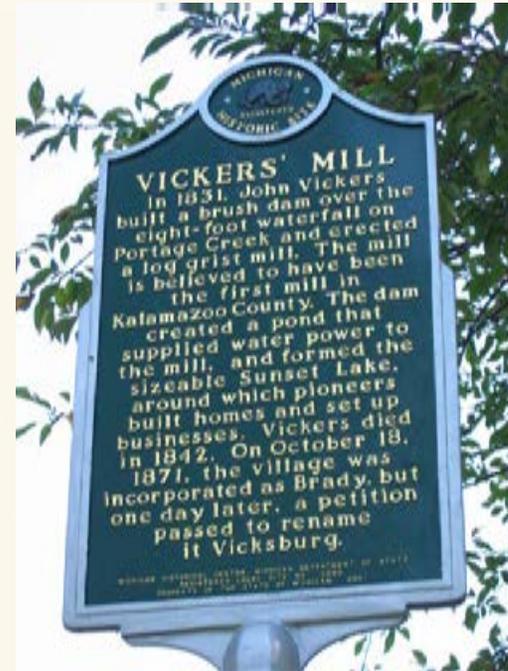
How six decades of water-powered mills (and their misfortunes) shaped Vicksburg's history



Ruins of Briggs & Smalley Saw & Planing Mill after Sept. 1, 1898 fire of "mysterious origins." It marked the end of an era which began with Vickers Mill in 1831.

Vickers' Mill

- John Vickers' 1831 brush dam converted upstream swampland into Sunset Lake and the "Mill Pond"
- At the time Vickers was a "squatter" on Tribal land
- The dam powered two 11" mill stones used for grinding corn in his 14 sq ft mill house...Vicksburg's first mill
- Mill expanded in 1834 to include a saw mill, larger grist mill (16" stones + a bolt), and distillery "... of which no good ever came"



Briggs & Smalley Saw & Planing Mill

- Vickers' Mill later torn down - Asa Briggs and Daniel Anderson built a new saw-planing mill on the site
- Later became the "Briggs & Smalley Saw & Planing Mill"
- The Briggs & Smalley Mill was destroyed by fire in 1898, marking the end of water-powered mills in Vicksburg



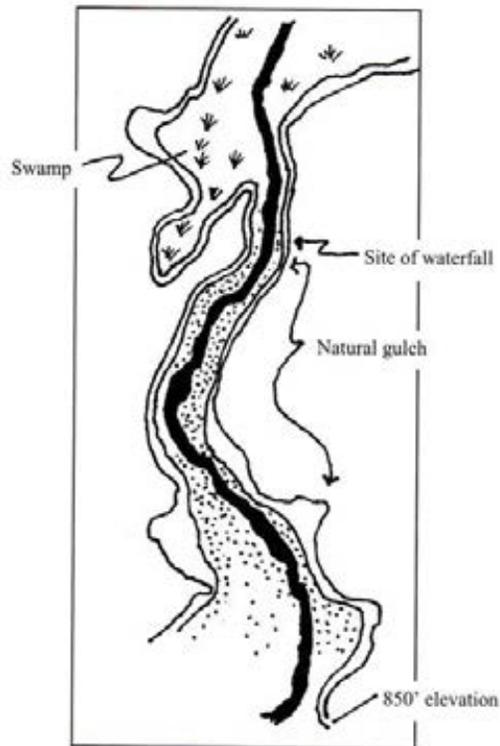
Briggs Mill

- Circa 1845 George Stuart and Elias Cooley cut a race from the Mill Pond to Portage Creek
- They built a flouring mill on Washington Street and produced “Vickers’ Superfine” flour
- Became the “Briggs & Cooley Mill” in 1850 and later the “Briggs & Anderson Flour Mill”



The plaque is wrong...this was NOT “Vicksburg’s First Mill”

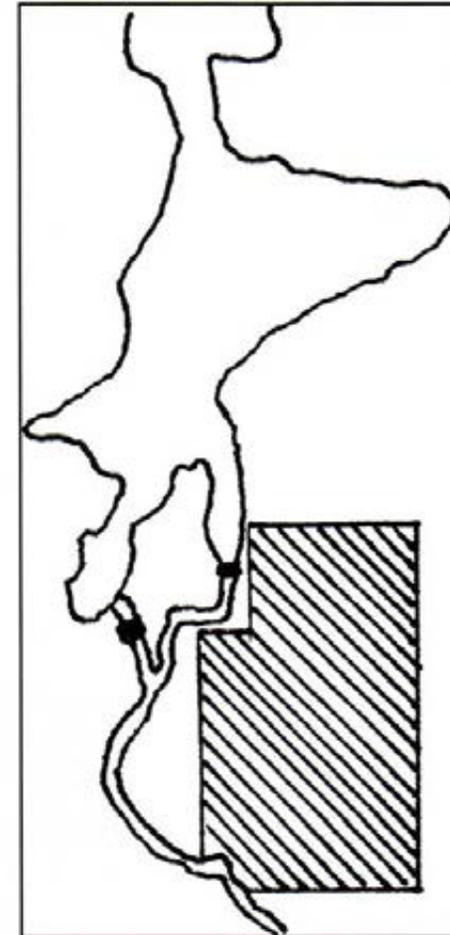
The Impact of the Mills



An unknown artist's conception of the Portage Creek Waterfall, combining the original surveyor's map with a topographical view.

A small gulch had eroded into the eastern side of the lower southeast quarter of Section 13, where Portage Creek had its course. The eight foot fall of the creek from its marshy bed into this small gulch furnished enough water power for Vickers' Mill to function. Over time the headwaters of his dam created a lake north of the dam and flooded the western arm of the swamp, which became known as the Mill Pond.

Before the Dams



Village of Brady
Platted 1849

After the Dams

How and When did Sunset Lake Get Its Name?

- Nameless until 1886; mostly referred to as “the swamp” or “the mill pond”
- Jennie Notley (later Jennie Notley Clark) coined the name while canoeing during an April, 1886 sunset



Photo courtesy of Dirk Vankrimpen

Lee Paper Dam

- Part of a larger Mill Pond Project to supply water to the new paper mill ...
 - ◆ Mill Pond blocked at west Grand Trunk bridge and drained for construction of a gravity-fed system to deliver water to the new paper mill
 - ◆ Schoolcraft Township constructed a “novel” cement bridge on Prairie Street
 - ◆ Once Mill Pond work completed a new dam was constructed at site of old Briggs & Anderson Flour Mill
 - ◆ Water let back into Pond in 1905
 - ◆ Dam failed in June of 1991
 - ◆ New Dam built in 1992

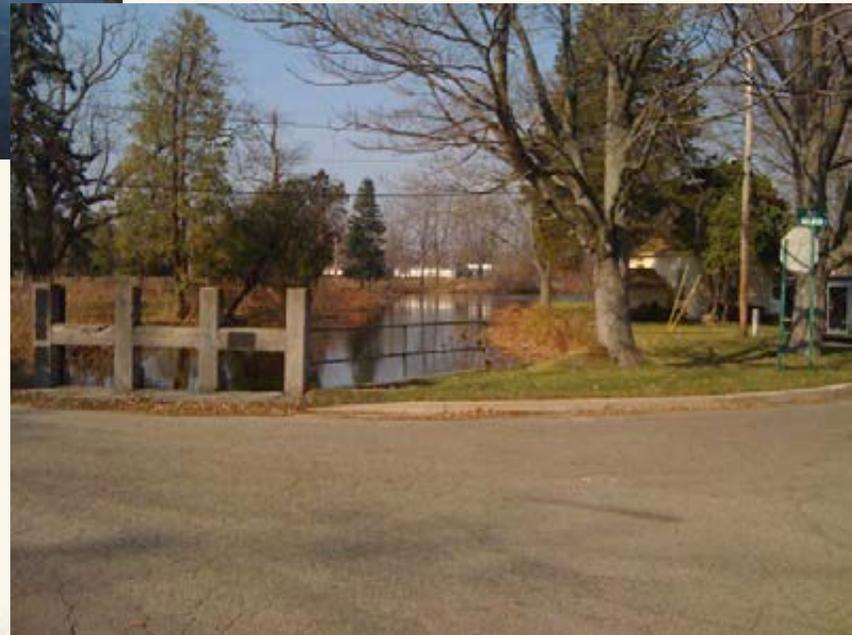


The Mill Pond Project Today



Mill Pond

Mill Race



Sunset Lake Ice Harvest

- Two separate ice harvests: Grand Trunk Railroad and Godshalk (supplying the Village of Vicksburg)
- Railroad harvest began in late 1800's
- In 1912, 25 cars loaded each day, each car accommodating 20 tons of ice.

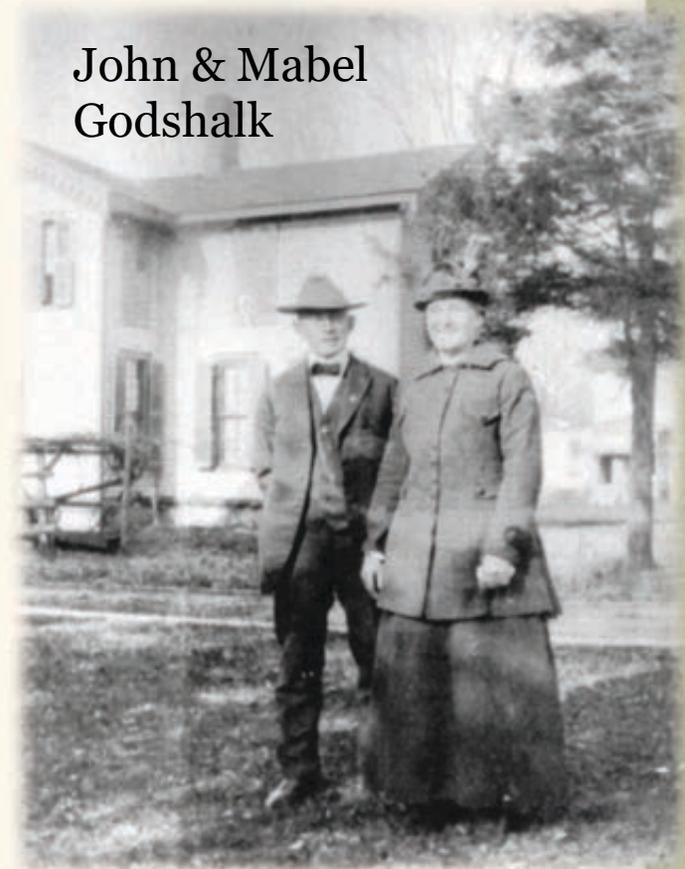


Godshalk Ice Harvest

- Original Godshalk ice house built on Mill Pond in early 1900's
- Larger facility built on McKain Street in 1905
- Ice harvest started in January and lasted 1-2 weeks
- Mercer Munn took over upon Godshalk's death in 1933
- Production ceased by 1940's

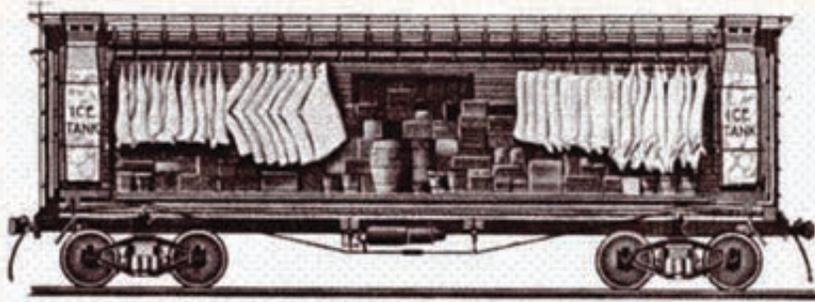


Godshalk Ice House
(1928)



John & Mabel
Godshalk

Lake Ice & “Homeland Security”



Lotus Lilies

- Lotus Lilies a major tourist attraction from 1870's to 1920's
- Sold to passengers when trains stopped in Vicksburg



- Origin and reason(s) for disappearance still a mystery



Vicksburg Waterfront Parks

We've come a long way ...

- Lee Park
- Clark Park
- Sunset Lake Park



Lee Park

- Part of land deeded to Mill in early 1900's
- Landscaped by the Mill as a public park
- Currently a popular “hangout” for local geese



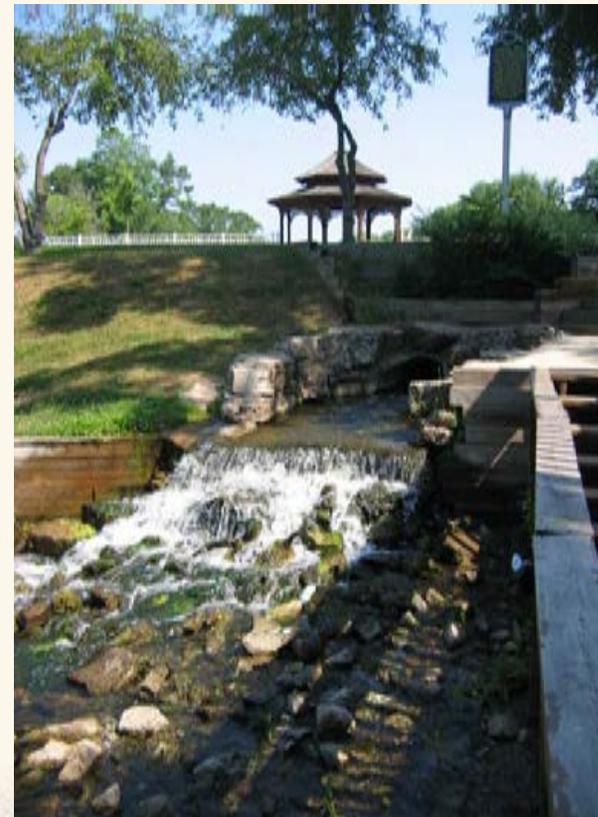
Clark Park (aka “Tourist Park”)

- Downstream from original Vickers Mill
- Deeded to Mill by Village Council in early 1900's for the “right and privilege” of making a park
- Served as a school botanical garden, cow pasture, swimming hole and “Tourist Park”
- In 1920's tourists coming to see Lotus Lilies often picnicked in the “Tourist Park”



Clark Park

- Tourist Park became Clark Park in 1950' s
- Stream blocked off in early 60' s; Rotary club project reopened in 1971 as part of Vicksburg Centennial Celebration
- Limestone slab waterfall opened as part of Prairie Street improvement project in 1992



Sunset Lake Park

- Designated for park purposes in 1904 when the Frakes addition plat was drawn up
- Deeded to Village in 1912
- 1950's - park and beach improvement was first project of newly chartered Lions Club
- Improvements included new beach house, sandy beach, life guard, and raft
- Red Cross swimming lessons attracted almost 400 kids
- Picnic pavilion added by Village in 1964



When the Lions Club organized in 1953, their initial project at the time was improving Sunset Beach. The Village Council furnished life guards. Pictured - Norman Brewers and Nancy Barclay.



THE
LIONS
CLUB

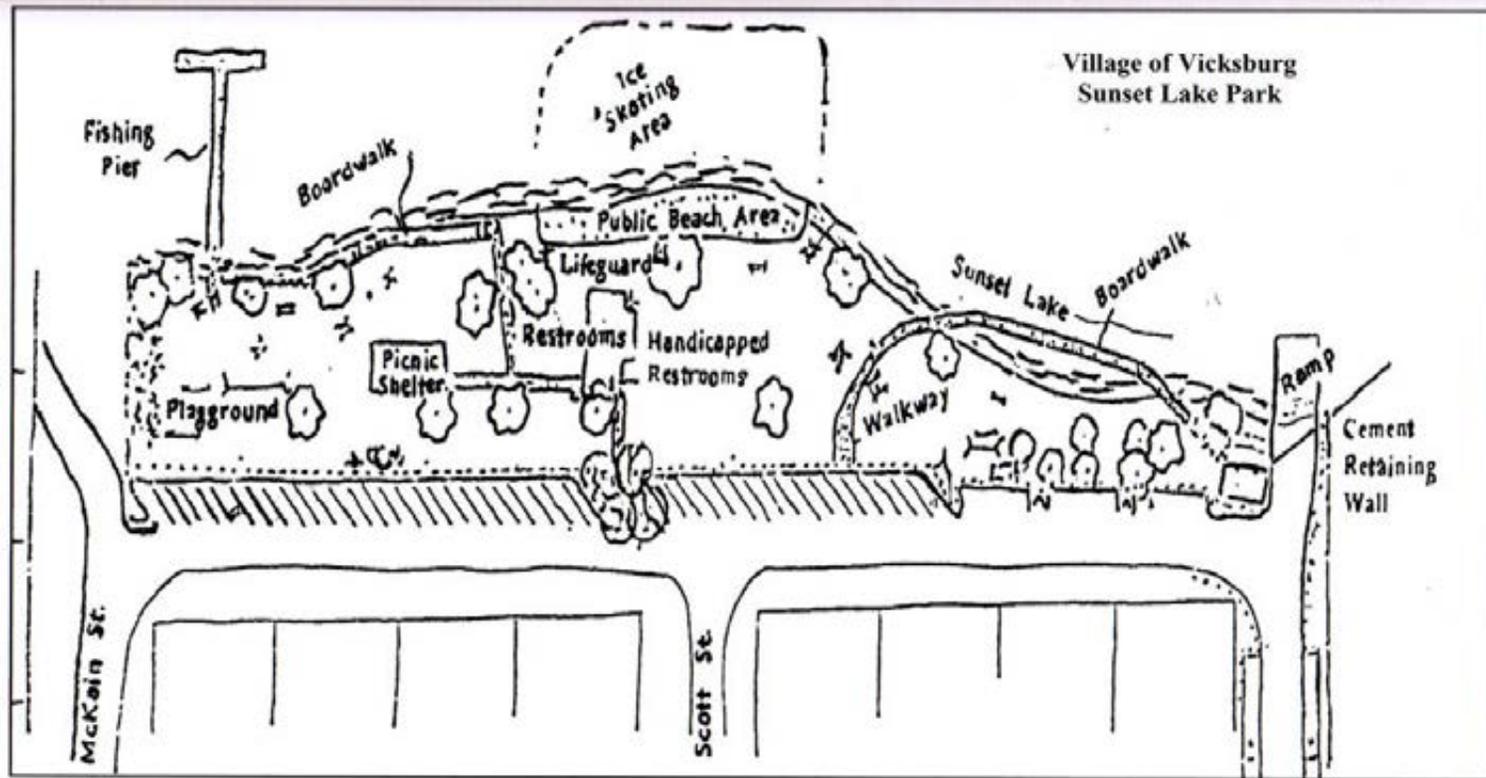


90 ONE OF THE LIONS CLUB'S WORTHWHILE PROJECTS HAS BEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MUCH NEEDED SWIMMING AND RECREATIONAL AREA ON SUNSET LAKE.



The new (1964) Sunset Lake pavilion built by the Village as well as an addition to the beach house in the right back.

Sunset Lake Park Improvement Plan (1981-90)



DNR Approves Grant For Sunset Lake Park Improvement Project

By Jean Delahanty

The Village of Vicksburg has received unofficial notice of some very good news for the people of the area.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has approved a recreation grant for the improvement project for Sunset Lake Park.

The proposal is to provide access to picnicking and fishing ar-

new lighting poles, 25 stalls for parking, 15 new picnic tables, six new barbeque grills, and concrete boat launching ramp, eight new pieces of playground equipment, sand for the beach, gravel, grass seed and flowers. The estimated total for the planned improvements is \$177,500. The DNR grant is for \$133,125 and the remaining monies are to be raised within the community from foundations, industry, businesses and individual donations.

Alien (weed) Invasion



©2009 Google - Imagery ©2009 DigitalGlobe, USDA Farm Service

Weed Control - Contract Services

- Sunset Lake Improvement Association formed in mid-70's to study and act to reduce weeds in Sunset Lake
- Sunset Lake Association formed in 1987 to support lake cleanup through voluntary dues collection
- Village Council created a Sunset Lake Improvement Board in 1994 which facilitated outside funding
- 20 - 35 acre treatment area
- Combination of chemical and mechanical treatment for algae and a variety of weeds



Weed Control - Disposal

- Harvested weeds deposited on grounds of Prudential Nursery
- Dries to a fraction of its size
- Excellent compost and plant bedding material



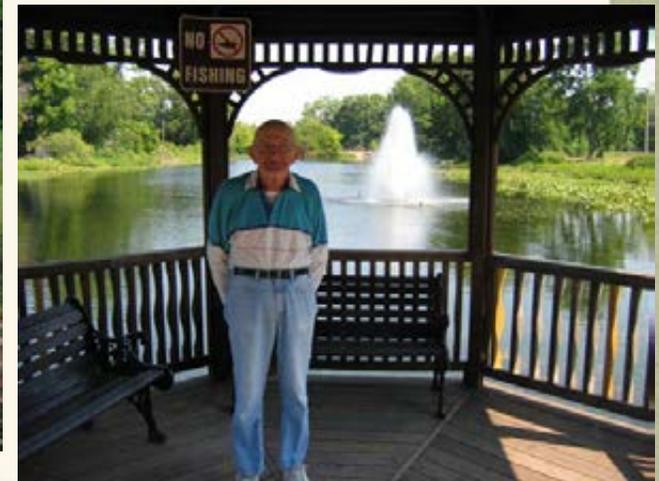
Weed Control - Individual Efforts

Lakeside residents complement cleanup efforts along the shore



Sunset Lake Today

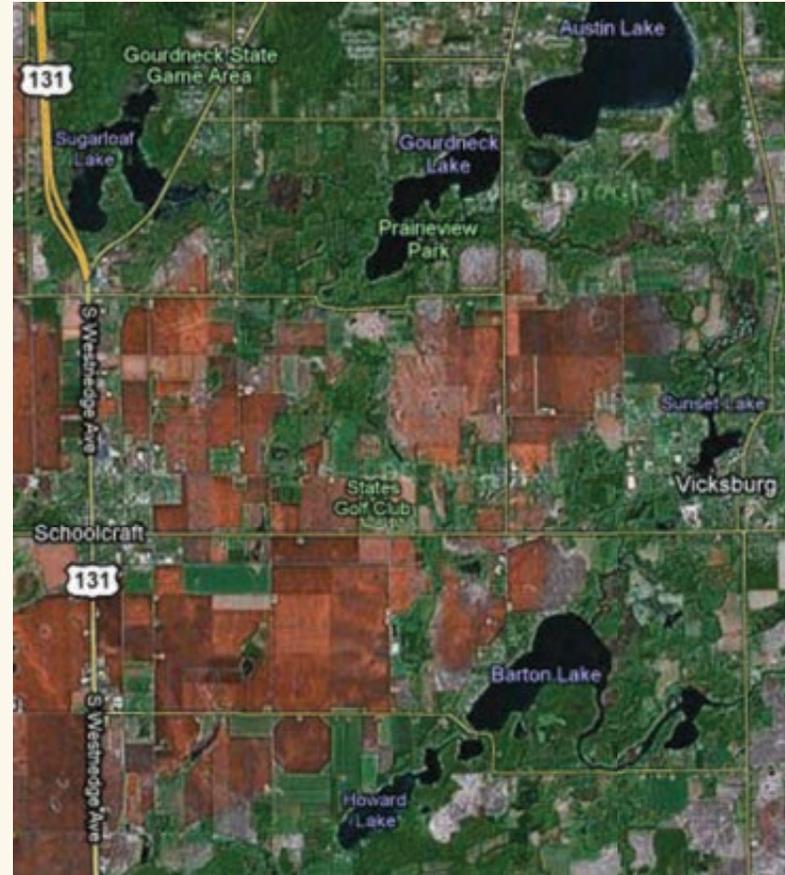
Sunset Lake is a major aesthetic and recreational part the community



John Storlarz

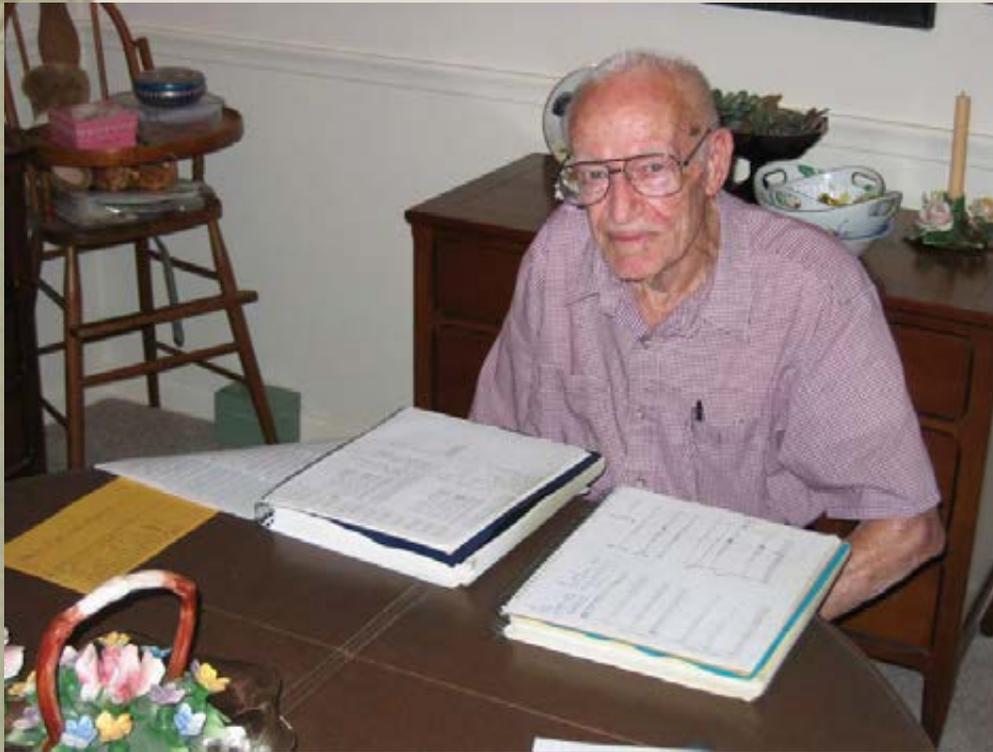
Sunset Lake Today

- Part of a chain of lakes - the only one that's man-made
- 25 - 32 sq mile basin area (lakes upstream supplying water to Sunset Lake)
- 150 acre (0.234 sq mile) impoundment area (the lake)
- The mill dam is a key control point, upstream and downstream
- Recreational uses include hunting, fishing, boating, swimming, bird watching and nature study, photography, and relaxation
- Also a significant nature sanctuary



Joe Anderson's

28-Year Sunset Lake Diary



- Sunset Lake resident since 1971
- Avid year-round fisherman and nature observer
- Systematically recorded fishing, wildlife, weather, and lake data

Joe's Sunset Lake Fish Stories

(all true)...



- 26,857 fish caught over 2,844 days fished - that's more than 9 fish/day
- He didn't eat them all! 16,191 fish served up or distributed to local residents (personally filleted and "ready for the pan")
- Edible varieties: bluegills, sunfish, perch, large mouth bass, pike, crappie
- Less edible: bullheads, dogfish, carp

Other Tidbits ...

- Nov 21 - earliest recorded date lake frozen over
- April 1 - latest complete thaw of the lake
- Other Sunset Lake residents that were “relocated” include:
 - ◆ 179 muskrats
 - ◆ 139 squirrels
 - ◆ 48 moles
 - ◆ 35 raccoons
 - ◆ 16 woodchucks
 - ◆ 3 skunks
- Other lake area residents observed: deer, mink, water snakes, waterfowl, *Homo sapiens*



Boating



Swimming & Picnicking



Photography - The Four Seasons

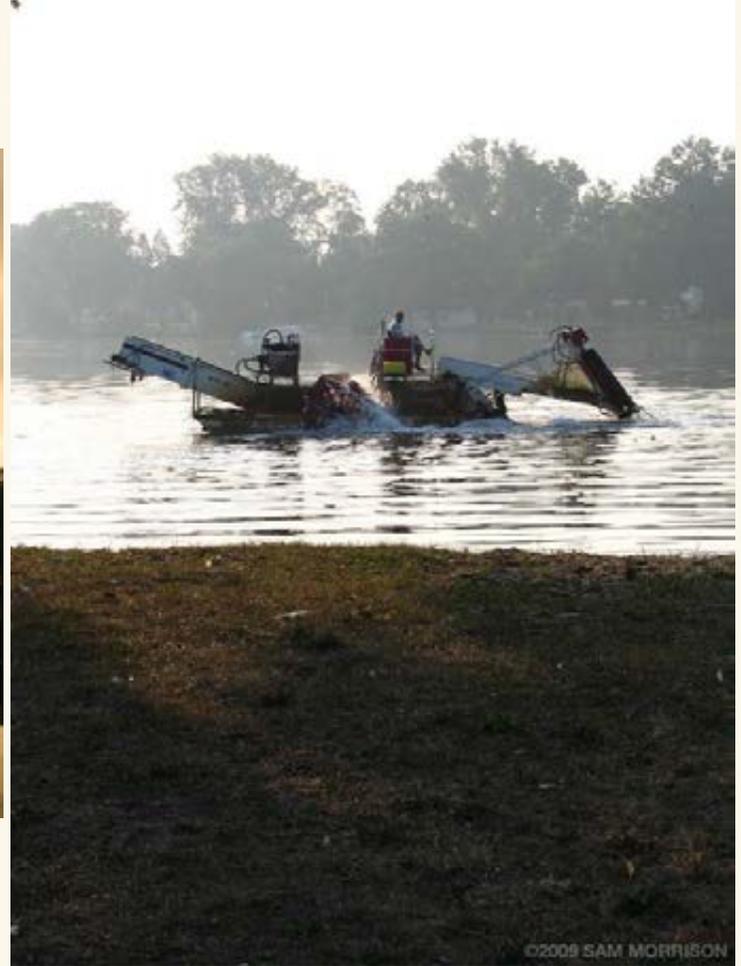








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SUNDAY



WEDNESDAY



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Let's Talk ...

- Vicksburg's well-being has been closely tied to that of Sunset Lake.
- Vicksburg residents need to reciprocate by helping maintain the lake's health.
- Talking points...
 - ◆ Origin and stability of the watershed
 - ◆ Impact of past and ongoing development
 - ◆ Weed control - maintaining the appeal and utility of the lake
 - ◆ Costs and benefits for the Village
 - ◆ Riparian Rights...Who actually "owns" the lake?
 - ★ Lakefront Property owners?
 - ★ The Village?
 - ★ DNR?
 - ★ The Mill?

**Visit:
VicksburgHistory.org**

**Vicksburg Historical Village
& Depot Museum
300 N Richardson St
Vicksburg MI 49097**

*Presentation by Dr. Ronald D. Smith,
Historian, Vicksburg Historical Society*