



Historical White Lake

Things that float – the Ark

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White Lake Historical Society

For some 31 years, the Ark could be seen rolling with the waves while being anchored in White Lake at the end of Scenic Drive.

The original owner of the Ark, Earl Sherman, built the raft in 1930 out of timbers that lined the White Lake Channel. On the raft he constructed a covered building with an open water fishing area in the center.

In 1947, Earl sold the Ark to Robert Benner of Miamisburg, Ohio. The Benner family had been summer residents and used the Ark often over the years. Robert rebuilt the Ark using some of the old timbers, floated the structure on 110 fifty-five gallon oil drums, and fastened it with four cables two to the shore and two to special anchors in the water.

Inside the building was a lunch counter where coffee and hamburgers were served to the fisherman. There was even a pot-bellied stove for warmth in the winter months and a number of three foot by six foot wells in the floor for fishing. Men sat on benches by the wells and cast their lines over the surrounding railings into the cold White Lake waters hoping for a great “catch”.

For 75 cents a day, men could fish with all the comforts of home, including a bathroom of sorts. Fishermen could purchase minnows and ice fishing poles on the Ark. For 15 cents they could have a hamburger and coffee.

The Benners also had 65 shanties, arranged in rows, that they rented out. A regular fishermen's village. They were heated with coal in metal stoves and were built to accommodate two, three, or four occupants.

The Ark operated year around seven days a week. Winters were the best season. The Ark was successful through about 1963 when its usefulness declined as did the perch and the Ark disappeared from White Lake forever.

About the same time that Earl Sherman built his Ark in the 1930s, the Ohrenberger family also built a fishing barge. It was a bit smaller than Sherman's Ark but it too operated year-around.

It was located in the middle of Indian Bay, near Long Point. Around 1940, Ohrenberger sold his Ark to Gerald Baker. Like waves on lake, it seemed to have its ups and downs. State regulators cited it for lack of toilet facilities, inadequate safety lighting, and lack of life preservers and fire extinguishers. It was cited as a navigation hazard by the local harbor master because it sometimes swung and drifted from its moorings.

In the 1950s, in a couple of articles, Lozier Wantz's name was associated with the Ark.

Property owners brought several lawsuits, some reaching all the way to the Michigan Supreme Court, which ruled that the Baker/Wantz Ark be banned from the lake.

