

**HISTORY OF LITTLE LAKE**  
**Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin**  
**By John L. Herlache**





# HISTORY OF LITTLE LAKE

## Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

By John L. Herlache

In 1852, Little Lake was called Crystal Lake (some have referred to it as Silver Lake) because of its clear and reflective water. This was particularly true of the south end of the lake and a smaller connecting lake on its southeast end. There were springs that fed the smaller lake and Crystal Lake near their junction accounting for the clear water. The sparkling clear water formed an upper layer over the lower marl-filled water characteristic of other parts of the lake. The north end was marsh with another smaller, marshy lake connecting to it. The west side of the lake was an island. Its location extended from what today would be a little north of Alabama Street south to Georgia Street (if extended to the Bay). The southern passage connecting to Sturgeon Bay was clear, draining the southern end of the lake. The northern passage was swamp. Tall majestic pines grew down to the shores of the lakes and the bay. Crystal Lake teemed with small mouth black bass and other fish. Small mouth bass and pickerel spawned in the lakes, the spawning adults entering the lakes via the north and south passages.

The geography of this area was very attractive for creating a logging and lumber industry. On September 11, 1852, Lyman Bradley and David Crandall from Lockport, New York, purchased the land surrounding Crystal Lake and its two sister lakes plus a few hundred acres of land nearby. The area was ideal for the saw mill. Its Sturgeon Bay location provided a large protected harbor where timber could be received and lumber could be shipped. Crystal Lake was located outside of the narrow neck of the bay where a dangerous reef was located. The southern waterway would accommodate smaller boats and the logs brought in from Green Bay could be sluiced into Crystal Lake where they were protected and easily available for delivery to the mill. Crystal Lake would also be available for bucket brigades when there was fire in the mill, which was a relatively frequent occurrence. Rumors of the possibility of a ship canal connecting Sturgeon Bay to Lake Michigan most certainly added to the attraction for the area.

In 1853, a crew of men who were brought from Lockport began cutting the timber around the lakes. By October, 1853, construction of a saw mill on the island was completed. The saw mill was the first industry in what would become Sturgeon Bay and it started at Crystal Lake. However, the first industry also began a long history of abuse of Crystal Lake and destruction of its two smaller connected lakes.

The mill was called Bradley Mill, but was also referred to as the Island Mill and as the Lower Mill. As time passed, the two attached lakes were filled in with sawdust, edgings, wood slabs and shingle slats. Crystal Lake also received a large share of the refuse. In its damaged state and reduced size, the name of the lake changed from Crystal Lake to Bradley Lake or Slab Lake. Ultimately it became known as Little Lake.

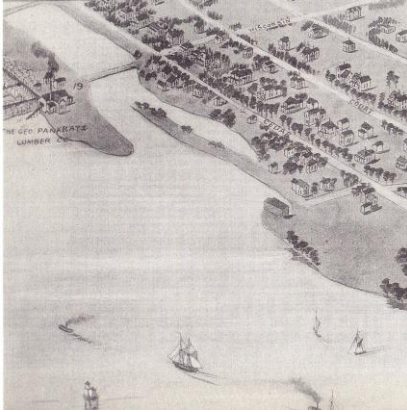
Initially the people living on the island and the employees of the mill moved to and from the island by row boats or walking over the winter ice. The mill employed between thirty and forty people. Each of three mills had built their own communities, creating three small company settlements for each mill making up the town of Otumba (1, the Bradley-Crandall mill; 2, D.H. Burtis' mill located where Bay Ship Building is now located; and 3, Robert Graham's mill; located at the base of what is now Pennsylvania Street). For brief times, Otumba was called Graham or Tehema, but on February 13, 1860, the village was officially named Sturgeon Bay. This was a name the Indians had given it because the bay was shaped like a sturgeon and it was populated with a large number of the fish.

Burtis and Works took over the Island Mill in February, 1854, as a result of a law suit in Lockport, New York. They renamed the mill Burtis and Works. However, the suit was soon settled and Bradley regained control of his mill and changed the name back to Bradley Mill in the fall of the same year. Burtis then built his own mill (the middle mill) in 1855. Works remained a partner of the Bradley Mill, but deeded his share to Mrs. Bradley in 1856.

The mill was located on the south part of the island. A wagon shop was located in the lower level of the mill where wagons and sleighs were housed and repaired. There was room south of the mill for a blacksmith shop and, a little further south, the company store. The two story boarding house for single men was south of the store. Two hundred feet north of the boarding house and just east of the mill was a large barn housing the animals and feed. By 1856 five homes had been built around the boarding house and toward the north end of the island, north of the mill and barn. Bradley's home was the furthest south near the tip of the island and north of the inlet.

In 1855 a causeway was built with wood slabs, crossing the southern portion of Bradley Lake. A twenty foot central area was left open to allow logs to pass through. A bridge connected the two ends, creating the causeway. The causeway and connecting road were named Bradley Street.

On September 12, 1867, a severe rainstorm took the causeway out. A second causeway was constructed further north on the lake. This bridge began at the base of what now is Delaware Street and bisected the lake to the center of the island. Eventually the lake south of the causeway was filled in with discarded materials from the mill.



A depiction of where the two causeways were located, drawn in 1893. Note the small connecting lake on the SE side of the lake.

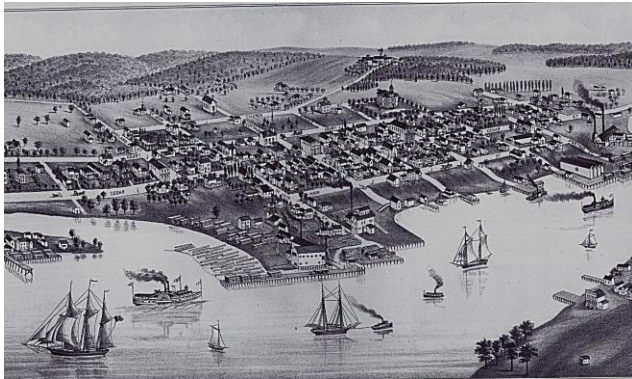
Two piers were built. One extended out into the Bay to unload and load the ships. The other pier was parallel to shore in front of the store to handle supplies. The two were connected in 1857 and were essentially one continuous dock. By this time, the lumber camps and milling business employed 80 people. In 1854, the mill produced 100,000 feet of lumber and 30,000 feet of lathes.

The national recession of 1857 caused the mills to close. With the lumber industry being by far the largest source of employment, Sturgeon Bay fell on hard times. The fall and winter were referred to as “the time of potatoes and salt”, essentially the only food available. Bradley had to sell his cow, which was the only cow in the area. As a result of the recession, all wood products available were shipped to Milwaukee and Chicago to settle debts. With the 1858 spring sucker run, large amounts of the fish were taken from the streams, and the worst part of the recession for the inhabitants was over. The mill went back in business in 1858. In the winter of 58-59, between four and five million board feet had been “banked” to ship to the active construction markets in the southern parts of Lake Michigan. In addition to being the largest long lumber mill in the state, the mill was also able to sell its saw dust for “paving” the streets in Sturgeon Bay and as insulation for the ice houses.

Lyman Bradley was the first in Sturgeon Bay to enlist in the Civil War in 1860. He and his family moved to Buffalo, New York. S. D. Clark bought the mill in 1863 after it had been closed for two years and kept it in operation until 1877 when George O. and Marshall Spear bought the mill. The Spears had extensive experience with saw mills and they were also experienced ship builders, having built several scows for hauling lumber and tugs for pulling logs at a mill they had owned previously. The first ship built at the Spear Mill was in 1877. They opened a shipping line to haul lumber and other goods to Milwaukee and Chicago and to bring cargo back. Those who were in the business in the Milwaukee area claimed that it would only amount to a “dummy line”.

After a very successful first year, Spears decided to name it "The Dummy Line", poking fun back at his critics.

During the mid and late 1850's a farmer/lumberman community developed in the surrounding area. In the summer crops were grown on cleared land and the timber they had harvested in the winter was delivered to the mills. The timber was used for saw logs, cord wood, railroad ties, telegraph poles, and farm posts. As a result of the growing farm industry, the first wheat grist mill was constructed by Bradley on the island north of the saw mill in 1859. By 1880, all of the previously cut over land that had been owned by Bradley was turned into farm land. It extended from the now existing streets of Kentucky Street on the south, Third Avenue on the east, Fifth Avenue on the west, and extending to Alabama on the north. The upper or eastern portion grew wheat and oats and the lower portion near Third Avenue grew potatoes. After being destroyed by fire in 1884, the wheat mill was relocated to the east side of the lake. By this time, all of the outbuildings on the island had burned or had been altered in some way.

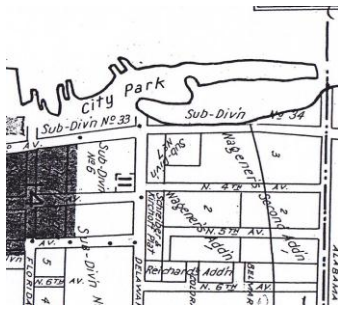


This is the Mill area and south outlet as depicted in 1880. The small lake on the SE side is not shown. The two piers at Bradley Mill, one extending into the bay and one along the shoreline, can be seen on the right. They are connected by the time of this drawing.

Spears moved back east in 1885 and a fellow, thought to be named Thompson, operated the mill until 1890. The mill had burned in 1887. It was rebuilt closer to the Lake and burned again in 1891. Frank and George Pankratz bought the mill in 1891 and rebuilt west of the boarding house. The mill was torn down, ceasing business in 1909.

By 1869 water levels had fallen to a point that the logs for the mill could not be sluiced into Little Lake. A tramway was built across the island to move the logs from the Bay into the Lake. In early June of 1876 high water had returned. The second causeway was washed out near the grist mill on the island. The six families living on the island used boats to get to the mainland. The causeway was repaired by August of the same year.

A northern passage, north of Spear Mill about 2/3 of the way up, was dredged out in 1878. The south channel was filled in with the dredging to allow easier access for the two Ice Houses constructed by A. O. Guthrie on the southern tip of the island. Two years later Guthrie built a foot bridge across the lake to Cedar Street (now Third Avenue). This was located on the southern part of the lake and was where the current road to the bathing beach is located.



This is a drawing showing how the lake looked after opening the north end. (It is not accurate for when it was drawn in 1928. The northwest area was swamp at that time and no longer felt to be an outlet.) Note that the south border of the lake is now at Delaware Street. The lake is about 1/2 its original size.

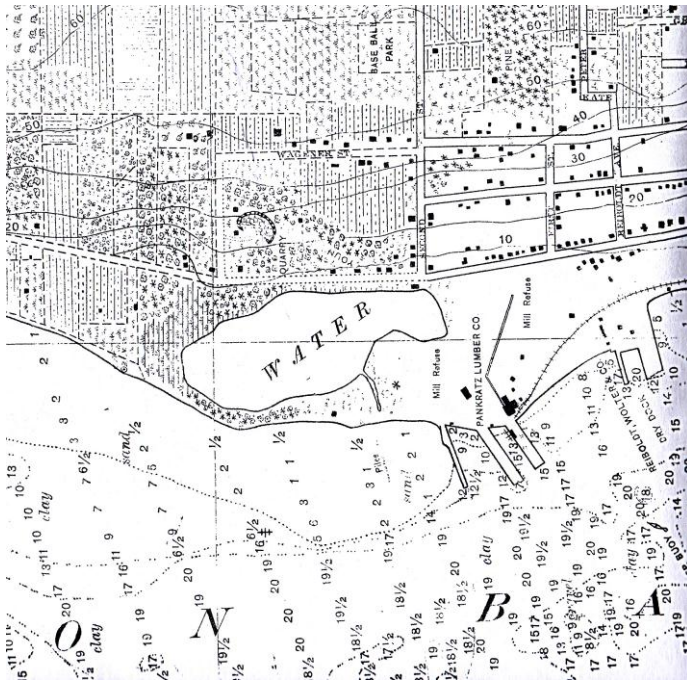
With the south passage having been closed to accommodate the Guthrie Ice Houses, stagnation of the Little Lake occurred. Due to the resulting stench and the occurrence of typhoid fever epidemics, the City of Sturgeon Bay ordered the south entrance to be opened on November 26, 1891. Water levels in the bay and lake fell in 1896 and the once eight foot deep lake once again became a bog, the southern estuary having closed. With continued filling from the lumber yard and mill, a large portion of what had been Little Lake was now Pankratz Lumberyard. It was estimated that one half of the lake had been filled, including some fill in the far northern parts of the lake as well.

In that year, Reimbaldt-Walter shipyard or Universal Shipyard docks were constructed, located on a 12 acre tract with 800 feet of shore frontage, purchased from Pankratz Lumberyard. The docks extended from the filled in area that once was the southern estuary. Much work was required to remove old fill, mostly slabs, to provide a bottom for solid fill.

The lumber business was the mainstay of the local economy until the 1890's when ship building and agriculture became more dominant. Ship building was a natural extension of the lumber business. The lumber companies built large and powerful tugs to tow logs from the west side of Green Bay to furnish their mills after the number of logs produced in Door County fell dramatically due to depletion of trees in Door County's forests. Large scows were built to carry the finished lumber to the Milwaukee and Chicago markets. The southern portion of the original island in the region of the Universal shipyard eventually became part of Roen Steamship and Dry Dock. This dramatically expanded

from 1941 to 1945 when all of the remaining buildings from the time of the saw mill were replaced.

Storms had intermittent significant effects on Little Lake. A storm on November 29, 1906, in conjunction with high water, caused wood waste from Little Lake to wash up on the east shore of Sturgeon Bay. By 1913, the south passage, which had been opened in 1891, was closed with sand having been pushed in by a strong northwest wind. Saw dust, shingles, etc. had already partially closed the outlet. From this point forward the lake began once again to stagnate. The water level slowly receded and the matter in the lake began to decay.



This map was drawn as a depth chart in 1906. The south end of the lake has been filled in. The south outlet has been obliterated. The piers are part of Pankratz lumber, the final owner of the original mill business started by Lyman Bradley and David Crandall in 1852. Note that the small lake is gone.

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1929, the city purchased the Lake and 25 acres south of the Lake. Little Lake had become a bog or mud flat that had an offensive odor so foul that home owners in the area had to keep their windows closed. The nearby bathing beach was being contaminated from run off from the lake area. The ground water in the surrounding areas also became contaminated. Little Lake had essentially no commercial value. The depth of the lake ranged from one foot to four feet. State Representative Frank Graass stepped up to the daunting task of revitalizing Little Lake to its “original” state. It was planned to dredge out the lake and to open a 100 foot south estuary, dredging out into the bay “to a sustainable depth”. The dredgings were to be used to fill in the low lands, the areas of the two communicating smaller lakes which



were already partially filled in and the south end of Little Lake. The filled area was planned to be a city park with athletic fields.

MAN RESTORES WHAT MAN DESTROYED---A LAKE



This is a picture of Frank Graass that appeared in The Door County Advocate in 1938. Frank is seen walking in the marshy remains of Little Lake. The “sump dredge” can be seen in the background. The piping used to direct the dredging to the lowland area south of the lake can be seen resting on float barrels behind the dredge.

There were many advantages cited for improving the lake:

- Pollution problems would be solved.
- Less mosquito breeding
- Increased property values around the lake
- Dredging would be used to fill in the lowland areas around the lake creating a beautiful city park
- Creation of a wildlife sanctuary for water fowl and muskrats
- Landscaping to include rustic bridges to the island, public boat houses for canoe rental, ice skating center, and a trout exhibition pond at the southeast end of the lake.

In the 1930's, the area was referred to as the jungle or the dump. Many brought their refuse and dumped it in the area of the partially filled Little Lake. “Hobos”, who came as migrant workers, lived in tents in the area during the summers. They waited there for farmers and orchard growers to come and offer them “pick up work”. By the end of the summers there were piles of refuse left behind. There was a rickety wooden bridge that crossed the south outlet of the lake to provide access to cottages located on the island. This was the only way one could get to the cottages. The water under the bridge was clear. There was no swimming in the lake, however, because it was infested with bloodsuckers.

Several attempts to begin the revitalization project for Little Lake failed due to a failing economy. Efforts were begun in 1931; they failed due to the depression. With Frank Graass' leadership, gradual progress was made. A federal government CWA project was instituted in 1934 "to put men to work". 12,000 cubic yards of refuse was removed from the edges of the Lake by "claws and trucks". Low lying areas south of the lake were filled with the dredgings. WCA having gone out of existence in 1936, Mr. Graass was able to obtain a federal WPA project to do landscaping and improvements at the lake. There were not enough "relief workers" in Door County to go around for these projects, the largest number of workers being assigned to the State Parks. The Little Lake work lagged far behind. In 1937, the Wisconsin Conservation Commission dredged along the edge of the lake and once again opened the south cut to the bay. 110,000 cubic yards were removed and used as more fill for the contiguous low lands. An island was left in the middle which was marshy and had the appearance of a marsh with several small islands. The odor was gone, but the lake was still unsightly, so the State decided to dredge out the rest of the lake with a suction dredge to a depth of eight feet. The dredgings were piped to the low lying areas. On May 31, 1938, the dredging was completed and approval was given to remove the bridge at the south estuary in order to remove the dredge from the lake. A cement bridge replaced the wooden one, once the dredge was removed. The rearing ponds were installed on the west side of the lake. In December of that year, the city approved plans to develop an ice rink on the lake in the area of the rearing ponds. In the same month the city deeded the lake to the Wisconsin Department of Conservation. They would have control of the lake as long as they used it for conservation purposes.



Shown here is the lake in 1938 after the lake was dredged out. The southwest outlet is open and the rearing ponds have been constructed. The cement bridge over the new outlet was not constructed at the time the picture was taken. The filled parts of the lake are apparent. The docks for the Universal Shipyard are in the area of the original south outlet.

The four 150ft. X 200ft. fish ponds were constructed on the west side of the lake. They were quite deep. They were used to raise fathead minnows which would be released into the breeding ponds for the bass and walleye pike, each raised in their own pond. Walleye cannibalize their young. By keeping these minnows in the ponds until the pike were fingerlings figured to solve this problem. To produce bugs to feed the bass and pike fingerlings, carp and other matter were buried under the fourth pond. It was felt that with the extra nutrition due to the bugs, the larger fingerling pike would not be as likely to be cannibalistic. The Lake was drained in 1939 in preparation for stocking the lake and the rearing ponds. A large number of shiners, bullheads and rock bass were removed. A small number of shiner minnows remained. Their presence was felt to be a good food source for the anticipated stocking of small mouth black bass, so they were allowed to remain. A ten horse motor was installed with electricity at the newly constructed concrete bridge at the south estuary. The pump was used to pump water out of the ponds to lower water levels when necessary. A wire fence was constructed on the west, north and south shores of the lake.

At the time, trout fishing had become expensive. The Mississippi River no longer spawned black bass due to dredging and installation of dams. Due to the past history of abundant bass and pickerel having populated the Lake, it was decided that the state fish hatchery, located just east of where Peterson Builders was located, would supply fish to stock the Lake with small mouth black bass. The superintendent of the fish hatchery was supervisor of the entire project. Small mouth bass spawn and adults were obtained from Washington Island and Mink River waters.

In August of 1940, an aquarium was built. It was stocked with fish indigenous to Sturgeon Bay and Lake Michigan and maintained by the local state fish hatchery. The city was responsible for providing the water, electricity and lighting. The aquarium was stocked each spring and the fish were released in the fall before emptying the aquarium and preparing it for winter. An example of what could be seen in the aquarium is revealed by the list that the State fishery developed for stocking for 1941: 12 bullheads, 5 dog fish, 20 blue gill, 5 garfish, 25 brown trout, 25 rainbow trout, 25 brook trout and 4 sturgeon. In the same year, the ice skating rink was placed in the area of the recently constructed rearing ponds. The aquarium was filled with dirt in 1971 and it became a flower planter. The Peninsula Planters and Garden Club and the Sturgeon Bay Home and Garden Club were responsible for maintaining the plantings.

During the summer months of 1943 water action at different times caused sand to drift into the Little Lake outlet so that it became totally blocked to passage of water. Sometimes the outlet was cleared with shovels and on other occasions excavating shovels were used. Water levels were high enough that water was pumped out 10 full days and two ½ days in October to keep the rearing ponds from overflowing. In 1944 the pump operated 325 hours and in 1945 346 hours.

As a part of the original project, multiple trees of varying species were planted around the lake and lily pods were placed in the lake.



Roen Steamship in winter mid1940's – The yard is expanded from the previous Universal Shipyard. The building dedicated to Frank Graass can be seen on the south side of the road going to the bathing beach. The road is where the foot bridge crossed the south end of Bradley Lake from Guthrie's ice houses. The trees planted around the lake have grown since being planted in 1938.

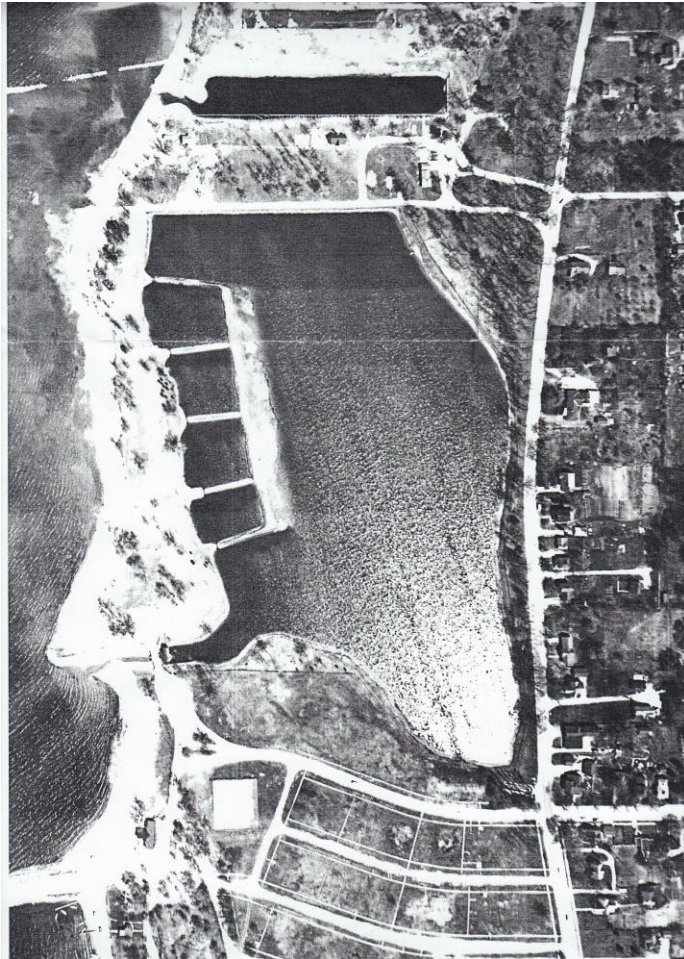


*Ron & Marie Greisen  
September 24, 1953 at little lake*

This 1953 photo shows the fence that had been placed around the lake. The last 100 feet of fencing was removed in 2006.

By 1952, the remaining lowland areas were filled and, in 1953, a little league baseball diamond was placed at the southeast end of the new park (at the corner of what is now the intersection of Third Avenue and Florida Street). A building was constructed to the west of the ball diamond to be used by the park and the little league. It was dedicated to Frank Graass. There are now three little league diamonds in the park sponsored by three Sturgeon Bay service clubs, The Lions Club, the Kiwanis Club, and the Rotary Club. The building is now used as a concession stand during Little League games.

In 1956 the south passage once again required opening to the Bay.



This is a 1957 aerial photo showing the opening on the SW end of the lake that was reopened in 1956. The cement bridge over the outlet can be seen. Delaware Street on the south end still goes through showing what at one time was the center of Bradley Lake but is now the southern extent of the lake. On the north, Alabama Street is the border. Some of the north end has been filled in.

A development corporation named Cherryland Investment, LTD, in 1963, proposed buying the lake and park to build a marina with associated homes or condominiums. This was rejected by the city council after the residents strongly objected on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

In August of that same year, the Door County Rod and Gun Club constructed a building for dispensing corn at ten cents for a filled small paper bag to feed water fowl at the southeast corner of Little Lake. The children fed the ducks and geese and loaded their fish hooks with corn as well to catch carp. A pump was placed to bubble the water to keep it open in the winter.

Piping was installed in 1964 to create a connection to the Bay “to eliminate the current unsightly condition” of the lake. It extended from the cement bridge on the southwest corner of Little Lake to the Bay. The bridge had been constructed during the 1938 revitalization of the lake. A dam was constructed to keep the Lake level two feet above the water level of the Bay that existed at that time.



This photo was taken in 1967. The road to the bathing beach is where the foot bridge built by Guthrie Ice Houses was located. It crossed the south end of the lake. Note that Delaware Street no longer goes through the park. Two little league diamonds are seen south of the bathing beach road. The building dedicated to Frank Graass is located between them.

The feeding of water fowl at the lake resulted in the growth of a large population center of ducks and geese. By 1984, as a result of the over concentration of the water fowl, the birds began to die off due to botulism and other ornathoses. Because of this, the feeding of the birds and water pump were ordered to be stopped and the corn sales at the site were discontinued. In 1987, the Rod and Gun Club building constructed for storage and sale of corn was sold.



Winter pictures of the water fowl area at Little Lake. Upper left: - January 1964 - The corn dispensing shed is being serviced by Lawrence Virlee. Wooden sheds can be seen that were constructed to house and protect the birds. Upper right: – January 1965 - A fenced in area is shown that protected the birds, some of which were tame farm birds. Lower left: – January 1965 - Holes were drilled in the ice and Christmas trees were placed to protect the birds from north winds. Lower right: - January 1963 - a snow fence was put up to keep people away from the area kept open by the aerator.



Photo of the corn dispensing building as it exists today. It is utilized as a machine shed by Dean Gigstead who purchased it from the Door County Rod & Gun Club in 1987.

In conjunction with the construction of a graving dock to accommodate 1,000 foot freighters in the early 1970's at the Bay Shipbuilding shipyard, dredgings were placed in the area of the nearby bathing beach and on the west shore of Little Lake, closing

permanently the south waterway to Sturgeon Bay from Little Lake. A culvert was placed at the north end of the Lake to allow continued communication with the Bay. It was placed to keep the water level one foot above the water level of the Bay at the time it was placed. A T-shaped peninsula on the west side of the lake was developed in the area of the old fish rearing ponds to function as a breeding area for water fowl.



This aerial photo from 1994 shows the “t-island” for water fowl nesting and the graving dock for the 1,000 foot freighters. The graving dock crosses the area where the original south outlet of Crystal Lake was located and is where Roen Steamship was located. Although the corn dispensing building is gone, the area of its location and the aquarium is seen on the SE corner of the lake (upper right end of the lake).

In 1985, a fishing tourney was instituted at Little Lake. It has been held annually on Father’s Day since. The tourney is for kids. A parent, grandparent or other family member must accompany the child. First place prizes are given for the largest fish caught in each category for that year. In early years prizes were given for large and small mouth bass, northern pike, perch, rock bass, sunfish, carp, bullhead and musky.





This is a picture of the annual Father's Day Fishing Derby during its heyday.

Sturgeon Bay and Little Lake water levels have now fallen. The north culvert leading to the Bay, placed when the south culvert was sealed, is out of water. It has a valve which was to be used to control the lake's water level. It has been closed at least since 1996 and is no longer functional. The mean lake depth is four feet with a maximum depth of 5.5 feet.

Three storm sewers now empty into the lake, receiving surface water from as far east as 8<sup>th</sup> avenue and bordered on the north by Delaware street and on the south by Florida Street. This is an area of 260 acres with 50 acres being open areas and 210 acres high density urban area. The most recent and furthest south pipe comes from Florida street and was placed in 2006. There are no records as to when the other two pipes were placed. The run off has resulted in nitrogen and phosphorus levels being far above that of any other lake in Door County. This results in increased plant growth in summer months which causes the lake to be supersaturated with oxygen due to oxygen production through photosynthesis. Sludge on the bottom of the lake is increasing at an accelerated rate secondary to decay from the increased plant growth settling to the bottom at the end of the growth season and sludge that is carried into the lake by the storm sewers. Oxygen content decreases to a level that will not sustain fish life during most winter months because of increased utilization of oxygen by the decaying matter at the bottom of the lake and little or no production of oxygen through photosynthesis by plant life.

As a result of decreased fish population, 12,000 hybrid sun fish were planted in the lake in 1994. This did not have a lasting effect. Now only bullheads are caught in the lake. Due to fear that the fish will be contaminated by the water in Little Lake, most no longer fish the lake. Very few showed up for the father's day fishing event and recently only bullheads have been caught. It has been shown that the nearby beach at times is contaminated by e-coli bacteria originating from Little Lake.

## Little Lake Chronology

1852 – Bradley & Crandall purchase Crystal Lake and a few hundred surrounding acres.

1853 – Bradley Mill completed and placed into operation

1854 – Bradley & Works took over Bradley Mill and named it Burtis & Works Mill. The mill reverted back to Bradley in the fall and renamed Bradley Mill.

1855 – D. H. Burtis built the Middle Mill.

A causeway was built crossing the southern part of Crystal Lake

1856 – Works deeded his 2/3 share of Bradley Mill to Mrs. Bradley

1857 – The ship pier and the shoreline pier were united into one pier  
The national recession resulted in closure of the mill.

1858 – The mill reopened

1859 – Bradley built a wheat grist mill on the island

1860 – February 18<sup>th</sup>. Otumba was officially renamed Sturgeon Bay.  
Lyman Bradley joined the North Military and closed the mill.

1863 – S. D. Clark bought Bradley Mill and placed it back into operation.

1867 – September 12<sup>th</sup> – the causeway was taken out by a storm and a second was built crossing the mid-portion of the lake. As the lake was filled in, this became the southern border of the lake.

1869 – Due to low water levels, logs could not be sluiced into the lake. A tramway was constructed across the island to move the logs from the bay to the lake.

1877 – Clark sold Bradley Mill to brothers George O. and Marshall Spear. The mill was renamed Spears Mill.

1878 – A north passage was dredged out. The dredgings were used to close the south passage to accommodate the Guthrie Ice Houses.

1880 – Bradley's cleared land west of the lake was planted in wheat, oats and potatoes.

1884 – The wheat mill was destroyed by fire and rebuilt on the east side of the lake.

1885 – Spears moved back east and Thompson operated the mill.

1887 – The saw mill was destroyed by fire and rebuilt closer to the lake.

1891 – The saw mill was again burned down. Pankratz bought the business and rebuilt west of the boarding house.

1896 - A south outlet was opened. About ½ of Little Lake was now filled and much of the south part of Little Lake was now Pankratz Lumber Yard.

The Universal Shipyard piers were constructed in the area of the original south estuary.

1906 – November 29<sup>th</sup> – Wood waste from Little Lake washed up on the east shore of Sturgeon Bay due to high water and high winds.

1909 – The saw mill was torn down and ceased operations.

1913 – A strong nor'wester closed the south estuary.

1929 – November 5<sup>th</sup> – The City of Sturgeon Bay purchased Little Lake and 25 acres of land predominately to the south, the areas of previously filled in Crystal Lake and the two connecting little lakes.

1931 – The attempts to revitalize Little Lake began.

1934 – The CWA Project started.

1936 - The WPA project began.

1937 – The Wisconsin Conservation Department began work on the lake.

1938 – May 31<sup>st</sup> – The dredging of the lake was completed, the dredge was removed and a cement bridge over the outlet to the bay was constructed. The fish rearing ponds were built and a protective fence was placed around the lake.

An aquarium was built just off of the southeast corner of the lake. A skating rink was operated in the area of the rearing ponds that winter.

The lake was deeded to the Wisconsin State Department of Conservation for as long as they would use it for conservation purposes.

A pump was placed into operation at the cement bridge. This was used to keep the water low enough so that the rearing ponds would not over flow.

1943 – The outlet to the bay needed to be cleared of sand on several occasions after having washed in by “water action”.

1952 – The filling of the lowlands south of Little Lake was completed.

1953 – The first Little League ball diamond was placed at the corner of Florida and Third Avenue. A building was constructed and dedicated to Frank Graass.

1956 – The south outlet was once again re-opened.

1963 – A proposal for commercial development of the lake and park area was rejected by the City Council.

1963 – The Door County Rod and Gun Club began dispensing small bags of corn at 10 cents/bag to feed the water Fowl.

1971 – The aquarium was filled with dirt and became a flower planter.

Early – mid 1970's – The shoreline of the bay along the bathing beach and the west shoreline of Little Lake were modified with dredgings as a result of construction of a large graving dock at Bay Shipbuilding. The south outlet to the bay was closed. A pipe at the northeast east remained opened. (It is

believed that this culvert was placed with the revitalization project ending in 1938.)

A “T-island” was constructed in the area of the old rearing ponds, to be used as a nesting area for water fowl.

1984 – Dispensing of corn to feed the water fowl was discontinued.

1985 - The Fathers’ Day Fish Derby started.

1987 – The metal building used to dispense corn was sold to Dean Gigstead for use as a machine shed

1996 – It has been known that at least since this time, the valve system in the northeast culvert to the lake has been closed and non-functional.

2006 – The last 100 feet of fencing was removed.

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