

Part I

Current Conditions and Recommendations For the Future

Historical Overview

Due to the City's industrial legacy, few places along Muskegon Lake's southern shore have been left unaltered by human activity. The extensive lumbering activity which took place in Muskegon during the 19th and early 20th Centuries resulted in a wholesale re-configuration of the shoreline through dredging, filling and other activities designed to make the shoreline more conducive to shipping.

By the middle of the Century, the lumber industry had largely given way to heavy "smoke stack" industry such as steel production. The cumulative effect of this prolonged and intensive exploitation (utilization) of the natural harbor and its waterfront (a situation certainly not unique to Muskegon) resulted in a series of environmental and land use

issues which, until only recently, appeared intractable.

Although historically utilized for industry and bulk shipping, the City of Muskegon also has a long history as a cross lake passenger port linking many cities on the western side of Lake Michigan to

Muskegon. During the off season, ships such as the Milwaukee Clipper were used to transport freight (including vehicles from Detroit) to various ports in Illinois and Wisconsin.

During the height of Great Lakes shipping (post WWII) Muskegon also saw regular shipments from European ports whose ships made their way to Muskegon via the Saint Lawrence Seaway and later, the Erie Canal.



Former Goodrich Docks

Over the past several decades, bulk shipping on the Great Lakes has concentrated in fewer ports and reduced in tonnage due to the ascendancy of the interstate highway system and the trucking and containerization it has facilitated. As a smaller Great Lakes port without the infrastructure, or shipping volume required for containerized shipping, Muskegon, has suffered as a result of this new paradigm.