

Civilian Conservation Corps



The Civilian Conservation Corps was a federal program established in response to the Great Depression. It was in operation nationally from 1933-1942 and offered a year of work for unemployed single men ages 17-23 as well as veterans. The purpose of the CCC was to do public works projects such as creating parks, campgrounds, and improving roadsides across the country.



The group that came to Wayne (Company 1618), formed at Wampler's Lake in 1933 and from there moved to Mackinaw Island and were finally assigned to Wayne in 1935. Carpenter's Lake was suggested as the location of the camp because it was close to where the project would take place on Michigan Avenue. However, locals as well as Irving Carpenter, did not want the camp near the lake. Reluctantly, Carpenter agreed to put the camp on 11.4 acres of his land after negotiations with an Army officer.



In October of 1935, 21 boys began work on the camp and they finished it by December. The camp was called SP13 (State Park #13) or Camp Wayne. The camp was set up to be self-sufficient; the workers dug a well for water, set up electricity through the Detroit Edison company, used Trojan Laundry of Ypsilanti, MI, for their laundry services, and bought groceries and supplies locally. The camp leaders provided educational and religious activities and also held a recreation hour every Monday evening for games, sports, and other leisure activities.



The group's main project was to grade, seed, and landscape Michigan Avenue from Holmes Road in Washtenaw County to Telegraph Road, a distance of about 16 miles. When the project began, there were 184 men enlisted in the camp, which was run by former military leaders.

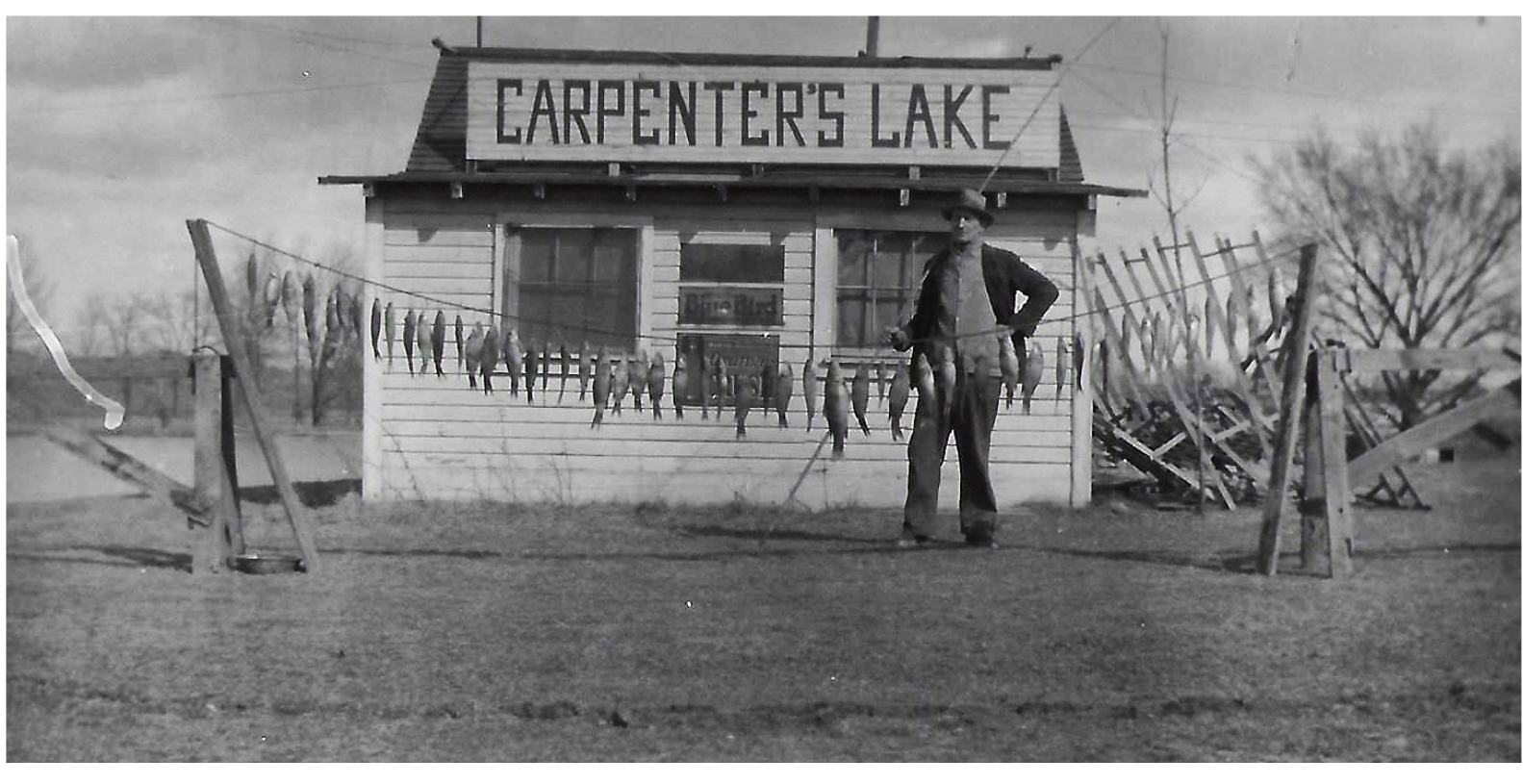


The work was hard, with most of it done by hand. However, Wayne was the first place they had access to machinery like bulldozers. Even under strenuous conditions the men were treated well and they were able to create long lasting friendships. The workers earned \$30 per month but each agreed to send \$22 of that back home to their families.

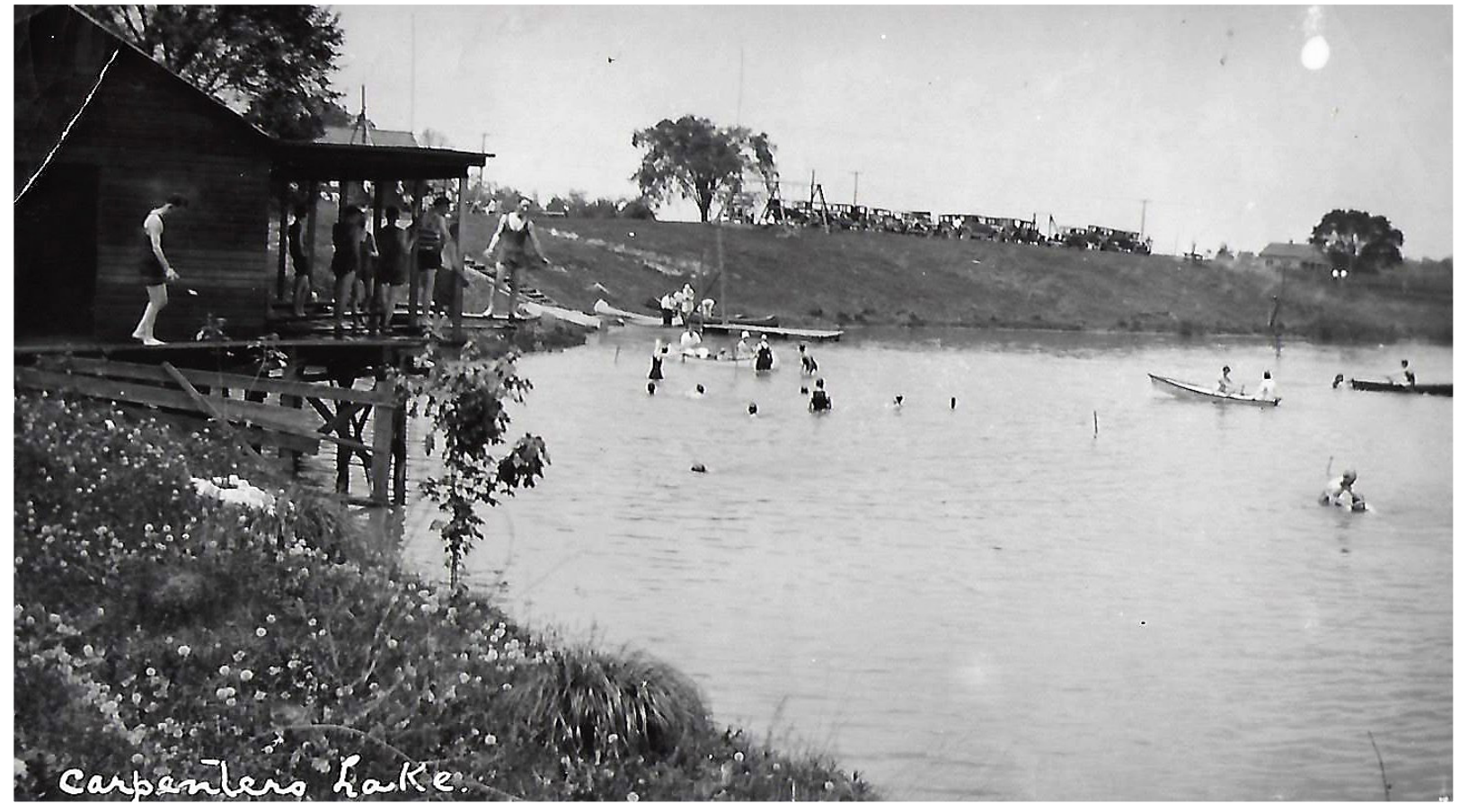


The Michigan Avenue project was finished by 1938, so the camp was closed and disassembled. The buildings were constructed with portable materials, so those materials were then sent to the next jobsite.

Carpenter's Lake



The man-made Carpenter Lake was located on the Carpenter farm near Michigan Avenue between Hix and Hannan Roads. In the 1920s, there were no state parks in Southeast Michigan to offer swimming, camping, and recreational activities, so Irving Carpenter decided to create his own.



To create the lake, a large earth dike was pulled up using a tractor and a windmill was built to pump water from the Rouge River. The lake was an instant success that attracted crowds from not only Wayne, but from surrounding communities as well.



The lake was known as a family destination, and there were always kids around. Eventually, several cottages were built, along with a cook house, general store, and a bathhouse for changing clothes. The cottages, as well as boats and canoes, could be rented out for those using the lake for both camping and day trips.



Over the years the lake hosted many tournaments, picnics, speeches, reunions, and served as a popular gathering spot for the community. Fishing was a popular activity for families. The main attraction, however, was swimming and for those who were adventurous, there was a diving platform at the end of the swimming area. In the winter, the lake still attracted people to go skating, sledding, and tobogganing on the frozen surface.



The lake remained a popular spot until the late 1930s, when it was caught up in a nationwide polio fear. During that time, many swimming areas across the country were closing due to the fear of contracting polio. In 1937, a county health inspector visited the lake and asked that it be closed. Carpenter complied with the county's wishes and breached the dike to drain the lake.



The cabins and grounds continued to be used for camping after the lake was drained and the lake bottom was used as farmland until 1971. Today the land is heavily wooded. The windmill and bathhouse were torn down, while the original house, cottages, and store building were left to deteriorate over the years. In 2002, Arthur Aigeltinger bought and restored the remaining buildings and built a new windmill in commemoration of the lake.