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## Tazelaar, Arthur J Oral History Interview: Longtime Residents of Macatawa Park

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Interview With Arthur J.  
Tazelaar

Conducted June 14, 1991  
by Joseph A. Kuiper

Hope College Oral History Project, 1991  
Subject: Macatawa Park

Joe- Can I have your name and your current address?

Art- It's Arthur J. Tazelaar, and it's 2270 South Shore Dr., Macatawa, Mich.. I moved here in 1920, I was seven years old and we moved here from Grand Rapids, and so I've lived here ever since, and was brought up out here, and this is it, I've stayed here ever since. At that time the park was still going strong. All the stores were in business, and the ferry boats were all still running. In the early days the train came to Ottawa Beach and of course they built the hotel there, then later on the Interurban came from Grand Rapids and ran out to Macatawa, and they would make seventeen round trips a day to Grand Rapids and the fare was only fifty cents, so it was easy for people to come out here to Macatawa and go swimming, and owners catered to all these people way back. The beach for swimming, and they had picnics, and then Jenison Park which is right east of here had the amusement park so they could come to both places. And at that time we had three ferry boats running continuously from Mac to Jenison to Ottawa Beach and back again in a triangle, and occasionally they would go to Waukazoo and pick up or you could go over there yourself by boat, and it was another small resort. Mac had thousands of people here on certain weekends because of all the big church picnics and factory picnics, and my father told me that

they carried so many people out here at times that they'd have to use flat cars with benches to carry all those people out here. And the train was on the Ottawa side and I have pictures that show five tracks wide where they stored their cars because in the evening all these people had to get back to Grand Rapids. And then we had the Chicago boat coming in here, they docked right out in front here, and you could get on the Interurban and save a half-hour's time. The boats went on to Holland, but by getting off here it was only a one hour ride to Grand Rapids on the Interurban. The boats made a trip every day up and back, but Friday and Saturday it made two trips, one in the morning and one at night to Chicago, and of course the fare was only like 2.50 one way. Boats ran all summer long until the fall. Then they put out a winter boat and it ran as much as it could until the ice would stop it and then it would start again in the spring. But they carried all fruit and freight to Chicago. The reason they quit was the trucking industry just started up and then they found it was much easier to load trucks and carry the, whatever their freight was, and deliver it directly to a factory or wherever it had to go and so gradually on the freight business fell off and so did the passenger business, it finally gave up. In the twenties more and more resorts opened up and people were buying

automobiles at that time, so they were going to other places and then we lost out on that too, so finally it dwindled down to during the depression there was just the cottages were here.

Joe- Did you ever get a chance to ride the Interurban?

Art- Oh yeah, I rode it often, I went to school in Holland on it.

It was ten cents to go to Holland and my mother always bought a lot of ten cent tokens from the Interurban; then you didn't have to use cash and you could just put in two of them for each way.

Joe- What do you remember about the ride; was it pretty smooth?

Art- Yeah, I remember, it was fine, I remember it jumped the track one time, I remember that, and that was a funny feeling but it didn't tip over but we did go over on our side a little bit, but that was kind of interesting. It ran during the winter too, but it cut down to about six or seven trips a day. But of course they carried the mail and newspapers; not too much freight, but mostly passengers. And then occasionally, I think in the summer they made about six or seven trips to Saugatuck and in the winter time that was cut down to like three trips. So they had quite a business going, but it's really the automobile that came along and kind of slowed their business down to nothing, so then in twenty-six, I think, was the last car.

Joe- What other effects do remember the automobile having on

Macatawa Park?

Art- Well, I will say the resorters had money and they were the first ones to have automobiles so they had them long before twenty, 1920, but it was after twenty when the ordinary person that had a little money would buy a car, but the rich people had them and we had a huge garage right next door here that could hold sixty cars, and no-one left their cars out over night, like you do today, they had a chauffeur at the garage here would go up with them to their cottage and then would bring the car back, and then you called down or sent a note down you wanted the car and the chauffeur would bring the car up the hill, and that's the way they operated. But like I say after the twenties, '21, '24, then it all fell off like that. The business fell off.

Joe- Did it seem like there were more or less tourists when the cars came?

Art- Well quite a few tourists came, but then the depression came in the thirties you know, and that put the kibosh, but we still had, like the hotel was probably about a half full during the depression, because we still had people come St. Louis, and Indianapolis, and there was a lot of people still had money that they could afford a vacation. But the automobile was the, really the cause of the slow-down.

Joe- You mentioned that a lot of people arrived at Macatawa by

passenger ship?

Art- Yeah, they did, and another thing they did, back before the twenties like, they stayed all summer. They'd come with their trunks and suitcases and they'd stay all summer until Labor Day. And then Labor Day, you could hardly find a person around; at two o'clock in the afternoon it was all over with until after Memorial Day, then it would start again. Actually, as soon as the schools were out then they'd be here.

Joe- Do any particular people stand out in your mind when you think back to Macatawa Park?

Art- Well, Swan Miller was the, one of the last owners of the park, and he lived to be 94. He was from California really, but he later moved to Chicago where he established his law office. And he bought into the park association, it was like a little corporation, and finally some of the stock holders couldn't make their payments and so forth, so he took them over those payments and so forth and then that way he owned the whole thing toward the last. Anyway, he controlled the private park for 30 years. Then the Den Uyls bought it in 1945, and they did a lot of work around fixing it up and they built Point West too. Tore the old hotel down in fifty-six, and then they didn't build for a while, a few years later they built the motel and then the restaurant.

Joe- What do you remember about the old Mac Hotel?

Art- I worked there as a night clerk, and it was, all wood you know, and it looked like a fire-trap really, but it was a beautiful place I've got all kinds of pictures of it. And it got through a period when before they had electricity and they lamps and it didn't burn at that particular time, and then finally the new hotel had electricity in it, and it was built in 1896, and it lasted until '56. But we always had hall lights; on every floor you had to have like a night light, and occasionally the electricity would go off and you'd have to use those kerosene lights, and I was a night boy there so then, you'd smell that fumes from kerosene and you'd think the hotel was on fire, so you'd quick run up there and everything was quiet (laughs). So I never had a fire there. Anyway, when the Den Uyls bought it, Sime Den Uyl operated for a couple years and just about that time there were several of these big wooden structure hotels that caught fire, so then the fire marshall came down and he looked it all over and he said you'll have to put a modern system in, with all the sprinkler systems, and add two more outside escape stairs; and of course it wouldn't have improved the looks of the hotel any at all, so they decided shortly after that they were going to tear it all down; and he also took all the stores



down with it. So then it laid idle for about three or four years, and the cottagers took over and put in all grass and plantings, and we took care of it, for three or four years. Finally, they decided they were going to build, and they did build a motel, but they also got a liquor license. See we had no liquor, we sold no liquor or beer or anything in the park and Mr. Miller could control all that, today he might have to go to court with it because it's a little different situation, but because he owned it all he could control it all. So finally they did obtain a license and then they built a new motel and they built a new restaurant. That of course was a boom to the place and drew a lot of people from all over Michigan because of everything being brand new. They operated it for ten or fifteen years about and then they sold it. Lately it hasn't done that well, but valuation of the property went way up and now you can hardly afford to buy anything out here it's so terribly expensive.

Joe- I've heard stories that perhaps the Den Uyls had torn down the Macatawa Hotel as a business proposition because it had been doing poorly.

Art- Yeah, well, maybe so a little bit, but I think basically they wanted to put in a new hotel, I can see why they didn't want to spend like twenty five thousand dollars to install a fire system, and you know the hotel only

operated about three months out of the year and that just one expense like that is a tremendous amount at that time; today you're talking a hundred and fifty thousand it would cost you know, for all that work to be done. So that was one of the reasons that they just tore it down.

Joe- Did yo spend much time around the cottages down in the area behind the hotel?

Art- We lived on the channel and the Coast Guard was right next door to us, but people that lived there, they lived there for several years, they hardly ever had a new family move in. It just was like a big family down there; there was about nine cottages, they were homes because we lived there year round. Finally, the Coast Guard moved out, they moved right across the lake to Ottawa Beach, and of course several of these people that were working at the Coast Guard Station they moved also - with their families too. Then the property kind of went down for a couple of years, and then new people started buying cottages, total strangers, and they would remodel. And of course it ended up with Mr. Van Andel buying five cottages on the Harbor Walk, and he just fixed up everything beautiful so now all the properties are in great shape. And we sold our cottage to Early for 11,000, we sold it to a gal; she had it for about eight or ten years and I think she got a

135,000 for it, just the difference of ten years. But because everything else was fixed in beautiful shape why then of course they turned right around and remodeled and spent a lot more money.

Joe- What do you recall about the social atmosphere of Macatawa?

Art- Well way, way back everything settled around the hotel itself. Way, way back I remember they had tea in the afternoon and all that, and they loved to play cards with all these guests, and they always had a band out of Chicago usually, not a large but about a three or four piece orchestra for the dinner hour and for dancing later. Way back, I can remember the little orchestra would stay all summer long and later on they started hiring small bands maybe out of Holland and Grand Rapids just for special occasional parties, but they always had dinner music, of course going way back. Everybody used the lobby of the hotel for, well I suppose if you wanted to play cards with a group of people they were free to use it. Even though they weren't staying there they were free to use it.

Joe- You mentioned that you were a night clerk?

Art- Yeah I was a night clerk and I remember when they always put their jewelry and all their cash in a big safe you know (laughs); I was afraid someone was going to walk in. Then I found out it wasn't even locked (laughs). But it was so big it was just like looking at a bank safe,

and you figure it's locked (laughs). First I bellhopped there for a long time, at least a couple years, and then they put me on for, great salary - I received ten dollars a week, plus a few tips. (laughs) Boy it was a lot of money, I tell you, it was a lot.

Joe- About what year was that?

Art- Thirties, I guess it was thirty-one, thirty-two, along in there. But I didn't take room and board see, I could have had that, but I would rather go home, but see that ten dollars wasn't too bad if you figured you were a student from out of town or something then you got room and board.

Joe- What year did you move over to your job at the post office?

Art- Thirty-six.

Joe- And did you begin as Post Master?

Art- Yeah, first my sister had it for a little while, and she didn't want it, and so then jobs weren't so plentiful so she said why don't you take the exam. So then we took the exam and there was only five of us that took the exam. I got the job, and I was glad I did, but like I say it didn't pay very much, only \$75 dollars a month, but you gradually worked up, and then I think when I left it was a second class office. Then the reason I retired was because the department wanted to put up a new building and I thought I got all these years in, everything will be new, and I thought just

let somebody else have the job; so the girl that worked for me for eleven years was appointed. She was able to step in and take over. Now they have a nice new building. And she's still there.

Joe- What sort of things did you do as Post Master?

Art- I just did everything there was to do. That's why when you're in such a small office, you have to do everything, where in a large office it's this person does one thing, each clerk has his own job. You have to know a little bit about everything. Because you do the same thing, but in a big office it's divided up in different sections but you do everything. Long hours too; I worked six days a week, Saturdays until three in the afternoon, every holiday until about one o'clock and then finally I got holidays down to eleven in the morning. And I didn't see Tulip Time for twenty-five years because I was working until 3:00 PM on Saturday. I started out at only seventy-five dollars a month. But that \$75 went a long ways I can tell ya that (laughs). And then the department finally told me I had to close because it didn't look right; people were coming from other areas they knew I would be open on Saturdays until 3:00 PM, while other offices have closed at noon. The Post Office Department in Grand Rapids said you'll just have to close down at twelve noon on Saturday. I wasn't getting any more money for

the extra hours, but it didn't look just right to have this one open and that other closed, so then they got shorter hours. Finally, we got it down to, let's see, Saturdays it's now down to just two hours in the morning on Saturdays.

Joe- So at the time you still lived along the channel?

Art- Yeah, then I lived, I built this house in '39, this house is fifty-two years old right now.

Joe- Do you recall any of the major catastrophes that struck the Macatawa cottages?

Art- Well we had five major fires, I saw them all, and the Ottawa Beach Hotel. Anyway we lost one hundred and fifty six cottages in the fires, and besides we had few fires where only like one or two cottages were destroyed.

Joe- What do you remember about the fires?

Art- Well I remember on the north end that's the first one that started; they had maids in those days, and they had a kerosene heater and she was heating water for a bath for the baby, and she walked away to let it boil and I think it boiled over and caused a flame to shoot up in the air and first thing you know the cottage was on fire. It burned the whole north end out, this is on the lakefront, we lived on the channel and those sparks and embers came right over and our house was on fire several places. But everybody had wooden shingles to

begin with, which was bad because they're dry and would burn. Fortunately there was a government boat in at the light house and it had a huge pump on it and they saved the Coast Guard Station and the light house station, the dwelling, they saved that with their pump, and then they had another pump there they pumped water just filling buckets and you would take a water bucket to wherever the roof would be on fire. Just a bucket of water would put it out, as long as you caught it right away. But finally they got out all of the small fires and this kept the houses from burning. I tell ya, that was a life saver to have that boat here that could pump water. Then we had another fire that started while cleaning up the cottages in the spring. When you closed cottages up for the winter why they covered everything with newspaper just to keep the dust off like your davenport, chairs, everything was always covered. Well in the spring when you took all these papers off and the first place you put them was the fireplace and you touch a match to them, burn them, and this particular fire why they were burning this paper but not watching what was coming out of the chimney, and it landed on the wooden shingles and of course first thing you know it was on fire and that took like thirty five cottages. And then the Grand Hotel was down at the end here, we had the Grand Hotel down at

the south end. And they were doing some work on the hotel and I don't know what happened exactly but it caught fire and that took like forty cottages that time. And the firetruck, in those days the fire department from Holland came, the Coast Guard would come any time too, but the Holland Fire Department they would answer all these calls way out here and all over, and anyway they came out and the truck was down on the lakefront, they were going to pump water out of Lake Michigan, and before they knew it the flames from the cottages on both sides of that particular street, Grand Avenue, were burning so they had to quick get the firetruck out, or lose their truck down in there. And they had to run right through the flames practically to get out. They got out alright but fire destroyed 35 cottages and the Grand Hotel. And then we had another fire, took I think it took twenty-five cottages. A judge from Grand Rapids he wanted to collect his insurance money and so he sent two boys, two fellas, down here to set the thing on fire, but the dummies they went to the caretaker and they asked him were the cottage was (laughs). And so he told them, he thought they were going to do some work there or something, you know painting or something, and gosh, at night the thing was on fire. It burnt twenty some cottages that time.



Joe- How did they discover it was arson?

Art- It wasn't very hard to find out (laughs) because they knew the owner and (laughs), so anyway they all ended up in jail or something and there was only twenty-five hundred dollars involved in the whole insurance deal so I don't know if they got their money in jail or what (laughs), but anyway the three of them all got picked up for that. Then the Ottawa Beach Hotel burnt too. That was a huge building.

Joe- Did you see that fire?

Art- I saw the whole thing burn. And I was pretty small when that happened, I think it was in '23 I believe, I've got all of the fire data down if you want any of it. This fire was across the channel; now, there is a corner house right at the mouth of the channel, and we would look around the corner to watch the fire. The heat was so hot that it blistered the paint on that side of the house that faced the hotel. As kids we'd peak around the corner and watch it for about a minute and a half until our face got like sunburnt (laughs), and back we'd go again, and saw the whole thing burn. They just put a new addition on it and the workmen took their tools away that night and it was during deer season and all the water was shut off on the Ottawa Beach side, and so there was no water and all of the sudden it was on fire and they don't really know how it

started, whether it was electrical or something. But there was no water to fight the fires so, because everything was drained for the winter, the Holland Fire Department went out there and, but there was such a huge blaze that they couldn't do anything to stop the fire. I know the embers in Graafschaap. The wind was from the north-west and those embers blew way over to those farms over there so, and they could see it in Grand Rapids, the sky was all lit up. The Pantlinds owned it, they also owned the Pantlind Hotel, and of course they all rushed out here but there wasn't a thing they could do. All that was standing was the chimney the next day.

Joe- I'll bet that was pretty sad.

Art- Yeah it was, it was pretty sad. They had a good crowd over there on the north side and so a lot of our people would like to go over there and I guess they played cards and had good times with them and mixed back and forth. But there was always something doing here, I remember the ferry boats were continuously going until, from morning until night, ferrying these people back and forth.

Joe- You mentioned Jenison Park, what do you remember about that?

Art- Well they had a derby racer [a rollercoaster] there, and they had all these little shops, I would watch the shooting galleries and all the games of chance and the

merry-go-round. They still have some of that stuff today at our fairs. They had a dance hall and across the street they had a, I think it was McCarthy's Saloon across there, that was more if you wanted a little excitement I guess, go across there - for the old fellas only. At the water's edge they had one of these swings that revolves around and it had four boats hanging on these long cables, and one day the cables broke on one of those boats and that boat flew right out into space and landed in the water. It had two passenger in it but they weren't hurt too bad (laughs). It was funny. That was really something. That was a busy place though. They catered to factory and mostly church picnics and things like that. They'd be busy all summer long.

Joe- Did you spend a lot of time there as a child?

Art- Yeah, just, it was just nice to go over there once in a while. But we had the lakefront and that and we spent most of our time swimming. We were in the water like three or four times a day, yeah, one more, you know, one more swim before you went to bed at night. That was a lot of fun. We had row boats in them days and we could play around, we had a lot of fun.

Joe- So the beach was pretty important to the social atmosphere at Macatawa?

Art- Yeah, that's what brought all these people out. They had a

bath house out here; they had one over the water but it was too hard to keep it, the terrific seas would pound on it so, it had to be moved, finally it did kind of collapse. Then they built a smaller bath house on land, and they also had a dock out there and way back in the olden days before they had the deep harbor here, then the Chicago and the different boats, the smaller type of boats would land at that dock and they carried all the provisions over and then they loaded them on smaller boats that took the merchandise into Holland. Then Holland started to dig a channel through to Lake Michigan, but it was later on that they received some money from the government and they took a survey. We had three channels here at one time. We had one against the south hill near the hotel, one north of the Ottawa Beach oval, and one where the present one is located. But they were all just shallow and, occasionally, the beach sand would close them off and then one might be open and the other wouldn't but they were only real shallow. So finally the government and the Corps of Engineers, took a survey to see how much earth had to be moved to put the channel through properly and they decided, I have all the figures on a chart that shows how much dirt had to be moved, well they decided that where it is right now, that would be the shortest and the least sand had to be taken out so

that's how they decided to build it there. But originally it wasn't very deep see, but of course they only spent like fifteen or twenty thousand on it; today they spend that much in a day doing repair work, they're out there now repairing, it's pretty near finished now. Eventually they maintained twenty-four feet of water which they have today, and that allowed the large boats to come in.

Joe- What was it like to live along the channel?

Art- Well it was interesting, just to see the boats go by and that's nice to see, every evening the passenger boats would go out and people would come and watch it go out and the other boat came in the morning it would be back at seven to eight o'clock in the morning. They had two boats, the City of Grand Rapids and the City of Holland.

Joe- Did you ever get a chance to ride on board one of the boats?

Art- Yeah, I rode just once to Chicago and it was awful rough and we were one hour late docking; they had to slow down because it was so rough.

Joe- Which boat did you ride?

Art- I rode on the City of Holland. It was a side paddle-wheeler.

Joe- What was it like on board?

Art- Several of the boats were side-wheelers except for the City of Grand Rapids was a stern propeller, like what we

have today. They were real nice ships. They had nice lobbies and decks that you could walk around and sit, plus they had you know the different cabins and a galley, if you wanted a state room you could have it, but that was like a dollar or so more. A lot of people who rode sat in the lounge and tried to sleep or you'd rent a state-room. At 7:00 AM you'd be at the Chicago piers, 96 miles across so it could easily make the trip during the night.

Joe- I understand there were quite a few cottages along the lakefront. What do you recall about those?

Art- Well the most of them burned, but they're all new cottages since the fires. The original ones were so close together that you could just get between them with a wheel-barrow that's how close they were to each other. But now they're all spaced differently; they had like thirty-five foot lots, and then you'd build a little cottage on that and you've only got a walking space between the two, and that's the reason that if one burned the next one would burn and they'd go right down the line like that if the wind was blowing. Now there's more space, but the cottages are so different now - they're just like homes now. In the olden days they had hand pumps and all that, but Macatawa was all self-contained. It had its own power plant, that's why it was such a popular resort in another way, because we

had our own electric power and we had our own water system and they had their own sewer system, but the sewer discharged into the lake in the olden days, but at least it went through pipes to the lake; they had a few septic tanks in some places, but most of it went out through the sewer. Then we had our own fire system too, and everything, now this is all way before the year 1900, so we were way advanced, and finally they sold the power plant to Consumers Power. But see then they only had electricity three months out of the year here. From June 1st to Labor Day. Then the season was all over with, so it was just about a ninety day deal that they furnished electricity, and you didn't have a utility commission to tell you when to cut off service. You'd just pull the switch when you wanted to stop the service (laughs). We had street lights and we had telephones, but only a few had telephones. It's a surprise that they could have all that service, but they did have it. But today the cottages are like homes, they've got to have everything, washers, dryers, everything, just beautiful inside, most of them.

Joe- Back then were the cottages set up as a comfortable residence, or as a very casual . . .

Art- Oh yeah, just casual. The furniture was just bare like you know, but they had more wicker and wooden rockers and swings in them days.

Joe- Do you remember the boardwalk?

Art- Oh yeah, very well. Well, it started right where Point West is now and it went to the mouth of the channel there, and lets see, we had a barber shop there and we had a restaurant there and we had a bowling alley and a pool room, and we had a ice cream - where they manufactured ice cream, and they had a plumbing shop there, and then they had a theater over the water and I can remember that when we were in there if the lake water was high and a little rough, you could here that water splashing against the floor (laughs). And then we had the Angel's Flight, that was a two track that went up to the pavilion at the top of the hill, and one car came up and the other came down, and they had a beautiful dance floor up there and so every evening they would have dances and little light lunches and things like that, but during the daytime it was playgrounds for children. It had all the slides and swings and toys for the children so they could play up there, and it cost you a nickel to go up there, a nickel up and down. There was no liquor sold, see Mr. Miller didn't allow any liquor at all, he had control of all that. So everything was orange pop and root beer. That was way before "Seven Up" (laughs). But "Coca-Cola" I think was sold, but it was more like "Orange Crush" and "Green River" and drinks like that (laughs). And it



was a beautiful place at night, because it was on top of the dune there you see, and we could see for miles down the lake or out into Lake Michigan it was really nice. Then, in later years, some kids got up there and they cut the cable one time and of course that top car came down and it smashed against the concrete base down below. Well they repaired it but they couldn't do all that nice wood work you know it was all carved and everything like that they just put the seats back in and repaired it. The business fell off and they stopped service. The building sat on top of wooden posts on top of the hill, and the basement was open somewhat, there was always an opening somewhere, and the kids got in there, and they built a fire in the basement and it wasn't long and the fire got away from them and it burnt the floor, it was a dance floor all hardwood you know. The whole building burned down so that was the end of Angel's Flight. It was really a nice place to go sight seeing.

Joe- Was there a boardwalk down along the beach?

Art- Well, let's see, after you passed the theater, then the balance of it was boat houses. Many of the cottagers had boats here at that time, and most of the boats were always kept under cover, different than today everything is out in the open today, of course a lot of sail boats you can't cover them anyway, but cruisers

and launches were put in boat houses. Boat houses were used to keep the boats clean and to keep the birds and the spiders and everything else off and so they kept the boats under cover. Caseys boat livery was near the channel; he operated that for a number of years and he would furnish you a pole and your minnows and he would ferry you out to just beyond the lighthouse and this is in the channel where the arrowhead is. He would make a trip every fifteen or twenty minutes, of course he had quite a business and that went on for about twenty years, and then the outboard boats became popular and it used to be we had it was just a couple outboards - Alto and Evinrude were the early motors. Fisherman bought these motors and started buying small boats to go fishing. Well then his business fell off, but he would have some tremendous business going there every summer and throughout Labor Day, because people would love to fish and go out on the breakwater. The only way you could get to the pier was a little catwalk, but every now and then parts of that would wash out or something so you couldn't get there, you had to go in a boat. John Baker, was on the Ottawa Beach side, and he ferried all his passengers to the Ottawa pier, and Casey stayed on this side, they didn't go on each other's side, they each took their own side, and they'd ferry, oh, sometimes they'd ferry a couple hundred out

there and when the fish were really biting and if it happened to be like Memorial Day or Fourth of July or something like that they would really carry a lot of passengers out there. They made a good living. On Lake Michigan beach way back they had a boardwalk toward the north end near the channel. The south boardwalk right straight behind Point West had to be made of wood pilings. But that was because the high seas took out all the sand. And when they did have it made of cement the water would wash away the walk. Being made of wood and on pilings, the water could rush in and out and the walk would last a lot longer that way. But some years there was probably so much sand the walk it would be buried and the next time the walk would be up in the air five feet, because all that sand would be gone, and so that was the reason they had a wood walk on the beach. Now for the last fifteen years they've had concrete and they haven't had any trouble. They've managed to hold it with rock and brush, but you can't see any trace of the rocks; they're all buried beneath the beach sand.

Joe- Did the storms ever do any damage to the lakefront cottages?

Art- It did wash in a few cottages. Over a period of years, but we used to have a cement promenade walk along the front, and they also had concrete slabs, they were like

sheet piling, they stood on end and then the walk was above that. And one time the water did get through those slabs and the sidewalk did collapse and a man did get killed there. That was before the '20s. If you cover something with concrete why you shouldn't really do that, unless you've got inspection places where you can see what's going on below the walk. And they didn't know that the sand had washed out and of course he just happened to be standing on that slab and it gave way and pinched him and killed him.

Joe- Do you recall any big events, such as annual balls, celebrations, Fourth of July?

Art- Oh we always had Fourth of July and Venetian nights. On these nights they had a string of Japanese lanterns that started at the Jesiek boat yard and went all the way around the bay to the hotel and to the corner restaurant. All of these Japanese lanterns had to be lit. That wasn't so easy to light all of them because they were spaced about oh I'd say about every five or six feet apart, and believe me that was a chore to light all of those candles. And then on the Fourth of July they had the fireworks, and then in later years the City of Holland and the Chamber of Commerce helped pay the cost so they could have a community type of firework display. And they had that for several years, and then one night a big flash and the whole scow

caught fire at once, and I can still see a couple of the guys jumping overboard off the scow, it was right out here in the bay. Well that was the end of that fireworks and at that time they were quite costly, you know if they spent a couple, a thousand dollars, that was a lot of money to spend for that and then to have it go up like that so, they kind of slowed down on fireworks. Today and for each year since 1985 Mr. Jay Van Andel pays for the beautiful displays. And another thing they had here one time way back was, they had bicycles riding on the water, but they had little barges anchored just a little bit below the water level and you couldn't see the barges from the shore. But they could still ride and do tricks (laughs) well it looked like they were riding on water. Yeah they always had a new stunt. Macatawa had the first water skiing National water ski meet. That was way back in the early forties. I had a little store down here and I sold beach supplies. I had little water skis made they were only about six or seven inches long and I just had little printing like National Water Ski, gave the year, etc. Skiing really got started down here with Charlie Sligh and of course it spread all over the country. But that was something to see because water skiing was a new sport.

Joe- What other things did people do for recreation?

Art- Oh I think boating was, and they used to row in old days too, way back, yeah, they used to have a big boat livery right down here and one near the channel, and Jesieks boat yard was here, and they also had boats, and Baker had boats. Rowing a boat or a canoe was fun for city folks. There were no outboards to speak of, so they would just row, they wouldn't think anything of rowing maybe from here to Waukazoo or maybe here to Holland and back. I hear tell they had row boat races. Our boat livery over here used to have trouble, they would rent a boat and row far up the lake, get tired and walk home, then they'd leave the boat somewhere. Then, if the owner had a power boat he had to go along the shoreline and find his boats and see what happened. Only a few renters did things like that. The old-timers they always brought them back to the boat livery. But today they charge a fee se, and maybe they take your drivers license and when you come back they'll hand it back to you, but in them days they didn't do that. Then we also had a, Casey also operated a ferry-boat, a rowing ferry boat across the channel there, and he would, for ten cents, ferry you across, and then you wouldn't have to wait for the big ferry. The big ferry didn't run on schedule but it just ran around and around like that, but it was a lot quicker if you could call over there and get "Casey" to

take you across.

Joe- So did it seem that there was a lot of interaction between the people on the Macatawa side and the people on the Ottawa side?

Art- Yeah, they mixed quite a bit. They played cards and danced after dinner; and also a "little money changed hands" in the casino room. But see those people could come out of Chicago either on the boat or on the train and then bring them right to the hotel, so it worked out easy for them to get to these resorts and meet their friends.

Joe- Where would you say most of the people came from?

Art- Well at Mac they came from Indiana, Indianapolis, and St. Louis, Missouri, a lot of them came from Missouri and lower Illinois. What really got things rolling at Macatawa was it started out more or less a religious resort. I have a tape somewhere of a lady that gave me the tape of way back and she said that the Christian Church, I think it was called, a Protestant church, they also had a magazine just like your Reformed Church has a magazine, anyway, the editor came up, after he found out about this new resort in Michigan, easy to get to by train and so he came up and paid a visit up here and stayed at the first hotel, which was built in 1882, the old hotel was built, and that was in 1882, and so he spent a little time at the hotel, and when he

got back he wrote a nice article on finding a real nice place that was a religious area to come and spend a little time up there, and we had a huge auditorium on top of the hill, which it says it held three-thousand people. I went to Sunday school up there Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1924. Each Sunday two boys were asked to ring the church bell - we rang it fast and loud like a fire bell. Anyway he wrote this nice article in this Christian magazine, and that started to advertise the place too, but a lot of the original people came from Michiwaka, Indiana, and they were church people. They also bought stock in the Park Co.. And of course later on when the new hotel was built, it was finished in 1896, why then the hotel started catering to people and they came from all over. But basically most of them came from Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas. It was easy to get here and then towards the last we had people from all over, we still have people coming from like Honolulu and California - and even France.

Joe- Were the resorters a pretty exclusive group?

Art- Yeah, they had to be, they had to be a little bit, I mean they had to have a little money in order to own a cottage and this is going way back of course, you had to travel by train and maybe you owned an automobile, in those days it took like six hours to get here from



Chicago. But they all managed to get up here and the hotel was always filled during the summertime, until the depression came along, and then it slowed down about forty percent.

Joe- What effects do you recall the depression having on the whole area?

Art- The cottagers weren't spending the money on their cottages, like other years. When the depression set in they weren't doing anymore than they had to. The hotel was the same way, they operated with as little help as they could, but they got through it all right.

Joe- Were there less people in the area during the depression?

Art- Yes, there were just less people that came. The depression arrived, we were already starting to slow down because the automobile was taking our resorters to other areas. Several of the cottages were closed for a few years or were up for sale. You could buy a cottage, oh a real nice one, for a couple thousand dollars, today you're talking maybe two-hundred thousand for that same cottage.

Joe- I've heard a lot of great stories about the "Roaring Twenties." What do you recall about the roaring twenties at Macatawa Park?

Art- Well, I think having the dance hall and all that activity at hotel. Saugatuck had the nightlife - then people started to go to Saugatuck for a different life-style.

They had cars or they could take the Interurban too if they wanted too. Saugatuck was always a lively place you know, they had their hotels and they had dancing and so forth and they had the big pavilion there, and that was a big attraction, that I would say was the main event. On special occasions they had top bands - like Duke Ellenton or Art Kassel. Of course we had the Yacht Club over here too, but you know you had to be a member, and they had a dance floor and used local bands; they had a nice crowd over there, but these were all yachting people. Today they've got a mixture, it's not all yachting people; they're busy over there all the time, but it's I dare say that several of them don't have boats. But they belong because they like all the activities.

Joe- What were your feelings when Macatawa Hotel was torn down?

Art- Oh it was kind of sad to see it go, and then to see the grounds with nothing on it, and wondering when we were going to get a new building. That's when the cottagers took over the grounds and we put in grass and we put in all these plantings, and that lasted about five years. Well there wasn't much doing here during that time period, all that was left was the Post Office. That had to be moved down here, we had a huge parking garage right here on this area it held 80 cars, so then the owner said, just move in the corner of the building and

you can take as much space as you want for the post office. A room was built with ample space. The post office stayed in there about 25 years, then they finally took the rest of the building down and just left the little post office building standing there. But we used to have a pumping and electrical station right across the street. And they pumped their own drinking water; they had a huge tank on top of the hill here, and they used to pump the water up there and they had an automatic cutoff on the pump, but it all had to be run by electricity and they had to have wires going from the pump house to that tank, and they always had trouble when the tree branches would break these wires and then the pump would shut off, so finally they decided let's turn the pump on and let it pump continuously. That was alright in the daytime because there was a hundred and fifty cottages were using the water, but at night when they were sleeping nobody was using the water so then the tank overflowed and washed the sand away from the base and the tank fell right in the hole that it dug from overflowing and they out of water instantly (laughs). Now some of the people had already had their own wells so they were using hoses and running to their neighbors, helping them out. But the well-diggers and drillers, they sure had a field-day there; boy they could just knock as many wells in

as fast as they could. The cottagers had to have water, you know, or go back to the city. Today, they can get water from the City of Holland, the main goes right by here so many of the cottages and the motel and all that, they all buy the water from the City of Holland. But I don't, because we've got wonderful drinking water. The cottagers were all hooked up to the sewer system several years ago.

Joe- When you are down here today and you look around and you think about living here in the 1920s and before that, what are the things that you think about?

Art- Well I think about the Interurban coming in here and making a circle. Originally it went down to where the hotel is, and they also went out on a dock over the lake, so that when the Chicago boat came, all they had to do was just slide up to that pier and they could unload. But that stuck out there way out in the lake like seven hundred feet or more, and that was too hard to keep that in the wintertime the ice is hard on it, so then they moved it over to where the Yacht Club is, and that is ground right there, so that's where it stayed, then they could make a dock right there. Anyway, I miss that, and you know it was interesting to see it come in and go out, and of course the newspapers came in and some freight came in on it. It was just interesting to see it. That's one of the things that I miss. And I

miss the large passenger boats too. We have freighters coming in now just the other night one came in and went out, but it's not like seeing a passenger boat all lit up and all their lights on the deck and all that, and on the Macatawa Hotel they had the roof gables with lights going up and down, they were beautiful, and whenever the boat would be down the lake the hotel would always salute the boat by flashing them gable lights on and off and then the boat of course would return the salute and that was interesting to see and hear.

Joe- Do you remember the North and South American?

Art- Yeah, but see they only wintered here, well in the spring they usually took one trip out it was like a trial trip and then they would take the Holland people out for just a few dollars, maybe one or two dollars a passenger, and they would take them out into Lake Michigan as far as Port Sheldon and around a big circle, and then they'd be back, maybe like a two hour ride, but once they left Holland they would go to Chicago and then they'd operate from there to Detroit and, but they had a good business going for years and then finally it fell off and I think the people just prefer to drive their auto and explore inland. If you wanted to go to Mackinac Island you quick hopped in your auto and drove up there - where the boat would

take you up there too, but see it would be a whole day and a half ride maybe to go by boat. You stayed right on the boat and you see only the shore line and port cities. But they had a job filling up the boat with passengers, I remember, the last thing I remember on the radio they were advertising from WLS about the boat trips and then they'd have different bands and entertainment. It wasn't all ballroom dancing; they also had square dances. But finally the business fell off; but the trip was cheap enough, the rate was like a hundred and forty-nine dollars for a week, including a stateroom and meals. So it wasn't the price, but it was just, business had something to do with it too. Then a few years later another ship tried; it was a foreign boat about half the size, but they couldn't make a go of it either. See, if you go up north there's plenty to see, but if you come into Holland, there really isn't much to see, you land at coal docks and you have to walk to town to see the sights. Now if you go into Saugatuck like the big boats used to go in there, well the minute you dock there everything was right there. Towards the last the large boats couldn't get to the village - the river was too shallow and it had lots of little stumps and trees and junk in it, but I had some pictures that showed that at one time there was three boats, huge passenger boats at the dock at

the same time. Saugatuck had a great tourist business going there. But like I say, the minute you go further north then you run into all these resort cities that are practically right on Lake Michigan, and then there was something to see and do, but then they opened the St. Lawrence seaway and one of the "American" boats had a trip to Montreal, but that didn't seem to pay either, and finally they decided to quit. So then the boats stayed put here for a number of years. And later the boats were sold.