



History Museum of Bay Mills & Brimley, Michigan

Museum & Gift Shop Hours

(provided volunteers are available)

May 15 - June 20

Saturday & Sunday only 10 am - 4 pm

June 20 - Labor Day

Wednesday - Sunday 10 am - 4 pm

Labor Day - October 15

Saturday & Sunday only

10 am - 4 pm

Visit us on our Web Site

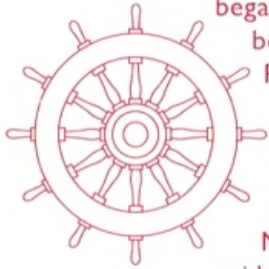
www.baymillsbrimleyhistory.org

No admission charge

Donations gratefully accepted

A brief history of The Bay Mills-Brimley Area

Michigan became a state in 1837. Three years later Willie A. Burt, a loyal and able Deputy U.S. Surveyor, began his survey of township boundaries for the Upper Peninsula. There was little inducement to settlers until townships were subdivided into mile squares in 1849. Outside of Sault Ste. Marie, there was little evidence of white occupancy.



The Iroquois Point Lighthouse was built in 1870. Wood burning steam boats which required fuel wood furnished employment for a few settlers. The first settlers in the Brimley area were the Ripley's, but three Scribner brothers, reputedly lured by riches in pine lumber, are credited with being the first settlers with designs on a townsite. James came west in search of timber shortly after the Civil War.

Brother Willoughby Scribner (1847-1913), generally known as the founder of Brimley, arrived about 1872 and settled with his brothers on adjoining homesteads. A small man with an extremely short temper, he ran a general store. Brother Josiah (1850-1940), a mason, came to Brimley in 1874. Despite poor vision, he was also a cooper who could make wet or dry barrels. He helped construct and maintain the factory and sawmill at Bay Mills. He also built and plastered many homes and built many chimneys in Brimley. It was he who, through goading and persistence, convinced the community that a school system was needed.

With the coming of the railroad in 1887, the town originally known as "Bay Mills," "Bay Mills Crossing," and "Superior," needed a name change to avoid confusion. Exactly who "Brimley" was remains in

dispute, but his became the official name for the town in 1896.

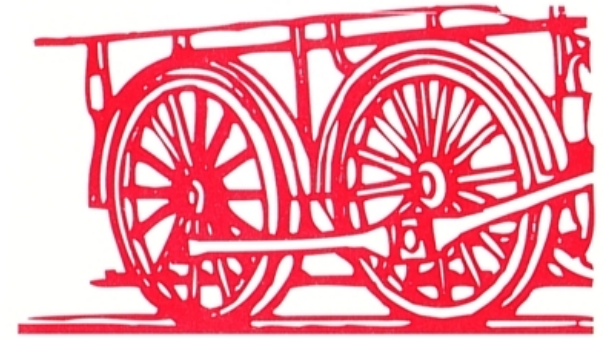
The Bay Mills extension of the Duluth, South Shore, & Atlantic Railroad from Brimley to Bay Mills started in January, 1891. The bridge, built entirely of pine timber, was placed on pilings at 10-12 foot intervals, and the piling, about 6 to a bent, was tied together with timbers or sway braces. Ties and rails were laid and a 12-inch plank in the center worn concave by the countless tread

WHEELS OF HISTORY MUSEUM EXHIBITS INCLUDE:

- * History of the Railroad in the Brimley Area
- * Historic Bay Mills Townsite
- * Early Telephone/Communication Network
- * Logging & Milling of Lumber
- * Lake Superior Fishing & Fishing Boats
- * Daily Life in Early Brimley

of caulked boots served as a walkway. At a point of deepest water, a manually operated swingbridge allowed small boats access to the bay. The trestle was 6-10 feet above the water.

Bay Mills was named for the Hall & Munson Company plants. For many years the area was inhabited by Indians and Bay Mills was a trading post. A post office was established in 1879. The first permanent settlement began in 1882 when a sawmill was built. By 1893, three churches, two saw-mills, a sash & blind factory, planing mill, box factory, Niagara Paper Co, and pulp mill were doing a flourishing business. Mail was



twice daily! A druggist, machinist, photographer, stage line and ferry operator, butcher, carpenter, millwright, lumber inspector, barber, innkeeper, blacksmith, and saw filer were among the 1,900 residents.

At its peak, the Hall & Munson Co. employed about 800 men. The sawmill turned out 160,000 feet of lumber a day, the sash and door company made about 800 doors, 1500 pairs of window sash, 500 blinds, and 300 window frames. The company carried about 30 million feet of lumber on its docks.

In 1904, the factory burned down; a few years later the sawmill ran out of timber and quit business. As a result, by 1909 the population had diminished to less than 75 people and the post office closed. Thereafter, mail was delivered R.F.D from Brimley. Only one general store continued in business. By 1940, Bay Mills was deserted, but slowly people began moving back into the area. In 1995, the Bay Mills Indian Community completed a Casino/Resort complex on the west shore of the bay.

Several major fires, including one in 1947, took their toll on Brimley. Train service to Brimley was discontinued in 1961. By then, the timothy hay crop, high in protein, especially sought after in Florida and Kentucky for racehorses, was being transported by truck rather than rail. Blueberries, another profitable crop grown on the burned off dry sand plains around Raco and Rexford, were also being transported by rail.

(Condensed from area history by Malcolm Mclver)

Trains rolled through Brimley from 1887 until 1961. The Duluth, South Shore, & Atlantic Railroad provided service to the area.

The wooden passenger coach that houses the Wheels of History Museum was built for the Algoma Central Railroad. Such coaches were last built in 1905.

The caboose, originally #52 of the Detroit and Port Huron (now Grand Trunk) Railroad, is a gift shop and tourist information center.

The Bay Mills-Brimley Historical Research Society was founded in 1981 as a non-profit organization for the purpose of establishing a local history museum. In the meantime, the U.S. Forest Service asked the Society to help restore the Pt. Iroquois Lighthouse. Through the co-operative volunteer efforts of the Historical Society, the Lighthouse was restored and a small museum was established. With that project complete, the Society turned its attention to its original purpose and focus - preserving local history. It is responsible for the restoration of the railroad cars and the establishment of the Wheels of History Museum in Brimley which opened July 1, 1995. A Michigan Equity Grant, a mini-grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and generous donations of time, money, and materials from local individuals and businesses make the project possible.

The Bay Mills - Brimley Historical Research Society meets monthly, April-October, in the Superior Township building in Brimley. Annual memberships are only \$10. They may be obtained by writing the Society, PO Box 273, Brimley, MI 49715.



michigan council for
arts and cultural affairs

Commodity Code - 80090217



Wheels of History Museum • located in Superior Township park, corner of Depot Street & M-221 in Brimley, Michigan • Museum Phone: (906) 248-3665