

# WELCOME!

Fishtown as we know it today developed after the turn of the twentieth century. A few fishermen put out from the mouth of the river below the dam and its abandoned sawmill to their fishing grounds in Lake Michigan in sailboats. And when the nets had yielded their haul and the boats had returned to the fish shanties in the river, the early summer resorters bought the fresh whitefish and lake trout—at five cents a pound. The allure of Fishtown still draws people to the historic site today.



For more than a century, people have been drawn to Leland's working waterfront, lured by the river, fishermen, tugs, shanties, and fresh fish. The staff and community volunteers of Fishtown Preservation are dedicated to saving this historic site.

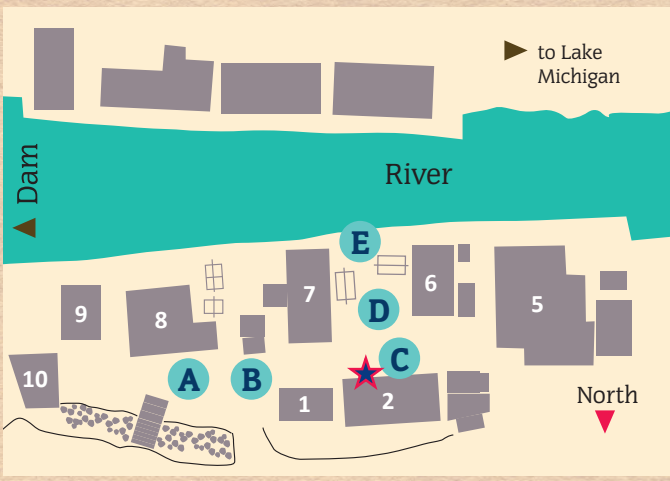
## WALKING TOURS OF FISHTOWN

# FISHTOWN BASICS

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR



### What's this place all about?



★ Fishtown Info Center

This is a five-stop, self-guided tour taking you on a short walk through Fishtown. You may start your tour at any of the locations indicated by letter on the map above.

SAVING THE PLACE,  
THE STORIES, AND THE  
LELAND FISHING TRADITION

### HELP US NET FUNDS FOR FUTURE PRESERVATION



PO Box 721  
Leland, MI 49654  
FishtownMI.org

There's lots more to be done to ensure that this crucial link to Great Lakes maritime tradition and timeless family memories remains a publicly accessible living history site.

To learn more, pledge funds and get involved, visit [FishtownMI.org](http://FishtownMI.org) or call 231.256.8878



Take a casual stroll through Fishtown and discover its stories and history.





# FISHTOWN BASICS

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR



Terry and Roy Buckler with smoked chubs



## B SMOKING FISH

*Tour stop: At the Welcome sign*

With the decline of whitefish and trout in the 1940s, Leland fishermen turned to smoking their catch of lake chub. The smoking process uses a maple wood fire and lasts 3 to 4 hours. This smokehouse was originally built in the 1960s by Steffens & Stallman. Carlsons, who were the first to smoke chubs in Leland, use this for their current smoking operations.



## C ICE AND ICE HOUSES

*Tour stop: Front of the Fishtown Info Center*

The building housing the Fishtown Info Center was built in 1926 as an ice house to store ice harvested in late winter from Lake Leelanau. Ice harvesting was a communal event involving fishermen, merchants, and farmers. They cut ice in large blocks and stored it in the ice houses in layers separated by insulating sawdust. It was used by fishermen as well as businesses like the Bluebird Restaurant. During the fishing season, fishermen shaved ice daily for packing fish. The introduction of electric freezers in the 1950s ended the era of the ice houses.

[FishtownMI.org](http://FishtownMI.org)

## D NET REELS

*Tour stop: Between the Fishtown Info Center and the river*

Nets, made of cotton until about 1950, had to be dried on net reels when pulled from the lake. Repair work included repairing holes and adding lead weights and floats. This work was done when the nets were on the reels. Cotton nets also had to be boiled in big pots with a waterproofing treatment. Reels are still used for repairing gill nets in Fishtown.



## E FISH TUGS

*Tour stop: Along the river*

The *Janice Sue* was built in 1958 for Louis Steffens and is the oldest active tug in Leland. The *Joy*, a trap net boat, was designed and built in 1981 by Ross Lang. The tugs were restored by Fishtown Preservation in 2008–09, ensuring the continuation of commercial fishing in Leland. Boats have been benchmarks in the fishery's development: from wood to steel, from sail to diesel, from as many as eight in the peak fishing period in the 1930s to these two today.

