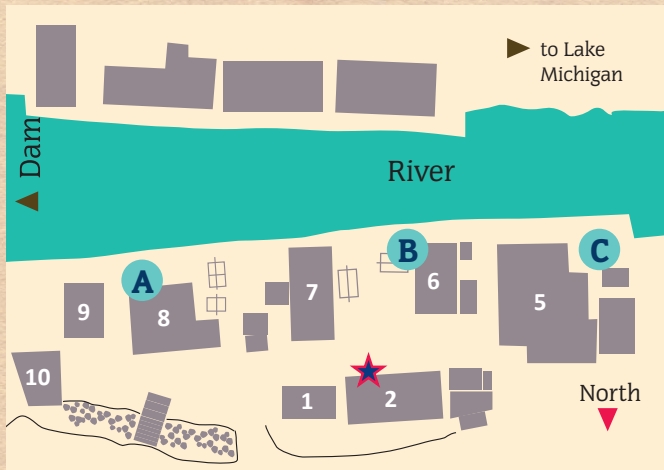


WELCOME!

The Leland River flows through the heart of Fishtown. Barely 4,000 feet in length, it connects Lake Leelanau with Lake Michigan. River otters play in its waters, in the autumn, salmon rest on the sandy bottom, thwarted from swimming upstream to spawn by the waterfall over the dam.

Pioneering settlers knew the river by the name "Carp River." Generations of fishermen called it "the fish creek." The river is the reason early bands of Ottawa established a town at its mouth. Its water power led to Leland's founding by French Canadian millwright Antoine Manseau, in 1853. The river sheltered fish boats, pleasure craft, and the Manitou mail boat and ferry, decades before Leland became a harbor of refuge.



★ Fishtown Info Center

This is a three-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



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

HARBORS AND DAMS

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR



1903: The Leland River flowed unimpeded into Lake Michigan

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 or call 231.256.8878



Managing the waters of the Leland River in and out of Fishtown.

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

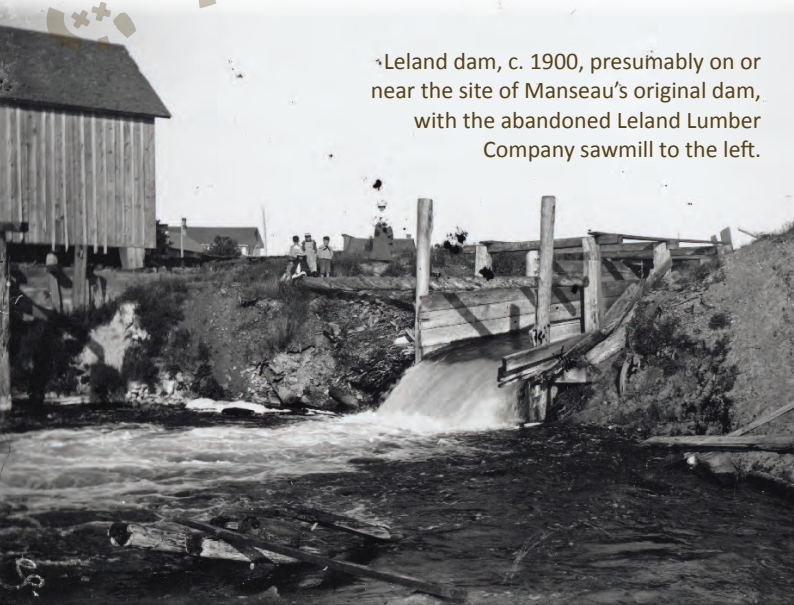


FishtownMI.org



HARBORS AND DAMS

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR



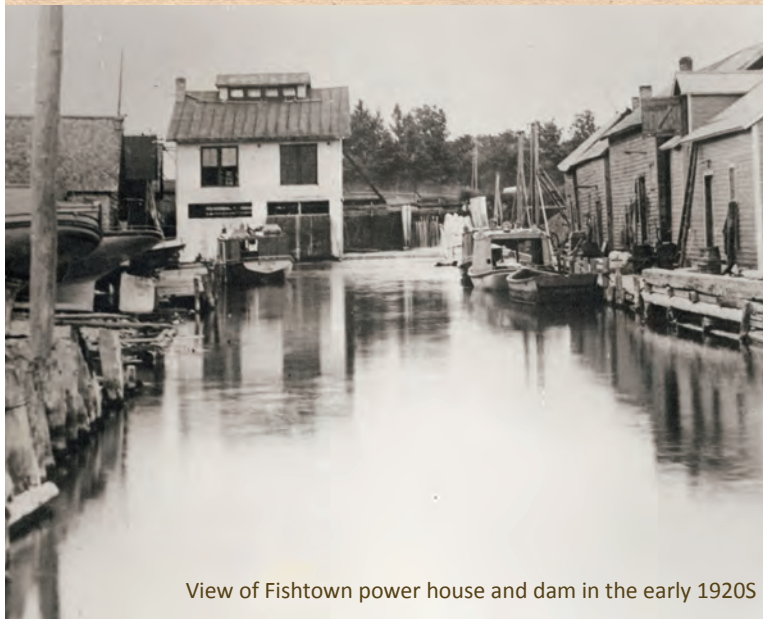
Leland dam, c. 1900, presumably on or near the site of Manseau's original dam, with the abandoned Leland Lumber Company sawmill to the left.



B A NEW DAM AND A POWERHOUSE

Tour stop: On the dock, at The Crib

In 1909, the Leland Light and Power Company built a new concrete dam and power house, the first concrete structures in Fishtown. They held both properties until 1927, when a succession of other privately held companies took possession. A fire damaged the building in the early 1940s. It was demolished in the 1950s. The Cove and Falling Waters Lodge were built in 1966 and 1967.



View of Fishtown power house and dam in the early 1920s

A 1867 DAM

Tour stop: On the dock, at the Dam Candy Store

The dam has anchored Fishtown's eastern boundary from Leland's founding to the present. It facilitated the creation of a boat basin where boats could turn as well as regulated lake levels upstream. Leland's first dam, attributed to founder Antoine Manseau, washed out in 1867.

A new, higher dam built in 1867 raised the water level of Carp Lake by twelve feet. Until 1908, it featured an earthen bank and sluice through which lumber could be floated to the lower river and Lake Michigan. Three smaller lakes upstream then became one large lake, Lake Leelanau, navigable from Leland to Cedar. It provided access to vast interior tracks of hardwood for the lumbering industry.

C HARBOR

Tour stop: On the dock, at Carlson's fishery

Until the late 1930s, Leland-based fishermen lacked a natural harbor. The river mouth was barely protected by log piers built by the fishermen themselves. The entry between the piers was a scant twenty feet, with water depths of barely three feet. These structures were often overwhelmed by heavy weather on the lake. Government-funded breakwaters were built in 1937, starting as timber-pile structures and ending as stone-reinforced walls.

The Leland Harbor of Refuge was constructed between 1966–1969. River access for both fish tugs and the ferry/mailboat to the islands improved, and Fishtown became a destination for cruising pleasure boats. The addition of a yacht harbor and attendant facilities, bolstered tourism.



Harbor configuration 1967–2009