

NATIONAL ACCLAIM

— Historical Notes and Critique for “Boating on the Maumee” - 1907

At the dawn of the 20th century, Toledo was a very promising place. It was promising in industry and commerce but also promising in the tremendous recreational boat scene that was rapidly blossoming up and down the river. Many were taking to the water and capitalizing on our great natural resource, the huge river and Great Lake.

The population was 132,000 in 1900¹ and famed mayor Sam “Golden Rule” Jones held the city’s highest office. Building permits had just become necessary law. Clubs such as MRYC and TYC were already established. Joseph Hepburn had been building boats in the city for a dozen years, and oilman Noah Bowlus was doing his best to promote the fashionable sport of boating by manipulating the newspapers and periodicals so popular at the time. In 1905, the Toledo Power Boat Club had been founded and by 1907, a national magazine, *Motor Boat*, had chosen the Maumee River for a feature, frontline story – as Toledo was clearly leading the interior regions in buzzworthy nautical practice. “Boating on the Maumee River” by H. D. Spohn appeared in the latter half of August 1907 as the front piece for *Motor Boat*. Such a powerful, featured article proved we were in the right place at the right time.



AN 1889 ADVERTISEMENT FOR
HEPBURN BOAT & OAR CO.
THEY LATER MOVED OPERA-
TION TO SUMMIT AND PONTIAC
STREET.

The Motorboat Publishing Company was a New York based print firm that specialized in books related to early motorboats. They published various guides and researched articles for both the novice and experienced boat owner and enthusiast. The publications often included detailed plans for building or modifying various boat types. The company’s work would also feature black and white illustrations and photographs. The books were popular both new and secondhand. In an age before television, and even before radio, print material was the popular medium by which everyone shared ideas and the people received the news. American literacy rates were near 90%² and print kept the growing population abreast of trends in fashion, technology, and product advertising at an insatiable level.

Motor Boat released its debut issue in April 1904. It would be a twice monthly publication on the 10th and 25th of each month. The subject of this article, Volume 4 Issue 16, was the second release for August 1907. Evidence can be found of publication continuing until at least December of 1922.

What follows is a reprint facsimile of the original story “Boating on the Maumee” in its entirety. It is the hope of this article that the reader will find delight in learning not only how celebrated our waterfront was on a national level, but also how our recreational area was viewed and described nearly 120 years ago.

MOTORBOAT

Twice a Month — Tenth and Twenty-Fifth

1133 BROADWAY — NEW YORK CITY — AT 26 STREET.

AUGUST 25th 1907

VOL. IV, No. 16



Rapids of the Lower Maumee

Boating on the Maumee River

By H. D. SPOHN

UP at early morn, then a hurried breakfast, not with pleasant anticipations of a Summer outing for incentive, but with stern necessity calling, calling to a dull office in a many-storied, hot, down-town building, where a giant, called "Business," ever keeps watch with sleepless eyes, goading his luckless serfs to greater endeavors that the swelling tide of Demand and Competition may be stemmed and conquered—such is the lot of, alas! too many a man to-day. With burning eyes, an aching head, and weary brain, he toils on, ever striving to keep pace with the onward sweep. The morning passes in a mad rush; the noon luncheon is hastily gulped,

while the fagged mind works on and on all afternoon. And, too often, the night is patterned after the morning, and the man, unless some recreation be found for him attractive enough to cause him to defy the sleepless giant, may, in the end, occupy a padded cell in a mad-house, or prematurely take up his sojourn in a satin-lined box.

To this kind of man, unable or undesirous of taking the regulation vacation of a week or a month, if he resides near the water, the motorboat has come as a meteor of light, a gift from the gods, carrying with it health and happiness, without the necessity of materially decreasing the time allotted to the aforesaid giant. Espe-

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cially is this true if the Maumee Valley be his home—the Maumee Valley, noted in song and story for its beauty and ringing with stirring tales of the hardihood of that sturdy band of pioneers who pushed into the primeval forest and made homes there.

More especially is this true if Toledo, the Princess of the Lake, be his home; for dozens and dozens of pleasant cruising grounds are within easy reach of the motorboat, whether large or small, from this locality. Every Sunday finds the waters of the river and bay dotted with motorboats whose occupants are on pleasure bent. For the larger boats, Monroe Pier is perhaps the favorite run. This resort is three miles from Monroe, Michigan,

one of the sights of the city until it was burned last February. The club has just let the contract for a new concrete club-house, which is to be erected in the same location at a cost of \$35,000. The park is located at the mouth of the Maumee River, nearly opposite to Presque Isle, and was the site of the Ohio Centennial and Northwest Territory Exposition, held in 1903. It comprises 250 acres of fine land, all very picturesque. There is a long line of bay and river frontage, and the harbor is one of the finest and most complete on fresh water. The chief points of interest here are the graves of the great Indian leader Wauesaon, and of several hundred other chieftains, all laid to rest on the high grounds of Bay View Park.



Site of Fort Meigs

and twenty miles north and east of Toledo. It boasts a bathing beach and a hotel somewhat famed for its cuisine; and here is also located the club-house of the Monroe Yacht Club. This is historic ground, and for that reason is popular with the lover of romance; for here, in the long ago, dwelt the Pottawatomies, a friendly Indian tribe whose wigwams dotted the shores of the Raisin River. Along the waterways now frequented by the motorboat, in the old days floated the canoes of these Indians as they made their way to the homes of the Ottawas on the banks of the Maumee.

Each Saturday afternoon and Sunday finds Bay View Park, at Toledo, gay with boating parties making ready to start on some cruise. Here once stood the handsome club-house of the Toledo Yacht Club, which was

At Riverside Park the Toledo Power Boat Club holds its meetings in the pavilion, and many are the pleasant little races indulged in by its members. Another Toledo organization is the Maumee River Yacht Club, which has a considerable following, and the members of which are ardently devoted to racing. Mere amusement is the object of the races, and any kind of a craft is admitted to the contests. Boats of every description enter the lists. This club expects to build a club-house during the present season in a charming little ravine at the beautiful Walbridge Park, which is one of the attractions of the city, and where is located the Zoo.

Put-in-Bay, forty-eight miles distant, is frequently visited by the larger craft. This is a famed pleasure resort and has all the usual amusements to be found in

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such places. Point Place, with its pretty cottages, its bathing beach and its famed Billie Gertz, also has attractions for many a yachting party, for "Billie Gertz" and "Point Place" are synonymous terms. It is not that Billie is an unusually attractive man; but the truth is that nowhere else can such frogs' legs, chicken and "shore" dinners be had. The spirit yearns, the mouth waters—but enough.

Down the bay many of the small motorboats dance over the waters, skimming along like so many fluttering birds toward the lake. The numerous small islands in the vicinity form the attraction, as one can sail until wearied, then land and explore an island, and again take to the

William Henry Harrison, Chief Justice Waite and several presidents, as well as many other gentlemen famed in their day. The Walcott mansion, a commanding edifice for those days, overlooks the river, and was the first residence built this side of Detroit. It was a grand mansion, the theater of many brilliant scenes, many stirring events.

Forts Miami and Meigs are here. Their mysterious mounds, their grass-grown wagon roads and decaying monuments, all point back to the war times when men died here amidst the crash of battle and the yells of savage Indians—died, but conquered, under that peerless leader, Mad Anthony Wayne, the "chief who never slept."



Near Walbridge Park

water for a bit, and so on *ad infinitum*. The cruise in this direction extends about eight miles.

But it is up the river, on the bosom of the old Maumee, that the owner of the small boat most loves to roam, for here is his Elysium. The destination is usually the little twin towns of Maumee and Perrysburg—twin sisters, clinging hand in hand to the banks of the ancient, the crooning, dreaming, memory-searching Maumee. These towns are about ten miles from Toledo and existed as flourishing communities when Toledo, the city, was born. There are many points of interest here. Among the foremost are the Exchange Hotel at Perrysburg, the old court-house, and the old Walcott house at Maumee. The Exchange Hotel was, in its day, a famous hostelry, and has entertained as its guests at various times General

All this at the memorable battle of Fallen Timbers, where the allied forces of Chiefs Turkeyfoot, Little Turtle and Blue Jacket met their Waterloo.

The scenery from Toledo to the resorts mentioned is like a leaf torn from some sylvan romance—a dream, perhaps of Fair Atlantis, of some other than a mere earthly resort. The river, clear and beautiful, glistens and shimmers silvery-bright in the sun, and, like a coquette, winds in and out along verdure-clad banks, now for an instant concealed, now peeping coyly out from behind some projecting point, now softly caressing some little island nestled on its bosom, again shining forth in all its glory.

On one side the bank rises abruptly from the river and is broken by defiles, sharp ravines and gentle dells; on the other side gently the bank rises and is covered

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by thrifty vineyards. Midway between Toledo and the twin towns hangs, like a pendant of emeralds, a bunch of small islands whose marginal lines are so indistinct as to make it almost impossible to tell where the land

the unending expanse of historic beauty; and even the devotee of the motorboat, with mind and body rested and gorged with delights, his hands filled with white water-lilies, is ready to wend his way homeward—ready to cope



"Phoenix"



"Lulu N"



"Bull Frog"



"Ventura"

SOME OF THE MAUMEE RIVER FLEET

ends and the water begins. The battle-ground of old Chief Marengo lies on the west bank of the river in this vicinity, and here are supposed to lie the bones of that great chieftain.

And so on, and on, until the eye and mind tire of

again with the giant, ready not only to cope with the work-a-day worries, but to surmount them and win—thanks to the perpetual Summer vacation made possible by his motorboat and the happy chance which made Toledo his home.

PLEASE CONTINUE READING FOR A PARAGRAPH BY PARAGRAPH ANALYSIS OF THIS
EXTRAORDINARY WORK. —————→

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CRITIQUE

Paragraphs 1-3 : The 1907 article opens like the great American novel rather than a boating magazine, with intense and minute descriptions of the stuffy boredom of working life yet the broad strokes of an expansive fresh air setting. Like many writers, perhaps the author had his or her desk job of tepid magazine deadlines to pay the bills - yet could not help allowing the power of their imagination and vocabulary take over as they dreamed of writing an epic novel in the back of their mind. To the author's credit, Spohn seems very aware of the Ohio Country's rich tradition of 19th century songs and stories, as well as the varied and colorful history of the region. Generally, Spohn sounds very much like a gifted travel writer and genuinely makes the Maumee River valley sound pleasant, referring to Toledo as the "Princess" of the Lake and Monroe a "Resort". However, the Pottawatomie tribe of the River Raisin were not generally considered a "friendly" native tribe. Indeed, they were often thought of as the most war-like, dangerous, and feared of any of the Great Lakes people and were vehement enemies to the United States during the War of 1812. Although the author is correct that the Ottawa people did inhabit the mouth of the Maumee River and indeed had a village at Bay View Park over 200 years ago.

Photo - Site of Fort Meigs: This is not a photograph of the site of Fort Meigs. The riverbank below the fort is lazy and gentle. There is a 100-yard-wide flood plain beside the river before the land ascends at a 45-degree angle up to a broad plateau fifty feet above the water level. This image may be closer to Fort Miami on the northwest bank which is more abrupt. But this is unlikely still, the presence of rock cliffs along the Maumee is virtually nonexistent.

Paragraph 4: Here is the first mention of Bay View Park. Only 14 years old at the time and only home to TYC for four years yet already described as "gay with boating parties". The author is accurate with the news of TYC burning in February of that year though the cost to reconstruct was ultimately \$45,000 (three times what it had been insured for). Mention of the Ohio Centennial was indeed the reason for expanding Bay View Park and digging the lagoon deeper. But the event was scrapped and held in Cleveland instead. While Bay View Park was home to an Ottawa village during the War of 1812, Chief Wauseon (a much later chief) was removed to the Kansas Territory and is not buried here³. Nor are there "high grounds" at Bay View Park.

Paragraph 5: The Toledo Power Boat Club is mentioned here by name at our original location, the public boathouse at Riverside Park. Riverside Park was later renamed Jamie Farr Park and lost its river access to industry.

Paragraph 6: William "Billy" Gertz opened a hotel and restaurant in Point Place down Edgewater Drive in the early 1900s. It operated as a resort in the summers only. Despite the short season, the restaurant gained fame in Toledo. Mr. Gertz died in the early 1930s as did his landmark business⁴.

1900s ADVERTISEMENT FOR BILLY GERTZ'S EDGEWATER RESORT

IMAGE: HISTORY OF THE TOLEDO POLICE DEPARTMENT

[HTTPS://OHIOMEMORY.ORG/DIGITAL/COLLECTIONS](https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collections)

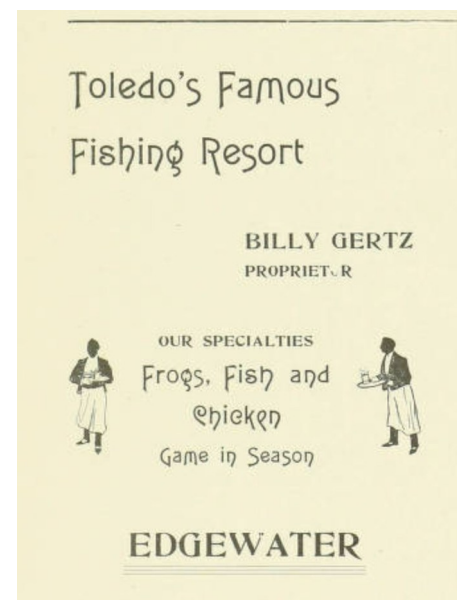


Photo – Near Walbridge Park: This could literally be anywhere. It looks to be about 25-feet of overgrown property. While the mood captured in the image is one of a hot and humid afternoon, this is likely a stock image similar to the “Fort Meigs” picture earlier. It cannot be imagined why this image was included in the story.

Paragraph 9: The “mysterious mounds” mentioned at Fort Meigs are no doubt the great “traverses” constructed in April 1813 as defensive earthworks to shield the Americans from British cannon fire – as well as the outline of the second Fort Meigs which was staffed 1814-1815.

Paragraph 10: This is such beautiful and flowery language. The question is begged if any modern reader would describe the area in the same manner.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LAUNCH A VIDEO PRESENTATION ON
THE “MYSTERIOUS MOUNDS”

Paragraph 11: The historical record does not know any Chief Marengo. Marengo was an ill-fated town plotted where it was thought the start of the Miami Canal would be. When this didn’t pan out, Marengo became a ghost town and the area later absorbed by a growing Toledo⁵. Slightly upriver from MRYC, just off Toledo Country Club is swampy and overgrown Marengo Island, which is all that remains of its namesake. Marengo was named after an 1800 battle at which Napoleon won a great victory over Austria.

Paragraph 12: The article concludes with such uplifting sentiment again returning to the expansive fresh air optimism from which the story opened. No doubt anyone who read this original article was inspired to visit Toledo, if not to reside here. Bravo!

WLEHS STAFF WRITER

- JOHN HC THOMPSON

CITATIONS:

1. US CENSUS BUREAU, 1998
2. NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS [HTTPS://NCES.ED.GOV/NAAL/LIT_HISTORY.ASP](https://nces.ed.gov/naal/lit_history.asp)
3. HISTORY OF FULTON COUNTY SITES.ROOTSWEB.COM/~OHFULTON
4. [HTTPS://WWW.GEOCITIES.US/POINTPLACEHISTORY/GERTZ.HTM](https://www.geocities.us/pointplacehistory/gertz.htm)
5. SCRIBNER, HARVEY. MEMOIRS OF LUCAS COUNTY AND THE CITY OF TOLEDO. 1910



MARINE HISTORY LINES

*THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WESTERN LAKE ERIE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY*

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A message from the President

IT IS OURS!!

We have recently purchased the former Masonic Lodge at 3024 131st St in Point Place. This is a big move for us and will allow us to display all the artifacts, documents, and photographs we have collected over the past fifty years. It will be called the “Western Lake Erie Maritime Museum.” It will be a lot of work, and we would appreciate all the help we can get. Please Contact Us:

wlehsinfo@gmail.com

www.wlehs.com/support/

Or call us at 419-351-8181.

John Greiner



The new building boasts 7,000 square feet of interior space and contains offices, a boat workshop, kitchens, large galleries and event space. Members are needed to join the ranks of the Western Lake Erie Historical Society. Help us transform this into something the boating community can indeed treasure.
