



## BOAT TOUR OF

### EXISTING HISTORICAL PROPERTIES

As we begin our historical tour around the lake, it is only fitting that we start at the same spot where many of the future residents started their Oconomowoc Lake lives:

#### 1 GIFFORD – 1858

George Gifford and his wife, Eliza Wittemore, purchased 125 acres from Hewitts Point Road west to the Oconomowoc River outlet. They named their estate “Villa Gifford”. They hosted several parties and had numerous requests from guests to return and rent rooms for weeks during the summer months. Thus, the Gifford Hotel was started in 1874. Eventually it was comprised of numerous picturesque buildings including seven cottages. At one time it housed up to 350 guests. The Hotel was razed in 1912.

#### 2 OCONOMOWOC LAKE CLUB - 1910 & 1996

In 1890 the Oconomowoc Lake Yacht Club was formed and the meetings were held in the Gifford Hotel. The clubhouse was completed in 1910. The tennis courts were built in 1937. Sadly, the original building was destroyed by fire in 1994. The clubhouse was rebuilt, in substantially the same location, and reopened in 1996.

#### 3 UHRIG - MATTHIessen – 1916

In 1916 Frank Matthiessen, owner of the Big Ben Alarm Company, bought 14 acres that roughly covered the entire point of Hewitts Point Road. Frank and his wife, Fannie Clara Möeller, built the Spanish “Villa DeLac”. The property included several storage buildings built along the shore and a large boathouse that remain today. Alexander Uhrig, who vacationed at Gifford Hotel with his parents, purchased the home with his wife, Corrine Dreyfuss, in 1924. Corrine was Alexander’s nurse at Waldheim Hospital after he was treated for an emergency appendectomy.

#### 4 NORRIS - 1852

Charles Wilkins Norris, heir to the Laacke and Joy retail empire, purchased a large track of land in 1870 as well as an 1852 farmhouse. The home is believed to be the oldest existing home on the lake. On a 1913 plat map it shows as a

70-acre parcel extending from Oconomowoc Lake to Okauchee Lake. Norris built a 7-room school on his property. The Norris name can still be found on the school and pillars which are still standing in downtown Okauchee.

#### 5 J. VAN DYKE - 1894

John Van Dyke was an attorney, mining baron, and president of Northwest Mutual Life. He purchased the 6-acre parcel of land in 1891. The current “Gone with the Wind” house was built in 1894. The house included heavy mahogany doors, crystal chandeliers, a log furnace, six fireplaces, wood cook stoves and a root cellar. The front of the house featured pillars from the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair.

#### 6 MARINER - 1909

John Watkins Mariner was a successful real estate lawyer. From 1904 to 1908, he rented the Hodges Lodge at Gifford Hotel. In 1909 he bought 10 acres from Dewey Buchanan and built a 15-room home called “Moorings Farms”.

#### 7 G. VAN DYKE - 1892

George Douglas Van Dyke and his wife, Louise Lawrence built an 11-bedroom home in 1892. His parents had an estate on Fairview Road. He was an attorney who invested in mining interests. He was a friend with George Miller who owned the property next door.

#### 8 MILLER - 1892

George Peckham Miller purchased the Harry Sanderson estate “Broadoaks” in 1897 next to, his friend, Louis Petit. Miller was an attorney and the founder of the Milwaukee law firm Foley and Lardner. His wife was Laura Appleton Chapman, heiress to the T A Chapman’s Department store. Miller also served as President of his father-in-law’s store. It’s the oldest house on the lake still occupied by the same family.

#### 9 PETIT - 1893

Louis Jerome Petit, originally from New York, established his wealth through his family’s salt and ore mines. He served as president of First Wisconsin National Bank, now US Bank. He served as the Commodore of the Oconomowoc Lake Club in 1896 and 1906-07. Petit constructed the 20-room summer home. The property included a boat house, a trotting track, an archery range and a furnished playhouse for his 3 children. The property was purchased in 1929 by next-door neighbor George P. Miller for his daughter and son-in-law, Alice and William Chester, and their 4 children. The Chester’s daughter, Marion Chester Read, inherited the home and the Read family continues to live there today.

#### 10 PABST – 1906

Fredrick Pabst moved to Oconomowoc Lake in 1906 from Milwaukee. Fredrick and his brother Gustav were sons of Captain Fredrick Pabst, who started the Pabst Brewery. Fredrick purchased 22 acres of land with swamp and islands which he dredged. He called his estate “Woodbine” and built a 27-room home on the property. The home was razed in 2001, however the boathouse and bridges can still be seen today.

#### 11 SCHUYLER - 1926

Attorney Daniel Schuyler and his wife Sybil Moorhouse in 1926 purchased 60 acres of land from the adjoining property owner and built the manor house, “Stonecrest”, in 1930.

#### 12 PECK - 1871

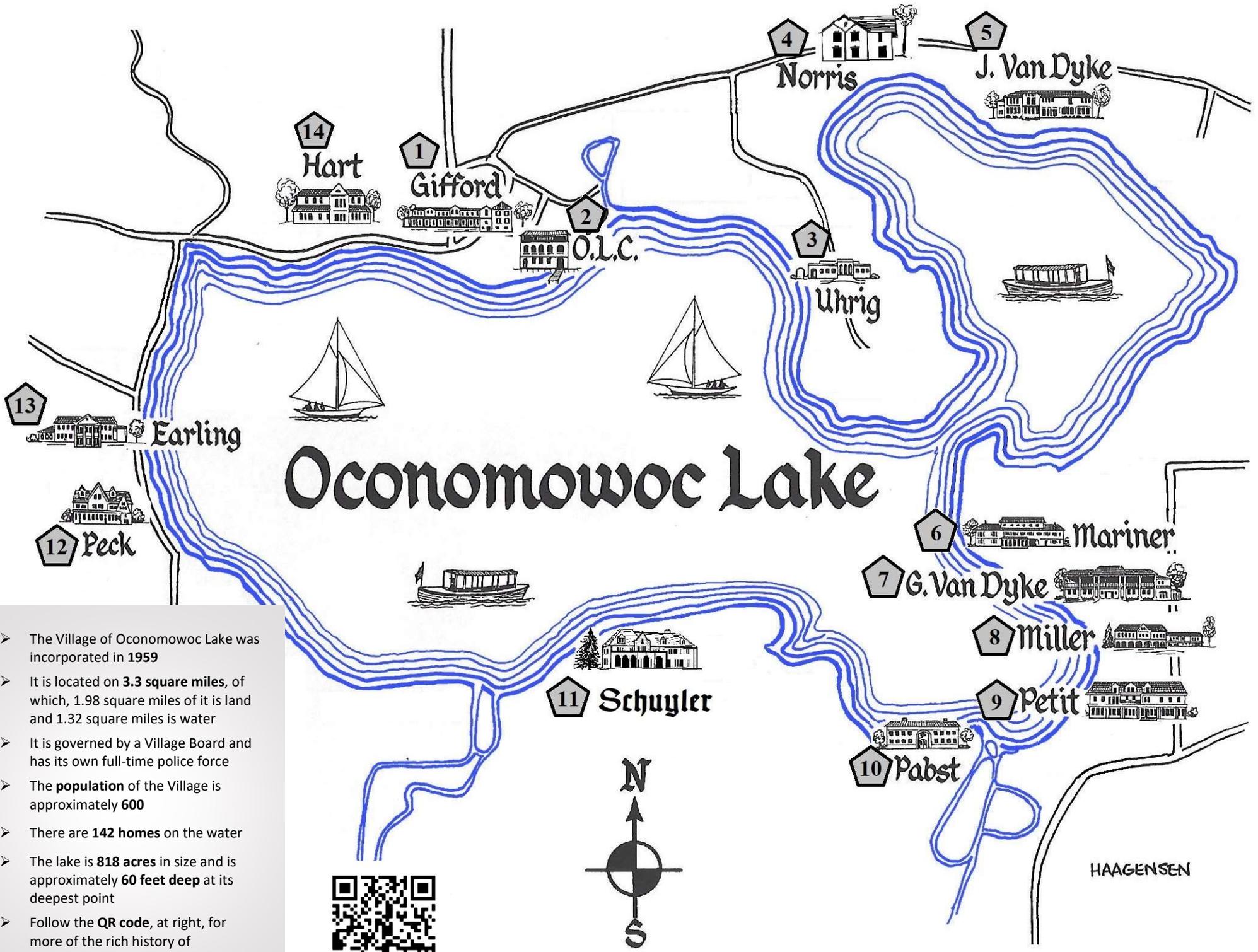
Attorney George R. Peck was general counsel for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. He obtained the land from Albert Earling, who owned the adjoining parcel. Peck’s daughter married, Albert’s son, George Earling. After Peck’s death, his heirs sold the home to Frederick C. Miller of the Miller Brewing family. The house can be seen nestled in the trees across Beach Road high on the hill.

#### 13 EARLING - 1885

Albert Earling became president of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad after starting as a telegraph boy for the company. He met Philip Armour while vacationing at Gifford Hotel. Armour gave him 20 acres of land. Earling built a home, which his daughter called “Brae Head”, which is Scottish for ‘top of the hill’. The house included a formal staircase, a ballroom, a veranda and rare mahogany trim. The family eventually added a water tower, an icehouse, tennis courts and a generator. When the lands were subdivided and developed as a detached single family planned unit development, a third of the house, the ballroom, was removed. The rest of the house remains today.

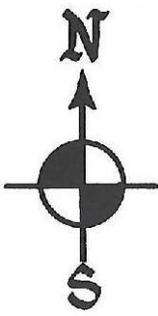
#### 14 HART – 1900

Harry Hart, one of the owners of Hart, Schaffner & Marx clothing store in Chicago, and Sara Liebenstein had both spent summers at the Gifford Hotel. Years later they found each other after both had been widowed. The couple then razed an existing log cabin near the Gifford Hotel to build a five-bedroom ‘cottage’. They eventually added a stable, a servant’s cottage, a poultry barn, a boathouse and a guesthouse to their estate. Only the home and boathouse remain today.



# Oconomowoc Lake

- The Village of Oconomowoc Lake was incorporated in 1959
- It is located on 3.3 square miles, of which, 1.98 square miles of it is land and 1.32 square miles is water
- It is governed by a Village Board and has its own full-time police force
- The **population** of the Village is approximately 600
- There are 142 homes on the water
- The lake is 818 acres in size and is approximately 60 feet deep at its deepest point
- Follow the QR code, at right, for more of the rich history of Oconomowoc Lake



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