

Ridges Road Historical Timeline

1848

Captain Justice Bailey, seeking a safe harbor during a storm discovers Baileys Harbor.

1849-1951

Alanson Sweet, businessman and Bailey's employer, seeks to develop the harbor in a big way, and manages to have the Door Peninsula set aside as a separate county, establishes Gibraltar (Baileys Harbor) as the County Seat, and earns the commission to build the Old Baileys Harbor (birdcage) Lighthouse that he built from local materials.

1852

The lighthouse is complete and operating.

1869-1870

The Old Lighthouse is decommissioned due to ineffectiveness, and the Range Lights are built and put into service at the beginning of the navigation season in 1870.

1871

Thomas Toft comes to work at Wing & Buckley's Mud Bay quarry.

1874-1906

Wing & Buckley go bankrupt, and Toft begins acquiring the land that will eventually known as Toft Point. Toft is determined to retain the old growth trees that grow there.

1896

The Treasury Department establishes a U.S. Lifesaving Station near the current junction of Harbor Lane and Ridges Road.

1915

The U.S. Coast Guard is formed from the U.S. Lifesaving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service. The Lifesaving Station continues but becomes a Coast Guard Station.

1923

The North Point Reserve Co. (also called Lighthouse Point Reserve Co.) is formed by prominent businessmen in the Sturgeon Bay area and land along the harbor and Lake Michigan shore is parceled out into lots. Selling points included the availability of a telephone at the Coast Guard station and daily mail being delivered by rural carriers to convenient locations.

The Old Lighthouse is sold to a private individual. A 1926 tax bill from the town shows a valuation of \$400 and a tax of \$9.84.

1931-1974

Cliff Wenniger starts his fishery just south of the Old Lighthouse land. Wenniger was a successful and respected businessman known for his inventiveness in converting old autos into flat bed haulers and other labor saving devices that increased efficiency in his business. Wenniger passed away in 1974

1935

The U.S. Commerce Department deeded the 40 acres of land around the Range Lights to Door County. The County Parks Commission took over management of this land for the benefit of the people of Door County. This included 400' of sand beach across from the lower range light.

1935

George & Jac Schmitz build a summer resort called Schmitz Gazebos that bought and renovated some small cabins from the Coast Guard Station. They expanded in 1948 when the Coast Guard station closed. By the early 1950s they could house 45 people in studio or one bedroom cabins w/ hot & cold running water and venetian blinds for privacy. After George Schmitz died in 1965, his niece Irene sold the resort to Adilbert Wild.

1937

The Ridges Sanctuary is established.

The County Parks Commission decides that a park/campground will be established on the land that will eventually become the original Ridges Sanctuary. This causes great controversy between those who want the travel trailer park and those who want the land kept as a nature preserve including many local individuals. Albert Fuller, chief botanist of the Milwaukee Public Museum, becomes a forceful advocate for preserving this unique natural area.

1948

The Coast Guard Station is closed.

Early 1960s

The Sands Motel (Carl Jonas) and the Sandpiper Restaurant (Bob Herbst) were built at the entry to Ridges Road.

1965-

Hickey Brothers Fishery established

1967

Toft Point Natural Area is established

1969-1993

Baileys Harbor Yacht Club opened by Aribert Wild. He built a marina large enough to dock 85' boats and added a helicopter pad.

1970

Range Lights replaced by single leading light on a steel tower.

