



**HEALING WATERS, RECREATION, GAMES OF CHANCE— MANAWA HAD IT ALL**

The transformation from a muddy overgrown wilderness to a fashionable resort began when E.H. Odell of New York recognized the investment potential and purchased land on the south shore to establish a pleasure resort he named Manhattan Beach in 1886. Patrons traveled to the north shore by rail then crossed the lake via ferries to reach the resort. The success of this project on the south shore spurred development on the north shore. Real estate developer Hattie Hay purchased 160 acres north of the lake after noting the increasing popularity of the area by the city's elite. This area was named Lake Manawa and lots were sold to the public in 1887. A Minneapolis investment company built Manawa Hotel on the north shore in 1887. An amusement park was opened and Ben Marks established a casino east of this. As popularity of the lake grew band concerts and baseball games were added on the north shore and a high water toboggan on the south.



The popularity of Lake Manawa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries made it a natural subject for picture postcards and photographs. By the 1920s the glory days had faded, leaving few landmarks for the curious of the 21st century to determine just where in the residential developments and state park of today the grand attractions and sites featured on the postcards were once located.

This brochure is intended to get the inquisitive started on a journey to learn more about the early days of the lake.

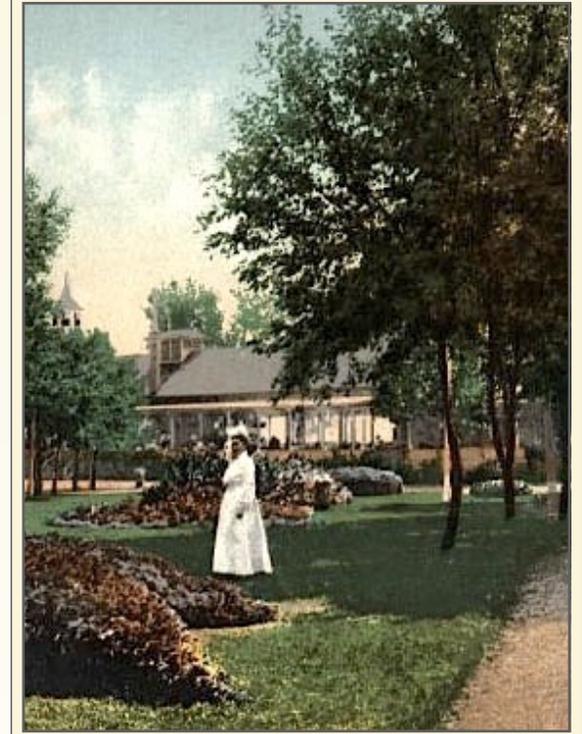
Information contained is from research by historian Ryan Roenfeld and the book *Mecca of the Midwest* by Dr. James L. Knott. Brochure and GPS coordinates by Karen DeForest and Dr. Richard Warner.

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF  
POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY**

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# LAKE MANAWA

RETRACING THE GLORY



After the Missouri River flooded in 1881 it retreated to a new channel, leaving behind "Cut-off Lake." Overgrown and difficult to get to, the lake initially attracted only a few hunters. It wasn't long, however, before the area became the most fashionable resort in the Midwest.





The Lake Manawa Hotel was built in 1887. It was destroyed by fire Christmas day, 1894. 41.211945, -95.849370



The signature feature of Manhattan Beach was the Kursaal, a 180 foot building that extended out over the lake on piers and housed a dining room, dance hall, and bath house. To reach it from town a visitor had to cross the lake; a searchlight guided boats at night. The Kursaal was destroyed by an Easter Sunday tornado in April, 1913. 41.201107, -95.859348

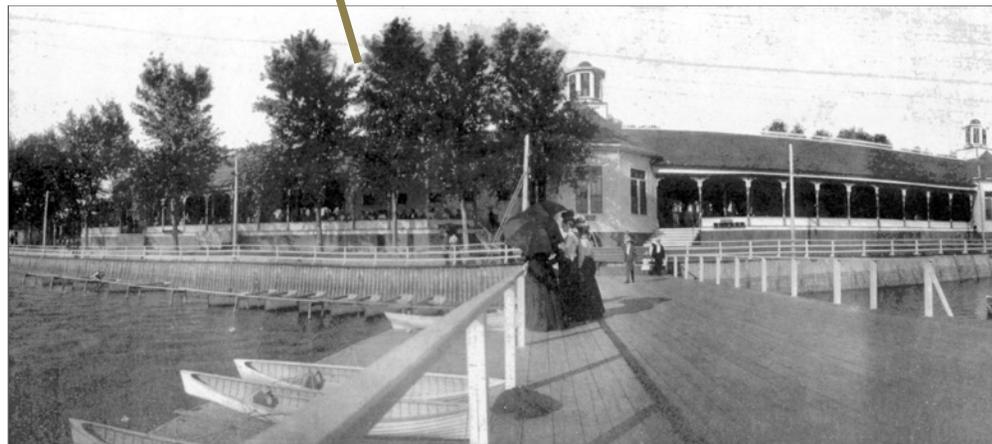
In 1887 the Lake Manawa Railway purchased 10 acres to build an amusement park to stimulate ridership. Flowers and trees decorated a grand midway as games of chance proliferated in the adjacent buildings. One remnant remains today; a flower ring in the middle of Sioux Street. 41.212807, -95.849869



Turtle Island became part of a peninsula after fill from a 1937 dredging project connected it with Coney Island. 41.211439, -95.857287



A roller coaster replaced a ballpark in 1906. The wooden Dip the Dips coaster was the largest in the West until destroyed by fire April 22, 1922. 41.214332, -95.85077



The Pavilion was built at the Grand Plaza on the north shore in 1895 with a soda fountain, saloon, restaurant, and 600-foot lakeside boardwalk. It was replaced by a dance hall in 1911 (below) which burned down in 1926. 41.212740, -95.852123



*Connect with the past using your cell phone! Enter the coordinates shown into your map app then follow the directions to visit the sites pictured and discover how they appear today.*

*See more pictures and Manawa history at [www.TheHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.TheHistoricalSociety.org)*