



History of Wenatchee River Institute's Barn Beach Reserve

In the pre-white American settlement era, this site along the banks of the Wenatchee River was part of an area that was very important to the P'squosa (Wenatchi) Band as a gathering place, a summer encampment and a place to catch salmon and other fish species important to their culture and survival.

The building was completed in 1903, during the mill town era, by the Lamb-Davis Lumber Company, owners of a mill located just above what is now Blackbird Island in Leavenworth. Originally known as the "Lamb-Davis Bungalow," it served as the summer home of Mr. Lamb and was used to host out-of-town guests of the Company.

Robert Baker "RB" Field, the town banker, and his wife Frances purchased the house in 1921 at the outset of the town's orchard era. The Fields were very prominent citizens of Leavenworth. As the town banker in an agricultural community, Mr. Field played a very important role in the town economy. Mrs. Field's daughter, Helen, described her mother as "a true environmentalist. She loved nature and what it provided and used it well. She had a deep respect for the goodness and wonder of nature." Mrs. Field was a leader of efforts to beautify the town, which culminated in Leavenworth being awarded the Better Homes and Gardens Civic Beautification Achievement Tablet in 1935. The building served as Field family home until 1967. For much of that time, it was known as the Bent River Ranch, where Mr. Field raised award-winning Arabian horses for many years.

After the elder Fields passed away, the house continued to serve as a private residence for other owners, including Caroline Schutte, Robert Rogers, Ted Price and Elisabeth Saunders and her family. Mrs. Schutte donated to the City much of the land that is now Waterfront Park. Rogers and Price were leaders in the effort to establish the Bavarian theme for Leavenworth. The Saunders family moved into the house in 1976. Beginning in 1982, when the village's tourism era was already well into its second decade, and continuing until December of 2002, Elisabeth operated a popular bed and breakfast in the house known as Haus Lorelei on the River.

The lowland area southwest of the main building is known as Barn Beach, a longtime swimming hole for the community. Between the Beach and the house one may find the foundations of two barns and fence posts denote a pasture where the Field Arabian horses were kept. More recently, this land was part of a two and a half acre parcel that was slated for development into a 58-unit condominium that would have stood monumentally between the main house and Waterfront Park. The proposed development generated a tremendous amount of controversy in the town of Leavenworth, but local business owner and philanthropist Harriet Bullitt ended that plan by buying the land and, eventually, in 2002, donating it to the National Audubon Society to become a part of a future Audubon Center. It is now part of Barn Beach Reserve .

