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## **A saga of furs, forests and farms : a history of Rice Lake and vicinity from the time of its first inhabitants : the Indian mound builders to the turn of the 20th century. 1955 (1987 reprint)**

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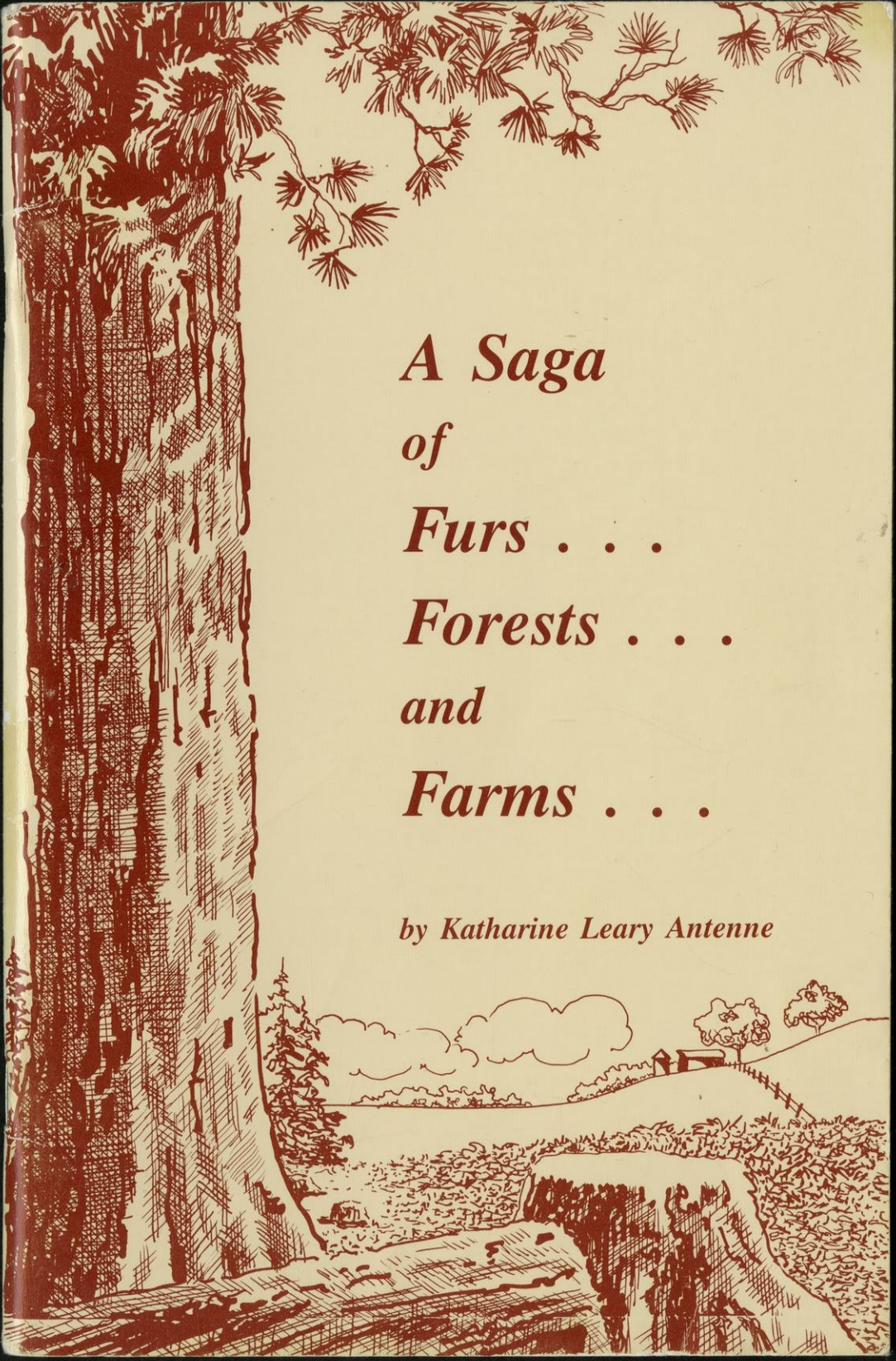
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*A Saga  
of  
Furs . . .  
Forests . . .  
and  
Farms . . .*

*by Katharine Leary Antenne*



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A HISTORY OF RICE LAKE AND VICINITY  
FROM THE TIME OF ITS FIRST  
INHABITANTS—THE INDIAN MOUND BUILDERS—  
TO THE TURN OF THE 20th CENTURY

by *Katharine Leary Antenne*

CHRONICLE PUBLICATIONS

RICE LAKE, WISCONSIN

First Printing 1955

Second Printing 1957





THE AUTHOR IS INDEBTED TO THE AUTHORS OF SEVERAL BOOKS ON EARLY WISCONSIN WHICH WERE USED FOR REFERENCE IN COMPILING THIS HISTORY—TO MARY AND PAUL FOURNIER AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS WHO CONTRIBUTED VALUABLE INFORMATION FROM THEIR PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF EARLY EVENTS IN THIS AREA—AND TO CARL E. OVERBY FOR THE USE OF SOME OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS APPEARING IN THIS BOOK.

Printed and Published by  
**CHRONOTYPE PUBLICATIONS**  
Rice Lake, Wisconsin

First Printing - 1955  
Second Printing - 1987

## Editor's Notes

This book is a reprint of the original which was published in 1955. Therefore some references and quotations are written in the present tense.

The spellings of certain names and places in this book are shown in source documents, and may vary from present-day spellings.

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## The Mound Builders

The first residents of the Rice Lake area who have left definite evidence of their occupancy were the Mound Builders, Indians generally believed to be the immediate ancestors of the Dakota (or Sioux, as they are commonly called, that being the branch to which the Dakota belonged). These were the Indians found in the upper Mississippi region by the early explorers.

The Rice Lake area, like the Chetek lake and Prairie lake regions, was a favorite resort of these aborigines. This region was formerly covered with a dense forest of pine and other timber. Fish and game abounded and wild rice grew in nearly all the lakes.

From the woods and streams the aborigines filled their simple needs of food, clothing and shelter. They made their clothes from the skins of animals, and hunting and wild rice harvesting supplied their food. They built their lodges of slender trees, covered with bark, and furnished them with mats made of plaited reeds.

### Corn and Pumpkins

Gradually they learned a crude form of agriculture by cultivating the ground with hoes of bone and plows of wood; then corn and pumpkins were added to their food supply. Their only domestic animals were dogs, which also served as an addition to their food supply.

Their tools, hunting implements and weapons were made of stone; their arrows were tipped with flints chipped to a point, axes and hatchets were made of edged stone, war clubs had heavy stone heads.

Lead and copper were the only metals known. The lead, mined in a crude fashion, was used mostly for ornament. The copper, obtained through inter-tribal trade from Lake Superior, was beaten by hand into ornamental shapes; occasionally it was used to tip weapons and domestic implements.

With the change of seasons, the Wisconsin Indians changed their mode of living. When winter came they left their permanent villages and scattered in small groups throughout the forests, living as best they could on what they could hunt down. They built temporary wigwams of pelts thrown over poles, and in them kindled



fires to keep themselves from freezing. With the coming of spring they returned to their villages and cornfields.

### **Sea Shells Found**

Intercourse with other tribes, aside from warfare, was maintained through trade. The extent and volume of this inter-tribal trade was considerable. Sea shells found in Wisconsin mounds show that they had passed among all the tribes between Wisconsin and the Atlantic coast. Shell, pieces of metal, articles of clothing and ornaments made up the bulk of the exchange.

Shells made into necklaces or belts were both a medium of exchange and the binding symbol of inter-tribal treaties and agreements. The fate of war captives was horrible, but envoys were sacred and treaties were never broken.

Summer was the time for council and warfare, as well as for religious rites. Raids on neighboring enemy groups were a normal part of the Indian's life. In every village was a council house where the chiefs and elders of the tribes discussed questions of war and alliance. The religious rites centered around a unit resembling a clan; effigy mounds were the symbols of the clan totem, and near these totems were placed burial mounds. Here were celebrated the sacred mysteries of the tribe and clan.

Barron county contains about 250 of these burial mounds, a larger number than occurs in any region of similar size in northwestern Wisconsin. The total number of such earthworks found around Rice Lake was 67, nearly all of them being conical or oval in form, the conical being most numerous.

Most of the mounds were found to contain burials, the majority of them bundled burials, or human remains which had been interred in temporary graves and later buried in separate bundles or deposits in the mounds. Some of the burials were thought to be intrusive or made long after the mounds were built. These are probably Chippewa burials, as they were not a mound-building tribe, even though some mounds found in northern Wisconsin appear to have been built by them.

### **Rice Lake Mounds**

Only a few of the mounds contained ornaments or implements of any kind. The presence of charcoal and charred human remains in some indicates that a fire ceremony accompanied the burials.

Most of the mounds found around Rice Lake were in a group of 51, called the Rice Lake Mound group, at the north-

ern end of what is now the city of Rice Lake. William Dietz explored some about 1887, and found as many as a dozen skeletons in some of them. K. E. Rasmussen also dug into several but found no more than two burials in any.

Since an 1890 survey by Prof. Cyrus Thomas of the Bureau of American Ethnology, the extension of the northern limits of the city has destroyed many of these mounds. G.C. Soper, an early settler, levelled some and others, on the lakeshore opposite what is now known as the Boy Scout island, were destroyed by the raising of the



**EARLY LUMBERJACKS GATHER IN FRONT  
OF THEIR WINTER BUNKHOUSE**

water when the dam was built by the Knapp, Stout & Co. in 1868. The levelling of the fairgrounds obliterated still others.

In 1922 the extension of Main street immediately below where Lakeview Medical Center now stands divided the remaining 23 mounds, with five on the west side and 18 on the east side. Among the 18 was the unusual double conical or dumb-bell shaped mound. This area is now Indian Mound Park.

These are prophetic words from the 1922 "History of Barron County": "As these are the last mounds now remaining on the west side of the lake, Rice Lake citizens should take advantage of the present opportunity to permanently preserve some of them. This place is a portion of what is known as Howard's Point. It is well located for use as a city park."

### **Completely Destroyed**

Every trace has disappeared of two groups of linear mounds which were located west of Main street on city blocks

formerly occupied by the Carnegie library and other buildings. They were destroyed in the growth of the city.

On the Hiawatha Park camp site, on the east shore of Rice lake on the north side of Red Cedar river, fireplace stones and quartzite chips were found in a potato patch. In the cultivated fields along the river were found arrow points and a few stone celts (a kind of ax or chisel).

Two of the rarest relics of Indian civilization ever discovered were found in 1932 on the farmland in Hiawatha Park, formerly owned by Perry Hall.

These were two funeral masks made of clay, the first ever found in the North American hemisphere, although similar masks have been discovered in South America. They were found by Prof. Leland Cooper and are now in the public museum in Milwaukee.

It is conjectured that the masks may have been made in observances of a custom related to one of which evidence was found in Canada. Here were discovered faces carved out of wood and placed on graves.

Prof. Cooper, in a bulletin published by the Milwaukee museum in 1933, wrote of the masks:

"The origin of such an unusual feature, foreign to anything we have thus far known, must remain a matter of almost pure speculation until further excavations can be carried on in this region and adjacent areas to the north and west."

The latest scientific excavation of the mounds in the Hiawatha park area took place in 1952, when Prof. Leland Cooper, noted archaeologist and brother of Robert Cooper of Rice Lake, explored their contents on behalf of the University of Wisconsin.

Found in them were pottery fragments, small implements, chips of flint, and six bundles of bones, identified as skeletons of the Santee Sioux Indians, buried 300 to 400 years ago.

All these were removed to Madison for study and preservation. Prof. Cooper pointed out it was not customary to leave relics of Indian lore in the places where they were found, if there were no museum facilities to preserve them properly.

The Draak Mounds are two conical mounds which were found on what was known as Draak's Point, on the east shore of Rice Lake, just south of the river mouth. This land was formerly an Indian camping site and a few box-covered graves were located here.

## CHAPTER II

### Pipestone Quarry

The first white men to approach the Rice Lake area were Pierre Radisson and Medard des Grosseilliers, who in 1659 skirted the southern bay of Lake Superior and entered Chequamegon bay, having come from Three Rivers, Canada. Near the present site of Ashland they built a crude fort close to the water. In 1680 they built a fort at Oak Point, east of Ashland.

From that time on Chequamegon Bay continued to be an objective point of the explorers, and early became a fur trading center. There the Indians who roamed the region around Rice Lake and northward first became acquainted with the whites.

Father Claude Allouez, a Jesuit missionary, first came from Canada by way of the Great Lakes into Chequamegon bay in 1635, and established a mission between the present sites of Ashland and Washburn. Four years later he was relieved by Father Jacques Marquette, a younger priest. From these priests the Chippewa of this region doubtless received their first religious instruction.

About this time, and continuing into the early 1700's, French trading posts were being established on the Mississippi river, at such points as Trempealeau and Red Wing. These posts were nearer to the Rice Lake area than those at Chequamegon bay, but they were in Sioux territory, while Chequamegon bay was in Chippewa country. The movements of various Indian tribes in the late 1600's had left the southern shore of Lake Superior practically abandoned to the Chippewa, although the Sioux still bitterly contested their occupancy.

The Chippewas had a village at Rice Lake as early as 1700. War between them and the Sioux continued, with the latter making many raids into the Lake Superior region.

#### Many Battles Here

Barron county especially, was the hotly contested area. It is believed that the main cause of the wars fought here was a desire to possess the rich rice sloughs. The desire to obtain pipestone was probably another factor. It has been said: "Almost every bend of the Red Cedar river has been the scene of an Indian battle."

The pipestone ridge located in what is now Doyle town-



ship, attracted many of the early Indians. This formation, called by geologists "catlinite," is a dark red clay, easily worked into shape with a knife, which hardens on exposure to air. The Indians secured blocks of it and fashioned it into pipes, beads and other ornaments, which rapidly hardened into a substance which takes a high red polish.

The quarry in the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of section 27, town 35, range 10 (Doyle) was long worked by the Indians. The excavation was about 25 feet square and about three feet high.

This seems small and unimportant, but since the clay was used almost exclusively for pipes, there was little waste, and other ancient quarries being in the neighborhood, it seems safe to conclude that enough was mined here to supply Wisconsin Indians for several centuries.

This quarry is surrounded by swamp and thus almost inaccessible in summer, but during the winter in years past farmers there obtained building stone. As a result almost all traces of aboriginal work have been destroyed. Along the highway leading from Rice Lake can be seen outcrops of shale, much resembling pipestone, but coarser.

#### **Silver Creek Site**

On the northeast quarter of section 34 in Doyle township were found other primitive workings, on the south bank of Silver creek. G.A. West, writing in "The Wisconsin Archeologist" in 1910, said: "Some of these excavations have been defaced by white men and by modern Indians, who annually made pilgrimages from the Couderay reservation several miles to the north, to this location for pipestone."

About a mile down the creek to the south, in Sumner township (section 3, township 34, range 10), West found other workings, where an old settler told him the Indians still occasionally worked the quarry.

## CHAPTER III

### Indian Trails

There were many Indian trails traversing the area around Rice Lake.

One of these, later known as the "Bayfield Trail," came from the vicinity of the west side of Cedar lake and crossed the country to Rice lake, passing down its west side. According to G. C. Soper, who came here in 1876, the Bayfield Trail came from Howard's Point on the shore of Rice lake, passed



OXEN TEAMS AND "SWAMPERS" HAUL HUGE LOAD

through the mounds located here, and followed in a south-westerly direction along a rise of ground, now graded away, to the southeast corner of Knapp and Main sts.

From there it went on past a pond then near the present corner of Stout and Main sts., and continued down Main st. to the corner of Main and Humbird.

Here it forked, one branch continuing down the Red Cedar river, and the other going northwest past where Lincoln school now stands, thence across the country to Bear creek. The branch down the river went on toward Cameron and then southeast to the present site of Chetek.

Traces of Indian agriculture remained in what were called the Nelson Garden Beds. This Indian planting ground was located in a pasture on the former H.C. Nelson property on the west shore of

Rice Lake, near Nora cemetery. The arrangement of these beds differs from that of any other plot of planting grounds found elsewhere in Wisconsin.

Nelson, who operated an extensive ginseng nursery here, accompanied the investigators who examined the beds in 1912. One plot was about 115 feet long, with 15 beds or rows in it. The other was about 200 feet long, with 38 beds. The beds varied from 15 to 36 feet in length, were 3 to 3½ feet wide and 4 to 6 inches high.

### Threshing Pits

Also found here were some circular depressions which the investigators concluded were threshing pits, used by the Indians in the hulling of wild rice. This they did by placing the rice on a blanket or deerskin spread across the hole, and treading out the grain with their feet. G. C. Soper said that in the early days of settlement the Indians frequently sank pork barrels in the ground and used them as pits, sometimes using sticks instead of their feet to beat out the grain.

The Howard Camp Site was a camping ground of the Chippewa in 1879 and 1880, located on the M. T. Howard place, known also as Howard's Point. One hundred or more Indians sometimes camped here, and in the early days they had a dancing ground where medicine and other dances took place, with large numbers of Indians taking part.

Every fall the Indians came to Rice Lake and the Chetek lakes to gather their winter's supply of wild rice. When the dam was built, raising the water and flooding the rice fields, the Indians were very incensed, and for a while danger was threatened. In time, however, the excitement died down.

Writing of the rice-gathering Indians in 1820, James D. Doty (Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. VII) says:

"The Indians in the month of September repaired to Rice lake to gather their rice. In no other place does it grow in such large quantities as there. The water is not over five feet deep, and its surface is almost entirely covered with rice. It is only in morasses or muddy bottoms that this grain is found . . .

"This work of harvesting is performed by the females. It is . . . gathered by two of them, passing around in a canoe, one sitting in the stern and pushing it around, while the other with her back to the bow, and with two small pointed sticks about three feet long, one in each hand, collects it by running one of the sticks into the rice and bending it over onto the edge of the canoe, while with the other she strikes the heads

suddenly and rattles the grain into it. This she does on both sides of the canoe alternately, and while the canoe is moving. About a gill is generally struck off at a blow.

### Not Yet Ripe

"It is not ripe when harvested. It falls covered with a husk, and has a beard about two inches long.

"One method of curing the rice, and that which makes it the most palatable is by putting it in a kettle in small quantities and hanging it over the fire until it has become parched. A round hole is dug in the ground one and one-half feet deep and three in circumference, into which a moose skin is usually put. Into this hole the parched grain is then poured, where it is trod by an Indian until completely hulled.

"This is very laborious work and always devolves upon the men. The grain is then taken out and cleaned in a fan made of birch bark, shaped something like those used by early farmers. This is the most expeditious method of curing it.

"The other method differs from this only in drying. In the drying process a scaffold is made of small poles about three feet from the ground, and covered with cedar slabs. On this the rice is spread and under the scaffold a small, slow fire is kindled, which is kept up until the grain becomes entirely dry.

### A Day-long Chore

"It takes nearly a day to dry the quantity contained on one of the scaffolds. The grain cured in this way is more nutritious and keeps much longer than the other. Parching in the kettle seems to destroy some of the substance.

"The rice when cured is put into sacks containing about a bushel. A sack is valued at two skins or about \$4 . . . a blanket will buy two sacks. One family ordinarily makes about five sacks, although those who are industrious sometimes make 25. The last, however, is very rare. A few provident Indians save a little for the spring of the year to eat with their sugar, manufactured with the sap of the maple trees, though generally by the time they have done curing it, the whole is disposed of for trinkets, ornaments and whiskey."



## CHAPTER IV

### The First White Man

The Indian's life was one of struggle and hardship in those primitive days when he alone lived here. Famine and disease were constant threats, war and wild animals carried away his young. Nevertheless, it is a moot question whether contact with the white man made his condition better or worse.

He soon forgot the skills of his primitive economy and became dependent upon the farmer's products for his clothing, tools and weapons. Urged on by the greed of the fur traders he rapidly killed off the game or drove it farther into the wilderness, which he then had to penetrate to get the furs with which to buy his necessities. Hunting became more and more important to his existence, but brought diminishing returns, and soon the Indian had to depend on the trader for the very means of his life.

The traders who went to the Lake Superior area after the French and Indian war found naked, half-starved savages who in less than a hundred years had ceased to be self-sufficient. Thus arose the fur trade, which was not only a means of exploitation, but an economic regime and a stage in the development of the American frontier.

The supposition is that the Indians ranging Barron county were more or less familiar with the traders at Chequamegon Bay, who probably penetrated this region to trade with them. The traders, the majority of them French, followed a system called "drouine," in which the fur company sent out runners or traders to camp in Indian territory, follow the Indians to their places of chase and secure credits from them for furs.

#### Early Trading Post

Tradition ascribed to Barron county such a trading post as far back as pre-Revolution days, believed to have been located on the site of a French fort built even earlier. The post stood on an eminence overlooking Lake Montanis (Kegama) and commanding a view of Rice Lake as well, on property now owned by Joseph Jachim, on the north side of Orchard Beach Lane.

The road occupies what was formerly a portage between the two lakes, and the swamp immediately east of it is a short distance south of the site of the post. This would have been a convenient trading point, both as a midway station for the voyageurs who were constantly passing between the Missis-

sippi river and Chequamegon bay and other Lake Superior points, by way of the Chippewa and Red Cedar rivers, and as a trading station for the Indians who regularly ranged this area as well as the wandering bands who came to the quarry for pipestone.

Dr. J.D. Butler, who visited the site in 1880, found a ditch about a foot wide enclosing a 50 foot square. At two diagonal corners were projections indicating the sides of two flanking turrets.

Dr. Butler concluded that the post was of French origin rather than Indian because of the provision for flanking fire, and because of its being too small to shelter more than one or two dwellings. Indian defenses were always larger, to protect whole tribes.

### **Many Bones Found**

A resident of the neighborhood, James Bracklin, told Dr. Butler that he had once dug up the stump of a stake which was sharpened at one end, plainly showing the work of a white man's axe and indicating that a palisade once stood in the ditch. Near two sides of the inclosure were found small heaps of flat stones which may have marked the spots where fires were made. The ground was underlaid everywhere with charcoal dust, at a depth of about three inches. Near the fireplaces were found many bones.

The only remnants of the ditch found by investigators in 1912 were several slight linear depressions, the longest about 15 feet in length. No trace remains of stones from the trader's chimney which an early settler, George Colon, said formerly lay on the ground.

In the Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. IX, Dr. Butler wrote:

"The locality is called Pocagamah, a Chippewa word said to mean confluence or the joining of waters . . . Early settlers in Barron county heard from the oldest Indians that this post at Rice lake was long occupied by a fur trader named Auguste Curot, or Augustine Cadotte, who was killed there by the raiding Sioux shortly after the Revolutionary war. For many years a spot was pointed out as his grave.

"So much credit has been given these stories by many Barron county whites that they have dug into the earth in several neighboring places, hoping to unearth the supposed buried cash of the mythical trader."

This "mythical" trader seems to be the same one who wintered in 1803-04 in the Yellow river region of the St. Croix

district, in what is now Burnett county. A French-Canadian, named Michel Curot, who like his employes spoke only French, was employed by the XY Company, a British fur trade company.

### **Describes River Trip**

In his journal of that winter (Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. XX) the trader describes his journey from La Pointe on Madeline island, across the northern tip of what is now Wisconsin, down the Brule river to the St. Croix, and along the St. Croix to the Yellow river and Yellow lake.

Here he and his men set up camp for the winter and conducted their trade with the Indians, often going with them to their lodges in the forest to obtain their furs. While Curot left no journal for the next year, we can assume that conditions were similar at the trading post on Rice lake.

Dr. Louise Kellogg of the Wisconsin Historical Society, an authority on the history of this region, wrote:

"A persistent rumor attached itself to the fate of a trader named Curot (some said Auguste), who, it was claimed, was murdered by the Sioux near Rice Lake in Barron County. At this distance of time it is impossible to be certain, but there seems to be good reason to believe this was Michel Curot; that he returned to this region the succeeding year, 1804-05, and advanced as far as the Rice Lake district, where he was murdered in an attack of the Sioux upon his customers, the Chippewa." Another version says the trader was August Cordot.

Reading his journal, one learns that at Yellow lake he was in mortal fear of the Sioux and was saved by the kindness of his rival, the trader of the North West Company, whose cabin was inside a fort, whereas Curot's was not.

Curot's journal for its matter-of-fact record of the customs and manners of forest trade, has considerable historical interest, but otherwise is not attractive reading. The picture it gives of a fur trader's daily life is crude and sordid, unrelieved by any of the romance usually connected with voyageurs.

### **Chippewa Graves**

Across from the site of Curot's post, at the narrows between Rice lake and Lower Rice lake, there used to be a Chippewa burial ground, called the Narrows cemetery. The graves, located at the north end of the railroad bridge that formerly crossed the narrows, were covered with the wooden shelters customary on Chippewa graves. They were destroyed in grading the approach to this bridge.

In the 1850's the Rice Lake band of Indians numbered about 200, headed by Chief Na-nong-ga-bee. In 1854 he with about 70 of his people went to La Pointe on Chequamegon bay to attend a treaty parley. Enroute home they were ambushed by a Sioux band on the warpath and the chief and his son were slain.

His daughter feigned death, until she saw that the Sioux were running off; then she raised her father's gun and killed the Sioux who was coming to get her father's scalp. She continued the chase with the men of the band, and when they returned to the women and children two days later, she had added two more scalps to the one she had taken from the warrior who killed her father.

To-go-ne-ge-shik and 40 other chiefs and braves of the Chippewa signed a treaty at La Pointe in 1842, ceding all Chippewa lands in Wisconsin to the United States, and a reservation was set up for them above Sand lake in Minnesota. Several Chippewa bands were very dissatisfied with the treaty and especially with the reservation, so the government returned to them a large tract on Lac Court Oreilles (Couderay) and the branches of the upper Chippewa. From there they continued to range Barron county, for game, fish, and beaver for pelts. Every fall they came to gather wild rice.

At the Colon Point camp site, on the point in Lower Rice lake, the well known Chippewa chief Chenini had his camp until all the Chippewa were moved to the Lac Court Oreilles (short ears) reservation. The Indians moaned and mourned when they were forced to move.

The Chippewa apparently were referred to as "short ears" because they didn't adorn themselves with the heavy earrings worn by other tribes and consequently their ear lobes weren't stretched. Thus the name of their reservation.

George Colon, an old settler and former owner of the point, said that several hundred Indians camped here at different times and held various festivals and ceremonies. There were several Indian graves here also. One, that of a niece of the chief, was disturbed by resorters over 60 years ago, and some cheap jewelry, metal forks and other articles were found.



## CHAPTER V

### Knapp, Stout & Co.

Around 1850 a memorable epoch opened for Barron county. The story of the Knapp, Stout & Co. lumber firm is inseparably woven into the first half century of the county's history, since their logging operations covered nearly the entire county.

This epoch began when Capt. William Wilson of Menomonie came up the Hay river, in the southwestern part of the county, on an exploring trip in 1847. When he came out on a bluff overlooking the river, Wilson saw a fertile prairie, thick forests through which flowed many small streams emptying into a river swift enough to afford ample water power. Here were the answers to his vision of the future; a central logging camp, a farm to supply food and fodder, and a sawmill near the camp.

As he gazed over the landscape, according to legend, Wilson exclaimed "Prairie Farm." The name has remained to this day, and soon after his visit a logging camp was established.

Knapp, Stout had its real beginning in 1846, when Capt. Wilson and John H. Knapp, both of Fort Madison, Iowa, purchased a sawmill in what is now the city of Menomonie. In 1848, Capt. Andrew Tainter of Prairie du Chien, who had been connected with logging at Chippewa Falls and along the Menomonie (Red Cedar) river, started logging north of Turtle Lake, with four ox teams and a few helpers, mostly Indians and half breeds. The village of Poskin takes its name from that of Tainter's wife, daughter of a prominent Indian leader.

#### "Gold" in the Timber

Tainter intended, when he reached Menomonie in the spring with his log drive, to take the proceeds and follow the "gold rush" to California. Instead, he became interested in the operations of Knapp and Wilson. In 1850 he bought a fourth interest in the sawmill, thus, as he used to say, discovering a gold mine in the timber of Wisconsin instead of in the quartz of the Pacific coast. The story is that Knapp and Wilson were unable to pay him for his logs, so persuaded him to join them.

In 1853, Henry L. Stout of Dubuque, Iowa, bought a fourth interest, and the name was changed to Knapp, Stout & Co. Two of his sons, James H. and Frank D., did much for the development of northwestern Wisconsin.

The former, who established Stout Institute in Menomonie

and for years maintained it at his own expense, also built good roads out of his own pocket, and greatly stimulated the good roads program in Wisconsin.

The latter was best known in this section for his interest in dairy development and had nationally known purebred Guernsey herds on the Stout farm on Red Cedar lake. Until his death he spent his summers at his home on Stout island in the lake, known as "The



GETTING READY FOR THE RAILROAD

Isle of Happy Days." During his lifetime a large share of the Stout land around the lake was a game sanctuary.

In 1854 the Knapp-Stout firm was joined by Thomas B. Wilson, and some years later by John H. Douglass, Knapp's nephew. In 1878 it was incorporated as the Knapp, Stout & Co., with a capital stock of two million dollars, which was doubled by 1882.

#### **\$1.25 Per Acre**

The company made vast purchases of pine lands in this region from the government at \$1.25 an acre; most of it was Norway and white pine, and among it was a liberal mixture of maple, oak and other hardwoods.

In 1863 the company bought 10,000 acres of pine land and the mill at Waubeek near Durand from C.C. Washburn. In 1879-80 it

bought over 100,000 acres from Cornell University of Ithaca, N.Y., and the NorthWestern and Omaha railroads. Other extensive purchases were also made.

Barron county, from where the logs were floated down the Red Cedar river in the spring drives to Menomonie and one of the largest sawmills in the middle west, was practically bare of pine and culled of hardwoods by 1897, fifty years after the logging operations began.

Between those years lies a fascinating story of hardships and thrills, of reputations and fortunes made, of heartbreak and shattered hopes, of the despoiling of the county's wealth, only to make way for the development of even greater wealth in other fields. Part of that story is the story of how Rice Lake began.

Capt. Thomas Wilson and James Bracklin, the latter in charge of logging operations for Knapp, Stout, first looked over the possibilities of this region in 1858. On the shores of Rice lake they found a large Indian village, and here every year came hundreds of Indians to gather rice and capture the wild fowl that fed on it.

#### **City Founded in '68**

The village of Rice Lake had its real beginning in 1868, when Knapp, Stout & Co. established a logging camp south of the Red Cedar river and east of what is now Main st. With headquarters at this camp, the loggers cut the pine from the present site of the city. That fall the camp was left in charge of Owen Gillespie, and another camp established on Section 15, on the west side of the lake, with John Lawler as superintendent.

The advantages of the site at the outlet of Rice lake were apparent to the Knapp-Stout people, and when they decided to erect a mill there, they built the dam on the present site. This transformed a series of rice pools and rush swamps into the body of water that Rice lake is today.

In the next few years quite a settlement sprang up, enabling Charles S. Taylor, writing from Rice Lake in 1876, to say:

" . . . Rice Lake is nicely situated in the midst of a level tract of country . . . The place was almost all built last summer. The company have quite a large saw mill, also a grist mill. They have quite a store, the only one in town. They have a large hotel, also a boarding house for their own men. The company also has other buildings. All . . . are nicely painted. The river and lake as dammed here, furnish a large reservoir for the company's logs."

## CHAPTER VI

### The First Ten Years

Knapp, Stout & Co. established its first mill here in 1871. It was started by M. W. Heller, who was the first permanent settler to bring his family to Rice Lake. He also started the first store, hotel and smithshop for the company.

By 1872 the river outlet was the scene of considerable activity, mostly connected with the Knapp-Stout operations. The sawmill was running with about six employees. For the accommodation of the settlers, a set of stones had been put in and grist was ground on Saturday afternoons.

The company built a frame hotel south of the dam and east of the street. This building was, 50 years later, to house St. Joseph's hospital when it was first organized. South of the end of the bridge was a log stable.

West of the hotel was a large frame sleeping shanty, popularly known as the "Kitchen," and still farther west was the horse barn. The company store was a frame building on the present site of the Stein Bros. warehouse. In 1872 a small frame dwelling, 12 by 16 feet, for Mr. Heller, was added to the other buildings south of the river.

North of the river on the west side of Main street stood a blacksmith shop. In 1874, Knapp-Stout built a structure intended for use as a courthouse on the site of the Odd Fellows building at the northwest corner of Main and Messenger streets. The same year Charles Nunn erected the Rice Lake Hotel near the same corner of Main and Messenger streets.

#### The Chronotype

The Rice Lake Chronotype made its first appearance on Sept. 9, 1874, with C. W. Carpenter as editor. In it he frankly spoke of starting the paper "in a new and almost unbroken wilderness," and complained that the mail service was wretched—it took two weeks to get an answer to a letter from Eau Claire. Most of the advertisements were from outside towns, but Knapp-Stout advertised a saw, planing and feed mill.

The first resident physician was Dr. E. T. Whinnery, a graduate of the University of Michigan, who came in 1872. He was also the first postmaster, when a regular mail service was started in 1874. Before that Knapp-Stout used to bring the mail by tote team from Menomonie.



The first attorney was E.M. Sexton, who also came in 1872. Two years later the first school was established, in a Knapp-Stout building on the south side, with Miss Cheney as the first teacher. The first schoolhouse was built in 1876 on W. Newton st., on what is now the Omaha right-of-way. In 1880 the First Ward school was erected, where Lincoln school now stands.

The Methodist Episcopal was the first church organized here, in 1875. As far back as 1842 a Methodist Episcopal preacher, Rev. Alfred Brunson, traversed this area, en route to La Pointe on Madeline island and a station as Indian agent for the Bad River Chippewa.

### **Mentions Quarry**

He was with an expedition of miners from southwestern Wisconsin who were traveling to the copper mines on Lake Superior. There being no road above Prairie du Chien, they joined forces and equipment for the trip. Rev. Brunson's narrative mentions the pipestone quarry in the eastern part of the county.

In 1860, a circuit rider, John Dyre, came to the outlet of Rice lake in his travels. His narrative mentions no place names except "Grover's Camp," a mile and a half from the outlet of the lake. Here he left his horse in the old lumber camp stable because the trail was blocked by fallen timber.

From here he went on foot until he reached the lake, where he found some Indian women fishing. He persuaded them to take him by canoe to their camp at the outlet where he found about 20 Indians but no whites. That evening a French half-breed who could speak no English took him back to "Grover's Camp." The next day he went to the nearest settlement on Hay river, which was probably the Prairie Farm settlement.

His notes relate that there had recently been a battle between the Sioux and the Chippewa here, and the battle scars on the trees were still visible. He held a service, perhaps the first in what is now Barron County. The attendance was about 35, probably the Knapp-Stout employees at Prairie Farm and the few settlers nearby, and those present were "all attention."

### **Oyster Suppers**

In 1875, the financial support of the pastor was rather meager and spasmodic. "Donations" and oyster suppers were familiar occurrences, the usual charge being \$1.50 per couple. Sometimes the supper was preceded by an afternoon of sports, with curling one of the favorites.

In the spring of 1876 the Chronotype inquired: "When are we going to have that Donation Party?" The editor went on: "Oliver Cromwell said: 'The Lord is on our side, but we must have shoes.' Brother Galloway (of the Barron county circuit) believes that he has the good will of all, and we know that he must have money."

In 1874 the first houses north of the river bank went up, built by Newton Abbot, C. W. Carpenter and George Anderson. Daniel Dorgan built the first saloon, "The Star." In 1875 Charles Saile established a brewery, and the same year Rice Lake was platted by Knapp-Stout. South Rice Lake was platted



IN THE BOARD SIDEWALK ERA

in 1884 on land belonging to Andrew Tainter, Egbert Bundy, Robert Macauley, Edward Manwaring, and Joseph Gates.

Once called "Schneiderville" was an area of 160 acres on the south side homesteaded in 1872 by John Schneider, who had worked for Knapp-Stout. He had to walk to Eau Claire to file his claim in the land office there, and made it to Chippewa in one day.

During the 70s more and more stumps were removed from the townsite, but N. Main st. was still a swamp thoroughfare. By 1880 the population had grown to 479, mostly members of woodsmen's families. The first permanent link through the wilderness to other communities was forged in 1882 when the Chippewa Falls and Northern Railway (later the C. St. P.M. & O.) laid tracks into the village. A minor "boom" followed and by 1890 the city's population was 2,130.

## CHAPTER VII

### Stores and Clubs

More and more services and industries were being added to the community during these early years. The Barron County bank, established in 1882 by N. W. Bailey, was the oldest in the county. It was first at the southeast corner of Main and Humbird sts., and later moved to the northwest corner of Main and Eau Claire sts.

The First National bank, which has operated continuously since 1888, was begun that year by E.L. Everts, as the Bank of Rice Lake, in the historic old Ringling building on the southwest corner of Main and Newton. This bank is now the First Wisconsin National Bank, located at the southwest corner of Main and Eau Claire streets.

Here in the earliest days of Rice Lake was a harness shop owned by A. Ringling, father of the famous Ringling brothers who founded the circus bearing their name, and made the city of Baraboo famous as their headquarters. According to one old commentator here, the sons had their early dreams of success in the harness shop; another said they were an odd bunch who didn't mix with boys of their age.

The Rice Lake Lumber Co. was founded in 1883, with O. H. Ingram as president. The firm erected the first buildings of what was later to become the largest hardwood sawmill in the world.

In 1890 they leased the saw and planing mill of the Knapp-Stout Co. and quickly built up the largest industry in the city, occupying 62 acres of land. The firm of C. Mercier and Son, consisting of Cyrille Mercier and his son Charles, had its origin in 1883 too, in the general carpenter and building line. They added a sawmill in 1890.

#### **Sockness Shoe Oldest Store**

The oldest retail store still in existence in Rice Lake is the Sockness Shoe Co., which was founded in 1886 by E.L. Sockness, who had come to Rice Lake to work for Knapp-Stout. In 1900 he was joined by John Nordenfoss and the firm was known as Sockness & Nordenfoss until 1923, when the latter sold out. The Sockness family was connected with the business until 1984.

The year 1886 also saw the founding of the Meikeljohn and Hatten barrel stave factory with E. Hartel as manager, and the establishment of the Reuter Hub and Spoke Co., with Henry Wilz as foreman.

Rice Lake was incorporated as a city in 1887, with D. M. Monteith as the first mayor. The present city hall property

was acquired at that time, and a small "lock-up" stood on it.

Meetings of the city council were held on the upper floor of the Knapp-Stout (later Odd Fellows) building. In 1890 the city constructed the building later occupied by the Barron County Normal, to be presented to the county as a courthouse. But when those aspirations were not realized, the building was used for some time as a city hall, and also as a high school and a library. It is no longer in existence.

There began the Rice Lake public library, through the efforts of Judge and Mrs. James Robbins, who made and carried out the first plans. A one-mill tax was levied by the city for its support, and Mrs. Robbins served for a time as librarian and assisted library work for many years. In 1905 the library moved from the school building to the new Carnegie library where it remained until 1977, when it moved to the southeast corner of Main and Marshall streets. The original structure was razed in 1985.

### **Fortnightly Club**

In 1908 the Fortnightly club with some help from the library board, finished up the north room in the library basement. This group, the oldest women's organization in the city, was founded in 1899 for "intellectual and social culture." The club had civic interest at heart too; through its efforts the first sidewalks were built, expectorating on the sidewalks was forbidden, and waste baskets were put on the corners for the disposal of trash on Main st.

The oldest lodge in Rice Lake is the I.O.O.F Lodge No. 269, which was chartered in 1877 with six members and bought the old Knapp-Stout building at Main and Messenger streets.

Fire protection for the village came in 1889 when the Rice Lake volunteer fire department was organized. It had 40 members, one steam fire engine, one hook and ladder truck and three hose carts.

The water works and electric light system date back to 1892, but long before the city was organized, the Knapp-Stout Co. had installed a few lights on the public streets, and furnished oil and provided a lighter and a tender.

### **Lantern in Hand**

Even so, her father used to meet her after work with a lantern on spring nights when the lumberjacks were back in the village after the winter in the woods, says Mary Fournier, one of the city's pioneers.

The Fournier family came to Rice Lake in 1880, with



Mary, her mother and a brother taking two days to make the trip in a wagon from Cedar Falls, near Menomonie. Two other brothers, Paul and Med, walked to Rice Lake with the cow. They made it in two days, too.

Mary Fournier, who until her retirement in the early 1950s had been connected with the Golden Rule since 1912 when she opened it with Henry Schneider, began her business career in the Christian Overby store, where the King Edward Inn building now stands. Started in 1887, the store sold clothing, furniture, groceries and jewelry, and Overby used to make an annual trip into the woods to sell jewelry to the lumberjacks. Bookkeeper in the store was his son, Oscar, who opened his music store in 1905.

### **P. M. Parker Store**

Among other retail stores of that era were the M. T. Howard hardware, the F. I. Demers store, and the P. M. Parker department store. The latter began in 1888 and in the 90's was the largest mercantile concern in the county. Parker was the man who first began shipping the farmers' butter and eggs out of Rice Lake thus raising their prices above five cents a pound and five cents a dozen.

In addition to the aforementioned establishments, also in operation by 1890 were a pickle factory, 16 saloons and the Tourist hotel, apparently the most elegant establishment in the village.

In 1893 was organized the Rice Lake, Dallas and Menomonie railroad, which connected with the Soo at Cameron. J. E. Horsman was influential in starting it and became the secretary. The same year the Rice Lake Manufacturing Co. was founded. It did building and manufacturing of all kinds of bank, office and saloon fixtures, as well as canthooks and peavy stocks. The Ge Wing Chinese laundry started operation in 1894.

In 1896 were founded the Barron Telephone Co. and one of the city's most important industries, the Rice Lake Creamery and Cheese factory. President of the latter was Dr. T.A. Charron, with J.E. Horsman, secretary. The creamery had a Danish cheesemaker and turned out 600 pounds of butter and 1,000 pounds of cheese a day. In 1904 Conrad Gerland purchased the factory. His children operated it until 1978 when it became the Rice Lake Creamery Division of Morning Glory Farms Cooperative, Inc.

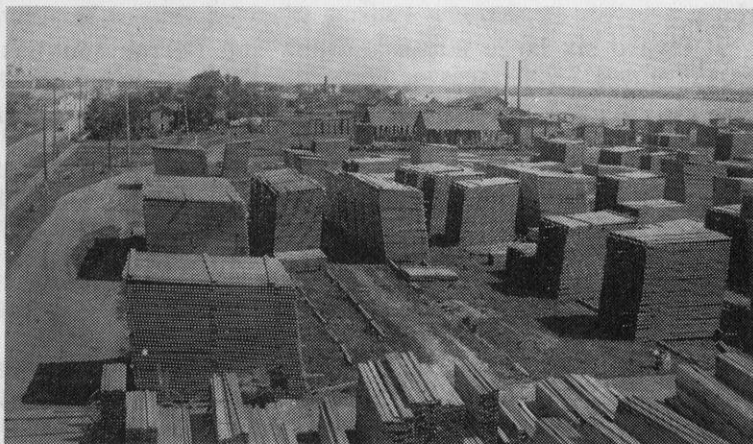
### **Columbia Cornet Band**

The nineties saw recreational facilities develop, with the founding of the city band, called the Columbia Cornet Band, in 1892, and the organization of the Rice Lake Athletic club

in 1897. The 30 members had a gymnasium and clubrooms in the basement of the Field building.

There was a Grand Opera House with a seating capacity of 800, managed by P. M. Parker and N. W. Heintz. A souvenir book of Rice Lake published in 1897 said: "They are careful to book only first class attractions."

This same booklet said: "Main street is two and one-half miles in length and 100 feet wide. Statistics prove the city to be very healthy, which, no doubt, is largely due to the natural



RICE LAKE LUMBER YARDS LOOKING NORTH

drainage that exists by the decline to the Red Cedar river and Rice lake, the overflow being carried into the Red Cedar, whose swiftly flowing current bears it onward to swell the Father of Waters."

#### **Lady of the Lake**

In the nineties, although the saw and planing mill of the Knapp-Stout Co. had been leased to the Rice Lake Lumber Co., their logging operations continued. The headquarters for some 25 lumber camps was maintained here, as well as a large general store, the blacksmith and general repair shops, and a log-sled manufacturing plant. Logs were towed through the lake by the steamer "Lady of the Lake," and floated down to the mills at Menomonie.

In 1901 the Knapp-Stout Co. presented to the Rice Lake Park Assn. the three acre Rice Lake park, with the stipulation that it shall revert to the owners if it is ever used for other than park purposes for two consecutive years. In 1903 the company disposed of all of its interests in Barron county.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Lumberjack Life

In the 1870's the Knapp, Stout Co. was said to be the greatest lumber corporation in the world. In 1873 it owned 115,000 acres of pineland on the Chippewa and Menomonie rivers from which it cut and manufactured in a year 55,000,000 feet of lumber, 20,000,000 shingles and 20,000,000 lath and pickets.

It owned six large farms in Dunn and Barron counties, covering about 7,000 acres of improved land, on which were raised its supplies of wheat and pork. It conducted general merchandise stores whose annual sales amounted to \$750,000.

The company's activities centered at Menomonie. There each fall gathered a motley crew, some from this continent and some from Europe. They came from Germany, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Canada, the older states to the east, and Wisconsin. Many of the men with families settled on farms, permanently or until they could select homes farther up the Menomonie (Red Cedar) valley.

Some of the loggers walked to the camps; others were brought in by company teams. In the early 70's a picturesque sight along the tote roads were the four-mule wagons, bringing loggers and provisions from Menomonie to the camp at Rice Lake.

#### Sand Creek and Chetek

The first night was spent at Sand Creek, the second at Chetek. The tote roads led everything through the woods and stumps to the logging camps. The main routes were fairly well cleared and gradually developed into well-traveled highways. The branch routes were merely a trail through the woods.

As the years went by, many of the loggers began to settle in Barron county. They made a little clearing and put up a cabin as the beginning of their homestead. They brought their family and goods in carts or wagons along the tote roads, and then on their backs to their claim in the woods. There the men worked in the growing season, clearing a little land each year and putting in a few crops.

But with the coming of fall, nearly every male inhabitant started for the woods. Some of the lumber camps were pretentious, with bunk shacks, cook shacks, stables, stores and blacksmith shops, and became the site of permanent settle-

ments. Others were temporary and consisted only of a shack for sleeping and eating, and a stable for the animals.

A typical camp was full of animated sights and sounds; the quick tap of the chopper's axe, the sudden crash as an enormous pine thundered to the ground, the swish of the needles as the branches were trimmed from the trunks, the commands of the foreman, the voices of the drivers, the rattle of chains as the logs were snaked into piles, the jingle of bells as the sled with its load of logs moved slowly to the river or lake bank, or returned on a run for a new load, the hearty shouts of the lumberjacks as they worked.

#### **Dawn to Dusk**

The work began at daylight and ended only with darkness, and the teamsters worked even longer caring for the animals. Paul Fournier, who was a logger with the Knapp, Stout Co. for many years, recalls how the lumberjacks got up by candlelight at 5 a.m., hitched up their teams and spent all day in the woods—for 18 dollars a month.

Next to the foreman the influential man in the camp was the cook. He had a helper, termed a "taffel" or "cookee." Meals were announced by two words, "grub pile."

Mary Fournier, Paul's sister, remembers visiting one of the lumber camps when her father was in charge of it. She agrees that the cook and the cookee were really the top men and usually did an excellent job. She still remembers the delicious pies, and how good the great big ginger cookies tasted.

It was not all work and no play at the logging camps, however. This account of a supper and dance in the eighties comes from a pamphlet entitled: "Social Life in Wisconsin:"

"The trip up the river was made in box sleighs on the ice . . . The long table was set in camp style, with everything on the board, and everything steaming hot . . .

#### **Like a Banquet**

"First there was a ragout of meat and vegetables, then roast venison, roast pork, and baked fish, with delicious accompaniments of both pickles and sweets. The dessert was dried apple pie in which cider was an ingredient, fruit cake, coffee and wild berry preserves.

"The supper was so prolonged with talk and story-telling that it was almost midnight before the room was cleared for the dance. The lumberjacks shaved and dressed as befitted the occasion, furnished partners for all lone ladies, so that wallflowers were none. A fiddler provided music for cotillions and jigs, and tallow candles illuminated the scene. Not until



daylight did the guests depart, fortified for the long ride with an early breakfast of hot pancakes and coffee."

Paul Fournier first came to this region in 1874, when his father built the dam at Cedar Lake (now Mikana). He used to drive logs from Big Chetac lake, through Birch, Cedar and Rice lakes down the Red Cedar to Menomonie. Twice he went as far down as St. Louis with the logs, on the Chippewa and Mississippi rivers.

He describes how they sometimes hauled logs downstream with "ginny boats"—boats with an anchor and 500 feet of rope attached to the anchor and to a winch on the boat. They threw out the anchor as far as they could, then four men turned the crank and reeled in the rope until they could pull up the anchor and repeat the operation.

The logs thus hauled were boomed, or fastened together, with about 1,000 logs in each boom. With a favorable wind the booms were allowed to float down the lake; with an unfavorable one, the booms were fastened to the shore so they wouldn't be blown back upstream.

### **Spring Busiest Time**

The log drives in the spring, when the water was high enough, were the most picturesque, and most dangerous, part of the logging operation. If the melting snow and spring rains were insufficient to produce a high enough rise of water, the lumberman had to wait for the next year to get his logs to market. However, that was rare, and with the melting snows thousands on thousands of logs came hurtling down the icy torrents, sometimes piling up in huge masses at an obstruction, then rushing on even faster.

The drivers had to keep this mass moving constantly, for unless a jam could be broken up quickly, it could pile up the logs to huge proportions. Onto these treacherous piles ventured the drivers with their canthooks and peavies, and many of them were killed and more injured in the wild rush of logs that followed the successful break-up of a log jam.

At night the Wanigan boat that carried the tents, blankets and supplies was headed for shore. Camp was made and after a hearty meal the lumberjacks turned in, to be routed out at daybreak for another day.

With the coming of the railroads and the dwindling of the streams, the logs were shipped on flatcars instead of on the water. When a scant snowfall made winter logging difficult, the logger resorted to "summer logging" with log tramways and crude tramcars.

### Chetek Tramway

Tracks were made of slender logs like hemlock and tamarack, and the curious tramcar ran over it. The horses were hitched behind the load instead of in front, and it was an unfortunate driver whose brake did not work on the downgrade. Such a tramway ran north from Chetek into the pine for several miles.

In the early days the county was under the domination of an absolute monarchy, composed of the lumber company, its



4th OF JULY PARADE — MAIN ST., 1889

superintendent and foremen. The foremen ruled with the power of the influence behind them, and with their fists, too.

The company for the most part had charge of county affairs also. Its favorites were placed in office, and if a show of legality were desired, hundreds of lumberjacks could be claimed as residents and sent to the polls. Occasionally some men, independent of the company, defied it, but generally any man not willing to listen to company dictation, whether employed by the company or not, could and did have a tough time.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Courthouse Fight

One case of defiance of Knapp, Stout & Co. was in the fight over the location of the county seat, one of the liveliest issues of county politics.

The first county seat was located a little east of what is now the city of Barron, in 1868 and in 1873 the citizens voted to move it to Rice Lake Mills, now the city of Rice Lake. There it first met in a hall rented from Knapp-Stout, which virtually controlled the county at that time, since the county officers were chosen by the company and elected by its employees.

As the company owned the land upon which Rice Lake had been founded, it was naturally anxious to get and keep for Rice Lake any advantages that being the county seat might bring.

#### Some Disagreed

A few independent thinkers in the county had other plans.

John Quaderer owned the camp and much of the land at Barron, and although he was originally a Knapp-Stout foreman and was still contracting for them, he was one of the leaders against the company domination of county affairs. Another was Woodbury S. Grover, who had a little farm in Dallas township. In the election of 1874 it was voted to move the county seat back to Barron, and Grover was elected county clerk.

The editor of *The Chronotype* at that time reported that there were irregularities in publishing notices of election, and declared that people in the Rice Lake area did not turn out to vote at all as a result. Only seven votes were cast in Rice Lake against 114 in Barron on the question.

Subsequently, a hot dispute arose over the legitimacy of the balloting. The company determined to carry the fight further, and there was talk of an appeal and an injunction restraining the county officers from removing the records to Barron. Grover had possession not only of his records, but of those of several other county officials to whom he was deputy.

#### "Courthouse" Chair

The dispute dragged on until Dec. 29, 1874, when the governor proclaimed Barron as the county seat. Word reached Rice Lake late in the afternoon a few days later.

So Grover, to forestall injunction proceedings, put the records

in the seat of a chair hewn out of a log, and with a team of horses said to have had their feet covered so as not to make any noise in going out of Rice Lake, took the records to Barron and deposited them with John Quaderer. The chair is in safekeeping at the county clerk's office vault in Barron.

### **Quaderer's Gift**

Grover's "coup" had the desired effect. All the county officials except Henry Sawyer, county treasurer, acceded. Sawyer's hold-out got him nowhere—the other officials declared his seat vacant and appointed John Quaderer to fill it in February, 1875. The next year Quaderer donated the present courthouse grounds for the building of a courthouse.

In 1890, with the population of the county more than doubled, the Rice Lake people felt it was time for another attempt to get the county seat. So they presented to the county board a petition asking that the question be submitted to the voters. The board had 13 members friendly to Barron and 12 friendly to Rice Lake.

The opposition set to work, after they had stricken off some names that did not appear on the poll lists, and as a result 196 persons asked to have their names withdrawn from the petition. This left fewer than the legal minimum and the petition was denied.

So heated was the dispute that followed that one man, John Lalonde, filed a taxpayer's suit against the county board. The suit went before the state supreme court, which in 1891 upheld the county board. That settled the issue, although it figured in county politics for many years afterward.

### **Cabins in the Slashings**

Knapp, Stout & Co. was doing considerable farming in this area during these years, and the settlers who had been drawn to the region because of the logging, began to settle on their own tracts of land in growing numbers.

Some of these tracts were in the pines, some among the stumps, some in the "slashings" and burnt-over land, and some in the hardwood which was then considered a nuisance to be eliminated as fast as possible.

Most of the settlers had a stove, cooking and eating equipment, bedding, flour, bacon and salt—and little more. They made their furniture on the clearing with an axe. That, plus a shovel and hoe, were the only tools many had for clearing and farming. Some of the settlers brought with them a pig or chicken or two.

Only a few had a cow, although many bought one soon



after arriving. Fortunately, the settlers could usually buy livestock from Knapp-Stout. Often the cow was used as a beast of burden—Mrs. Mary Cain, who was a pioneer in the Spooner area, recalls a settler who used to come to the village driving a wagon hitched to an ox and a cow.

When provisions were needed, the men trudged to Menomonie, Chippewa Falls, or Eau Claire, and brought back supplies on their backs. Stories are told of men who even brought in stoves this way.

Many of the women, especially those who had come from Europe, carded and spun on the spinning wheels they had brought from the old country, then knit mittens, socks and even jackets to supplement their meager supply of clothing.

For some years little was raised on the clearing except the food needed by the family. This was augmented by wild game, and such staples as could be bought at the far-away stores.

Wheat and corn had to be ground at distant mills. Meat was dried and cured in the back yard, or hung up, preserved by the intense cold. As their acreages increased, the settlers could sell a little surplus, especially of rutabagas, oats, hay and meat, to the lumber company. They were paid mostly in scrip and orders good at the company store.

In some neighborhoods were crude schools which children could attend for part of the year, but for a long time the more isolated children received only what instruction their mothers could give them. Traveling ministers and priests gave religious instruction and baptized children. Services were held in the settlers' homes, and many of the congregations in Rice Lake today were founded in these humble cabins.

## CHAPTER X

### Pioneers and Indians

The first assessment of the county of which there is a record was made in 1869, when the total assessed valuation of the county was \$316,065. Eighty-five years later, in 1954, the valuation had increased to \$86,594,640.

In 1870 the county had a population of 538 actual residents, the real pioneers of Barron county. In the library of the State Historical society in Madison are the original census



M. T. HOWARD STORE — SOUTHEAST COR. MAIN & NEWTON STS.

schedules for the 1870 census, which listed name, age, occupation and birthplace.

The very first settlers were chiefly "Yankees" with a New England or New York heritage who came to work for the lumber companies. They were joined almost immediately by Scandinavians, mostly Norwegians in the early days, and by Scotch-Irish, Irish and French, who came to this section from Canada to follow the lumbering industry. There were also some Germans and an occasional Hollander.

#### Italian Colony

In the late 1870's an Italian colony of about 150 families

started a few miles south of Cumberland. They had been engaged in railroad construction and after its completion settled on small farms.

Among the names in the first census are: Casper Rosbach, 34, farmer, Mecklenburg; Ole K. Larson, 23, logger, Norway; John Quaderer, farmer, Austria; Henry Ashlen, 26, logger, Canada; Wm. McAuley, 56, boss in camp, Scotland; W. S. Grover, 38, farmer, Maine; Benjamin Kellogg, 40, farmer, New York; August Rhomheid, 30, farmer, Saxony; Frank Malay, 20, logger, Ireland; A. C. Knutson, 18, cook, Norway; Andrew Nelson, 22, cook, Norway; A. Thompson, 24, logger, Norway; John O'Neil, 26, farmer, Ireland.

Also listed in the first census were the pioneers of what is now known as Dobie. The French settlement, as it was called, was the first agricultural settlement in this part of the county.

### **French and Irish**

Its pioneers were John LeBrie, sr., John LeBrie, jr., Charles Amans, Henry Demers and Cyrille (Sevil) Demers. They had come from Canada to Rice Lake by way of Missouri. The French settlement was adjoined on the north by an Irish one, in 1870, started by four bachelors, Michael Donnelly, Michael Dooker, Michael Rilley and James Russell. The Barron county history records that "alone as they were, they found their diversion in visiting the French settlement."

It is not hard to imagine the feelings of the wives and mothers of these pioneers, especially those in the isolated cabins, when winter came and the men and older boys made for the woods. Wild animals ranged the forest, neighbors were far away, often provisions ran low, Indians were sometimes in the neighborhood, sometimes there was illness and even death.

The Indians belonging to the Court Oreilles reservation camped near many of the lumber camps throughout the county for many years after the county was opened. Some of them were related to the lumbermen by marriage, for such prominent leaders as Capt. Tainter, John Quaderer and others had married Indian women.

But as the farms increased and there were more lonely cabins in which the women and children were alone in the winter, many of the whites felt it wise for the Indians to be moved.

As a result, in 1878, the county board requested the Department of the Interior to remove the Indians to their reservation. At the time there were only three voting Indians in the county, two homesteaders and one a free holder. So gradually the Indian bands were removed to the reservation, and their old hunting grounds were converted into rich farms.

## CHAPTER XI

### Farming in Earnest

By 1895, when the logging period was coming to a close, farming began to assume ever-increasing importance. It was becoming a little easier too—in the 1890's the first machine-run threshing machines were introduced. At about the same time appeared the first round silos. Before that the stone-and-mortar structures had been square or rectangular.

These first above-ground silos, which originated about 1875, caused a great deal of controversy among the dairy farmers of the day. Many believed that feeding silage to the cattle would taint the milk and result in poor dairy products.



MAIN STREET PARADE — EARLY 1900's

#### Prophetic Statement

With the waning of timber resources, it became more and more evident that agriculture must replace lumbering, if the county was to progress. In 1896 Dean W.A. Henry of the College of Agriculture



of the University of Wisconsin wrote:

"After a careful study of all conditions prevailing in northern Wisconsin, its fine water, its ability to produce fine field crops, such as clover, hay fodder, corn, barley, peas and potatoes, I am impressed with the belief that this region will some day become one of the great dairy regions of America.

"With the passing away of the vast forests and the disappearance of the lumber industry, let there come to northern Wisconsin advanced methods of farming with dairying as the leading factor, and the prosperity of the region is assured beyond all question."

Whether they were familiar with Dean Henry's views or not, many pioneers realized the same possibilities, and began slowly and laboriously to build up good herds.

#### **LeJeune, Clark, Stout**

Among early day breeders who carved names for themselves in the dairy industry are these: John LeJeune, who was honored by the state university; W. H. Clark, famed for his Jerseys, and called "Jersey" Clark; Frank D. Stout, who bred purebred Guernseys at his Cedar Lake farm; A. J. Krahenbuhl of Barron; C. J. Orn, W. F. Krippner, W. A. Weilep, John E. Bowen, the Halvorson brothers at Canton, D. R. Kline, F. W. Meyer, Frank and Henry Roemhild, Peter Miller, G. J. Gleiter, W. H. Bond, C. A. Ness and Son, and many more. These men were the leaders in bringing in purebred sires to produce the best calves.

As far as can be learned, Jerseys were the first purebred cattle to be brought into the county.

In the late 1880's three purebred Holstein bulls were imported from Lake City, Minn. Two of them were owned by the Van Valkenburgs in Dallas township, and the third, an aged bull that weighed 3,200 pounds and cost him \$200, belonged to Woodbury S. Grover, also in Dallas township.

#### **Drs. Charron and Sattre**

Two other men who firmly believed in this area's agricultural possibilities were two Rice Lake doctors. Dr. Toussaint A. Charron, who came to Rice Lake from Montreal in 1887, owned the 320 acre "Rose of Sharon Stock Farm" in Rice Lake township, where he raised purebred Holsteins and horses.

Dr. Olaf M. Sattre, who came here from Michigan in 1894, also brought purebred Holstein cattle into the county, and made it possible for others to get started raising that breed.

He also owned a large flock of purebred Shropshire sheep, from which many of the flocks of the county sprang.

Hand in hand with the development of dairy herds in the county was the development of the creameries.

The creamery founders were quick to realize the importance of high producing cattle to the farmers who were selling the milk for conversion into various dairy products. In every way they could they aided the farmers in acquiring better herd sires, and encouraged the dairymen to improve sanitary conditions on the farm. Many of them extended themselves to their financial limit to assist worthy breeders to establish good herds.

### **Barron Creamery in '02**

Among these early creamery men was John E. Bowen of Barron, a Guernsey breeder, who became president of the Barron Cooperative Creamery Co. in 1902, when it was made a permanent organization.

Dr. T.A. Charron served as president of the Rice Lake Creamery and Cheese Co. when it was incorporated in 1896, with a capital stock of \$4,000. This was the creamery acquired by Conrad Gerland in 1904, when the area was beginning to be a milk producing section. That same year G.O. Gustafson established the G.O. Gustafson Ice Cream and Dairy Co. in Rice Lake.

But despite the evidences of agricultural progress in the 1890's, the census of 1895 showed that the county was still scarcely developing from a wilderness. There were some prosperous farming communities with a few good homes, but these settlements were scattered, and less than one seventh of the county was under cultivation.

However, the prediction made in the Rice Lake souvenir book of 1897 (that "Rice Lake is a city destined by nature, assisted by the hands of enterprising men, to become one of the foremost in this section of state,") has been borne out over the years.

Thus it could be written, as far back as 1922 when the last History of Barron County was compiled, that "with the dawn of the new century the forces were forming, the influences were at work, which were to result in the glorious story of modern agriculture and dairying, a story which had written the name of Barron county in the foremost ranks of the prosperous Wisconsin communities, and well in the front among the flourishing agricultural regions of the whole country."

THE END







