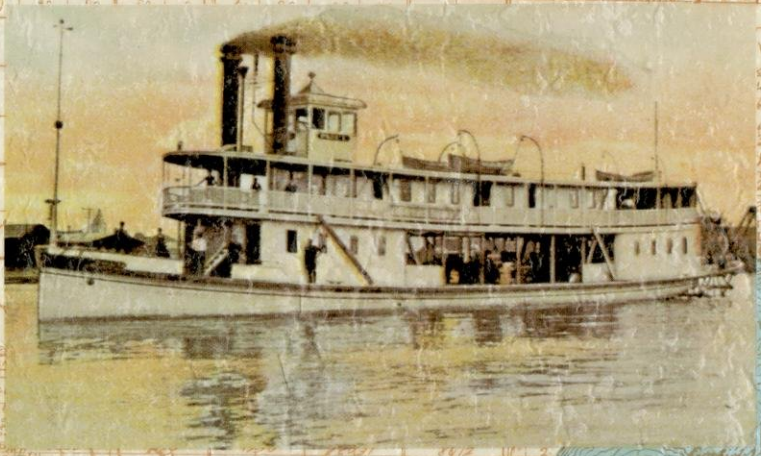
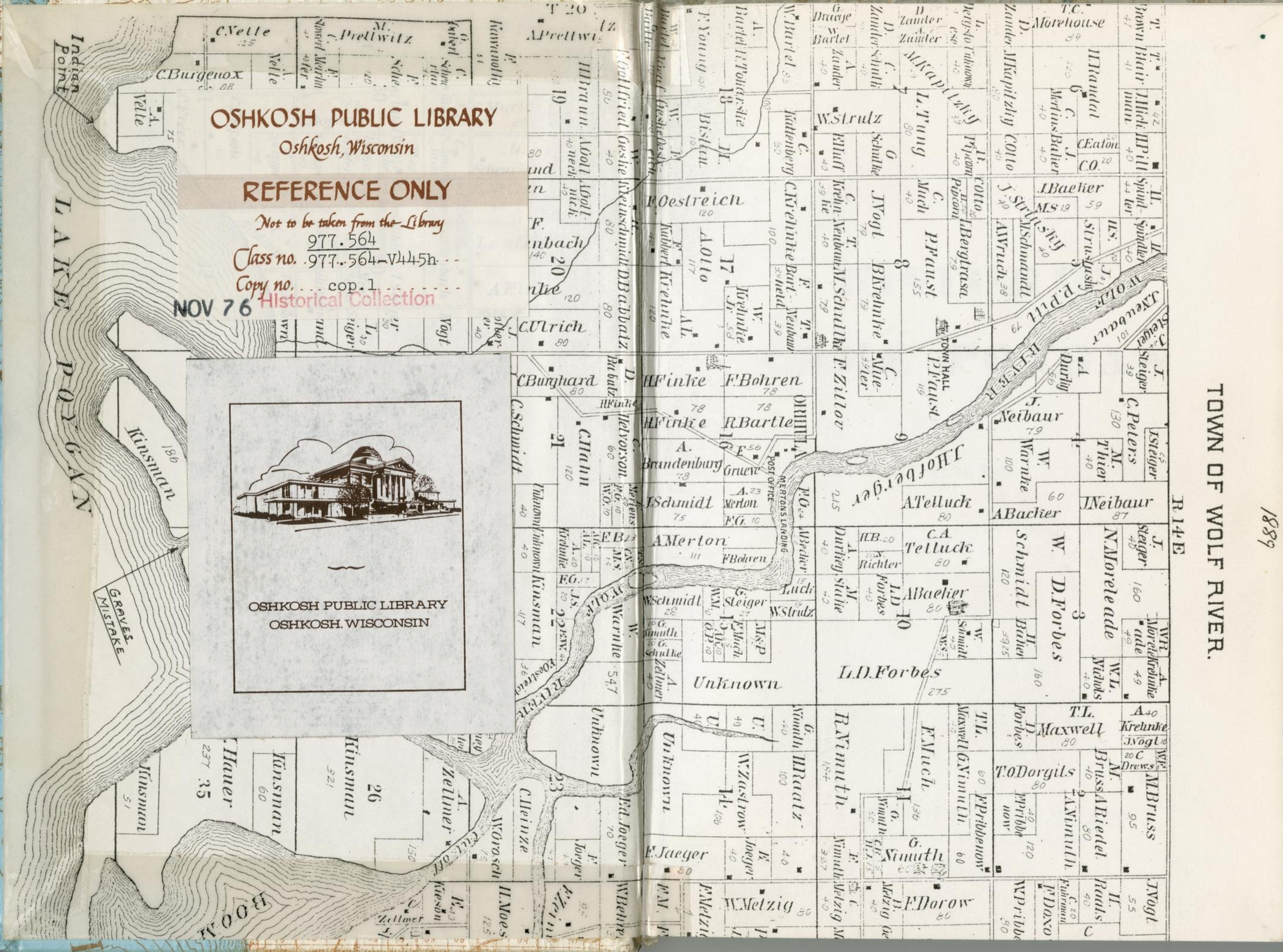
Historic Lake Poygan. 1976

Velte, Charles H.
Neenah, Wisconsin: Velte, 1976

HISTORIC LAKE POYGAN



Chas. H. Velte



HISTORIC LAKE POYGAN

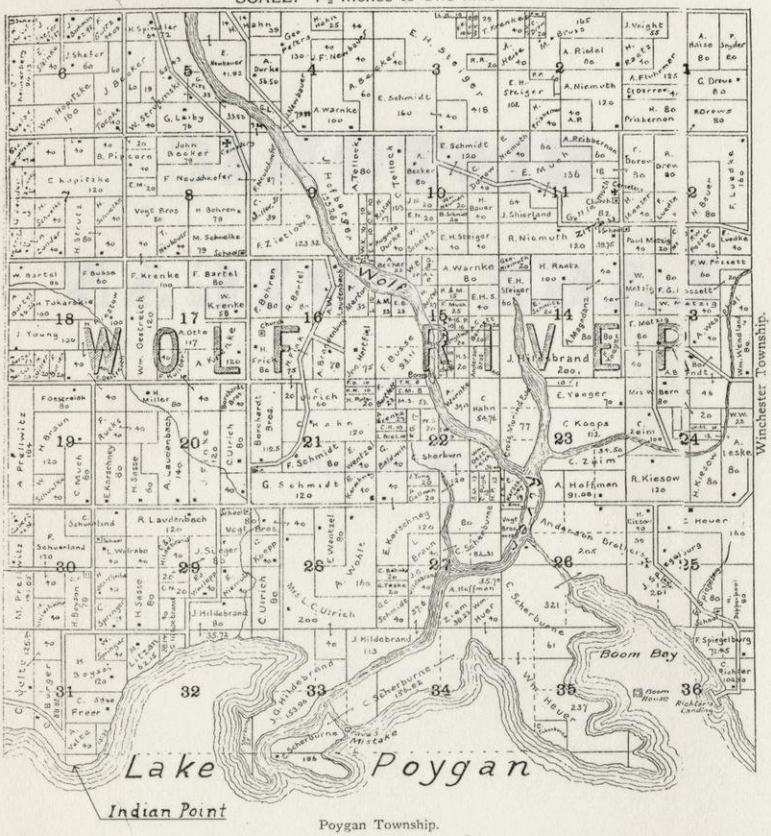
By

Chas. H. Velte

Map of

Wolf River Township

SCALE: 1½ Inches to One Mile



Poygan Township.

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(a synopsis)

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THE BEGINNING OF THINGS

I lived on the shore of Lake Poygan all my early life. From my birthplace at Tustin any fisherman, with a long cane fish pole, could cast into the lake. When my family moved to the farm at Indian Point, a mile away, when I was 2-3 years old, the lake was on three sides of us. It was always within shouting distance.

I was born into an historic environment. My paternal grandparents, with five children, came from Germany in the late 1840s and settled along the north shore of Lake Poygan. Four of them were young men, becoming old enough to be taken into the German compulsory military service. They were among the large number who came to America to escape that military regime. Ironically, these young men became soldiers in the Civil War, and returned to this locality after the war. A mile from our farm across Norwegian Bay lived Jake Hildebrand, a son of Joseph G. Hildebrand, who had served in the Kaiser's army during the German rebellion in the 1840s, and came to this country to be free from German militarism.

Adjoining our farm home on the north was Charles Freer, a pioneer Englishman; and next to him was Charles Boyson, an immigrant Norwegian. Our adjoining neighbor on the West was Chris Burgner, from Switzerland. The melting pot was operating here.

The lands on which the people in this vicinity lived was historical Indian land. There had been a Menominee village at Tustin, and another on the Boyson farm, half a mile north of my farm home. There was an old Indian burying ground near the log house where I lived. Indian Point was the place where

the Indians came to cross the lake on horseback, on their way to the Paygrounds, where Government Agents met them in October of each year for the annual payment. When they were moved out of this area, up the Wolf River in 1852, they were in sight of the log house home where I lived later.

During my lifetime, steamboating reached its peak and the story of this enterprise touched me at many points. I was born into that environment.

Wallace W. LeFevre was the pioneer steamboat man on Lake Poygan, and became prominent in the steamboat history of the region as owner and operator for years. Sometime after he moved from Eureka to Tustin in 1878, my mother worked in the LeFevre household, which was also a stopping place for travelers. My brother Wallace was named after Mr. LeFevre. Paul LeFevre, the son, was five years older than I and we attended the Tustin School together, and sat on the same seats and benches. John Velte, a well known steamboat captain for many years, was my cousin and I lived in his home while going to school at Oshkosh. His son, Earl, was a captain on the government tugboats all of his adult life. My brother Wallace worked on a tugboat for one season. My next door neighbor during my childhood was Marie Burgner, who was the cook on the LeFevre boats many years. In spring, summer and fall I heard steamboat whistles almost every day during my early life. The steamboats that entered the Wolf River were in sight of my home at Indian Point, a mile away.

Not only was the Wolf River an important thoroughfare for steamboat traffic but it was a very important stream during the lumber and logging era. It was considered to be the best log driving stream in the state. The story of the logging operations in the northern pineries and rafting along the river was also a part of my experience. My father went into the logging camps in the upper Wolf country for several winters with his team (Dick and Clyde).

Many people have written about this area and what

transpired here during the pioneer days, and up to comparatively recent times. Most of the people who made the Lake Poygan and Wolf River history and lived through it are gone. To those now living in the region, the story is hazy, or not known at all. People now living on the land which was the Paygrounds 125 years ago may not even know about the history of the spot.

It seems advisable to me, and desirable, that the various chapters of the story should be brought together in a single abbreviated form and preserved. So far as I know, nobody is thinking of doing it. If I don't attempt to write up such a record, it will probably never be done. There is no intention to make this story a literary production, or qualify it for a wide circulation. It is local history, and I hope it may be interesting and informational to the people living in the general area of Lake Poygan and the Wolf River region. The story is essentially a product of my life and experience in the period and what I have learned by gathering and using such informational material that has some relation to the area and what transpired here.

The subject matter is presented under the following title headings:

I. Lake Poygan
II. Tustin
III. The Paygrounds—the Indians' Last Stand
IV. The Steamboat Era
V. Logging and Rafting Operations
VI. Borth-Willow Creek
VII. Town of Poygan
VIII. Town of Wolf River

I.

LAKE POYGAN

Lake Poygan is a part of the Lake Winnebago Pool. This pool is a huge reservoir which receives all the surface water of the drainage area covering more than 3,000 square miles in northeastern Wisconsin. The pool itself has a surface area of about 265 square miles at the elevation of the crest of the dam at Menasha. It includes Lakes Winnebago, Butte des Morts, Winneconne and Poygan, and the Fox River upstream to about Eureka in Winnebago County, and the Wolf River upstream nearly to New London in Waupaca County.

Lake Poygan has received little historical attention because it is just off the early travelled water trail on the Fox River between Portage and Green Bay. For more than 200 years this river was the thoroughfare of the pioneer explorers and those who followed them. The Fox River and Valley "occupied one of the commanding positions of the Northwest and will always hold a place in history far out of proportion to its size." Lake Poygan is only 5½ air miles away from this historic thoroughfare, and the Fox River traffic bypassed it. This lake became historically important in its own right in later years because of what happened in the Fox River territory during these 200 years.

Origin of Lake Poygan

Why is there a Lake Poygan? It is the result of what happened before it became a lake. To know what that was we must go back to the time of the Ice Age or Glacial Period. There were several cold epochs in this Ice Age, and between the epochs were warmer periods during which the glacier ice

melted back toward the north, only to return long afterward with the return of another cold epoch. Each of these alternating periods of warm and cold climate was tens of thousands of years in duration.

Some 10,000 years ago Wisconsin was covered by solid ice nearly 2 miles thick, called the Labrador Ice Sheet. A part of that ice sheet is called the Green Bay Lobe. It was part of the glacier which bulldozed its way down through Canada into Wisconsin and moved everything in its path along with it, tearing off the tops of the hills and digging out of the valleys, grinding everything up into a huge mass of decayed and pulverized limestone combined with clay and a mixture of sand, rocks and boulders, called "drift". The Green Bay Lobe pushed its way southward, down through the Green Bay–Fox River Valley.

When this glacier melted, it dropped all the "drift" it had accumulated. This "drift" filled in the valleys and the depth was great—maybe a thousand feet, or more. In other places the "drift" was only a few feet thick. In some places the bed rock projected up high enough not to be covered up by the glacial drift, as at Red Granite, Montello, Wausau, and, some other places.

Wherever the glacial "drift" blocked a stream or river, a natural dam was formed and the water in that stream was backed up, creating a lake. Hundreds of lakes in Wisconsin were formed in this manner, and they are called glacial lakes. Lake Poygan is a glacial lake. Now then, how did it become such a lake?

Geologists tell us that before the Ice Age there was a shallow valley or ravine where Lake Winnebago is now, and a river ran northward through the valley. That river carried the water that came down from the drainage area where the Fox and Wolf Rivers and their tributaries flow. That river continued its course and flowed down to Green Bay. When the covering glacial ice melted, it deposited enough glacial "drift" across the river ravine to block the water and back it

up. A natural dam was thus created at what is now the northeast corner of the lake. The water kept pouring in from the drainage area above and was held back by this glacial dam, thus creating Lake Winnebago. The level of water in the lake raised until it found a place on the rim or margin of the lake where it could overflow the bank. This was at the northwest corner of the lake, where Neenah and Menasha are now located. From that point the overflow continued its course in a round about way toward Green Bay, and finally found its way back into the original river bed at Kaukauna, 16 miles away, a drop of 146 feet. This produced the water power from Neenah and Menasha to Kaukauna.

It so happens that the water level in Lake Winnebago is about the same as the water level in Lake Poygan. Consequently, as the water level in Lake Winnebago rose, the level of Lake Poygan rose accordingly. *In other words, there is a Lake Poygan because there is a Lake Winnebago.*

If the iceberg had not dammed up the stream at the point which is now at the northeastern corner of Lake Winnebago, and the original river had been allowed to continue its course through the valley unimpeded, there wouldn't have been any Lake Poygan.

It is interesting to comment that it would not be a difficult engineering feat to dredge out the original channel from Lake Winnebago down through the original river bed. If this were done, and the water were allowed to go through unimpeded, there wouldn't be any Lake Winnebago or Lake Poygan.

These two lakes are comparatively very shallow. One geologist has described Lake Winnebago as "merely a film of water spread over a slightly depressed portion of a plain". Its maximum depth now at normal water level is only 21 feet. On this basis, Lake Poygan is thinner or shallower than a film. Compare this depth with that of Green Lake, which is more than 300 feet deep.

When Lake Winnebago was formed, its maximum depth was considerably less than 21 feet, probably about 15-16

feet. Its depth was determined by the glacial dam at the northeast corner, which therefore also determined the depth of Lake Poygan. At that level, Lake Poygan was no more than a rice lake. On an ancient map (1769), it is named "Rice Lake".

At that time, the west end of the lake had less than 3 feet of water. The same condition existed along the entire shore line around the lake. The east end of the Lake Poygan we are talking about is where Clark's Point on the north and Lone Willow Point on the south come close together. At one time Clark's Point probably extended far enough south to include Goose Island; Lone Willow Point extended north from the south shore. The only thing between them was a channel through which the water from the Wolf River flowed. Both of these points were low marshland. Members of the Clark family told me that they used to pasture their cows way out on Clark's Point.

A deeper part of Lake Poygan was located in the middle of the lake from the mouth of Wolf River eastward to the channel between Clark's Point and Lone Willow Point. Yet, the greatest depth of the water in that area was only 6½-7 feet. At Indian Point, it was possible to wade almost across the lake during normal or low water levels. A well-defined sand bar extended out from that point, and a similar sand bottom extended northward from the south shore. The maximum depth of the water over these sandbars was less than 5 feet—in some places from 3½-4 feet. The Indians were able to pick their way across the lake on these sandbars on horseback. I have often waded out on the sandbar at Indian Point, where I lived.

Lake Poygan was filled with rice-beds; and it might be said that the lake had one rice bed, which covered the entire area except the deeper part in the middle running east and west. It probably would be accurate to say that 2/3rds of the lake was covered with a rice bed at one time.

Importance of the Rice

This fact was very important to the Indians. The Menominees derived their name from the fact that they depended on the rice growing in the lake for their food. The rice-beds were the "bread basket" of the Menomonie Indians. Their name means "The people of the wild rice". This wild rice was a staple food for them because it could be stored as an insurance against the grim winter months. The Indians came from distant places during harvest time (in September) to get their winter supply.

The harvesting and threshing procedure was an intersting one—also a laborious one. There were minor variations in this

(Courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin)

procedure, but the process was fundamentally the same. The following was a normal procedure.

An Indian and one or two squaws, in a canoe or light flat-bottom boat, went along the side of a rice bed, or through it. The Indians pushed the canoe with a 12-18 ft.

pole. The squaw(s) had a curved stick with which she reached out and bent the ripened seed heads over the edge of the canoe and pounded out the grain into the bottom of the canoe with a short wooden paddle. When a load had been gathered in this manner, the canoe was pushed ashore and the grain poured into a receptacle of some kind—a kettle or possibly a zinc wash tub tilted over a slow fire. There it was stirred around with a 3-ft. wooden paddle until the grain was thoroughly parched—not scorched—separating the kernels from the husks. This may have taken several days. This procedure was continued through the harvesting season until a winter's supply was obtained.

After the parching process, the grain was removed to a trampling pit where an Indian, wearing new moccasins, threshed the chaff from the grain by trampling on it, a rather long process. Then the contents of the trampling pit were winnowed into the air on windy days so that the breezes could blow the chaff away, leaving the rice grains, which are about the size of oat grains, and twice as long. Not only was the wild rice gathered and stored for home consumption, but it had a commercial value in trading with the Indians far away. It found its way into the western country occupied by the plain Indians. It is reported that one Indian harvested 780 pounds one year, but such a harvest must have been far above the average.

The High Water Era

The time came when man began to do something about the surface water supply. As settlers moved into the Winnebago-Poygan Lake area, the water was not high enough in most places for good navigation.

A dam was built in 1849 at the Menasha outlet of Lake Winnebago. It did not affect the water level materially. In 1869 the dam was raised sufficiently to overflow some of the lower lands in the Lake Winnebago pool. In 1876 a new dam was built which continued the overflow period. In the winter

of 1880-81 the dam was heightened to raise the water level 3½ feet, and this raised the water level that much all the way to Lake Poygan and its tributaries.

This caused a great disturbance among the land owners all around the two lakes and the connecting waterways. Their lands were flooded and their usefulness destroyed. My father was one of about 300 land owners seriously affected by raising the water level. He owned the 59.4 acre tract of which Indian Point is a part, and lost 20-25 acres. 133 land owners filed claims against the U.S. Government for damages, and there were 133 separate suits. Many of the lawyers in Winnebago, Calumet and Fond du Lac Counties were engaged to represent these claimants. It was impracticable to try 133 separate lawsuits. The question of law involved in all of them was the same. It was, therefore, decided to select one of those claims for a test case; and it was agreed that the result in that suit would apply to all of the claims. My father's claim was picked as a type case. It was tried in Circuit Court at Oshkosh. The judgment in that court was appealed to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, where it was decided in 1890 that the Government was liable for damages at the rate of $15 per acre for the land permanently destroyed. The name of the case is VELTE VS. THE UNITED STATES and the record of it is found in Vol. 76 of Wisconsin Reports, on page 287. As a result of that case, the Government paid $600,000.00 to the land owners for damages.

By strange coincidence another event happened when the Menasha dam was heightened 3½ feet that intensified the high water problem. During that same winter (1880-81) there was an unusual snowfall of 10 feet all over Wisconsin. In the early spring of 1881 that snow melted suddenly and the water poured in torrents into the tributaries and main streams of the Wolf River Valley. Almost continuous rains in December, 1880 had already swollen the streams and lakes in the Winnebago pool to their capacity. When the rapidly melting snow in the spring of 1881 poured in on top of this,

there was widespread devastation. But this was not all.

A terribly destructive force came from another direction. The Wisconsin River Valley was also a victim of the same high water problem. The heavy rains swelled the Wisconsin River to flood tide. The dikes which had been built to keep the water within bounds were swept away and the Wisconsin River water flowed uninterruptedly into the Fox River at Portage. This uncontrolled flood poured down the Fox River to Lake Winnebago. Of course, this great volume of water added to the flood conditions already existing, and created an indescribably destructive condition, far surpassing anything like it that had ever happened in Wisconsin, either before or since then. When one remembers that the water level of the Wisconsin River at Portage is from 3 to 5 feet higher than it is in the Fox River, only 2½ miles away, one can hardly imagine what happened as a result of that breakthrough. When this flood condition was at its height, all of my father's 59.4 acres at Indian Point were under water except four or five acres. Most of the highway in the vicinity was also under water.

A description of the conditions that existed during this unprecedented flood is found in the History of Northwestern Wisconsin, published in 1881:

> "In the 1880-81 period, the riparian owners up river blamed the dams at Neenah and Menasha for flooding and resulting devastation. A relief committee at Oshkosh was formed to take such action as might be necessary to relieve the area from the existing catastrophe. They proposed that a sluiceway be constructed in the dams at Neenah and Menasha and that all the flumes be opened so that all the pent-up water could pass through. The people at Neenah-Menasha were afraid that the people at Oshkosh would attack the dam, so they stationed an armed guard at the dams and mounted a cannon from old Fort Howard on the river bank, loaded with gravel.
>
> "The people at Appleton also became seriously alarmed. If the dams at Neenah and Menasha would be opened up, as the Oshkosh people demanded, Appleton would have received the brunt of the destructive torrent rushing down the river."

It is interesting to observe that if the Wisconsin River water had originally been diverted into the Fox River at Portage, there probably wouldn't have been any Berlin and Omro, at least not in their present locations.

High Water and Wild Rice

The acreage of the wild rice-beds in Lake Poygan remained fairly constant until 1880-81 when the dam at Menasha raised the normal water level 3-3½ feet. The combination of that fact and the unprecedented floods at that time began to reduce the wild rice acreage. In the winter when the water level was low, much of the rice-beds had frozen solid. The spring floods poured into the lake before the rice-beds had thawed out, lifting them up to the increased water level and literally tearing them up by the roots. This produced a floating rice bog. The winds and water tore some of that bog loose, which was then blown to and fro, muskrat houses and all, and dashed to pieces by wind and water.

As the northern woodlands were cleared out, the winter snow melted faster and the water came down more rapidly. There was "high water" every spring. This spring flow often reached flood proportions. It was not uncommon for the water level to be raised 3 feet.

Through the years, the variation was about 4 feet. In 1881 the water level reached an all-time high—752 feet above sea level. The all-time low after 1881 came in 1889, when it was 743.6 feet above sea level. The extreme variation has therefore been 8.4 feet.

The greatest damage to the wild rice-beds came when the water was low at freeze-up time, followed by a severe winter which froze the beds way down into the roots; and then high water came in the spring.

Another destructive force came into existence through the years. In the earlier years there were few carp in these waters. They multiplied rapidly and became destroyers of the rice-beds. They are bottom feeders who rip up the lake and marshland bottoms in their search for food. High water and

hungry carp doomed the wild rice to almost total extinction.

In addition to the foregoing, the moving ice each spring bulldozed big holes into the shorelines. As a result of all this, the shorelines have been pushed back far beyond the original lines. Where there were orchards on the south shore, there is now 2-3 feet of water. A pasture and pig yard on the north shore is now open water, 2-3 feet deep. Clark's Point was once pasture land. Most of it is now covered by 2-3 feet of water; the rest of it is low marshland.

The wind, water and ice are wearing away the shoreland that is left. The lower shoreland has become marshland and the lake has pushed itself farther and farther inland by washing out those marshlands. The lower Wolf River area is a good example of that.

When the "Boom Cut" was dredged through to Boom Bay, the river flowed about 3½ miles beyond the "Cut off" through a land area before reaching the lake. Now that area is nearly all open water. In fact, the open water extends a mile or two inward on both sides of the river. The mouth of Rat River is now a half mile farther upstream than it used to be. Open water now extends about a mile north of the "Cut off". It is estimated that about 1300 acres of shoreline land have been washed away.

Land owners are trying to save their lake frontage by building breakwaters. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is going at great length to protect and preserve the shore lines and eroding river banks. Its object is to protect and preserve the public wild rice areas, and to provide spawning grounds for fish. That department is spending a lot of money on this project. Miles and miles of rock banks have been erected along the banks of Rat and Wolf Rivers and Pumpkinseed and Willow Creeks, and along the lake front and inside of The Underground at the west end of Lake Poygan. The process is called "rip rapping". It can be done only in wintertime and then only when a winter has been cold enough to freeze the area solid with ice thick enough to

bear the weight of trucks loaded with rock to be dumped on the ice, which will sink into place in the spring. A loaded truck weighs 22-23 tons.

What does such an operation cost? In one case, it cost $81,760.00 for the rock to "rip rap" the lake front of 590 acres. It is presumed that there were additional costs for other items. That acreage is only a very small part of the total acreage to be "rip rapped". This conservation program is said to be the most extensive one of its kind in the Lake Michigan area.

A Spectacular Event

A spectacular event took place at the mouth of the Wolf River that is worth recounting here.

For many years Jim Hilbert and his two sons, Guy and Hal, lived at the mouth of the river on the south end of an area containing probably 50-60 acres. They lived in a comfortable home with many conveniences, including a flowing artesian well. A luxury item was the pool table. They had a good sized garden which provided a good share of the vegetables they used. Steam boat service both ways passed by their home every day during the open seasons. Duck hunting and trapping abounded all around them. They led the "life of Riley". This place was vulnerable to the attack of wind, water and moving ice. In the night of March 23, 1920, the "world came to an end" at this place. It was at the time of the spring breakup and there was a large body of open water in the lake, but the west end was still filled with solid floating ice. A strong west wind moved that ice eastward, and that moving mass of ice gained momentum as the strong wind pushed it along in the open water. The Hilbert home was in the path of that moving "iceberg". When this mass of ice hit, it was like a huge juggernaut that moved everything along with it and demolished the buildings and everything in its path. When morning came, everything was gone; not even the land was left. There is five feet of water there now.

Guy Hilbert was the only one on the premises when the

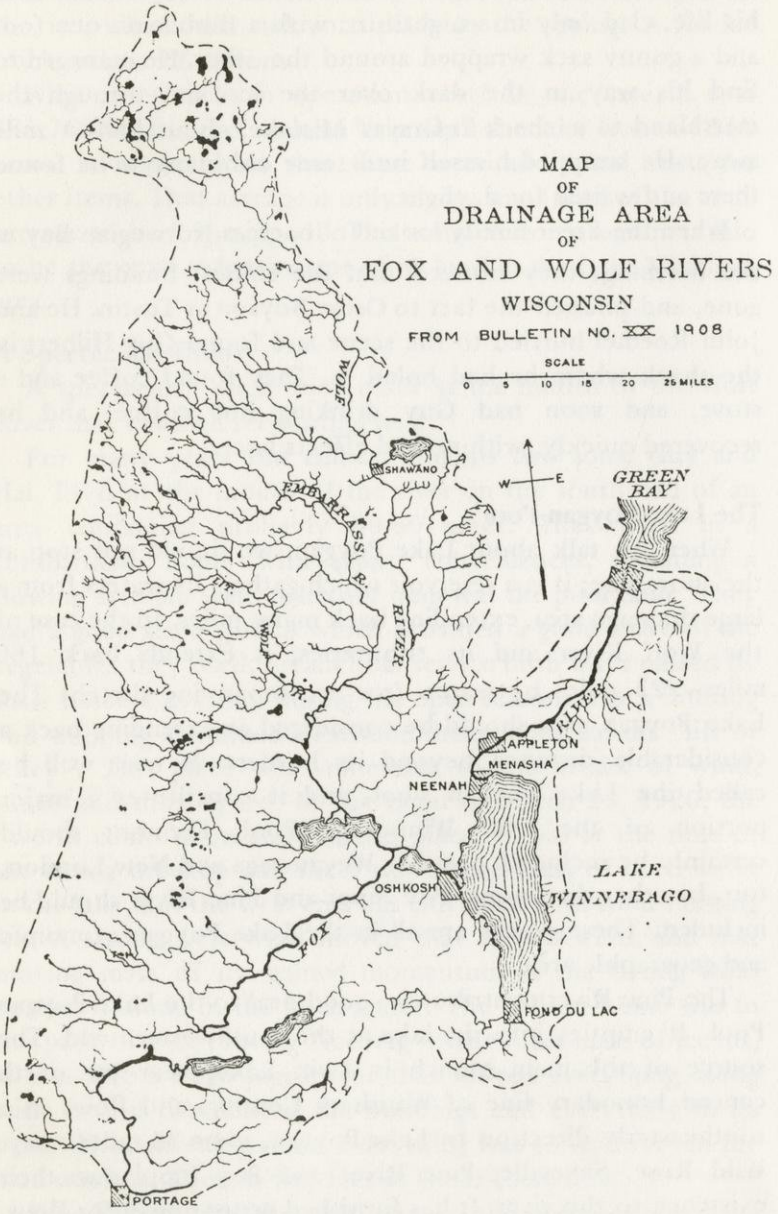
iceberg struck. He was awakened out of his sleep and fled for his life, clad only in a nightshirt, with a rubber on one foot and a gunny sack wrapped around the other. He managed to find his way in the dark over the ice and through the marshland to a shack at Graves' Mistake, about half a mile away. He wrapped himself into some old blankets he found there and waited for daylight.

When the Freer family looked out across Norwegian Bay in the morning, they noticed that the Hilbert buildings were gone, and phoned the fact to Oscar Boyson at Tustin. He and John Roemel hurried to the scene and found Guy Hilbert in the shack where he had holed in. They found coffee and a stove, and soon had Guy drinking hot coffee, and he recovered quickly, with no bad effects later.

The Lake Poygan Pool

When we talk about Lake Poygan, we should not stop at the shore line; it is a reservoir which gathers its waters from a large drainage area, extending back many miles. In the case of the Wolf River and its tributaries, it extends back 160 miles—223 miles by water. (see accompanying sketch) The Lake Poygan area should be considered as extending back a considerable distance beyond its borders. It may well be called the Lake Poygan Pool, and it constitutes a major portion of the Lake Winnebago Pool. Fremont should certainly be included; possibly Weyauwega and New London, too. In other directions, Poy Sippi and Pine River should be included. These places are all in the Lake Poygan economic and geographic area.

The Pine River contributes a good deal to the Lake Poygan Pool. It empties into the lake at the southwestern end. The source of the main branch is Twin Lake, near the north central boundary line of Waushara County, and flows in a southeasterly direction to Lake Poygan, some 35 miles away. Wild Rose, Saxeville, Pine River and Poy Sippi owe their existence to this river. It has furnished water power for flour,


MAP
OF
DRAINAGE AREA
OF
FOX AND WOLF RIVERS
WISCONSIN
FROM BULLETIN NO. XX 1908
SCALE
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GREEN BAY
SHAWANO
WOLF
EMBARRASS R.
WOLF R.
FOX RIVER
APPLETON
MENASHA
NEENAH
OSHKOSH
LAKE WINNEBAGO
FOX
FOND DU LAC
PORTAGE

grist and saw mills along the way. Dams have been built in five different places. It is possible to navigate up the river with a light boat or canoe to Poy Sippi, four or five miles away.

Willow Creek makes its own contribution to the pool. It empties into the lake about half a mile south of the Pine River mouth. Its source is Silver Lake, near Wild Rose, some 30 miles up from the lake. Its source is about a mile south of the Pine River at one point. Lohrville and Mt. Morris owe their existence to Willow Creek.

Pony Creek in the Town of Bloomfield and Alder Creek in the Towns of Wolf River and Bloomfield drain a fairly large area. Pumpkinseed Creek, near Willow Creek, is also a part of the pool area. Perhaps the Bayou (Bi-o) at Tustin ought to be mentioned.

Lake Poygan collects all this water and passes it on to Lake Winnebago.

Sacred Springs

"Sacred Springs" are known to have existed on the shores of Lake Poygan—one on the south shore and two on the north shore. They were described by George Overton in Vol. 7 (No. 4) of *The Wisconsin Archeologist* on pp. 212-215. The article was published in July, 1928. We summarize and quote briefly from that article:

"The Indians believed that spirits inhabited such abodes. They made offerings to these spirits of the best they had. . .

"The Bohn Spring on the south shore is different in location and somewhat different in the character of its products from those on the old original beach of Lake Poygan in the west half of Section 18, Town 19, Range 16 East, which is the southwest shore of the lake. It is now covered by four feet of water. . . It was very thoroughly explored. . . I can best describe it by repeating the narrative of the late Loren Leaman, formerly of Winneconne:

"About 1890, I, with three companions, was fishing

sturgeon in Lake Poygan. Our cabin boat was tied to the shore opposite the Bohn Farm. We got our water from a spring on the beach a short distance from the boat. The spring was small, just large enough to dip a pail in, but rather deep. One morning one of the boys went for a pail of water for breakfast. After waiting a long time for the water we looked to see what had become of him. We saw him down on his hands and knees clawing in the spring. Thinking he had gone crazy we ran over to see what the matter was and found him completely surrounded by Indian relics he had dug out of the spring. We had often noticed something round bobbing about in the bottom and thought it was a stone. He had poked it with a stick and then fished it out. It was a human skull. When he pulled it out a deer horn came out with it. We all joined in and scooped out everything we could find. We dug out flint spears, all kinds of arrowheads, pipes, bone awls, bone fish spears, shells, pieces of deer horn and other trinkets till we had more than half a bushel.

"We did not divide the stuff. That fall when we got back to Winneconne the church was having a bazaar and supper and we were asked to display our find as an attraction. It completely covered a table ten feet long. We left it in the church that night. When we came to get our stuff in the morning not one scrap was left; everything had been stolen.

"The Burgner Spring is on the shore of Lake Poygan in the Southeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 31, T. 20 N., R. 14E. This spring, now covered with water, is very deep. Long poles have not found bottom at sixteen or twenty feet. The late Chas. Freer pretty thoroughly explored this spring in the early days before dams had raised the level of the lake. He disposed of most of his finds to his friend, S.D. Mitchell, who had on display the following:—Heavy bone fish spear with five barbs, five bone daggers, seven bone awls, two bone punches, a human skull, several bear skulls, deer horns, pieces of ornamented antler, bear and other large teeth, a copper awl, and two quarzite and other arrowheads. . ."

Author's Comment

I think Mr. Overton was mistaken in describing the location of the "Burgner Spirng". The spring he described is probably the one located at Indian Point, about 20 rods east of the Bergner farm. My father, Adam Velte, owned the land of which Indian Point is a part. It was known by people in the area as the spring where Mr. Freer used to scrape out Indian "relics" with a rake he had made for that purpose. Many times as a boy I went to that spring just to look at it. The water was quiet and clear; it was about 8-10 feet in diameter at the top, and about the same depth. It was said that deer sometimes drowned in the spring when they went there to drink. In my boyhood the spring was located in low land a few feet from the shoreline in normal times and overflowed during high water periods.

Mr. Overton continues:

"The Freer Spring, richest and most important, was located on the farm of the late Charles Freer now owned by his son Geo. Freer, in the fractional Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 31, T. 20N., R. 14E. The spring, as described by Geo. Freer, who as a boy trapped mink around it, was located in a low meadow situated between a woodland and lake, about eight or ten rods from the lake. . . This spring was discovered by Mr. Freer in about the year 1852. During the following years he raked many relics from it. From 1872, when the Neenah-Menasha dams were raised,till the late 80s when the spring was covered by the lake. In 1889 and for three years thereafter the mill men drew down the water till the lake was lowered to its original bed and all the old shore campsites were revealed on the beaches. Mr. Freer not only industriously searched the beaches but had a sort of hooked rake made with which he combed out the spring. He not only scraped out the bottom but dug away the sides till it was twice its original diameter and depth. Of the material he found much was given away to friends and callers. This was been lost to record. What was

left is now in the S.D. Mitchell collection and is catalogued as Spring No. 1.[1] The following are perfect specimens:—Large bone fish spear with 3 barbs, bone celt, 24 bone daggers, 40 three-bone awls, one flaker, 50 bear tusks, several bear skulls, many deer horns, 1 copper fish spear and 2 broken stone gorgets: 125 perfect pieces in all. Besides these are many broken and miscellaneous pieces the color and state of preservation of which indicate they came from these springs. Several decorated clam shells and a piece of a catlinite pipe bowl of the Micmac type. Two other catlinite pipes are listed. These latter are Siouan in type and are probably surface finds. If we add to this list the specimens which Mr. Freer gave away and others surreptitiously raked out by relic hunters we have a total of 3 or 4 hundred pieces."

Not only were Indian artifacts found in these sacred springs—they were found in abundance along the shores of Indian Point, Norwegian Bay and the south shore of Lake Poygan. When the farm lands back from the lake shores were plowed and cultivated, they, for many years, turned up arrowheads and other artifacts, and a collection of them could be found in almost every farmhouse around the lake. A few people made special searches for them. Charles Freer was, by far, the most prominent long-time Indian "relic hunter".

It may not be far from the truth to say that a very large part of the Lake Poygan Indian artifacts found their way into the public museum at Oshkosh. There are still a few privately owned collections. The Clarence Olen collection, now owned by the Neenah Historical Society, is the largest one of them.

Trapping

Lake Poygan in the early years was an important trapping center. Muskrats ("mush rats") were plentiful everywhere—in the rice-beds and the surrounding marshes. There were

[1] This collection is now in the Oshkosh Public Museum.

numerous large operators who owned large areas of marsh land, and leased trapping rights from others. As the rice-beds disappeared in the lake on account of high water and carp, the trapping was limited to the shore line and the inland marshes. The western end of the lake was a fertile trapping ground. The Underground and the Pine River and Willow Creek marshes abounded in muskrats. The Ringlings and Fred Cook operated extensively there. Trapping rights could be bought cheaply. Fred Cook rented 30 acres of muskrat marsh along Pony Creek for $2.00 for the trapping season. He could have bought it for $35. Later it sold for $5,000. William Heuer operated extensively in the Haulover and Boom Bay area.

Many of the land owners around the lake did some trapping on their own land. There were many muskrat houses among the rice-beds out in the lake. They belonged to anybody who got there first each season. I did some trapping there.

Perhaps the largest trapping operation was carried on by Charles Sherburne in the lower Wolf River area. He owned 1200 acres and leased 700 acres more of the surrounding trapping marsh. He managed and operated it as a muskrat farm up until the time of his death (1916). He hired experienced men to help him. His headquarters were at the "Cut-off", where he resided. Charles Ulrich bought this muskrat farm from Sherborne estate in 1917 and continued the operation. During his ownership the price of muskrat pelts reached an all-time high. $1.00 for a prime pelt was considered a good price for years. During the First World War it reached $7.00, which was a lot of money then. Later Grant Boyson became the owner and operator. This was a lucrative business during the Sherburne-Ulrich-Boyson ownership. The yield of pelts reached as high as 700 a day. In winter it was about 100. Ted Kiesow worked on this muskrat farm a number of years. He tells of the best 7-day operation, when he, individually, trapped and caught 1196 muskrats. He was

one of four men working for Charles Ulrich and Grant Boyson.

When one remembers that the Sherburne-Ulrich-Boyson operations were only a small portion of the total trapping grounds around the lake, he is impressed with the fact that Lake Poygan must have produced a great supply of muskrat fur. When the supply of muskrat fur from the trapping area all the way down through Lake Butte des Morts was added to the supply from Lake Poygan, it stamped this region as one of the best muskrat trapping areas in the country—possibly the best. High water, moving ice, carp, wind and waves destroyed nearly all of this.

The good trapping period extended over a period of 30-40 years, in the later 1800s and early 1900s.

Duck Hunting

Duck hunting was as important as fur farming. Nearly everyone who was old enough to handle a shotgun was a duck hunter. Ducks furnished a ready supply of food, both in season and out. There was a long open season in spring and fall. There was no limit to the number of ducks one could bag and take home. It was no trick to go out almost any time and bag 15-20 ducks on one trip, especially in the spring. Often it would be 30-40.

Not only was duck hunting for personal pleasure and home consumption; there were numerous hunters for the market. The supply seemed to be unlimited. To the early settlers it seemed inexhaustible. The lake then was a rice lake. With its extensive rice-beds and surrounding rice marshes the lake was a perfect natural habitat for all water fowl. It attracted the ducks as the Horicon Marsh attracts the wild geese. They were almost as plentiful as the wild pigeons of that day. Stories have been preserved that flocks of wild pigeons were so large and extensive that they "darkened the sun". Sam Luce, an old settler in Tustin, used to tell that the flocks were so large and flew so low that "you could knock them down with a whip stock". John Muir, the naturalist, said "I

have seen passenger pigeons flowing over from horizon to horizon in an almost continuous stream all day long."

Lake Poygan attained an extensive reputation as a duck hunting lake, and sportsmen came from far and wide to participate in this sport. The most conspicuous of these came from Chicago. They organized the Lake Poygan Gun Club and leased the hunting rights all around the lake and in adjacent marshes. Of course, these sportsmen had to have a guide—a "push" as he was called by the natives around Tustin who were hired. This Gun Club built a clubhouse on the lake shore in Tustin, where the members kept their decoys, guns, ammunition, boats, etc. It was only a stone's throw from Mrs. Drummer's Lake House which was famous for its duck dinners. The club members ate and slept there. It was a swanky little hotel, tailored to suit the important people from the big city, and traveling men, too.

I remember that Adam Wolft was a member of this Gun Club and that the name on his locker in the Club House was *A. Dam Wolff.* I also remember that many bundles of ducks were hung up in and around the club house and remained there until they spoiled and were buried.

The natives around Lake Poygan didn't like the idea of a gun club getting all (or most) of the hunting rights around the lake, and posting "No Trespassing" signs everywhere. It was like taking something away from them which they inherited from the Creator, and of course, there was a lot of poaching; but nobody was ever arrested for trespassing.

One night the club house went up in smoke. The townsfolk did not feel very sorry about it. Sometime afterwards a stranger came to town and stayed around for a long time. He became very friendly and mixed with the townspeople. Nobody could figure him out, and the suspicion grew that he was a detective trying to find out who burned the club house. I never heard a hint from anybody that might be a clue to finding out who it might have been

that set the fire. Everybody was mum. Another club house was built.

Fishing

Fishing in Lake Poygan was as important as duck hunting. Everybody in Tustin and the surrounding country was a fisherman. Some of them were commercial fishermen. Fish were plentiful and easy to get, and furnished a lot of food for the people in town and the countryside, many of whom had a supply of fish on hand most of the year. Fish were obtainable the year around.

Grandpa Richards should be mentioned here. He was the best known hook and line fisherman in the Tustin area. He was the father of Mrs. (Alice) Drummer, who catered to foreign duck hunters, and to traveling salesmen in her attractive hotel. Grandpa Richards supplied the fish that were served to the guests at the hotel. He was on the lake almost every day in good weather, with his long cane fishpole—sometimes two poles. It was a childhood tradition that he sometimes fished a newly born babe out of the lake. His cuss words were "dum de divil".

Some of the people around the lake engaged in commercial fishing on a small scale—a few on a large scale. The Ringlings (Jake, Fred and Bill) and Fred Cook should be mentioend in this respect. Miles Durkee and his son Ben came from Winneconne to Tustin each year in the spring with their fishing shanty and lived there in their shanty until late fall. Marble and Hooper of Winneconne also came with their shanty each year and did the same thing.

Commercial fishing was at its height in the late 1800's and early 1900's. During this period there was no limit to the kind or quantity of fish that could be taken out of the lake, and fishing for the market was a lucrative business—to both the major and minor operators (there were no carp then).

Every morning during the summer fishing season these fishermen delivered their catch of the day before to the

steamboat which ran between Tustin and Oshkosh. It was an interesting early morning sight to the steamboat passengers to see the boats come out from the shores and shanties along the way and deliver their fish. The steamboat stopped for each delivery enroute. At Oshkosh these fish were delivered to the meat markets there and to the express company for quick transportation to Milwaukee and Chicago.

Extensive commercial fishing was discontinued about the time the steamboat service discontinued (1921). Not only then were there no local shipping facilities available, but legal restrictions were becoming progressively more restrictive, and the quantity of fish that could be legally caught and shipped was reduced to a point so that it hardly paid to continue. There is little commercial fishing now (1975).

II.

TUSTIN

There are at least three Tustins—one in California, one in Michigan and Tustin on the shore of Lake Poygan in Wisconsin.

Development of the Wisconsin Tustin began long before it became a village. It began shortly after the Menominee Indians were moved out of the territory in 1852. One of the early settlers who moved in was Charles Freer. He had lived at Fox Lake and moved to Berlin. From there he came to the Tustin area in a horse-powered boat (a horse treading in a circle which turned the paddle wheel of the boat). The family record indicates that he arrived in 1856. The land records of Waushara County, however, show that he and James Lee obtained a government patent for 57.86 acres of land (Government Lot 1) in October, 1854, and paid $72.33 for it. Two years later (October 13, 1856) Mr. Freer became the full owner of the land. It was lakeshore property in what is now the southeast corner of the Tustin Plat.

On September 11, 1855, Freer obtained a government patent on the Northwest Quarter of the Northeast Quarter (NW¼-NE¼)—40 acres— for $50.00. This is in the northwest corner of the Plat which was later adopted.

By 1856 Charles Freer was therefore the full owner of 97.86 acres of land in the Tustin area, and became an active dealer in real estate. His name appears in most of the abstracts on Tustin property. He was probably the most prominent pioneer developer of the village. Other prominent dealers in real estate were H.M. Kingsbury and Gordon H. Gile. C.H. Stowers was the surveyor.

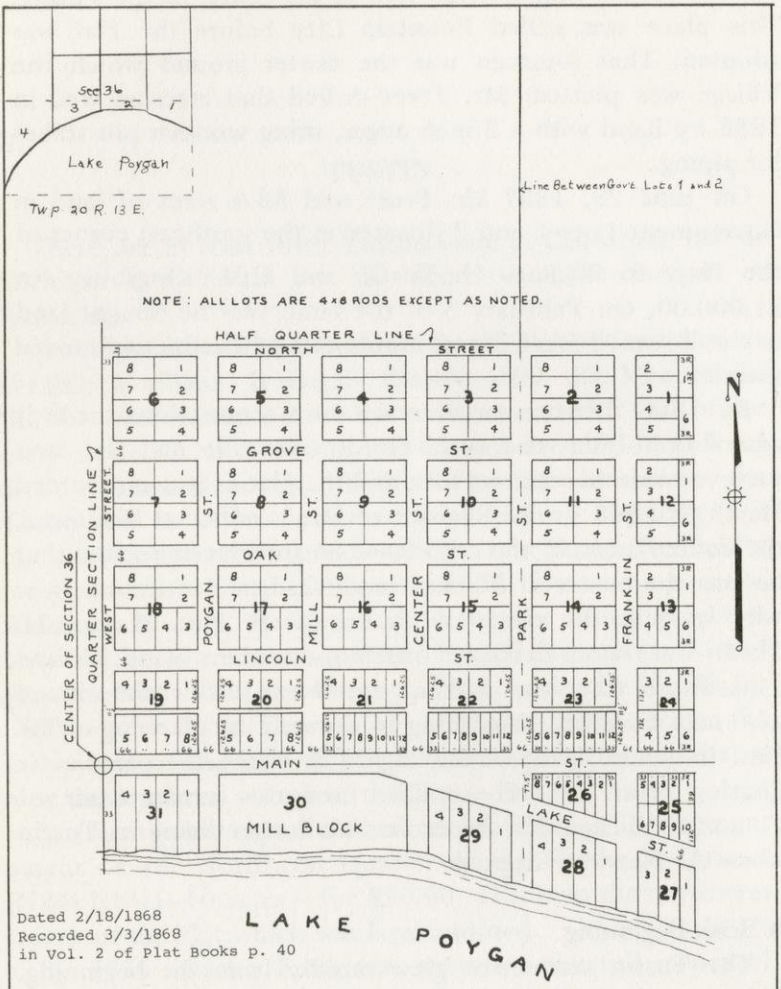
There still exists daily proof that Freer was a developer of Tustin: the flowing artesian well in the center of the Village. This place was called Fountain City before the Plat was adopted. That fountain was the center around which the Village was platted. Mr. Freer drilled that artesian well in 1856 by hand with a 2 inch auger, using wooden pin stakes for piping.

On June 29, 1867 Mr. Freer sold 53.4 acres of land in Government Lots 1 and 2 (located in the southeast corner of the Plat) to Thomas H. Tustin and H.M. Kingsbury for $1,000.00. On February 5 of the same year he bought land in the Town of Wolf River, a mile east of Tustin, and moved there.

By 1868 the number of real estate transactions made it advisable to plat the land. Gordon H. Gile had the land surveyed into blocks and lots, and the plat of it was recorded March 3, 1868 in the Register of Deeds office at Wautoma, the county seat. In the certificate on the Plat he recited that he was the owner of Blocks 1 and 12. It is not known now why he gave the name of Tustin to the Plat. Thomas H. Tustin was not an extensive owner and trader of land. He was a hardware merchant and apparently an influential citizen who may have had something to do with the planning of the Plat. It would have seemed logical to name the place after Charles Freer, or even to have used the former name of Fountain Village. Mr. Freer was no longer living in Tustin when the Plat was adopted.

A Brisk Beginning

The Tustin settlement grew rapidly from the beginning. This growth resulted from several important events that should be kept in mind. The Menominee Indians were moved out of Poygan in November, 1852, and this made the Lake Poygan lands available for settlement. Water transportation by steamboat began in 1844, when the first steamboat entered Lake Poygan on its way to Shawano—the


Sec 36
Lake Poygan
Twp 20 R 13 E.
Line Between Govt Lots 1 and 2
NOTE: ALL LOTS ARE 4x8 RODS EXCEPT AS NOTED.
HALF QUARTER LINE
NORTH STREET
GROVE ST.
OAK ST.
LINCOLN ST.
MAIN ST.
CENTER OF SECTION 36
QUARTER SECTION LINE
WEST STREET
POYGAN ST.
MILL ST.
CENTER ST.
PARK ST.
FRANKLIN ST.
LAKE ST.
30 MILL BLOCK
LAKE POYGAN
N
Dated 2/18/1868
Recorded 3/3/1868
in Vol. 2 of Plat Books p. 40
ERVIN BRUCHS, ABSTRACTER.
WAUTOMA, WISCONSIN.
VILLAGE OF TUSTIN
LOCATED IN THE
EAST ½ OF SEC. 36, T20N, R13E.
SCALE - 1 IN. = 300 FT.
DRAWN BY HAROLD H. DETTMANN - FEB. 3, 1941.

Manchester. In 1850 the second steamboat came into these waters—the *Peytonia.* Then began a rapid development of boat building and water transportation.

The geographical location was favorable for growth and development. It became a gateway from an extensive water transportation system to the back country beyond Tustin—westward to Poy Sippi and Pine River, and beyond; northward to Weyauwega, and eastward toward Orihula and Fremont. There were no railroads then. Tustin was the center of a lively trading area. It was the timing and combination of these events that made Tustin what it was during its heyday.

Tustin was a thriving village during the steamboat era. The village and the immediate environs grew to a population estimated at between 400-500. During the period from 1890-1910 the school enrollment was from 50 to 60.

Origin of Settlers

The origin of the settlers around the north shore of Lake Poygan was somewhat different from that of the south shore. The Irish predominated among the early settlers in the Town of Poygan. They were soon followed by the Germans. The first settlers along the north shore of the lake were a mixture. Following the shoreline westward from the mouth of the Wolf River we find such names as Ulrich, Hildebrand, Boyson, Freer, Velte, Burgner (German, Norwegian, English, German and Swiss). These people really lived in the Tustin area although they resided a short distance east of the eastern boundary line of the village. Boundary lines didn't matter so far as the social life and trading area were concerned.

In Tustin and its environs we find the English, French, Germans and Danes, and a few Irish. The north shore of the lake was truly a "melting pot".

The social structure of the village was different from that of Poygan, where the church was the center of the social life and activities. In Tustin the three saloons were the social centers. There was no church. The Sunday School furnished

the religious and social atmosphere of the town. Sunday sessions were held in the school house. John Moffet, a Poy Sippi merchant, walked to Tustin and back every Sunday in the summer for some time to conduct the Sunday School. Occasionally, evangelistic teams came for a week or so and held services in the school house.

The ladies of the town felt the need of church influence and organized a "ladies aid society" which met periodically at sewing and quilting parties, and promoted other activities

1 2 3

4 5 6

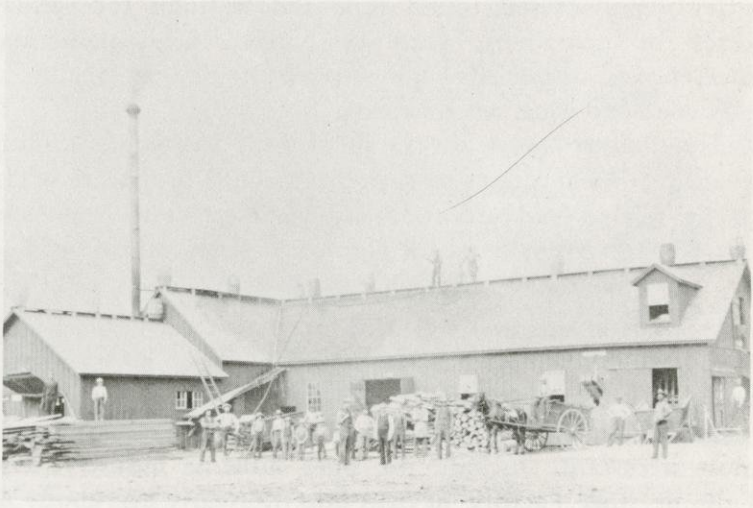
1. Gerry Vogt — 2. Fred Sasse — 3. Amiel Strehlow
4. John Boyson — 5. Julius Heisinger — 6. Blind Hans

to raise money for a church. These activities continued for a number of years and then faded out. This society, however, served a good purpose in furnishing a social center for the women.

A description of the village life and activities would not be complete without mention of the village orchestra. It was composed of talented musicians whose performance was equal to that of any musical organization of its size in that part of the country. This orchestra was at the height of its existence and popularity between 1900 and 1910. Its reputation was known far and wide and its appearance was in demand throughout the year at many places and functions. The social life of the village was enriched by this orchestra, which was also a fruitful means of communication with outside areas.

Steamboats and Sawmills

It was the steamboats and sawmills that kept the town going.



A combination saw and heading mill (Photo 1900)

The steamboats ran day and night and were loaded both ways. Farm produce and products from the whole back country and mill products were taken to market. The 101 things that the whole area needed—from needles and pins to threshing machines and building materials for houses and barns—were brought back. All winter long cordwood was brought to the dock yard from the surrounding country and was piled high to be hauled to market by boat. All summer long the boat crews were loading that cordwood on the boat by wheelbarrow, to be taken to Oshkosh next morning—usually at night on plank tracks by lantern light.

A sawmill was an economic necessity in the developing community. Timber was growing everywhere and buildings were being built in town and country. A small mill was built as early as 1860. A second one was built later. The two names connected with them are Stowers and Prutzman. They were succeeded by S.R. Clark, who built his own mill, and continued as a sawmill owner and operator until about 1898. His first sawmill burned and he built a larger one, which was a combination sawmill, planing mill and a heading mill. The latter manufactured round tops and bottoms for various kinds of containers, such as barrels, kegs, pails and cheeseboxes, especially the latter; they were made of basswood and were called heading.

The millyard was always filled with basswood heading piled in rows and rows of drying bins until they were ready to be planed and grooved, and then cut into tops and bottoms of various sizes. Joe Gordon was the veteran heading sawyer. Sam Luce was the bookkeeper and paymaster. The lumber cut in this mill was used for home consumption. The products from the heading department were shipped by boat to Oshkosh and beyond to the consumers.

To fill in another element of this Tustin economy, we must necessarily include the boat building industry. The LaBorde Boat Factory fit right into it. Nearly everybody in town had a boat or had an interest in one, and LaBorde made

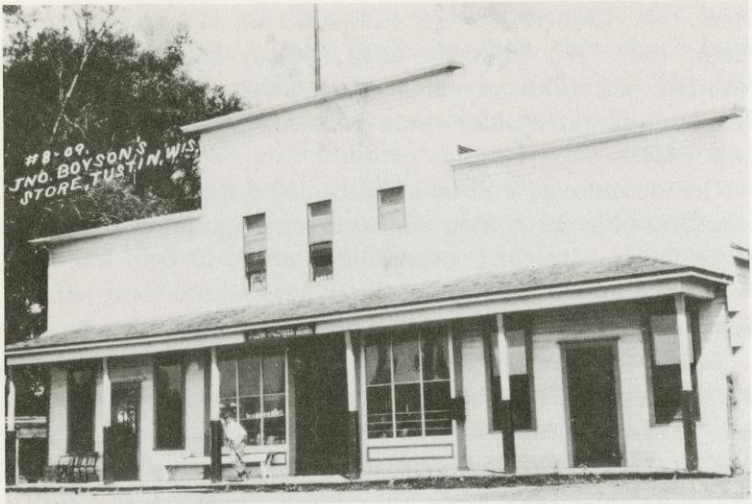
them. The Club House was full of boats, and LaBorde built them, too—Fred LaBorde and his son Dayton ("Date"). Another son (George) moved to Oshkosh and became a famous sailboat builder there with a Mr. Jones (Jones and LaBorde).

The steamboat, mill and boatbuilding eras coincided and, together with the fishing and duckhunting era, combined to make Tustin a bustling community.

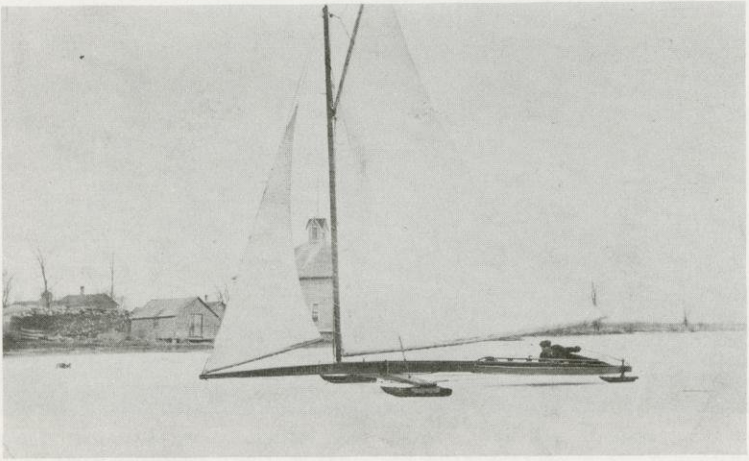
Trading Center

Tustin was the center of a large trading area. In the early days Emanuel Weiser and Thomas R. Tustin operated general and hardware stores. They were followed by John Boyson and Gottlieb Velte, who became competitors and operated stores (with saloons) about a block apart. John Boyson married Gottlieb Velte's sister Katherine (Kate)—so it was a sort of family rivalry. Opposite the Gottlieb Velte store and saloon, across Main Street, was the Jenks Hotel, the other business place in the village. Later (about 1893-94) this hotel

Gottlieb Velte-Krueger-Boyson Buildings on right. LaBorde Boat Building on left. Street fountain in foreground—drilled in 1856 by Charles L.Freer. The concrete tank was built in 1912.



Jno. Boyson's store, Tustin.



Winter sport on Lake Poygan. Ed Velte piloting iceboat.

Henry Bartel Meat Market – Adam Velte Saloon and residence. Formerly Jenks Hotel (1891)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

1—Henry Bartel. 2—Jake Ringling. 3—?. 4—Adam Velte. 5—Will Ringling. 6—Herb Brewster. 7—Jed Brewster. 8—Eddie Velte. 9—Charley Velte. 10—Wallie Velte. 11—Mrs. Maggie Velte. 12—Mrs. Henry Bartel.

property was transferred to Adam Velte, who used it as a residence and operated a saloon in a part of the building. Henry Bartel operated a meat market in another part of the building.

John Boyson was an energetic "go-getter" and expanded his business so it provided nearly every kind of service that the inhabitants needed or wanted. His store and warehouses were stocked with almost every item and commodity that could be found in a Sears-Roebuck catalog—groceries, hardware, shoes, dry goods, furniture, jewelry, feed, meats, farm machinery, sporting goods, ammunition, etc. He was also a part owner of the steamboat line. He sold caskets and had charge of some funerals. He operated a drug store and

acted as a veterinarian. He was the village postmaster.

He (with others) built and operated a telephone line (and at one time organized a posse armed with guns and drove off the members of a rival company who were cutting down the telephone poles and destroying the line).

In winter he made trips to Berlin (22 miles away), Winneconne and Oshkosh (25 miles away) by team to haul the merchandise he needed. In winter he bought all of the dressed hogs which the farmers had to sell and hauled them to Oshkosh. The first part of the trip was across the lake on the ice. In early winter when the ice was thinner, two separate loads were taken across and then piled high on one sleigh, like cordwood.

Boyson was always the first man across the lake in winter and he took risks that few men would take. Several times his teams and loads broke through the ice, and he lost a horse at one of those breakthroughs. Nobody would think of taking anything across the lake in early winter until Boyson had crossed first. The question always was "Has John Boyson crossed the lake yet?"

Tustin was an isolated spot in winter—from early November, when navigation ended, until early April, when the first boat came up from Oshkosh. Its inhabitants stocked up well with the necessities of life in the fall to tide them over until spring, when they relied upon water transportation again. The Boyson transportation system was the lifeline in winter.

The lake formed a bridge in winter over which Tustin had some communication with the outside world. Some of the farmers in Poygan depended upon the Poy Sippi swamp for wood and lumber, and going through Tustin was a shortcut for hauling it to their homes along the south shore of the lake. Many a barn in Poygan has built into it tamarack lumber from the Poy Sippi swamp. Hauling wood and logs through Tustin produced trade and business for the town. The logs were often cut into lumber in the sawmill or

trimmed for barn rafters. The saloons got some business, too.

Then too, there was some travel across the lake by individuals to and from Winneconne and Oshkosh; and this supplemented the Boyson trips.

Of course, there was communication with the outside world through the U.S. Postal Service. Gustav Pfaff was the mail carrier for many years between Tustin and Pine River, a 22-mile round trip daily. And a few people received the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern.* The weekly *Weyauwega Chronicle, Waushara Argus,* and *Berlin Courant* had a fair circulation in the Village.

Although Tustin was partially winterbound, the townspeople developed numerous local activities that grew out of the environment of the place. The lake is shallow and was frozen over early in the fall. Sometimes the ice was thick enough to skate on by Thanksgiving. At such times skaters could skate within 20 rods of the steamboat that was plowing its way through the ice to reach the town.

Because of the early freeze-up ice boats could get onto the lake much earlier than they could on Lake Winnebago; and there was a longer ice-boating period with safety and without snow.

In early winter it was the custom to have a huge bonfire on the ice at night, which attracted skaters of all ages.

Any feeling of isolation that existed vanished when the boat made its first trip up from Oshkosh. Beginning about April 1 the townsfolk began looking daily for that boat; and when the whistle of the incoming boat was blown, the "whole town" went to the landing dock to welcome the boat; and all the whistles in town and country sounded off and answered that boat whistle, too.

Town Characters

Every community has some characters that are outstanding, i.e. they are noticed more than others because of their habits, personalities, activities, etc. Tustin had some

people of that kind that ought to be mentioned—different kinds of people that helped make up the personality of the community.

There was Doc. (J.D.) Kitchingman, who learned how to be a doctor by driving a doctor around the country on his visits to sick people. He was the only Englishman in town, and sometimes was called "Johnny Bull". He was the only doctor in the town and had pills and powders for every ailment. When arms and legs got out of joint, he put them together again. Whenever he needed assistance, he called Dr. McWain from Poy Sippi, who was always called for the more serious cases.

Doc. Kitchingman was also the Justice of the Peace and presided at lawsuits and coroner's inquests. He acted with dignity and authority in such cases. He felt very important and acted it. Perhaps the most remembered lawsuit tried before him as Justice of the Peace involved a public school teacher. A Miss Tice, the teacher in School District No. 6 in the Towns of Leon and Mt. Morris, was arrested on a criminal warrant for whipping an alleged bad boy. Attorney R.L.D. Potter of Berlin, formerly of Wautoma, was the lawyer who defended Miss Tice in the lawsuit. It was a jury trial and the verdict was "not guilty". The townspeople were in sympathy with the teacher and they "passed the hat" for a collection, which turned out to be liberal. It was handed to Miss Tice for a new silk dress.

Amos R. Bent was also a well-known character, a Civil War veteran, who always wore his formal uniform when he came to town from across the lake. He was a tall imposing figure that attracted attention wherever he went. Some people thought he looked like a Spaniard. He came from the Boston country and had traveled widely and had many a tale to tell. He liked to tell about his experiences with the wild men "out west" and demonstrate how they handled their guns. In a saloon one day he demonstrated how it was done, and his gun (38 caliber 6 shooter) went off accidentally, and the hole

in the wall was often pointed out afterwards when talking about the demonstration.

One summer a certain character hung around town, going away and coming back. He posed as a former member of the Jesse James gang. We never knew where he came from or where he went to. This was after the first Lake Poygan Gun Club House was burned and the townsfolk spotted him to be a detective trying to find out who burned it.

The Ringling brothers lived in the Tustin area—one at the mouth of the Pine River (Jake) and two in the village—Fred and Will. They were second cousins of the Ringling Brothers of circus fame.

And there was the never-to-be forgotten Fred Cook, a tall athletic man who came from the Willow Creek country. He was a Spanish War veteran who knocked around the country a good deal before setting down in Tustin. Before coming to Tustin, he had been a western cattle herder and a Klondike gold hunter. He was a good boxer and wrestler and an expert marksman. He was a notable huntsman and sportsmen's guide—a man who made a record that became a legend. He was so familiar with the fishing grounds and fish habits that he was said to "know every fish in the lake by name". He lived to be 96 years old (February 10, 1968).

Blind Hans (Jensen) and his violin were known far and wide. No festive occasion would have been complete without them. He played a large variety of music but dance music was his speciality. For 50 years or more he was the outstanding "fiddler" who was in demand for the dances and weddings in Waushara, Winnebago, Waupaca, and surrounding counties. The number of such occasions would probably run into the hundreds. His repertoire included much of the so-called classical music. At public musical contests he was the man to beat. He learned all his music "by ear". After listening to a musical selection several times, he could reproduce it. Thousands and thousands danced to his music.

Charley Laubenheimer was a life-long member of the

community—about 80 years. His family farm was about a mile from the village limits and he walked in almost every day. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that every time he walked to town he picked a 4-leaf clover or two and put them in the lapel of his coat, or whatever he had on. He was the Clerk of the school board for so many years that it would be easy to believe that he was always the Clerk. He was always associated with some phase of the village or town proceedings. He was as familiar with the lake and its fish and ducks as Fred Cook was and was valuable as a guide to fishermen and duck hunters who came in from the outside. When the big bullfrogs were plentiful, he was after them, and he captured many a mud turtle for the market. He lived in an environment where beer and liquor flowed freely, but he was a total abstainer. He was an exemplary citizen whom everybody respected and looked up to.

Of course, John Boyson was the most outstanding personality in the Tustin area. He was a Norwegian and reminded one of the old Norsemen. He was a dynamo of energy that overcame all surmountable obstacles. He was the "king" of Tustin. He was a friendly and kindly man and not easily offended, but when he was aroused and crossed he was a "bear cat". He was as agile as a cat and "as strong as a horse". Many tales are told of his strength. It has been told and retold how he could take a barrel of salt (280 pounds) and toss it into a wagon box, four feet up from the ground. He could roll a barrel of molasses (600 pounds) on planks from the ground up to a four-foot high platform. He subdued roughnecks with one well-directed blow. There was no rowdyism when he was around. He was the leading citizen and respected by everybody.

If the village had not been named Tustin when it was platted it would surely have been named Boysonville later, or some name like that.

The Georgeson (Jorgenson) Brothers helped to make the town a good place to live in. They were Pete, Jule (Julius)

and Chris. They filled the gap that resulted from the burning of the saw and heading mill. They operated a large shop building where all kind of wood, iron and machine work was done. They could make or repair anything. Attached to this building was a sawmill which served the whole countryside; and attached to these buildings was a feed and gristmill that served the community.

Georgeson Bros. shop, sawmill and grist mill. Former lake house at right.

Pete was a mechanical genius. He was an expert with all kinds of machinery. He experimented with gasoline engines and made many improvements on them. He invented and manufactured the Georgeson automobile gasoline primer, which was far better than anything like it at the time.

He was also a self-educated photographer. He built his own camera and ground and finished the lenses he used in them, and became a portrait photographer.

A large manufacturer in Chicago induced him to move

there and work in his plant. He was not assigned a particular job to do. He only had to walk around the factory and watch the operations and advise how the machinery could be improved or better machinery built for the purpose.

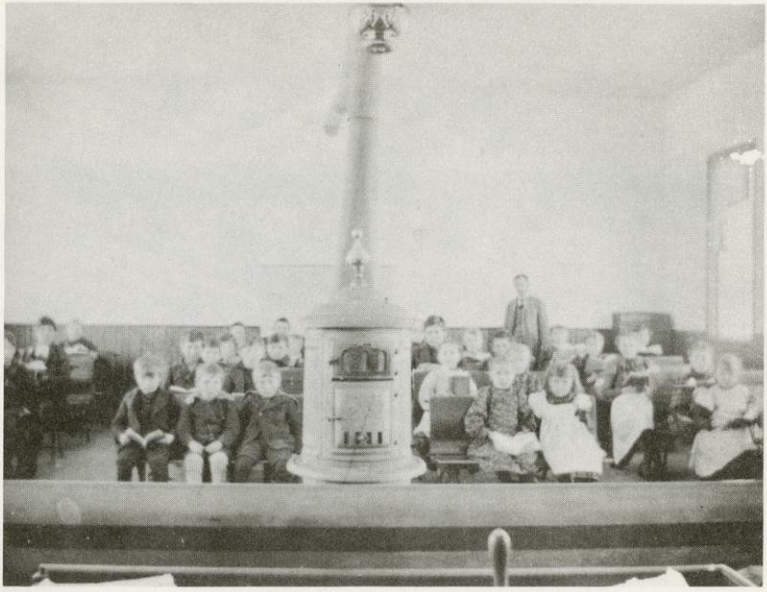
The remarkable thing about this was the fact that he could neither read nor write.

A word should be said about his wife, Annie, sometimes called Annie Pete. She was a remarkable person in her own

Tustin school (1891)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
17 18
19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42

1—Chris Velte, 2—Rheinhold Pfaff, 3—Hugo Pufahl, 4—Adam Velte,Jr., 5—Rufus Kitchingman, 7—Will Johson, 8—Louie Velte, 9—Walter Kitchingman, 10—Charlie Weiser, 11—Luce, 12—Lottie Lanphere—Teacher, 13—Clara Velte, 14—?, 15—Katie Lind, 16—Amelia Gloff, 17—Clyde Snell, 18—Sammy Luce, 19—Harry Snell, 20—Albert Yehrke, 21—Frank Weiser, 22—Ferdinand Pufahl, 23—?, 24—Dayton LaBorde, 25—?, 26—Lute Velte, 27—Gloff, 28—Henry Stienberg, 29—Charley Velte, 30—Paul Le Fevre, 31—Martin Pfaff, 32—Henry Greening, 33—May Weiser, 34—Lizzie Pufahl, 35—Olga Bartel, 36—Louise Yehrke, 37—Belle Burgner, 38—Lydia Stienberg, 39—Jennie Gordon, 40—Luce, 41—?, 42—Ivy Oaks.

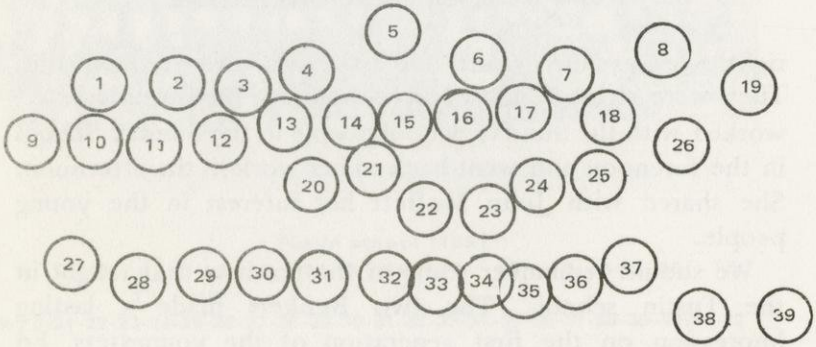


Tustin school—Ed Coates, teacher (1892)

right. She was Pete's reader and assistant in everything he did. They were strict Seventh Day Adventists, but "Annie Pete" worked with the Sunday School people in the Sunday School in the forenoon and went back to her work in the afternoon. She shared with John Moffett her interest in the young people.

We should remember some of the teachers that taught in the Tustin schools. The two Bunkers made a lasting impression on the first generation of the youngsters. Ed Coats and Ed Kileen followed and later became County Superintendents. George Dobbins came as a graduate from Ripon College, and later became one of the best known businessmen in the Fremont-Weyauwega area. Amiel Strehlow taught school in several different periods and had the highest enrollment the school ever had and he taught more Tustin children than any other teacher.

Tustin school (1898)



1—Ida Mielke, 2—Laura Moak, 3—Luce, 4—Alice LaBorde,, 5—Charley Velte, 6—Eddie Velte, 7—Frankie Pufahl, 8—Teacher, 9—Harry Brewster, 10—Henry Stienberg, 11—Yesse, 12—?, 13—Clara Pufahl, 14—Eddie Gabel, 15—Yesse, 16—Oscar Schindleholz, 17—Wallie Velte, 18—Ella Schindleholz, 19—?, 20—La-Borde, 21—Lillie Burgner, 22—?. 23—?. 24—?, 25—?, 26—?, 27—Lillie Boyson, 28—Blanch Brewster, 29—?, 30—Anna Pufahl, 31—Hilda Ihrig, 32—Lovejoy, 33—?, 34—La Borde, 35—?, 36—Eddie Ringling, 37—Robbie Boyson, 38—Edgar La Borde, 39—Bernie La Borde.

Gottlieb Velte Store and Saloon Building

3rd musician—George LaBorde, 5th musician—Adam Velte, 7th musician—August Moak, others unidentified.

Funeral procession to Brushville cemetery—6 miles away (1890)

Swimming "hole" at Tustin (1892)
In sailboat: Dayton LaBorde at tiller; Claude Russell standing. In skiff at left of sailboat: Lute Velte with paddle. 3 in boat to right of sailboat: Ferdinand Pufahl, Chris Velte and Albert Yehrke (sitting). In skiff at middle left with paddle: Jule Georgeson. In center boat: Frank Luce (with hat on). In skift at front right: Charlie Luce (with uplifted paddle). In water from left to right: Frankie Pufahl, Arthur Yehrke,?. ?, Eddie Velte, Charley Velte (on shoulder), Frank Yehrke, Eddie Krueger (on shoulder).

OLD TUSTIN BY THE LAKE
(By Martin R. Pfaff, with apologies to Hood)
(See footnote)

I remember, I remember
Old Tustin by the Lake;
Where years ago on Poygan's shore,
We kids our swims did take.
We'd play and loaf and fish and swim
And hunt the arrowhead
That Indian braves had always used
Before the white man's lead.

Some of the kids around town (1893)

1 2 3

4 5 6 7 8 9

10 11 12 13 14 15

1—Oscar Boyson, 2—Martin Pfaff, 3—Charley Velte, 4—Johnnie Boyson
5—¾, 6—?, 7—Frank Yehrke, 8—Arthur Yehrke, 9—Eddie Velte,
10—Anna Boyson, 11—Lilly Boyson, 12—Ernst, 13—Paul Pfaff,
14— Wallie Velte, 15—Frankie Pufahl.

I remember, I remember
The clans and tribes of old;
Those pioneers and settlers
With lofty visions bold.
They came from many nations
When Tustin had its boom;
But all they ever wanted
Was space and elbow room.

I remember, I remember
The mighty Boyson clan.
Old John who kept the Village Store
Sold goods to every man.
Next came the sturdy Veltes;
Some drilled through rock and sand
And brought forth gushing fountains,
While others tilled the land.*

I remember, I remember
LeFevre on the boat.
He was the captain of the Lynch;
The proudest craft afloat.
John Yehrke was the engineer.
He knew his throttles well;
And tended to the whistles
And to the clanging bell.

I remember, I remember
Clark's ancient lumber mill,
And any man who wanted work
Could find a job at will.
Hard by the village smithy stood.
The Jorgensons were there.
They did the hamlet's iron work
And shod the horses bare.

I remember, I remember
Duck hunters in the fall
That filled the Drummer boarding house
But there was room for all.
Across the street was Pufahl's place,
The cobbler of the town;
His hammer, thread and needle fixed
The boots and shoes worn down.

I remember, I remember
The Ringlings at their work.
These men were hardy fishermen,
And toiled where none could shirk.
They caught the bass and sunfish,
And sturgeons big they took.
They captured all the finny tribe
With net and seine and hook.

I remember, I remember
Where Tustin cheese was made,
The project of the Linds and Grimms.
It was the highest grade.
The farmers all around pitched in;
And each one did his share.
And all the region prospered
Because they'd do and dare.

I remember, I remember
Where the rude schoolhouse stood.
'Twas Tustin's "Alma Mater."
We learned all we could.
Among the famous teachers
Were Bunkers and Ed Kileen;
And then our own George Dobbins
Appeared upon the scene.

I remember, I remember
When men could not agree.
Sometimes they'd bicker back and forth
And cause disunity.
But when the fame of Tustin
Was spoken of in vain,
The ranks closed up a solid front;
And all were friends again.

I remember, I remember
When global changes came;
Great nations then were blotted out;
Others were not the same.
I'm getting old and sleepy,
It's time to take my nap;
But Tustin and its children
Are still upon the map.

* There were five Velte brothers. Adam Velte was the fountain (artesian well) driller.

Footnote.

Martin Pfaff was born in 1882 and moved to Weyauwega in his early teens. He wrote this poem in 1944 or 1945, and it was published in the Weyauwega Chronicle.

III.

THE PAYGROUNDS–THE INDIANS' LAST STAND

The Indians' Last Stand

People living on the north shore of Lake Poygan knew that the Paygrounds were located on the south shore of the lake, in the Town of Poygan. Few knew the approximate location. It was generally known as the place where the Government paid the Indians, but had no more other significance than other places around the lake, like the Underground or Lone Willow Point.

The early residents in the Town of Poygan, of course, lived near the site of this historic place, especially those who later lived on the land termed the Paygrounds; the Neil Grimes family, for example. Many of them attended school in the red schoolhouse located in the Paygrounds area. They knew a good deal about what transpired at this place. As the early settlers and the second and third generations after them moved off the scene and left little or no record of historical value, students of history began to collect information and preserve it. They were beginning to ask why the Paygrounds happened to exist at all. Why did the Government pay the Indians, and what for? Why was this particular geographical location selected for the payments? How long were these payments continued? Why were the Indians moved off?

It is attempted here to trace the historical events from the beginning in orderly sequence to the creation or establishment of the Paygrounds, and what transpired there.

I lived at Indian Point, about half a mile east of Tustin (where I was born in 1883) and about two miles across Lake Poygan from the Paygrounds. I lived alternately at Indian

Point and at Tustin until about 1912—always in sight and within shouting distance of the lake.

Living and growing up in this environment has given me a background for telling my own story of what happened in the Lake Poygan area from the time of the Indians. My inherited interest in the place, and personal and acquired knowledge of its history has been supplemented by a search for additional information wherever it could be found. Some of the early or original settlers in the region were still living during my early life; and I became acquainted with some of their children.

As my search for historical information continued, the feeling grew that a record of this history should be written up and preserved.

An important bit of history has been preserved by the erection of a permanent historical marker, in Poygan Township, upon which the following inscription is written:

> "In 1836 the Menominee Indians ceded all their lands between the Wolf and the Fox Rivers to the U.S. Government. Payment was made every October in 20 annual payments on these grounds. All the remaining lands were ceded in 1848 and they were offered a reservation in Minnesota which was refused. In 1852 they moved up the Wolf River where, in 1854, they were granted 8 townships, the present Keshena Reservation."

A picture of that marker is shown herewith.

That is a good place to start. It takes us back to 1836. What happened then was the outgrowth of the history prior to that time.

For many years prior to 1836 the Menominee Indians occupied an area of land that included all or parts of Marinette, Oconto, Shawano, Marathon, Wood, Outagamie, Portage and Winnebago Counties.

The Menominees claimed to own these lands by gift of the Creator and long undisputed occupation.

It was in 1836 that the Territory of Wisconsin was separated from Michigan Territory. The white population was

increasing rapidly. Incoming immigrants and the Easterners entered the Territory in great numbers. There was tremendous pressure upon the state and federal authorities to make these Indian lands available for settlement. All over the country Indian lands were being taken up. The state and federal governments recognized the Indians' claim of

ownership and felt honorably bound to respect their rights. They were forced, however, to yield to the overwhelming demand for the Indian lands. This meant that the Indian land had to be purchased and the Indians moved off.

Treaty of the Cedars

A conference between the government agents and the Indians was therefore called to negotiate for the purchase and sale of this vast territory. The conference was held on the bank of the Fox River near the City of Kimberly. It lasted six days. (One report says 10 days). The official date of the treaty is September 3, 1836. An historical marker has been erected on the spot which bears the following inscription:

> The Treaty of the Cedars was concluded on the Fox River near here September 3, 1836. Under the treaty, the Menominee Indian Nation ceded to the U.S. about 4,000,000 acres of land for $700,000.00. The area now contains the cities of Marinette, Oconto, Appleton, Neenah, Menasha, Oshkosh, Wausau, Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point and many others. The six-day meeting ended in a spirit of mutual respect and fairness. Governor Dodge said "I view it as a matter of first importance to do the Indians ample justice in all our treaty stipulations" and Menominee Chief Oshkosh later affirmed "We always thought much of Governor Dodge as an honest man." The treaty was proclaimed February 15, 1837, and the Indians began moving to their new homes west of the Wolf River.

A plaque is located on the same spot near the historical marker. That plaque contains the following inscription:

> Near this site Sept. 3, 1836 the Menominee Indians ceded to the United States by
>
> THE TREATY OF THE CEDARS
>
> four million acres between the Fox, Wolf and Menominee rivers.
>
> Signed by
>
> Henry Dodge — Territorial Governor
>
> Oshkosh — Menominee Head Chief

This Treaty of Cedar Point expanded the Treaty of Green Bay made in 1832. It ceded to the United States all of the Menominees' rights to the land above described, sometimes described as all their lands north of the Fox River and east of

the Wolf River. As later modified, this treaty provided for annual cash payment of $20,000 for a term of 20 years. These payments continued for 12 years, until 1848, when a new treaty was made. The details of this new treaty will be related later.

The United States further agreed to pay and deliver to the Indians each and every year during the 20-year period the following articles:

> $3,000.00 worth of provisions; 2,000 pounds of tobacco; 30 barrels of salt and also $500.00 for farming utensils, or other implements of husbandry.

It appears that the Government agreed to appoint and pay for two blacksmiths and furnish them with iron and steel. It also agreed to pay the just debts of the Indians amounting, if proven, to $99,710.50. The further sum of $80,000.00 was to be divided among the mixed bloods. It has been figured out that the total cost of this land purchased was $700,000.00, or 17 cents an acre.

Movement to Poygan

When the Treaty of the Cedars was made it was a compromise. The Government sought to accomplish two things: (1) to open a large area for settlement; (2) to deal fairly with the Indians.

As a result of this treaty, the Menominees moved to and settled in the Town of Poygan, on the south shore of Lake Poygan. Their tepees spread out about six miles along the lake shore in the Towns of Poygan and Winneconne.

Annual Payments Story

Little did we on the north shore of Lake Poygan know about what went on during these payments. It is probable that some northsiders did visit the Paygrounds when the payments were being made, but we of the second and later generations never heard anybody talk about them. The story of these payments has been preserved and it is a sad and shocking story, indeed. One can easily conclude that the

Indians would have been better off if they had turned their lands over to the Government free, or for $1.00 to make it legal. These payments did them more harm than good. One writer describes the payment procedure as follows:

"(The Treaty of 1836) drew to these annual payments adventurous crowds of all classes of society then on the frontier. People came to these payments from all parts of the country and along the river as far as Green Bay on one side, and Portage on the other. The traders in this area came for the collection of their just accounts for the credits to the Indians during the year. Then there was the peddler and vendor of flash jewelry, beads and colored scarfs who came to attract the Indian to their wares. Then the gambler, the sport, and the hanger-on of the frontier came to play his game, and all of them came to get their share of the money of the Indian, and they all met with fair success. The agent of the United States was usually guarded by a company of soldiers who made some show of protecting the Indians. Temporary eating houses and boarding places were improvised and the scene was one of exciting life; the forest was alive with the hum of these activities."

When Harney published his history of Winnebago County in 1880 many people were still living who had personal knowledge of what took place at the Paygrounds, and his description of it is probably an accurate contemporary account of what transpired there; and we can do no better than to quote and summarize a part of his account:

"Here in Section 16 the Indians were met by the Government agents, whose duty it was to deal out a small quantity of rusty pork, a few pounds of damaged tobacco, with blankets and some money. A company of soldiers were generally on duty to guard these treasures from the avarice and cupidity of the hundreds of white men who congregated here as promptly as the natives themselves. White and half breed traders. . .would invariably manage to be on the ground at pay day. Merchants from all parts of the country, from Green Bay, Appleton, Neenah, Oshkosh, Milwaukee, Prairie du Chien, Chicago, Detroit and elsewhere, would each lay in a stock of Indian goods. . .About this time, the gamblers in flocks, like wild geese and ducks, were flying northward. Eating houses were distributed over the ground in profusion.

"The only thing prohibited here was the spirituous liquors;

consequently large quantities were offered for sale upon the outskirts of the forbidden ground, and *sub rosa* under the very droppings of the pay-house.

"The agent, having distributed the goods brought for that purpose, and everything in readiness, he proceeded to pay out the money. As the interpreter calls the name of the head of a family. . .the individual so called enters the pay-house, walks up to the counter, reports the number comprised in his family and. . .he receives the amount for the entire family, and secreting it as far as possible under his blanket, he emerges from the building at the end opposite the door he entered, and passes along between two files of soldiers, who protect him for a considerable distance from the mob of traders, who are greedily awaiting an opportunity to pounce upon him. He no sooner passes the last soldier than he is seized by two, three, or perhaps a half dozen of this motley crowd, each one claiming to have an old account against him, and each striving to get the first chance at the pittance just drawn from the pay table. In an instant he is stripped of everything that could hide a dime, and each of his captors taking an amount sufficient to satisfy his rapacity, the victim is released and left to gather up his scanty clothing, and depart with a small amount, if anything, he has left. In the meantime, another debtor has been turned loose from the pay-house to run the same gauntlet, and another set of traders are relieving him in the same manner. . .(The Indian) is now beset at every step with temptations to part with what remains. Blankets, broadclothes, calicoes, saddles, fancy bridles, beads, brass buttons, ear-rings and finger-rings, are everywhere conspicuously displayed. Pint bottles of whiskey, two-thirds water, are offered him at about the price of a gallon, and are seldom declined."

On October 31, 1851, the *Oshkosh Democrat* published an editorial that is worth repeating here; it is an eye witness account. Here it is:

"PAYMENT

"This is a word fully understood here, but not abroad. It comprehends the time and place of paying the Indians the Government Annuity. The last of these to the Menominees came off this week at the head of Lake Poygan. A part of a company of soldiers came up from the Bay, to keep all things straight. The gathering lasted about ten days. These payments are the rendezvous of all the gamblers and rowdies in the country, together with sharpers, small traders and people generally who go

for profit or amusement. The Indians are ignorant and weak, and all that the Government gives them is disposed of in twenty-four hours, and the scramble with those that go is to see who can get the most of it.

"We went up on Sunday last, to see the sight. The poor remnants of the Menominees were gathered there in their squalid misery, and any number of eating, drinking, and gambling saloons were clustered about. Meat markets, stores, confectionarys, clothing stores, and a little of everything found in a large village was there, showing the generality and variety of the means resorted to to get the Indians' money.

"The sight to us was one of pain instead of pleasure. We were pained to see what was intended for good—the annuities of Government—perverted to so great an evil. The money does the Indians no manner of good. It costs them more to go and get it, than it is worth, provided they kept it; but when they squander it on sharp peddlers for gewgaws, whiskey, etc., it proves a great evil instead of good."

In 1841 an adventuresome Englishman visited frontier Wisconsin, and upon his return to England, he published a book in 1842 about his adventures. In 1950 the State Historical Society of Wisconsin published a reprint of five chapters of that book, under the title A MERRY BRITON IN PIONEER WISCONSIN. One of these chapters is entitled AN INDIAN PAYMENT, in which the author narrates his experience at the Paygrounds. He describes in detail what he saw but we quote only what he wrote about his meeting with Chief Oshkosh on his way to the Paygrounds:

"He had a pipe bearer, who prepared a red stone calumet (pipe) to a long flat stem, richly ornamented with red and green feathers.

"Chief Oshkosh went to the paygrounds in a large birch-bark canoe capable of holding 10 to 12 persons with ease. This was paddled by four Indians, two in front and two in the rear, while a fifth perched himself up in the stern to steer it. In preparation for this trip, the crew dressed themselves up with great care and elegance. Their side locks were neatly platted, red, green, and brown feathers interwoven with their scalp locks, their cheeks, chins and foreheads liberally bedaubed with vermillion and ochre. Two of them wore nose-rings as well as ear-rings, necklaces of

wampum, dark printed calico tunics, scarlet cloth leggings and moccasins worked with moose hair and porcupine quills. On this trip the Chief wore a white chip hat, and squatted himself down in the midst of the canoe, puffing his long calumet with great dignity and self-satisfaction."

The Briton also described the payment procedure, and continued as follows:

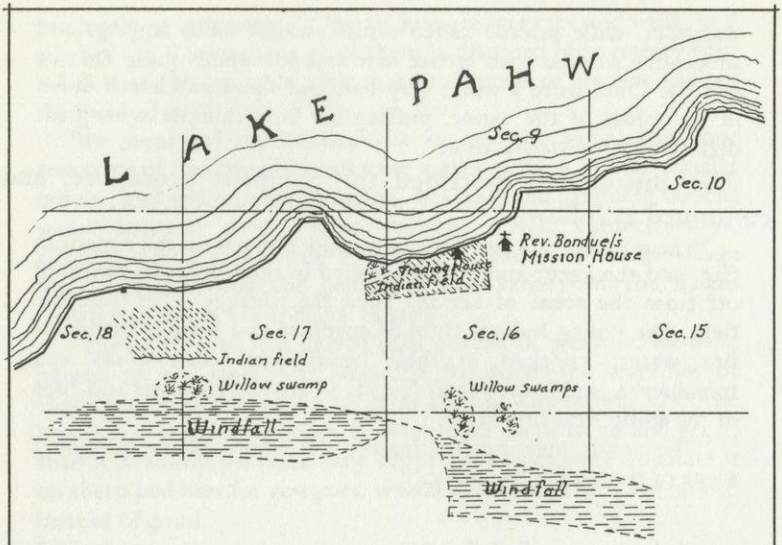
"The moment the last dollar was paid, down went the American flag, and the agent and his men rushed to their boats and sheared off from the scene of action. Then the whiskey seller took the field. The young Indians clubbed together and bought barrels of fire water, knocked in their heads with their clubs and tomahawks, and helped their friends all around to bowls and cups of the spirit—real fire water.

"The result may be anticipated; the whole village became a scene of riot and debauchery."

Historical Marker—Location

No record has been preserved, so far as this writer knows, which locates and marks the exact location and size of the area except a U.S. Government surveyor's map in the Winnebago County Register of Deeds' office. The surveyor sketched in the paygrounds area with some detail. This Government Survey was made in June, 1851, while the Indians were still located there. It designates the Paygrounds area as "Indian Field", placing it in the Northwest Quarter (NW¼) of Section 16, with a small portion of it extending westward into the Southeast Quarter (SE ¼) of the Northwest Quarter (NW ¼). That sketch is reproduced herewith. It covers 94.77 acres. We estimate a lakeshore frontage of 124-130 rods. Upon that basis, the east and south boundary lines can be estimated at 75 rods and 200 rods respectively.

The surveyor's sketch shows a trading post located in the northeast corner of the "Indian Field". It was established by George Coustaugh (Cowen) in 1844 (Harney's History page 278). It later also became a post office. The land upon which



Government survey in the
Town of Poygan made in June,
1851 showing Paygrounds
(Indian field).

U. S. government surveyors map, Winnebago County Register of Deeds Office. Paygrounds is labeled "Indian Field".

the trading post stood, later became the property of Neil Grimes (1885), who converted it into a residence. A picture of that residence as occupied by the Grimes family is shown herewith. That particular spot is now (1975) owned by Mr.

Neil Grimes' home. Mr. Grimes bought the old trading post in 1885 and converted it into a residence. Neil Grimes in foreground.

and Mrs. Henry Bremer, who have built their home on it. The lot is described as the East 90 feet of the West 190 feet of that part of Fractional Government Lot 2 lying northerly of the center line of County Trunk B.

In the same year that Cowen bought this property (1844) Father Bonduel established a missionary station nearby,

about 65 rods east of the "Indian Field" as shown on the accompanying sketch. He, with the help of Mrs. Rosalie Dousman of Green Bay conducted a school there. The land east of the Mission House was used as a cemetery. Mrs. Margaret (Anton) Herbst still remembers that there were some 20-30 grave markers on that cemetery when she taught school from 1916 to 1925, in the schoolhouse located a short distance southerly from the Grimes residence. In excavating for a residence in that locality recently, numerous skulls were dug up and a complete skeleton was removed, which has been preserved. That spot is now (1975) owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer A. Plantikow as their summer home. Two other residences have been built in the area covered by the mission house and cemetery. They are owned by Gordon Plantikow and Lester Audin. These three residences are in Government Lot 3 in the Fractional Northeast Quarter (NE ¼) of Section 16.

The historical significance of the Paygrounds has been recognized for many years. That significance and the location have received more and more attention through the years.

In the early 1900's two men living in Oshkosh became especially interested in preserving some kind of record of this place.

One of them, Arthur Kannenburg, became the Curator of the Indian Department of the Oshkosh Museum. He was probably the best informed man about the Indian lore of Winnebago County. Associated with him was Herman Hollub, who became a member of the Museum Board. They visited and explored the area in Poygan that had been occupied by the Indians and collected all the available information they could. Mr. Hollub's grandfather lived near the Paygrounds and Mr. Hollub gained a good deal of first hand information from him.

By 1918-20 these gentlemen planned to erect a suitable historical marker on the grounds at the place where the annual government payments were made. From all the

information they could gather, they determined the spot which would best mark the center of the payment activities. (These men did not know about the surveyor's sketch at the Court House). They found a large glacial rock near Poy Sippi and hauled it to the Paygrounds and placed it in the yard of the red schoolhouse on the south side of County Trunk B, which was situated in a southerly direction from the old trading post on the north side of the highway. Mr. Hollub planned to make the pattern for the bronze plaque to be fastened onto the rock. The Oshkosh Museum had no money to pay for the expenses involved in making the plaque and having the marker finished. No individual could be found who would finance the project. The whole matter drifted along indefinitely until it was finally abandoned.

Interest in the historical aspect of the Paygrounds was revived about a generation later when the Historical Society of Winnebago County became concerned about establishing and preserving some kind of public record of the place. This Society enlisted the interest and cooperation of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, and, in 1956, they erected the historical marker now standing there.

Erection of that marker was deemed of such historical significance that some 200 people attended the dedication ceremony, held there on October 7, 1956. The Winneconne High School band furnished the music for the occasion. Suzanne Schreiber, the State President of the Badger Junior Historians, led the group in the pledge to the flag. Betty Grignon and Mary Becker read prize essays written for the occasion. Chief Roy Oshkosh, the great grandson of the original Chief Oshkosh, was present and gave the address for the occasion. A 30-star flag, such as was flown when Wisconsin became a state in 1848, was presented to Russell Grignon, whose forebears were the first settlers west of the Wolf River. E.A. Clemans, former acting president of the Oshkosh Normal School (now University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh) was the President of the County

Historical Society. He promoted and planned the program.

It is interesting to note that the historical marker is located a considerable distance from the spot where Messrs. Kannenburg and Hollub had placed the large rock to mark the spot where the annual payments were made. During the dedication exercises in 1956 it was stated that the marker is located in "almost the exact center of the area" in which the payments were made. Apparently the people who planned the dedication program did not know that the Government surveyor's map existed. If they did, they probably had good reason to place the marker where it is. Some of the older residents of the area think there may have been two reasons for locating the marker where it is: The owners of the property where it ought to have been located objected to its being placed there; and second, the present location is better to attract public notice and observation. At any rate, it appears to be located within the boundaries of the Government surveyor's "Indian Field" shown on his map. But it develops that Kannenburg and Hollub had located the spot to be exactly where the U.S. surveyor had placed it on his map, and placed the large rock in the right place.

The Exodus

When the Treaty of the Cedars was made in 1836, it was believed that the demand of the settlers for land would be satisfied for the next 20 years. It developed, however, that in less than half of that time the demand for new land became so strong, and the pressure was so great, that the Government felt compelled to yield to that pressure. The problem was how the twenty-year period could be shortened up and the Indians moved out in the shortest possible time. Col. William Medill, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, was assigned the task of solving the problem. Col. Medill had a job to do and he picked the time of the 1848 payments to do it.

A book was published in 1856 entitled Geographical and Statistical History of Winnebago County, by Mitchell and

Osborn, contemporaries of Col. Medill, in which they said: "(The details of that treaty) were neither creditable to that gentleman nor the government and decidedly unprofitable to the poor Indian, who was so foully cheated that they are now to pay $40,000.00 to obtain a fraction of the restitution to which justice entitled them without cost." (p. 103)

An article in the Wisconsin Magazine of History, published in 1975, had this to say about the deal: "Medill was harsh, unyielding and furious when the Indians, whose only offense was procrastination, managed to extend the treaty council over a 10-day period (from October 5 to October 14, 1848)". The article further states that the Indians were threatened that if all else failed the government could eject them forcibly. "It was a bargain the Menominees immediately and continuously rejected" (Vol. 58–No. 4).

Col. Medill went to the 1848 Payment prepared to "put over" the deal to acquire all of the remaining Menominee lands in Wisconsin.

It is probable that the terms of the treaty had, in effect, been drafted in advance, and nothing else remained to be done except to have the Menominee Chiefs and headmen sign it. They were all on the Payment grounds at the time. No more fooling around now. The government agents planned to get the deal closed immediately. The Indians, however, resisted so strenuously that, on the fourth day of the negotiations, one of the officials was so angry that he left, having lost all hope that the treaty could be made. Finally, the Indians were told that if they didn't sign, they would be forcibly ejected. They then yielded very reluctantly. Chief Oshkosh said "I signed it without my consent. I was compelled to sign." This was called the Treaty of Poygan and signed October 18, 1848.

By the terms of that treaty, the Indians agreed, among other things. to move to Minnesota within two years. The reaction of the tribe was so violent that they refused to move or take any steps toward removal. Finally, Chief Oshkosh and

a few of the headmen of the tribe were persuaded to inspect the land in Minnesota. They decided that the Menominees should not make the move. The government agents were angry and furious. When they sought to remove the Indians forcibly, Chief Oshkosh and some headmen of the tribe responded by making a visit to President Fillmore at Washington, and persuaded him to defer the movement out of Wisconsin to June, 1851. Even then the Indians did not move out.

Every effort was made to get them off the land they were occupying, but the Indians dragged their feet and remained there until 1852.

During the period when negotiations were being conducted for a solution of the problems involved (between 1848 and 1852) the government agents decided to move the Indians to wilderness lands on the upper Wolf River "where no white man wants to go anyway". Official consent was given for the Menominees to occupy temporarily an area between the upper Wolf and Oconto Rivers

Finally in October 1852, the government agents decided to wait no longer and they ordered the Menominees to move out of the Poygan area to this northern "wilderness"; and they were ordered to pack up and take to their canoes and get going.

"On a bitter cold day, November 2, 1852, the Menominees, 2,002 of them, women, children, old and young, sick and well, with household goods and all of their capital lares and penates in birchbark canoes, embarked upon the already icy waters of the river. Oshkosh, grim and silent in the head canoe, knew the cruelty of this order, and that the agents were making them pay through their noses for not being cooperative in the past. If they had gone in the spring as soon as the ice was out of the Wolf they would have had time to plan. Now it was too late. The journey was one of tragedy. In some cases the canoes smashed up in the ice." (Phoebe Jewel Nichols in *Oshkosh, the Brave)*

Mr. James Frechette, formerly Chairman of the Advisory Council of Menominee Tribes, supplements Phoebe Nichols' account by adding that not all the Indians were able to complete that terrible trip. Only the stronger ones pushed ahead; the weaker ones lagged behind and scattered along the river banks from below New London to a point south of Shawano, probably a distance of 30 miles. The winter weather was severe and the Indians were forced to live in temporary improvised shelters through the winter. Many of them died from exposure and lack of shelter. Mr. Frenchette estimates the total number that moved out of Poygan at 1200.

This story would not be complete without a word about Father F.J. Bonduel, a Capuchin priest, who accompanied the Indians from Poygan and ministered to the sick, the feeble, the dying. He had established a mission station in Poygan in 1844, and stayed with his flock on their journey up the Wolf River. More about him later in this history.

Those who survived the winter finally settled at a point about 9 miles north of Shawano. In May 1854 the Federal Government took action that permitted the Menominees to retain as a permanent reservation the land they had temporarily occupied and the Wisconsin Legislature adopted a resolution consenting to the action. This became the Menominee Indian Reservation, which contains 10 townships of timber land.

Between 1852 and 1854 the condition of the Menominees was so desperate that Chief Oshkosh sought relief from the government, reporting that his tribe "had never been so poor and destitute of provisions and are starving".*

* A spurious record was made to prove that the Menominees were completely satisfied with the treaty of 1848. This is refuted by a petition to the President, signed by all the chiefs and headmen of the tribe 10 years later and filed in the office of Indian Affairs. It recited the numerous acts of the government agents by which the Inidans were misled and cheated, and that the Indians were compelled to sign against their wills. The petition was never acted on.

History continued to be made on the Menominee Reservation. "The past is not something that we have left behind us. . it is something that moves along with us". (A.J. Poynbee)

IV.

THE STEAMBOAT ERA

Steamboating dates back to 1806 when Robert Fulton built the *Clermont* and ran it on the Hudson River from New York City to Albany on August 7, 1807. It was the first steam-propelled boat that could be operated mechanically and commercially with success.

Only 14 years later, July 31, 1821, the steamer *Walk-in-the-Water* left Detroit, Michigan for Green Bay, arriving there August 6 with a large passenger list.

When the *Clermont* made its famous trip to Albany, migration westward from the Atlantic seaboard was just beginning. A rugged mountain system and a dense pathless forest area stood in the way and tended to discourage western movement. There were only two waterways that could be used—the Ohio River system and the Great Lakes. To use the former, a traveler would first have to climb over the Appalachian Mountains. To use the latter, he would have to get to the Great Lakes system. It is the latter we are concerned with in this story.

The beginning of the western immigration movement and the invention of the steamboat triggered the idea of building a canal. The only way to get to the Great Lakes was to dig a canal from Albany, New York to Buffalo on Lake Erie. To do this in that day was a tremendous undertaking—a stupendous engineering feat, but it was done. It took 8 years to dig and complete the Erie Canal—from 1817 to 1825. The result: the longest canal ever built in the U.S., 363 miles long with 72 locks. It was carried over several large streams on stone aqueducts.

Early Steamboating–Hotaling et al.

One of the pioneer steamboat men on the Hudson River between New York and Albany and on the Erie Canal was Peter Hotaling. Robert Fulton's *Clermont* made its historic trip in Hotaling's lifetime, and he may have seen the boat on the Hudson River. In 1843, he was persuaded to come to Green Bay to help open up a navigable waterway between Green Bay and Lake Winnebago.

Green Bay was in a key position to benefit from the trade passing through it over a long established trade route from the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes and Erie Canal ports and beyond. Lead trade from the lead mines at Galena, Illinois was especially prominent in the economic structure of the territory. Lead had been for many years coming up the Mississippi and the Wisconsin Rivers and down the Fox and on to New York. There were numerous overland portages, at Portage and between Lake Winnebago and Green Bay.

The stretch of water from Lake Winnebago to Green Bay was a bottleneck in the water transportation along that route and the Green Bay merchants were eager to bridge that gap, and they picked Captain Hotaling to help them do it.

The water level of Lake Winnebago is 170 feet higher than the level at Green Bay. Between the two bodies of water (about 40 miles) there were 31 miles of rapids–Could some way be found to run a boat "uphill" 170 feet in 31 miles? At Kaukauna the ascent was 50 feet "uphill" in 1.26 miles. At Little Chute it was 38 feet in 1.15 miles. At Appleton it was 38 feet.

To prepare for this venture, Captain Hotaling outfitted an Erie Canal boat with a steam engine and called it the *Blackhawk*.

Hotaling was a determined man. His plan was to run his boat upstream as far as possible, then drag it overland around the rapids to the next open water and so forth. When he and his crew got to the Kaukauna rapids, they gave up.

That winter Hotaling built and supervised the construction

of a new hull at Manchester (now Brothertown) on the east shore of Lake Winnebago, and the boiler, machinery and all usable parts of the *Blackhawk* were transferred to the new hull. In effect, he got his *Blackhawk*, except the hull, to Lake Winnebago; and he called it the *Manchester.* It was a sidewheeler 75 feet long and 13 feet wide with a 3½ foot hull. It was launched in 1844.

During the fall of 1844, the *Manchester* entered Lake Poygan on her way up the Wolf River to Shawano, loaded with sawmill supplies and goods for a trading post, and stopped from time to time along its course to chop out trees that had fallen into the channel and remove the hidden snags along the way.

At Shawano the crankshaft broke and there was no way to repair it there. Two members of the crew carried the broken parts through the dense trackless wilderness to Green Bay, 40 miles away, to have a new shaft made. The new shaft weighed 150 pounds and these two men carried it back to Shawano on their backs.

In 1850 the *Manchester* was lengthened 25 feet and came out under the name of *Badger State.* In the fall of that year she was taken to Shiocton and Shawano where she was frozen in. In December the river opened up and the boat was run down to Lake Poygan where she remained the rest of the winter. In 1853, while going up the Wolf River, she ran into a submerged log and sank at the mouth of Bruce Creek. Her machinery was taken out and placed in a new hull and the boat was named the *W. A. Knapp.*

This historic steamboat (*Manchester–Badger State–W.A. Knapp*) made many a trip through Lake Poygan going from Oshkosh to points up the Wolf River until 1860. It was the only steamboat on the Winnebago-Poygan and Wolf River waters for seven years (1844-1850).

In the winter of 1849-1850 the *Peytonia* was built, or rebuilt, at Neenah. It was the second steamboat to ply these waters. It is said that the *Peytonia* was brought to

Green Bay and taken up the river to the first rapids at DePere. There it was beached, the upper decks were removed, and the hull cut in two. Then the sections were hauled up through the rapids to Neenah where a new 20-foot section was inserted, and these several parts of the hull joined together. New decks were built at Neenah. It was a better and larger boat than the *Manchester.*

These two pioneer steamboats "blazed the trail" for navigation on Lakes Winnebago and Poygan and the Wolf River.

They were followed in the early 1850's by numerous boats of various sizes. There was a mania for steamboat building and so many boats were built that none of them could be operated profitably.

W.A. Titus, in his article entitled *Early Navigation on Fox and Wolf Rivers and Lake Winnebago* said "it seemed that everyone with a little cash wanted to build and run a steamboat, and it may be said that every one of these investors lost his money in time." Many of these boats went out of business. The *Peytonia* and the *W.A. Knapp* (formerly the *Badger State* and *Manchester*) continued to operate. Several boats were run on regular schedules between Oshkosh and New London, which was considered the head of navigation. Among them were the *Northwestern* and the *Tigress*, running in opposite directions. They gave daily boat service each way. The *Northwestern* left New London about 7 A.M. and at the same time the *Tigress* left Oshkosh for New London, meeting each other about half way, arriving at their destinations about 3:30 P.M.

These boats made connection with the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad at Winneconne and served all points up river to New London, and at Gill's Landing transferred freight and passengers bound for Weyauwega, Waupaca, Stevens Point and Wausau.

Lake Poygan was the connecting link between Lake Winnebago and the Wolf River. All of this steamboat traffic

up the Wolf through Lake Poygan was in sight of my home, a mile across Norwegian Bay.

Breaking Down the Barriers

During the feverish steamboat building activity in the 1850's another historical event was shaping up.

Before Hotaling came to Green Bay in 1843 there had already been much discussion about improvements to the waterway across Wisconsin. It was highly desirable that there should be an uninterrupted passageway from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River, and vice-versa. There were two major obstructions that blocked the way, and some way had to be found for getting steamboats on the Wisconsin River over to the Fox River. That problem was solved by digging a 2-mile canal at Portage in 1851. Hotaling no doubt had a good deal to do with the development of that project.

The other obstruction was between Green Bay and Lake Winnebago, and it was this one that Hotaling had a primary interest in. When he became convinced that he could not drag his boat around the rapids he no doubt worked with those who were conquering those rapids in another way. A series of dams and locks was under construction to provide a continuous waterway between Green Bay and Lake Winnebago. When this project was nearing completion Hotaling started east to purchase machinery for a new boat he was building. He wanted to be ready to take the trip up river with his own boat when the waterway was ready for navigation all the way through. On his way east, he died at Detroit from a lung hemorrhage, at 54 years of age.

After thirty years of dam and lock building, navigation from Green Bay to Lake Winnebago was opened June 19, 1856, and steamboats could navigate to all parts of the Mississippi-Ohio-Hudson River systems, and the Great Lakes basin. That is what Peter Hotaling had dreamed about and worked toward for many years.

It was his son, Captain Stephen Hotaling, who made the

2300 mile trip by steamboat that his father had envisioned. In 1856 he piloted the steamer *Aquilla* from Pittsburgh down the Ohio River, up the Mississippi, up the Wisconsin River, through the canal at Portage, down the upper Fox River, through Lake Winnebago and down through the lower Fox to Green Bay. It was the first steamboat to make the entire trip from the Mississippi River to Green Bay by water.

From the time the *Aquilla* entered the Wisconsin River at Prairie du Chien there were celebrations all along the way to Green Bay. It was a triumphant entry parade. It has been described as one of the noisiest, merriest, and longest civic celebrations that pioneer Wisconsin ever had—crowds and brass bands at the stopping places along the entire route, with speeches, fireworks and noise-making instruments and so forth. The Great Lakes and the mighty Mississippi were now linked by a single waterway.

The *Aquilla* became a part of the steamboat fleet that navigated the Green Bay, Winnebago, Poygan and Wolf River waters—along with the *Peytonia, Badger State, Milwaukee, Northwestern* and *Tom Wall.*

Lake Poygan had thus been connected up with waterways leading to all parts of North America—in fact, to all parts of the world.

Author's Steamboat Memories

This brings the story down to my time. As a child, I heard my father talk about the *Milwaukee* and the *Tom Wall.* As a teenager, I was on an excursion boat that got stuck when it ran into the wreck of the *Tom Wall* that had sunk in a bend of the Wolf River (8/2/1888), now called the Tom Wall Bend.

My own personal knowledge dates back to the *John Lynch,* which was built in 1877, and ran regularly between Tustin and Oshkosh.

I wish to continue my story about steamboating from the background of my experience with it and the steamboat people I knew or knew about.

During the years I learned about many steamboat captains, and became acquainted with some of them. They were a group of remarkable and capable men. Steamboating was a way of life for them, and often two or more members of a family qualified for the captaincy. Among the better known captains in my time were the following: John Lynch, Captain Booth, Mike Golden, O.B. Reed and Thaxter Reed (sons of L.B. Reed), Luke Laborde, Bailey Grover, John Velte, Bill Neff, Ed Neff, and Sam Neff, Tom Wall, Mick Garrow, Paul and Arden LeFevre.

Navigation and Hazards

The steamboat captains knew every nook and corner of their water routes. They had to be very versatile and resourceful. They were often confronted by emergencies that required a cool head and instant action to avoid serious consequences or disaster. Navigation at night required full knowledge of all the land-marks along the way and alertness to discover the unusual. Fogs were a nightmare.

In piloting his boat from Bay Boom toward Tustin at night, Captain Paul LeFevre, for a long time, was guided by a light in the LeFevre residence at Tustin. Later, a lighted lamp-post on the dock guided him.

During heavy fogs, the pilot would have to "feel" his way. He had a mariner's compass and sometimes that didn't help any. At one time during a dense fog, Paul LeFevre was "feeling his way" toward the dock at Tustin and couldn't find it. After wandering around the lake for a time, he was passing by a dock on the *left* side of the boat. There was only one dock on the shore of Lake Poygan at which he could land and it was always on the *right* side of the boat when it landed. How could there be a dock on the left side? He called the crew. It was the right dock all right, but it was on the "wrong" side of the boat. The boat had always approached the dock from the east going west, but this time it was coming from the west, going east.

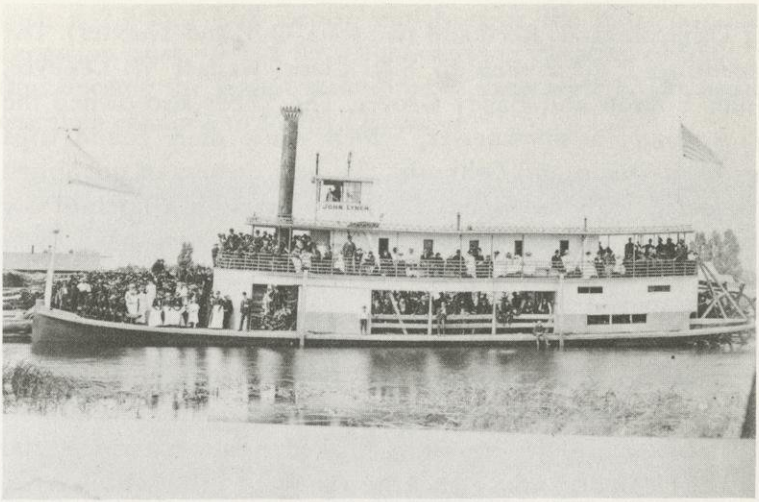
One year during a high water season, Captain Booth was taking the *Lone Star* up the Fox River to Princeton, when darkness overtook him. When he realized that he was out of the river channel, he stopped his boat and heard a German call out, "Vat you doing in my pasture?" "Why in ---- didn't you keep your gate shut?" shouted the captain back to him. The boat had gotten out of the river altogether and it was steaming over a farm.

It was the custom to leave the boats at Oshkosh for the winter, where they were drydocked and made ready for the next season. In the winter of 1880-81 the *John Lynch* was frozen in at Tustin. When spring came, the lake opened up around the shores, providing open water around the edge of the ice. The whole body of lake ice was free to float. When such a body of ice is driven by the wind, it gathers great momentum and tears up the shore line and roots up the trees in its path. Boathouses and shanties in its path are crushed like pasteboard boxes. One day the body of ice was moving toward the dock where the boat was moored. If the boat had remained there it would have been crushed like an egg shell. Captain LeFevre was ready for it and knew what to do. The steam was up and the boat was ready to go. It was run westward along the shoreline to the "Bi-o" Creek, and up the creek about 70 rods, to the bridge and tied up there.

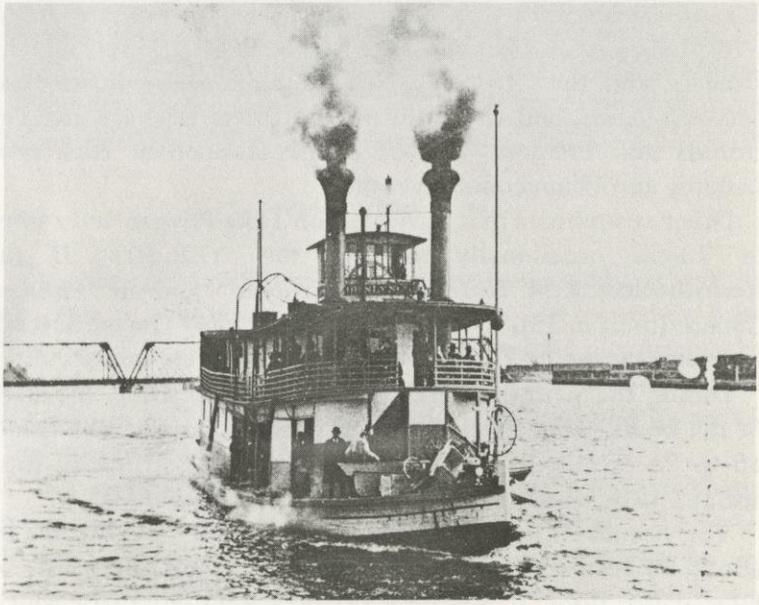
The steamboats to and from Tustin operated as late in the fall as possible, breaking and plowing through the ice when necessary. It was usually early in November when they "laid up" for the winter, occasionally as late as November 15. Once it was November 22. The lake was clear of ice in spring as early as March 21 and as late as April 27. Navigation usually opened up sometime during the first week or ten days in April.

Tustin Steamboats

The *John Lynch* was the first steamboat owned by Tustin people. It was built in 1877 and owned by the Reed Family



Steamer John Lynch. It later had two smokestacks as shown below.
(Courtesy Oshkosh Public Museum)



of Oshkosh (L.B. Reed and two sons, O.B. and Thaxter). The Reeds sold the *Lynch* to S.R. Clark, Wallace W. LeFevre, John Boyson and Bailey Grover. The Reeds also owned the *O.B. Reed*, a sidewheeler, which made daily round trips between Tustin and Oshkosh. The new owners of the Lynch bargained with the Reeds that they would not operate any steamboat on the Tustin-Oshkosh route, and paid them $500.00 extra for "goodwill". The Reeds violated the agreement not to compete and operated their *O.B. Reed* on the same route and sought to acquire the Tustin trade by underselling the owners of the *Lynch.* It looked as if the Reeds were trying to run the Tustin owners out of business. The Tustin people, however, backed home enterprise and gave their trade to the *Lynch*, and the *O.B. Reed* quit.

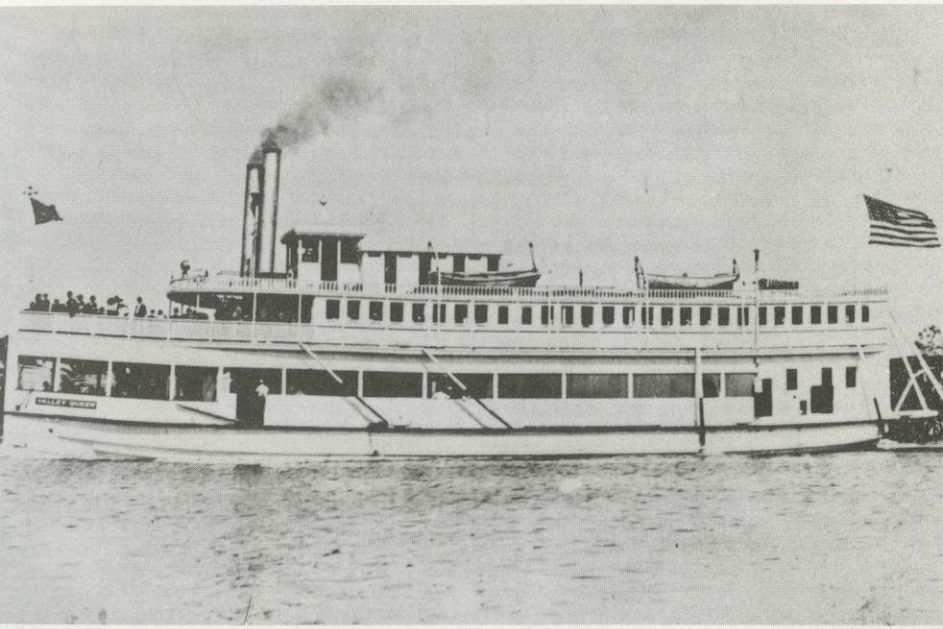
When we mention Tustin steamboats, we must at the same time think of the LeFevre name—Wallace W. LeFevre and his two sons, Paul and Arden. Steamboats and the name LeFevre were almost synonymous. They operated 8 steamboats in and out of Tustin, either as owners or part owners: The *John Lynch, Fashion, Thistle, City of Oshkosh, LeFevre, Dixie, Paul L.* and the *Arden L.* Not only did these boats run between Tustin and Oshkosh, most of them ran regularly to Orihula and Fremont—and of course stopped at Richter's Landing and Winneconne en route.

Other steamboats that navigated on Lake Poygan and came to Tustin occasionally included the *O.B. Reed II* (a sternwheeler), *K.M. Hutchinson, Evalyn,* and the *Leander Choate* (built in 1908), later named the *Valley Queen.* Several excursions came to Tustin each summer on these boats.

During the period of greatest steamboat activity, the size of the boats varied from 80 to 125 feet in length, and from 16 to 25 feet in width. The ratio of length to breadth was about 5 to 1, which produced steady and faster boats.

The *Leander Choate* was rebuilt in 1921 by lengthening it about 20 feet and converting the upper (third) deck into a large dance floor. It was then 146 feet long, 30½ feet wide,

with a 7.2-foot hull depth, and became the most popular excursion boat, with a passenger-carrying capacity of 550. It thus became the largest steamboat in these waters. The name was then changed to *Valley Queen.*



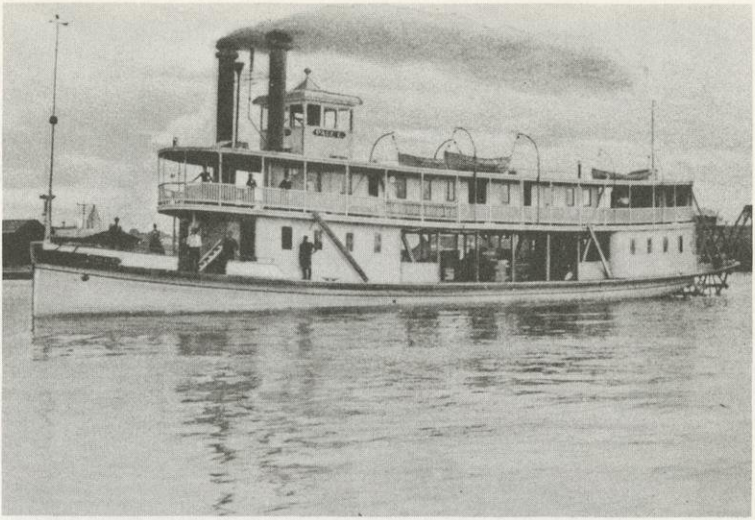
Steamer Valley Queen.

Another boat ought to be mentioned separately. It was the *Cambria,* a twin screw propeller boat. It was owned by John Stevens of Neenah. It was a beautiful, de luxe pleasure yacht that was built to navigate on the Great Lakes for long cruises, staterooms and all. It visited Tustin each year and its arrival was always a noteworthy event.

The steamboat that was best known by the Poygan-Tustin people was the *Paul L.,* named after Captain Paul L. LeFevre. It was a beautifully built boat and was thought by its admirers to be the best looking boat on these waters. It was

The Cambria—a deluxe pleasure yacht.

Inspection trip, July 24, 1895. On board were Sec. J. B. Doe, Mayor W. L. Marshall, John Steven, Mathes, Weed, Hilton, Worden.

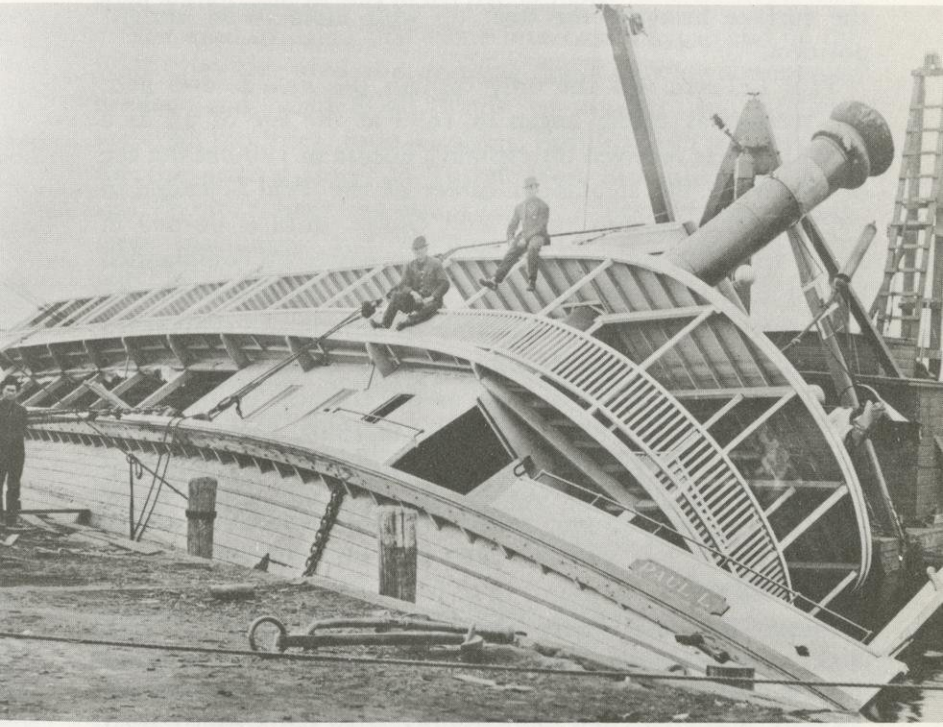


The steamer Paul L., the pride of Tustin.

Paul L., after capsizing.

The Paul L. at the Tustin dock.

123 feet long and 248 feet wide, and had a carrying capacity of 400 passengers. It was built in 1907 and retired as a steamboat in 1921, at which time it was converted into a bridge construction barge. It sank during a bridge construction job at Appleton about 1923; and this ended her career.



The Paul L. being uprighted. Two barges were sunk on the outside and fastened to the boat—then pumped out. As they came to the surface, they pulled the Paul L. up with them.

In 1910, the *Paul L.* was the victim of a disaster when it was unloading a cargo of coal at Oshkosh. The coal was being unloaded from the dock side of the boat while it remained untouched on the water side, thus causing it to lean in that

direction. As the dock side became lighter by removal of the coal, the other side leaned more and more towards the water side, and finally the boat tipped over completely on its side with half of it under water. It was raised by sinking two large barges beside the boat and pumping the water out of them. These barges were securely fastened to the underside of the boat and as the water was pumped out of them, they rose to the surface bringing the boat up with them to an upright position.

Paul LeFevre was the only captain the *Paul L.* ever had. His steamboat career began in 1893 at the age of 15 as a cabin boy. He received his captain's license in 1900 at the age of 22. When the steamboat career of the *Paul L.* ended in 1920, Paul skippered the *Valley Queen* until it burned in 1923. In 1924, he moved to Chicago where he commanded harbor tugs until his retirements in 1952, at which time he had been an active licensed steamboat captain and skipper for 52 years. The LeFevre steamboat regime began with Wallace W. LeFevre, the father of Paul, as the engineer on the *Isabel* (a Berlin boat) in 1876 and closed in 1920, a period of 45 years. The only Tustin man who approached the LeFevre record of service was John Yehrke, who was the engineer on the LeFevre boats for 35 years.

What Cargoes?

The cargoes of freight carried by the boats on Lake Poygan included everything. They were loaded both ways. Livestock buyers scoured the country and bought all the livestock the farmers wanted to sell, and shipped it to Oshkosh by boat. Potatoes were another commodity shipped in large quantities. The Clark mill in Tustin regularly shipped all of its manufactured products by boat, mostly unassembled cheeseboxes (tops, bottoms and sidewalls). When other freight did not make a full boatload, cordwood was loaded aboard. The dock yard was full of it to draw from.

Commercial fishing was extensive, as has hereinafter been described.

Another bustling activity that furnished a lot of business for the boats was the grass mat rug industry at Oshkosh. The marshes around Lake Poygan and up the Wolf River grew a certain kind of marsh grass that was suitable for the manufacture of rugs. Hauling this produced a lucrative freight business for the boats. The *John Lynch* burned to the water's edge with a load of this baled hay aboard.

The kind of cargo that came into Lake Poygan and up the Wolf River consisted of everything that a growing community needed and wanted—all kinds of lumber and building material, groceries, food, clothing, furniture and merchandise for the general stores at Tustin, West Bloomfield, Orihula, and Fremont, beer and liquor for the saloons in those places, farm machinery and equipment for the area and the purchases made at Oshkosh by the boat passengers, etc.

The Steamboat Era

Steamboating developed and flourished from 1844 to about 1920, roughly 75 years. After that, it became less and less important and faded out as a thriving enterprise because the railroad era had arrived. Steamboats continued to perform valuable service in making connections with railroad points at Winneconne and Gills Landing and points above. Steamboat traffic continued to be important to Tustin longer than at other points because there was no railroad competition there, and also to Fremont, because the railroad was four miles away.

Location of the railroad so far out of town came about in this way: It was the custom and practice of railroad builders to get free land along the right-of-way; and cities, towns and landowners along the way were glad to make such donations with financial assistance. The Fremont area did not provide any land or money for the railroad, so the story goes. The village board and influential citizens of the town figured it out that the railroad had to come through the village—there was no other way to go; so why pay them to come through?

At least, that is the way the story goes. The railroad company penalized Fremont by building the railroad four miles out of town, and crossed the Wolf River at Gills Landing instead of at Fremont. As a result, steamboat traffic continued to be important.

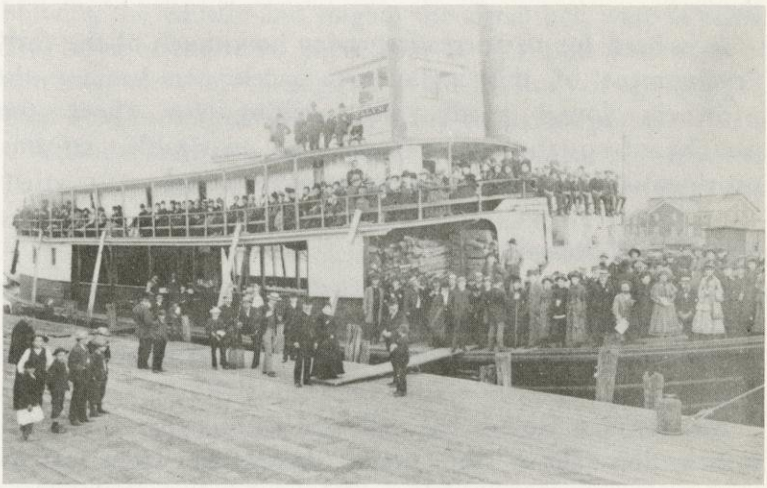
Lake Poygan also furnished an entry point into the back country. Tustin is located at the west end of the lake and was the gateway to the Poy Sippi and Pine River area, and beyond. Trade and traffic flourished at that point and was a great boon to those places. When the automobiles and trucks came, they ended the steamboat era.

After 1920, Paul LeFevre continued his boating career in the Oshkosh waters until 1924 when he moved to Chicago where he piloted harbor tugs until his retirement in 1952. His steamboat career spread over a period of 59 years—from 1893 to 1952—an all time record as a steamboat man. It covered 80 percent of the active steamboat era. He died June 8, 1964 at Shawano Lake at the age of 85.

People who lived on the shores of Lake Poygan and along the Wolf River up to Fremont during the steamboat era had a special kind of feeling toward the steamboats—a sort of indescribable kinship. It was well expressed by William A. Durkee of Winneconne, who had developed a special love for the *John Lynch*, which stopped at the dock in Winneconne twice a day on its daily Tustin-Oshkosh trip. When the *Lynch* burned to the waters edge (5/2/02) and he saw its hull being towed to Oshkosh, he felt as if it were a funeral procession of an old friend.

Excursions and Freight Hauling

During the summertime, mainly June to early September, some of the larger boats were used as excursion boats. The principal ones were the *Thistle*, *Evalyn*, *Paul L.*, and *Leander Choate* (later the *Valley Queen*). These excursions were sponsored by churches, Sunday Schools, societies and commercial bodies. The boat hired for the trip, if it were a



The steamer Evalyn—a typical excursion boat.

daytime excursion, would start out in the morning and return in the evening. At other times than the excursion season, these boats were used as freighters. Coal from Green Bay was usually the cargo.

These freighters would run from daylight to dark. They often would start out while it was still dark in the morning so as to reach the loading place about daylight. They might often get in two or three hours of work before daylight and breakfast.

The Fox-Wolf River system was a most important

waterway in Wisconsin. Steamboats operated through the years on schedules in Winnebago, Waushara, Waupaca, and Green Lake Counties and, to a degree, in Marquette, Shawano and Columbia Counties. Up and down the Wolf and Fox and through the several lakes that formed the large beads in the chain of narrow rivers, side and sternwheelers plied, carrying passengers and freight to and from the points along the way.

It is hard for us to realize today how much of the early development of this region was accelerated because the pioneers found ready and waiting for them this northeast-southeast system of navigable streams, providentially located in the center of the state.

More About Steamboating

An abundance of printed matter on steamboating can be found in the public libraries at Oshkosh and Appleton, probably considerably more in the Oshkosh library than at Appleton.

Mr. Herman Hollub has collected an immense amount of information about the boats themselves from official government sources, and has catalogued it in a card system. In that information he has the date and the place of building, size, an dimensions, complete building specifications, names of owners, and what eventually happened to the boat. He has built models of 15 boats, all constructed to an exact scale from the original specifications. He has counted the number of steamboats that were built in the Lake Winnebago–Fox and Wolf River Pool and states that at least 225 were built during the steamboat period.

An ambitious steamboat historian could render valuable service by collecting all of the available data about steamboating in the Winnebago–Poygan–Wolf River waters and compile the information in an orderly single volume. This could be supplemented by a hundred or more photographs of the better known steamboats and tugboats.

Post Script

I do want to add my story about the *Perkins,* a screw propeller cabinboat about 40 feet in length. It was sunk in 3½ feet of water, about 50-60 feet from the Tustin shoreline, with the bow pointed out into the lake. The boiler and other machinery had not been taken out. The steering wheel in the pilot house was still intact and the wires for blowing the whistle and ringing the signal bell were in place. The boys of the town (ages from 10-12) took possession of that boat and went through all of the motions of operating it. That boat took them on many a trip to distant places.

Nobody knew where the boat came from or how it got to Tustin. The kids of Tustin knew that boat better than any other boat in these waters. This was in the early 1890s.

According to Fred Cook, there was a *Perkins* which made trips up the Willow Creek about 4 miles in those years. It is barely possible that was the same boat that was grounded at Tustin, but there is no evidence to support a supposition that the names referred to the same boat.

V.

LOGGING AND RAFTING OPERATIONS ON WOLF RIVER

All of northern Wisconsin lived through an exciting lumbering era. The story of one section is essentially the story of all sections, with minor variations. What happened on the rivers and lakes is at the center of the story.

To tell the story of the logging and rafting operations on Lake Poygan, we must consider the Lake Poygan and Wolf River Basin together.

Lake Poygan is really an expansion of the Wolf River, a sort of half way station on its way to Lake Michigan. The river can be compared with a rubber tube which has bulged out in one place.

Now what is the Wolf River like? It rises in Forest County near the Wisconsin-Michigan boundary line. In the upper half of its course it is one of the wild rivers in America, and rushes downgrade at the rate of 9 feet per mile—775 feet in the 80 miles between Lennox and Shawano (p. 18 GEOLOGY AND WATER RESOURCES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY, published by the University of Wisconsin Geological Department in 1966). That stretch of the river is full of falls and rapids. Below Shawano the downgrade is gradual. The banks are low and there is frequent flooding. The drop is about 42 feet in the 80 miles from Shawano to Lake Poygan—6 inches per mile.

The Fox-Wolf Fiction

When the early explorers entered the river at Green Bay and ascended it, they were navigating on the river that

drained practically the whole area of the Lake Winnebago Pool, an area of 3,200 square miles. All the rivers in that area except a few creeks flowing into Lake Winnebago, are tributaries of the Wolf River. (See the accompanying sketch.) Geographically and actually, these explorers entered the Wolf River at Green Bay. If they had followed that river up to its source, they would have discovered and entered the finest stand of pine timber in the land. But these men were on a waterway that might lead them to a larger waterway; so they entered the tributary that entered the Wolf River near Winneconne, called the Fox River. When they got up to Portage, they discovered that the Wisconsin River was only 2½ miles away, which was reached by portaging—then down to the Mississippi.

To these explorers the route from Portage to Green Bay was all one waterway, and they called it the Fox River.

To the lumbermen and rivermen, all the logs towed to Oshkosh from Bay Boom floated on the Wolf River. To them the waterway from Bay Boom to Oshkosh was all one river, the Wolf. It seems inconsistent, even now, to use the name of a tributary for the main river, especially when the Wolf is a much larger stream. 75-80% of the water that flows through Oshkosh to Green Bay comes from the Wolf River above the point where the Fox enters it. Reuben G. Thwaits sums it up by saying "This geographical mistake has so long been persisted in that correction becomes impracticable, and we must continue to style the branch, the trunk."

It is interesting to note that at one point the distance across country between the Wolf River and Green Bay is 28 miles, but it flows 150 miles from that point, in a hairpin pattern, to reach Green Bay; and the latter part of that stretch is called "Fox River".

The Wolf is fed by many tributaries along its course. Among them is the Little Wolf, which enters the Wolf near New London, and the Waupaca River, which enters a few miles north of the Winnebago County line. When the

tremendous volume of water from this area(3,200 square miles) pours into Lakes Poygan and Winnebago in the spring, it often raises the water level three feet, sometimes more.

River Divides Township

This river, in the early years, was a barrier between the east and west sides of the river. There was no place between New London and Winneconne where people could cross except by boat, unless they waded across. According to tradition, there was a place at Fremont where the river could be forded. An artist, Bill Juhre, painted a picture showing two ox teams wading into and across the river, pulling covered wagons behind them. Later a ferry barge took people and traffic across. The bridge came in due time.

Lake Poygan and Wolf River–Ideal Combination

Lake Poygan and the Wolf River were made to order for the logging and lumbering industry. A vast unbroken pine forest to the north and west of Lake Poygan was waiting to be cut and taken to the sawmills. It was said that one could walk from Michigan to Minnesota without leaving the shade of that forest. It covered the north 3/5 of the state–some 3 million acres. It was the finest stand of timber in the nation. The Wolf River Valley north of Lake Poygan was located in the eastern section of that forest.

In Winnebago County lumbering began in 1835. There was a good stand of pine along the Rat River (which empties into the Wolf). It was cut for the construction of government buildings at Neenah. There was some lumbering in the state before the Civil War but the lumberjack era began about 1860 and lasted until the early 1900's (the last drive came down the Wolf in 1910).

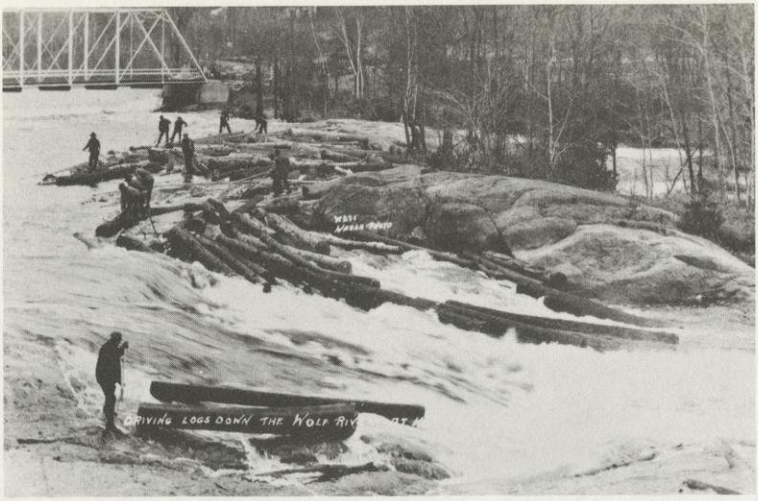
Lumber camps were spread all over northern Wisconsin. The cutting of the trees and hauling the logs to the rivers is a thrilling story. Many a man from the Lake Poygan country spent his winters at one of these logging camps, working "in

the woods up north"; it was the only employment men could find in the wintertime. Often two in a family went. Some boys at 14 were old enough to go. Men with their ox teams went there to haul sled loads of logs to the nearest river. Later they went with their horse teams. My father went with his team (Dick and Clyde).

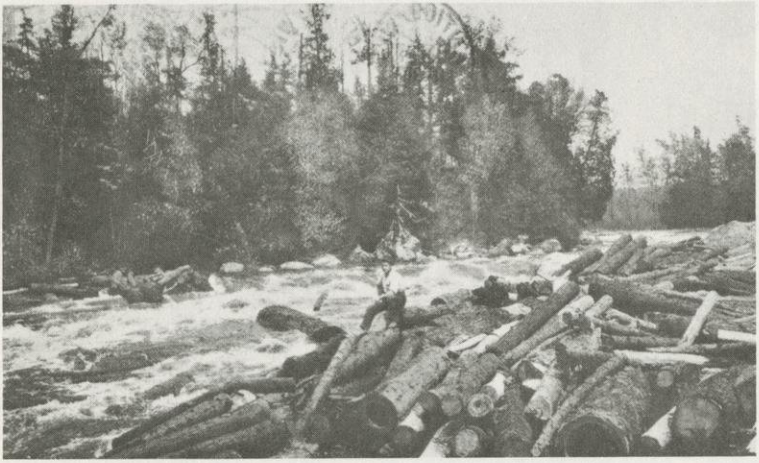
Hauling logs with horses, Necedah, Wis., about 1890. Below, hauling logs by sled. This load was built up for the photo. One team could pull such a load on the ice roads. Sometimes a lead team helped to get the load started. Photos courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

A lumber camp about 1875. This is a picture of one of the larger camps—a later type of camp houses.

It was a tough and rugged breed of men that could stay in camp all winter cutting the trees and getting them to the rollways along the rivers. They were routed out at four o'clock in the morning and worked day in and day out in all kinds of weather—snow sometimes waist high and



A typical log drive in wild water on the Wolf river.



Another view of wild water log driving. Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

temperature often below zero—"2 feet below zero", some of them said.

When these men returned home in the spring they brought with them stories of their winter experiences. So the Lake Poyganers felt a real kinship with the lumber camps and pineries and the crews who worked there. It was a generation of lumberjacks in fact and in spirit.

Many a story came out of the lumber camps that lent flavor to the life and activity there—some tall tales, too. We heard about the hodag and the granther. Paul Bunyan and his blue ox topped them all. We also heard about sending the greenhorn rookie to the next camp, and to the next, and the next, to bring back the "crosshaul".

When spring came, miles of river banks were piled high with logs. They were also piled on the ice along the banks. Soon those logs were floating downstream in dozens and scores of rivers—all headed for Wolf River, which was also carrying its own load downstream. Wolf River was considered to be the best log-driving stream in the state. All of the drainage of northeastern Wisconsin west of the Green Bay area flowed into the Wolf. At one time there were 43 dams on the upper Wolf and its tributaries to facilitate log driving operations.

This called into action a special kind of lumber-jacks, who called themselves "river-rats" or "river-pigs". They were the toughest of the tough and had to be very agile and surefooted, and daredevils besides. It was their job to keep those floating logs (the "drives") moving toward Lake Poygan. They were on the job 14-16 hours a day, in and out of the ice cold water, riding floating logs or springing from one log to another, hand-spiking logs loose when they got hung up on rocks or sand bars, pushing or pulling them out of the nooks and corners they got into, and above everything else, to keep the logs from getting into a jam. This was the hardest and most hazardous job of the lumber-jack, for he was flirting with serious injury or death at every turn. The

best of these "river rats" were almost always soaked to the skin, for there was no stopping to dry out, and wet clothes dried on the body. One driver is reported to have had ten dunkings into the icy stream on the first day of a drive. No "river rat" ever got on a floating log without wearing a pair of well-caulked driving shoes, with 6 short sharp spikes in the heel and two rows up the sole. Near the toe of each boot some drivers cut a hole "to let the water out" as they put it. The best drivers received about $2.50 a day for their work. The greenhorns got only $1.75.

These men slept out in the open along the way—in small tents or temporary shelters.

The tool of these rivermen was the peavey, a cant hook with a spike at the end (named after Joseph Peavey, a blacksmith who invented it). To see these "river rats" handle their peaveys was a marvelous sight—they did it so skillfully and effectively. They knew how and where to attack a log in any place and position in order to control and direct its course, or to dislodge it wherever it got hung up. A quick and clever jerk or turn one way or the other would do the trick. The pikepole was also a handy tool and as cleverly handled.

Log jams were the rivermen's nightmares. A key log or two would get stuck on a rock or sand bar and hold up the logs back of it. They would continue piling up until the jam could be broken. There are records of log jams on the Wolf reaching back a mile or so. In 1869 there was a log jam in the Chippewa River extending 15 miles up river.

Whether the jams were large or small, breaking them up was always a dangerous job. Only a skilled and veteran riverman dared to tackle them. The problem was to locate the key log or logs, and then to dislodge it or them. Not a few of the men lost their lives breaking or trying to break log jams. An eye-witness account in the Oshkosh Northwestern dated May 18, 1882 tells how a riverman cut the last log which was holding up a large number of logs creating a jam.

Log Jam on Chippewa river. Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Breaking log jam on Chippewa river. Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

"He stripped everything save his drawers. A strong rope was placed under his arms, and a gang of smart young fellows held the end. The man shook hands with his comrades, and quietly walked out on the logs, ax in hand.

"The man was quietly walking to what might be his death. At any moment the jam might break of its own accord; and also, if he cut the log, unless he instantly got out of the way, he would be crushed by the falling timber.

"There was a dead silence when the keen ax was dropped with force and skill on the pine log. Now the notch was near half through the log; one or two more blows and a crack was heard.

"The men got in all the slack of the rope that held the axman; one more blow and there was a crash like thunder, and down came the wall, to all appearances on the axman.

"Like many others, I rushed to help the poor fellow, but to my great joy I saw him safe on the bank, certainly sadly bruised and bleeding from sundry wounds, but safe."

A raft of logs at Bay Boom.

Finally, the logs got down to Lake Poygan where they were rafted preparatory to having them towed to Oshkosh and other places down river. There were no log jams after that. Here the rivermen were confronted by another problem. The logs were now out in open water, with no shelter of any

kind where they could be easily rafted. They were at the mercy of the wind and waves, making it difficult to control and raft them. Severe storms and strong winds would break the raft apart and scatter the logs all over the lake.

How Problem Was Solved

The problem was how to get the logs into still water, some sheltered place, where the rafting could be done more easily. About 2 miles up river from the mouth there was a narrow strip of land which separated the river from Haulover Bay to the east. That bay would provide some protection against the wind and waves. Frank Graves proposed that a canal be dredged from the river to the bay, so that the logs could be shunted through it, thus getting them to still water and saving about 5-6 miles distance in getting the logs down river. His proposal was approved by the lumber companies involved, and the canal was cut through. For some reason the plan did not prove satisfactory and the canal was abandoned. Since then it has always been called Graves' Mistake.

Then another proposal was made. The general course of Wolf River is in a southeasterly direction. Then it changes its direction to a southwesterly course, almost a right angle turn. At that point it was about one-hundred fifty rods across land and marsh to Boom Bay. It was about a mile and a half further upstream than Graves' Mistake, and that bay afforded more shelter for rafting. Then, too, a part of the current in the river would continue in a southeasterly direction through such a canal instead of suddenly turning sharply to the southwest. The canal was dredged in the early 1850s. It cut 7½ miles off the distance of the trip to the saw mills at Oshkosh. This cut through to Boom Bay has ever since been called "The Cut Off". It was 100 feet wide and deep enough for steamboat passage.

The river below the point where it turned from a southeasterly direction to a southwesterly direction, to the mouth of the river and into Lake Poygan was a beehive of

activity in the spring. A good description of that activity was given by Charles G. Finney in 1866 in the *History of Oshkosh.* We quote a part of that description:

> "Each man or company owning logs coming down the river has men along at the booms on the bay and river for some miles to gather up the logs as they come along, turn them into their respective booms, where they were rafted and hung outside the booms in the bay, and are there made up into 'fleets'.
>
> "The 'Cut-off' shortened the distance of navigation 7 miles—3½ miles of river and a round-about trip through Lake Poygan. The 'Cut' makes nearly a straight course with the river above through Lakes Poygan and Winneconne.
>
> "There was a continuous boom from the 'Cut-off. northward some 10 feet from the river bank. making a race through which all logs passed. Outside the boom, the rafts were made up belonging to the different owners, and hundreds of men stood at their respective posts watching closely every log for the owner's mark and shoving it on its journey to the next when its ownership was not recognized. When their raft was full, made up in this way, it was shoved across the channel and 'hung', to be taken to the 'Cut-off' in that shape, and to be made up in 'fleets' in the bay below.
>
> "The river from its turn to the lake, 'some 2 miles', presented one solid mass of logs which are also rafted and taken round through the lake to the bay aforesaid.
>
> "There were 2½ miles of river occupied making up the rafts and 2 miles of Boom Bay below the 'Cut-off' used for the same purpose. The rivermen lived in small huts or houses on these rafts, all afloat on the rafts.
>
> "Sixty companies were engaged in getting and running down logs."

The foregoing quotation can be supplemented by adding the following information:

Since there were 60 companies or owners engaged in the logging business, the Wolf River Boom Co. was organized in 1857 to assure an orderly method of distributing the incoming logs to the rightful owners. Each owner had his own boom space and his logs were shunted into this space as they came along. There were open spaces every 60 feet for that purpose. Each log had its owner's special log mark

stamped upon it to be easily recognized and turned into its own boom space.

A boom consists of a log or logs floating in the water and used to keep the logs in place. The boom was an important factor in storing logs in reservoirs where they would be held until they could be sawed or moved farther down the stream. A sheer boom was placed at an angle across the current to turn the logs to one side of the stream.

Then the logs in each boom were collected into rafts and made into fleets. There was enough space to make up, at the same time, 150 rafts, which were "hung" outside the boom for fleeting. 300 men were engaged in rafting at the Bay. The average wages were $2.00 per day.

The fleets were then taken down to Oshkosh, and beyond, by tugboats. A fleet is a number of rafts tied together. Fleets half a mile long were common sights on the river.

These tugboats were built especially for pulling fleets of logs. Each tug had a perpendicular shaft called a "grouser". Each "grouser" was shod with a sharp pointed shield at the bottom of it so that it could be easily rammed into the bottom of the lake to hold the tugs fast and stationary. The tugs would fasten a tow line to the fleet and then run ahead a considerable distance letting out the tow line. Then a large winding spool on the tug was operated by steam power, winding in the tow line and pulling the fleet toward it. When the tow line was wound in, the process was repeated over and over. In good weather a grouser tug could move a fleet 3 miles an hour. Some estimates are more than that.

Lumbering Business Highly Competitive

Lumbering was big business, and highly competitive. Many people were involved in it. Certain combinations of owners and operators worked together for control of the business, and those lumbermen who were members of the combination, or affiliated with it, became very wealthy and powerful. They were called "lumber barons".

Oshkosh was the center of the lumber industry. At one time there were 24 sawmills located and operating there. One report says there were about 50 in 1886. If a lumberman was a member of the "ring" he fared well; if he wasn't, he did not fare so well.

Parlan Semple was a well-known lumberman. His holdings of timberland in the upper Wolf area were extensive. It was said that at one time he "owned half of Shawano County." He lived in Oshkosh. It is not certain whether or not he was a member of the "ring".

Anyway, something happened during the years that caused him to lose all of his timberland holdings. He insisted that the "lumber barons" at Oshkosh cheated him out of his timberland. However it happened, he was "cleaned out"—a "plucked rooster".

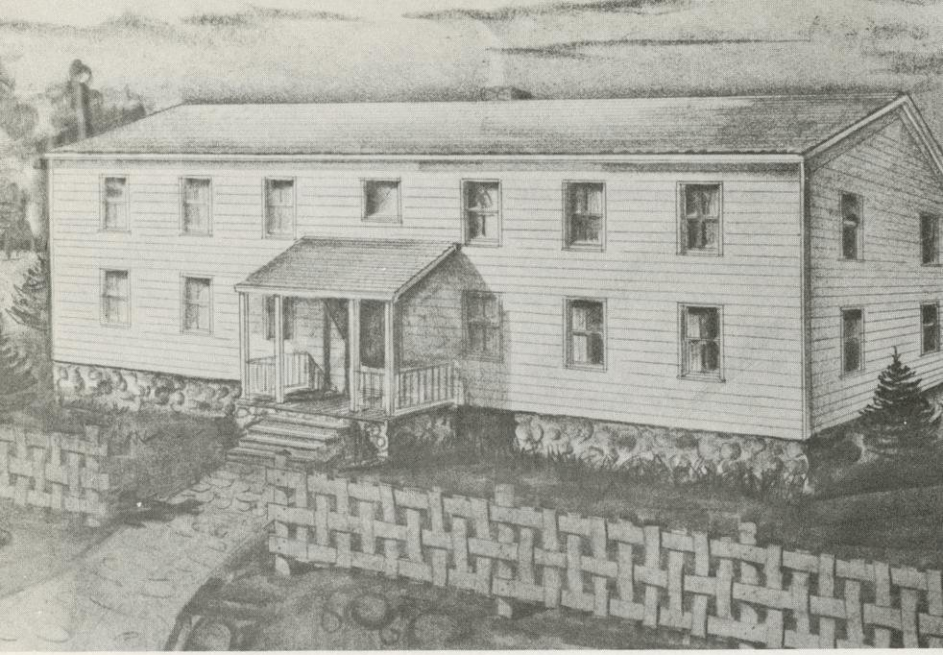
He felt so bitter about it that he became a one-man demonstrator against the "lumber barons". One of the banks in Oshkosh was the bank of these "lumber barons". Mr Semple marched up and down the sidewalk in front of that bank displaying a sign or placard upon which was printed "Beware all who enter here". He did this day after day and was considered a nuisance by the bank. The officers complained to the District Attorney and requested him to put an end to the "nuisance". In the proceedings which followed, Mr. Semple was ordered "to get out of town and stay out; and if he ever came back, he would be committed to jail."

Years after this, when Mr. Semple was a man in his 80s, he sought to regain a part of his former financial status. Early in life he had acquired some interests in mineral lands in the famous Gogebic iron range in northeastern Minnesota. He now hoped that he might be able to cash in on those mineral rights. It was his "last chance to come back", as he said. He hired a young lawyer to search the title records at the County Seat to find some evidence that he still had a valid claim to some of those iron ore lands. He made it plain that he had

no money to pay for legal services, but persuaded the attorney to take a chance on finding some kind of valuable claim. The end result was zero. Semple could not even pay the lawyer his expenses, but assured him that he would find enough money to reimburse him; and he did.

BAY BOOM (Boom Bay)

This bay had been called "Bay Boom" by the old timers and it is still "Bay Boom" to older people. When the logs arrived ("when the drive came in") this place was as busy as a beehive. Sometimes there were upwards of 800 men working in the area, which included the Boom Bay, Haulover Bay and the Wolf River from the "Cutoff" to the mouth of the river. The Boom House housed the business personnel of the Boom Company. The others ate and slept in the shanties around the bay. The Boom House was a large one-story building resting on piles, built high enough above the water to be free from any high water.



Half-Way House at Willow Creek.

VI.

BORTH-WILLOW CREEK

Willow Creek Area

In the early development of the Borth region the Willow Creek area became important. The lakeshore road led from Winneconne to Poy Sippi and Berlin, and around the western end of Lake Poygan to Tustin. In the 1880's a 2-story hotel was located on the east bank of Willow Creek where the road crosses it, on the south side of the road. The hotel barn and other buildings were located across the road at the same point. This hotel was called the "Half-way House" because it was midway between Oshkosh and Winneconne at one end and Berlin, Poy Sippi, Wautoma and Tustin at the other end.

The distance was great and the travel was slow in those days, and this hotel was a welcome stopping place for the travelers, who found food and lodging there. A part of it was also used as a store.

Amos Shepard owned and operated the hotel. He sold it to Douglas Downing, who married a Mrs. Cook, the mother of Fred Cook, who lived in the hotel in the early part of his life—probably until he married Jake Ringling's daughter.

Cook remembers that a flat-bottom steamboat ran 4 miles up the river from the lake to Thomas Landing, to carry out a variety of freight—marsh grass for rug matting, cranberries, pulp and cordwood, etc. That boat may have been the *S.D. Perkins*, owned by Carey Bros. of Berlin. The bridge across Willow Creek was so constructed that it could be swung open from one side when a boat passed through.

To the south of the lake road, and extending toward Berlin and farther west, was a large cranberry marsh which was in operation for many years (from the 1860s to the early 1900s). The cranberry culture was a major and thriving enterprise, which furnished employment to a great number of people living in that area.

Among the early settlers around Willow and Pumpkinseed Creeks was Fred ("Red") Ringling, a Civil War veteran who had an interesting war record. Because of that he acquired a large acreage of land in that area, bordering on Lake Poygan. In his farm operations he specialized in raising horses. He was a first cousin of the famous Ringling Circus people. His sons were Jake, Fred and William, who lived around the Lake Poygan region all their lifetimes.

Voelkner Era

As the Willow Creek activities were drawing to a close they were being shifted westward to Borth.

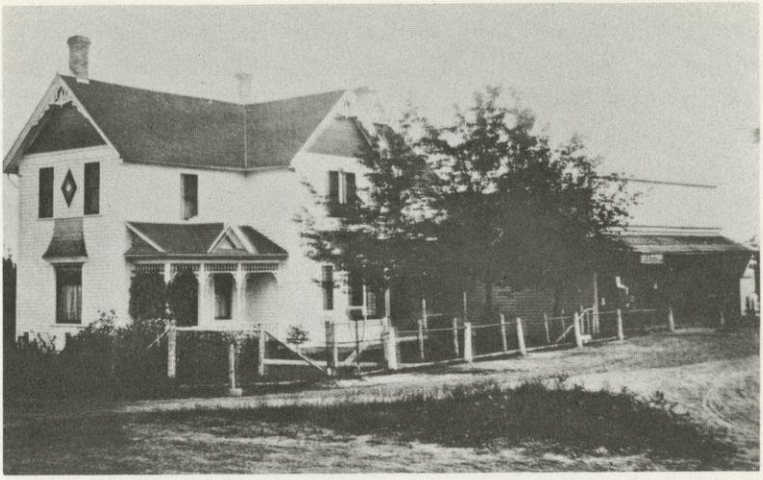
To me, as a young teenager in Tustin, Borth was the place across Lake Poygan where a church was located, and could be seen. What was beyond the church was unknown to me.

Anyway, it was a landmark that I used to measure the width of Lake Poygan. To do this, a store string was measured out 300 feet long. My brother Ed held one end of the string on the ice and I went ahead toward the church with the other end and marked the place on the ice at that end. We repeated this process across the lake, always aiming towards the church with the other end and marked the place on the ice at that end. We repeated this process across the lake, always aiming towards the church, and kept track of the number of times we laid the string down. That number times 300 feet gave us the number of feet. Then dividing by 5280, we got the mileage. Result—3½ miles.

About this time, two imporatant events were shaping up and happening at Borth. The people had succeeded in having a post office established there, located in August Borth's cheese factory. It had to have a name, and they called it Borth. The other event that turned out to be important was the coming of Charles Voelkner from Germany in 1895, at the age of 25. To tell the story about Charles Voelkner is to tell the story of Borth.

Mr. Voelkner was an accomplished musician and soon after his arrival from Germany he was giving organ and piano lessons locally and in Poygan, Poy Sippi, Tustin and Pine River. He also sold organs to his pupils. He married one of his pupils, Theresa Albrecht Yehrke.

Soon after his marriage, he built a home just across the road from the church described above. It soon became evident there should be a trading center at Borth and Mr. Voelkner began using his home as a store, carrying only a limited stock of groceries and staples (about 1897). The store business grew rapidly and he had to build an addition to his home in order to accommodate the trade. He soon was operating a general merchandising store stocked with everything that the area needed—groceries, dry goods, hardware, notions, shoes, paints, washing machines, farm feeds, cream separaters and all kinds of farm machinery. Not



Voelkner residence and store at Borth.

only was the original building enlarged, but the store building had to be added to three times as the business expanded. The residence and store building were connected so that the family and others could go from one to the other under the same roof. During the 50 odd years Mr. Voelkner owned and operated the business, he gave employment to some 30-35 women as clerks and housekeepers. He always had 2 or 3 men working for him. When he conducted special sales, he sometimes called in help from the outside. Riley Colt and Grant Boyson of Poy Sippi were among the men who helped him.

Mr. Voelkner liked to tell about the prices when he began operating the store business. . .coffee sold for 10 cents a pound; eggs 7 cents a dozen; butter 12 cents a pound. A 50-pound bag of flour sold for $1.00.

Not only was the Voelkner Place a busy trading center for a large trading area; the post office was located in the store for many years. It became the social center of the community. People who came to trade found other traders

there, with whom they visited and discussed matters of mutual interest to them. Saturday nights there, were always well attended social affairs. Benches and tables were available at all seasons of the year, inside and outside, for those who congregated there.

Mr. Voelkner was a man of many talents. As a musician, he was outstanding. For many years he was a church organist. He was a staunch churchman and was a Sunday School superintendent during much of his church membership. He was also a justice of the peace.

He sold the store in 1948. By that time, it had served its time and purpose. Good roads and automobiles spelled the end of a profitable store business at that place and it was closed shortly after 1948.

The 4th of July was for many years the big event of the year. It was an all-day affair, with games, foot races, wrestling, horse racing, with a large noon-day picnic dinner and an evening display of fireworks.

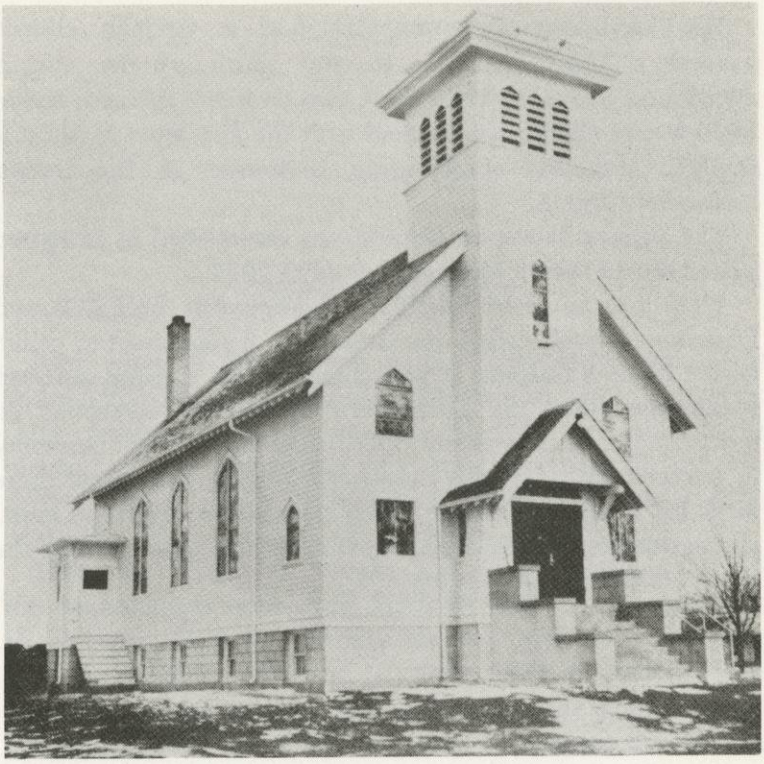
Borth also had its public entertainment shows. It was the custom for show people to come in with a tent and pitch it on the Crowley property, across the road from the Voelkner residence. Among these tent programs was the old-time medicine shows, and the "popular lady" contests. A sleight of hand show was always popular.

Borth had its own entertainment group. . .a popular orchestra that was prominent at weddings and dances. Robert and Arthur Crowley were members of the organization. Other members were Otto and Albert Haase. On special occasions, "Blind Hans" Jensen, Bert Cornell of Poy Sippi, and Mr. and Mrs. Amiel Strehlow were added to the regular group.

Churches

Borth was well supplied with churches.

The church just across the road from the Voelkner store belonged to the Evangelical United Brethren (E.U.B.)



Formerly E. U. B. church—merged with Methodist church in 1968.

Denomination. The first church was built in 1879. A new church edifice was built on the same site in 1906. This edifice was struck by lightning and burned to the ground in 1925. The present church building was built and dedicated in the same year. The E.U.B. Church merged with the Methodist Denomination in 1968. In 1970 a new charge was formed with the Poy Sippi United Methodist Church. The building site was donated by the Crowley family. This church gave two of its members to the Christian ministry, the Rev. G.H. Bloede and the Rev. Merlin Hoeft.

The Methodist Denomination had a German church located a short distance to the south of the church mentioned above. In 1968 these two churches merged; and in 1970 a new charge was formed with the Poy Sippi Methodist Church, and this combination is known as the United Methodist Church.

The Trinity Lutheran Church was established in 1898 and joined the Lutheran Missouri Synod in 1927.

There was another church located between the E.U.B. and Lutheran church called the Separatist Church, often called Pastor Miller's Church. It was composed of a group that had withdrawn from the Lutheran Church and established an independent church. Pastor Miller came direct from Germany to become pastor of this church. He continued to serve there until his retirement, after which the church ceased to exist. His pastorate covered a period of about 25 years, during the latter 1800s and early 1900s.

VII.

TOWN OF POYGAN

The Town of Poygan was a part of the large area owned and occupied by the Menominee Indians for many years. One early historical event of the Poygan area should be mentioned. The Payground area was at one time the site of a thriving Indian village under Chief Grisley Bear; but after his death the village declined and gradually disappeared.

When the Treaty of Poygan was made (1848), by which the Menominees sold their lands to the U.S. Government, those lands were theoretically thrown open for settlement; but the transfer could not be made until the Indians were moved off. They realized that they had made a bad deal and refused to move out. They succeeded in delaying the removal for four years, when they were forced out in November, 1852.

The early settlers did not wait until the Indians were moved off before they moved in. Early in 1849 John Keefe staked out a claim in the town. Later in the year Thomas Mettam moved in with his family. They were preceded by George Rawson and his brother, and by Jerry Caulkins and Thomas Robbins. Within a few weeks Thomas Brogden, Henry Cole, Richard Barron, George Burlingame, Joseph Felton, Jonathan and David Maxon and Reed Case also moved in—all in 1849. Following them in 1850 were Philander Hall, James Heffron, James Barron, William Johnson, G. and S. Wiseman, H. Scofield, William Tritt and E.B. Wood.

On July 8, 1852 a post office was established at Powaickam, later named Poygan.

In the early settlement of Poygan, the Irish predominated, and on both sides of the lake the area was known as The Irish Settlement. A newspaper article of March 17, 1963 was headed "Once Irish reigned supreme in Poy Sippi, Borth, Poygan area". We quote from that article:

> "There were the Martins, Heaneys, Cassidys, Costellows, Lallys,. . ., . . ., Lannahans, Duffys, Gallaghers, Donegals, . . . and the name of Tittemore—Irishmen all".

Such names as Crowley, O'Reiley, Mongan, Grimes and Kilalea could be added to the list. If one looks around the Town of Poygan even now (1975) that list of names could be extended. If you go into the Poygan cemetery you will understand why Poygan was called the Irish Settlement. Here are some additional names: Broderick, Carey, Cleary, Conlin, Gilrain, Hanley, Heffron, Kinney, Moran, Morrissey, Murphy, Neary, O'Connell, O'Rourke, and Sullivan—sons of Erin all.

The Irish soon yielded to the Germans, who also moved in and settled there.

It is likely that two historic events furnished the background that brought the Irish and the Germans to this area. In the late 1840's there was a terrible potato famine in Ireland and great numbers of Irishmen left their homeland and came to the U.S., and many of them settled in the Poygan-Poy Sippi area. During the 1840's a revolutionary movement was developed in Germany, which came to a head in 1848 and the German army succeeded in putting it down. Then the revolutionaries had to flee the country to save their lives, and they came to the U.S. Many others came with them to escape military service. Thousands of them came to Wisconsin, and some came and settled in Poygan.

One of these settlers was Albert Herbst. He was an Austrian-German and came in the late 1840s or early 1850s. The history of his family is outstanding. He had four sons—Frank, Louis, Wendell and John. Frank Herbst had

sixteen children, three of whom became Catholic priests: Winfred, Leo and Clarence. Louis Herbst had fourteen children. Albert Youngwirth was another Austrian-German who came shortly after Albert Herbst arrived. His son Anthony married Ann Grimes. This is a good example of the inter-marriages between the Germans and the Irish. Another example is the marriage of Anton Herbst to Margaret Conlin.

If measured by the number of Irish landowners and the acreage they own, the Town of Poygan still qualifies as the Irish Settlement. Here are the names: Tritt, Broderick, Leach, Dain, Quigley, Grinnell, Murphy, Grimes, Martin and Kenney.

The early Irish settlers were very religious people, and the loyalty to their faith laid a solid foundation for building a religious community. In the beginning they worshipped in a little log chapel which Father Florimond J. Bonduel built on the shore of Lake Poygan. He was a Capuchin priest who came from Belgium. Although he was a missionary to the Indians he served both the Indians and the Irish Catholics who came into this area and formed a parish.

After the Indians were forced to move out of the Poygan area in 1852, the parish was served by Catholic missionaries until a church was built in 1860 on Poygan Hill, with a resident pastor in charge. At one time the congregation numbered around 250 members. Church life was the way of life. It was out of this background that three members of the Frank Herbst family entered the priesthood. It was my privilege to meet and talk with Father Clarence, one of the three.

The church building is not in active use any more. The members are now affiliated with the churches at Winneconne, Omro and Poy Sippi.

The one name that stands out above the rest is Father Bonduel. Not only did he serve the Indians and the white people in Poygan, but he traveled to other areas in the state that needed him—Green Bay, Prairie du Chien and places

between. It was his trip with the Menominee Indians up the Wolf River during the terrible winter of 1852-53 that stamped the man as one of God's noblemen. When he died in December 1861, a Green Bay newspaper had this to say about him:

> "He has lived a life that few of us can hope to live, and he has gone to his rest amid the blessings and prayers of the whole community. . . From far and near, the mourners came. . . So large a concourse of people was never before seen in this county. The church was one densely packed mass of human beings and the streets leading to the church were thronged. And when the procession moved (composed of the entire fire department, city council and a great body of people on foot and in carriages) it seemed to have gathered in one long line the grief and sorrow of an entire community".

VIII.

TOWN OF WOLF RIVER

The name "Wolf River" means two different things—the Township and the River.

The earliest settlers in the Township were a part of the migration movement from the East. The push westward was well on its way in the 1830s. The first arrivals in the State settled along the eastern and southern borders and kept moving inward. By 1850 the settlers were moving into the Winnebago County area. The land was owned by the Indians but the settlers believed that the Government would throw the territory open to settlement, and they wanted to be on hand when this happened.

Andrew Merton was the first white settler in the Town. He came from Plymouth, Wisconsin and picked out a plot of land for his home on the west bank of the Wolf River, in Section 16, and located his family there in the fall of 1849. Shortly afterward, Albert Neuschafer and Herman Page moved into the same neighborhood. They also came from Sheboygan County.

It would seem that Mr. Merton was a man of considerable ability. In 1862 he became the Register of Deeds of Winnebago County, which office he held for two years.

It appears that Charles Boyson moved into the Town a little later and settled in Section 31 on the shore of Lake Poygan. Harney, in his *History of Winnebago County*, says that Boyson settled there in the fall of 1849. The land records of Winnebago County, however, show that he obtained a Government Patent on December 9, 1854. It is

possible that both statements are correct, because he may have lived on the land for some time before the patent was issued. Boyson was a Norwegian, and that part of Lake Poygan bordering his land has always been called Norwegian Bay. His shore became a landing place for boats. He owned and operated a sailboat, which he used to transport incoming immigrants from Oshkosh to Fountain City (now Tustin).

Harney says (p. 275) that "these few persons were for several years the only white residents in the Town. A long distance from the habitation of man, without roads or bridges, cut off from intercourse, except with each other and their Indian neighbors, unless from some pressing necessity, some one of their number was compelled to make a trip to Oshkosh, their privations and sacrifices must have been in the extreme, in fact, far greater than under ordinary circumstances of pioneeer life."

A further statement from Harney's *History* is enlightening and informational: "The condition of these early settlers was dependent upon Oshkosh for such necessaries as they could not raise or produce at home, and upon the pioneer grist-mill of D.W. Forman and Co., at Algoma, for converting their small crops of grain into edible form; and these places could be reached only by a journey of some 25 miles on foot (50 miles to go and return). During some six or seven months of the year the river and lake were free from ice, and a boat for transportaton of supplies became a necessity. This being the only means of obtaining anything too heavy to be carried on a man's back, Messrs. Neuschafer and Page set about the construction of a 'dug-out' (canoe) from a large pine log about 18 feet long—". Apparently this dug-out canoe was far from being a perfect boat, but it seems to have answered the purpose.

The steamboat *Berlin* made a few trips up the river in the fall of 1851, and began making regular trips the following year.

Harney also records that the first child born in the Town

was Mary, the daughter of Charles Boyson, who was born in the early winter of 1849. She became Mary Bradway by marriage and lived in Tustin most of her life. I knew her very well.

The first school was opened in the spring of 1858, when Mrs. Mary Hagers conducted a school in her home, and the first public school house was erected in 1859.

Town Organization

The Town of Wolf River is divided into two geographical parts, one east of the Wolf River and the other to the west. The river flows from the northwesterly corner to the southeasterly corner, and it divides the town into two fairly equal parts. Before the bridge was constructed at Fremont the only way to get from the western half to the eastern half, and vice versa, was by boat across the river; and after the bridge was built, in order to get from a point in one section to the other by land, one had to go to Fremont and cross the river on the bridge, and then come back southward again to the point on the opposite side. Although it might be only a half mile from a point on one side of the river to a point on the opposite side, one might have to travel some 7 or 8 miles. The Town business was conducted under difficult circumstances. For example, if a town meeting were held at Zittau, a person living on the west bank of the river would have to travel by land about 10-11 miles or cross the river by boat and then find some way to get the rest of the way by land.

It must have been a situation something like this that persuaded the Town and County Governments to change township lines.

Harney explains what was done as follows: (p. 276) "By order of the County Board of Supervisors dated January 4, 1855, all that part of Township 20, Range 14, lying west of Wolf River, and that lying east of the Wolf River and west of the Cut off, and west on the section line, between Sections 22

and 23, was set off from the Town of Winneconne and Winchester, and organized as a separate town to be called Orihula. . . ."

"On January 9, 1861 (p. 277), the name of Orihula was, by order of the County Board, changed to Wolf River, and, January 8, 1873, the two tiers of sections in the eastern part of Township 20, Range 14, were detached from Winchester and added to this Town."

For many years there was only one Republican in the Town—he was the postmaster.

Another geographical oddity should be mentioned here. The northern boundary line of the Town of Poygan includes some land that is shown by the map to be in the Town of Wolf River. A government surveyor's map of 1851 shows 33.18 acres of Indian Point are in the Town of Poygan, and that 3½ acres at the mouth of the Wolf River are also in the Town of Poygan. The lines are still there but the areas are covered by water. This means that nearly all of Lake Poygan is in the Town of Poygan.

STEAMBOAT ACCIDENTS

Accidents to steamboats were numerous during the period of greatest activity on the inland waterways.

The *Badger State* was built in 1850 and sank in 1853.

The little sidewheel steamer *Berlin* was built in 1851 and taken to Neenah late in the fall to lay up for the winter, where she was burned to the water's edge. She was rebuilt and the next season taken to the Mississippi River, and later wrecked on Lake Pepin.

The sidewheeler *Van Ness Barlow* was built in 1851. On August 7, 1854 one of her boilers exploded just as she was leaving main street dock in Oshkosh. Two of the crew were killed.

The boiler of the *Barlow* blew up at Oshkosh in 1854 and two firemen lost their lives.

The *Samson,* built in 1855, had a boiler explosion while lying in the Calumet Harbor, killing one man.

The *Aquilla,* built at Pittsburgh came to these waters in June 1856. It sprang a leak on Lake Winnebago and sank in ten feet of water. It was raised and repaired.

The *Lady Jane* was built at Eureka in 1854 and was wrecked in 1857 on the Mississippi River.

The *Berlin City,* built in 1857, while racing with the steamer *Pearl,* was blown up by the explosion of her boiler while crossing the bar at the head of Lake Butte de Morts. She sank instantly. Her upper works were blown to pieces. Several holes were blown through the bottom of the boat and she sank in shallow water. Many passengers were blown overboard into the water, more or less scalded. Among those who were fatally injured was Captain Braun, formerly a captain of an ocean steamer. He was badly scalded and had a broken leg. He said, "The idea of my sailing the dangerous sea all my life, and now blown up on this ------ little frog pond on a 75¢ boat with a 50¢ fare and my leg broke" (page 8 *Oshkosh Times* 2/29/1899) written by Captain W.W. Nett.

The *Wolf* was built in 1858 and ran between Oshkosh and New London. It burned in 1863.

In the spring of 1859, Captain Drummond tried to take the *Peytonia* up to New London before the ice was out. Prospects seemed good as the boat entered Lake Poygan; there was a wide open stretch of water just ahead; but the expanse of open water got narrower and narrower as the boat went upstream. Finally the ice closed in and cut the boat in two. The hull remained where it sank.

A side wheeler *Elwood* was built in 1860 and went to the Mississippi in 1863, and sank there in 1886.

The *Fountain City* was built in Omro in 1860 and went to the Red River where she sank.

The *H.T. Leavens* was built at Neenah in 1862 and was taken to the Mississippi in 1865 where she burned on the Hatchie River, Tennessee.

The *Flora Webster,* a double wheel propeller, was built at Menasha in 1871 and burned at Green Bay.

The double wheel propeller *Neptune* was built at Oshkosh in 1872 and sprang a leak and sank just north of Sturgeon Bay in about 80 feet of water.

The *Tom Wall* was built in Winneconne in 1873. She was snagged on the Wolf River August 2, 1888 and her hull remained a total wreck.

The *John Lynch* was built in 1877 and was burned to the water's edge on Lake Poygan near the mouth of the Wolf River on May 2, 1902.

The *Menasha* was built in 1880 and was burned.

The side wheeler *Leander Choate* was built in 1884 and was burned at Northport on the Wolf River in 1888. Her hull was towed to Oshkosh and her machinery removed and rebuilt. Then she operated under the name of *City of Fremont* under the command of Captain John Velte.

The *K.M. Hutchinson* sank a number of times and once was beached near Fond du Lac on August 31, 1895, and finally burned to the water's edge just below Lone Willow Point at the east end of Lake Poygan.

The *City of Oshkosh* burned about 1894.

The *L.W. Crane* was built in Berlin. She caught fire in 1880 at Oshkosh and burned to the water's edge.

The foregoing is only a partial list of the steamboats that burned, sank or were wrecked. A complete list can be found on pages 122-23 of *The Trial of the Serpent.*

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1889

TOWN OF WOLF RIVER.

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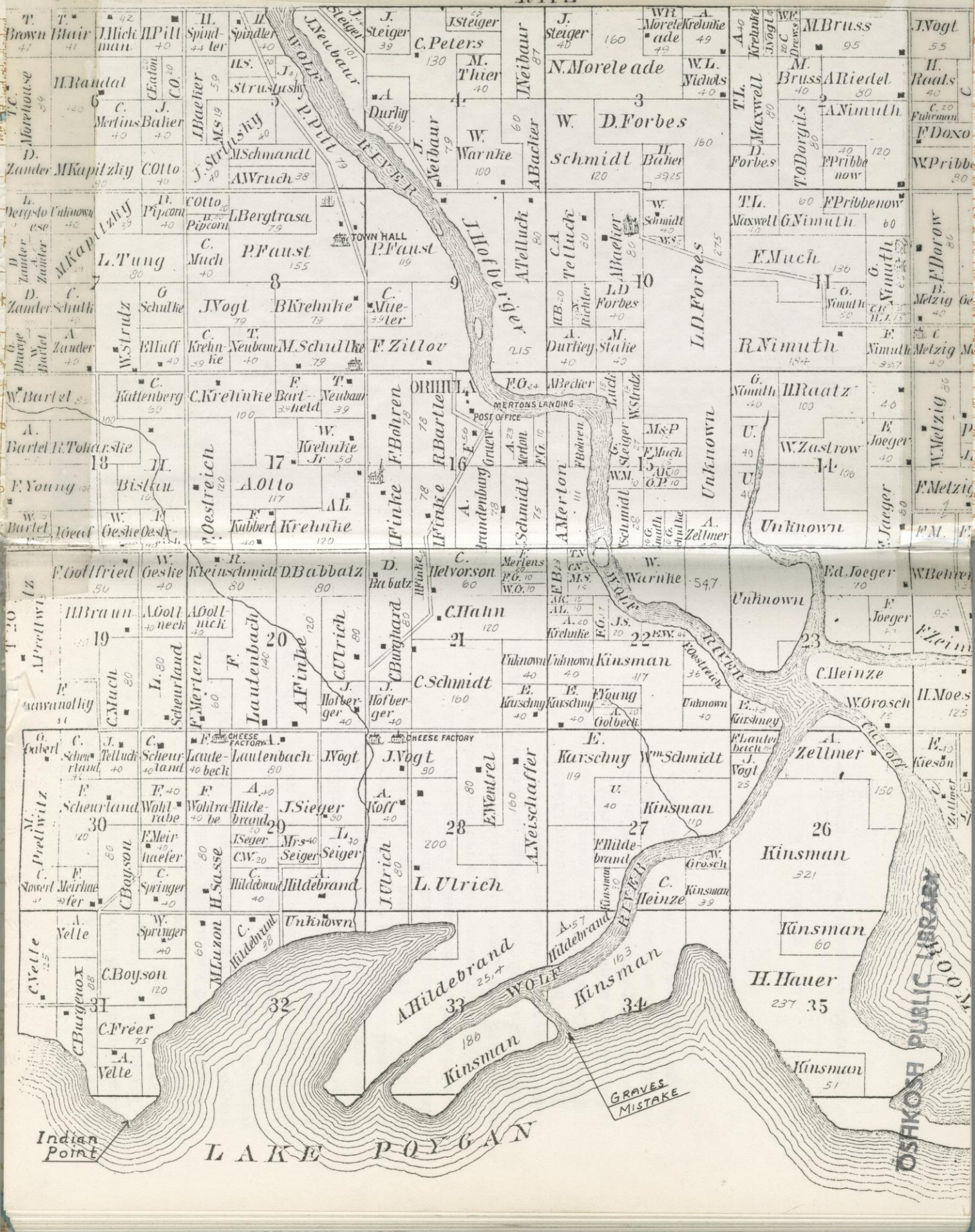


TOWNSHIP
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VAR 7° 0'E
Indian Point
LAKE POYGAN
Lake Winneconne
WINNECONNE
POYGAN
Poygan
TOWNSHIP 19 N.
TOWNSHIP 18 N.
RUSHFORD
VAR 6° 0'E
Waukau