

## ALBAN, The Township of

Alban is the only township in Portage County which can point its finger at the first settler with reasonable certainty. One of the main reasons for this lies in the fact that it was the last to be settled and for more than two decades was administered as part of New Hope. Thus through the New Hope proceedings it is possible to detect at once each new settler who paid taxes in the unnamed township which the Scandinavian pioneers referred to simply as "*bien fem og tieve*" (literally: Town Twenty-five).

Named after a post office first located near Peru in New Hope, the township honors the Civil War regimental commander, James S. Alban, mortally wounded at Shiloh in the battle of Pittsburgh Landing April 6, 1862.

The circumstances of its location was largely responsible for the township's late development. Lying in the extreme northeast of the county, away from the larger rivers which helped to write the early history of the county, and away from the railroads which pushed their way into the county in the 1870s, Alban was further handicapped by the heavy growth of timber which covered most of the township. The big lumber companies of the 1850s and 1860s were cutting the timber closer to hand along the main river systems of the Plover and Wisconsin and it was not until the lumber companies of Oshkosh began to exhaust their supply of easy-to-reach timber along the Wolf River that they began reaching up the tributaries of the Wolf, especially the Embarrass, and the Little Wolf which flows through the northeast corner of Alban into Waupaca County to join the "big" Wolf near New London.

The subdivision of modern Alban was begun Sept. 28, 1852 and finished Oct. 16, 1852 by Wm. P. Huntington, deputy surveyor.

Huntington mentions a "sugar orchard", actually a camp in the woods, more often referred to locally as a "sugar bush", where the sap of the hard maple is tapped and boiled down for maple sirup or for sugar. In the 19th Century, particularly after the Civil War, sugar was expensive and at times even difficult to buy. Many pioneers boiled maple sirup into sugar and sold it or exchanged for groceries. The sugar camp mentioned by Huntington, almost certainly operated by the Indians, was probably located south and east of Lions Lake.

The town of Alban is probably the most favored of glacial lakes and streams in the county. Slicing through the northeast corner in Sec 1 runs the Little Wolf, favorite of trout fishermen, which drains the Holt Creek originating in Marathon County, and Bailey Creek which flows out of spring-fed Lions Lake. The Holt Creek has also been known as the North Branch of the Little Wolf, a name used until well after the turn of the century but which was subtly changed to Holt Creek after a saw mill community located in the early 1900s across the county line. Some maps refer to Bailey Creek as Bradley, a name seldom heard locally. The origin of either name is uncertain.

A third well-known stream, originating in Sharon and Marathon County, is known as the South Branch of the Little Wolf, in opposition to the North Branch, which runs through the entire township, north to southeast, via the village of Rosholt. A mill pond was created on this river in the 1870s by Jens Rasmussen, later taken over by J. G. Rosholt, and along the west end of this pond the stumps of the pine that once stood here may still be noted above and below the water level which add a nostalgic touch to the natural beauty of the pond.

The largest lake in the township, identified on both the 1895 and 1915 plats as Helen, in the *Historical Atlas of Wisconsin* (1878) is called Hunt Lake, probably after Huntington. In fact it was known locally after 1900 down to World War II as Lake Huntington, but since that time has mysteriously reverted to the name, Helen, probably after a tavern-bar established by Ambrose Stanislawski on the north shore. The origin of the name Helen is uncer-

tain. According to local legend, a woman by that name served as a cook in one of the logging camps of Conley or Ripley & Mead in the 1880s, died, and was buried nearby. Later, the lumberjacks heard a voice wailing in the wind along the shores of the lake and recognized it as Helen!

The second largest lake is identified on both the 1895 and 1915 plats as Three Lakes. It lies in Sec 3 and was originally known as Gutho Lake after the first family to settle in the northeast of the township in the late 1860s. Later plats mistakenly referred to it as "Tree Lake", probably because the Norwegians pronounced it "t'ree" and the Polish "tree" (for three) and in 1958 it officially became Tree Lake by action of the County Board. To the west of Tree Lake a few rods, connected by a small stream, lies Mud Lake, favorite of mallards and bluebills every fall; and to the southeast of Tree Lake, probably connected by an underground stream, lies Penny Lake, allegedly named after a dog called Penny owned by Andrew Nelson who operates a cabin resort on the east shore of Tree Lake.

In the middle of the township lies Lions Lake, known locally under several names in the past, but longest as Kiolbassa, after Peter Kiolbassa, one-time city treasurer of Chicago who built a summer home on the south shore in the early 1890s. The lake property was acquired in 1956 by the Wisconsin Lions Foundation and is now known as Lions Lake where a summer camp has been established for visually handicapped children.

Collins Lake, the fourth largest in the township, lies in the southwest in Sec 31 with the west shore extending across the range line into Sharon. While it was called Fish Lake from the 1870s down to World War II, it often came to be referred to as Collins Lake after a county park was established on the north shore and named in honor of W. F. Collins of Arnott, one-time County Board chairman. In 1958 the County Board officially adopted the name Collins Lake.

One lake which retains much of its primeval charm lies in the northwest corner of the township in Sec 6 but

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, Board of Supervisors, Vol. IV, p. 35.

has no name, and, as most of the shore line is rimmed by swamp, is not easy to reach.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Schritzmeier (or Skreckzmeier), Danes from the island of Lolland, were the first settlers in Alban and were given title to a forty in Sec 35 (the James Berge place) on Sept. 24, 1857. Several coins dated in the 1840s and 1850s as well as sherds have been picked up near this site. In the late 1860s family differences separated this pioneer couple and while Schritzmeier returned to Denmark, his wife moved out West.

The first permanent settler in the township of Alban was either Hans Larson or Hans Klinge (more commonly Klincke), also Danes. The Klincke cabin stood on the hillside northeast of the bridge now on Trunk T. Sam Loken, who eventually acquired this property, found horseradish still growing near the site when he cultivated this field. The early Danes were fond of horseradish.

The first Norseman in Alban was probably Ole P. Klope who is mentioned in the 1865 tax roll as paying taxes on a forty in the western part of the township. Whether he had an improvement here or not is uncertain, but it is known that he built a house, only recently demolished, which was located in Sec 33 in the southern part of the township.

The first Polish settler in Alban was Gottlieb Joseph Liebe who made an entry on three forties in Sec 31 on Dec. 21, 1863, and paid his first taxes in 1867, one of the few in the township who acquired land under the Homestead Act of 1862.

Originally a part of the town of Stevens Point from 1852 to 1856 and from 1856 to 1878 a part of the town of New Hope, Alban made its first attempt at incorporation in November 1870 which the County Board rejected. The matter came up again in November 1877 when the board voted to constitute a new township to be known "as the town of Alban, provided that the tax levied upon said town . . . for the year 1877 shall be levied and collected by the proper officers of the town of New Hope."<sup>1</sup> This is the only time this clause appears in a like order by the County Board.

The first town meeting and election of officers of Alban was held April 2, 1878, at School District No. 5, actually a log schoolhouse which stood less than a half a mile south of Alban Corners (SE-SE, Sec 21). Andrew A. Brekke was elected chairman; Anton Kirsling and Jens Rasmussen, supervisors; Martin O. Wrolstad, clerk; Ole J. Aass (later Oas), assessor; J. P. Hanson, Jr., treasurer; C. C. Gilbert, J. H. Bigler, Simen Stenerson, and Andrew Brekke, justices of the peace; and A. Rasmussen, A. J. Aass and J. Mortenson, constables.

The 1878 assessment roll, the first in Alban as a township on its own, includes the names listed below. However, owing to the fact that Alban was one of the last townships to be settled, it has been possible, through family association, to identify, if not all, at least most of the families which were actually resident in the township in 1878. These will be italicized as opposed to the others who presumably represented investors in Alban real estate, timber or cedar holdings. The taxpayers were: F. C. Peters, F. R. Land (Fox River Land), Nils R. Bestul, *Andrew A. Brakke, Berte J. Fjelbo, Aunun A. Brakke, S. S. Chandler, Ole A. Brakke*, Mark Sutsen, B. H. Wellington, *Olve Ingebretson*, Ole C. Seter (probably Sether), David Boe, John O. Wraalstad, Andrew Anderson, *Ole P. Linland*, Ole G. Flom, Johanes F. Kankrud, Christian Elingson, Johan O. Ekkern, Knudt Sakariasan, Margaret Peterson, Hans O. Lee, Peter Eiden, *John O. Daabu* (later spelled Dobbe), Gilbert & Christenson, John J. Svanholt, *Peter E. Gutu, Thomas O. Listul*, Louis Smith, Ole P. Hoijord, Edvard Helgesen, Thomas O. Onland, Johan C. Kalrud, Hans P. Woldingen, Johan O. Woldingen, Nels G. Serkland, *Ole P. Kvisla* (later Quisla), Hans G. Frogne, *Ole P. Daabu, Gunder J. Lia*, And (?) Mathison, *Peder O. Daabu*, Ole Paulson, *Jacob Semonus* (later Simonis), Amund O. Hole, Louis H. Foss, Peder O. Ekeren, *Jens P. Hanson, Sr., Hellek O. Foss, Ole A. Moe, Ole D. Moe, John Walendalen, Nels Stianson, Jorgen O. Wraalstad, Ole P. Klope, Joseph Liba* (later Liebe), *Joseph Plaska* (later Pliska), Frank Lauska, *Jens Rasmuson, John P. Pederson, Joseph Sabarösky, Joseph Clammens, Hans G. Hanson, Hans J. Fredrikson, Ras-*

*mus Jorgenson, Jens P. Hanson, Jr., Anders J. Oas, Ole J. Oas, Jens Haralson, (later Haroldson), Peder Kystolson, Charly Pederson, Knudt Erickson, Karen Pederson, Johannes M. Omadt, Cysskleba, Emma Jorgenson, Knudt Thorson Fure, Erik Bentzel, Charly Buck, Halvor O. Wraalstad, Martin O. Wrallstad, F. Reinharth, Simon Stenerson, George Laubienten, Andrew Rasmuson, Thor Knudtson, Abraham J. Fjelbo, A. H. Bancroft, C. C. Gilbert, Hans P. Anderson, Elling Johanneson, Jens Mortenson, Paul Anderson, Jacob Jenson, Martin Sarak, Frank Goytowski, Peder Jorgenson, N. Boyington, Ole G. Bank, John Zaulauski, Peter Kustus, Joseph Glodauski, Anton Kirsling, Apasto Ganyak (?), Jacob Kirsling, Anton Witbrot, Peder Benson, Frank Gruna, Johannes O. Byseth, Wilam Bergen, Hans P. Klinke, Hans Larson, Nelson & Thomson, Isak Skougen, Janeka N. Smaadal, Johan G. Skigestad, Peder Johanneson, Henry Wentzel, John H. Hagemon, Nels O. Brathovde, John O. Brathovde, Sven O. Hagen, Peder K. Heller, Andre N. Hotvedt, and Thor Amundson.*

The post office called Alban, which earlier was located south of Peru in New Hope, was moved into the town of Alban in 1880 to the home of Charles C. Gilbert who lived about half a mile south of Alban Corners (the Frank Knitter place). Gilbert served as postmaster and later built and operated a store on his property. The post office was discontinued in 1905.

Three of the names listed in the 1878 tax roll are mill owners; namely, Bancroft, Bigler and Wrolstad. All three mills were located on the south Branch of the Little Wolf on a three-mile stretch of the river and, from the evidence of road statements, all appear to have been built in 1867 on the right bank of the river, the farthest upstream in Sec 33 by Hans O. Lee & Ole Iverson, later taken over by James Bigler; the second downstream by Ole O. Wrolstad in Sec 34; and a third less than a mile farther down by Willard W. Sherwin, later taken over by the Fleming and Bancroft families of Amherst who eventually sold out to Simon Stenerson. The Wrolstad mill was taken over by son George (Jorgen) in 1881 and later sold to Hans

Johnson who operated it until 1903 when the mill burned.

Between 1875 and 1900 there were probably more logging operations in Alban than in any township of similar size in the county. Up from Fond du Lac came Moore and Galloway's top woodsman, Jack Hunter, to look over the rapids on the Little Wolf. Owing to the nature of the rock formations in the river, apparently no one but Hunter considered the river navigable enough to float a log. But Hunter brought in ox teams, long power booms that went with a sweep, and worked the boulders to one side and those he could not pry out, he blasted with black powder and piled up along the river bank where they may still be seen below the Middle Dam in Sec 1. Hunter built the Middle Dam and a series dams all the way to New London in Waupaca County. None was used for power sites, but rather to create ponds where the logs could be stored until a "head" had been built up and then released, sending the logs pell-mell over the difficult rapids to the next pond farther down.

And up from Oshkosh came cruisers for the Conlee Lumber Company and Ripley & Mead to establish logging camps in the east half of the township, eyeing the yellow gold in the white pine. All told it is believed that between 1880 and 1900 Conlee, or "Corn-le" as the Norwegians pronounced it, had logging camps at Lake Helen, on the Bailey Creek in Secs 13, 15 and 16, and between Russell Marsh and Round Marsh in Sec 5, and on the Little Wolf in Sec 12 not far from the "Improvement Rapids", more often referred to the "Rips." All these sites may still be located. The logs from these camps were hauled by sleigh over swamp roads leading to the banks of the Little Wolf where they were piled on skidways pending the spring thaw and then rolled into the icy water.

Serving the town of Alban, with a population of 682, in 1957-58, were Harold P. Anderson, chairman; Nick Wanta and Ed Dziedzic, supervisors; Donald P. Danielson, clerk; Earl L. Olson, treasurer; Stanley Pliska, assessor; Donald P. Danielson, justice of the peace; Ambrose Stanislawski, constable; and Dr. V. A. Benn, health officer.

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