

ALMOND, The Township of

The finest collection of township records in the county is held by the town of Almond which also seems to have a fairly continuous account of its elections from the beginning down to the modern period. Not only are most of these records remarkably well preserved, but the general level of literacy throughout is no doubt the highest in the county, marked by fewer misspellings, the least number of grammatical errors and most legible penmanship.

Off hand this rather high degree of proficiency suggests that Almond had fewer newcomers, i.e., foreign-born, than any other township, that most of its original settlers were native Americans from the East where they or their fathers had attended schools in the English language and had been nurtured in an atmosphere of intellectual curiosity and political ferment. Other townships had strong elements of the same Yankee strains, but mixed with communities of newcomers from the Old World who, even if they happened to be Irish, were apt to be lacking in the correct nomenclature of the American idiom. Where the newcomers were actually the predominating ethnic group, such as the Norwegians in New Hope, the difficulty of spelling and grammar is at once apparent.

Almond township was set off by the County Board which ordered Towns 21 in Range 9 and Town 21 in Range 10 (later Belmont) to hold its first election "at the public house of James F. Moore on the first Tuesday of April, 1852, for the election of town officers."¹ Apparently the freeholders of the township were unable to meet this deadline, as the order was amended and the place of election changed to the house Elijah Wood although nothing is mentioned about changing the date of election.

¹ *Proceedings*, Board of Supervisors, Vol. I, p. 187.

In 1854 the town of Almond was enlarged to include all of modern Pine Grove (Town 21, Range 8) and one section (36) in Town 21, Range 9, later a part of Grant. This was all detached from what was then a part of the town of Grand Rapids, Portage County. In 1856 two tiers of sections in the north third of Town 21, Range 8 (Pine Grove) were detached from Almond and attached to the town of Buena Vista. On Nov. 28, 1856 Town 21, Range 10, was set off from Almond to constitute the new town of Belmont. The south two-thirds of Town 21, Range 8, and Sec 36 in Town 21, Range 7, were detached from Almond in 1856 by the incorporation of the new town of Pine Grove, which, with Belmont constituting another new township on the east, left Almond within the constitutional limit of 36 sections. This has remained unchanged.

The subdivision of Almond township was begun July 9 and completed July 22, 1851. In the general description of this township, the surveyor noted: "The Prairie in S(outh) part of Tp. is settling fast. The Tp. contains 15 families, about 70 souls, and there is nearly 300 acres under cultivation."

The field notes also mention a "farm of Mr. Miller" which, from the description, was situated east of the modern village of Almond; on a random line north between Secs 26 and 27 mention is made of "Grimm's House," a "field east of D. B. Frost," and a farm of "Mr. Moulton" of which "20 acres fenced," all located east of the village. On a line between Secs 33 and 34, i.e., south of the village, the surveyor encountered a field of Mr. Welcome, a field of Mr. Hix, and a house of Mr. Moore. Still another field note states that Moore's house, (probably James F.) stood in the southeast corner of Sec 28 which places this on the northwest angle of the intersection of Main and First Street in Almond village. Finally, the survey makes reference to a "Mr. Beggs farm" which, from the description, was near Spirit Land Corners.

The first instance of wild-life conservation on the township level in the county may have been observed in 1866 when the Almond town board resolved that "any per-

son who shall catch any fish within three years from this date (except suckers) out of the lake lying partly in Secs 31 and 32. . . commonly known as Gordon's Lake, shall be liable to pay a fine of five dollars for each offense. . ." The lake was probably being stocked with pan fish or pike. From this it is learned that the lake later called Washburn, after the several members of the Washburn family on nearby farms, was first known as Gordon's Lake, probably after Robert D. Gordon, a justice of the peace on the first town board. While the new plat (1957) refers to this lake as Washburn, a sign on the highway today calls it "Twin Lakes" as there are actually two lakes here, once connected by a small stream, since dried up, while Washburn itself in 1958 was practically a dry lake bottom. The 1895 and 1915 plats both refer to the west lake as Washburn and the one on the east as Clauds Lake. The east lake was also known as Palmer in the 1870s and 1880s after the several members of the Palmer family, but the origin of the name "Claude" is uncertain.

Almond has other small lakes, including East Lake in Sec 25 and Wolf Lake in Sec 1, a name which has only recently become familiar and where some 16,000 walleye fingerlings were planted in 1958 by Conservation Department Warden Herb Schneider. Almond township has no rivers, the only one in the county which has none.

Meanwhile, the first town election of Almond was held in 1852 and on Page 1 in the proceedings of the town board the following entry is made:

1852. The town of Almond was organized the eighth day of May A. D. 1852.

Meeting organized by appointing Elijah Wood chairman, John D. Beggs clerk and Daniel B. Frost & Archibald Beggs inspectors. The officers were sworn according to law and proceeded to business.

1st A motion was made to elect town officers by ballot. Carried. Three supervisors, one town clerk, one treasurer, one superintendent of schools, one assessor, two justices of the peace and two constables were nominated. Asa Cowles received ten votes for chairman and was elected; Archibald Beggs and Solomon C. Wellcome received twelve votes each and were elected supervisors; John D. Beggs received twelve votes and was

elected town clerk; Elijah Wood received twelve votes and was elected treasurer; Asa Cowles received twelve votes and was elected school superintendent; Hiram Frost received eleven votes and was elected assessor; Robert D. Gordon received twelve votes and was elected justice of the peace; Archibald Beggs received eleven votes and was elected justice of the peace, and Aaron Moore & John D. Beggs received twelve and *was* (were) elected constable. A. Moore did not qualify.

In addition to the first post office established in Almond village in 1850, a second post office in the township, called Lone Pine, was established Feb. 22, 1856, Josiah E. Farmington serving as postmaster, and a third, called Hetzel, was established on Oct. 17, 1896, in the northeast, John Hetzel serving as postmaster. The Lone Pine was discontinued in 1865, re-established in 1866 with George McMulkin the next postmaster and was discontinued in 1904, while the Hetzel post office was discontinued in 1902.

The original Lone Pine post office was probably located in the farm house of Farmington near the intersection of modern H-51 and Trunk W, where a store later came to be built also known as the Lone Pine. Sherman states that he was associated with the naming of the community which took its name from a big pine tree, alone and aloof, which stood in an open field several rods to the west of the cemetery, also called Lone Pine. The cemetery appears to have been laid out on or before 1856, as one of the earliest headstones reveals that Sara Melissa White, aged five, died in 1856. The Lone Pine School, the foundation of which is still visible, stood on a lot which separates the cemetery from H-51.

An alumnae association called the Lone Pine celebrated annual reunions for a number of years, elected officers and talked about the "good ol' days" — good because the people who remembered them were young then and filled with the joy of life. One of the last reunions was held at the Plainfield Community Hall in 1937. Among those attending were W. D. Corrigan of Milwaukee, a noted horticulturist, Bert White, E. C. Schilling, Fred Young, John Fisher and Elmer Soule. Several elderly ladies, their gray hair pertly waved and combed, dressed in polka-

dot cotton materials, had their photo taken. On the basis of the caption below the picture which appeared in the *Stevens Point Daily Journal*, it is clear from their names that most of the women were sweethearts of neighborhood boys, viz: Mrs. Sarah (McCallum) Wood, Mrs. Lina (Dickson) Radcliffe, Mrs. Ella (Kollack) Pratt, Mrs. Emma (Achilles) Soule, Mrs. Addie (Dickson) Anthony, Mrs. Helen (Dickson) Corrigan, and Mrs. Cora (Kollack) Brady.

A number of the older headstones in the Lone Pine Cemetery are shattered and while some have been repaired, others have not. This followed one of the worst, if not the worst, cyclones in the history of Portage County in October 1903. The storm gathered strength in the town of Pine Grove where a number of farms were damaged, particularly around Mosquito Bluffs, and swept eastward toward the Lone Pine district where houses and barns were leveled or damaged, including the Lone Pine store, which also housed the post office, and the Lone Pine school immediately east of the cemetery. The cyclone continued east into Pleasant Valley of Buena Vista, Lanark and Belmont, where more damage was caused, leaving a number of dead and injured in its wake across the length of the county.

Spirit Land Corners at the intersection of H-51 and Trunk D probably got its name in the 1860s when a number of followers of the new spiritualist cult became active in the community. There appears to be some connection between this cult and a meeting conducted in Stevens Point by a speaker come to explain the mysteries of spiritualism. One of the mediums chosen by the leader was a (name deleted) from the town of Almond who asked to be put in touch with his first wife. (He had been married two times.) After a series of rappings and tappings he failed to make contact with wife No. 1 and the medium urged him to communicate with wife No. 2. When this also failed, someone in the audience allegedly spoke up and said, "Call wife No. 3, she'll answer."

A town of Almond citizen who achieved world fame was Henry Wellcome, son of Solomon C. Wellcome, an

early town chairman. Son Henry was born either south of Almond village or just across the county line and presumably spent his boyhood in the neighborhood. He later studied pharmacy and also became interested in archaeology, but after university training concentrated on research, especially on quinine. In 1880 he moved to London, England, which he considered more advantageous as a manufacturing and distribution center for his products. In England he won not only fortune but fame and at one stage of his career is said to have helped to make the Egyptian Sudan safe against fevers which had been badgering the white man's conquest (presumably Lord Kitchener's) of north Africa. He was reputedly the first civilian to enter the Sudan after its reconquest by Kitchener a decade or so after the death of General Charles ("Chinese") Gordon at the hands of Mahdi tribesmen at Khartum in 1885. For his outstanding service to humanity, (not to mention British imperial interests in Africa) Henry Wellcome was knighted by King George V in 1932. He returned to Almond the same year with the intention of purchasing a 13-acre tract of land near the county line where he wished to erect a marker at his birthplace. Apparently nothing came of this and he returned to London where he died in 1936, aged 82.¹

The earliest assessment roll available in the county covers the year 1854 for the town of Almond in which the following names appear as resident owners: George Beamish, Hiram Frost, George Newton, Timothy Welcom, Solomon C. Welcom, Elijah Wood, James Densmore, James F. Moor, Aaron Moor, Sylvanus Baker, Asa Cowles, John D. Beggs, Crowell & White, Lucy O. Moss, John Downing, William Bell, Daniel B. Frost, William Sleicher, Ellis Wicks, James Dunagan, Elias (?) Robinson, George W. Robinson, Heatherly R. Robinson, William D. Dopp, and David Kijor (or Risor). Non-resident owners are given as John Miller, Daniel Stewart, Orvel Sluzzer, William F. Hale, Jr., Isiah L. Frost, Charles McBerry, Richard Norton, Mary W. Wellcome, Palmer Daniels, George Daniels, Mart T. Tisdale, Wilson, Wilson E. King, Lucas M. Miller, and Walter Dickson.

¹ Obituary, *The Times* (London), July 27, 1936.

Serving the town of Almond, with a population of 538 in 1957-58, were Arleigh Hetzel, chairman; John Hetzel, and Hugh Brady, supervisors; R. G. Tess, clerk; Ruth Kollock, treasurer; Leland Young, assessor; Ora Vroman, justice of the peace; Kenneth Mehne, constable; and Thomas Brady, health officer.

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