

ALMOND, The Village of

Almond village, one of the earliest settlements in the county, did not incorporate until 1905. The application for incorporation to Circuit Court in session March 13, 1905 was made by B. J. Walker, John Hynek, Fred Grosse, M. A. Morey, C. E. Webster, F. A. Wood and J. A. Bowden. The village was to include 647.19 acres or slightly more than a section of land.

The records of the first election were not available in 1958, but from an audit made in the treasurer's book it is known that O. A. Crowell was elected president and J. Tice, clerk. From the assessor's roll it is learned that W. H. Borst was elected assessor, and from the treasurer's book, that A.W. Skinner was treasurer. C. V. Pierce was probably justice of the peace.

The assessment roll for Almond village after it was incorporated lists the following names for the year of 1905: M. Entzenminger, Fred Grosse, N. A. Rice, J. A. Bowden, Christian Yohn, J. A. Davidson, Will Hotze, John Jenerk, F. Langbaner, G. G. Crowell Store, O. A. Crowell Store, Dr. E. S. Cooper, G. Hill, A. McIntee, W. C. Fisher, M. A. Morey, A. Cizinsky, G. Yeager, A. J. Aplin, C. Cobb, G. Hoaglin, Mrs. V. (ictoria) Rath, P. Fisher, A. W. Skinner, Portage County Real Estate Company, G. Walters, Mrs. Julia Coffett, D. Hicks Potato House, A. Yohn, C. Fess, A. Krohn, Kellog Bros. (Lumber Co.), F. A. Wood, R. D. Bursell, Aug. Boelter, J. Milins, H. Karnopp, Dr. Casey, Wm. Paap, Martha H. Pierce, Baptist Church (exempt), J. C. Boelter, J. H. Droske, A. W. Adams, Almond Milling, N. Rader, E. D. Plank, D. Shaffer, C. A. Piekard, D. Mehne, F. J. Frost, Miss Phillips, Clara Thompson, J. W. Dunegan, M. R. Hetzel, C. E. Webster, W. C. Stevens, B. J. Walker, J. S. Cowan, Frank Beggs, S. D. Scott, G. Hawes, G. Mehne, Mrs. Ella

Frost, Mrs. C. A. Wilcox, Miss Carpenter, Beggs Bros., Josaphine Kent, Frost Bros. & Roberts, Almond Land Company, J. H. Johnson, Bryan True, Sid Palmer, O. F. Brown, F. W. Keffner, Margurite Borst, R. P. Carson, F. S. Rawsen, O. A. Crowell, Frank Poll, Northern Grain Company, Louis Adams, N. Piper, W. Tess, J. P. Coon, Borst & Tvill, Mrs. F. Duley, J. H. Hynek, F. Mathe, Albertina Tess, C. Wellwood, F. P. King, Daisy Pufts, E. D. Plank, Thomas Galland, W. H. Plank, G. G. Crowell, John Martin, A. W. Guernsey, H. H. Matha, J. Fredrick, Fred Stevens, and Daniel Crocker.

Personal property in the village, also subject to taxation in 1905, included the following items: bank stock valued at \$4,000; 113 horses valued at \$6,525; 68 head of cattle valued at \$1,455; 175 head of sheep valued at \$350; 14 swine valued at \$74; 94 carriages valued at \$1,594; nine pianos, \$545; 18 organs, \$195; ten bicycles, \$55, in addition to merchant's stocks valued at \$41,130, notes at \$2,565 and lumber at \$8,500. The majority of taxpayers resident in the village had one or more horses, most of them presumably drivers.

The total valuation of real estate in the village in 1905 was \$160,315 and personal property \$78,658 which together made \$238,973.

One of the first business places in the future village of Almond was a tavern-house operated by Isaiah Felker, referred to in the town proceedings of 1857. Probably the first store was built by I. (for Isador) Samuelson, an immigrant from Prussia, and perhaps the first of the Jewish faith to settle in the county. He applied for naturalization at Plover on Feb. 21, 1860 and there is reason to believe he opened his store in Almond the same year. A road statement of 1863 takes a bearing "in the middle of the Berlin road between the tavern of I. Felker & the store of I. Samuelson." This fails to explain the side of the street either was located on, but a later tax roll suggests that Felker's tavern stood on the northwest corner of Sec 34, i.e., on the east side of lower Main Street in the original plat of Almond village. The 1876 plat carries an advertisement of A. Frost who operated "National

House" in the northwest corner of Sec 34. It appears that Frost had taken over the building of Felker after the latter's death in the early 1870s.

One of the sales girls who worked for Samuelson in the early 1860s was Caroline Young who, in 1861, became the second wife of Geo. F. Schilling. According to Mrs. Lauretta Zimmer, nee Schilling, it was in Samuelson's store that her father met and courted Caroline Young. She recalls her mother saying that Samuelson was "a very considerate man" to work for. He later served on the County Board.

From the 1876 plat is also learned that Smart & Crowell were operating a general store and hardware; Bowden & Miller were general blacksmiths manufacturing wagons, carriages and sleighs; and Frank Fredericks, Jr. was a shoemaker, all located in Sec 28, which places these establishments on the west side of modern Main Street, probably north of Samuelson's store. Somewhere nearby in Sec 28 A. W. Guernsey had an office as physician & surgeon.

W. H. Else also carries an advertisement on the 1876 plat as the owner of a general store and hardware in Sec 7, probably in the southwest angle of the intersection of modern H-51 and Trunk W. This later came to be known as the Lone Pine store.

The first 100 years of postal service in Almond was observed July 8, 1950. The post office was the fourth to be established in the county, but ranks third in continuous service. The third post office was established at Shawrette (Conant Rapids) in 1849, but was discontinued in February 1850 before the one in Almond was established. James F. Moore was the first postmaster at Almond.

With the coming of the Chicago & North Western Railroad on Aug. 2, 1901, connecting Almond with Fond du Lac and Wisconsin Rapids, Messrs. W. M. Smart and Richard Davis foresaw a spurt in village development and hurried to establish a weekly newspaper to attract advertisers and job printing. Called the *Portage County Press*, Vol. I, no. 1, issued on Saturday, Aug. 3, 1901, and edited by T. R. Cunningham, carried eight pages of local and

national news and advertising.¹ Most of the paper, however, was "boiler plate," that is, stories of national interest which could be sold by the sheet, already printed, to smaller papers like the *Press*. Local items in this first issue are pointed, aside from Almond, at the communities to the south in Waushara and Winnebago Counties which suggests that the people of Almond were more closely related, both economically and ethnically, to the families of Wautoma, Pine River and the town of Oasis than to the communities to the north of the township in Portage County. A close relationship also existed between families of Almond and Plainfield.

From the "Home News" column of this first issue it is learned, *inter alia*, that "Geo. Hill of Bancroft was transacting business in town Wednesday"; that "landlord Rich is having a windmill placed on the hotel grounds"; that "Mrs. J. H. Hetzel of Stevens Point called on friends in the village Wednesday"; that "C. D. Wood was in town Wednesday with his fine English Morgan stallion"; and that Josh Lebrick "slipped and fell from a hayrack and sprained one of his limbs."

The *Portage County Press* was taken over by Lillian G. Phillips in 1902, by David E. Thompson in 1908, and by Ernest E. Ingle in 1913 who probably continued until 1924, when it was discontinued. A second paper called the *Almond Press* was established by J. Leonard Moberg of Amherst in 1924 and continued until 1931 when it passed to E. J. Scott who ceased publication the same year.

Among the ordinances passed by the early village board of Almond was one regulating the movement of vehicles and traffic on the streets. The coming of the automotive age had brought new problems and obviously the need for their solution had become apparent some time before the ordinance was passed on May 7, 1918. Among other things, this ordinance held that if the driver of an automobile noted that the driver of a horse or team of horses was having trouble, the automobile driver "upon request," was to "stop all motor power until such horse,

¹ In collection of Harold Calkins, Almond, Wis.

or horses, shall be under control and shall assist such person, or persons, to pass such automobile or other vehicle in safety."

The importance of radio to the people of the county in 1939 may be judged from an ordinance adopted in Almond on Aug. 1 when it was declared unlawful "for any person to operate, within the village, any electrical apparatus, device, machine, or equipment which needlessly and unnecessarily interferes with radio reception. . ."

The Portage County Bank, main credit institution in the village, was organized July 15, 1901 as a private bank with a capital stock of \$1,000 and opened for business the same day. In 1903 the bank was incorporated as a state bank in which the following held shares: J. W. Dunnegan, five; O. W. Crowell, 25; E. G. Crowell, five; David Hicks, five, and C. E. Webster, ten. On Dec. 31, 1957 the Portage County Bank had \$1,385,550.42 in deposits, and \$100,319.95 in capital structure. None of the original board of directors was present at the last meeting. Death had taken some and the others had disposed of their stock. The new officers of the bank are Darwin Follett, chairman of the board; Milton Busse, president; Kenyon Follett, vice president; Howard Newby, cashier; and Ronald Abbott, assistant cashier.

The Almond bank was robbed in October 1902. The bank's cash and securities at this time were kept in a big safe standing behind the service counter and from the evidence of a photo taken the morning after the robbery, the door of the safe had been blown open with demolitions. Debris was scattered over the floor, papers and books on the service counter were tossed about, and a stove pipe from a small stove was lying at an angle across the stove, disconnected from the ceiling. The burglars got only \$48 in nickels, about \$100 in silver and a few pennies.

The noise of the explosion awakened Mrs. C. E. Webster who warned neighbors. Several men armed themselves and proceeded in the darkness toward the bank. Apparently a man posting on Main Street spotted them

and warned the others to hurry. The robbers, probably three in all, after scooping up the small change, jumped into a rig stolen from A. O. Crowell, and drove east toward Amherst. No attempt appears to have been made to follow them in the darkness. Days later — most accounts differ on the exact number — a gaunt, half-crazed horse was discovered tied to a tree in a woods not far from Amherst. Discovery of the horse created almost as much of a sensation as the original crime. The bandits had apparently walked into Amherst from the woods and boarded a train, and this was one robbery never solved. The horse recovered.

Serving Almond village with a population of 434, in 1957-58, were Howard Newby, president; Merle Pagel, Leon Trickey, Milton Abbott, Arden Pohl, Irving Bartels and Victor Hardell, trustees; Ronald Abbott, clerk; Louis Prochnow, treasurer; George Hilgendorf, assessor; George Hilgendorf and D. D. Thompson, justices of the peace; Harold Fix, constable; Martin Johnson, health officer; and Harold Mehne, supervisor.

Our Country Our Story Portage County Wisconsin - Link Page

PREVIOUS...ALMOND, THE TOWNSHIP OF.....226

NEXT.....AMHERST, THE TOWNSHIP OF.....239

GO BACK TO THE ELECTRONIC INDEX PAGE...