

## BELMONT, The Township of

The town of Belmont was set off from the town of Almond in 1856 and in the process the County Board detached Town 22 (Lanark) from Amherst and attached it to Belmont. The first election of officers was to be held on the first Monday in October "and the place for holding town meetings and other elections shall be at the tavern house of Alexander Gray."<sup>1</sup> Thus the first town meeting of Belmont was held not in the township as it known today, but in modern Lanark where Gray's tavern-house was located in Sec 36. A few months later, however, Town 22 was detached from Belmont to constitute the town of Lanark which left Belmont within the constitutional limit of 36 sections.

As a number of the pioneers of this township originated in New York state, it is quite possible that it took its name after Belmont, New York.

The work of surveying the section lines was begun Sept. 29, and completed Oct. 4, 1851.

Three small streams originate in the east sections of Belmont and flow into Waupaca County. A bridge was authorized on the northernmost stream in 1871, then referred to as "Robinson's Creek," no doubt after one of the Robinson family (1876 plat). This stream originates at Fountain Lake in Sec 10 and runs into Long (or Big) Lake in Waupaca County; it is also called Emmons Creek, probably after the family of the same name in the town of Dayton.

The central stream draining Belmont originates in Sec 22 and since early times has been known as McInroe Creek, no doubt after the pioneer family of the same name. It joins the South Fork of the Waupaca River in the town of Dayton. The lower stream in Belmont, originating in Sec 26, flows southeasterly

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, Board of Supervisors, Vol. I, p. 261.

through Sec 36 where it is generally known as Dopp Creek, after the pioneer family of the same name, and runs into the town of Dayton where it is identified on 1889 plat of Waupaca County as Pearl Creek which joins McInroe Creek to form the South Fork of the Waupaca River.

Because of its splendid isolation, Fountain Lake, set like a star sapphire against a mounting of tree-covered hills, retains a sense of wild beauty probably unmatched in the county. It is approached over a town road where the trees reach across the road to form a natural arbor.

In the northwest of the township lie the three lakes, Pickerel, Pine, and Pleasant, all identified on the 1915 plat. A summer camp known as Asbury Acres has been established on the east shore of Pickerel Lake by the Wisconsin Conference of the Methodist Church which controls the land around the lake although access is permitted at a public landing on the east shore.

The movement of settlement into Belmont appeared to be a step behind Lanark which is to say that the "York staters," many of whom had spent a few years in Winnebago County in the 1840s, first filled up the oak openings of Lanark, and when the movement into Belmont began it flowed south from Gray's tavern into the northeast sections of the township, gradually farther south, and west along the plateau of modern Trunk D to the flats around modern Blaine. Some of the most hilly, yet picturesque countryside in the county may be found in Belmont and from one vantage point in the very corner of the township it is possible on a clear day to view many miles of Portage County to the northwest.

Many of the families that settled in both Lanark and Belmont were related and a close bond of togetherness has existed between the two townships to this day.

The first post office, called Blaine, was established June 12, 1876 with Charles McMillan serving as postmaster. The origin of this name is uncertain but it was probably named after James G. Blaine, a member of Congress from Maine and a leading Republican, later secretary of state. The post office was discontinued

in 1903. Whether McMillan operated a store in connection with the post office is uncertain, but according to hearsay evidence, a country store was established on a lot just south of the Methodist church by John H. ("Johnny") Johnson. However, the earliest store of which there is memory, located on the northwest corner of the intersection at Blaine, was operated by Looman Taylor, identified on the 1895 plat as L. Taylor.

The foundation of the modern store at Blaine operated by Clarence George was built on the northeast corner of the intersection by D. A. Day which, by 1909, according to a post card photo, had been taken over by J. C. F. Fletcher & Co.

After the turn of the century, a creamery was located on the road west of the store, and a blacksmith shop north on modern Trunk A. The Grange Hall which stands to the west of Trunk A, north of Blaine, was built by the Maccabee Lodge, an insurance organization similar to Woodmans.

Blaine Post No. 115 of the G.A.R. held its meetings in a hall located about a mile south of Blaine on the farm of Luke Scott (the Henry Stinson place). In the early 1900s, after taps had been blown for most of the G.A.R. veterans, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War met at Scott's Hall for meetings and social events.

A second post office was established in Belmont on Aug. 31, 1876 known as Sherman,<sup>1</sup> probably after William Tecumseh Sherman, which may have been located in Sec 11. Veterans of the township recall that Johnathan Brown (mentioned in 1863 tax roll) and Luke Scott served as postmasters — probably before it was moved to the north side of the road to the farm house of Don Sawyer. It was temporarily discontinued in 1887, re-established in 1888, but the date of its final closing is uncertain although it was still a post office address in 1896.

A third post office in Belmont, called Towne, pre-

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence, U.S. Post Office Department, May 13, 1958. (There is no entry on the Sherman P.O. in the Index.)

sumably after Cyrus Towne, was established April 18, 1884, with Joseph L. Dopp serving as postmaster. The post office, which was discontinued in 1903, was located about a quarter of a mile west of the intersection of modern H-22 and Trunk AA, or west of the Methodist Church often called the "Dopp Church" after the several families of Dopps who settled in the neighborhood.

A fourth post office, called Heffron, probably after John J. Heffron of Stevens Point, was established near the Waushara County line on Jan. 30, 1901 with Frank Wiora serving as the first, and apparently the only postmaster as the post office was closed in 1903.

Cyrus Towne died in 1899 and is buried in the Green Vale Cemetery south of Dopp Church. His wife, Martha, preceded him in death by 19 years, aged 40, and at the bottom of her headstone appears this epitaph:

Mother thou has left thy babes  
Thine was an early tomb,  
Tis God who has bereft  
And filled our home with gloom.

There are three other cemeteries in Belmont, one called Elmwood, formerly Sherman and later Oak Wood, about two miles east of Blaine; another south of Blaine called the South Belmont and often referred to as the "Kent Cemetery," and the last at Heffron at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. Quite a number of veterans of the Civil War are buried in Elmwood, not to mention veterans of later wars.

Around 1870 the town of Belmont, as with other townships in the eastern part of the county, became deeply involved with the matter of bonding the county to bring a railway into Stevens Point. At a special meeting held in 1871 a resolution was introduced to authorize the town chairman to take such legal action as he deemed advisable to prevent the "issuing or delivering to any person or corporation of the bonds of said County (being One hundred thousand dollars) voted by said County in the year 1870 to the Portage, Winnebago and

Superior Rail Road company, now the Wisconsin Central Railroad Company in exchange for the capital stock of said company. . ." The resolution was passed unanimously.

Obviously, the proposed railroad between Portage and Stevens Point had become a matter of deep irritation to the farmers of eastern Portage County. Some 15 years earlier several thousand investors, many of them farmers, had to satisfy mortgages against railroad bonds or lose their farms, including a number around Plover and Buena Vista, in the great "Horicon Swindle" of 1856-57. Another reason for opposing the railroads, extraordinary to a later generation, is made evident in the following entry made after a meeting held April 2, 1872 "in and for the town of Belmont":

Proposition

"Whereas, The facilities afforded by the Wisconsin Central Rail Road for bringing into Portage County feed, flour &c has greatly reduced the price of the farmers' produce and thereby crippled his resources: And whereas, By illegal procedure, by deception and fraud, Portage County bonds have been issued to said company, and unless appropriate legal proceedings are maintained against said R.R. Corporation, the payment of said bonds will be enforced, imposing upon the taxpayers of Portage County a heavy burden which they will be illy prepared to bear.

Therefore, be it Resolved, by the town of Belmont that our Supervisors be and hereby are instructed to unite with the towns of Lanark, Amherst, Stockton, New Hope, Linwood, Sharon and such other towns as may see fit to associate themselves together for the purpose of maintaining an action or actions to prevent said R.R. Co. from obtaining possession of or collecting said bonds: and for the furtherance of said object our Chairman be and hereby is instructed to meet with the Chairman of Supervisors of the several towns above named at the house of H. H. Felch of Stockton, on Tuesday, April 9 at 1 o'clock P.M. . . ."

The earliest tax roll of Belmont is dated 1863 when the following paid taxes: John Gray, Wm. Handell, Wm. E. Sanders, Charles Hewitt, Milo Clark, John (actually Johnathan) Brown, Charles Halfhide, A. S. Gould, Richard Lea, John Bishop, Lewis Charles, Terry Mc-

Bride, Merritt Curtiss, Edwin Curtiss, Richard Dolling, Patrick Stinson, Alvin Pike, James Smith, Charles Taylor, Albert Taylor, David Taylor, Joseph Polley, Henry Downing, Starr Polley, Ebenever Olds, Elijah Clark, Charles T. Clark, Celia Welby, Sarah Strong, William Olds, Luke D. Scott, John Turner, Luman Taylor, Loren Buck, Charles Lewis, James Garter, Wm. Grant, Elizabeth Polley, Charles Sanders, Elder Ashmurn, J. C. Stringham, S. H. Sawyer, J. C. Devoin, G. W. Robinson, H. R. Robinson, Alpheus Austin, Ed Derigan, Henry Dean, James Youngs, Hiram Hooglan, Thomas Collier, A. D. Freeman, James Edminister, Estate of Reuben Edminister, David Spurbeck, John Collier, John Fletcher, Stephen Fletcher, Joseph Graham, James Sutherland, Mary C. Chaplin, L. L. Hawes, Alonzo Lomas, Warren Lincoln, Stephen Smith, Edward Kent, John Coon, David Kent, Samuel Whitney, Peter Dunigan, D. R. Morgan, James McInroe, Nelson King, L. A. McInroe, Robert Parks, H. P. Kelsey, Edward Dunigan, Jesse Tibbitts, N. D. Tibbitts, Cyrus Fairbank, Orange Randall, John Rice, H. H. Dopp, Wm. D. Dopp, Willard Dearing, E. Y. Smith, Arthur Collier, Robert Collier, Theodore Lincoln, Jonas White, Peter Turner, Joe A. Wiora, Henry Turner, S. H. Turner, Thomas Bacon, David N. Town, Howard P. Towne, Edward Y. Smith, and George Drysdale.

Several of the taxpayers mentioned above actually lived in Lanark or Waupaca County. It would also appear from the list above that Joe A. Wiora was the first Polish settler in the township.

An elm tree of historical interest in Belmont stands in front of the house on the farm of Steve Nenadovich in Sec 11. This house, one of the oldest in the county, was built by William Grant. Shortly before he was called into service during the Civil War, Grant decided to cut this elm down and began by cutting off the roots on the west side. By night fall he had the tree leaning at an angle to the east. Apparently he was called up for duty shortly after and never completed the job. When he returned from the Civil War he found the tree still growing and for sentimental reasons decided

not to cut it down. It is still growing, bent slightly east, and already local legend has it that a treaty with the Indians was signed here.

One of the leading citizens of Belmont in the early 1900s was Frank P. Guyant who in 1907 was elected sheriff of Portage County and again in 1911. His son, Merrill, served as under-sheriff to Anton Kubisiak, and in 1915 was elected sheriff for one term.

Owing to the paucity of pine timber, and the nature of the hard woods, there is no record of any saw mill in the township. The 1895 plat identifies a mill at the outlet of Fountain Lake. This, according to hearsay evidence, was a grist mill, operated by James Grant, which served the neighborhood down to World War I. The foundation of this dam or mill apparently was extinguished when the modern concrete dam was built here to regulate the flow of the water. Under the old mill dam, it is said, the suckers in spring were so thick they could be scooped up with a potato fork.

Serving the town of Belmont, with a population of 471, in 1957-58, were Henry W. Stinson, chairman; Earl Towne and Arnold Rassmussen, supervisors; Walter E. Wied, clerk; Hazel Frater, treasurer; Bert Wied, assessor; Albert Potts, justice of the peace; Dick Vaughn and Fred Butolph, constables; and Earl Towne, health officer.

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