

CARSON, The Township of

The first specific reference to Town 24, Range 6, today part of the town of Carson, occurs in 1856 when a new township consisting of Towns 23 & 24 in Range 6 was organized as the town of Scott. But when Wood County was set off from Portage County that same year, Town 23 in Range 6 went to Wood, and Town 24 to Portage County. To give Town 24 a place in township government it was therefore necessary to include it in a township in the newly-constituted county of Portage and this was done in November when it was annexed to the town of Stevens Point from whence it had been separated only a few months earlier in the creation of the town of Scott.

At the fall meeting of the County Board in 1878, a petition asking for the incorporation of a new township to be called Carson was heard from F. Aldridge, John Landers and "38 other petitioners"¹ and a few days later on Nov. 27, all of Town 24, Range 6, and the south half of Town 25, Range 6, were detached from the town of Stevens Point to constitute the new town of Carson. This created a township of 54 sections in the western part of the county, probably named after Samuel Carson, an Irish pioneer who entered the United States at Portland, Maine, in 1865 and applied for naturalization at Circuit Court in Stevens Point in 1872.

The first town meeting was to be held at Junction City, presumably April 1, 1879, when the above changes were to become effective. On Nov. 27, 1888 Carson also annexed most of the sections in the northwest corner of the county, namely, sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 in Town 25, Range 6, which had been part of Eau Pleine for the past several years. The petition for this move came from a majority of the resident

¹ *Proceedings, Board of Supervisors, Vol. IV, p. 107.*

freeholders of these sections, probably because of the inconvenience of being part of a township (Eau Pleine) which was divided by the Wisconsin River. Effective April 1, 1899 all of Town 25, Range 6, excepting sections 1 and 12, were taken back from Carson and attached to Eau Pleine. But Carson absorbed from the town of Stevens Point, sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and those parts of sections 2, 3, 10, 14, 15, 23, and 25 lying west of the Wisconsin River in Town 24, Range 7. By this action, modern Carson as it is known today was established.

Much of Carson and Hull were subdivided in the Indian Survey of 1839-40. A fractional subdivision of Town 24, Range 7, was begun Dec. 16, and completed Dec. 18, 1854 by A. G. & F. S. Ellis. This survey included only the westernmost sections in Range 7, i.e., about half way between Stevens Point and Junction City.

The subdivision of a part of Carson in Range 6 was made by the Ellis' who began Sept. 24, and finished on Oct. 1, 1851.

Many of the early records of Carson are woven into the proceedings of the town of Stevens Point and no clear picture of the township can be drawn without extensive cross-reference. From the town books available, it is known that on Apr. 9, 1890 the town board included George E. Oster, chairman, and Walter Campbell and John Pheet, supervisors.

On Page 24 of the town of Stevens Point proceedings held by Carson appears a list of voters, the only one available, of an election "held in and for the town of Stevens Point Apr. 2, 1875" which was concerned with a railroad matter, unidentified. The 67 men who went to the polls that day, presumably all residents of the township west of the Wisconsin River in modern Carson, were Joseph Aldridge, Wm. Tester, Johan Peski, John Miller, Albert Makusate, Thomas Zanekowski, Herman Masefield, Geor Weston, Antone Green, Newman Hoag, A. Hamilton, John Case, Thomas Kelly, Charles Golehan, George Kickland, Frank Kickland, Thomas Larsen, John Manning, Thomas Clements, A. Speasman, D. McDonnel, Nathan Nason, Thomas Stoke, John Clements, Samuel Sascon,

F. Patterson, James Galiges, John G. Kenedy, John Keofer, James Sneening, A. Sameson, A. Fassitt, C. B. Fountain, John Meehan, Thomas Mathews, H. W. Grant, Geo. Clark, J. G. Clark, Eschas Hilie, John Newton, Olie Anderson, Arik Peeterson, Alax Johnson, Thomas Nason, Geor Bean, David Stephens, Daniel Fosson, Stanton Nessitt, T. Conners, M. O. Conners, J. A. Mostin, J. T. Wines, Andrew Fosior, Henry Hill, W. D. Campbell, Geor McConnac, Andrew Nessitt, Alison Wilber, H. Philbrick, Michael Sweeney, Sr., Michael Sweeney, Jr., F. Aldridge, James Anderson, G. W. Holingshead, Lewis Famere, Wm. Plumer, and Wm. Coburn.

This election was followed by the annual meeting of the town board held "at the school house," when it was voted to raise \$500 for town expenses and to hold the next meeting of the board at "Junction City," the first time this name is mentioned.

George Runkel took much of the white pine off the western sections of Town 25 in Range 6, while Scott & Clark Lumber Company, who operated a big mill north of Rudolph in Wood County, logged off much of the pine in the southwest sections of Carson. The Wisconsin Valley Railroad came through this pine country in 1874 and eventually a siding was created about a mile and a half north of the Wood-Portage County line, where Trunk G runs into the railway tracks, known as "Log Hill." The road bed of a spur which extended either from this siding or was built from the Scott & Clark mill is still visible in the center of Sec 27.

Much of the timber in Carson was floated to saw mills located either on lower Mill Creek, or on the Wisconsin River near the mouth of the creek. It is reasonable to assume that the first jobbers floating their logs to mill did not stray too far from the banks of the creek, but continued to work their way upstream along either bank where the timber could be skidded directly unto landings along the banks. By the time Scott & Clark began operations, they were cutting timber some distance removed both from Mill Creek and the Wisconsin. Run-

kel was in the middle of modern Eau Pleine quite removed from any significant stream.

A saw mill is believed to have been situated near the present bridge on Trunk G where it crosses Mill Creek, but the 1876 plat fails to show any mill at this point. Instead, it lists a "Lester's Mill" on Mill Creek where modern Trunk M crosses the stream.

As far as it is known the only private siding in the county was built on the property of L. M. Nash (the Roegge farm) and popularly known as "Nashburg."

There are several references in road statements in the town of Stevens Point books to Webster Station located on the section line between 22 and 23 in Range 7, and identified both on the 1895 and 1903 plats. A siding was built from the Wisconsin Central to the Webster saw mill on the Wisconsin River, probably in the 1880s, and a sizeable community developed around the mill before it burned in 1883. It was never rebuilt and there is no trace of Webster Station today.

Probably the first community to develop in Carson was called "Mohawk." In 1858 the editors of the *Pinery* had this to say of it:

"Mohawk. Where is that? About six miles west of Stevens Point on Mill Creek. There is a post office there. The point is known as Cook's mill. There are 150 inhabitants in the vicinity and settlers going in rapidly. Mohawk will be a name to be heard of after this. Success to it."¹

The news item is rather typical of the period, full of optimism and the willingness to believe almost anything concerning a new development. From the description, it may be that Cornelius Cook operated a saw mill here which, according to legend, was located on Mill Creek at modern Trunk G, although this would place it considerably farther away than six miles from Stevens Point. A post office called Mohawk was established on Nov. 24, 1858 with Cornelius Cook as postmaster. It was discontinued Oct. 20, 1860 which suggests that the mill had burned and the community moved away.

¹ *Pinery*, Dec. 31, 1858.

For a time it appeared that southwest Carson was going to develop into a cranberry-growing center. Evidence of ditches and a dam which were probably built in the 1860s are still visible. Patrick Sullivan of Stevens Point was the supervisor of these operations. However, there was no dearth of cranberries in the county. A big yield was being harvested in 1854 either in or just outside the village limits of Stevens Point and berries were selling at \$1.25 a bushel.¹

In 1872 it appears that a road was re-established along what was previously known as the "Black River Road." From the description this seems to be roughly modern Trunk M and probably followed the Chippewa Indian trail referred to in the Indian Survey of 1839-40.

When the Wisconsin Central began laying tracks west of Stevens Point in the spring of 1872, the town board of Stevens Point decided to improve the highway into the western part of the county by, 1) following a course northwest from Stevens Point for a couple of miles along the tracks laid down by the railway, then west across the tracks roughly along modern Trunk M; and, 2) by making it four rods wide, which suggests that earlier this road had only been three rods wide. When the town board re-established this northwest road in 1872 it is quite evident that the timber, at least along the Wisconsin River over the two-mile stretch or so to Trunk M, had been cut, as bearings were taken on four pine stumps, one red oak 24 inches in diameter, one red oak stump, also 24 inches, and one black oak stump. This suggests that the log jobbers near the river had cut not only the pine but also hardwood, presumably because it could be hauled directly to a local mill.

After the log jobbers moved out and the farmers began moving in, many made cash money through the winter months by cutting cord wood for the pulp mills in Wisconsin Rapids, as well as kiln wood (pronounced "kill wood" by most) for other markets. Considerable

¹ *Pinery*, Oct. 3, 1854.

timber was still being cut after 1900 in Carson by smaller jobbers with "pony" mills, or by farmers cutting for themselves and hauling logs to mill or selling on the stump. Before 1900 many of the farmers who had only recently settled on the cut-over land were scarcely able to afford a team of horses, and local buyers in Junction City sent their own teams out to the farms after the logs and hauled them to the railway.

Today, most of the cut-over land in Carson, which after the turn of the century appeared to be an unbroken vista of pine stumps, has been cleared and some of the finest dairy farms in the county are located south of H-10 to the Wood County line. What remains of forest land is mostly poplar, while the balance of the land not under cultivation, some of it on low ground, is largely used for pasture.

The town of Carson in 1958 was devoted chiefly to dairying with scattered acreage of potatoes. In the early 1900s there were at least four potato warehouses in Junction City catering to the growers. Today there are none in operation. The few that grow potatoes wait for truckers or truck themselves.

Serving the town of Carson with a population of 1,197, in 1957-58, were Robert Bobrowski, chairman; Henry Doehr and Archie Olds, supervisors; Carl O. Olsen, clerk; William H. Peters, treasurer; Thomas Klawikowski, assessor; and Walter Joosten, health officer. Martin ("Can we afford it?") Poliwoda, several times town chairman and highly respected member of the Carson community, was tragically killed near his home in 1956 at a grade crossing of the Milwaukee Road.

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