

NEW HOPE, The Township of

In a document written in long hand by a deputy clerk of Portage County on a rather ordinary piece of writing paper, it was announced that the County Board, at a meeting held Nov. 11, 1856 had determined "that all that portion of the county of Portage composed of Township twenty four (24) and twenty five (25) of Range ten (10) be and hereby is set off and shall for the purpose of town government constitute the town of New Hope and shall hold its first town meeting on the first Monday of December next at the house of Johann Oleson Hole."

The circumstances of this document and the timing of the election for December rather than the following spring suggests that an extraordinary situation had arisen in eastern Portage County. A township of 72 sections known as Peru (still pronounced "pee-roo" by some) had already been organized on April 1, 1856 at an election held at Frederick Reinhardt's house. Ole Olsen Wrolstad had been elected town chairman; Sondre Gunderson (Loberg) and Leonard Perry, supervisors; Ole O. Wogsland, clerk; and Peder Halvorson (Houen), treasurer. But some question had arisen which caused this election to be considered, if not illegal, at least irregular. Probably this explains why the deputy clerk, who forgot to attach the County Board seal to the document, was in such a hurry when he sent out the notice of a special election. The new name of New Hope, replacing Peru, was allegedly suggested by Frederick Reinhardt, a German, and two Norwegians. Reinhardt was from Saxony. He entered the United States at New York on Aug. 23, 1849 and applied for naturalization at Plover on Dec. 27, 1853. It is quite possible that enroute to Portage County he spent

a short time with German acquaintances in or near New Hope, Pennsylvania, and from this experience suggested the same name for the township which he helped to organize.

At the new election of the township, which fell on Dec. 12, 1856, Leonard Perry replaced Wrolstad as chairman while Wrolstad and Simon Iverson were elected supervisors. John O. Hole became town clerk as well as one of the assessors; Nils Stiansen the second assessor; Ole O. Wogsland, John O. Hole, Sondre Gundersen and George R. Lawton, justices of the peace; and Peter Peterson Kjaerra, treasurer. Apparently Kjaerra did not qualify as a later entry reveals that Wrolstad had been appointed treasurer.

The survey of the section lines was begun Jan. 24 and completed Jan. 30, 1852.

The glacial period dotted the town of New Hope with more lakes and pot holes than any other in the county, most of them in the east and southern sections where the rolling terrain aptly reflects the uneven struggle with nature. In fact, a town road between sections 35 & 36 runs into a kettle hole which the Norwegians since pioneer times have referred to as *vrang hule*, "the mean hole," not quite so noticeable today but still a hazard in winter driving.

Sunset Lake, one of the most beautiful in central Wisconsin, is situated in Sec 22 of New Hope. None of the early plats ascribes a name to it and it was first identified as Sunset in the mid-1920s when a portion of the east shore was acquired by the Boy Scouts of America and since developed as Camp Chickagami ("Where camping is King,") playground of the Samoset Council with membership from all or part of 11 Wisconsin counties. And here a special Boy Scout order known as the Order of the Arrow has been established. Later, as if to confirm the mystic rites associated with the Order of the Arrow, it was discovered that at a certain time of day towards sunset, when the water mirrors the sky, that a person standing on the southeast shore, looking north, may discern a great arrow lying along the

north shore — an illusion created by the sandy beach which makes up the feathers, and the shore line which makes up the shaft, while the head of the arrow, lying to the east, is created both by the shore line and the reflection of the trees on a nearby hill.

To the southeast of Sunset lies a small lake. The parsonage of the North New Hope Church was originally located on the same forty of land and the lake came to be called *Praeste Laken* (the preacher's lake) and is officially known today as Minister Lake.

Farther east a few rods on the line between sections 22 & 23 lies a lake identified on recent plats as Skunk Lake, once known as "Valders Lake" after a man referred to by the early Norwegians as "Henrick Valders" who took the name of Larson in America.

In sections 28 & 29 lies Reton Lake, no doubt after the J. O. Reton family who later moved to Stevens Point. This lake also may have been known as Dutchman Lake in the 1870s, a name no longer used and while none of the early county plats, including 1915, designate it by any name, the 1957 plat calls it Reton which means that it has recaptured its first name. In 1958 the lake was to all purposes dry.

At the corner stake of sections 13, 14, 23 & 24 lies a lake which was once known as Horton, probably after Cyrus Horton (mentioned in 1857 tax roll). The property nearby was later acquired by Peter Budsberg and the 1895 plat identifies this as Budsberg Lake, a name still used.

Lying across the section line of 27 & 34 is a lake which in pioneer times was called Reinhardt, no doubt after Frederick Reinhardt. Although it still retains its original name, it is often referred to locally as "Wolding Lake" after a nearby family. A short distance west in Sec 27 lies Onland Lake, after T. O. Onland (or Onneland), also a pioneer of New Hope. One other named lake in the township lies in Sec 24 and is called Kankrud, after Hans P. Kankrud, but in 1958 was nearly dry. The western sections of the township are drained by the Tomorrow River and a feeder stream which

originates in the north of the township and is usually referred to as Mitcheltree Creek after the family of the same name living at the end of the town road. Eske Lodge, rendezvous of the Hot Shot Club from Stevens Point, is situated at the fork of Mitcheltree Creek where it joins the main stream of the Tomorrow River.

When the water level in the township is up to normal, a small stream also drains Reinhardt Lake and runs through sections 35 & 36 into the South Branch of the Little Wolf in the town of Iola.

Although Town 25 (Alban) was under the jurisdiction of New Hope until 1878, only six men in 1857 paid taxes on land in Town 25 and none of them lived there. The following taxpayers are listed in the New Hope assessment of 1857: Peder Pedrsen Kieara, Nils Stiansen, Leonard Perry, Ole Olsen Hole, Amund Olsen Hole, Simen Blihovde, Rasmus Andersen, Oluf Pedersen, Svenning Andersen, Knudt Hansen, Thor Amunsen, Lars Nilsen, Andrew Olsen, Benjamin P. Pattersen, Anders Johnsen, Edward Pattersen, Giarul Gunstensen, Johan Olesen Reton, Gunder Olsen, Edward Halgesen, David J. Sanders, Wasington Sanders, Handrick Nilsen, Hans Kankrud, Lars Iversen, Ole Gaarden, Helik O. Foss, Ole O. Foss, Amund Mortensen, Endre Nilsen, Wiliem Barger, Amun Torgersen, Aslak Olsen, Ole Aslaksen, Knudt Sakariasen, John Iversen, Simen Iversen, Ole Iversen, Lars Johansen, Ole Gundersen, Georg Lotow (probably Lawton), Olaves Lund, Ole O. Wogslan, Anloug Elefsen, Claus Gundersen, Gunder Nilsen, Gulbran Larssen, Hans Olsen, Ole Olsen Wrolstad, Peder Knudtsen, Halvor Borsen, Thomas Osmusen, Lars Andersen, Frederick Reinhardt, Handry (probably Henry) Wentsed, Ole Guliksen, Jorgen Pedersen, Cyas (probably Cyrus) Horton, Andru J. Horton, Johanes M. Aamot, Jens Houen, Osmund Gundersen, Hans Danielsen, Matis Halvorsen, Ole Tolefsen, Rasmus Andersen, Halvor Rolefsen, Johan A. Johansen, Sondre Gundersen, Jens Johansen, Reiar Halvorsen, Jacob Jacobsen, Nils Even- sen, Peder Halvorsen, Ole Halvorsen, Thomas Nilsen,

Kjel Johanesen, Torsten Rasmusen, Hans Olsen Lee, Ole Ostensen, Nils Andersen and Ole Johanesen.

The majority of these taxpayers were probably residents of New Hope. Although New Hope became the most heavily populated Norwegian township in Portage County there were, in the beginning, a few English or Yankee settlers here such as the Pattersons and Sanders, in addition to Horton, Perry, and Lawton. Most of them left New Hope within a few years, probably to avoid being absorbed completely by Norse culture. Leonard Perry, for example, moved south to Lanark where he could be among Scotsmen and Englishmen who referred to "tea" as supper, not a mid-afternoon snack (*kaffe-tid*).

The first Polish settlers in New Hope were probably John Domaszek and John Gladowski. Both paid taxes in 1868 on land in Sec 7 and perhaps settled here before that time.

As there is no village in New Hope, several country stores became local landmarks. Probably the most noted was located in the southeast corner of the township at a place known before and after the turn of the century as Benson Corners (H-161) more recently referred to on a highway sign as "New Hope." That the highway department reverted in mid-1950 in its road legend to this name suggests that it may have been the original name of the community, even as the 1895 plat identifies it. When a post office was established here on Aug. 13, 1861, it was, in fact, called New Hope. Frederick Reinhardt served as the first postmaster. When it was discontinued in 1904 the name Benson Corners gradually replaced the name of New Hope, probably because of the confusion which arose over the two entities. Peer Benson operated a store here in the 1870s and advertised in the 1876 plat as a dealer in "dry goods, groceries, hats, caps, boots, shoes, clothing, notions, etc." The store site is first referred to at a meeting of the town board held "at the store of J. Endlick" on May 11, 1863. In 1958 it stood vacant after nearly a century of service.

In the 1930s a novel was written by George V. Martin called "For Our Vines Have Tender Grapes" which used the region around Benson Corners as the locale of the story. It was later made into a motion picture.

On April 11, 1865 the town board held a meeting in "(?) Store." The wording is illegible and the name could be Syverson or Evenson. Nils Evensen paid taxes in 1865 on \$800 of personal property and as this kind of money usually represented a store building, it may be that Evensen operated a store located north of On-land Lake in Sec 26.

Another early country store was operated by Ole O. Wogsland south of Peru on Trunk T. A post office, called Alban, in honor of James S. Alban of Plover, was established in northern New Hope on Jan. 29, 1873 with Ole O. Wogsland as postmaster. Veterans of the township agree that this was located south of Peru on what is still the Walter Wogsland farm. The post office, still calling itself Alban, was moved into the town of Alban in 1880. The first reference, however, to Wogsland's store appears in 1868 when the town board met there.

Another country store, noted in the early days for its pot-bellied stove, cracker barrel, spittoons and peanut-shucks-all-over-the-floor, was built in the early 1880s in the west of the township at the intersection of Trunks A & Z. The building may have been erected by Sgvart T. Foxen when he purchased the lot on the northeast corner in 1882, for it was here that a post office, called Garfield, no doubt after the president, was established on March 19, 1884 with Foxen serving as postmaster. While the post office was discontinued Oct. 15, 1907, the store has since been known as the Garfield Store. Foxen passed it on to Amund Mortensen in 1892. Whether he actually operated the store is uncertain. The heirs of Mortensen sold to John A. Hole in 1896 when the store was operated mostly by son John and later Edwin, probably down to 1914, when Martin Ingbretson took over for about a year. By this time the old building was quite dilapidated and the store was closed for several years. The property was sold in

1920 to Joseph Omernik who erected a new building. Around 1925 son Alex began operating the store for his father, in 1927 became the owner and has continued in business since that time.

The Peru Store, at the junction of Trunks T & Z, was started in the early 1880s by Oscar Wrolstad. This may have followed the establishment of a post office on Sept. 14, 1882, called Peru, in the home of Martin O. Wrolstad who lived a few rods northeast of the present store. The post office was temporarily discontinued Nov. 28, 1884, opened again Jan. 7, 1885 and continued down to Oct. 15, 1907 when it was closed. The Peru store, operated throughout this period by Oscar Wrolstad, was sold to Alfred M. Wrolstad in 1912. In 1947 it was taken over briefly by Elvin Wrolstad and later by a brother, Franklin Wrolstad. In June 1948 Allen Torbenson became the owner and has continued in business since that time.

A farmer's co-op creamery was established across the road (west) from the store around the turn of the century. It eventually became a cheese factory which was discontinued after World War II.

In 1958 what is considered to be one of the finest stands of second-growth white pine in northern Wisconsin is located east of Garfield on a forty owned by Joseph Ostrowski (NW $\frac{1}{4}$ -NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec 10). It was probably logged off in the 1870s and, owing to the fact that it was and still is a "back forty," that is, removed from any town or county road, it became in a sense isolated and was allowed to re-seed itself. -Except for recent select cuttings, it has remained untouched for some 80 years. In this wood lot one can sense the great dignity and splendid isolation of the white pine — the tree that helped establish a new civilization in Portage County.

In the northeast corner of the township, J. Melvin Rustad also has a stand of timber which is among the finest in central Wisconsin. A white cedar located on this wood lot is the largest in the state. It was officially measured by State Forest Ranger William Peterson in 1958 and scaled ten feet and six inches in circumfer-

ence four and a half feet from the ground. One of the tallest white spruce trees in the state is also growing nearby.

Serving the town of New Hope, with a population of 608, in 1957-58, were Russell Krogwold, chairman; Sam Larson and Peter Hintz, supervisors; Arthur Stoltenberg, clerk; Alex Omernick, treasurer; Franklin Wrolstad, assessor; and Dr. V. A. Benn, health officer.

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