

ROSHOLT, The Village of

Seemingly hidden at the bottom of the page in the 1858 tax roll of New Hope under a number of forties of land listed as "unkown" appears the single name "Steubli," owner of 160 acres in Sec 20, Town 25. It is almost symbolical that this single freeholder, who is not even given a Christian name in the first tax roll, had come to live this far from any neighbor several miles to the south. He was Gottlieb Stanbly, or Steubli, or Stiple, or Stiply — the assessor never did get it straight — who was related to the Jacob Whipf family in Iola and probably through them had come to Wisconsin to make an entry on this quarter-section at the U. S. Land Office in Stevens Point on May 10, 1858.

Stanbly built a log cabin on the high bank overlooking the South Branch of the Little Wolf near the north end of modern Main Street in Rosholt village.

Apparently not a farmer by profession, Stanbly sold his land in 1861 to Theodor Stanbly, went off to war, rose to corporal in Company B, 14th Infantry Regiment, and died in service.¹ The land was purchased in 1867 by Jens Rasmussen who moved into the log cabin built by Stanbly. Thus Rasmussen, a Dane from the island of Lolland, came to be the first permanent settler in the village. Professionally, he preferred tinkering with machinery to farming. Noting the need for a grist mill in the neighborhood, he installed stone grinding wheels powered by a winch that went with a sweep, pulled by oxen walking in a circle around the main shaft connected to the stone wheel apparatus. It was slow work and probably having noticed the beaver dam a few rods to the west of the cabin, Rasmussen decided to build a

¹ Correspondence, National Archives and Records, Washington, D. C.

grist mill run by water power. Peter Rasmussen, a nephew, said that it had been in operation for several years before he arrived from Denmark in 1881.

Meanwhile, John Gilbert Rosholt of Waupaca County, and Albert ("Muskego") Anderson, began operating a threshing machine and at least on one occasion, probably in the early 1880s, brought their rig up as far as the Peer Dobbe farm, about a mile north of Alban Corners. Rosholt, a man in his late twenties, already owned a saw mill on Graham Lake in Waupaca County and probably through his venture in the threshing machine business in Alban came to note the great stand of white pine still standing in the northwest sections of the township. In 1881 he made his first purchase in the township by buying the timber rights on a forty owned by Hans J. Fredericksen in Sec 20. In 1884 he apparently made some arrangement with Rasmussen to share the water rights on the pond, tore down his saw mill on Graham Lake and moved the machinery to the new site on the South Branch of the Little Wolf. In the next decade or so Rosholt bought up more timber forties both in the northwest of the township, as well as across the town line in Marathon County. By 1902 he had acquired enough timber to interest the big combine of Brooks & Ross Lumber Company of Schofield and Chicago.

Many had speculated on the possibility of a railroad branch coming into Alban township, either from Eland Junction or from Norske. On Dec. 13, 1902 Rosholt signed a contract to sell the timber rights (except cedar) on his land to Brooks & Ross for \$125,000. In return the lumber company was to arrange with the Chicago & North Western Railroad to run a branch down from Elderon to ship out the logs. The first train arrived in mid-October 1903. On Sept. 2, 1956 the last train left Rosholt and the tracks were torn up, another casualty of the automotive age.

When it was definitely certain in the spring of 1903 that the track layers were coming to Rosholt, the village became a boom town and no other in the county devel-

oped quite as explosively. Business men with an eye to the future from Iola, Amherst, and New Hope hurried to build hotels, hardware stores, grocery stores, warehouses, and residences. Several families lived in the back rooms or above their own stores the first years.

Adolph Torgeson, a brother-in-law of J. G. Rosholt, operated the first store in the village in the mid-1880s. The store was in a log cabin located south of the pond. Around 1887 he built a frame building near the site of the present State Bank and continued in the business into the 1890s. Another store was built at the south end of Main Street in the early 1890s by Jens P. Hanson Jr., and here, on March 2, 1893, a post office was established called Rosholt with Hanson serving as postmaster.

The village, with a population of 382, was incorporated on Oct. 14, 1907 and, at an election held on Nov. 12, 1902, the whole number of votes cast was 47, all for incorporation. The first election of village officers was held on April 7, 1908 when the following were named: J. G. Rosholt, president; George C. Nelson, Oscar G. Olson, Carl Knutson, Tom Warner, James Hanson and Carl Rosholt, trustees; O. F. Meyer, clerk; Martin B. Wolding, treasurer; Ole Leklem, assessor; Charles Weller and Henry Goer, justices of the peace; John Himmes, police justice; George Philbrick, marshal; Peter Rasmussen, street commissioner, fire warden and pound-master; and John Gilbert, supervisor.

From the first assessment roll, the following paid taxes in the village in 1908: Jacob Simonis, Henry Simonis, Johnny Simonis, Thor Jacobsen, Haral Haraldsen, Karl Knutson, J. G. Rosholt, Fred Simonis, Jens P. Hansen, Taylor Bros, Martin Peterson, Tom Torgrimson, Gunder Hansen, Andrewe Austin, P. N. Peterson, O. F. Mayer, Charles Weller, Peter Gulliksen, Nels Tosten-son, Alek Dahlinger, Stanislawsky & Guratski, J. Gil-mister, Nick Kluk, P. M. Olfson & Co., Alfred Olsen, Giszczinski & Dzwonkowsky, John Dzwonkowski, George Wolding, Wolding Bros, John O. Aas, C. J. Gilbert, T. J. Warner, A. T. Singstock, Carl Nottelsen, J. Golden, Jens Rasmussen, State Bank of Rosholt, O. G. Olsen, Nottelsen & Sether, Rosholt Creamery Co., Alvin Sether,

Ole Wigen, Peter Rasmussen, John Rodomski, Joe Sabenas, Sr., Martha Lebee, Agnes Dahlinger, Albert S. Olsen, Martin Wolding, Tom Augustinak, A. Merde estate, J. L. Jensen, John Ezidor, Mike Gilmister, H. J. Fredriksen, Tom Windorf, J. C. Hansen, Chas. Winberg, Mike Cavanaugh, Rasmus Jensen (also known as "Black Rasmus"), Jacob J. Bakken, Emil Wrolstad, Isak Sather, Ole Leklem, Theodore Johnsen, Andrew Anderson, Halvor Bensen, Rasmus Jorgensen, Hans Lee, Torval Johnsen, George Philbrick, John Glodowski, Mike Domback, Jacob Dulac, Nick Simonis, Tom Mathisen, A. J. Torgerson, Joseph Whitcowski, J. O. Wrolstad, John Kurozcinko, and John Zerwinski. Not mentioned in the real assessment, but together with some of the above in the personal property assessment of 1908 were N. A. Anderson, Peter DeClark, W. J. Maxwell Lbr. Co., Herrington & Nelson, Lawrence Pettersen, Mrs. Clara Pettersen, Iola Hardware Co., Glentski & Sabienas, Jr., Mrs. A. E. Baumford, Jim Fogerty, C. E. Slocum, John Himmis, Nels Tostensen, Theodore Krostu, Frank Manning, L. Starks, Farmers Produce Co., and Lewis Hansen.

John Oas published a weekly newspaper, the *Rosholt Echo*, in the later part of 1905, and discontinued early in 1906. E. W. Look, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, edited the *Rosholt Record* probably from 1910 to 1913. Otto F. Meyer, owner of the local drug store, apparently purchased Look's printing equipment and on March 13, 1913, published the first edition of the *Rosholt Journal*.¹ In 1915 he sold or leased the equipment to Harry T. Ravelin. Type was set by hand in "sticks" and printed on a hand-operated press resembling the first printing press of Albert G. Ellis. The paper was probably discontinued in 1918. On Oct. 22, 1920 Ross C. Woodhead, a World War I. veteran, began publishing a weekly called the *Review* which used a rotary press, and continued in business until Oct. 31, 1924. He was followed by H. Y. Buchanan who on Nov. 25, 1926 began publishing the *Community Press*, later taken over by William M. Schwartz who passed it on to Frank

¹ In collection of Pioneer Museum, Rosholt, Wis.

Freimund. The latter discontinued in the early 1930s.

The first building of the State Bank of Rosholt, a frame structure, was built on the northwest corner of Main & Randolph Streets in the fall and winter of 1903-04, and the bank opened for business Feb. 6, 1904 with a capitalization of \$10,000. From the 1908 tax roll it is learned that J. G. Rosholt owned 70 shares, and sons Carl, Milton and Jens each had ten shares. In 1921 a modern brick structure was completed. The capitalization was increased in 1913 to \$25,000, in 1921 to \$40,000, in 1946 to \$55,000, and in 1955 to \$80,000. At the close of the business year of 1957 the bank had total deposits of \$2,850,192.10 and a capital structure of \$253,666.26. Directors in 1958 were Mrs. Carl Rosholt; Mrs. Tilda Rosholt, widow of Norman Rosholt; Lester Peterson, a grandson of J. G. Rosholt through his mother, Cally Juliana, only child of a first marriage; Vernon Rosholt, a grandson through Carl by a second marriage; and Malcolm Rosholt, a grandson through Milton by a second marriage. Carl Rosholt, who began as cashier in the bank the day it opened in 1904, continued uninterruptedly until 1937, and as president down to the beginning of 1958 when, owing to illness, he was replaced by Lester Peterson.

The State Bank of Rosholt made state-wide headlines the day following an attempted hold-up on Sept. 4, 1924 which was foiled by the daring of Carl Rosholt who, true to the frontier spirit in which he was nurtured, grabbed the pistol under the counter and exchanged several rounds of fire with the hold-up men. Under this barrage the two men who entered the bank, and a third man posting outside, retreated to a waiting automobile and were driven away by a captive chauffeur. A posse of local citizens under the village constable, Ingwald Hanson, was formed to follow the get-away car. Later in the day the men were trapped on a road near Bevent and when ordered to surrender, jumped out of their car and dashed into a nearby woods. One was shot and killed on the spot and the two others were captured a few days later, all by local men who also knew a thing or two about

guns. The captive chauffeur had given himself up on the Bevent road and was later exonerated.

In the summer of 1917, probably, a Guernsey Breeders' picnic was held under the white pines on the hill north of the village, (later donated to the village as Hill Park by J. G. Rosholt), and out of this picnic developed a community fair, organized in 1926 as the Free Community Fair Association, which has become a three-day event held each Labor Day weekend and annually attracts around 20,000 visitors. When the Great District Fair was suspended in Stevens Point in 1927, the Free Community Fair, on a petition to the County Board in 1929, was designated the official county fair for Portage County. State aids were extended for agricultural, livestock, floral and crafts exhibits in 1928. In 1948 on the occasion of the Wisconsin state centennial, the County Board appropriated \$500 to move a log cabin to Hill Park, since known as the Pioneer Museum, where several hundred exhibits and photographs of central Wisconsin pioneer life and culture have been assembled by Malcolm Rosholt, director of the museum. In 1955 a second log structure, once used as a granary in the town of New Hope, was purchased by the State Bank of Rosholt as a public service and moved to the museum site.

In 1948 a group of local businessmen, in an attempt to provide employment for seasonal labor and others, organized the Rosholt Box Factory. It began with the manufacture of cheese boxes, but shortly switched to the manufacture of wooden pallets used as platforms for fork lift trucks. The plant employs about 15 men the year around. The business has prospered and the stockholders have already realized their original investment. In 1954 Arthur Doede, one of the stockholders, withdrew from the firm and organized Doede Manufacturing Company which also makes pallets and employs about an equal number of men. Both of these small factories are excellent examples of home industry and the fruit of private initiative.

In 1958 a new village hall, beautifully faced with light brick, was completed on Main Street and which replaced the earlier frame structure located on the right

bank of the river on Randolph Street.

Serving the village of Rosholt, with a population of 511, in 1957-58, were Fred Dahlen, president; John Wanserski, Felix Kranski, Gerald Dobbe, William Czerwonka, Ralph Colrud, and Ben M. Johnson, trustees; Allan Gilbert, clerk; E. A. Depka, treasurer; Harry G. Hanson, assessor; Walter Oestreich, justice of the peace; P. Oliver Olson, constable; Dr. V. A. Benn, health officer; and A. P. Dobbe, supervisor.

Our Country Our Story Portage County Wisconsin - Link Page

PREVIOUS...PLOVER, THE UNINCORPORATED VILLAGE OF.....370

NEXT.....SHARON, THE TOWNSHIP OF.....385

GO BACK TO THE ELECTRONIC INDEX PAGE...