

SHARON, The Township of

The County Board in December 1859 ordered that "from and after" April 1, 1860, Town 24, Range 9, in addition to 30 sections on the east side of the Town 25, Range 9 were to be taken from the town of Hull to constitute the town of Sharon "and the first meeting for said town be held at the house of James Moore."¹ The Biblical name of the township may have been adopted by someone who originated in or passed through the township of the same name in Walworth County. The survey of the sections line of Town 25 in Range 9 was begun by William Huntington on Feb. 5 and completed Feb. 24, 1853.

The Tomorrow River drains the township on the east and the Plover River on the west, the waters of the Tomorrow eventually flowing into Lake Michigan and the waters of the Plover into the Gulf of Mexico. This diversion is created by the terminal moraine running north-south through the central sections of the township. In fact the Plover forced its way through the terminal moraine in the north of Sharon, the only river in Wisconsin to accomplish this geological phenomenon.

Although not indicated on the 1957 plat, a small river originates in Sec 9 and flows west to the Plover across County Trunk J. About two miles to the south lies the headwaters of the Tomorrow River which flows east. Although it would be difficult to detect any unusual feature of the terrain between the headwaters of the unnamed stream and the Tomorrow, except swamp lands and lakes, somewhere between these two fountainheads lies the "great divide" in Portage County.

Lying between the fountainheads are two lakes in sections 16 & 21, never identified by name on any plat,

¹ *Proceedings*, Board of Supervisors, Vol. II, p. 49.

but known as Twin Lakes. Early plats, however, identify Becker Lake in Sec 32, probably after William Becker; Oesterle Lake (now dried) in Sec 3 (T.25) after Joseph Oesterle; and Kranski Lake in Sec 35 after August Kranski, all pioneers of the township. The Sharon east range line also cuts through the west end of Collins Lake in Sec 36. (See *Alban, The Township of.*) Another small lake is located on the section line between sections 4 & 5 in the north of the township, never identified by name on any plat. An entry in a lumberman's field book kept by S. Y. Bentley in the 1870s refers to this as "South Lake" presumably because the lake lies south of Shantytown Lake in Marathon County. It was later called Glisezinski Lake after a pioneer family of the same name living nearby. Somehow, this became confused with the name Glesbiki, probably through a misspelling, and in 1958 the County Board adopted the name Glisezinski Lake.

The first election in Sharon was held April 3, 1860 and those elected to office were Samuel Brown, chairman; Joseph Oesterle and Michael Dawson, supervisors; Alexander V. A. Jack, clerk; Timothy Leary, treasurer; James Moore, superintendent of schools; Richard Keef, assessor; K. N. Abbott and P. D. Sanders, justices of the peace; Patrick Thely, Albert Richnaghel (?) and William Page, constables; and William Calkins, sealer of weights and measures.

At the April meeting of the town board in 1863 it was voted that "all boar hogs over three months old be prohibited from running at large."

It appears that the pioneers of Sharon, whether German, Polish or Scandinavian, had a more difficult time getting started than in other parts of the county. One reason for this, no doubt, was the isolation of the township and its remoteness from market. Another reason may have been the extra expense of the Jordan swamp road. Whatever, for three years running from 1866 to 1868 inclusive, the town board was forced to grant an extension of tax payments from Jan. 15 to Feb. 15 "in regard of hard times and application of the inhabitants

of said town. . .” This same wording is used three years running to justify the extension of the time limit.

In the spring election of 1868 August Kozicskowski became the first Polish side supervisor while Adam Goreski and John Kozicskowski were elected constables. Matias (also written Matthius) Gosch became the first town chairman of Polish origin in Sharon, and in Portage County, in the spring election of 1870.

During the 1860s and even into the 1870s the four corners at Ellis were known as “Poland Corners” although there appears to have been almost as many Germans here, particularly members of the Eiden family, as there were Polish residents. However, the name officially became Ellis, no doubt in honor of Albert G. Ellis then serving as mayor of Stevens Point, when a post office was established here on Feb. 26, 1867. Joseph Oesterle served as first postmaster.

The four corners at Ellis became the most strategic location in the northeast of the county in the 1860s and 1870s and for a time it appeared that a sizeable village would develop here, except for certain drawbacks. Being situated on the main road for logging operations between the mills and camps in Sharon and Shantytown and the mills on the Plover and in Stevens Point, it attracted more than its share of lumberjacks, teamsters, not to mention farmers driving to Stevens Point, most of whom were quite thirsty by the time they reached Ellis. But equally important, it was a frontier meeting place for a mixed group of European newcomers, the Germans, the Irish and the Poles in the order of their arrival. Two of these people were enjoying their first taste of freedom, the Irish from the rule of England, the Poles from the rule of Prussia. The Germans stood between them, confident that their own culture superseded either by the fact of a modern Germany under Bismarck.

Thus, while it has been said that “Irish whiskey and Polish beer did not mix,” the circumstances of the arrival of the Irish and Polish immigrants from a background of single exclusiveness into a community of

mixed exclusiveness was almost bound to result in a period of difficult adjustment, particularly in an environment which in itself was primitive. Although Ellis became noted for its frequent disturbances of the peace, no one was ever killed here.

Within two years after the first liquor license was issued in 1866 to George Halder, there were four saloons at Ellis operated by Nicholas Gross, Peter Eiden, Casemir Lukushewitz, and Halder.

Despite the facilities already available, the town board was having difficulty convincing some citizens that it had the authority to issue or withhold a liquor license. In 1870 one license was revoked because the owner was charged with maintaining "a disorderly and riotous house."

The plat of 1876 identifies two stores, two churches, a post office, and a hotel in addition to several unidentified buildings, probably residences or sheds where hops were being dried. Evidence of the hotel appears in an entry of 1873 which refers to Nicholas Gross "who keep a house of public entertainment at his tavern on the SW corner on a public highway in said town for the benefit and accommodation of travelers." Gross apparently had a commodious guest room as the town board met here more often than any other place in the 1860s and 1870s.

There were actually three, not two, churches in Ellis in the early 1870s. One was located on the east side of where Trunk J runs today, south of the corner where the plat places it, known as the First National Polish Church; one was located a forty or so west of the corners on the north side of the road (H-66) known as St. Martin's, a mixed German-Polish congregation; and a third stood a few rods east of the four corners known as St. Joseph's (opposite the Buckhorn Tavern). Additional stores, a blacksmith, and a skimming station were built later. Adam Bembenek operated one of the first stores at Ellis. Jacob Kirschling, Leon Narlock, and Anton Omernick & Bros. were store keepers in the 1890s.

Meanwhile, the community which came to be known

as Polonia developed as a result of a split in St. Joseph's church at Ellis in the early 1870s. (See *Ethnic Groups of Portage County*.) The first store at Polonia may have been built in 1876 by August L. Bischoff^f, a name often slurred to "Bishop." His wife, Helena, nee Fuhring, could speak German and between them they were able to cater to the bi-lingual community. The village was never incorporated. One tavern located on H-66 on the north side of Polonia is known as "Konkolville" after Andrew Konkol who, in the 1940s, operated a portable saw mill nearby. From this experience in the lumber business he branched out to Orofino, Idaho, where he has since built an imposing saw mill installation.

The smallest community with a place name in Sharon but which no map or plat refers to is at North Star, located at the "T" intersection of Trunks J & CC in Sec 28, and probably named after a Polish weekly newspaper published in Stevens Point. The founders of the saloon-store at North Star were Frank & Katie Bembennek.

Aside from Ellis and Polonia, one other post office, called Boyington, was established in Sharon on July 28, 1881. It was named after Nathaniel Boyington who operated a saw mill in Sec 24 a short distance from the Alban-Sharon range line. Mrs. Rose Polak of Sharon recalls that the post office was located in the big square frame house, adorned with green shuttered windows ("Oh, it was such nice house") where the Boyington family resided. The post office was discontinued in 1895.

Sharon was not constituted in its present size until 1899, but in 1870 most of what is associated with the township of today had been set off. For this reason an exception is made and instead of quoting the first tax roll available on Sharon (1863), it seems more pertinent to quote the taxpayers of 1872 which is also available and which covers the township two years after its reorganization in 1870. These, then, are the taxpayers of Sharon for 1872 in Town 24: Joseph Woyack, Joseph Oesterle, Fox River Lands, Nicholas Woyack, Frank Woyack,

¹ Obituary, *Steven Point Daily Journal*, Oct. 29, 1904.

John Kluk, Albert Garien, John Gelbrusikowski, Joseph Norloff, Nickolas H. Kier, Peter H. Kier, Peter Konapaski, John Sominka, Martin Palbergh, Vincent Kluk, Joseph Miller, Frank Bender, John Zinda, Anton Lorbieski, John Sossong, Sr., Nicholas Sossong, Peter Smith, August Kluk, Frederick Mersch, Nicholas Nice, John Simonis, Sr., Jacob Goseh, Frederick Simonis, Balthasar Bender, Joseph Dootsigh, Peter Noll, Simon Felefskoski, Leonard Kluk, Joseph Sulfa, Sr., H. Lynder, Charles Muller, Andrew Kedrofski, Peter Nickels, D. R. Clemens, Spalden & Co., Patrick Higgins, Matthew Hefferon, John Parks, Peter Fisher, Patrick Stapleton, William Steffannus, Nicholas Eiden, Sr., Charles Dael, Louis Cotty, H. Jack, H. Milenoski, John Eiden, Sr., Nicholas Eiden, Jr., Patrick Wilson, Hugh McGreer, James H. Fianor (?), Smith Rodgers, Peter Eiden, John Eiden, Jr., Lina Kools, Henry Leibs, Matthew Eiden, Laurent Goodness, Andrew Isidor, Joseph (name illegible), Adam Lakie & (illegible), Ludwigh Jecefski, Michael Warrancka, Charles Denreker, Nicholas Gross, Casemir Lukachewicz, Matthew Goseh, George Halder, Rt. i.e., (Reverend) Joseph Melcher, Peter Bilawski, Peter Kedrefoski, Peter Damask, Simon Strelewicz, John Sobieski, Frank Sobieski, Andrew Sikorski, Gastaf Baranowski, John Mianke, Ignace Witzel, Joseph Milenoski, Frank Eigendorff, Theophile Kozit, Adam Grimatsch (?), Michael Kozits, Jacob Snarnofski, August Birna, Peter Lordbieski, Andrew Hinza, Martin Repinski, Michael Studinski, Leonard Ainslee, Frank Richter, Frank Birna, John Glodowski, Jacob Glodowski, Anton Glodowski, John Swiney, Thomas Shirka, Adam Goretski, Joseph Lordbieski, Michael Doyle, Peter Andriska, Joseph Schultz, Richard Keef, Joseph Smaghelick, Andrew Kanelefski, John Palupeski, Paul Cicefski, Frank Koliniski, Matthew Glinieski, Adam Welch, Joseph Lucorits, Charles Ghilmeister, John Ghilmeister, John Busa, Lucas Norloff, Peter Orligoski, August Bembergh, Thomas Lipski, Timothy Leary, Patrick Wilson, Roman Wisa, John Mitchel and "Vaughn or unknown."

In Town 25 of Sharon the following paid taxes in 1872: D. R. Clemens, N. Boyington, James Hinman,

Henry Lawson, Fox River Lands, Robert Maine, James Hinman, L. P. Miller, Wis. Lumber Co., D. Hulbert, August Flees, Leonard Ainslee, Alfred Earll, George W. Bentley & Co., Orlando Curtis, George William, David Foucher, John Phillips, Matthew Wadleigh & Co., Hungerford & Bro Co., Geo. M. D. Hubbert, N. T. Moore, Chs. FuMeir (?), Gherard Prell, Albert Ommernick, Blaise Steffanus, Frederick Mersch, H. S. McMillon, John W. Lind, John Simonis, Matthew Simonis, L. H. Patchin, Miles Lenit, Fred K. Simonis & Co., James Empey, John Nelson, Peter Peterson, D. H. McMillon, H. H. Hoggle, Matthew Daleki, John Janta, George J. Swain, James Sutherland, Louis Sheffer, J. M. Matson, John Jersefski, John Jacobs, H. Merchelkamp, John Zimmer, Frank Stroik, Frank Weisbergh, Frank Potinski, Peter Hanson, Amund Olsen, Casemier Ostrowski, H. Withney, Ole Simenson & Co., Alice M. Harris, Nicholas Zwamofkoski, Peter Kedrefski, Peter Konapaski, John Johnson, Michael Kozits, Joseph Liba, D. J. Sanders, Knut Halverson, John Zinda, John Kluk & Co., Konrad Wellner, Matth Thomson, Joseph Oesterle, Osten Ostinson, Thomas Thomson, John Olsen, John Kobinsinski, John Jacobs, Joseph Sulfa, Jr., Matthew Piekowski, Anton Stinka, John Stinka, John Simonis, Jr., Nicholas Dehlinger, John Platta, Joseph Platta, Michael Helbach, Peter Triba, Matthew Wasolefski, Anton Chygosh, Thomas Yach, Albert Strok, Frank Yach, Peter Fisher, Peter Barrewick, John Sossong, Jr., Jacob Sossong, X. Lynder, Peter Nicels, Peter Trierweiler, Nicholas Bender, Lucy Lay, Andrew Yach, N. R. Hall, H. Jack, Leonard Kluk, John Johnson, John Merunk, Frank Bender, Joseph Grogolsi, Anton Sobieski, Ignace Witzel, John Prins, Vincent Glinieski, John Brathovde, John Woyach, John Selbruzikowski, and Honifred Krinziski.

The following also paid taxes on "homestead entries" in Towns 24 & 25; Adam Kleinsmith, Joseph Dootsigh, Casemier Lukachewicz, George W. Bentley, John Jersefski, Peter Sullis, Knut Halverson, Michael Bronick, Joseph Holdman, John Merunk, Adam Goritski, Michael Helbach, Michael Worzalla, Martin Cygosh, Andrew Yach, Blaise Steffannus, and Vincent Glinieski.

Ostensibly there is an omission in this tax roll; namely, the whereabouts of the several members of the Koziczkowski family. However, by comparing the known location of their land and the same forties in the 1872 tax roll, it is revealed that either the town treasurer or members of the family had temporarily changed their name to "Kozits," a faint resemblance to the first part of the name Koziczkowski.

In the latter part of 1861 the east half of the double sections 30 & 31, Town 25, Range 9 were taken from Hull and annexed to Sharon and in 1864 a resolution was adopted by the County Board to create a new township of 30 sections in the southern part of modern Sharon called Bradford which took in modern Ellis and Polonia and extended south to the town of Stockton. This was never finalized as the board rescinded the resolution at its spring meeting in 1865. But in 1870, most of these sections, that is, the south one half of Town 24, were annexed to Stockton. (See *Stockton, The Township of.*)

Probably to compensate Sharon for the loss of the 18 sections in the south half of Town 24, the County Board in 1898 adopted a long recommendation on county reorganization which included a provision that sections 6, 7, 18, 19 and the west half of 30 and 31 in Town 25, Range 9, were to be detached from Hull and attached to Sharon, effective April 1, 1899. This made Sharon a township of 54 sections with no indentations but as it lies on the range line between 8 and 9, which covers government lots added to standard sections, modern Sharon is roughly equivalent to 63 sections.

In 1957-58 the town of Sharon, with a population of 1,310, was being served by Ted Burant, chairman; Vincent Lilla and Ambrose Konkol, supervisors; Walter Cychoz, clerk; Francis X. Wysocki, treasurer; Joseph V. Platta, assessor; Henry Schulist, justice of the peace; Walter Stroik, Norbert Maslowski and Clements Konkol, constables; and Damian Omernick, health officer.

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