

LANARK, The Township of

Town 22 (Lanark), like the other five townships in Range 10 before 1851, was still part of Brown County, and in 1851 made part of Portage County. From 1852 to 1856 it was administered as part of the town of Amherst, and for a short time in 1856 as part of the town of Belmont until finally on Nov. 12, 1856 the County Board ordered Town 22 set off from Belmont to constitute the town of Lanark. The first election was to be held the first Monday in December 1856 "and the place for holding town meetings and other elections in said town shall be at Spurr's Mill."¹

While George Spurr sponsored the original petition to the County Board for incorporation of Lanark, the indentures on the mill forty suggest that the William Spurr, supervisor on the joint Amherst-Lanark town board before 1856, began building a saw mill here before 1854 and apparently was unable or unwilling to finish it, as the property was mortgaged to Luke V. Spurr in 1855 for a sum of \$2,000, and when the latter sold several forties of land to George A. Spurr and John L. Spurr in 1855 they agreed "to finish the Saw Mill now being erected on said premises and put the same in running order. . ."²

The mill site was located on the right bank of the Tomorrow River about two rods south of the bridge where Trunk DD today crosses the river in Sec 14. The old road bed down to the dam and part of the race is still visible.

The name Lanark was probably given to the township by the Minto and Swan families who are believed to have originated in Lanark, Scotland.

¹ *Proceedings*, Board of Supervisors, Vol. I, p. 276.

² *Deeds*, Vol. E, pp. 224-225.

The government survey of the section lines was begun Aug. 5 and completed Aug. 18, 1851. An entry in the field notes states that the township contained six families of about 24 persons.

Lanark is drained by the Tomorrow River and Spring Creek which flows into the Tomorrow in Sec 10. A small stream, fed by springs, originates in Sec 35 and runs into Waupaca County through Sec 36 but is not identified by name on any plat.

In the west of the township lies Spring Lake, fed by Spring Creek which originates in Buena Vista, and a short distance down from the lake is a mill pond which in 1958 was nearly dry. A short distance east of the former Howard mill on Spring Creek lies Bingo Lake in Sec 16, identified as such on both the 1895 and 1915 plats, but the origin of the name is uncertain. In the southeast in Sec 30 lies a small lake, partially dried up, which in pioneer times was known as Merryfield after the family of the same name.

The earliest tax roll of Lanark available is dated 1861 when the following paid taxes: H. Dewey, John G. Severance, George Hutchinson, Robert Blair, Hiram Clinton, Chas. Fenlan, M. Clinton, Peter Ciperlie, Edwin Turner, Thos. Godfrey, Walter Ciperlie, A. B. Gilchrist, M. E. Spears, Joseph McKeen, R. P. White, Brown and Silverthern, P. L. McMilan, Enoch Lea, James Lombard, Louis Lombard, Elijah Scott, Leanidus Lombard, James McCall, Bradley Rice, Wm. D. Spurr, Asa Gould, John Lea, Chessa (probably Jesse) Lea, Benjamin Huntly, A. W. Urline, Lydea H. Baldwin, Leonese J. Urline, H. Steadman, John L. Spurr, Wm. Kemp, G. A. Spurr, M. McGregor, George Sherman, H. D. Boswick, Julius Jeffres, A. Foster, H. M. Ciperlie, Wm. House, John Bussard, Wm. H. Ciperlie, Thos. S. Blair, Samuel Zimmerly, Robert Morrison, Wm. Boss, Asahel Humiston, Ansle Gower, F. L. King, Michael Hopkins, John Gordon, William West, H. McFall, M. D. Lane, A. Timlan, Patrick Ryan, N. P. Judson, J. F. Phelps, Jacob Vaughan, E. Olus (?), Walter White, James Barr, Patrick Donovan, Ellen Osborn,

E. Cooney, Michael Lang, James Cary, Thos. Wait, Rich Kemp, James Eskret, John B. Kemp, Geo. I. Smith, C. B. Pasco, James Hutton, Chas. Hewitt, Arthur Minto, James Stanfield, Abe Rait, A. R. Gray, Thos. Swan, John Swan, G. R. Furjusen (probably Fergeson), Jessp Yate, James Evens, Sarah Nash, D. McLalden (?), Andrew McLaldin, C. W. Peaver, C. Granfloe, G. W. Fletcher, P. McDonough, Tarry McBride, Patrick Nelsen, Peter Hanley, C. Cowlan, John Lorvin, John Gray, Jobe Humphrey, J. H. Doswell, Benj. Huntley, M. Heran, J. Butterfield, N. P. Judson, R. Haywood, Cael Patten, Robert Fletcher, Bela Strong, Jas. Smith, Lewis Collier, C. W. Pierce, Jane Tyler, Robt. Vickery, C. Franfler, Truman Carpenter, M. D. Womer and H. G. & A. Stedson.

The first entry in the town proceedings is a transcript from the Amherst records dated June 24, 1854 relative to a road already laid in Town 22 (Lanark). This is modern Trunk D with variations over the years. It is not only one of the oldest roads in the county, but one of the most interesting, bridging both the Tomorrow and Spring Rivers, up and down, over and around tree-covered hills and valleys, one of which is rimmed by a range of hills on the south known since times past as Bluejay Bluffs.

The first road order issued by the newly-incorporated township itself is dated July 6, 1857 and deals with a dispute over a fence line and right-of-way in Sec 1 which involved Eli West, J. G. Severance and Horace Dewey as parties of the first part and Levi Bishop and Merick Adams, parties of the second part. Disputes over fences and right-of-ways appear to have been the most common source of friction in the formative period of settlement, probably because the pioneers, most of whom had never owned their own land before, had not yet learned, as the poet Robert Frost was to write, that "good fences make good neighbors."

Between 1870 and 1880 the name "Badger" appears several times in the town proceedings, but one entry actually refers to a special election in 1871 held at "the

Badger Hotel." This was the tavern-house of Alexander Gray where the first town meeting of the combined townships of Towns 21 & 22 was held in 1856 (see *Stopping Places Along the Road*).

The 1876 plat identifies the Badger post office in Sec 26 of Lanark, located on the north side of modern H-54 about half a mile west of the intersection with Trunk D. The Postal Index of 1855 lists a post office by this name with Robert Fletcher serving as postmaster. It was discontinued in 1901.

The pioneer post office of the township, called Madely, was established May 9, 1855, John F. Phelps serving as postmaster, and located in a building in Sec 29 on the south side of a road (now H-54) opposite from Phelps tavern-house. It was discontinued in 1900. A third post office called Lanark was established Sept. 24, 1883 near the present site of St. Patrick's Church in Sec 19, less than two miles northwest of Madely. It was discontinued in 1899.

Probably the first country store in Lanark, located a few rods west of Gray's tavern-house, i.e., the Badger Hotel, was operated by H. G. & A. Stedson. The 1861 tax roll reveals that the Stedsons paid taxes on one acre of land in NE $\frac{1}{4}$ -NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec 36 while their personal property valuation was \$855, most likely representing merchandise. The store passed to Theodore ("Ted") Minton who later rented to George ("Pegleg") Corrigan. The latter lost a leg allegedly as an Indian fighter in the West, and even as a storekeeper in Lanark affected the attire and beard of one of Buffalo Bill's riders. The store probably closed in the early 1890s.

A road order of 1859 refers to "Spring Lake Creek" which carries approximately the same name today, i.e., Spring Creek. Spring Lake lies a short distance to the west of Howard's Pond. Older residents of Lanark recall that Nathan ("Nate") Howard had a grist mill on Spring Creek. He is not mentioned in the tax roll of 1861, but a road order of 1866 refers to "the highway near Howard's mill on the Sec. line between Secs. 8 & 9..." This places the mill squarely on Spring Creek

near the bridge which today crosses the river on Trunk A. The foundation of the old dam is still visible about a hundred feet west of the bridge. Howard was not the first on this site as the indentures on it reveal that when this forty was deeded to Mary Jane Lombard in 1856, she had the "privilege of raising the water by dam for hydraulic purposes so that the water may be 10 feet deep on the East line..."¹ The following year it passed to Dr. James Lombard who was granted the same privilege. This suggests that the Lombards had erected a dam for a mill site, but whether a saw mill or grist mill is uncertain.

Before the turn of the century Howard converted his mill into a small factory where he turned out wooden pumps on a turning lathe by squaring a small pine log and boring a hole through the middle for the suction chamber. These pumps, noted for the great gulps of water, bridged the gap between the old oaken bucket and the iron pump. Howard's pumps were sold throughout central Wisconsin and Julian Maxfield recalls that his father installed one outside the house in Plover village.

Earl Lea, town clerk of Lanark, recalls "Nate" Howard ("a heavy bearded man") who one day got to talking about life in southern Wisconsin before moving to Portage County. In his youth he had once carried a sack of corn over a considerable distance to a grist mill and when he arrived at the mill the owner laughed at him and said "he'd be damned if he'd start up his mill for a little sack of corn." Howard swore that if he ever had a mill of his own he would take in any amount of grain to be ground. And he did.

Around 1910 Frederick Norlan took over the mill site, did custom feed grinding and also manufactured surgical instruments, but probably discontinued around 1920. Meanwhile, Charles Hammon and Michael Tobin built a saw mill (*ca.* 1910) near the site of the feed mill which was operated by steam. This was taken over a decade or so later by Henry Schlichting who

¹ *Deeds*, Vol. D, p. 408.

ground feed and also operated a saw mill on water power, apparently during the spring freshet. Schlichting was a tall, slim man, but described as "only a shadow to Rosie," his wife, who was equally adept at canting logs into the mill or tossing feed sacks into a lumber wagon.

The "H. Steadman" mentioned in the 1861 tax roll appears to have acquired the mill site of the Spurr's in 1858. The water power was probably uneven for it is known that Steadman later built a steam mill west of his house located on the hillside overlooking the ravine of the Tomorrow River and where the 1895 plat also confirms a saw mill site. Whether this mill burned or outgrew its usefulness, son Robert Steadman is known to have built another saw mill on the north side of modern Trunk D which was probably destroyed in the great cyclone of 1903. His brother, Leeman, in turn built a grist mill on the site of the original Spurr mill which was operated by water-power and continued to do custom grinding on a small scale down to World War I.

Herbert Steadman, Sr., also operated a brickyard farther west of his place in Sec 8, the only brick kiln in Lanark. General Irwin School was built of this brick.

The modern tavern at the intersection of H-54 and Trunk A got its name "Little Chicago" during the Prohibition Era. Moonshine was allegedly being sold at or near the corner and as a result acquired a reputation for defying the law after the manner of Al Capone.

No record of Lanark would be complete without mention of John Castle who immigrated from Ireland in the early 1860s. According to local legend, Castle was apprehended in New York by Union counter-intelligence and charged with spying for the Confederacy and was sentenced to be shot. While waiting execution, he allegedly became mentally unbalanced and instead of shooting him, the court allowed him to go free. Somehow or other he made his way in 1862 to the Irish settlement of Lanark in the western part of the town-

ship when he was described as being "crazy as a bed-bug" but quite harmless. He was adopted by the community and became the unofficial courier and errand boy for many of the pioneer families. All he asked for his service was a cup of coffee and a piece of bread, but preferred to eat out on the steps. When he was on an errand, or for the mail, he often retraced his steps, walking backward a short distance while repeating a rhyme which seemed to run through his head "best a man beat a man, best a man beat a man. . ." which does not appear to have any connection with recognized poetry and may have been a thought which developed as a result of past experience. His antics and habits became so widely publicized that in 1872 a movement got under way in Lanark to run him for circuit judge, probably as a protest against the incumbent. (The proceedings of Belmont township reveal that in the judicial election of April 1872 Castle — spelled Castel in the proceedings — received one vote as against 26 for W. H. Richmond and seven for G. W. Cate.) After that, when asked his name, Castle referred to himself as the "Judge of the Judge's Society." In his old age he was taken to the county poor farm where he died in 1906 and was brought back to St. Patrick's Cemetery. A collection was taken in the community and a headstone erected because, as Harry Whipple explains it, "everyone respected him, *but* even depended upon him."

A woman to remember was Mrs. Mary E. Holman, beloved by an entire generation of Lanarkians, who served as midwife to most of the families of the township from the time she arrived, probably during the Civil War, down to the 1890s.

Serving the town of Lanark, with a population of 645, in 1957-58, were Thomas Morgan, chairman; Carroll Peterson and Lloyd Krutza, supervisors; Earl C. Lea, clerk; Agnes Lucht, treasurer; Anthony Riley, assessor; and Henry Cain, health officer.

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