



BICENTENNIAL SERIES

A history of Thompson Twp. & Village of Thompson

Mrs. Hasell Osterhout

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of Bicentennial features on the history of the village and township of Thompson. The articles are prepared by Mrs. Hasell Osterhout, of Thompson, who has compiled an extensive history of that area dealing with all facets of early pioneer life.

Early lumber company operations were instrumental in the founding of the township and village of Thompson. Those same companies were also responsible for the development of Thompson into a town larger than neighboring Manistique.

Companies working the area were the Delta Lumber Co., Schlosser and Tighe, Thompson Lumber Co., Frank and Friant, Paul Johnson Lumber Co., and A.M. Chesbrough. John B. Raulting and Chipman Co. at Little Harbor were under the supervision of Webb Marble. Other industry in the area included a shingle mill at Swede Town, which was the southern end of Thompson near the lake shore.

The township itself was established March 6, 1882. Joseph Walsh was the first supervisor. Eugene Slayton followed him in 1888. Other supervisors were R. Lipmon in 1887, E.A. Tighe in 1887, L.S. Phippeny in 1891, D.W. Bennet in 1892, John H. McCallum in 1893, Simon Bouschor in 1896 and N.D. Norris in 1901.

Thompson Township was formed by the division of Hiawatha Township. Subsequent changes were made in the boundaries in later years, attaching and detaching parts of the present Inwood Township. The final change came in 1919.

The village of Thompson was platted shortly after the township, on Nov. 8, 1888.

In the mid 1870's, before the existence of roads, four men came to Thompson by boat to deliver the first horses to the village. The animals were put on rafts and taken into the shallows of the lake and then swam part of the way to shore. Bringing the horses in were Milo Gibbs, Chancey Hinkson, Sr., Pete Shambeau and Ike Phillips.

The horses were the backbone of early logging operations which supplied millions of board feet of clear white pine to the midwest and the treeless plains.

Soon a company barn was built to house 30 teams of horses and store more than 50 tons of hay. The barn was located in the area of the ponds at the Thompson fish hatchery.

These huge draft horses were cared for by their drivers. Often on Saturday night the horses were given a special treat of warmed oats, bran and linseed meal, all mixed with molasses. The animals also enjoyed molasses cookies supplied by the teamsters from the camp cook.

One of the highlights of my early childhood in Thompson was to hold the reins of a team named Picadore and Topsy who, when on their way to the barn, would stop in the Thompson Creek to drink. These horses hauled stove wood to area homes for \$1.25 a cart load.

Driver of the team, Fred Hinkson, Sr., of Manistique, would wait by the creek and let children of the area drive the horse to the barn.

Commercial fishing was also an early industry in the area. A few miles south of the village, on the lake shore, was the John Stark homestead. Stark made and sold barrels for shipping the catch.

Farther south, at Barque Point, was the farm of Simon J. Bouschare, homesteaded in 1859. He became one of the area's earliest commercial fishermen.

The site of the homestead is still marked today by two small graves in a white enclosure. The graves are those of two of the Bouschare children who died in infancy. The Bouschare's had a total of 13 children. This homestead was the first to be designated a Centennial Farm in the Upper Peninsula.

The general store of the early 1870's in the village was owned and operated by the lumber companies. It was packed with everything needed by the early lumbering families. Supplies available included clothing, food stuffs, kerosene oil and patent medicines.

The supplies could either be purchased with money or the coupons with which lumber companies paid part of the men's wages. Usually the value of the coupon book was \$10. The coupon also served as a deterrent to help the lumbermen past the local saloon where the coupons were not redeemable.

What wasn't available at the general store could be obtained by mail order. When the season was right, sailboats coming in to load lumber would bring fresh fruit. These two-masted sailboats, called Little Traders, would make weekly visits bringing in supplies and hauling away lumber.

Most of the men in the area worked in lumber camps during the winter, returning to their homes during the holiday season and again in the spring. During the summer, men would work in the local sawmills.

About twice a year, usually in the spring and fall, we were taken to the C-L Lumber Company store in Manistique for a Sunday dress and shoes. Having no little sister, my new shoes were always one size too big so I could grow into them. My other clothing was somewhere near the right size.

In these early years of pioneering our clothing was patched and repatched. Even the knees of our stockings were patched. Nothing of value was wasted.

