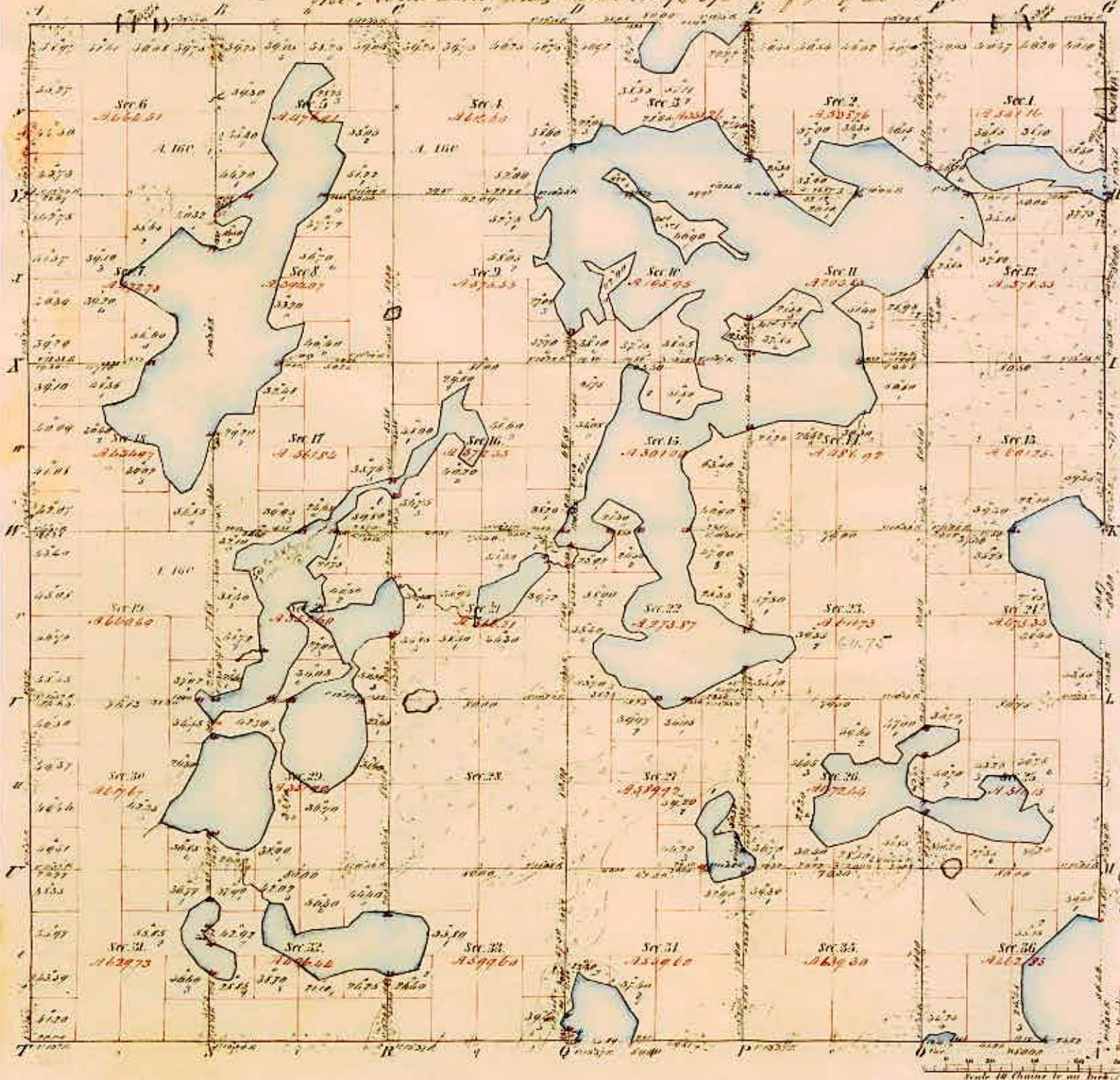


Township No 15 N, Range No 28 W 14 Mer. Minn.

Plat. with new Grid, taken N. 96 27 56" of July 22nd 1879.



Scale 40 Chains to an Inch

Bay Lake Township

Although located just south of Deerwood township and just north of Garrison township, ~~Bay Lake~~ both of which were comparatively old settlements, Bay Lake township probably had no permanent white settlers until 1882. Kahwassie, an Indian chief, lived on the island in Bay Lake until his death in 1898, as it had been the home of his ancestors, (1) and Hugo Knieff, a pioneer of the Bay Lake community, says that when his father moved to his homestead in 1882 or 1883, he noticed an old abandoned log house standing ~~in section 3~~ in section 3. He thought it must have been the home of some early trapper. (2) But it is generally conceded that David Archibald, a brother of Robert Archibald of Deerwood, was the first white settler. He took a homestead in township 45, range 28, in 1882. (3)

Township 45, range 28 had ~~been~~ part of the Mille Lacs voting precinct, when that was established in 1881, but all of the officers of that precinct seem to have been residents of township 44, range 28. In 1884, the county commissioners established the Bay Lake precinct and named John Milem, David Archibald and N. Newgard as judges. The voting place was at Milem's. (4) In 1888, they changed the Bay Lake precinct so as to include townships 45, ranges 28 and 29, (5) and in 1890 reduced the precinct to township 45, range 28. (6) It remained unchanged until the township was organized.

Bay Lake boomed in 1884. Not only was it established as a voting precinct, but the Bay Lake school was built in District 11; a post office was established with Ashael Bennett as post master. This office was discontinued in 1885 and not re-established until 1892. (7)

From May 10, 1886, until the latter part of 1887, a very interesting experiment was tried in township 45, range 28. It began with the incorporation of the Pioneer Co-operative Company, granted a charter to buy and hold land, to exemplify co-operative methods of production and distribution in township 45-28. The incorporators were: James S. Rankin, William N. Bethel, Charles W. Shephard, Joseph Ruttger, Augustine J. Bacon, J. H. Rankin, and A. Stafford. (8)

This was the second co-operative society to be incorporated in Crow Wing county, the Brainerd Co-operative Building & Loan Assn., having been incorporated April 26, 1886. (9)

The Pioneer Co-operative Company was backed by the Knights of Labor, and they bought a tract of 250 acres of land on the north shore of Bay Lake, where the Bay Lake school, store and Ruttger's Resort are now located. They took over an abandoned saw mill and began getting out lumber for

61

their own use. J.M.Young was in charge of this mill for the co-operative. One fatality occurred at this mill. The first Tuesday in September, 1887, Nick Christenson, working in the mill, fell against the saw and had one foot cut off and his leg ripped open. He died from the shock. He was the father of John Christenson of Bay Lake. By December, 1887, the much talked of Colony that the Knights of Labor had failed to provide for, had gone on the rocks--through poor management, one of the members stated in Minneapolis. Only 75 rods of board fence were put up and five acres broken. All of the men had left except Mr. Rankin. The following wrote to J.P.McGuachey that they were leaving: J.Ruttger, A.Erath, H.Erath and J.M.Young. The man interviewed said that the men all worked well together, but were poorly managed. ~~(10)~~ J.S.Rankin was the man in charge of this project, and he remained in Crow Wing county until the latter part of 1888, because in September of that year, he filed as a candidate for county superintendent of schools, stating that he had had 20 years experience and had been superintendent of schools in Hennepin county. (10)

According to local tradition, Ashael Bennett was the first sawyer at the co-operative mill, but the records state that the co-op used an abandoned mill, and Bennett, who had moved to Aitkin county where he established a mill and settlement at Bennettville, it is said; had been post master at Bay Lake in 1884 and left there, or gave up his office, in 1885, so he probably had no connection with the Colony, except to leave a saw mill for them.

Of the men brought to Bay Lake by this co-operative venture, a number remained to become permanent residents. Joseph Ruttger is still living there, having bought his property from the land used by the Colony. The Erath and Christenson families also remained, as well as A.Stafford, who until his death a few years ago, was an active member of ~~the~~ Bay Lake community life, and Chas.Shephard remained until after the organization of Bay Lake township. The township settled up at a very steady rate, and by 1890, it was necessary to establish another school district. District 26 was organized in that year, and in 1896, District 42, the Eadon School, was established. The last district to be organized in this township was District 83, in 1903. All of these districts are still active.

The post office at Bay Lake, discontinued in 1885, was re-established in 1892 with Euretta M.Grinnell as post mistress. The name was changed to Baylake in 1894, and in 1895, Mrs. Josephine Ruttger was appointed to the office, which she held until the post office was discontinued in 1909. The Eadon postoffice was established in 1898 with J.Walker

102

as post master. He remained in office until 1909, when rural free delivery superseded the little rural offices. Another post office, Katrine, was established at the same time as Esdon. Katie E. (Mrs. Jas. M.) Young was appointed and she served until about 1900, when Mrs. G. W. Hunt, Sr., was appointed. This office was also discontinued in 1909. (11) Mrs. James M. Young is probably the wife of the man who was the sawyer at the Co-operative Copong, and if so, they add to the number of families who remained in Bay Lake township as a result of this experiment in co-operative living.

In 1890, township 45, range 28, had a population of 126. This increased to 255 in 1900, when the township was organized. In 1910, it was 228; in 1920 it had increased to 238; while in 1930, it was 320.

The petition for organization of the township was granted by the county commissioners Nov. 13, 1900. (12) It was signed by: John H. Raine, P. D. Carr, A. Stafford, G. A. Hunt, C. A. Hunt, C. Carr, D. L. Young, Chas. J. Bloomquist, Anson Orr, Robert Orr, F. L. Norcross, Joseph Ruttger, David Orr, E. Batz, Colly Skillings, D. Archibald, W. A. Chord, R. J. Maghan, L. E. Garrison, Chas. Shephard, Frank Benjamin, William Waldrop, Martin Oppegaard, John Walker, Dan Chord, E. W. Walker, Charles Isle, B. P. Chord, John J. Simon, C. G. Christenson, A. A. Decent, J. G. Taylor, C. C. Wheeler, J. C. Goddard, N. Newgard, D. Mack, Albert Erath, L. H. Scofield, Max H. Knieff, J. C. Peterson, John Peterson, John J. Ellsworth, J. Jay Ellsworth, Sr., G. W. Hunt.

Bay Lake township is a noted resort country, and the first resort in this township was established by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ruttger. Today, their four sons are operating large resorts in Crow Wing county, and a grandson is carrying on the family traditions in Beltrami county. Besides its resort industry, this township became a noted berry growing district. And the co-operative instinct was probably left as a heritage of the Pioneer Co-operative Company, because another co-operative, and a very successful one, was the Bay Lake Fruit Growers Association. This was organized in 1909, and A. H. Coleman was the manager and instrumental in its incorporation. The first officers were: A. N. Gray, F. B. Berglund, A. W. Nelson, C. R. Skillings, Frank Fuller. (13)

In his "Pioneers of Deerwood", A. J. Crone gives the biographies of several Bay Lake pioneers. They are: Nick Newgard, J. F. Lundstedt, Henry F. J. Knieff, Otto F. Wasserzieher, and David Archibald. John Milem was a very early settler, probably reaching the township shortly after David Archibald, at any rate, his home was the first voting place in the township. It stood where the large frame house just west of Ruttger's Resort stands on the lake shore. He had a log house and also ran a little store. (14) The census of 1885 shows that he was a Union soldier, age 37, born in England, and had a wife and two children.

26

By 1886, J.D.Torrey was named as a judge of election in this township. He operated a saw mill on Serpent Lake, ~~where~~ on what is now Mrs. Thomas J.Cole's beach, (15) having established one there in the late seventies. Other officers of the Bay Lake voting precinct included H.Baker, L.G.Hunt, G.A.Hunt, J.M.Young, Robt. Maghan, L.E.Garrison, C.R.Skillings, L.H. Schofield, Isaac Carr and Andrew Stafford. The L.E.Garrison mentioned was the adopted son of Oscar E.Garrison, pioneer resident of Garrison township. L.E.Garrison also served as Crow Wing county surveyor for many years. The children of many of these pioneers are still living in this township, noted for the beauty of its lakes and the abundance ~~of~~ ~~the~~ and quality of the berries grown here.

- (1) Pioneers of Deerwood, p-4
- (2) Hugo Knieff, Deerwood, Route 1
- (3) Pioneers of Deerwood, p-56
- (4) Com. Vol. B, p-143.
- (5) Com. Vol. B, p-344
- (6) Com. Vol. B, p-433
- (7) U.S.P.O. records
- (8) Reg. of Deeds, Mis. B, p-528
- (9) Reg. of Deeds, Mis. B, p-494
- (10) Brainerd Dispatch, Feb. 11, May 16, Sept. 9, Dec. 2&9, 1887, Sept. 28, 1888.
- (11) U.S.P.O. records
- (12) Com. Vol. C, p-312
- (13) Brainerd Dispatch, Aug. 5, 1910.
- (14) Albert Miller, Deerwood, Route 1
- (15) Pioneers of Deerwood, p-39