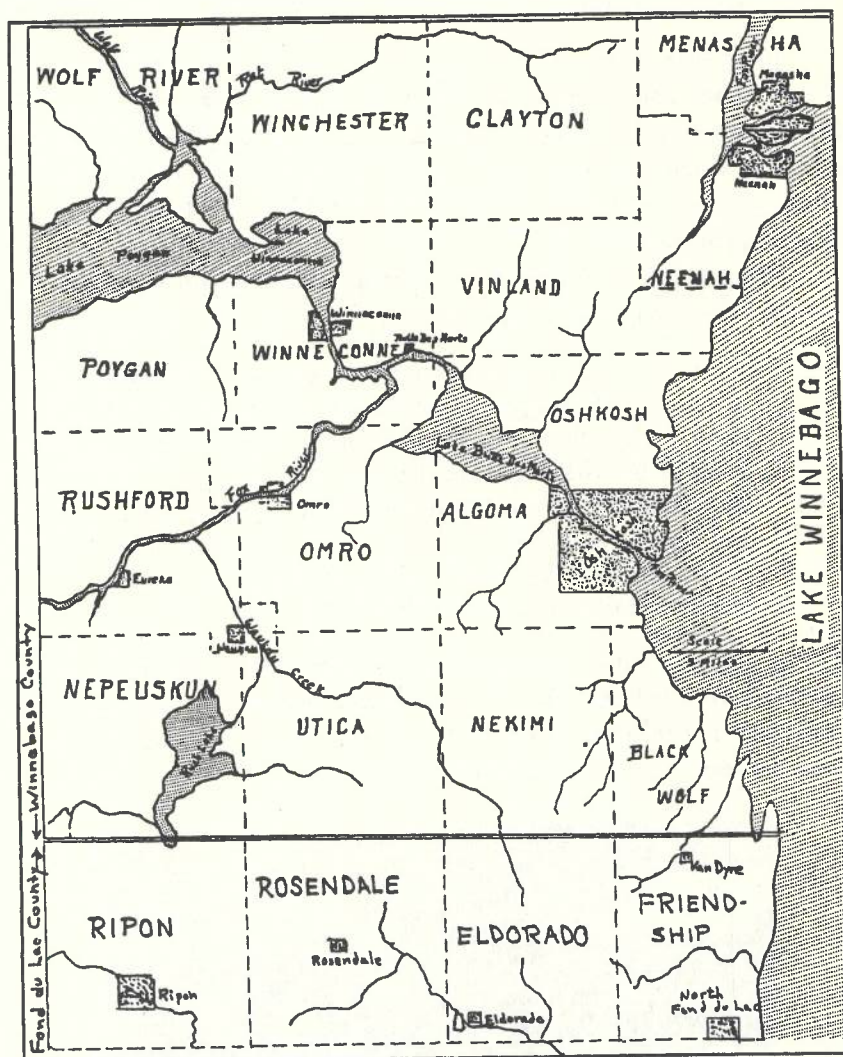


New Elm



*Winnebago County and adjacent portion of
Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, showing townships*

NEARLY ALL ACCOUNTS of emigration from Glarus have focused on the most dramatic and organized instance: the establishment of New Glarus, Wisconsin, in 1845, as a sort of official colony. New Glarus for many years maintained a Glarus culture that attracted additional Swiss and German immigrants during the balance of the Nineteenth Century.¹ In fact, however, there were hundreds of other emigrants who left Glarus for America in the 1840s and 1850s, scattering to many locations in the United States.² Most soon simply assimilated with the culture they found.

Nor did all Glarus emigrants who came to Wisconsin go to New Glarus. In the same era, the Glarus ancestors who are recounted in this book joined another community, New Elm, which lay in Winnebago County, a hundred miles northeast of New Glarus. It had been founded in 1847 on wooded land near Black Wolf Point on Lake Winnebago. The name the settlers chose reflected that the original group were families from Elm; certainly the flat topography bore no resemblance to that Alpine village.

The New Elm settlement has been neglected by American historians.³ A rare one who did take note observed that "[t]he Swiss are found massed in the town of Black Wolf,"⁴ and called "the Swiss in Black Wolf" an instance of "obvious colonization."⁵ The Black Wolf settlement also has received little attention from Swiss scholars, eclipsed by the larger and more visible community at New Glarus.⁶

One Swiss writer in New York in 1889 did include New Elm in a listing of Swiss settlements in America:

Also on Lake Winnebago, near Oshkosh, is found located an attractive colony "New Elm," which was founded in 1847 by people from Glarus, and under these inhabitants as in New Glarus the traditions and customs of the homeland live on.⁷

A Swiss writer a century later observed that "there was even found in the United States a New Elm settlement, as well as a New Glarus. In 1853, 117 inhabitants of Elm emigrated, and over the next 40 years about 500 persons."⁸

No doubt there must have been some contact between the settlers of New Elm and their countrymen in New Glarus.⁹ For example, Fridolin Zwickey, brother of Hilarius Zwicky of New Elm, emigrated to Washington Township in Green County, five miles from New Glarus. Presumably they kept in touch, although no letters among them have survived.¹⁰ A short message has been found from Hilarius Leuzinger of Washington Township to his cousin, probably Hilarius Zwickey.¹¹ In general, however, the two communities seem to have existed rather independently, with New Elm smaller and less exclusively Swiss than New Glarus.

THE WINNEBAGO SHORE

The Glarus founders of New Elm settled on wooded land with fertile loam soil near the shore of Lake Winnebago, at a location first settled just a few years before, by a few Yankees in 1841.¹²

Along the shore in this town were what was called "timber openings," and Indian planting-grounds; being very large, tall oaks, with an occasional tree of hickory, bass, elm, and other varieties. These trees were scattered at intervals with open spaces and thickets of hazel brush, plum and crab-apple. The undergrowth was so kept down by the annual fires, that large tracts presented the appearance of great well kept parks. So open was the country that in some places the lake could be seen through the trees for a distance of a mile or more from the shore.¹³

As described a few years after the Swiss arrived, the area was "principally timberland or heavy openings; the soil is excellent."¹⁴ The first settlement at New Elm was recounted in an 1880 history:

In 1845, a party consisting of Frederick Zentner, Sr., John Zentner, Joachim Rhyner and Felix Geiger, with their families, left Switzerland for Wisconsin, and made a temporary stay at Waukesha, where they were joined by John U. Elmer and Fred Marty. In 1846, John U. Elmer and Fred Marty came to the Town of Brighton (now Black Wolf), looking for a place to make their homes. They were so well pleased with this town that they returned to Waukesha and induced their Swiss friends previously named in this sketch, to return with them to this place. Here they bought land of the Government and of the Fox River Improvement Company, in the interior of the town.¹⁵

No passenger records for 1845 have been discovered that show the vessel on which the group listed as 1846 Swiss settlers at Black Wolf arrived.¹⁶ According to the same later source they were joined in 1848 by others from Glarus: "Oswald Geiger, Beat Rhyner, Albert Elmer, Abram Swiefel [*sic*], Rodolf Hoesley, Peter Elmer, John Zentner, Sr., John [Johannes] Pfeiffer, Martin Wooster [*sic*—Wurstler], Rudolf Eisley, Peter Babler, and others." Many of this Glarus group came from the village of Elm.

The inclusion of Johannes Pfeiffer in that later-published listing of 1848 arrivals is incorrect,¹⁷ but in other respects the account seems generally accurate. Even more reliable is a letter by the settlers themselves, written in 1851 to the authorities of Glarus. In it they identified themselves, described their community and requested that births and marriages at New Elm be registered in the Glarus records. They explained that four years previously fifteen families, ten of them from Elm,

as well as an approximately equal number of immigrants from the various states of Germany founded here a German settlement with an area of about six square English miles. This settlement for a year has been called New Elm.¹⁸

They had purchased, they said, mostly from the government, a total of about 1800 acres, had organized a church, and were working hard to clear the forests, succeed at farming and earn enough to pay off their debts.¹⁹

New Elm, unlike New Glarus, did not become a magnet for new Swiss immigrants, nor was Black Wolf ever a uniquely Swiss community. As the founders' letter noted, Black Wolf also attracted many Germans, whose farms intermingled among those of the Swiss.²⁰ Such was typical throughout Wisconsin; the Germans and Swiss, the latter nearly all German-speaking, tended to settle in the same locations and to remain in rural areas.²¹ By 1860 the township of Black Wolf had 155 heads of families, of whom 72 were in origin German, only 33 Swiss.²² Unlike New Glarus, where most of the land had been open, at New Elm the settlers chose a heavily wooded place, but entirely flat and with fertile soil.

These hardy pioneers had cast their lot in a wilderness of heavy timber, without roads, schools or churches, the nearest settlement being several miles distant. Log houses were built and clearings made. The growing village of Oshkosh, about seven miles to the north, soon became a good market for wood, and one of the peculiar sights of the early days was the long line of ox-teams, loaded with wood, on their way from the Swiss Settlement to Oshkosh.²³

The New Elm name, unlike that of New Glarus, never found a place on maps. However, it lived on for a century in the New Elm Church, where the settlers and their descendants worshiped. It still is preserved in the old and new New Elm cemeteries, which face and adjoin the former church building on Highway 175, south of Oshkosh.²⁴

INDIANS

Two Indian tribes had occupied the area. The Winnebagoes, whose name meant fetid water (and were called by the French "*les Puants*," "the smelly ones"), had lived at Black Wolf, but by the time the Swiss arrived, most of the Winnebagoes had moved to a reservation in Minnesota.²⁵

The signs of Indian cultivation were plainly visible in many places on the lake-shore, in this town, up to within a very recent period, and probably the corn-hills can yet be seen in some places.

These old Indian planting-grounds are lovely spots, with the great spreading oaks and greensward in handsome contrast with the sparkling waters of the lake, and were once the homes of a dense Indian population.²⁶

Nearby, the other tribe of the region, the Menominees, still occupied the area around the village that became the city of Oshkosh. According to one writer in 1870,

In character, the Winnebagoes were cruel and treacherous, habitual liars and thieves, and, generally, what may be reckoned as Bad Indians. The Menominees, on the contrary, were almost directly the opposite of the Winnebagoes, being honest, generous and truthful, they have long been inhabitants of this vicinity, the Jesuits speaking of them in 1639.²⁷

The Menominees

were at one time very powerful, and owned a large part of this state, but by successive treaties their possessions have been cut down and curtailed, till but little is left to them. They have almost invariably remained at peace with the whites, and, although good fighters, seem to be of a peaceable, quiet disposition.²⁸

Another writer, one of the great historians of Wisconsin, was more charitable towards the Winnebagoes:

The Winnebagoes are by no means the worst Indians in the state. In some respects they are the best. Socially they are more moral than most of the others; they are good-hearted, have always been friendly to American interests, . . . they are extremely tractable, injure no one's legitimate interests, and mind their own business; the remarkable pertinacity with which they have clung to the Wisconsin streams and forests, despite numerous attempted removals, argues a degree of patriotism for

their native state, to which no white Badger, who entertains any pride of birthplace, should object. . . . [T]hey should be instructed in better agricultural methods than they have thus far adopted; they should be taught that a nomadic life is not in the end as profitable as staying at home and carrying on legitimate farming; they should be forced to send their children to the district schools, where the white teachers and pupils are willing and anxious to receive them, and where the few young aborigines who have thus far attended have made encouraging progress; in short, these people are like a pack of children, who need a patient instructor and friend; they are willing enough to advance, if continually urged to the task, in season and out of season.²⁹

As for the Menominees,

Contentedly whiling life away in their waterside villages of bark, even the soothsaying medicine men of the Menominee failed to foresee the fate that was speedily to overtake them. They knew not that their hunting and fishing grounds were soon to be parcelled out among the thousands of eager, pushing, land-hungry agricultural pioneers who followed in the wake of the adventurous Stanleys. Neither did they realize that their degradation also, would now be more rapid than before—for [Webster] Stanley's tiny settlement [Oshkosh] lay on the far Western frontier of American occupation.³⁰

The historian sadly explained the contacts with the white men:

The frontier of every growing land is peopled by two classes—the boldest and the best of their race, side by side with the most worthless. When the aborigine first comes in contact with the civilization of the border, especially if the borderers be Anglo-Saxons, he is apt to become the prey of the baser, more aggressive element, and to be untouched by the virtues of the noblest of the pioneers. This is why our race quickly brings to any less-developed people little else than injustice, ignominy, and

disgrace. The partial decadence suffered by the Menominee from their two centuries of experience with the French, was now rapidly hastened by the heartless and often supercilious indifference of our own ancestors. From being known by novelists and poets as the "noble red man of the forest," the aborigine became the pest of the American frontiersman, whose motto has ever been, "The only good Indian is the dead Indian."³¹

He added:

The Winnebagoes enjoy company. They are companionable. Their motto is, "The more the merrier," and they will sacrifice a good deal for pleasure. The days pass with them in hunting, gossiping, gambling, and listless loafing. Some of them are inveterate talkers, and they are often confirmed practical jokers. Very few of the tribe are quarrelsome, except when in liquor. There is no social grading among them; a pure democracy exists; the days of the chieftaincy are over, as the Wisconsin Winnebagoes no longer entertain tribal relations; and while there is naturally much respect entertained for the descendants of former chiefs and for those who are by nature leaders, each Indian boasts himself quite the equal of the best man among them. The result of this free-and-easy independence is, that the vicious and the dissolute of either sex are hail-fellows-well-met in any camp, whatever opinions may be entertained of them in private, by their companions.³²

Most of the Indians disappeared from Black Wolf and the Oshkosh area over the course of the Nineteenth Century, but a few continued to visit for a long time:

For many years after the white settlement of the county, the Indians made this locality a favorite resort—living on very friendly terms with the early settlers, and in many instances, preserving the latter from starvation.

An old acquaintance and friend of the writer—Wm. Armstrong, who settled on the lakeshore, in this town,

in 1845, at which time there was only one other house between his place and Fond du Lac—a distance of twelve miles, stated that on several occasions, when his family were out of food, the Indians who were very friendly to them, brought them corn, wild-rice, maple-sugar and venison. The Indians were, of course, very frequently the recipients of the bounty of the whites.³³

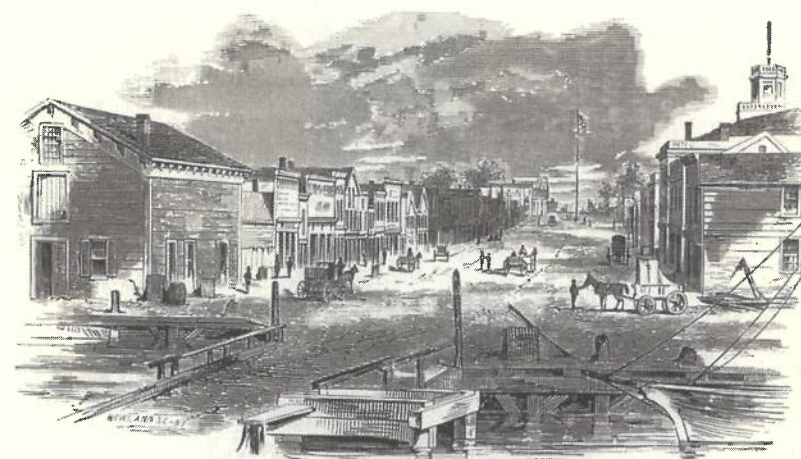
WINNEBAGO COUNTY

Wisconsin's new Winnebago County had been erected as a separate political entity out of Brown County in 1840. A writer in 1846 observed that "[t]he character of the soil, timber-prairies, water, and other things usually considered in making a selection of a new home in the West, will compare favorably with any other county in the Territory."³⁴ The new county rapidly filled up during the middle years of the Nineteenth Century, particularly after the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad was extended from Chicago and Milwaukee up to Oshkosh in 1858, opening a national market for lumber products.³⁵

<i>Year</i>	<i>County population</i>
1840	135
1842	143
1844	732
1847	2,787
1850	10,179
1855	17,439
1860	23,770
1865	30,767
1870	37,279

OSHKOSH

Oshkosh, the seat of Winnebago County, was first settled in 1836, just after the Black Hawk War, the same year that Congress established Wisconsin as a territory. The village was founded by a Yankee, Webster Stanley. Lying where the upper Fox River entered Lake Winnebago, it originally was called Athens. The first steamboat began operating on Lake Winnebago in 1849. Oshkosh



Ferry (later Main) Street, Oshkosh, 1855
From a Daguerreotype

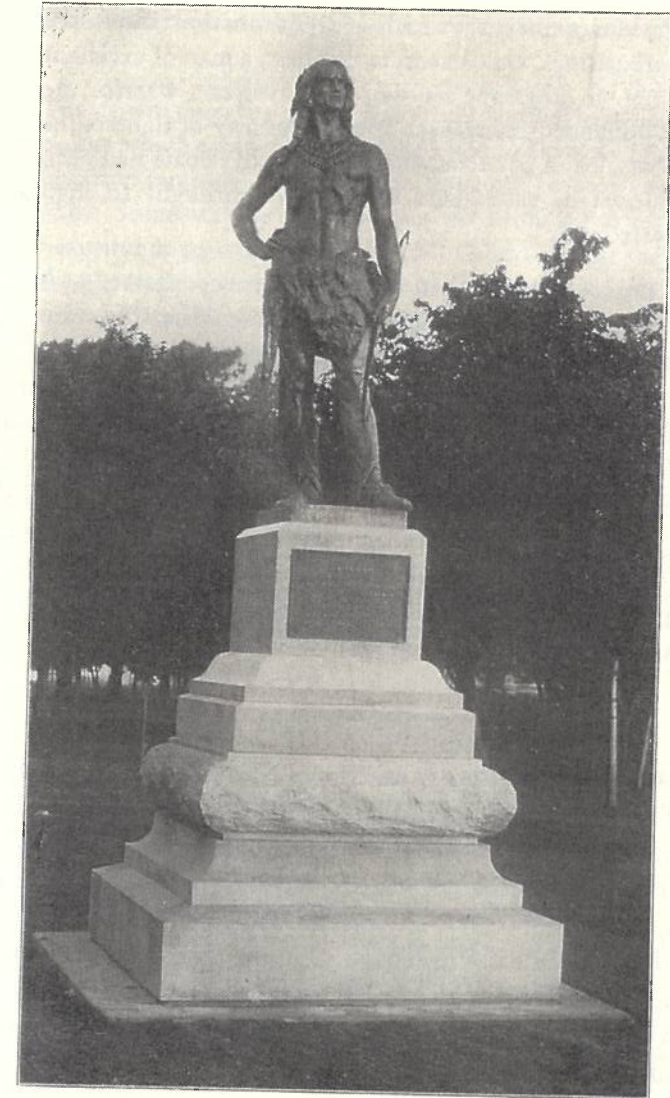
was incorporated as a city in 1853, taking that name from a chief of the Menominee tribe.

This Americanized degradation of the Menominee had well begun, when (in 1840) the hamlet founded by Stanley attained its fourth anniversary. The settlers were clamoring for a postoffice, and a postoffice must have a name. "Athens" had its advocates. Indeed, the weekly newspaper at Green Bay had already given this title to the new settlement at the junction of the upper Fox River and Lake Winnebago. But the Menominee and not the Greeks were the neighbors of the pioneers. The custom of the Indians was eagerly sought at this point, which now was a commercial rival to the old French-American fur-trading post at Butte des Morts. Moreover, the red men still out-numbered the whites, and were able to give trouble if stirred by such desire. These various politic reasons of trade and diplomacy caused Stanley and his fellows, at a popular election, to reject the oft-used name of the ancient capital of Greece, and in its stead to adopt for their little village the virile and euphonious title of the head sachem of the Menominee. This choice of the settlers made Oshkosh immortal.³⁶



Chief Oshkosh
From Daguerreotype, 1855

Oshkosh, a Menominee who was born in 1795, had fought on the side of the British in the war of 1812, distinguishing himself in the capture of Mackinac from the Americans. He came to be well regarded by the latter, who recognized him in 1827 as the head chief, or "grand sachem," of the Menominees, and gave him a medal to wear depicting two clasped hands to represent the friendship of the Great Father in Washington. In 1830 Oshkosh was acquitted after trial in a Wisconsin territorial court for murder of an Indian of the Paunee tribe who had killed a Menominee.³⁷ In 1832 Oshkosh served with the Americans in the Black Hawk War. Thereafter with the



Statue of Chief Oshkosh, Menominee Park, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Menominees he withdrew to the reservation set aside for them on the upper Wolf River (now Menominee County), where he proceeded to "fritter life away."³⁸

Our last sad glimpse of this primitive ruler is during a tribal brawl near Keshena, in 1858, which resulted in his

the Menominee. Viewed, however, from the standards of barbarism, Oshkosh was, at his best, a man of excellent parts. In physique he was attractive; as a warrior, he commanded the respect of a community of fighters; he easily led in councils where the arts of debate had been cultivated, and where oratory was brought to high perfection.³⁹

When in 1911 a statue of Chief Oshkosh was dedicated at Menominee Park at Oshkosh, the speaker reflected that "Standing here, beside these glinting waters, yon savage in bronze seems to extend a welcoming hand to the white brother, as man to man; but, with pathos unspeakable, he nevertheless is preparing to retreat and vanish before the economic development of his native land."⁴⁰

The city of Oshkosh after obtaining rail access rapidly became a center of lumber products fashioned in its industrial plants from the logs floated down the Wolf and Fox River waterway from the northern forests. "By 1871 Oshkosh had twenty-four large sawmills, sixteen shingle mills and seven sash and door factories."⁴¹

BLACK WOLF

The farms the settlers from Glarus cleared were a short distance south of the city of Oshkosh and close to Lake Winnebago. This area of Winnebago County had first been part of a township called Brighton. In 1847 Brighton was divided and the remainder renamed Nekimi, and in 1850 Nekimi was divided to split off a new township, the smallest of Winnebago County, lying in the southeast corner along the lake shore.⁴² The new entity was given the name Black Wolf, after a point on the lake shore that had in turn been named after a Winnebago Indian chief.

Indian villages . . . formerly occupied the more eligible points on the lake-shore. On one of these points, called Black Wolf Point, was the village of Black Wolf—a famous and shrewd Winnebago chief, who was skilled in all the arts of Indian diplomacy, and who exercised much influence in Indian affairs. The town was named after him.⁴³

As it was described in a book published soon after the arrival of the Swiss:

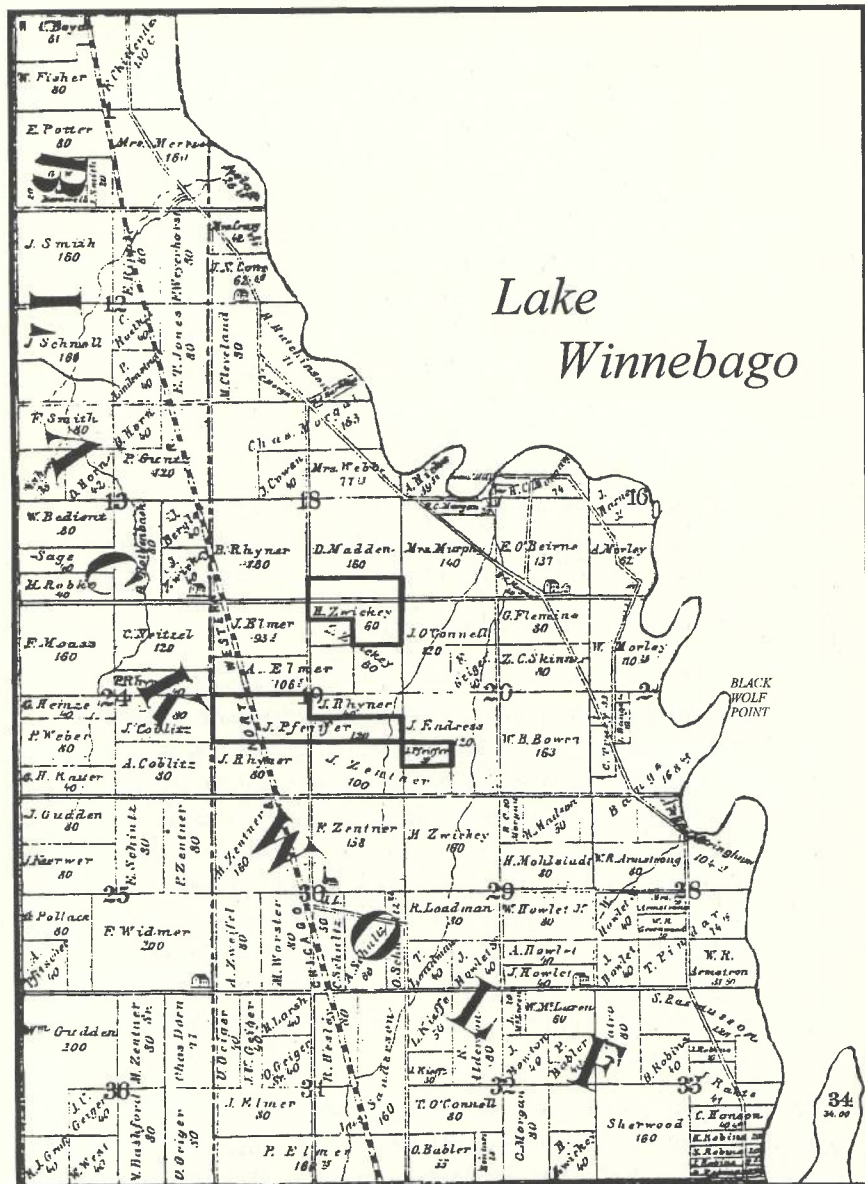
The town takes its name from one of the beautiful points which project into the lake—said to have been the favorite camping ground of an Indian Chief of that name. Some of these points on the lake shore are so very beautiful as to strike a stranger with admiration. They are generally openings and have been favorite camping spots of the Indians; they contain a beautiful coat of grass or white clover, which seems to be natural to the soil. The "Lake shore road" to Fond du Lac, traverses the town from north to south. The town has a Post Office named after itself, near which is a saw mill and a landing for steamboats. With the exception of the north end and along the lake shore the town is covered with a fine forest. The inhabitants now are mostly Swiss and German. Farms can be bought from five to thirty dollars per acre, according to the location and improvements.⁴⁴

An 1880 history summarized the setting:

That portion of the town embracing a tract, a mile to two miles in width, bordering the lake-shore, is very handsome undulating land, indented with bays, which form beautiful wooded points. These points are the favorite camping-grounds of excursionists during the summer months—parties frequently camping there for weeks at a time. The shores are generally gravelly and stony, with handsome sloping banks, which were originally covered with a fine forest growth. In many places enough trees have been preserved to retain much of the original appearance; in others the timber has been cleared off.⁴⁵

The village nearest to the farms of the Swiss families of Black Wolf was Van Dyne, in Friendship Township of Fond du Lac County; sometimes the Black Wolf settlers were listed with post office address of Van Dyne.

Life at Black Wolf



Black Wolf Township, 1862

Hilarius Zwickey and Johannes Pfeiffer farms highlighted

WHAT WAS TRUE of New Glarus must have been even more so of New Elm: "To the people from Glarus who had been accustomed to living in closed villages, the transplantation to an isolated log cabin on a 40-acre lot in Wisconsin must have appeared as literally a step from one world to another."¹

PROSPERITY

The Swiss of Black Wolf, who had not been grain farmers in Glarus, were familiar with cattle-raising. In their new home, and enjoying a favorable soil and climate, they readily turned to dairy husbandry, and along with it cheesemaking. They did well. The farmers soon were able to buy horses to replace their oxen, one measure of increased prosperity. Most of the original log homes were taken down and sold for lumber when the railroad was constructed through Black Wolf; new frame structures took their place.²

When the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad was completed through the town, in 1858, the railroad company purchased thousands of cords of wood from the settlers. From the sales of wood and the produce from their farms, the settlers soon became forehanded, the log buildings were replaced by good frame houses and barns, roads were made, school houses and churches

were built, while the ox-teams gradually disappeared and good horse-teams took their place, and at this date (1880) there is not an ox-team to be found in the town. Prosperity has rewarded the sturdy industry and frugality of this people, and the Swiss, at this time, are reckoned among the best farmers of the county.³

Already by 1867 the Swiss (who often were referred to as Germans) were well respected as farmers. A history of Oshkosh that year commented that

The German population which is not at the present time inconsiderable, is being augmented by constant arrivals, bringing with them their peculiar habits of industry and enterprise.⁴

The same work also observed, again referring to Oshkosh:

The people of American birth surpass all other nationalities in numbers, and have come mostly from the eastern and middle States. There is also a considerable foreign born population, consisting of Germans, Welch and Irish, with all of whom may be found many of our best citizens. They have their churches and their schools, and do much in their own way for the advancement of moral and religious improvement. In the social enjoyments, these classes, after the habits and customs in which they have been educated, surpass that of the Americans. They cling more to the pleasures of life than to its conventionalities, and seize upon every rational enjoyment, as their rightful inheritance.⁵

By 1880 it was written of Black Wolf that

The town is noted for the superior quality of its wheat, which took the first premium at the Paris Exposition, in competition with all other countries.

Three small streams traverse the town, and empty into the lake, forming good harbors for sail craft. Good well water is readily obtained, by digging or drilling.

* * *



Float bridge, Oshkosh, 1855
From a Daguerreotype

The roads on the lake-shore are now among the best in the county, although at an early day they were execrable, in fact almost impassable during wet periods.

* * *

The early-day traveler through Black Wolf would hardly recognize the excellent roads, delightful scenery, and highly cultivated farms of the present day, as the same place; although in a state of nature it was very handsome, the chief drawbacks being the bad roads, with which all new countries are afflicted.

A large portion of the cultivated land is now cleared of stumps, and the farms generally present a fine appearance, with good buildings and all the comforts and conveniences of farm life.

The inhabitants of the lake-shore are principally Americans. In the interior part of the town they are chiefly Swiss and German.⁶

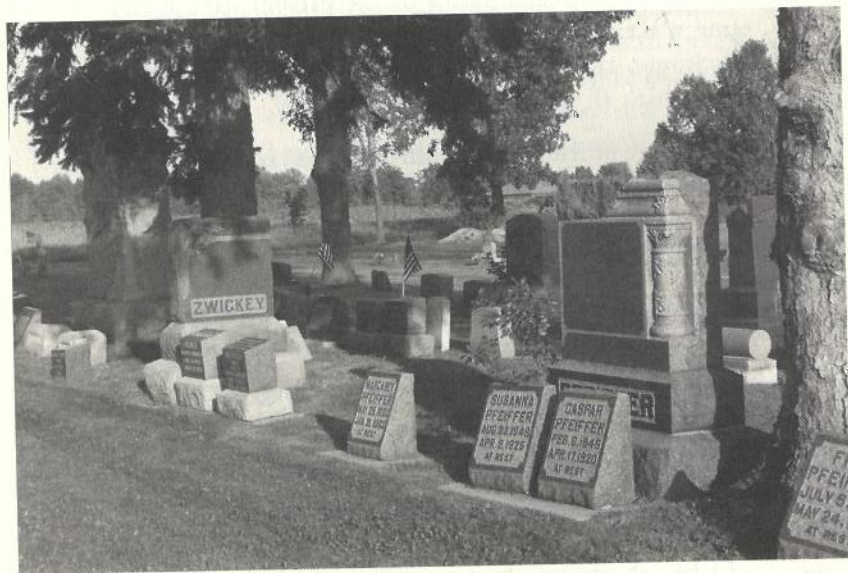
The Swiss did well in farming and making cheese and butter, for which Oshkosh provided a nearby market.⁷ The few miles to the city were considered walking distance in those days, and in the early Twentieth Century an interurban rail line from Black Wolf made travel to Oshkosh swifter and easier. Already in 1870. urging a

return visit to Switzerland, a relative in Glarus wrote to family members in Wisconsin that "you can easily afford it."⁸

THE NEW ELM CONGREGATION

Soon after their arrival, the Swiss settlers in the autumn of 1850 organized a religious group of the Reformed faith, called the New Elm German Evangelical Congregation (*deutsche evangelische Gemeinde New Elm*).⁹ On 29 June 1851 they formally adopted a constitution, which was signed by forty-five members.¹⁰ In 1852 the congregation adopted a seal, which was described as "a man with a plough in his hands and with the words New Elm."¹¹ Also in 1852 they erected a church, which became the center of the Swiss community.¹² By 1850 they were able for the first time to support a clergyman, who came from Bern. They wrote in November 1851:

Since last June our pastor now lives with us, and we are uplifted on Sundays by the preaching of the Word of God, and the hymns, which we once sang in the dear old fatherland, raise up our prayers here, even though we have few hymnals here. Also the school is being conducted by our pastor . . .¹³



The New Elm congregation maintained regular correspondence with the church authorities in Glarus for many years after the first contact in 1851, annually reporting each spring births, deaths and marriages,¹⁴ and receiving guidance on church doctrine and some financial support.¹⁵ "In the year of 1859 the congregation sent away to Switzerland for hymn books which were used until the year 1907."¹⁶

The first pastor, Jacob Raess, preached two Sundays out of three and received lodging, firewood and \$26.00 for the first half year; to raise that amount, each of the forty-nine members over sixteen years of age was assessed 53 cents.¹⁷ He departed after a year and a half and was replaced by two successive pastors who served brief terms.¹⁸ In 1855 they retained a new pastor, Felix Widmer of Canton Zürich, who remained for the next sixteen years, filling the role of school-teacher as well.¹⁹

In the spring of 1857 the church burned, and services were held in the large home of Joachim Rhyner. A new building was soon built on land donated by Fridolin Zentner, with lumber offered by Johann Ulrich Geiger; it was ready in time for a Christmas service on 13 December of that year.²⁰ Like the previous structure, it lay adjacent to the road that traversed Black Wolf, but on the opposite (east) side. Hence the original New Elm Cemetery, which was next to the first church, today is across the road from the new cemetery, which was later begun next to the new building.

In 1909 a Reformed Church was established in Oshkosh, served by the same pastor. The New Elm congregation then became affiliated with that church in the city, which after various mergers became Bethany United Church of Christ in Oshkosh. Finally, in 1962, the church at Black Wolf dissolved.²¹ The church building along the highway still stands, although after the cessation of services it was sold and now, no longer painted white, is a private home. The two cemeteries still bear the name New Elm.

GOVERNMENT

The Swiss settlers of Black Wolf played a substantial role in the government of their own township, but virtually never sought political office beyond. Their attitude appears to have been the same as that of the immigrants at New Glarus as described a century ago:

From the beginning the political preferences of the people have been mostly for the democratic party; two-thirds or more of the colonists vote that way. It is another instance of the conservatism of these Swiss settlers, that they have mainly adhered through all changes to the political creed they first embraced. For a man to change his politics is quite as rare among them as to change his religion. Nevertheless, a candidate known to be worthy and competent will get their support, irrespective of party. Elections are for the most part conducted quietly, and but little of the usual electioneering jobbing or trading is done. Public speakers of all parties are always respectfully heard and well received.²²

Like the German immigrants, with whom they were closely identified, the Swiss generally supported the Democratic party, in part because the Democrats had sponsored liberal legislation allowing recent immigrants to vote, and also because the Democrats opposed the anti-immigration Know-Nothings, and the Whig party, predecessor of the Republicans, had been identified with anti-foreign sentiment.²³

According to one of the settlers of New Glarus, the American observance of Independence Day readily substituted for Glarus' annual observance of the victory of 1388 at Näfels:

In 1853, the first celebration of the 4th of July, was held by a few of the colonists, associating with it the vivid remembrance of a day of festival kept in their father-land—very similar to the American holiday; and, from that time, Independence day has been celebrated every year more or less in the village by all the people, old and young. A number of the primitive settlers have gone to their everlasting rest; but those remaining may be seen on these festive occasions, taking part in the

celebration of the fourth of July, which serves to remind them of their native land, and of the battle day which delivered their ancestors from the tyranny of their oppressors on the 9th of April, 1388, when eight hundred [*sic*] men of Glarus defeated several thousand Austrians.²⁴

SOCIETY

At Black Wolf education of children was attended to from the beginning.

The first school district established was joint district number 1; which embraced part of the now towns of Black Wolf, Nekimi and Algoma; and a log school house was built near the site of the present Boyd school-house in the fall of 1846, and a school taught that winter by Miss. Eliza Case. The first school, in the present limits of Black Wolf, was taught in district number 2, now known as the Fleming school district. A log school-house was built in 1850, on the site of the present frame building and the first school taught by Warren Crosby, who received, for his services, twelve dollars a month.²⁵

Already in 1855, when Black Wolf's population was 552, there were five schools with 144 students.²⁶ By 1878 there were 343 children of school age.²⁷

The Swiss of New Elm, who were a close-knit group and fellow church-members, were not at all a litigious society. Even in the larger community of New Glarus, John Luchsinger, himself a lawyer, in 1892 observed:

No lawyer has ever located in the settlement. The Swiss have a horror of litigation, and it is only when all other means fail that one resorts to courts of justice. The few cases in which the aid of a lawyer has been required were managed by attorneys from Monroe. With a people so industrious and economical, there can be little or no litigation. Possibly this characteristic may have been imparted in some degree to the other citizens of Green county, for true it is that in proportion to the population and wealth there are less days of litigation.

lawyers there than in any other like county in the state.²⁸

In 1853 the author of an emigrant guide to Wisconsin had warned:

Lawyers, unless they are prepared to take in hand a four-to-five-pound axe, had better remain in Germany. In America the wheat is not yet sowed for them; since the administration of justice fortunately is much simpler here, and the men who dispense justice possess sufficient sound, human understanding they do not always consider the rigid law but also talk of justice.²⁹

Although the Swiss ancestors in this book were in Wisconsin well before the Civil War, there is no record of any of them having performed military service during that era. That is consistent with the record of many immigrants to Wisconsin, particularly Germans, who tended to be Democrats politically, and were opposed both to the Civil War and to wars generally.³⁰ It is in contrast, however, with the record of some Swiss at New Glarus, a number of whom did join the Union army.³¹ In later generations, assimilated fully as Americans, family members served in the armed forces in both World Wars, and in Korea and Vietnam.

LANGUAGE

A century ago, an early settler predicted of New Glarus that "judging from the history of colonies of German-speaking people in some of the older states, it will be safe to predict that the Swiss dialect will exist and be spoken here two hundred years hence."³² But that was not to be the case—not even for the more homogeneous and numerous Swiss population of New Glarus, and certainly not in the small Swiss community in Winnebago County at Black Wolf. Although the first generation of children growing up there was surely bilingual—Verena Pfeiffer's autograph and verse album from the late 1880s contained inscriptions in both languages³³—the sway of German steadily waned. German of any dialect as a language of day-to-day communication had already begun disappearing by the

First World War. However, English spoken with distinctly Germanic accents was still common among Black Wolf farmers in the 1950s and beyond.

The New Elm church held its first English-language services during the First World War,³⁴ and began keeping its records in English instead of German in the 1920s. A few Oshkosh churches, in diminishing numbers, continued to conduct some services in German thereafter. In the more densely Swiss area around New Glarus, after a century some residents still could be found who could speak the Swiss-German dialect of Glarus, but the next generation contained few to succeed them. A study in 1968 concluded that even in New Glarus:

The speaking of Swiss German has been one of the last aspects of the Swiss culture of these immigrants to survive the almost inevitable process of Americanization which occurs in such a settlement. But use of the dialect has now declined to the point where it is spoken fluently by few of the younger generation . . . English is now used much more than Swiss German by almost all speakers of the dialect except recent immigrants from Switzerland. It does not seem likely that Swiss German will be much spoken in the area after the passing of the present older generation.³⁵

Wayne Zwickey of Oshkosh recalled of his father Adolph (1875-1959):

My Dad spoke quite heavily accented English right up to the end. He told me they were taught English in school but always spoke Swiss-German at home. It's entirely possible that he spoke very little English until he started working at the post office circa 1905. Prior to that he lived on the farm, where Swiss-German was the everyday language.

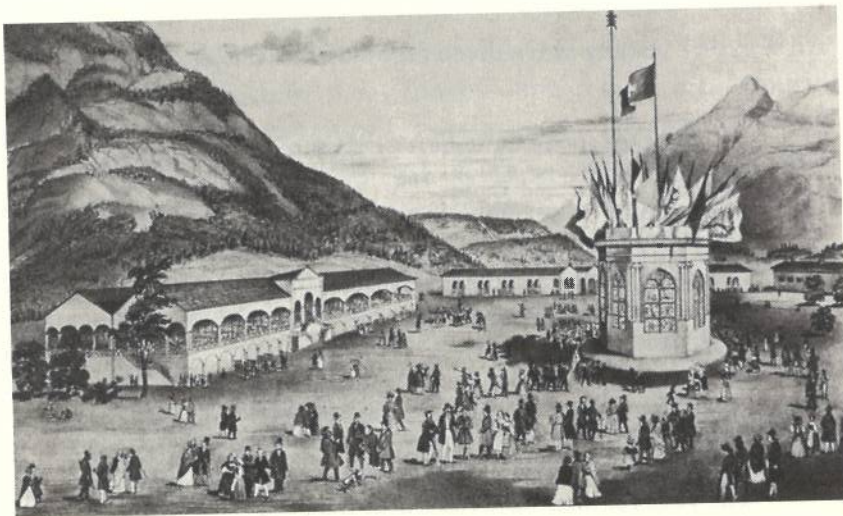
I remember that he rarely spoke English to his sister Maggie. Unfortunately, they never spoke Swiss-German to me. He also spoke Swiss-German to all his cousins. The younger ones were less fluent than those who were about his age.

I remember John Pfeiffer visiting my Dad every week or so in the summer. My Dad and John would sit at the kitchen table drinking wine, arguing politics, all the while playing *Joss*, a Swiss card game. This would go on for hours during which not one word of English would be spoken.³⁶

The author can recall from the 1950s and 1960s that his aunt Margaret Pfeiffer, who knew Swiss German well, always spoke English with a distinctive Swiss accent.

THE BLACK WOLF SCHUETZEN VEREIN

From the era of Wilhelm Tell, whose weapon was the crossbow, marksmanship was a valued manly skill in Switzerland, and no less popular in the era of firearms. By the mid-1400s, and with an added burst of enthusiasm beginning in the 1820s after the Napoleonic wars, target shooting had become the Swiss national sport. Contests were held in Glarus and throughout Switzerland for hundreds of years, with the final matches generating public attention and



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enthusiasm like a version of the Olympic Games.³⁷ "During the great festivals held at regular periods, Swiss from all cantons and of all languages gathered for the purpose of marksmanship competitions and patriotic celebrations."³⁸

The crossbow was the weapon generally used in these shooting matches until the beginning of the Sixteenth Century. As soon as firearms offered a degree of accuracy, they were used as well, and soon it was apparent that they were the arms of war of the future.³⁹

The great *Schützenfest* held at Zürich in 1504 lasted six weeks and drew shooters from as far as Cologne and Venice.⁴⁰

By the 1800s, "Shooting guilds had been bound up with Swiss militias for half a millennium, and the possession of arms in the Confederation held up internationally as a yardstick of liberty ever since Machiavelli described the Swiss as 'armatissimi e liberissimi.'"⁴¹ Target shooting was, as James Fenimore Cooper wrote,

an amusement, or rather a discipline, that is national. The rifle is truly a Swiss weapon, for in defending their rocky passes, it is the most efficient that can be employed. Every district has a place for the sharp-shooters to assemble, and a round target, about as large as the head of a hogshead, with circles in paint, is to be seen near every hamlet. There is also often a house, for protection in bad weather.⁴²

Therefore it is not surprising that the Swiss settlers at Black Wolf soon organized a shooting club, which has continued for nearly a century and a half, and is still in existence. Called the *Schuetzen Verein* (loosely, security club),⁴³ it began in 1853 as a group of men who gathered on Sundays to socialize and shoot at targets. After 1876 the members met at Hilarius Zwickey's farm. The club adopted a formal organization, with officers and dues. One of the minute books, which begins in 1874 and continues to 1954, is still in existence. The entries are in German through 1912; for the years thereafter they change to English.⁴⁴

Throughout the years, members of the Zwicky and Pfeiffer families played leading roles as officers of the organization. A listing

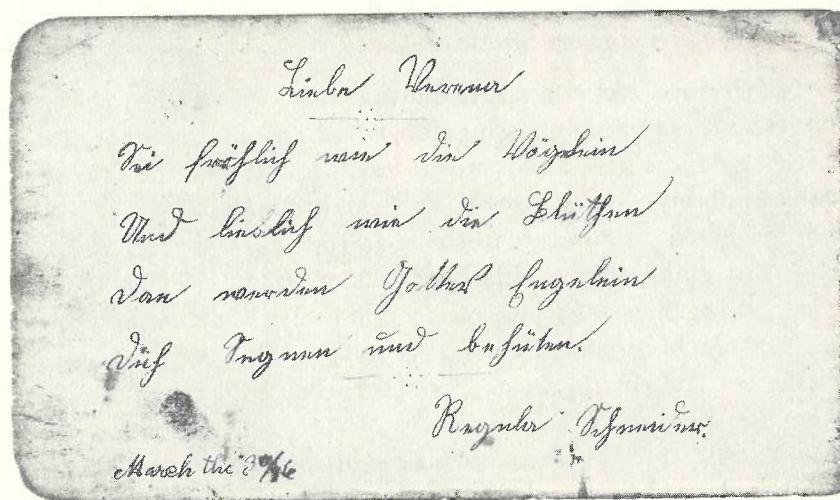
of members in 1882 is a cross section of the Swiss community of Black Wolf:⁴⁵

Caspar Pfeiffer	Jacob Rhyner
Caspar Zwickey	Fridolin Zwickey
Fridolin Zentner	Albrecht Elmer
Mathias Zentner	Michael Pfeiffer
H. Zwickey	Fridolin Stüssi
F. O. Geiger	Henry Leutzing
John Geiger	Joachim Rhyner
Joachim Rhyner, Jr.	John Eprecht
Henry BURGAT	Joseph Vogel
Jacob Baebler	

In 1944 Adolph Zwickey, then secretary of the group, wrote a history of the Black Wolf *Schuetzen Verein* up to that date. It is reproduced at p. 1143, *infra*.⁴⁶

PART TWO THE NEW ELM SETTLERS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

Escaping the severe economic conditions of Glarus in the early 1850s, the sisters Verena and Susanna Zwicky came to Wisconsin. With their respective husbands, Hilarius Zwickey and Johannes Pfeiffer, they joined the Swiss community of New Elm. The next two chapters are about them and their many descendants.





The New Elm church

IN THREE MILLENNIA

The Zwicky, Pfeiffer, Leuzinger,
Elmer and Allied Families of
Switzerland and Wisconsin

With Lines of
Carolingian Descent

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