

Waters of Lake Mill, Near Gobles Cover High Points in Its History

Gobles, Mich. - Close to 100 years ago a sawmill on the heavily wooded shores of a lake near Gobles owned by Samuel and Lyman Holmes gave to that body of water its name, Lake Mill.

Nothing remains of that early enterprise save the story of its operation along with the fact that even today it is possible to see in the lake's clear waters sunken logs cut for that mill.

Some 35 years ago Frank Campbell and Wall Lamberson conceived the plan to salvage some of those virgin logs. They rigged a set of tongs on a scow equipped with hooks and were successful in hoisting up a number of which, after through drying, were hauled to town and sold.

This lake served another purpose, according to the recollections of Gobles oldest inhabitant, Mrs. Mellie Alway, 98, when Grant Brown was accustomed to peddle ice every summer to the wilting villagers.

As homesteads were forged on the shores of this wilderness lake by Holmes, Gorhams, Feelys, Austins, Sages and Gobles -- to mention a few of the earliest families -- a settlement gradually formed called Gobles. Arch W. Bishop was the first postmaster; the post office being the only business establishment as the lake dwellers had no store, the nearest being at Paw Paw.

The Holmes family owned 1,400 acres on Lake Mill and it was from this settler that the Sages bought their farm in 1866 upon arrival via the covered wagon from the East. Not hesitant about doing his duty as he saw it, the 17-year-old Pat Sage marched off to the Civil War and for 20 months was held in the notorious Anderson Prison.

LAKE MILL SCHOOL

Lake Mill School -- now over 100 years old--was first housed in a building of logs with Elder J. H. Darling one of the early schoolmasters.

Those were the days when handsplit shingles were made in many forest cabins to eke out a precarious existance: when old Marcus Clark rang the church bell with a vigor and insistence not to be denied which impelled the most reluctant out of their cabins and churchward. And when children hurrying home from school at noon dreaded to find company at the table for this meant a much longer grace with less time to eat.

As distances were more arduous and time consuming during Lake Mill's early settlement, it was not unusual to "put up" guests for the night or set an extra plate "at table". A frequent visitor in those lakeside homesteads was the circuit preacher, the Rev. William Myers, who covered his territory on horseback and also taught at the township public school.

Mrs. Alway remembers Rev. Myers whom she said seemed ever to be on the move.

This lady, whose father was Warren Goble, had four brothers, Hiram E., John, Warren and James, and "in the beginning" owned all of the present site of Gobles.

On the east side was a section called the Warren Goble Addition. Her father started a fruit dryer and made charcoal for his blacksmith shop where he turned out wagon wheels, apple and cider barrels.

BASKET FACTORY

Another business in operation many years ago was the George A. Bush handicraft shop where baskets were made from steamed poplar logs--a slow, time-consuming process.

Yet in those days time took care of itself. No one wasted a thought on acceleration. If you had a tiresome letter to pen and didn't possess ink or paper, what better place was there than the grocery where a writer's tools and supplies awaited the novice--along with abundant prognosticators and raconteurs.

A second favorite gathering place was the old barber shop of Tink Wilcox whose experience as a cornet player in Sousa's band and latter a performer in a circus band on several different instruments provided unending anecdotes and stories. With his sister, Millie Wilcox at the organ, they gave generously of their talents at church and village affairs.

Probably Tink is best remembered for the steamboat he used to run on Lake Mill every Sunday during the summer. For five cents, a person out to have a thrilling experience, could chug to the other shore under steam generated in the wood-burning boiler.

But this thrill was never to become commonplace through long repetition, for just as the business appeared a sure success, sufficient influential public opinion deemed it improper to operate Sundays.

Report has it that the old steamboat sank and that parts of it may actually be seen through the translucent waters opposite the Wood Landing.

Thus Lake Mill serves as custodian for two historical emblems of the past--Tink's steamboat and logs cut for the Holmes sawmill.