Introduction

In celebration of our township’s 100 years, the Holcombe Centennial Committee decided that a book should be put together to commemorate our history and that it should be completed in time for the Centennial Celebration on July 3, 2005. A committee was formed and we decided that we wanted to include the following: General History, Pioneers and First Settlers, Logging Industry, Past and Present Dams, Past Businesses, School, Government and Churches.

Over the last few months we have gathered stories, memories, photos and historical facts, hoping to give you a glimpse into the history of Holcombe.

Centennial Book Committee

Sharon Stephens
Darlene Luethi
Sue Crank
Gail & Denis Kirkman
Gert Guthman
Donna Helland
Curly Gygi
Ray & Yvonne Guthman
They Walked Here

They walked here, those old pioneers, 
over this creaking covered bridge
Where dust grows thicker and thicker 
as time goes flying by;
Dust that corrodes the aged 
and battered rough-log timbers,
And blackens each seasoned criss-cross 
beam and chiseled tie.

They walked here in this gloom 
where water gurgles 
beneath the old plank floor
That once knew the harsh gashings of 
wagon wheel and horse’s hoof.
The burning, sparking slide of heavy 
sleigh runners on the dry and sturdy planking. 
The hobnailed boots of weary travelers 
who sought protection beneath its roof.

Here, too, staked grim disaster and 
tragedy in springtime and autumn flood, 
When raging water clawed the foundation 
loose and split apart the seams. 
Dragging the quivering structure down 
into the roaring, rioting waters; 
But come fair weather, again those 
pioneers wearily bridged the stream.

What memories it could relate to those 
who walk here now in wonderment; 
What stories it holds away from those 
who reverence its construction and atmosphere. 
But all is silent, no rumbling carriage 
wheels, no horse’s brisk clip-clopping pace.

No sweet youthful laughter, or hearty 
voices of pioneers. 
All is quiet, but we know they walked here.
Little Falls

Information from Cornell Courier, Past & Present of Chippewa County

In the early days of the Chippewa River there were four falls or rapids in a thirty-mile distance. Jean Brunet recognized the importance of two of them, and the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company saw the need for the dam at the fourth one. The second marked Vermillion Falls on early maps seems to be the site of present day Jim Falls.

Before there was Holcombe there was Little Falls, a small settlement attracted by the construction in 1878-79 of a large right angle dam across the Chippewa River.

Little Falls, flowing over big boulders in a bend of the river a short distance from the west end of Irvine street in Holcombe, seemed rightly named. A good paddler could bring a canoe through the rapids, and Charley Robert could birl a log through without getting dunked on most of his attempts. It was a beauty spot attracting many sightseers, but was lost when the new dam was built below it.

The first plat of Little Falls was originated by Adolph Bernier and this was recorded July 29, 1902.

The Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company, including various big name lumbermen at different times as interests were bought and sold, built and contracted the dam in 1878-79. The men in charge of construction were Ben Millard, superintendent of crews, with Elijah Swift of Eau Claire and Joseph Vilas of Chippewa Falls as assistants.

The dam rose from a foundation of sixty-three feet wide with abutments having a width of one hundred feet. Thirty-two flood gates opened singly or together. After a severe flood the angle intended to break the force of water was enlarged, and the width of the dam increased to give greater strength. Two sluiceways allowed wanigans to go through and a narrower one was made for a batteaux. There were ice breakers above the dam and a two hundred-seventy foot wing dam below. Small wing dams were built on the Fisher river and some of the bigger creeks flowing into the Chippewa to keep logs from getting away or rolling dams built at the creeks to roll wayward logs back into the river. Water could be raised to a depth of sixteen feet. When it was that high, it created a reservoir extending ten miles up river. The reservoir at it's highest could raise the water level in Beef Slough one hundred miles away on the Mississippi near Lake Pepin three feet. Little Falls was an important dam for logging.

The planking on the top of the dam was wide enough for a team to travel it as a bridge. That was the only way to cross the river there, except by boat or on the ice in winter time. Few bridges were built in the area until after 1906.

Prominent names of our area are connected with Little Falls, most of them from Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls, William Irvine, E. W. Culver, O. H. Ingram, Delos R. Moon, Fletcher Coleman, Wallace, Barnard, Peck, Rutledge, Weyerhauser,
Shaw. Many others owned shares in the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company, but many sold when the company was not making money. Others of them became millionaires.

The building of the Chicago, St Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha railroad commonly known as the Omaha, was so necessary to get the logging business from the many logging camps.

Holcombe was laid out and platted by the Eau Claire Realty Company and recorded on December 31, 1902. It was at that time, the town's name Little Falls was changed. The new post office and the town were named Holcombe, which was the name of a railway official.

Looking at the village of Holcombe now it is hard to imagine what it was like in 1902, what a thriving center of trade in northern Chippewa county.

Main street, the principal north and south street, intersected Irvine Avenue named for William Irvine, former official of the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company. Other avenues, Frawley, Spooner, Quarrels are names apparently not well known. Hughitt street could be a misspelling of Hewitt. The north section of the plat, later known as “Barney Town” named for Adolph Bernier, had only numbered streets up to Ninth street with Hughitt extending that far. The Little Falls

Bernier Ice House - Holcombe 1905

Road between “Barney Town” and lower town Holcombe 1905
Dam had been in line with Third Street on the east side. The plat shows Puffer-Hubbard mill east along the track opposite Quarrels and Spooner Avenue. The depot was next to the tracks on the north side of Irvine Avenue.

Two men vied for prominence in Holcombe. As soon as the new railroad was assured, A. J. Edminster moved his small store and post office from his farmhouse at Martin settlement three miles south of Holcombe into a new building on the corner of Main Street and Spooner Avenue. He built a warehouse and planing mill along the tracks and began maneuvering to get the depot in his part of Holcombe.

Adolph Bernier came in from the area south of Estella and built several buildings on First Street. Two were general stores, one operated by his son George. There was a furniture store, lumber shed, a garage and office for a doctor who came up from Chippewa Falls several days a week. Bernier did not succeed in getting the depot in his part of Holcombe.

The west side of the block on Main Street between Spooner Avenue and Irvine Avenue beyond Edminster's corner store was filled with small store buildings occupied at various times by the telephone exchange operated by Mrs. Spafford, a millinery store run by Mrs. Eckers, a photographer always on call to take pictures of people and events. George H. Henry advertised as a landscape photographer. He was also the blacksmith later.

The first blacksmith was John Bickerstaff with his forge located in a building on the corner of Main Street and Spooner Avenue across from...
Edminster’s store. The Holcombe Journal, an enterprising weekly, was printed in rooms over the blacksmith’s shop.

An advertisement in The Holcombe Journal in 1906 reads, “Our new presses and machinery arrived last week and we will soon be in shape to attend to anything in job printing from a small card to a full page.” Mr. W.R. Munroe, Cadott was the publisher and E. H. Burnham, editor. A subscription was $1.25 a year in advance, but many times people paid with cordwood or produce. Mr. Burnham also offered his services in undertaking and embalming with a full line of coffins.

Armond Gygi opened a butcher shop on Spooner Avenue after dissolving a partnership in Barney Town. The meat market became the general store of Gygi and Son.

Holcombe had two three-story wooden hotels both on Irvine Avenue. One of the oldest establishments in Holcombe is the general store owned and operated by Arman Gygi.

Holcombe was fortunate to have a resident physician, Dr. Rodecker who lived on Irvine Avenue over the drugstore which he owned.

A dentist, Dr. C.A. Dickinson from Chippewa Falls, came to Holcombe Wednesday noon to serve patients until Saturday noon at the Holcombe Hotel parlors.

Holcombe had two three-story wooden hotels both on Irvine Avenue.
One was the Falbe House, owned by Edward Falbe, and the other was the Holcombe House, built by the Eau Claire Realty Company and operated at different times by various owners. The last owner was Charles Robert who lost it by fire. The Falbe Hotel was torn down after years of standing unused.

A social center of town was Bill Graff's building on the northeast corner of Main and Irvine where Bill Meyer had his barber shop and a pool hall. Upstairs was the hall where school plays, basket socials, graduation exercises, programs of the Literary Society were held.

A Methodist Mission Church served by Florence Moore, Deaconess, on the corner of Jenkins and Irvine. Until the Catholic parish could build a church in Barney town, their services were held in Graff's Hall. German Lutheran services were held at the Falbe Hotel.
Two years of high school and eight grades were taught in a small white frame building at the present school site. Herman Paulsen was one of the early graduates. Susie McKee was the first school mistress, but the teacher best remembered if not the most admired was Tom Mealey who walked with the aid of a cane which he sometimes used for other purposes, especially if boys didn’t tow the mark.

A. J. Edminster and James Jardine, the last superintendent at the Little Falls Dam, built nice residences just west of the church. Through the years floods had taken most of the dam except a few cribs, but Jardine had to report water levels into the Chippewa dam every day. A high bridge built across the river just below the falls in 1906 made the daily trips to the site of the old dam easy.
Holcombe had numerous saloons. In Barney Town one owned by Pinkham was located between Eliza Smith and the Catholic church. Charles Robert bought the building and moved it to the corner of Irvine and Hughitt. Later the Dodgers had a store in the building. Adolph Bernier's saloon was at the end of First Street. Ed Falbe had a bar in the basement of his hotel and undoubtedly there was also a bar in the Holcombe House. During the early logging days there was a saloon on the tote trail along the river below the dam, a first and last chance place for teamsters.

Like all small towns, Holcombe had a bandstand on the northeast corner of Spooner and Main and had a local band, The Modern Woodmen of America Band, to play in it. Any settler who could play an instrument was welcomed. The fire bell in that area (it's still there) was rung to call out the bucket brigade in case of fire.
The Odd Fellows Hall was over Ray Willmarth’s home on Spooner Avenue and in 1906 the Rebekha Lodge was organized in 1908.

Small farmers in the area needed a creamery or cheese factory. Tony Will was the cheese maker. Later Errol Huhn took over until he went to Cadott.

A. J. Edminster started the first bank with “A fully paid up capital of $10,000,” and Mr. Gallup was the first cashier, but later Edminster became cashier.

In those days’ Holcombe was the trading center for the area. Ed Porter, who had a store and Post office in Estella, came by wagon for supplies for his store from Edminster’s warehouse. Edminster bought flour, kerosene, fruit jars and other necessities by the carload lots. Max Dietzler’s team from Fern forded the Jump River to get supplies for his store. The Flambeau Post found it convenient to get supplies, especially after the bridge was built across the Chippewa River in 1906.
Excerpt taken from
“March of Civilization” Mrs. Edward Porter.

Holcombe was the first town to be built in the Cornell country and it seemed a real metropolis to us in the early days. It was the market place for the entire Estella country at one time and “going up to Holcombe” was considered quite an outing. How many hometalent plays, and lodge banquets and church socials we have attended in Holcombe in the old days. And we always met with royal welcome at the hands of her good people and nothing the little town afforded was too good for us. One of the most beautiful spots in Wisconsin is the scenery along the banks of the Chippewa River at Little Falls Dam near Holcombe. And this locality used to be a great recreation point in the early days of the Estella region. Many a fishing party has been held there and I must tell you that in the good old days of long ago, fishing at Little Falls Dam, was fishing. It all comes back to me now in a flood of joyous memory, the scrambling over rocks out onto the piers, the tramping up and down the banks of the river in search of just the right spot to catch the biggest bass; the frenzied chase after the elusive frog, for bait for the muskellunge. And the fish! Such fish! Bass, pickerel, muskellunge, monster eat-fish, all yours for the trouble of casting in your line. We used to make a sort of stove out of large stones on the river bank, build a fire in it out of pieces of drift wood and fry the big, juicy bass, fresh from the water. And if you have never eaten bass cooked like that, with good bread and butter and potatoes roasted in the ashes and a cup of hot coffee to top off with, you don’t know very much about the joy of living. Civilization and progress have brought many luxuries in their train; but nothing they have to offer can ever take the place of an old time fishing
trip to Little Falls Dam.
This excerpt taken from “The March Of Civilization” by Mrs. Edward Porter.

The Making of the Township of Holcombe

The Holcombe country, the Estella region, the French Corners and Drywood were all in the old town of Arthur. The northern boundaries of Arthur were located eight miles above Holcombe village and its southern boundary extended to within three miles of Cadott, making the town twenty-seven miles long. The polling place was the old town hall at what is know as Bate corner. Many of the voters had to travel a distance of eighteen miles, in wagons, through mud so deep their horses could hardly pull through it. Generally it snowed on election day—a damp, clinging snow storm. Sometimes it rained by way of variation, but a real pleasant election day in those times has never been recorded. But not a voter in the entire town who was not absolutely confined to his bed ever stayed home. As soon as the polls opened in the morning, the war was on. The candidates for office or the men seeking to secure votes for improvements from the upper end of the town were mercilessly flayed to pieces(verbally) by the voters from the lower end, and vice versa. I used to stand at my gate on the evening of election day and listen to the rumbling of the returning wagons of the upper town voters. And I grew to distinguish by the manner of their coming which side had won out in the fray. If the returning teams came walking steadily along, taking their own gait through the mud and slush, unchided and unmolested by their drivers, I knew all was well with upper town politics. But when the poor animals came, nervously plunging through mud holes and ruts, and their drivers were urging them on with voice and whip, I knew we had lost out. But the glorious part of our old time political struggles was that no matter how divided in opinions on an election issue those old-timers might be and no matter how fierce the wordy war that was waged between the disputants, all differences and bitterness were promptly forgotten as soon as election was over. Finally it became evident to everyone that a division of the Town of Arthur was imminent, and necessary. And in 1905 the question of the division of the town was submitted to the voters, and carried. The new town created from this division was named Holcombe in honor of the new village. Its
northern boundary remained unchanged, but to the south, it extends only one and one-half miles below Estella.

March 14, 1905

The following petition was read and referred to committee No. 9.

To the Honorable County Board of Chippewa County, Wisconsin: We, the undersigned, freeholders and residents of the Town of Arthur in Chippewa County, Wisconsin, being more than one-third in number of the legal voters thereof, do hereby petition your honorable body for a division of such town, such division to be made so that all that portion of said town, being 42 sections in area lying south of the correction line which extends east and west between townships 30 and 31 in said Town of Arthur shall constitute a separate town, and all that portion of said Town of Arthur lying north of said correction line between townships 30 and 31 shall constitute and separate town.

Your petitioners therefor respectfully ask that such steps be taken in law and by your county board as well speedily and legally divide such Town of Arthur, according to the prayer of your petitioners. Petition signed by Fr. V. Kinker and one hundred and nine (109) other residents.
Committee No. 9, to whom was referred petition asking for the division of Town of Arthur reported as follows: We, your committee, to whom was referred the within petition would recommend that same be granted. On motion of supervisor Touhy, report of committee was adopted.

The County Board of Supervisors of the county of Chippewa do ordain as follows: Section 1. That the following described territory now embraced within the boundaries of the Town of Arhtur in Chippewa county, Wisconsin, to-wit: All that part and portion of the said Town of Arthur, lying north of the correction line which extend east and west between townships thirty(30) and thirty-one(31) in said town, that is now embraced in and a part of the Town of Arthur in said county of Chippewa is hereby created and constituted a separate town to be known and designated as the Town of Holcombe.

Section 3. The place of public meeting known as Graf's Hall in the village of Holcombe, be and the same hereby is designated as the place of holding the first meeting of the said Town of Holcombe, and Edward Porter and A. J. Edminster and Stillman Wilkins of the said town are hereby appointed and designated as the persons who shall call said first meeting and election and give notice of the place of holding the same.

Section 4. This ordinance shall take effect on March 16, 1905.

On motion of supervisor Touhy, ordinance was adopted as read, all present voting aye. Absent(0).

November 14, 1906

To the undersigned chairman of the Towns of Holcombe and Ruby in said county respectfully petition your honorable body to detach from said Town of Holcombe and attach to the Town of Ruby the following described territory. The SE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of section No.24 Town 32 Range 6 west. E.C. Hawn, chairman of the Town of Ruby, and Edward Porter, Chairman of the Town of Holcombe.

Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors
November 15, 1906

Committee No. 9, to whom was referred petition asking for a change in boundary line between Ruby and Holcombe reported as follows: We your committee to whom was referred within petition recommend that same as allowed. On motion of supervisor Bartingale report of committee was adopted all supervisors present voting aye.

April 1, 1921

Section 1. There is detached from the Town of Holcombe as heretofore and now constituted the following: All that part of Township thirty-one North, of Range six West, lying east of the Chippewa River, excepting therefrom the North half of section four, the north half of section five, and all such parts of the north half of section six lying east of said river, and also excepting therefrom all that territory lying within the corporate limits of the village of Cornell and the same is hereby created and constituted a separate town to be known and designated as the Town of Estella.

Section 2. The first town meeting of said Town of Estella shall be held in the building formerly occupied as a store and postoffice located near the Northeast corner of the Northwest 1/4 of the Northwest 1/4 of section twenty-two, in Township thirty-one North, of Range six west, on the day appointed by the law for the holding of annual meetings in the year 1921; and the qualified electors of said town shall, by ballot, elect town officers for their town and exercise all other powers and make such provisions for the government of such towns as now authorized by statute to be exercised and made at the annual town meeting of any town.
June 21, 1921

Section 1. There is detached from the Town of Holcombe, Chippewa county, all that portion of sections twelve, thirteen, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, thirty-five and thirty-six, township thirty-one north, range seven west, lying east of the Chippewa river, and the same is added to the Town of Estella, in said county.

Section 2. There is detached from the Town of Estella, Chippewa county, the south half of sections four and five and that portion of the south half of section six lying east of the Chippewa river, all in township thirty-one north, range six west and the same is added to the town of Holcombe, in said county.
Proceedings of first annual town meeting of the Town of Holcombe held at Holcombe April 4, 1905.

The following were sworn in as election board: Edward Porter, Glode Rualow, Claude Fuller, J.F. Butler, Geo. H. Hendry, Warren Ward and Chris Johnson. At 9:30 a.m. polls were opened by public proclamation at front door of school house in Holcombe by Edward Porter for election of town officers and such judicial as lawfully come before electives. Balloting commenced and continued until 12 noon when polls were closed for one hour. At one o’clock p.m. proclamation made by Edward Porter polls reopened and balloting continued in the school room and the election being assembled in north room of school house the following resolutions were offered and carried.
First – That all road tax be paid money.
Second – That each road commissioner receive not over $50.00
Third – That we raise $2,500 for new roads
Fourth – That we raise $600.00 bridge funds
Fifth – That we raise $300.00 town funds
Sixth – That we raise a 3 mill road tax
Seventh – That the clerk receive $150 for the year
Eighth – Board instructed to arrange with some bank or banker to cash all town orders and not to pay over 8 per cent. Proclamation having been made by Edward Porter polls were closed at 5:00 p.m. The clerks of election comparing their poll list were found to agree.

The undersigned inspectors of the election held at the time and place specified in the within statement by us subscribed to hereby certify that the within named Edward Porter is duly elected to the office of Chairman of Supervisors and said town; that J.B. Fisk and Gustave Robert are duly elected to the office of supervisors, that J.F. Butler is duly elected to the office of town clerk; that A.J. Edminster is duly elected to the office of town treasurer; that J.W. Bickerstaff is duly elected to the office of assessor; that Oscar Carroll, Thomas Wilson and George Hatch are duly elected to the Office of Justice of Pease and that George Kappus, James Towns and Karl Pichler are duly elected to the office of constable of said town. In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands this 4th day of April 1905.

Edward Porter
Glode Rualow Inspectors
Claude Fuller
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1995
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Eddie Aune
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Dale Weiss

1996
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Eddie Aune
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Dale Weiss

1997
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Eddie Aune
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Tracy Brown

1998
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Eddie Aune
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Tracy Brown

1999
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Dave Staudacher
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Tracy Brown

2000
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Dave Staudacher
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Tracy Brown

2001
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Dave Staudacher
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Craig Luethi

2002
Chairman: Dave Staudacher
Super: Duane Schulze
Super: Barry Hoke
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Larry Pederson
Constable: Craig Luethi

2003
Chairman: Dave Staudacher
Super: John Bell
Super: Barry Hoke
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Claude Rigleman
Constable: Frank Lompa Jr.

2004
Chairman: Dave Staudacher
Super: John Bell
Super: Barry Hoke
Clerk: Darlene Luethi
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Claude Rigleman
Constable: Frank Lompa Jr.

2005
Chairman: Robert Bayerl
Super: Chuck Wachsmuth
Super: Barry Hoke
Clerk: Sheryl Gererding
Treasurer: Sharon Stephens
Assessor: Claude Rigleman
Constable: Frank Lompa Jr.
The present town hall was built by A. J. Edminster in 1906 to be used as a warehouse for machinery, hay and grain. Later it was changed to a livery stable. From 1912 to 1917 the ground floor was used for storage and the basement for cattle and horses.

In 1917 it was remodeled into a community hall and open to the public on January 1, 1918. Roller skating, dancing, etc. was enjoyed by the community. Inside walls had to be replaced twice due to damage done by the skaters. The beautiful hard rock maple flooring has held up and was refinished recently.

The community hall was taken over by the Town Board of Holcombe in 1935. Application to renovate the hall by WPA project was made by Chairman Carl Guthman, William Graf and Julius Hovey to the district director and manager of the Division of Operations, C. E. Hughes, an area engineer. In August of 1940 approval for the WPA project # 10654 was given by the President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The outside stone work was done by local men.

Work on the hall was completed in August 1941.

Toilets were added later and a large machinery garage was built back of the hall. Before the remodeling of the Holcombe School, lunches were cooked and served in the hall basement. In 1979 a new kitchen was installed upstairs. For fuel efficiency two new furnaces, one to serve the upstairs and the other for the basement, were installed and a wheelchair ramp was added. Weddings, anniversaries and other celebrations are held in the hall and it serves as a meeting place for the senior citizens and various organizations.

In 1996 the town hall underwent another remodeling project which consisted of new windows, re-insulating of the walls, new lighting and ceilings, wainscoting, new doors, remodeling of the bathrooms to bring them up to state code. There was also the addition of voting booths, closets to the entryway and in the basement stairway for storage.

To the left of the hall can be seen the home of the Holcombe Indian and also the old fire bell.

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New Chairman Named in Towns

Few Hot Contests Mark Election in Towns Throughout County

Election in the rural districts made a few changes in the personnel of village and city officials, but in some places the incumbent officers were returned. A few changes in chairmen who compose the county board were made. The voting was not heavy, which is perhaps due to poor condition of the roads. Following are the results of the election in towns so far as returns were received today:

Town of Holcombe
Chairman – John Cox
Clerk – R. H. Fiske
Treasurer – George Wahler
Assessor – Herman Stassel
Pioneers

Information from “Chippewa County Past & Present”

Gustave Albert

Gustave Albert was born in Saxony, Germany, December 18, 1872 to Carl and Pauline (Fritche) Albert. Gustave came to Chippewa county at the age of seventeen. At that time he was employed at sawmill and lumber camp at Estella. He was engaged in lumbering until 1909, at that time he began to develop the farm that would become his home. He had purchased sixty acres in 1892 in the township of Holcombe. By 1913 thirty acres have been cleared and are under cultivation and Mr. Albert devotes most of his attention to dairy farming. He has built a frame dwelling and also a barn on the property. He was considered a very successful dairy farmer.

In 1909 Mr. Albert was united in marriage to Miss Fannie Nagler, a native of Germany, they had two children, Charlotte and Mary.

Alfred Brown

Born in 1870 imigrated to this country from Flitwick, England in the early 1890’s settling in the Wheaton Township, Chippewa County. Alfred married Ida J. Studley in 1894, they had four children. Kate (Brown) Taylor, Evelyn (Brown) Will, Clara (Brown) Jardine, and Herbert A. Brown

In 1912 Alfred & Ida with their children moved to Holcombe, first living at present day Buchholz farm fuction of 300th Ave. and 300th St. northeast corner. Just across the road Clara and Herbert went to school. In the 1920’s Alfred bought land from David Tabor and moved to present day 25545 State Hwy 27 the Jim and Arleene Jiskra Farm. Alfred owned and operated a construction company in which he hired Herbert Brown and Jac Jardine (son-in-law). Building many bridges in Chippewa County and near by counties, also paved the road between Cornell and Holcombe which is Hwy 27 today. He worked on the present day Town hall in 1941 W.P.A and was town chairman from 1934-1938. He passed away in 1948.

E.H. Burnham

EH Burnham was the editor and owner of the Holcombe Journal. The Holcombe Journal, eight page weekly newspaper that was started in 1906. Mr. Burnham was born in Princeton, Minnesota on March 31, 1859. He was a high school graduate.

Before coming to Holcombe Mr. Burnham had engaged in business as a photographer. Besides running the Holcombe Journal, he was also in the undertaking and embalming business, acts as a notary public and chief of the fire department. Fraternally he is a member of the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows.

Holcombe Ball Team 1919
L to R standing: Louie Bernier, Glen Hinton, E.H. Bernham, Jack JuVette, Tommy Johnson
Seated: Billie Henry, Bob Zimmerman, Ernie Lother, Bill Meyers and Kib Ecker
James Peter Carroll

James P. Carroll, was born May 2, 1877 in Nelson, Wisconsin. He moved to the Holcombe area in 1897. He spent his life working for the Chicago Northwestern and The Hannibal Line Railroad companies, retiring in 1942.

He was united in marriage to Louisa Fry, the daughter of Reuben and Nancy Fry in the town of Estella in May 2, 1905.

They had eight children: James, Robert, Levi, Donald, Wanda, Eliza, Wilma, Olive.

Mrs. Carroll passed away in 1951.

Mr. Carroll passed away in 1969.

Jay Clark

Jay was married to Elizabeth Price. They had five children, Pearl, Sylvia, LeRoy, Raymond and Dolly. Jay moved here from the state of Wyoming. He owned and operated the Lake View Farm, which was located by Pine Lake in Holcombe. In 1930 he was listed in the Chippewa County Atlas as a breeder of Guernsey cattle, Duroc Jersey hogs, Barred Rock chickens, Oxford sheep.

Elizabeth was a member of the Rebekah Lodge.
Raymond Cleaves

He was a partner in the firm of AJ Adminster & Co., doing business at Holcombe and Cornell. He has been involved in this since 1911 and has been very successful in the development of this. He was born in Chippewa county on October 17, 1882 in Eagle Point. His parents were Eugene and Jennie (Shipman) Cleaves. He acquired his education at public schools and the normal school at River Falls, Wisconsin, to the age of 18. He spent two years working as farm labor and then was employed with the Omaha Railroad in the engineering department for two years. It was after this that he became an employee of AJ Adminster as a clerk in the general store and later became a partner.

Mr. Cleaves was united in marriage at Packwaukee, Wisconsin on June 5, 1907 to Miss Frances Kendall.

Mr. Cleaves was a chapter Mason, loyal to the teachings of the craft—belonging to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and to the Modern Woodmen of America.

John and Florence Cox

To the best of our knowledge, John & Florence Cox first came to the Holcombe area in the late teens. John ran a sawmill, which was located near to where the “Twin Ponds” sit today. Their two oldest granddaughters can remember playing in the sawdust piles as children. John & Florence had five children, Merl, Harold, Elizabeth, Jack & “Little” Florence. Merl died at 49, having lived most of his years in the Holcombe area. Harold was the family wanderer, and traveled West to work on various dams, including Hoover (Boulder), Grand Coulee and Fort Peck. He also spent time in the gold mines of Nevada and Alaska and died at the age of 35. Jack was in the military and died in the Azores during World War II while in his early 20’s. Daughter Florence left the area upon high school graduation. She married and had one child and died at the age of 60. Elizabeth, after a brief stay in Montana, spent the remainder of her life in Holcombe, dying shortly before her seventy-first birthday.

John & Florence spent many years in the Holcombe area, leaving for short periods of time when work took them to other locals. Their original home in the Holcombe area was just to the west of the Herman Paulsen home, where the dike now sits. Their children went to the old wooden school that burned in 1931 and Elizabeth played “kittenball” for the local team. In the late 40’s when the “Holcombe Flowage” came to be, the John Cox home was jacked up and hauled away to a site on Pine Lake where it remains today. The house has been renovated so many times that it bears little resemblance to the house by the Chippewa River. People who were around “back when” can remember that just west of the original home site was a high steep bank leading down to the river. Going down to fish was quite an experience! At the new location, John Cox set out on a new venture, raising turkeys, while Florence and son Merl enjoyed fishing on the new lake in their free time.
N. H. Deuel

N.H. Deuel was the founder of Arnold, Wisconsin. He is included in the history of Holcombe, because he was a significant influence on the progress of this area. N.H. Deuel was born in LaCrescent, Houston county, Minnesota, April 10, 1867. Mr. Deuel in earlier years was very prominent in the milling business, and operates a profitable hotel, owns farm lands besides village lots and is the owner of the Deuel telephone line. The Deuel or Arnold telephone line had its beginning when Mr. Deuel constructed a line from Arnold to Holcombe for his own use. Other parties asked to be connected and the system grew. This line connected the following areas: Holcombe, Arnold, Sheldon, Donald, Ruby, Hannibal, Stanley, Colburn and Huron. They operated one hundred and seventeen miles of line and long distance connection with Stanley.

Mr. Deuel was united in marriage to Miss Martha Stassel, a native of Germany and a daughter of Gottlieb Stassel, who immigrated from that country in 1891. Mr. and Mrs. Deuel have seven children: Arnold, Ella, Walter, Curtis, Orville, Norman and Gordon.

Charles “Kib” Ecker

Charles Ecker was born on January 21, 1878. Charles married Marie Chambers in 1899. They were from the Whitehall area. It seems they came to this area in the early 1900’s. They purchased a small farm in 1914. That piece of property is still in the family and is presently owned by a great-granddaughter of Kib and Marie. The Eckers had four children, Alan, Marian, Walter and Mason.
Kib was involved in many occupations over the years. He was a carpenter and worked in Whitehall, Madison and Holcombe. He had worked at the Little Falls dam and had been a logger working at several camps around the area hauling logs and lumber. He operated a small farm on his property and engaged in fur trapping. He was instrumental in forming a baseball team and also played on that team along with a son, Mason.

Marie operated a millinery shop in Holcombe. She also was a traveling salesperson selling corsets. She would travel to surrounding communities such as Cornell, Estella, Arnold, Martin settlement, sometimes traveling far enough to warrant an overnight stay at a friend’s home or hotel. It was known that Marie didn’t care much for living in Holcombe, being such a small community. But, she decided to make the “most of it” and bring culture to the area by presenting hometown plays, in which she participated along with many community members. She also was the person who organized the “Fourth of July” parades and the annual fairs.

Later near their home which is located near the river, they constructed several small cabins which they rented for a dollar per week to vacationers wanting to relax and do some fishing. One of their guests named the property the “Trails End Resort”. The Eckers great-granddaughter still has one of the guest books in which several guests wrote little notes about their visits to the area.

The Eckers have several grandchildren and great-grandchildren living in and around the area who have fond memories of spending time at the Ecker place.

While visiting with the Ecker’s great-granddaughter, Stephanie Kelnhofer and Eleanor Jones daughter of Abbie Jones several stories were told.

One was that town residents had gathered together for a meeting about a certain citizen who had made comments about the Germans and the war going on at that time. The crowd had become quite angered after hearing of this. They had pretty much decided to hang this person, when Marie Ecker stood up in the middle of this meeting and took control, made them realize what they were planning, calmed the residents and sent them home. Marie must have been a very much respected and an admired citizen of Holcombe.

Marie had a sister, Elizabeth, also known as “Libby” who was married to a
Minister. Libby was visiting at the Ecker home. During the visit the sisters decided to go watch the men and the logs as they came down the river. While they were there, Libby noticed a gentleman by the name of JuVette. The story goes on to say that when their eyes met, they fell madly in love, consequently Libby left her husband for Mr. JuVett.

Mother’s School
John Parell, Joe Libby, John JuVettes, Nina B., S. Nelson, Tessie Carrell, Silas Mayhue

First person on right in front row is Mrs. Florence Cox - President
First person on left in front row is Mrs. Lucille Sauerwein - Secretary
Second person on right in second row is Mrs. Echo Kron - Vice President
Second person in third row is Mrs. Frances Cleaves - Treasurer
Grandma Ecker

Kib Ecker, Holcombe Ball Team
The spring breakup and high water of the spring of 1920 was the cause of the dam at Holcombe going out. In a forward, I would like to say to give a little of the history in case anyone should read this article by accident or just to kill time. No doubt they will say, “What of it and why was it there?” I will add a little of its history.

This dam was built in the years of 1880 to 1885. There had been a dam built before those years but it had gone out in a midsummer’s flood. It was built by the Chippewa Log and Boom Co. of Chippewa Falls. The purpose of the dam was to hold water in a reservoir, which was called a flowage; so when logs were being floated down the river, they could release water enough so it would help to float the logs over a series of rapids, six rapids to be exact in a stretch of thirty miles, to the mills down river in Chippewa Falls. The Chippewa Log and Boom Co. had the largest sawmill in the world in the years from 1895 to 1910. Of course, there were other lumber companies at Eau Claire and Beef Slough that also used the Chippewa River for log transportation.

The dam was a feat even for this day and age. It was built entirely of wood and stone. The piers were cribs of logs filled with river granite. The dam was thirteen hundred feet long and was built on a 90-degree angle. The structure had 11 Tainter gates and one automatic gate. It was last used in 1910 for it had to be caulked. Then, in 1911, a loading works was built at Holcombe and the logs were loaded on flat cars and shipped to the mills. The Chippewa Log and Boom Co. changed over to the Wisconsin Light and power Co. and built a large dam at Wissota, Wis. After several more changes it finally developed into the Northern States Power Co., which it remains today.

The winter of 1919 and 1920 was a very hard winter. The freeze up had come early in November. There were heavy snows all winter long and cold weather. The ice was 30 inches thick and the snow was hip pocket deep to a tall Indian. The spring breakup of 1920 filled the swamps and sloughs with water.

The Flambeau and Jump Rivers broke up first and started the ice in the Chippewa. It piled up and formed a jam at the old jam piers, which had been built one mile up the river for the protection of the dam.

Charles (Kib) Ecker had worked at the dam for over ten years and the evening of the breakup he went to take a look at the water at the dam. He knew of some high water marks that had been made in previous years while he was employed there. He reported that the water was the highest he had ever seen it, and also remarked, “That old dam will go out tonight.” The telephone operator gave out the word throughout the community. That evening at 8:00 Raymond Cleaves (a representative of the Northern States Power Co.) called our home and asked me to go up to the jam piers and watch the jam and notify the property owners down river if it should break. He said, “I have another man to go with you. Stop at the Holcombe House and pick him up.” I was glad of that because we had to go through two graveyards. I arrived in town and picked up Lester Stanley at the hotel. We started on our hike to the jam piers. We had a lantern and a double-bitted axe. We thought we would have to build a fire if we had to wait all night. It was a cloudy night, but the moon was full and would peep through the clouds occasionally. After getting half way to the piers,
we decided to walk down to the rivers edge. We came down off the riverbank and walked across a little flat about five hundred feet in width. Before we got to the river edge, we could hear sounds of ice grinding and timber cracking. There was no movement on the river when we reached the edge. Then all at once the river was all in motion – the ice commenced to rise and move down stream and the sound of grinding ice and breaking timbers was very loud. We decided then it was time to get away from there and going back the way we came the water was up to our knees. If we had waited just a few minutes more before starting back, we would never have gotten out. When we climbed to the top of the bank and looked around, the river was a running bank full of ice. We lit out and ran back to town where we came to Bert Glen’s house. He had a telephone and we got in touch with the telephone operator (who was Mrs. George Spafford) who put the call through to warn the people down the river from us. We ran back to the old dam and the moon at this time had broken through the clouds and we had a good view of what was going on.

The dam held the jam for about five minutes. It was piled high with ice and debris. Then with a rush and a roar the west part of the dam collapsed. A swell of water 30 or 40 feet high came over the dam. It was horrifying to see the power that water has. It made a beautiful sight like a huge waterfall. The large cakes of ice glistened like silver in the moonlight as they plunged over the top of the swell. The ice jam moved down the river until it struck the bridge, but it did not take long for the force of the water to take out a 200-foot span on the north end of the bridge. The moon was covered with clouds again and we could not see what was happening. We were all too frightened to get too close to the river because we knew that the flood was undermining the banks. The flood of water and ice kept moving at about a quarter of a mile at a time, then would jam up again until it finally moved into the Cornell Flowage. There it spread out and relieved some of the pressure against the Cornell Wood Products. All of the gates at the Cornell dam had been raised but nevertheless the highway bridge was demolished. Three of the gates of the dam were carried away. Two friends of mine, Louis JuVette and Mitchell Corbine, were watching the bridge and stopping all traffic that was moving. They told me that when the jam hit the bridge, it was tipped over like a falling tree.

The flood was finally stopped when it went into Lake Wissota. If it had not been for the gigantic size of the Wissota Reservoir, it would have been a bad catastrophe for the Mississippi River Basin. The dam at Wissota was large enough and strong enough to control the flood by releasing a limited amount of water at one time. So a lot can be said about dams, reservoirs and storage pools.

Well, the old dam was gone although it had not been in use for ten years. There were many of us that were raised and had lived within the sounds of the roar of waters that rushed through its gates and sluiceways, and of course, we all missed it very much. In the days when the dam was in working condition, the company had kept a year round crew. There was the upkeep of the dam and the jam piers above the dam, and also the buildings, which were many. Mr. James Jardine, the man in charge for the company, would hire every available man in the community when he had work. I had seen the time when he would walk the distance of a couple of miles to hire workmen for the dam. I heard Mr. Jardine tell that when he was still in his teens, he came to the headquarters with a tote team. He
arrived in time for the noonday meal. After the meal he decided to walk down the river a way. He said he would kept right on going but he had left his jacket at the office. So, he went back to get his jacket and ended up staying 40 years.

There were some comical things that happened when the dam went out. A group of young people had gone across the bridge to look at the water on the other side. That was in the days when young ladies had to be in early, so they left the boys to do the looking and they went back to town. When the fellows decided to go back, the bridge was gone. So they stayed overnight at the old headquarters building. The next morning they carried a canoe up river for a mile before they would attempt to cross the river. The river was free of ice by that time so they did not have any trouble paddling to the other shore.

There were many other things that happened, but I have not the time to relate them now.

Ice jam on Chippewa River below Holcombe

High water at Ecker’s
EDMINSTER PLAYS IMPORTANT PART IN AREA HISTORY

BY: Mrs. Edward Porter

(Taken from an article in the Cornell Paper October 21, 1996)

Editor's note: This is an edited chapter of “March of Civilization” by Mrs. Edward Porter, published in the Cornell Courier in 1916. It gives a brief biography of Amasa J. Edminster, author of the poem “Holcombe Then and Now” (See story). There is a copy of her book at the Chippewa County Historical Society and also at the Chippewa Falls Public Library.

I have told you about the coming of Warren Flint into the Estella country and the part he took in the conquering of this wild inaccessible region. Now I am going to tell you about another big man whose lot was cast with the pioneers of this portion of Chippewa County.

In 1881, James Edminster of Colby opened up a livery stable in Cadott. And this fact is of vital importance in the history of the Cornell country because one day Mr. Edminster sent his boy, Amasa, to drive one of his rigs over the trail laid out by Warren Flint up into Estella country.

Young Edminster had as his cargo that day a load of lumber jacks bound for Warren Flint’s logging camps and the lumberjacks had a load of fire water that put them all in such a state of inebriety that young Edminster rolled them out on the floor of Duvenal’s log barn when he reached this stopping place and left them there. This was in August of 1881. In September of the same year he made a second trip up over the Estella trail, this time with a more valuable cargo for he brought up Knute Hendrickson and his family, pioneer settlers, who have played an important part in the development of this region.

In the spring of the next year Amasa Edminster came again to the Estella country, this time to work on Warren Flint’s log drive. He was a young, husky fellow who prided himself on being able to eat with relish whatever the river cooks offered in the way of “grub” or to go without anything to eat for days if circumstances so ordered, and to endure all sorts of hardship and privation philosophically.

This was in 1882 and Destiny had placed A.J. Edminster into the niche awaiting him since his creation. Henceforth this portion of Northern Wisconsin was to be his home, its struggles a part of his existence, its interests his interests throughout the years.

Now, for some time Mr. Edminster followed in the footsteps of the older pioneer settlers, working in the logging camps in winter, driving logs in the spring and turning his hand to whatever occupation this new country offered him between times. In spring of 1889 he went down to civilization once more and came back with his bride. He was married to Miss Nellie Loiselle at the home of Mr. And Mrs. Edward Porter, who resided in Eau Claire at that time. In September of the same year, Mr. Edminster brought his young bride up into this backwoods wilderness moving into a logging camp of Edward Porter’s two miles above where Arnold is now located.
The newlyweds carried their entire worldly possessions in a trunk and in fording the river the (Jumper) (a long, low sled used for travel over the forest trails in summer) capsized and the trunk went to the bottom.

Now right here I want to pay tribute to Mrs. Edminster as being the sanest and most all around efficient woman I have ever known. Nothing of hard work or privation ever daunted her in those olden days and nothing of prosperity or luxury that has come to her since has ever unduly exalted her. She entered into the wild lonely life of the logging camps with a beautiful zest and in every enterprise her husband has undertaken, she has always stood by his side, cheering him on and lending a capable helping hand in every emergency.

It is one of my cherished memories of the old days in my husband’s logging camps that little log shack of this young couple – clean, spotless, cozy of a winter evening with the fire crackling and snapping in a little battered old cook stove polished so brightly that the firelight seemed dim in comparison. The home made table with the young husband sitting on one side of it busily totaling up the figures he had set down in his scale book during the day and his young wife beside him knitting happily away at big warm woolen socks or mittens for his comfort. Humble? Never! The wealth of a great contentment was theirs and the luxury of perfect health and youth and love.

Mr. Edminster remained in the employ of Warren Flint and of Flint and Porter for ten years then he engaged in logging on his own account for a while. Later on he bought from a Miss Halbert, who worked in the pension office in Washington, D.C., the quarter section of land near Holcombe for eight hundred dollars. Mr. Edminster afterward added 280 acres more to this farm at a cost of two thousand five hundred dollars. Entering into the clearing up of this land with the same enthusiastic zeal that marked all his ventures, Mr. Edminster toiled and planned and improved his acres until he finally made it one of the model farms of the country which eventually brought him at its sale to Jones Brothers eighteen thousand dollars. As a sample of Mr. Edminster’s industry in the farming venture, I must tell you that the second year he was on this farm he raised a crop of twelve hundred bushels of potatoes.

In 1896 Mr. Edminster opened up a little general store and post office in his farm home. In January 1903 he moved into his new store building in the little new village of Holcombe. Since then success and honor have come steadily and deservedly to Mr. Edminster.

He is president of the State Bank of Holcombe, President of the State Bank of Cornell, President of the Mortgage and Loan Association of Chippewa Falls, is at the head of a large general store in Cornell and an equally large one in Holcombe, with Peter Robinson as a partner he is engaged in a large real estate business with offices in Holcombe, Cornell, Cadott and Chippewa Falls. He is treasurer of the Laursen Automatic Pump Company of Eau Claire, treasurer of the Town of Holcombe and has been postmaster at Holcombe since it’s founding.

With all these varied interests Mr. Edminster always finds time to extend a helping hand to anyone who comes to him. The down and out individual can take his troubles to “A.J.” and is always sent away comforted and assisted in some practical manner to get on his feet again.

The capitalist who comes into this section to invest his money in any enterprise comes to “A.J.” for expert advice on conditions and is always given reliable and honest information. Mr. Edminster has been a most potent influence in the development of the Cornell country in a fine farming section than can ever be properly estimated. In his quiet and practical system helping the small farmer to tide over his “off crop” years and never letting his left hand know what his right hand doeth.
When I landed at Estella, about thirty years ago,
Logging was the industry and wages were low.
I hired to Flint in the camp to work
And he sent me to St. Clair’s for a barrel of pork.
The roads that we traveled meandered around
From high place to high place to find solid ground.
Into the swamps our old oxen would plunge
And the jumper they drew would go in with a lunge.
Faithful and true through the mud they’d walk,
No lines, no bridles, just driven by talk.
A barrel of pork and a few sacks of grain,
Was considered a load for this little train,
From St. Clair’s place to Flint’s old store
Was a big days work for this team of four.
Unload your cargo, Flint would say,
Feed your oxen and hit the hay,
For tomorrow morning at five you will start
For Tom Kelly’s camp on the big marsh.
Tell Tom that this load must finish the work.
And until he is done he will see no more pork.
Tell him for me that I think he has done find,
But ease up on the pork and eat more porcupine.
This barrel of pork, for transportation alone
Has cost enough money to buy him a home.
When you get to the camp you’ll find “Tom” and four men.
Just turn out your oxen and stay there with them,
Says I, Mr. Flint, what wage do you pay
For the driving of oxen and cutting of hay?
The wages I pay depends all on you,
You’ll be paid just according to the work that you do.
One dollar per day is the highest we pay
For the driving of oxen and the cutting of hay.
If you can’t earn that much, you’re no good to cut hay.
So early next morning for camp I did start
As happy and gay as a meadowlark.
For two days I traveled beside this old team
The mud on both sides of the sled to the beam.
The night before starting I gave Maud Flint the hunch,
That if it took me two days I might need a lunch.
Maud says, just wail till they all go to bed
I’ll swipe you some doughnuts and a pan of brown bread.
The first night I stayed at the Range Line Road,
Not a soul to see lest me but frogs and a toad.
The brown bread seemed good to that young stomach of mine
As I stored it away that night in the pine.
The next night I arrived at the Hay Marsh camp
My clothes were all mud and I looked like a tramp.
I delivered the message that was sent by me
To Tom Kelly, the foreman as quick as could be.
I had been told by some that “Tom” was bad
And would swear at his men until all were mad.
I soon learned that this was not true
And unless something was done his grievance to atone
A certain lady would be living on the hill all alone
But trouble would cease and there seemed then some chance
Of getting together and having a dance.
“Flint” would invite them old young and all
To come to his place for a friend making ball.
Then hurrah for the dance, both old and young went.
A good time was had and the money well spent.

“Belleback” played the fiddle with the help of “Sam White”.
They made the woods tingle with happy delight
When the fiddles were resined and the fiddlers greased
Even “Parsons” and “Brown” seemed to dance with great ease.
The dances then were not quite so slow
When the girls cut the capers with “Gloodie Ruslow.”
I’ve laughed with joy till I thought I would bust,
To see the Big School Man swing “Little Gust.”
Everything elastic, the dancing was fine.

Good times seemed to lengthen like forties of pine.
There were many large forties, bit, round and plump
That reached all the way from Fisher to Jump,
Then over to Main Creek and far as Deer Tail,
Then down to the dam and took in every swail.
Big pine was wanted and to get the right yield
One forty must cover a very large field.

One forty there was where the yield was quite big,
Which resulted in the departure of “Louie the Pig.”
This ended the filerering and extending the line
For the county and state were now watching their pine.
This was the routine from year to year
Of the babyhood days of Estella’s career.
Later came Porter and his more modern way
Of treating men better and giving more pay.

“Ed” was no fighter but his word was the law.
And his camps were all run without even a flaw.
The times seemed to better from now on for all
And everyone seemed to have a new call.
I thought about this time I’d look up my Honey,
And move her up Fisher to help me make money.
No couple more happy after looking things o’er
For a few years we labored, late, early and hard
Until we had enough money to buy us a farm.

During these few years on Fisher, changes were shown,
The old guard had weakened and a new one was known.
Our roads were all opened, jumpers were gone.
Horses and wagons were coming along.
School houses and churches erected by twos
And money judiciously spent on our roads.
Farms were soon opened and this was the craze,
To see what land around Estella would raise.
The biggest surprise to a hope so forlorn
Was “Roberts” big yields of Yellow Dent Corn.
This was a wonder to all in this land,
How we could raise corn on Upper Chippewa sand.
From that time to now, there’s no crop we don’t tackle,
Why, even “Bob Burns” raised Badger Tobacco.
The polls was the next place where interest was shown.
Each man seemed to want an office of his own.
A few of the Old Guard still continued to run
And one more especially caused all the fun.

Each year at town meeting he would muster up spunk
To run for some office, only to flunk.
When the votes were all counted and he saw his small pile
His temper would raise and his language was vile.

“Get up here, Punkin,” in a voice not so sweet,
He would say to his horse, which he thought was quite fleet.
“We will pack up our sack and sell the old farm,
No one here seems to appreciate my howl of alarm.
They will tax the poor farmers as long as they can
And the benefit all goes to one certain man.
We will go to some country that’s new like this was
When I first took my claim, under Uncle Sam’s laws.”
We were getting along fine, all over good roads,
Had buggies and wagons to haul all our loads.
I’ll never forget the first buggy we had,
It cost us $8.00 the price was not bad.
But my wife didn’t like it, the dash board was gone,
The shafts were quite wiggly and the body was long.

The next thing to stir up neighborhood fun
A railroad had started though this country to run.
The project was favored by some of the crowd
While others far back protested aloud.
The smoke was a nuisance, ‘twould fire the land
And the country be run over with dirty old tramps.
However, it came with prosperity too,
And all are now satisfied that it went through
No railroad was e’er built without honors attached
And a spur was put in and named for George Hatch.
Honors those days were quite rare.
This being the first since I’d killed the bear.
You may depend upon it, this story is true,
And who the joke was on I’ll leave up to you.
Bear were quite frolicsome here they, you see
And this day I had seen one over in “Three”.
No more was thought of it, till some time that night
We heard the pigs squeal as if in great fright.
So out in our night clothes we went on the run
To the crotches in the kitchen where hung the old gun.
Then out in the darkness we went with a bound,
Closing the door without even a sound.
Then up from the stable came a form big and fat
With eyes bulging out, they shone like a cats.
Says I to my wife, “Now you hold the light
Right close to the barrel so I can see the sight.”
Then squaring myself and fearing buck fever,
Took a good aim and then pulled the trigger.
Down went the object and how I did laugh,
But my wife says to me, “That sounds like a calf.”
Go on, said I, she made me feel sore,
I guess I had heard a bear’s holler before.
So off for the carcass we must cut his throat now.
My wife speaks again, “Why, that’s Gust Albert’s cow!”

“Now, Smarty,” she says, “You’ve done a nice trick.
“Twill take you some time to get this thing fixed.”
Oh, no, I’ll go over to Gust and talk to him some
And offer to pay him, if he’ll just keep mum.
So we skinned the old cow and hung her up sleek
And early next morning we peddled the meat.
After making the sale the pile was too small
To make any start at a payment at all.
So we traded the pigs for another good cow
And gave it to Gus; this settled it now.
The money I got from the hide and the meat
I left in Cadott to pay for the treats.
The next event happened at town meeting one day,
A bridge had been voted to cross Chippewa
Oh, my, such a frown and some faces mean.
The country was ruined, ‘twas plain to be seen.
The very idea of spending that money
To help out a few looked pretty funny
Then Holcome was started, they wanted a bridge,
A big trade was in sight from the Flambeau Ridge.
The dam was unsafe for teams to cross
And we must have the bridge regardless of cost.
The money was raised by a margin of ten
The town had gone bug-house, would it never end?
Some faces were sunk, like a shoemaker’s stool,
While others resembled “Falbe’s Old Mule”.
Again, after this had quieted down
A petition was passed round to divide the town.
The whole lower end with her roads in good trim
Was anxious for us to take a new name.
It was voted and settled, the division went through
And we were to have towns thirty-one and two.
The new town was christened “Holcombe” that very same day,
And the champagne drank by “Ben Diamond” they say.
After this election was over Jim Martin’s old cow
Had gone up on the hill and caused quite a row.
She had eaten up log chains, damaged the barn,
Disfigured the roadway and ruined the farm.
Jim must be licked was the only way out,
But as Jim was quite willing that settled the bout,
Then there was trouble on school starting day
“Mrs. Porter” was bound always to have her own way
But she stuck to her figures and laid down the rule,
Which gave to Estella a peach of a school.
The next thing that happened made us all sad.
’Twas the news that Charles Henrickson was hurt quite bad.
He lingered along for a very short time
And then the word passed that he had crossed the line.
None of us here was more loved than was he,
And he’d acted his part during his stay.
The town site at the village then caused some talk
But Bernier’s addition was the easiest bought;
Some went to Bernier’s and some the other site,
There was very little choice, so buy where you might.
The next thing we hears is the boom at Cornell,
Everything looks good for this town so they tell,
No better location for a town could be found,
And no better people in the country around.
As I scoot o’er these roads and think as a boy,
How I helped to cut logs and make corduroy,
There was one piece of road, not made with ease,
Where I ditched on both sides in the mud to my knees
A neighbor took the job which was not to his wishing,
So he let me dig the dirt while he went fishing.
The road I relate of in this little yarn
Is the one running north and south by Ed Porter’s farm
The men I refer to are all pioneers,
Some are here yet but advanced in years.
All honor is due them for the work they have done
For the trails they have blazed that others might come.
Take them together they were a very good lot,
And each man among them had a big heart.
I think of the hardships we have stood here together
As we worked side by side on the creeks and the river,
When we waded in slush ice and water up to our breast,
And laid down at night by their fires to rest.
Some faint hearts there were that scattered about
But the pioneers stayed till the last log was lot.
When all these hardships and events I recall,
My heart beats with friendship for each and all
And when the log drive of life is all in with the rear,
May we be favored according to our past career
May all our peavies by attacked at the door of the goal
As we all answer “present” when the Great Timekeeper calls roll.
HOMESTEADING MEMORIES

Recalled by Ida Hewitt (Granddaughter of Gustave Roberts)

(As Emerson said, “The mind celebrates a little triumph every time it formulates a thought.” I had one yesterday and it cheered me up all day.)

It is believed that Hughett St. is misspelled Hewitt after Ida’s family.

IDA HEWITT'S MONTANA HOMESTEAD STORY

For many years our children have been asking about the “good ole” days in Montana when my husband, Wilbur and I were proving up our homesteads. This I’m happy to tell, but it begins in Wisconsin. Once you young people of today know about our early days, you will appreciate much more all the wonderful opportunities you have. Schooling is easily accomplished nowadays. Jobs and spending money are there if you’ll apply yourselves. Television and radio and the news media and the best of music are all yours for such a small effort on your part. Truly, you are blessed.

Back in 1895 when I was born, we lived in a small log cabin in the fork of the Chippewa and Fisher Rivers in North Central Wisconsin on my paternal grandfather’s (GustAVE Robert) homestead of 160 acres. Pa and I were born in the log cabin. Grandpa and Grandma had moved into a new two story brick house (Don Craker owned this house many years and now his daughter owns it) just built on higher ground; a tall chimney goes from the cellar floor up through the house and the date is still there in the cement – 1895. Even yet I love to go back and see this house. Those days all the children in our area called their parents Ma and Pa. We lived in this log house until I was six years old. Grandpa Robert (pronounced Row-bear) had planted apple and crab apple trees in the pasture. (Had Johnny Appleseed been there?)

Wisconsin is one of the most beautiful and bountiful states in America. Our gardens had about everything except okra and sweet potatoes, black eyed and other field peas and the new Sugar Snap Peas. These we now eat pod and all, sometimes with a dip! If you haven’t tried them, they are a must. They look like an English pea and are good cooked or raw, saving us the tedious shelling process at home.

Fish, venison, wild rice and small game were plentiful. Hunger was unknown. I’ve seen two tall men, my Pa and his brother, bring home sturgeon on a pole between their shoulders and the fish tails would drag on the ground. These big fish we smoked. With our own cattle, sheep, chickens, and fish from the nearby rivers and lakes and our own pork, bacon and hams, we ate very well.

In my 85th year, I am writing about how we lived in those early years. Now that we, Wilbur and I, are 91 and 86 years, we are living in a care center and are actually getting some spare time so I want to record those exciting days. It is possible that others will want to read this, too. My paternal grandfather, Gustave Robert, came to Indian America to homestead. He spoke French, English and Chippewa Indian fluently. “Chippewa” was the French-Indian colloquialism of Ojibwa. Grandpa came from Switzerland where he had been a watchmaker. There is no Swiss language – they speak German, French or English. Even today, those living near France speak French and those near Germany speak German. Others speak Italian or English. Many are bilingual. When I was there in 1966 we saw old ladies with hand scythes cutting hay around the fence posts and putting it on canvas squares which they carried on their heads to the barns. Their barnyards were so clean and orderly and were very near to their houses. Every house had window boxes with blooming plants and they looked so tidy. Their barnyards were swept with long homemade brooms of small twigs. We saw many signs of thrift.

Grandpa Robert’s wife was a Chippewa Indian and French girl, Josephine Gauthier. Grandma’s father was a French voyager who had come by way of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. Grandma was an excellent cook and she was a good housekeeper. She did beautiful Indian bead work. But, she seldom showed any sign of devotion or affection to her grandchildren or nieces and nephews. (Was this typical of Indians I’ve wondered?)

They left their log cabin when he built a stone and cement raised foundation wall filled in with dirt and rocks on higher ground than the original cabin. He had built cement steps that led up to his new and beautiful two-story, four bedroom eight room brick house. Behind the house Grandpa built a large wood shed, with an orderly workshop over
it, windows and all. He did beautiful woodwork and made many nice things for Grandma’s kitchen, like a
triangular box in the corner behind the kitchen door for overshoes and rubbers. Above this he had built triangular
delves where he kept the weekly Chippewa Heralds. Grandpa was meticulous in everything he did and his
houses were the nicest around. I’ll never forget his newspapers. He kept them folded and piled on a shelf each
one in rotation by months. That Chippewa Herald was the bane of my Grandmother’s existence. She had never
been to school and didn’t know one date from the other. Grandpa would fuss if the papers got out of rotation.
Imagine an active grandchild in that picture! Naturally, we three sisters always wanted to see the pictures in his
papers but woe be unto any of us who got them out of order. Grandma couldn’t help us keep them in order!
Worse yet – Grandma’s elderly mother was blind but she could make the most beautiful rugs. She had three
separate piles of colored cloth strips which she braided and made into rugs. Sometimes this was too much
temptation for a great grandchild, as we did find the brightly colored piles inviting. No wonder Grandma wasn’t
as affectionate as our Grandma Alix!

Having been a watchmaker, Grandpa was exacting although I never realized this was natural until I went to
Switzerland in 1966. Grandpa was the envy of our entire neighborhood because of his accomplishments around home.
He never took politics seriously, although he declared himself a Republican. He attended the Lutheran Church, but the
rest of the family was Catholic, as most Indians had Jesuit Priest background.

In 1895 log rolling and working in lumber camps was the small farmer’s salvation. Grandpa farmed in the
summer and logged in the winter. Across the river he had a logging camp, a cook’s shanty, bunk houses and barns built
of logs. He had about 20 or more struggling farmers working for him each winter to make enough for taxes, clothing,
sugar and flour, machinery, etc. for the coming year. They cut down trees, mostly pine, trimmed the logs, stamped them,
hauled them to the river bank and put them on skids slanted slightly toward the water. Grandpa’s “mark” could have
been “GR” for Gustave Robert. Each log was stamped with an end or bark mark or brand, much like Montana or
Texas cattle brands. Some exam:

Examples of end stamps on logs:


I’ve often wondered how they kept accurate records and paid each logger. However, each sawmill kept a list
of the bark and end marks and paid the owners of the logs accordingly. Come spring thaw, as the snow melted most of
the logs rolled down the bank into the river and floated down to the Chippewa Falls saw mills where some were sawed
for market. Most of our local logs were caught at Chippewa Falls and other were sent on downstream to Eau Claire
and even to the St. Louis mills. Most homes were built of logs but folks needed some boards for shelves and window
frames, flooring and so forth. Four trees furnished enough material for a small cabin. Wisconsin “pineries” (pine forests)
were noted for the lumber they furnished the early settlers.

Some of the more daring lumberjacks stayed on in the spring as “log rollers”. Logs were piled on skids slanted
toward the river bank during the winter. As melting snow and ice washed the logs into the river, the strays were rolled
into the river by log rollers with hooks. These men also broke up log jams along the 18 miles to Chippewa Falls. They
always rode the logs with a peavey and wore spiked shoes. I’ve known log rollers who couldn’t even swim, but they’d
get out there and ride a log in the deepest water. To this day, I marvel how they would guide the log they were riding to
the next log jam.

Usually on the Fourth of July a group of log rollers met at Holcombe for a picnic. They wore their spiked shoes
and rode logs in the rough water below the dam. Each had his peavey along. These were often breathtaking displays of
agility and courage as they maneuvered their logs in the turbulent waters. Sometimes we had other forms of
entertainment, and in the evening there was dancing. We children looked on and I’m sure many folks remember that
bright spot in their childhood. In current times men and women, boys and girls still compete for championship honors in
log rolling as a sport.
In 1906 a log jam formed above Holcombe Dam and the log rollers had a real job breaking up this jam. Eleven log rollers drowned. Each evening after supper the river folks would go out in their boats hunting for these men. My sister Lauretta (Laura) and I found one man. His body was caught in some tree roots near the bank across the river from our place. We managed to get the body loose and dragged it up on the bank. I’ll never forget how the flesh was puffed out above his high topped boots.

One of my earliest memories is of playing with a small skunk on a log outside the kitchen door. My mother said I was calling it “Kitty” when she saw me petting it. She called for me to put it down real easy and come to her. This I did, and the baby skunk and I both went to our Mamas with no scent. For years I’ve wondered if a young skunk could give off an odor. Today on Houston radio it was reported that if a young skunk is frightened it could! Our son-in-law claims he was watching a mama skunk and her young one day when suddenly they all raised their tails. That’s when he took off and he still doesn’t know!

THE TRAGEDY AT LITTLE FALLS IN 1906

BY: Charlie Klass

(As written in the Courier Sentinel August 23, 1979)

I’d like to have you people come
No matter where you be.
And listen to an ugly fate
That took our local boys away.

There were eleven shanty boys
Both manfully and brave
That helped break the jam at Holcombe
And found their watery graves.

On July the sixth in nineteen six
As you will shortly hear
The logs were piling mountains high
They could not keep them clear.

The company knew they needed help.
They sent work to Chippewa Falls.
And soon a crew were on their way
In answer to their call.

They said we’ll loosen up that jam
It won’t take long at all.
And soon we’ll have that pile of logs
On their way to Chippewa Falls.

Some of them went willingly
While others they stood back.
For they had been celebrating

And thought they’d better not.

But those eleven brave young men
Did volunteer to go
Each grabbed a peavey in their hands
And climbed into a bateau.

They hadn’t moved out very far
When the jam did break and go
And carried away those ten young men
With their foreman Young Gagnou
And all of them young faithful hearts
A few of us still recall
Were in among that mountain of logs
On their way to Chippewa Falls.
Edward Falbe

Edward Falbe was born in Green Lake county, Wisconsin on October 16, 1871, his parents being Henry and Minnie (Ponto) Falbe, natives of West Prussia, Germany. In 1864, they immigrated to the United States settling in Ripon, Wisconsin. At the age of fourteen, Edward went to work as a farm hand, at the age of nineteen he moved to Princeton, Wisconsin where he went into the draying business. Later he spent three years cooking in logging and railroad camps, and later took up railroad construction. Since 1901, was identified with railroad construction as a contractor. In 1902 he worked on the building of a road through Chippewa county and foresaw the growth of the area, purchased property and settled in the Holcombe township when there were no buildings and the land was covered with timber and brush. At one time he owned twenty-two forty-acre tracts and had also cleared and farmed another large tract near the village of Holcombe. He also owns and operates along with his wife a hotel and livery stable business in Holcombe. Mr. Falbe did spend some of his time with a construction gang in railroad work-having his own construction crew and being a contractor along that line for twelve years.

In Green Lake county, Wisconsin, Mr. Falbe was united in marriage to Miss Mathilda Manthey. They had 6 children Lester, Edward, Ervin, Henry, Agnes, Lillie.

Julius B. Fisk

Julius B. Fisk was born in Juneau County in 1857. He moved to Chippewa County in 1896 and did farming. In 1912 he sold his farm and moved to Holcombe and purchased the Holcombe Hotel.

Julius married Albina Holland in 1878. They had three children: Harry, Alfonzo and May. Alfonzo, known as Fon, settled in Holcombe as a railroad engineer. Fon’s first wife and children died. He then married Aletha Stockwell and they had six children: Perry, Mary, Howard, Dale and Elmer and a daughter, Violet, who died. Fon was a carpenter and he served on the town board in different positions. He was killed in a car accident in 1954. Perry and Mary are still living in Holcombe. Perry had a trucking company for many years. He and his daughter Dolly also lives in Holcombe. Mary married Harry Loring and had three children, Howard, Gary and Vicki, then divorced Harry and married John Wallace. They had seven children: Marty, Lee Ann, Trudy, Shelly, Violet, Duane and Darrell. Mary’s children also live in the area.
Reuben Fry was born in Beaver county, Pennsylvania on October 28, 1840. He grew to adulthood in the place of his birth.

When the civil war broke out, he enlisted in Sam Miller’s Company, R20 Regiment, Penn, Reserve Corps. He was wounded at Gain’s Mill, Virginia, on May 27, 1862. Very soon after this he was taken prisoner and held until December 6, the same year, when he was exchanged. Early in November 1863, he was discharged. After a thirty day visit at home, he re-enlisted and served with the Captain Mathew Merchant Co. K191 Regiment of the Pennsylvania Volunteers. He was enrolled December 19, 1863, to serve for three years or the duration of the war.

He participated in the following battles: Fredrickburg, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Spottsylvania Courthouse, North Ann and finally at Appomattox, where General Lee surrendered.

Mr. Fry, who then was a corporal was honorably discharged on May 28, 1865.

He was united in marriage to Nancy Jane Stewart in 1869. In 1902 with his family moved to the Estella and then to the Holcombe area.

Reuben and Nancy Fry had six children.

He passed away on December 7, 1920. He will be remembered as a noble citizen and a friend.
Albert Glenn

Albert “Bert” Glenn, was born March 16, 1873 in Weedsport, Onandaga county, New York. He moved to Holcombe in 1904. Bert worked as a depot clerk and agent, and he had also worked on the wooden dam at Holcombe. He was a member of the Modern Woodmen of America. He served on the Board of School District #11 as clerk, Holcombe cemetery board, Holcombe town board.

He was united in marriage to Clara Lintz from Cadott on July 4, 1897. Eight children were born to this union, Lyle, Mamie, Doris, Enid, Douglas, Roger, Rodrick and Helen.

Bert Glenn passed away on August 21, 1954.

William Graff

Leonard, Mary, Roy (little boy)

Graff Wedding
2nd row: Ray Cleaves, Fon Fisk, E. Lother, Bob Chambers, Erv Hunter, J.B. Fisk, George Angle with calfs
The Guthman name became associated with the Holcombe area around 1890 when Herman and Ida Guthman (Stassel) moved here from Crimmitschau, Germany. They had an infant daughter, Martha, who died at the age of 3 shortly after arriving in the United States. They settled in an area east of Holcombe in Section 34 and 35.

There were four more children born of the marriage as follows. Carl Herman Sr. born October 29, 1892; Minnie Marie born January 28, 1900; Otto Gustav born November 22, 1904; and Walter Herman Sr born November 30, 1912.

The Guthman name has been pronounced as tho it were ‘Goodman’. In more recent times it is pronounced as it is spelled by those who would have no knowledge of its historical pronunciation. In what appears to be the baptismal certificate of Otto the name is spelled Gudhmann and on some documents it is spelled Guthmann. Perhaps the ‘Goodman’ pronunciation came from the Gudhmann spelling.

There is no record of any other Guthman moving to the immediate area. On the Stassel side of the family the elder Stassels, Ida’s parents, also moved here and through the years had 7 children some of whom remained in the Holcombe area.

Before coming to America Herman served in the German military. He also spent a short time working in a brewery. After arriving and settling near Holcombe it appears that Herman worked in the logging camps for most of his years. He was a foreman on a logging crew that worked for Carl Stassel, a brother of Ida’s. He also farmed along with the woods work.

The original 40 acres remained in the family nearly 90 years. Herman and Ida lived there until Herman died at the age of 54 years of a ruptured appendix. That would have been in 1922. The story has it that he took a train out of Cornell to get to medical help in Chippewa but was not able to get there in time to get the help he needed. Ida continued to live there until her death in December of 1952. Otto married in 1929 to Lucinda Downer and they lived on the home place. After Otto married an addition was placed on the original farmhouse and that is where Ida lived. This writer can remember many conversations between Otto and his mother that took place in German. English was spoken primarily but the German language was not forgotten. Otto and Lucinda continued to live on the home farm until the fall of 1977.

All of the children walked to the Enterprise school which was a mile to the South of the home farm on what is today 290th street. The school like all the other area schools later consolidated with the Holcombe school. The last year of classes for Enterprise should have been in the spring of 1951. As far as we know Walter was the only one of the four children to go through the 8th grade. For entertainment they would walk to the Legion on hwy 178 in Cornell to attend dances. All of Carl, Otto and Walters children also walked to the Enterprise school until it closed.

The eldest child was Carl born October 29, 1892. Carl’s first full time job was at a stonemill at the age of 14 working 10 hours a day in Holcombe for $1.65 a day. He later helped to build the Cornell dam and also did some work laying railroad tracks. He went into service in 1918 and served in the first world war. He married Gertrude Kellogg on November 23, 1920. In 1922 he went to Eau Claire and worked there for a short period of time doing chauffeur work and delivering ice. They moved back home following the death of his dad. For a short time they lived in a place along Hwy W
the town of Estella and then moved back to Holcombe to farm for several years. They sold the farm to their oldest son Carl Jr and moved into the Town of Holcombe in about 1947. He worked as janitor at the office when the new dam was being built. Later they moved and operated a store on Hwy 27 north of town. That was later sold and they moved into a trailer near what is known as Pine Lake. Gertrude passed away in 1973 and he later married Celesta Tonnancour. In addition to Carl Jr. (Iona Escher) they had another son Edward Lee (Gertrude Celske) and three daughters Helen Mae (Lloyd Hatfield), Lorraine Olive (Robert Thon) and Harriet Grace (Jack Allard). Carl also had served on the Holcombe Town Board for 12 years, eight of them were as chairman. He also had service on the county board.

Daughter Minnie was born on January 28, 1900. Minnie moved to Eau Claire and was employed at the Northern Colony in Chippewa Falls. She met and married Henry Brown of Eau Claire on July 1, 1922. Together they had two daughters, Delores (John Heffernan) and Shirley (Ray Knott). Minnie and Henry lived in Eau Claire until his death in May of 1950. Minnie then went to work as a nurses aid at Luther Hospital in Eau Claire. She would later meet and marry Kent ODonnel. They would later move back to Holcombe. After Kent passed away she met and married Alfred Brenner of Holcombe. They would reside near the Lake until Minnies passing in 1978.

Otto was born on the 22nd day of November in 1904. At an early age he went to the woods to work with his Uncle Carl Stassel in the logging camps. For a period of time he also worked in Eau Claire delivering ice to residences and business. This career was cut short when he dropped a chunk of ice on his foot and smashed it. He returned home to the family farm and continued to farm there until 1966. He also did road work with his team of horses including grading and building. In 1929 he married Lucinda Downer. A daughter Irene (Ronald Johnson) was born in 1930 and in 1939 Raymond (Yvonne Alix) was born. Otto built a new barn on the farm in 1943. In those days all the work was done by hand, foundation footings and hauling rocks...
off the farm for the basement wall. Raymond purchased the Carl Guthman farm in 1958 and continued to live there with his family until 2002. Otto served on the school board for the Enterprise school and later for the Holcombe school district. After quitting farming he went to work with local surveyor Herbert Brown helping to survey. In 1977 they moved from the home farm and built their new house on an adjoining 40 acres. Otto passed away in July of 1981 and his wife Lucinda lived until April of 1986.

The youngest of the children was Walter born on November 30, 1912. Like his siblings before him he grew up helping with the chores. He milked 6 cows by hand in the old log barn before he went to school. When he was out of school he found work in the woods during the winter for $1.00 a cord. He did chores for Gus Albert for 50 cents a day and layed rock silos with Alfred Harms during the summer. For two summers he worked for Alfred Brown paving Highway 27 from Cornell to Holcombe. This included placing riprap by the bridge over the Fisher River. He would later work for the Jones farm as a hired hand for $15.00 a month and room and board - the second year he got $25.00 a month and had to milk 30 cows. His first car bought was a 1928 Chevy, 4 years old, for $125.00. His next car was purchased in 1937 for $760.00. In 1936 he and Edith Logan were married. That same year he went to work in the paper mill in Cornell and stayed there until 1942. They also farmed and milked cows. He found he could not make a living farming so went back to the mill in 1948 and retired in 1971. He and Edith lost a house to fire in 1946 at their place along Hwy W. They then moved to Hwy 27 and lived there until 1960 when they moved up on the Sand Road across from the old Shackleton house. Walter Jr took over the farm. In 1962 the barn burned. Walter also served on the Holcombe Town board for four years. Walter and Edith had two children Walter Jr. (Karen McChesney) and Lois (Tracy Brown). Both Walter Jr and Lois are still living in the area. Edith passed away in May of 1977 and he married Lucille Sauerwein in February of 1981. Walter passed away June 1996.

All the direct descendants of those mentioned are still living in the area with the exception of three - Lorraine Thon, Helen Hatfield and Irene Johnson who are deceased. There are also several grandchildren and great grandchildren still living and working in the area.

What appears to be the baptism certificate of Otto Guthman on August 25, 1905
Charles A. Henrickson

Charles Henrickson was born in Norway on April 16, 1864. He immigrated to the United States in 1881 with his family. He purchased one hundred and twenty acres of land in the Holcombe township, Chippewa county. (Section 20, township 31, range 6). C.A. Hendrickson devoted his attention to building a substantial residence and barn. Charles Henrickson married Jennie Sather, a native of the United States and by whom he had five children: Jessie, Allen C., Carrol F., Henry, Alice.

Charles A. Henrickson died May 15, 1907. The cause of death was a result of a farming accident. He was clearing a stumpy field on his farm, had his leg broken and mangled. He was taken to the hospital at Chippewa Falls, but passed away a few days later never regaining consciousness.

M.A. Henriksen (Henrickson)

M.A. Henriksen was born in Laurvik, Norway on November 21, 1867, a son of Knute Henriksen. Knute worked one year in Milwaukee and then came to Chippewa county purchasing two hundred and eighty acres. This acreage was wild, covered with standing hardwood timber. There was no highway for miles, sparsely settled and very undeveloped. Knute was a blacksmith by trade. He spent much time to that and also to farming. He built a house of six-inch hewed, planed and matched logs-common to Norway. Knute was married to Miss Olea Frederickson in Norway. They had ten children: Henry, Anna, M.A. of this review, Fannie, Fritz, Anton, C.A., who is deceased, and three who died in infancy.

M.A. was fourteen when he traveled with his parents to the new world and remained with until they passed away. He came into possession of one hundred and twenty acres of the original homestead in the Holcombe township and resides in the log house, built by his father. M.A. Henrickson is engaged in dairy farming.

On April 2, 1904, Mr. Henrickson was united to Miss Hattie Albert, they had one child, Marie.

James and Christine Jardine

James and Christine Jardine, two of the first settlers in this area, moved here in 1898, before Holcombe existed. All there was here at this time, Christine Jardine recalls was a small dam and a lumber mill operated by her husband. The population varied from about 40 to as few as six depending on how many men were employed in log drives.

James and Christine helped organize the Holcombe Episcopal Church in 1906, which today is the United Methodist Church. A church could not be built until they had a site to build on so Christine, then secretary of the church board, wrote to the Eau Claire Company asking them to donate the land. They did so for $1.00.
Louis Eugene (Jene) JuVett
1858-1944

Louis (Jene) immigrated from Switzerland to escape a prearranged marriage. He lived in this area with the Indians and why he chose this area is not known. He married Marguerite (Negamoseque) who was a Chippewa Indian. They had four children, Mae, Louis, William and John. Marguerite passed away from an unknown illness. He then married Louise Jones Mayhue (1862-1913) who was a widow with six children, Cyril, Silas, Hattie, Lottie, Simon, Frank and together they had three children, Eugene, Charles and George. Louis (Jene) was a part of the logging era, working at the wooden dam and also being a part of the story of the Dam Indian. Luke Lyons hired Louis (Jene) JuVette to haul the log that would be carved into the Dam Indian, which would be placed on the Little Falls dam and now resides by the Holcombe Town Hall. He was a farmer and also operated a shingle mill in Holcombe. On his farm he raised Guernsey cattle, Buff Orpington and Silver Laced Wyandotte chickens, Bronze turkeys, Chinchilla rabbits. The JuVette farm has remained in the family. Winona and Bill Turner the present owners, Winona being the granddaughter of Louis (Jene) JuVette.
A MESSAGE TO YOU FROM
HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.

Mr. Louis Eugene JuVett

11th May 1918

WINDSOR CASTLE.

Soldiers of the United States, the people of the British Isles welcome you on your way to take your stand beside the armies of many nations now fighting in the Old World the great battle for human freedom. The Allies will gain new heart and spirit in your company. I wish that I could shake the hand of each one of you and bid you God speed on your mission.

George R.I.

April 1918.

Louis Eugene JuVett

JuVett farm house Charles & George JuVette and Lottie Mayhue
Antone Paulsen

Antone Paulsen was born on August 28, 1865 in Middelfart, Denmark. He was employed as a Cigar maker. On a trip to Germany to purchase tobacco for the business he met his future wife, Anna Bruening. Anna was born in Harburg, Germany on April 25, 1876. They were married on March 4, 1893 in Germany. They lived in both Germany and Denmark for several years after their marriage and four of their children were born in Europe. Marie and Bernardine were born in Germany and Herman and Paul (Marius) being born in Denmark. In 1902, the Paulsens immigrated to Clinton, Wisconsin, where Annas' brother Albert lived. Eight more children would be born to this family, Albert, Antoinette, Ernest, Robert, Max, Henry, Eleanor and Bernard.

Antone became acquainted with a gentleman by the name of Gregory West, who was from the Holcombe area. Mr. West told the Paulsens that there was land in Holcombe that could be purchased cheaply. In 1905 the Paulsen family moved to Holcombe first moving into Barney Town and in 1907 purchased 40 acres in section 27. The land had to be cleared for farming and a log cabin and barn was built. Antone worked for the railroad and was a farmer.

Axel Laursen

Axel Laursen was born in Denmark on January 5, 1849, his parents were L. and Kerstine Laursen both of whom passed away in Denmark. L. Laursen was involved in agriculture but later, settled in Skovlyst, Smadkaeclund, Denmark where he had a large summer garden and restaurant during the months of April to October.

At the age of twenty-three A. Laursen in 1873 came to the United States. For two and one-half years resided in Boston, Massachusetts as a sailor, then made his way to Nebraska where he purchased one hundred sixty acres of land in Stanton county. Soon after sold the property and returned to Denmark. In 1899 returned to America and made his home in Chippewa county, Wisconsin working in the woods his first year. He purchased eighty acres of unimproved land in Holcombe township, from which he started a farm.

Mr. Laursen was united in marriage to Miss Berget Kerstine Davidson, a native to Denmark. They have three children; Adolphine married to Christ Johnson, Chippewa county; Lawrence A., Eau Claire and Rufus married Mabel Peterson, Cornell.

The Laursen Pump invented by L.A. Laursen Inventor at Holcombe Wisconsin

October 4, 1970

Roving Reporter

By Earl Chapin

BIG IDEA

Axel Laursen came to these shores as a penniless immigrant but with the courage and fortitude so commonly displayed by the pioneers, he began the prodigious task of grubbing a farm out of the stony forests at Chippewa county. The first time the assessor visited Laursen's log shanty, there was no table on which to lay his books.

But Laursen was not a man destined to till the soil. His mind was on invention and his ideas, when they came, were never the small change kind. So it happened that one day when Laursen was standing on the old wooden dam at Holcombe watching the excess of hydraulic energy, he got an idea. Wasn't it possible to employ water's own energy to pump it into a workable water system?

LAURSEN THOUGHT he could do it. So did Ed Falbe of Holcombe. Falbe operated a hotel there and had made some money in the railroad construction business. With his capital and Laursen's ingenuity, the men hoped to build an economical water system for Holcombe and the other towns similarly blessed with hydro energy.

Laursen built a fantastic engine to accomplish the purpose. It worked, but not well enough. Maybe its perfection was an unsavable as perpetual motion. Undiscouraged, Laursen kept right on with other inventions. And eventually he perfected the full circle process of making inner tubes and made a small fortune.
Edward Porter

Edward Porter was born in Durham, Quebec, Canada on May 25, 1853, his parents were William and Margaret Porter. Mr. Porter received his education in Canada until the age of fourteen and then took up the occupation as a clerk in a general store. He then spent three years in railroad construction work in the state of Vermont and then continued in the same line of work in Duluth and Superior. He came to Chippewa county in 1877 working in the woods and forming a partnership with Warren Flint for ten years and continuing in that business until 1900, and he was also involved in farming at the same time. In the spring of 1913, he started into the real-estate business, where he found much success.

Mr. Porter served as chairman of the Township of Holcombe for Nine years. Mr. Porter was united into marriage to Miss Jennie F. Kean, her father being I. H. Kean, a merchant in Eau Claire. The Porters had three children: Herbert T., Grace, Margaret. Fraternally he associated with the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows and the Modern Woodmen of America.

Gustave Robert

Mr. Robert (pronounced “Row-bear”) came to this country about which he had heard many romantic tales and found true romance when he married Josephine Gauthier in 1869. (Another account gives it as 1870.) Francis Gauthier (it was at one time pronounced “Goat-shi”) passed away in 1880 and then Mrs. Gauthier, Ben, Charles and Julia moved to Lac Du Flambeau. Some of you probably have visited the Gauthier Resort, which Ben established there.

Gustave Robert was a go-getter. Money which he earned from logging their property near the mouth of the Fisher River was put to good use. The original log house built at the confluence of the Fisher and Chippewa Rivers in 1870 was replaced by a brick home in 1894. It was the first of its kind in the wilderness. (He got the bricks from Chippewa Falls). (Lori Craker lives there now)

Henry Roberts, Gustave Robert’s son told me that the home is still in excellent shape. The setting of their home would be enough to gladden the heart of any sportsman. Game was plentiful and catching fish was sometimes too easy. Henry said, “Dad caught huge muskies in one evening. A spoon hook served as a lure that muskies seemed to like. Dad had no pole – he fastened one end of the line to his arm and held the line in one hand as he rowed. When a big fish was on, it would sometimes tow the boat around the river. Setlines were placed at the mouth of the Fisher River. We had catfish everyday.” Naturally, walleyes, bass and northerns were also plentiful.

History floated by the Robert home on the mighty Chippewa. Log drivers, wanigans, bateaux, logs, Indians, loggers on their way up river to camps and river men pushing logs ahead of them in the spring were scenes which became etched on their memories. Henry Robert will never forget the day when the bateaux from which 11 men drowned passed by their place.

Mr. Robert was a remarkable man and I hasten to say that he was married to an equally remarkable woman, Josephine (Gauthier) Robert. She spoke three languages – French, Chippewa and English. (Doesn’t that stop you short? Some folks now days can’t learn one language even if they have a teacher.)
She, like her parents, were half Indian and half French and was well acquainted with many Indians who stopped at Brunet’s friendly spot on the river. She remembered seeing Ah-mous, Chief of the Flambeau, coming down the river in a canoe with his son and “Old Abe” the Civil War eagle, which the young man had captured. In fact, the then very young Josephine Gauthier fed fish to the eagle which all of our country was to acclaim. Mrs. Robert cooked at their fist log home for men who were cutting timber for her husband. When operations were farther away, she sometimes cooked in the camps. It is plain to see that the Roberts’ were a good team. Ezra Cornell made his headquarters at Brunet’s Long Log Stopping place when he was selecting pine stands which eventually enriched Cornell University (I can’t understand why the U of W didn’t do as well!) Ed Rutledge and Alex McDonall were a few of the notables who stopped regularly for bed and board at the frontier emporium at the foot of the magnificent Brunet Falls. History was made at this wilderness oasis but we know too little of it.

Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Roberts

Four Presidents Slept Here

BY: Ralph Christoffersen

(Taken from The Chippewa Telegram, Friday, October 25, 1974. VOL. 5 NO. 17 Section B – Area People, Places Historic Goldmine)

Chippewa County has not taken advantage of the veritable goldmine, which we have, in the way of historical sites. Some cities make much of pointing out that “Washington slept here”—“Lincoln slept here”—and so on. Would you believe that one of our locations was visited by three future presidents of the United States and that a future president of the confederacy visited another? Unbelievable you say – and yet it appears that Zachary Taylor, James Buchanan and Ulysses S. Grant were guests at the Brunet Stopping place at Cornell, Wisconsin. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy and Robert Anderson, defender of Fort Sumter were in our county when they were army lieutenants in charge of protecting logging operations when Indians were on the warpath. They were in the Cadott, Boyd and Stanley areas. Henry Roberts of Tony, Wisconsin gave me information, which indicates that future Presidents Taylor, Buchanan and Grant stopped at the most famous boarding house on the Chippewa River, which was at Brunette’s Falls. This to my knowledge has not been authenticated by an eminent historian but it adds luster to the historic site. I was further informed that Presidents to be Buchanan and Grant signed Brunette’s guest book.

Mr. Brunet’s (I will use recent spelling) long, log boarding and rooming facilities were located on level land near the foot of his portage. The steep, vertical drop at Brunet’s Falls was impossible to navigate. A fine grove of white pine trees is now growing near the river not far from where the buildings once stood. A nice spring furnished the pioneers with fine water. We should reconstruct the buildings of that day and equip them with artifacts of logging days. After all, what other spot in what was once a wilderness has seen so many important men come and go? The men I have mentioned are but a few of the citizens who stayed for a night or longer after being lulled to sleep by the powerful music of our greatest waterfall. Henry Roberts of Tony, Wisconsin has the Brunet Ledger. From a historical point of view, it is priceless!
Salt of the Earth

The Brunet legend has always intrigued and amazed me. Someday it should be put into perspective for all to read but today I want to give you a little insight into the remarkable family which made things go at Brunet’s Place. The more I learn about the Gauthier’s, the greater my empathy for them gets to be. In feeling or perception Francis Gauthier and his wife worked for Mr. Brunet most of their days until Mr. Brunet’s death in 1877. By today’s standards, it was a novel arrangement because very little money changed hands. The Gauthier’s, including daughters Rose, Josephine, Julia and sons Benjamin and Charles performed the multitude of tasks required to maintain a boarding and rooming house for transient loggers from the late 1830’s to 1880. For the devoted works of a lifetime, their immediate needs were taken care of but little cash found its way into their pockets. I imagine the boys worked in the woods at times.

Some accounts indicate that a railroad was used to haul gear around the falls. This is incorrect. Stone boats, wagons with wooden wheels made out of a cross section of a pine log, and later wagons equipped with iron wheels were used. Oxen provided the power, which conveyed heavy equipment up the steep incline to more placid waters above the falls. The ingenuity of our pioneers certainly amazes me. Loggers and crews came upriver to the falls. They would stay the night but in the meantime, their heavy gear had to be portaged before they could leave the next morning. I am sure that the Gauthier’s had their hands full when loggers were on the move. They certainly earned a great deal more than their keep. I repeat, it would be great to simulate the original setting of 136 years ago, by the waters edge near the white pines, which are symbolic of the fact that life is continuous. I agree, it wouldn’t be the same because the wild river is harnessed now.

A Great Lady

Josephine Gauthier married Gustave Robert when she was in her 21st year. Their first cabin was built in a different manner than most log homes. It was made of small logs, hewn square, neatly fitted together with dovetailed corners. It served until the brick home was built in 1894. Mr. Robert was a good lumber cruiser. He was employed by Ezra Cornell who used Mr. Robert’s talents in locating prime timber that enriched Cornell University, which bears Ezra Cornell’s name.

Many travelers stopped at the Robert home on journeys up or down the river but what do you make of this one? A visitor comes walking out of the forest with a tree limb on his shoulder. On its end he has a bandana in which are a few necessities such as soap, a razor and other personal effects. He is given supper, a bed and breakfast the next morning before he continues his journey. He probably thanked Mrs. Robert but never was moved to give her any money. (Probably none was expected!) That man made millions in the lumber business and he was now on his way to inspect his holdings or to add other choice properties to his portfolio. His name was Frederick Weyerhaeuser – king of the lumbermen.

Possibly he was checking out section 36 in some township. (I have been given to understand that they were free.) He probably had more than his share of such windfalls. Mr. Weyerhaeuser made lots of money but he took it with him. We can be thankful that men like Irvine, McDonell and Rutledge left legacies to the city that will perpetrate their memory. I like that!

This column is but a short overview of the parents of two families which I chose to call Salt of the Earth. We owe much to them and others like them.

Mrs. (Gauthier) Robert lived to the golden age of 96. She was always an inspiration to all who knew here. She was a devout Catholic and found favor with her Lord. He blessed the Roberts by presenting them with five children – Lena, Louis, Charles, Marie and Henry. A grandson now operates the fine Robert eating establishment which is on 178 between Jim Falls and Cornell. He is but one of the many descendants of the union between the Swiss immigrant and the “lady of the falls”. Her pastor, Father Peter Minweggen, brought her a copy of the picture “A Sacred Heart” which had been blessed by Pope Pious X.

It is plain to see that Mrs. Gustave Robert will live on to eternity in the minds and hearts of all who knew her.
In 1903 Dr. Rodecker came to Holcombe for a visit with an old time friend, JB Fisk. He was so impressed with the outlook of the Holcombe area, that six months later relocated his general practice here. For eleven years, he was the only doctor in Holcombe that also included Cornell and Flambeau area. His home was located on Irvine Avenue over the drugstore which he also owned and operated. Making house calls could be very challenging in those days when roads were poor or nonexistent. His mode of transportation was by horse-drawn buggy or sleigh or by using a handcar to ride along the rails to Arnold or other settlements.

His father, a physician from Wonnewoc, Sauk County came up to visit and hunt in the area, liked Holcombe and decided to move up and help with the practice.

Resources used:
“March of Civilization” Mrs Edward Porter
“Only the old timers know Little Falls” The Cornell Courier
Dr. Rodecker
horse drawn sleigh

Dr. Rodecker and Cora
Herman Stassel

Herman Stassel came to the United States from Germany as a teenager with his parents. He lived on a tract of land east of town.

Herman served on the town board in different positions. He was also a member of a local band called “The Modern Woodmans Band” organized in the early 1900’s. Herman worked at various logging camps. He was married and had two children, a daughter Marie and a son Henry. Herman died at the Odd Fellows Home in Green Bay on July 1, 1964. His daughter Marie married Howard Crank, who later became a town chairman in the early 1950’s. Herman had three grandchildren that also became involved in the town board in later years.
The Maple Leaf Stock Farm of W. J. Stockwell & Son is one well known in Holcombe Township and Chippewa County. They are proprietors of a farm of one hundred and sixty acres well stocked with pure-blooded and high-grade Guernsey cattle and they conduct an extensive and profitable dairy business. Everything is done along modern scientific lines, neatness and thriftiness characterizing the place, while the utmost care is given to the sanitary conditions so that milk of the greatest purity is put upon the market. Energetic and determined, Mr. W. J. Stockwell has worked his way upward since he started out in life on his own account at an early age. He was born in the Green Mountains of Vermont on November 29, 1860, and is the son of Francis and Harriet (Hale) Stockwell, both of whom were natives of Massachusetts. In 1865 they removed to Webster County, Iowa, and subsequently went to Nebraska, where the father homesteaded a tract of land and engaged in farming. He continued to reside there for a long time, but in 1902 came to Barron County and now makes his home on a small farm near Conrath, Wisconsin. Both he and his wife are now past seventy years of age.

Although born in New England, W. J. Stockwell has spent the greater part of his life in the middle west. He was but five years of age when the family went to Webster County, Iowa, where he was reared until the removal to Nebraska. Of the latter state he continued a resident until 1902 when he took up his abode in Barron County. Two years later, however, he removed to Eau Claire and in 1906 came to the farm which he now owns and occupies, first acting as manager for the previous owner and subsequently purchasing the land. He and his sons have made good improvements upon the place, building a large barn, also putting up a silo and adding other modern accessories and equipment. The farm is now carefully tilled and in addition to the raising of cereals, Mr. Stockwell makes a specialty of handling cattle and now has thirty-five head of high-grade and pure-blooded Guernseys, with a registered bull at the head of his herd. He thus breeds and raises stock and keeps many of his cows for dairy purposes, selling a large amount of cream. His farming and dairying interests are conducted along most scientific lines and Mr. Stockwell is meeting with good success, gaining for himself a place among the representative agriculturists of the district.

While in Nebraska, Mr. Stockwell was married to Miss Violet Harvard who was born in the state of New York and they became the parents of six children Lester D., who is in partnership with his father; Clinton H., who is married and occupies an adjoining farm; Herbert, who is married and makes his home in Barron County, Wisconsin; Edity, the wife if Iva Dinsmore of Barron County and Ethel and Aletha, both at home. Mrs. Stockwell passed away in 1903 in Barron County and Mr. Stockwell then had the whole care and responsibility of the children and some of them were at the time quite small.

Mr. Stockwell is a Republican and has served on the township board for two years. He was also clerk of the school board for two years and is interested in all measures that tend to improve and up build town and county. He is working hard and the success that crowns persistent effort is now rewarding his labors.
H.L. Tinker

H.L. Tinker came to Chippewa county in April 1906. He was an agent for the Chicago, St Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway at Holcombe. He was born at Westfield, Massachusetts on November 20, 1875. His education took place at the following schools: Huntington, Holyoke and Springfield Massachusetts, until he was eighteen years old. He then was employed by Springfield National Bank as a bookkeeper for the next three years. The Midwest attracted him and in 1897 he traveled to River Falls, Wisconsin, where he was employed by Chicago, St Paul, M & O Railroad as a telegraph operator. He then served in the Spanish-American war enlisting at Hudson, Wisconsin as a member of Co. C., Third Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Returned to Wisconsin in 1899 and went back to the railroad company as an agent traveling to various locations in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. He prospered in Holcombe. Evidence of that was in the real estate that he owned. Those included were his own home, two other houses and properties in Holcombe and the surrounding area.

June 14, 1900, Mr. Tinker was united in marriage at River Falls to Miss Mary A. Deans. The Tinkers had two children, William L. and Lola I.

Fraternally Mr. Tinker was a Mason, an Odd Fellows and a member of the Order of Railway Telegraphers. He also served one year as Town Clerk of Holcombe.

Walters

Pete Walters came from Holland to Sheboygan and then came to Holcombe. Peter received his schooling in Holland. There were four brothers and three sisters. Pete married Mary Russell in Cadott. She was a teacher. They had seven children; Louis, Ogden, Glen, Lucille, Rayland, Lorraine and Betty. Pete was into logging lumber and construction. He built the Holcombe School. Pete died at the age of 90. Several of the children had businesses in the area. Ogden had an appliance business and feed store. Glenn had a hardware store. Rayland had a bar and restaurant and Lucille and her husband Bill Sauerwein had a grocery store for awhile. Rayland and Lucille still live in Holcombe.

Robert L. Zimmerman

He was the assistant cashier at the State Bank of Holcombe. Chippewa county lists him as one of her native sons having been born in Chippewa Falls on April 3, 1887, his parents were Frank and Effie (Boutelle) Zimmerman. His father was a flour and feed merchant in Cadott. He attended school in Cadott and graduated in 1904. He then began work on a farm near Holcombe and also at a store, beginning his experience that prepared him for his present position. Also has interest in the real estate business and has negotiated several real estate deals.

He was involved with local fraternal groups having taken the royal arch degree in Masonry Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Mr. Zimmerman was married July 15, 1913 to Caddie Runkel of Cornell, Wisconsin.
Anton Bergerson & family - Late 1901
Back row: Christion, Moe, Carl, Anton
Middle: Anna
Seated: Elizabeth Bergerson Tweit, Ester, Maratha (Anton’s wife)
Children: Ragna, John

Hans Halla Farm

The farm today - Fisher Farms - Ervine and Mary Larson
Front: left to right: 1st unknown, Lola Tinker, Florence Moorey (dark dress, white collar), Church Decon and Lay Pastor, unknown, Mrs George Spaffard
2nd Row: Mrs. Caroline Dehler, Mrs. Roy White, Mrs. Omar Adams, Mrs. Phoebe Edminster, Mrs. Oris Adams
Mrs. James Jardine who holds son, Tom, unknown
3rd Row: Mrs. A.J. Edminster, Mrs. George Zerbach, Angeline Zerbach, Dell Brooks, Mrs. Tom Dehler with child
4th Row: unknown, Mrs. Thadeus Loiselle, Mrs. Alfred Brunning, Proell, Edna West
3 children in front not identified.
Shorty Staples & Marve Olson East of Holcombe

A catch of long ago, A.J. Edminster and R.L. Zimemrman

Rural mail carrier 1922. This was one of the Holcombe routes. Picture courtesy of Mrs. Herman Paulsen

Early days in Holcombe
Fred Aliesch
Submitted by daughter, Nancy Sullivan

Fred Aliesch was born in 1911 in Switzerland. He grew up in Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin. Fred was a surveyor and had worked for Chippewa County, the government on the Alaskan highway and Northern States, which is why Fred came to Holcombe in 1948. He was the surveyor for Northern States Power Company when the dam was built creating Lake Holcombe.

Fred then opened a sporting goods shop in Holcombe. They had moved to Birchwood and are buried there.

Fred married in 1936 and had two daughters and one son.

Fred died in 1984 and his wife in 1985.

Byron E. and Louise C. Beighley

Byron and Louise lived in the township of Lake Holcombe since they were children. Byron is the son of Theron and CoraBelle (Towns) Beighley. Byron is from a family of eight children.

Louise is the daughter of Emil and Ella Walsvik (Pahl). Louise is from a family of seven children.

Byron and Louise married 7-18-1951 at Chippewa Falls.

Byron worked at the paper mill and farmed. He served in the Korean War.

Byron was Holcombe Town Chairman for years.

Louise was a housewife who enjoyed cooking and flowers.

During their marriage they raised three children. They have six grandchildren.

Byron passed away on June 13, 1990.
Great Grandpa was born on 12/29/1883 in Sauk County, WI and died on 3/07/1967 in Holcombe, WI. He married Eva Doulgas on 8/15/1905. Great Grandma was born in North Freedom, WI and died on 2/18/1967 in Holcombe, WI. They had 5 children: Lawrence, Hazel (Hoffer), Mazel (twin died at birth), Beatrice (Kelly), and Pearl (Winkler). They lived in the Bateman area before moving to Holcombe in the early 1940’s, 4 miles outside of Holcombe on the banks of the Chippewa River.

Great Grandpa was a farmer and painter most of his life. He painted homes, churches, red barns and many local businesses; he was still painting at the age of 70. He grew green beans and soybeans. He also worked on the Holcombe dam by going down into the big reservoirs and painting the insides of them. He told many stories of the huge fish he saw. He also sold ice to people, by cutting chunks of ice out of the lake with a hand saw and hauling them by horses to the barn. He would cover them with sawdust to keep them froze.
Great Grandpa had one of the first steam thrashing machines and went around Chippewa County working on farms.

Friends gave them a 65th Anniversary party in 1967, at the ages of 83 and 84. They were married 66 years and had over 50 Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren. They passed away within 2 weeks of each other. Still living on the banks of the Chippewa River of Lake Holcombe.

Great Grandpa was known for his 6:00 o’clock run into town to get his evening “Paper” at Bud and Sally’s bar.

**Lawrence Eugene Black**
(known at Shorty)

Grandpa was born on 5/12/1906 in Beloit, WI and died on 12/21/1982 in Holcombe, WI. He married Fanny Armilda Carroll in 1929. They had 7 children: Don, Billy (died as a baby), Margie (McKay), Lloyd, Betty (Helland), Bonnie (Hayes), and Sharron (Miller).
At the age of 13 Grandpa went to work for his father, Elmer, as a mechanic keeping the machinery all running with the thrashing business. At the age of 18 he ran his own garage in Barney Town. He became a mechanic by trade and later worked at the Chevrolet garage in Thorp for many years. He also had a station in Holcombe and a garage at the four corners on Highway 27 and I94.

Grandpa married Doris (Krone) Stillman of Holcombe on 9/2/1959.

Don Eugene Black

Dad was born on 1/20/1930 in Chippewa Falls, WI and died on 6/15/1984 in Holcombe, WI. He married Dora Mae Shackleton on 5/11/1949. Mom was born on 9/5/1931 in Barron, WI. They had 11 children: Sally (Cummings), Bob, Bev (Priest), Larry, Linda (Shilts), Ron, Donna (Steele), Sandy (Thackeray), Bill, Sarah (Moen), and Kathy (Mobry).

Dad lived in Holcombe most of his life. He was a mechanic by trade and worked for the Chevrolet garage in Cornell, Shackleton Implement in Cornell, and he was a heavy equipment operator and loved working on cars. He worked for the Town of Lake Holcombe for 10 years as a Town Patrolman and he maintained all the town equipment. He was also the Town Constable for 5 years.
Herbert A. Brown

Born 1904 Wheaton Township Chippewa County, came to Holcombe in 1912 with his father and mother Alfred & Ida Brown with his 3 sisters.

Herbert married Jane I. Jackson April 10, 1943. In Superior, Wi. Herbert & Jane had four children:

Tracy, Penelope, Marla, Terry


They lived at present day 25545 State Hwy 27 or the Jim & Arleene Jiskra Farm. While there Herbert farmed and worked for NSP surveying shoreline of Lake Holcombe. In 1950 sold farm to Jiskra’s and took job with Army Corp of Engineer in Europe. Lived in Frankfort, Germany and Paris, France. Before returning to the States had ordered a new 1957 fairlane which they drove from New Jersey to Holcombe. In 1959 to 1969 Herbert was surveyer for Chippewa County. Built new home on lake present day address 27958 296th Ave. Then moved to present day 27473 267th St or old Clark Farm where Tracy and Lois live at present.
Earl Barrett Craker (in his mid-30’s) rode a train to the Holcombe area one winter bringing along his horses to do some logging. He went back to Reedsburg in Sauk County and returned with his wife Evah (Greenwood) and children in 1918 to make Holcombe their new home. They purchased 40 acres on the corner of County W and what is now Highway 27. They drove up in a car called a “Baby Grand.” Three of the sons rode the train with the horses and machinery, getting off three-quarters of a mile west of Highway 27 at a railroad spur where the train picked up cars loaded with logs. Sleighs filled with logs coming from Ruby going to the railroad spur were a common sight in those days.

Earl and Evah moved into a small log cabin just north of their property, owned by the Angle family who also were from Sauk County. They lived there while their new home was built. The house is still standing and is now the Happy Horse Bed & Breakfast. A barn was built in 1922, and held 26 dairy cows, which at that time was a lot of milking by hand. Another 80 acres behind the original 40 was bought from the Peters. They also purchased another 160-acre farm three-quarters of a mile west of their farm. That farm was eventually owned by one of their sons and presently has a fifth generation living on it.

Earl and Evah raised nine sons, Victor, Vinton, Marvin, Max, Manley, Arlie, Warren, Lee and Marlowe; and six daughters: Crystal, Lorraine, Shirley, Juanita, Gladys and Marian. They all attended Enterprise Grade School, Holcombe High School and over half of them went on to college.

Times were tough in the 20’s and 30’s. Picking berries, harvesting hazelnuts, making maple syrup and finding an occasional honey tree were common at that time. A large garden was a necessity and raccoon was common fare at the dinner table. In those pioneering days, neighbors were always pitching in to help each other.

Evah, who her children often comment what a wonderful mother she was, died in 1950. Earl continued living on the farm until he was 100, and died in 1986 at the age of 104. Their final resting-place is at a small cemetery adjacent to their farm on County W.

Generations from this large family continue to live in the Holcombe area.
The backyard of the Fisk home is big enough for a whole fleet of trucks. Shown here are just three of the 29 owned by Perry Fisk—a 1969 White dump truck, a '25 Ford Model T, and a '34 Chevy—the first of his trucks for which Fisk bought a commercial license.

Trucking along

He's retired from the business, but Perry Fisk keeps on trucking

“As far back as I can remember, Perry Fisk showed up at our farm in his truck every morning, hauling milk,” recalled Cathy Mousseau, member services advisor at Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative. “He still has every truck he ever owned—and he keeps them all in working condition. He even drives one of the oldest ones to town occasionally.”

Since Fisk began his hauling business in 1940 and has augmented the collection with several other vehicles, that translates into quite a few trucks—29, to be exact. All are housed at his home near Holcombe on Chippewa Valley Electric lines.

As it turns out, Mousseau was mistaken—but only a little. Perry Fisk, now retired at the age of 71, is missing one truck from the extensive number he has owned. That one—a 1931 half-ton Ford—was “smashed up by my dad so bad he sold it,” Fisk explained. And he also has one truck that doesn’t work. “It makes a good yard decoration,” he joked. “It's the Army version of a two-ton truck. They were going to junk it, and I couldn't let that happen.”

The other 28 trucks in Fisk's collection are objects of his daily care and affection. The hobby consumes most of his time now that he's retired. And indeed, most of the trucks look brand new. Only their styling attests to their distinctive color scheme for the Fisk fleet.

“I was always crazy about trucks, ever since I was big enough to see what they were,” Fisk confessed. “My own first truck was a Model T pickup. It was 1940 when I turned my love for trucks into a business. I've hauled milk, gravel, pulp, wood, hay—anything that needed to be

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Fisk spends most days in his shop, keeping his trucks in prime shape. He hauled—in this area all my life." At one time, he had as many as 10 or 11 drivers working for him. In the early years, Fisk left his new business to spend time in the Army. Even then, he drove trucks. Stationed in the South Pacific from ’43–46, he hauled both troops and gravel before returning home to pick up where he had left off.

Still fiercely patriotic a half-century later, Fisk serves as commander of the Lake Holcombe American Legion post and is a vocal proponent of the "Buy American" philosophy. He has little use for foreign-made vehicles and has always owned American trucks and cars.

Fisk is also an avid proponent of rural electrification. Moussette said he'll sometimes stand in the co-op office, telling everyone who comes in that electricity is the biggest bargain around. He even keeps a poster commemoratingREA's 50th anniversary—showing, incidentally, a 1930s-vintage Ford pickup—on the wall of his workshop.

A visit to the workshop, which includes Fisk's office, is like visiting a museum of trucking. The walls are hidden by old truck pictures, parts, calendars, accessories, and license plates. The shop also usually holds a truck—whichever one Fisk is repairing at the moment.

The "museum" tour extends through a string of sheds and garages on the property, where the other trucks are housed, along with assorted equip-

ment. "I remember those snowplows," Moussette recalled. "When I was a kid, if it had snowed during the night, Perry was always the first one out, with a plow on the front of his milk truck. We watched for him, because we knew the school bus couldn't come unless Perry had gotten through first."

But though the sheds and grounds are full of trucks and memorabilia, the shop remains the heart of Fisk's domain. "We even have our morning coffee and chat out here," said his wife, Echo. "I've learned if you want to spend time with Perry, you have to go where the trucks are."

She worries that Perry might someday become physically unable to work on his trucks, "I just don't know what he'd do then," she said. "It would just kill him if he couldn't keep them up anymore." Fisk agrees, but at least he knows the trucks will be in good hands. His nephew, Gary Loring, has bought the property and agreed to take care of it—and the trucks—after Fisk is gone.

Though Fisk would hate giving up his regimen of truck repair, he does not regret retiring from the trucking business. "I have more time for fun now," he explained.

It's not surprising that his idea of fun, like his idea of work, centers around trucks and other automotive objects. "I belong to three truck clubs," he said, "and the Chippewa Valley 'A's'—a club for owners of Model A Fords," he said. He and Echo enjoy attending parties organized by the "A's" and often go on tours with the group.

Fisk's idea of enjoying retirement definitely includes having visitors come to see his collection. "I really get a kick out of showing them around, no matter how many times they've been here," he claimed. "Sometimes they say, 'I never saw that the first time I was here!'"

Obviously Fisk's retirement from the trucking business has in no way diminished the avid interest he developed as a child. By his own admission, he's still stuck on trucks.—Linda Hilton
Logan Family

From the family record: Mr. Mrs. Wm. Osborn celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary at their farm home at Sheldon, Wi. They were both still very active and doing their farm chores and household duties. They were married July 4, 1886 A bright and sunny July 4 was drawing to a close when William Osborn reined his bay horse to a halt in front of Charlie Smith’s justice of the peace at Kickapoo Center and helped the young girl beside him out of the covered buggy. Bill and Ella Wilder were on their way home from the big July 4 celebration at Reedstown when the inclination hit them and inside his chambers Charlie Smith tied the nuptial knot so recorded the Sheldon paper of that at that time. Bill was 22 then and Ella was 18. At 82 and 78 they were reported in good health and making their living on the farm milking five cows and doing the work themselves. They raised a big garden and kept a flock of chickens. The work was done with a team of horses.

Mrs Osborn was the reporter for the Riverside area for the Ladysmith news since 1914. She was also an area 4-H leader for several years. Her father and Almonzo Wilder (of Little House in the Prairie) believe to be brothers.

The Osborn’s moved to Rusk County in 1913 and bought 80 acres of wild land. They began clearing it for a house and barn. They moved to this land by horse and buggy. They eventually cleared all except a small sugar bush and the pastureland. Their first house was a two-room house, tarpaper covered. The barn was the same. Eventually by much skimping and saving a big two story barn was built, then came a two story eight room house. In the spring Maple syrup and Maple sugar was made in the sugar bush, this was stored for year around use. Wild berries were plentiful and gathered for later use. These hardy pioneers wasted nothing. In the days before he came to Rusk County Mr Osborn worked as a raftsman, moving timber and lumber along the kickapoo river to the mouth of the Wisconsin and on to the Mississippi. That was in the 1870’s and his wages were $1.00 a day.

Children of Ellen Wilder and William Osborn

Myrti, Pearl, Alta, Erma, Clarence

Alta Olive Osborn married Floyd Logan Sept 26, 1893 in Kickapoo, Vernon Co. They resided in N. Dakota and Wi. They were farming. Floyd wanted to borrow money to buy more land, they got money and bought a large steam engine. The depression came and bankrupted them. He came back & worked on the RR.


Children of Alta Osborn and Floyd Logan

Myrtle, Edith, Hazel, John, Gilbert, Ruth, Irene, Orville, Lawrence, Floyd Jr.

Myrtle Idella Logan married Oscar W. Emerson April 6, 1931 in St. Paul, Mn. Myrtle was a stepmother to Oscar’s two children from previous marriage. Elmer William and Delores Ellen. They lived south of Cornell and farmed. Moved to Holcombe, to farm and worked at the Chey Garage in Cornell. Then worked at pontiac garage in Chippewa Falls. Then moved to town of Anson farmed until 1953. Moved west to Sunnyside Wa., Moab Utah, Holbrook, Az., then back to holcombe. Then to Chippewa Falls to a retirement home where Myrtle died in 1983 and Oscar died in nursing home in 1991.

Children of Myrtle Logan and Oscar Emerson

Gerald, Donald
Edith Evelyn Logan married Walter Herman Guthman Sr Sept 8, 1936 in Holcombe, Wi Chippewa Co. Their years together is in the Guthman history. Edith died in 1977 and Walter in 1996.

Children of Edith Logan and Walter Guthman
   Walter Jr., Lois

Hazel Isabelle Logan married Cecil Lyon Married Sept 8, 1936 at Cornell, Wi. Chippewa County.
   Children of Hazel Logan and Cecil Lyon
      Virginia, Wayne, Duane, Clifford (adopted)

John Thomas Logan born May 2, 1920, died June 29, 1940

Gilbert Edward Logan married Dereen Malnory May 4, 1945 at Cornell, Wi. Chippewa County. Dereen died in 1992. Gilbert joined the Marines in 1941 and was boxing champ in San Diego in 1942, held it for two years.
   Children of Dereen Malnory and Gilbert Logan
      Glenford, Linda

   Children of Ruth Logan and Clyde Moore
      Robert, Gary, Juanita

Irene Virginia Logan married Eugene Victor Tarnowski April 2, 1946 at Holcombe, Wi. Chippewa Co. Eugene died 1982
   Children of Irene Logan and Eugene Tarnowski
      Carol, Larry, James, Judy

Orville Logan born May 1928 and died May 1928 (born with a veil over his face)

Lawrence LeRoy Logan married Joyce Saward May 29, 1952 at Sheldon, Wi.
   Children of Lawrence Logan and Joyce Sawards
      Dawn, Diana, Bonnie, David, John, Susan, Alta

Floyd Edward Jr. Logan married Darlene Thelma Engeldinger June 16, 1953 at Glidden, Wi.
   Children of Floyd Logan and Darlene Engeldinger
      Floyd, Bobette, Vicki, Daniel, Stephanie, Suzette, Jeffery, Timothy
Jerry drew the cover pictures for the Northern Broadcaster in 1958, while attending Holcombe High School.

He is married to Anne Fields and they have four children and live in the house on the Jones Farm.
NOTE: Jerry drew the bear picture in last issue but his last name got trimmed off. We think they are good and hope to have more for you. What do you think? Editor
Andy Morey  
Holcombe Cowboy

He left home at age 14, he had a disagreement with his dad and brother over his hound dog. His dad told him to get out, so he left in the morning and went to his cousin’s home in Montana.  
(Home was Juneau County, WI)  
He worked to pay his fare and sold the hound dog. He traveled around to ranches in 14 states. He wanted back to Wisconsin and a piece of land of his own. So he homesteaded a piece in 1920 by Holcombe. The many rocks and swamps made for a lot of hard work. He sold wood in Holcombe for $1.25 a cord and milked cows.  
Morey had a talent for breaking animals. He says the secret is to be firm but kind. Animals are smarter than people, Morey says.  
At Andy’s belt hangs a six-gun, a reminder of the Wild West. It is there Andy explains, because of a fight he had in 1939, about a year after renting a 164-acre farm along the Jump River west of Sheldon. A fellow beat him with a four-foot pump pipe leaving him for dead. I packed a pistol ever since, says Andy.

He sold that homestead and bought another by trading 2 cows, 3 calves and a pair of ponies for 80 acres. At that time land was worth $100 a 40.

In 1942 he moved to his last farm. He acquired 640 acres, some from the county for as little as $1.00 an acre.

He had special breeds such as cross of Texas longhorn with a Scottish Highland so they could rough it in the rocky, swampy lands.


Herman Paulson

Mailman

In 1921 Herman became a mailman in Holcombe for route 1.

In 1967 - 800,000 miles driven and 28 cars later, Herman retired.

Herman was born in Newberg, Denmark in 1898 and came to America in 1900. He came to Holcombe in 1904. He worked in the sawmills, attended 2 years of high school (which was all that was afforded at this time). He completed his education at River Falls and taught school at Turtle Lake for 2 years.

In 1921 he returned to Holcombe and started the mail carrier job.

Herman traveled the 30 miles or Rt. 1 with a Model T in summer and used a sleigh and two horses during the winter.

A mailman’s job included more than mail. Without phones he would check on sick people and often deliver groceries and other supplies to his patrons.

Route 1 grew from 30 to 89 miles, and families served increased from 50 to 1015 patrons. Herman enjoyed the growth along the lake and the farms and especially the improvements of the roads.
Ernie and Dorothy Paulsen

Ernest Paulsen was born in 1908 to Anna and Antone Paulsen in Holcombe on the place where he still lives. He had four sisters and seven brothers. Dorothy Paulsen moved here from Iowa with her parents and sister. They both graduated from Holcombe High School. Dorothy and Ernie were married on October 21, 1943. They had five children, Sharon, Carolyn, Jane, Dale and Mark.

Dorothy and Ernie have many memories of growing up in this area and here are just a few.

Dorothy and her sister Helen started school together when Dorothy was five ½ years and Helen was three ½ years and in those days you started in the first grade. They graduated the same year. Helen was only fifteen.

When Dorothy’s family moved here, they owned a Model A car. Well, and her dad was always busy, with people needing a ride somewhere, like to Sheldon, Donald, Arnold. Lots of people in the area would walk to where they had to go some had to walk five miles for groceries.

Ernie remembers, that cedar posts would be hauled into Holcombe during the wintertime. They would be piled crisscrossed in piles ten feet high and would stretch out from the depot all the way to Barney town. In the Spring, people would be hired on to peel the posts at five cents a post. The posts would be loaded onto railroad cars and be shipped to Illinois and others areas south of here.

Dorothy told of Ernie being one of the best ballplayers in the state. Ernie said I missed the boat. The guy, who had the Triple A Baseball team in Eau Claire, came up one Sunday when Holcombe had a team in 1922. After the game a bunch of us went up ahead of the rest of the people, we were playing around on the bank steps when that guy came up to me and asked if I’d want to play ball. I didn’t know what he was talking about, I was only in the seventh grade—I only played ball with the kids. I just looked at him, didn’t know what to think, I didn’t know anything about ball playing, I just played it. Even after Ernie was out of school he continued to play ball whether it was baseball or football. So every time they would have game the professor would send someone out to get Ernie, no matter where I was working, because they needed someone to help them win the game. There was one game in particular and that was the game that we played at Owen. Well I really shouldn’t have been playing, but I was trying to stay out of the pile. I wasn’t in the pile, but a guy pushed me onto it and another guy jumped on my leg, well it was broke. But I got up and finished playing the game. Ernie couldn’t remember if they won that game or not.

Ernie and Dorothy remembered the fairs, the circus coming to town and the outdoor shows, the 4th of July celebrations the hometown plays and what a busy little town that Holcombe was.
There was a family that lived east of town by the name of Pichler. There was Karl (father), mother, Alfred (son), Kurt (son), and Gertrude (daughter). Gertrude and Alfred moved away from Holcombe. Kurt stayed and ran the farm. He was the local jokester.

Here is that jolly bartender,
None other than Kurt
With a big grin and hair a bit thin,
But that don’t hurt –
For he is a good looking chap,
There is no denying that
And he is always good natured and kind
To his little hound dog, his cats and his cows,
But listen gals, a wife he never did find!

Looking Back and Remembering

“Milo Perry Shackleton”
(known as Perry)

By: Sally Cummings (Granddaughter)

When I look back at my childhood, I have so many fond memories of going to Grandma and Grandpa Shackleton’s. There were always so many people around and lots of fun and excitement, never a dull moment.

Milo Perry Shackleton was born on 6/4/1903 in Montrose, K.S. He died in Hillsdale, WI on 8/6/1966. He met Genivieve Bliven in Barron, WI and they married in 1926. She was born 1/14/1907 in Groshen, ID and died on 2/13/81 in Menomonie, WI. They had 10 children: Robert, Viola (Hanson), Jane (Wolf), Dora (Black), Raymond, Don, Dick, Stan, Dave (died on 2/19/2000) and Dan. Today they would have 160 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great great-grandchildren.

They lived in Barron prior to moving to the Arnold area in 1931. Grandpa worked on the railroad when it came through Holcombe. Around 1936, they moved 5 miles east of Cornell on Highway 64. They didn’t own a car, so Grandpa walked 4 miles one way to work and back every day for wages of $1.00 a day. He worked for W.P.A. (a government program) and helped build Brunet Island State Park.

In 1941, Grandpa bought the old Clark farm on Pine Lake. He farmed the 206 acres, milked 35 cows by hand and was very proud of his Guernsey herd. He also raised sheep and pigs – 200 to 300 at a time. He would shear the sheep’s wool and sell it to the Chippewa Woolen Mill in Chippewa Falls. The pigs he sold and shipped out.

Grandpa had to quit farming when the dam was put in. His barn had to be moved and part of his farmland was flooded. They stood and watched the water come in on their
Grandpa also worked for the Town of Holcombe as a Town Patrolman and in 1947 he owned a Piper Cub airplane. People were given flying lessons in his field.

Around 1949 until around 1962, Grandpa grew green beans on 135 acres. Local people and people from miles around would come to pick the beans. They were given a row to pick, a pail, and a gunny-sack. They would fill the sack and take it to the truck to be weighed. They were paid 2 to 3 cents per pound. It took a lot of beans to make any money. Some came early in the morning and stayed all day. Mexicans came by the bus loads to work. They used the barn that was made into apartments for housing during picking season. My mother (Dora) had a concession wagon and sold sandwiches, Pep chips, and candy bars. The pickers would come on their breaks for snacks.

Grandpa also raised turkeys for Barney Walters. Not sure of the exact years he did this. Grandma always had a large garden, with everything you could think of. She also had plum trees and a lot of grape vines. I can remember canning time. My mother (Dora) and aunts would come to Grandma’s and they would all work together. They would can hundreds of quarts of vegetables and fruit. Each one had a job to do, just like an assembly line.

I remember Grandma and Grandpa as hard working people. They were loving, Christian people and a joy to all who knew them. They loved their family dearly. Such wonderful memories of times gone by.
This picture shows Mr. and Mrs. Perry Shackleton of Holcombe with their family. The picture was taken at the Assembly of God Church, when they were the largest family group to attend the recent Cornell Crusade for Christ, there being 33 in the group, two grandchildren were absent. Their children are Mr. and Mrs. Don Black, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Shackleton, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Hanson, Mrs. George Wolfe, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Shackleton, Stanley, Dick, Daniel, David and Don Shackleton and the grandchildren.

*Photo by Jahnke Photograph*
Henry and Elizabeth (Cox) Staudacher Family

Going back to 1930, to a time when Florence Cox was cooking at Nina Conroy’s (one of the local eating places) her daughter Elizabeth came in one day to help out. It was believed that she was washing dishes or “pearl diving” as it was called back then. It was here that she met a young cowboy, Henry Staudacher, who had newly arrived from Montana with a herd of horses. Elizabeth was just 16 at the time and Henry was 22, but love bloomed. When she turned 18, they left for Montana to marry and start a life together. Their children like to recall how their father and mother were married in a funeral home in Great Falls, Montana.

The young couple lived in a mining town in Montana during the first two years of their marriage. They lost a child there and when a second child was on the way, Henry took her back to have the baby in Holcombe. Joanne was born in July of 1934 before Henry could get moved back from Montana. The couple stayed in Holcombe and went on to have Jean, Henry Jr., Carol, David and a daughter Marie who died at birth. In the mid-forties, the couple built a new home on the “Old Falbe Place.” Old timers may recall the huge barn that once stood southeast of the house. At that time, it was the largest barn in Chippewa County. The barn proved to be a source of entertainment for the Staudacher children and they remember climbing from the heights of the “pigeon roost” to the bottom of the old silos.

In 1953, tragedy struck the family when Henry Jr. was drowned at what is now known as the Wayside Park. The rest of the family grew to adulthood and some might even say “old age.” Joanne settled in California and still comes home to visit often. Jean lives in Cornell and David and Carol both live in Holcombe, just across the street from each other and near to the home where they grew up. Henry lived in that home from 1945 until 2002, when he died at the age of 94. From the union of the “cowboy and the schoolgirl” were born five children, 12 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren and one great, great grandchild. The children all attended the “new” school built in 1932, as well as several of the grandchildren. More recently grandchildren and great grandchildren attend or have attended the newer school.
Maurice Staudacher came to the Holcombe area from Montana in the mid-twenties. He carried mail and with his first wife Doris, ran a Ford garage here in town. Maurice became a bit of a “wheeler-dealer” in the area, buying various tracts of land and assorted buildings. He settled on the site that is now “Vaughn Place Gallery.” It was because of Maurice that Henry first came from Montana back in 1930.

In the mid-thirties, having lost his first wife, Maurice remarried. His new wife was the former Amy Cox from the Sheldon area. Amy and Elizabeth, who even though they both bore the same maiden name, were not relatives. However, as sisters-in-law, they formed a closer tie than some real siblings did. Both of these ladies were quite active in local organizations and were well liked by many.

The John Cox and Henry Staudacher families often included Maurice and Amy in their get-togethers and the children remember many a picnic and holiday dinner with the combined families.
ENTERTAINMENT AND FUN

Spring

There wasn’t much to do in the spring until the ice went out. Then we could go sucker fishing. They had a lot of bones but were good after a long winter. I don’t remember ice fishing in the early days so we had no fish all winter, except canned fish.

We always had the radio. It ran on a battery for us before 1950 and we never had electricity except a 12 volt battery. After the dam went in, our house was moved up by Highway 27 and we got electricity. Then we got TV. Our first one and a 75 or so foot tower. The next night on the way home from school the bus driver and the kids that were on the bus yet when it got to our place came in to see the TV.

My brothers and I played games a lot and after chores we could watch TV if our father wasn’t sleeping so he could go to work at midnight.

Even after TV we listened to the radio stories and the entire family sat around for the Lone Ranger, Sky King, Sargeant Preston of the Yukon, Buster Brown, Gunsmoke, WSN and the Grand Ole Opry.

When it was time for spring planting, we all had to help with that, then we could go to the river and skip rocks any time.

In the spring we would hook up the pony to the buggy and ride around the farm. It was nice when spring came. We only lived a little over 3 miles from school but in nice weather we always walked home so we didn’t have to ride the bus 40 miles or more around to get home. Later we got a bike but never took that. We took the bus the 4 miles. We could get there faster.

On May 1st or the first school day after May Day, all the little schools around, like Ruby, Arnold would came to Holcombe School for one big play day, lunch and all. We had ball, races and a lot of other activities.

Summer

We had free shows outdoors in Holcombe, Arnold, Twelve Mile Corner and all were paid for by the businesses of the town. We played ball and more fishing. After making hay and other chores we would go swimming to cool off and get cleaned up. When we went swimming in the Jump River before the new dam was put in we had to come out now and then and get the (UCK!) blood suckers off us. This was because they stayed on the large rocks and we would climb on them and jump off. To get the bloodsuckers off we would put salt on them. When the bleeding stopped we would go back into the water.

At times if we were going to swim we would put a pail out up stream and fish at the same time. We only had worms to fish with when we fished in the river before it was a lake. We always rode the pony. We would play “anty over the wood shed” with a ball if other kids came over. If it was a night we didn’t need to go to bed at dark, we would chase lightening bugs.

Kids in the country in the early days didn’t have a lot of free times. We all had farm work to do, gardens to plant, weed and harvest, housework to help with, canning to do and whatever had to be done, everybody helped. Making hay for the farm animals was no great fun but we tried to make it that way so it went faster. When work was over we could all go down to the river for a swim. Now, that was fun!
Also in summer we would get all our chores done up as fast as we could. Then we would walk into town to go to the free show or to the one up on Twelve Mile Corner where ever the free show was at that time. When my dad was working days he and mother would go with us. I liked it better when they went so we didn’t have to walk home in the dark. It was OK if a lot of kids went and at times we’d get a ride home with the neighbor kids.

In summer time we would pick beans for money so we could go to the Ladysmith fair and get things for school the next fall. Summer we water skied when we could and went boating.

**Fall**

Being by the river and later the lake, we did a lot of fishing. We picked fruit to can and make jelly and jam for the winter. We had to harvest all the garden so we could eat good all winter. When we dug potatoes we took a can with us for worms to go fishing with or to sell to other fishermen.

We liked to gather wild nuts in the fall so we could have them in the winter. Mother would make nut bread.

We always played ball, any time of the year when other kids came around.

**Winter**

In the winter we would go sledding, skating or skiing. There were long ski and a ski that was only about 13 inches long with 4 holes that went through the wood with straps to go around your boots like the long skies do. I still have my short skis.

Three back strap holes. You put the strap in depending on how big a foot you had.

Most everyone had a sled or toboggan if not a sheet of cardboard or an old rug would do, anything to get you down the hill.

In winter frost would get on the windows and we would look at that to pass the quiet time and see what shapes were in it. At times it looked like flowers, ferns and many other things. We built snow forts and snow men.

When it was Christmas time, we went with the pony and sleigh with my dad to get a tree. My dad always went with us in the woods because of the wolves and coyotes. They were on our land and other land around there by our place.
A well known character of our community is the “Dam Indian.” The Indian was carved in 1876 by a former sailor, Luke Lyons. There are a couple of stories regarding how Lyons obtained the log, from which the Indian was carved. The first is that Lyons with the help of Jene Juvette, carefully selected a Wisconsin Cork Pine and cut it down in the area now submerged as Pine Lake, north of Holcombe. Some Old Timers claimed they could point out the stump when the lake was drawn down.

The second story is that when Lyons and Juvette were riding logs down the Chippewa River the perfect log swirled by Lyons and he claimed it from the thousands that went down the river that day. He hired Jene Juvette to haul it to his tent and according to legend, it took the strength of two yoke of four oxen. Lyons and a French-Canadian named Bedore spent months scraping and whittling with a hatchet, draw shave and a jackknife to carve out the Indian Brave. When Frederick Weyerhaeuser, president of the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Co., saw what Lyons was doing, he was angered that anyone would take a perfectly good log and make a wooden Indian out of it. It goes on to say that Weyerhaeuser docked Lyons pay a days worth of wages which was about a dollar for payment for the log.

The Indian has been referred to by many names such as “King of the Chippewa River”, “Father of the Waters”, “Brave on the Bridge”. The Indian received these names because of being placed on top of the Little Falls Dam. It is written that each Spring as the log drive neared Holcombe, the river men would gaze ahead for a glimpse of the Indian- because sight of him meant the dam was near and the drive would stop until more water was collected. and they could go home for awhile.

The Indian was washed away several times, once he ended up downstream about 20 miles. He was recovered, but was missing an arm. James Jardine, who in charge at the Little Falls Dam at this time took on the job to carve and graft on the new arm. He also applied a new coat of paint to the Indian.

So as the logging years progressed the wooden Indian on the dam, became a legend simply for what he did best-he stood tall and became a guardian over the Chippewa River and the hardworking lumberjacks.

Over time, development and progress of Little Falls took over—A new bridge and a concrete dam took the place of the wooden dam and the Indian had lost his home. The Indian was
then placed in a glass and stone case and put on bank of the river near the new Holcombe bridge.

The Indian who had survived the elements of nature and the waters of the Chippewa couldn’t withstand vandalism. His glass case became the target of sticks, stones and even gunshots. It was no longer possible for him to remain in his new home and problems arose as to who should take the Indian. When Northern States Power Co., owners of the new dam stepped in to claim him, the people in the community who had come to revere the Indian, controversy exploded.

According to one story, the Indian disappeared and a search that lasted for years finally ended at the old Edminister’s hayloft near Holcombe, where the Indian had been stashed in an attempt to keep him in his own homeland. The opinion of most of the community was that the Indian should be placed, where those who wished to be reminded of the old logging days, could see him.

Despite this, Dr. Otto Enger, Holcombe Town Chairman decided to present the Indian to the Northern States Power Co. after the new dam was constructed in 1950. After another complete restoration, the “King of the Chippewa” was packed up and moved to his new home at the Northern States Power Co. office. Here he was protected against the forces of nature and from vandalism. The Indian was on display for hundreds of tourists to visit as a part of the logging era history. Over the last century he was taken to Chippewa to be on display for their centennial celebration and was also on display at some area schools and tourist stops.

In 1976, the “King of the Chippewa” came home with the help of many individuals and community groups from the town. The Indian now resides next to the Holcombe Town Hall in a glass case, a reminder to all of Holcombe’s logging era and guardian over the Town of Lake Holcombe.

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**The Historical Wooden Indian**

By Miss Scott 4th grade teacher 1977

A wooden Indian am I; So they say
I’ll tell you of my glorious past; If I may.
For I can still recall that historical day!

Once I stood as a mighty pine,
In a forest that was all mine,
But for an Indian tribe so fine.

Then came an unfamiliar sound,
By the mighty lumberjack I was found.
The cry of “Timber” sent me to the ground,
To be heaped into a huge mound,
Left wondering where I was bound.

But floating down the Chippewa was not to be my fate.
Carved by a lumberjack of that date,
Like that same tribe of late,
I found myself the center of debate.

Standing from my vantage point on
The old wooden dam,
I watched the logs roll with a slam
Often causing such a terrible jam.

Once my prestige was almost lost,
As rushing waters swirled me for a toss,
But I was returned without much cost.

When the sound of “TIMBER” came no more to call,
I was placed in the community hall,
There I remained, not to fall.
Until on a new dam I stood firm and tall.

Now I’m back next to the town hall.
Many people have come to call,
And to recall the great timber fall.
Little Falls Dam

The Little Falls dam was the known as the largest wooden Dam in the world. It was constructed sometime in the 1878. The Dam measured 625 feet with the main purpose to control the water level on the Chippewa River all the way to the mouth of the Mississippi or to the Beef Slough. There was 32 flood gates in the dam which were 7 feet long and 17 feet high. The Little Falls Dam created a “head” of water of 16 feet. Most dams in Wisconsin only raised a head of 8-10 feet. The Dam rose from foundations 63 feet wide. Besides the 32 flood gates there was a sluice gate that was to sluice the logs as they passed through it. There was a smaller gate for running the Wanigans through.

A wanigan looked like a house boat that followed the log drives and was towed back by a tug boat. Canoes could be attached to the wanigans so men could get off the boat to keep the logs from jamming. Along with the loggers on the boat there was a cook who would prepare simple meals for the men.

On top of the dam was a plank road that extended across the length of the dam. The road was wide enough for a team of horses to follow but not to meet another team. Until a steel bridge was built below the dam in 1906, the plank road was the only way a team could cross the Chippewa at this point.
The first dam at Little Falls was severely tested in 1880 when a flood washed out the embankment on the east end of the Dam. This released the water in the flowage and together with heavy rains the river below the Falls became a strong and fast-moving stream of water. Logs poured through the break in the wall of the dam, adding to the force of the flood. Thousands of logs were lost.

After the break of the east end was fixed the entire dam was raised five feet to catch a head of 21 feet. This enlarged the flowage upstream but it also weakened the overall structure of the Dam.

The Little Falls Dam served its builders well from 1880 to 1884 until disaster struck on September 17th, 1884. A flood struck the dam and took the center and most of the east end. The keeper of the Daily Journal described that day as:

“All gates up. Every piece of splash taken off and everything done to let water escape and still rising in the pond. About 5p.m. o’clock the dam went out, the far side bursting first about half an hour before the side. The logs piled up over the dam. Blocked up the gates and “bust” the booms taking some of the piers with them”

By the next week roads were blocked off by logs that had washed onto the banks. The booms over the dam were smashed and part of the company warehouse had been washed away. Also the blacksmith shop and an old stable were washed away.

A telegraph was sent to Frederick Weyerhaeuser and with out hesitation, Frederick and his associates decided to rebuild the dam. By September 24th, in the daily journal of the dam an entry had been made—”men preparing to build dam.” By October 4th work had begun on the coffer dam.

The flood of 1884 destroyed not only the Little Falls dam but also the many other structures along the river. The big saw mill in Chippewa was seriously destroyed along with many houses. Only one bridge of twenty five along the river remained standing.
The new dam was going to be rebuilt differently to provide extra support and also to get more use out of it. The dam had been a series of gates that stretched straight across the river from bank to bank. Instead, it would be built at two angles, a zig and a zag to give more space for spillways and reinforcements. This dam stood firm and served for the lumbermen until the final drive in the summer of 1911 with only having one or two gates washing out.

The work on the new dam took place in the autumn of 1884 and into the winter and spring of 1885. The formation of the new bridge called for many horse teams and wagons or sleighs to haul rocks to the dam site. The men had to chisel holes into the rock formation for blasting powders. An embankment of some type connected the shore line with the rock outcropping to the west side, and the road to the dam followed the west bank north to the dam. The crew rested on Christmas Day but the blacksmith took this day to move to his new shop.

A rare photograph shows of the new dam under construction shows two iron tracks less than a meter apart running on raised cross-pieces along the deck of the dam from the west end to the center of the dam. These iron tracks were used to transport rock and other supplies by cart from shore to the work site.

The dam did not have concrete abutments, it had support built against a wall by huge box like cribs planking and timbers into which rock and gravel were dumped into.

In March of 1885, the dam was near completion and the construction crew was reducing. The crew had an average of 175 on it when it cut 17 men by the end of March.

The new dam had splash planks in back of the sluice gates as well as the flood gates. Some time after 1890, around 14 Tainter gates replaced an equal number of splash plank gates. Tainter gates were invented by Jeremiah Burnham Tainter of Menonomie in 1880. The gates were convex
in shape on the upstream side and was supported by two rockers.

The dam included the main sluice gate, the wanigan gate, and a narrow for the batteaux to pass through the new dam at Little Falls which had two bear traps sluice gates, neither one of which was used for sluicing logs. The bear traps could release more water in less time than the regular gates and perhaps this is why the two bear traps were put into the dam for the fear of another flood.

By 1900 the new dam probably included thirty-five gates of different descriptions. The living quarters which were at the west end, as well as the stables and blacksmith shops were of log construction, were all replaced by frame structures after the new dam was complete.

Standing to the left of the dam was a boat house, which was a two story building with a basement underneath. The building was basically used as a storage building with supplies for logging camps north of Little Falls. On a small hill to the right of the boat house stood a blacksmith shop and to the left of the boathouse stood the “dam house.” The new house was built around the mid-1890’s with a apartment on the first floor for the foreman of the crew of the dam. Kitchen help lived upstairs of the house. There was two bedrooms on the second floor reserved for visiting officials of the company, and also a larger room with bunks for thirty men of the local crew although there were seldom that many employed here. There were two day rooms on the first floor, one on the east end with the second on the west end. The kitchen and storage facilities were located in a lean to off the back. Driving crews passing through stopped to eat at the Dam house standing at tables outside.

Besides the blacksmith shop there was a shed for washing clothes, a chicken coop, hay barn, a lean to off the horse barn for two cows, a pig house, an ice house, and a smoke house for catfish and sturgeon. A wood shed and a cellar was also built. The cellar stored vegetables and meat in the winter. During the summer the meat was stored in the ice box. Ice was cut from the river and preserved in the ice house. There was outdoor toilets for both men and women not far from the dam house. The bedrooms also had “night jars” in them.

The new dam served the lumbermen for twenty-five years. Chief users of Chippewa Lumber and Boom ran its last log in 1909. Other companies still drove logs down the river. In the summer of 1911, Zac Jardine said that he stood on the dam and watched the last log being sluiced through the gate. After this time, logs could no longer be run down the river because of power dams being put up in Cornell and Jim Falls.
Holcombe Hydro Dam


The NSP dam at Holcombe is the third dam to be built on this area of the Chippewa river. The first two dams were wooden structures. The first was built in 1872 by the Union Lumbering Co. The second was built and owned by the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Co., also operating the world’s largest sawmill under one roof, down the river at Chippewa Falls.

In 1910 the logging boom was over and the Chippewa Falls sawmill closed its doors. The wooden dam at Holcombe was abandoned. Over time with flooding, ice and no repair the wooden dam eventually disappeared. In 1912 the site was purchased by the Chippewa Valley Construction Co., which sold it in 1914 to the Wisconsin-Minnesota Light and Power Co. (later known as Northern States Power Co.)

In 1948 constructions began on a new hydroelectric dam, a few hundred yards downstream from where the wooden dam was located. This project changed both the landscape and the local economy.

The area above the new dam site was cleared of remaining trees. An earthen dike 600ft long was constructed on the north bank, another 3500ft on the south bank protects the town of Holcombe. The Holcombe bridge had to be dismantled at a cost of about $4000. The larger section was sold by the county for scrap metal. The smaller section could be used at some other location. When the Holcombe dam is completed and the pool behind it filled, the water will be 20 feet above the floor of the county highway bridge.

The Holcombe and St Joseph’s Catholic cemeteries were located north of Holcombe on what is know as west Lake Shore Drive. Both cemeteries were moved south of town at their present location.

A new 6-span, 795ft bridge was constructed, located on Highway County M, at the cost of $360,000.
The following are facts about the dam:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth dike fill</td>
<td>81,000 cu. yds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(With Holcombe dike included)</td>
<td>100,000 cu. yds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock excavation</td>
<td>25,000 cu. yds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>55,000 barrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate for concrete</td>
<td>50,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>45,000 cu. yds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcing steel</td>
<td>1,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural steel</td>
<td>30,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water wheels (3)</td>
<td>336 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generators (3)</td>
<td>459 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformers (3)</td>
<td>135 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tainter gates (13)</td>
<td>340 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other items (roads, bridges, etc.)</td>
<td>150,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power house crane</td>
<td>60 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating capacity</td>
<td>34,000 kW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Annual kilowatt-hr production</td>
<td>96,837,700 kWh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of impoundment</td>
<td>4,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pond elevation (above sea level)</td>
<td>1,045 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>42 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. river flow at dam</td>
<td>4,245 cu. ft./sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of operation</td>
<td>Peaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of completion</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total cost of the dam $9,200,000 wholly paid for by private capital.

After the construction of the dam was complete and the run off starts, the 4,000 acre lake would begin fill.

Raymond "Curly" Gygi started working on the dam in the summer of 1948. He started out as a laborer, then a labor foreman and later a concrete foreman. The engineer for NSP approached Curly and asked if he would be interested in staying on and working on the filling of the lake. The hours would be 4pm to 8am. Seven days a week and it was approximated to take six to eight weeks.

And so the process started, Curly explained, NSP had a gauge set on the gates of the dam to show how high the water was coming up every day. As it filled and reached a certain point and it needed to be held at that point for so many hours. Each time you could bring the water level up 1/2in to 3/4in more than the last. Open a gate to hold it at a certain pressure. Then you would repeat that process over and over. You couldn’t release all the water at once, they needed to have steady pressure on the dam and the earthen dike and also to observe if they were holding up under these conditions. This was in the spring and there was ice coming
down, you had to watch for large pieces. They used dynamite to break up the larger ice, so that it could go through the gates.

The Holcombe park and the ball diamond were located across the bridge from town on the left. Curly remembers, “that’s where we would play ball all the time. I was the last one to see that ballfield. Because at 4:50am I watched the water go up and over that bank, and slowly flowed over the park and ball field.”

“I took it as a great honor to fill the lake. I asked the engineer later-just why did you pick me?” He said, “well you were from town and your folks were some of the old timers from here. We had talked it over and thought it would be a good idea to have someone from here to do it.”

When the filling process was completed, a 4,000 acre lake had been created. Lake Holcombe contained 21 islands and counting all the inlets, more than 100 miles of shoreline. This caused a boom in land sales and building. Heavier development began around 1952, which increased the need for electric service. In addition to an increased electric load, Chippewa Valley Electric received another benefit of the dam construction. The co-op purchased 40,000 feet of second-hand lumber from the dam contractor, 2x6 panels that had been used for forming up concrete for the structure. The cost was $650. The lumber was used for the frame work of the new co-op office building in Cornell.

The Holcombe Hydro Dam provides inexpensive peaking power but also gives this area excellent recreational opportunities. Residents, as well as vacationers who visit the area resorts and campgrounds, enjoy waterskiing, boating, hunting and fishing.

Study of the fishery on the lake was part of a joint research project conducted from 1978 by NSP and the Department of Natural Resources. As a result, NSP installed fish cribs and limits the duration of the annual draw down of the lake. The study showed that a flowage can successfully serve as a productive fishery and, at the same time, a hydroelectric reservoir.
Building the Silver Bridge
Come all you Jolly People
Come listen to a song
It's all about the Piny boys
And how their getting along.
So many and so fine.
Their path way they will steer
For the big Piny Woods
And waiting for the springtime
To return again.

We come to the shanty,
There was Tom, Jim and Joe,
And with the war of water
The cook he loudly shouts,
For all the boys come rushing in
When dinner is over,
We to our shanty go.
We all light up our pipe and smoke,
Till everything looks blue.
It's time for the woods my boys,
Our foreman he does say.
We all gather our mitts and caps,
For the woods we hasten away.

We all go with a happy heart
And a well contented mind,
For the winter winds
It does blow cool,
Amongst the waving pine.
You will hear those saws and axes
Ring until the sun goes down.
Lay down your tools my boys
For the woods we are bound

When floating ice is done with.
Our business is to drive
500 able bodied men
Are wanted on the drive.
And good will be the day
Lay down your tools my boys
And haste to break away

If some of the boys are out or
Should happen to be there
They will laugh and dance
And joke around, to pass away time
For a jolly crew we know,
The shanty boys in pine.

To risk their lives you know.
Some cold and frosty morning,
They shiver with the cold
Too many logs are on the pond.
The dam can scarcely hold.

Now folks when you hear or see,
Believe it to be true
And if you doubt a word of it,
To join a lumber crew,
For it was in the Piney shanty
This song was sung with glee
And this is the last of my Piney song,
Was only sung for me.
Chippewa County in the 1840’s was deep in the heart of timber country. White pine grew into flawless beautiful saw timber from 200 miles below what is now Chippewa Falls to the Hudson Bay country of Canada. When cutting this timber and sawing it into boards and beams for housing and buildings was first thought of, estimates were that it was an inexhaustible supply or that it would take hundreds of years to cut. The loggers and logging companies of northern Wisconsin would soon prove that theory very wrong! Sometime in the late 70’s, Andrew Kirkman, a Swedish born immigrant who was hired by Edward Hines to plot and estimate tracts of land purchased by Hines for cutting, remarked in his letters that when walking along the Chippewa river north of Little Falls (Holcombe) that you couldn’t see the sun for the thickness of the canopy of the great white pines!

What made the cutting of the timber more practical was the great river system in northern Wisconsin. The timber and logs in the woods were not too far from a river or a stream leading to a river and eventually to a sawmill ready to turn it into lumber for building cities all over the north central part
of the United States. Cities like Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison and many others were built with this lumber. Among the rivers that were important to the Chippewa River System were the Flambeau, Jump, Thornapple, Fisher, Yellow, and streams like the Deer, Main, Paint, Little Wiegar, Elder, Mud, Maple, Potato, Bob, O’Neil, and Duncan Creek just to name a few.

In 1837 the Chippewa Indians ceded to the federal government the lands that made up Chippewa County and other lands connected, which actually made up most of what is now the state of Wisconsin. Soon after this Gen. Sibley, Col. Aiken, H.E. Dousman and Lyman Warren cooperated to outfit an expedition to build a sawmill at the “Falls”, as Chippewa Falls was then known. This expedition was headed by Jean Brunet, then a prominent businessman of Prairie du Chien. Brunet is generally accepted as the founder of Chippewa Falls. (Chippewa Herald “150th Anniversary of Chippewa County “p.4)

When Brunet came to the Falls (now Chippewa Falls), a small French settlement was located about five miles above the falls known as Chippewa City and is still referred to as that. Jean Brunet was born in Gascon, France and came to St. Louis in 1818 and later lived in Prairie du Chien. Brunet spent several years in the U.S. Army under Col. Zachary Taylor helping to build Fort Crawford and in 1828 retired from the army and as stated above set out to build a city and sawmill at Chippewa Falls, Wis. At one time Brunet studied for the priesthood which is said to have helped him with the Indians. He was responsible for teaching many Indians about wood and iron work and religion. He won their everlasting friendship. Brunet operated the first tavern or “stopping place” in Chippewa Falls. He was elected judge in Chippewa Falls and conducted the first sessions of court in northwestern Wisconsin. He was a member of the territorial legislature and the first river pilot on a steamboat on the Chippewa River. He later piloted the first raft of logs down the Chippewa and Mississippi to Prairie du Chien. Jean Brunet then moved up the Chippewa River some 25 miles to what is now Cornell and established a river crossing and trade center. Here he traded with the Indians, and it was here that Chief Sky and Blue Sky brought “Old Abe” the war eagle to Brunet who sent them to Dan McCann in Eagle Point who bought and trained the famous Civil War bird. His crossing known as the “Portage” can still be located by the foundation of his Inn and trading post below the Cornell dam on the west side of the river. While living there at the Portage he was responsible for building the world’s largest wooden dam at Little Falls or what is now Holcombe, Wisconsin. Having known and been partners with many very wealthy men such as Dousman, Jefferson Davis, Zachary Taylor, Ezra Cornell, Frederick Weyerhauser and many others, it is ironic that Jean Brunet should be the first inmate of the Chippewa County Poor Farm Cemetery. (Raihle, 23-25)
Logging Operations

“Logging operations, at first, consisted of cutting the trees on the banks of the Chippewa and its tributaries and rolling them into the water or onto the ice to await the spring flood. Later, operations became more complicated and crews of specialists took over the work. Sawyers would go into the woods and drop the trees and saw them into logs. Swamphers would then follow and trim off the branches and cut skid trails. Then came the skidders with their go-devils and oxen and later horses. The logs were taken from the stump, one end on the go-devil and the other dragging in the snow. The bull driver walked at the side with his “goad stick.” Roads and trails were swamped out by the “road monkeys”. The logs were hauled to roll-aways and then piled on the huge sleighs by the loaders. The roads were iced by tank-sleighs, working at night, which kept the ruts frozen. The road monkeys piled hay in the ruts on the down grades and “snatch teams” were kept on the upgrades to help out on the hard hauls.

The teamsters vied with each other in the size of their loads. In fancy loads, 16,000 to 20,000 feet were hauled by a four horse hitch and unloaded at the landings, in the ice of creeks and rivers. They were given the company brand and left to wait for the spring floods. The wood butchers made the tools such as go-devils, cant hooks and peaveys. Filers kept the saws in shape and toters with tote teams brought in the supplies. Cooks and cookies prepared the meals. Over all was the
"boss," king of all he surveyed. The hours were from first sign of dawn until too dark to work.” (Raihle, 47)

In the spring the melting snow would cause the rivers and streams to overflow and take the logs down the rivers and streams. Men would follow the logs and make sure they got to the sawmills. These men were drivers or “river rats.” The crew that followed the logs numbered thirty to forty and those that preceded and prepared the way in front of the logs numbered around fifteen men. Their tools were peaveys (a handspike and cant-hook combined) and pikes. The men

This load of Logs was specially loaded for the photographer according to Alex Tremblay. It would take about two hours to assemble such a load, but the loader took pride in his skill. Logs were piled so they practically held themselves on. Binding chains were put across the load about in the middle and then over the top. The picture was taken in 1892 and is probably the first load out of the Mudbrook Logging Project (1892)

Bruno Vinett’s Camp

K. Ecker, T. Loiselle, B. Glenn, H. Fisk, W. Loiselle, J. Bean, G. Kappus
The Wannigan named “Sue Larson”
Picture by H. Parsons

Fred Olmstead’s Camp - Ruby, WI about 1908
slept on the banks of the river and ate out of a cook boat (wannigan) that followed the logs. They would ride the logs down the river, hopping from log to log and keeping the logs from jamming or floating into backwaters or bottom lands.

They all wore hobnailed boots and wool clothing, the boots to help keep them from falling in the water and the wool because it would dry on them much faster if they fell into the river. The rapids at Chippewa Falls were dangerous but the biggest threat to the navigation of logs down the Chippewa was at “Little Falls” near the present village of Holcombe. Here a dam was built to facilitate the log drive, the largest and widest wooden dam in the world. In spite of their efforts many jams occurred, one near Holcombe almost fifteen miles long, tying up more than 150 million feet of lumber. When the logs reached the mill the men were paid in company script or cash. If cash, the
company discounted it at least 10%. Sometimes the men would have to wait until the logs were sawed to receive their pay. Speculators would discount the script for cash and many got rich on such deals.

“The logs were stored in booms or reservoirs. They were then floated into the mill and were sawed into specific dimensions to be sold at market.” (48)
Logs “decked” Cox or Stamper Companies of Holcombe

Camp #5 (1904) Holcombe up near Arnold

Ruby mill operation and yard
Sawyers at “Babbit’s Camp” near Holcombe 1910

“Stacking Logs” in the woods (early 1900’s) near Holcombe

Ruby Camp - Faces but names are gone!

Picture of logging days near Ruby, WI. Who can give the year, name the camp or any of the men in it? Picture courtesy of Jim Clark
LIFE OF THE LOGGER—THE CAMPS

The loggers came from all walks of life. Usually they were immigrants from Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Poland, Germany and any of the countries of Europe. They probably spoke very little English and were in desperate need of work. Many were taken advantage of by the logging companies, paying them as little as they could get away with ($20 to $24 per month) plus food and a bunk in a camp. Living in the logging camp was cramped and not the most hygienic place as keeping clean was not an easy job in the wood and not the top priority! Clothes were boiled to disinfect them and changes were infrequent to say the least! The company usually had a store where they would sell the lumberjack his clothes and base needs. Many lived on farms and in company towns and provided commodities for the other lumberjacks or the company itself. According to the Chippewa County Chronicle, the Flambeau settlement was such a company settlement started by the Daniel Shaw Lumber Company around 1850. Although the mill was located down river, the company provided for its logging operations by establishing such a temporary settlement. The Daniel Shaw lumber company employed over 200 men. They cut 13,584,000 feet of lumber, 250,000 lath and 3,110,000 shingles. Shaw owned stores, shops, cheese factories fine grist mill all on the Flambeau settlement. (Wedding, 1971). These settlements ended up being communities that still exist today. The Shaw “staging area” was located across the river from what is now Flater's Resort at the junction of highway “D” and “E”. The loggers tools and equipment were stored there, and company farmers raised food for the camp kitchens. This staging area known as the Flambeau settlement had its own church, two schools, two cheese plants, sleeping areas for loggers, a company store, saloons, and various other types of businesses. Little remains of the Shaw company staging area today. When the logging operation ceased many of the occupants left and the buildings were sold and converted to a sheep ranch which failed but Sheep Camp Road is still there!
The lumberjack’s life was a hard one, working in bitter cold winters and long work days from dawn until dark. The camps, in spite of the work, were relatively happy places. The men developed a “great fraternity” of comradeship regardless of their ethnic background or their religion. They worked together and cared for each other as they worked in the dangerous woods and down the wild Chippewa River. Though some lost their lives, the exciting life and the chance to earn cash always kept an army of river men and lumberjacks at full strength. (Raihle, 49)

**IDENTIFYING THE LOGS**

With the many different logging companies using the same river to transport their logs to their respective sawmills, it was necessary to mark each log before starting it on its way down the river to the mill. Each company had its own mark and this was placed usually on the log’s end. For example, the Edward Hines Co. marked their logs with an “H” brand among a few others. The Chippewa Lumber and Boom Co. had over a hundred different endmarks that came from smaller companies that were bought up by Fred Weyerhauser (the owner of the Chippewa Company) and brought under its control. The five mills in Eau Claire also had well over a hundred endmarks for their sawmills. These endmarks all had been registered and used to identify their logs as they traveled down the river and endlessly “sorted” until they reached the correct destination.
“Little Falls” a name given to compliment the “Big Falls“ (Chippewa Falls) stayed with this logging community until it gained a post office in 1898. Its first postmaster, Amasa J. Edminster named it “Martin” This name was to be short lived as the Omaha Railroad was soon to change the name of both to “Holcombe.” The name “Little Falls” was hard to kill as Adolph Bernier, a local businessman laid out the first platt of “Little Falls” in 1902. The Omaha Railroad was coming up from the south that year and the company wanted to locate a depot nearby, but Bernier and the railroad authorities could not agree on terms for land purchase. As a result, the railroad bought land to the south of the dam and called it “Holcombe,” and “Little Falls” got its new name and post office on December 6, 1902. The community, which was “Little Falls,” north and east of the dam was called “Barney Town” after Bernier. Holcombe, named after an employee of the Omaha Railroad, possibly the surveyor or the person who platted the town and rail right-of-way, was located south and east of the dam where it still stands. After the dam was abandoned most of the houses in “Barney Town” were either moved, torn down or burned down and the village of Holcombe developed to the south of the dam. (Rosholt, 147)
The first dam was built by the Beef Slough Company at Little Falls in 1878, 625 feet in length, but was destroyed four years later in the flood of 1884. The cost of the entire operation in 1878 was $90,000.00. It could raise a “head” of 16 feet which was about twice the depth of other existing dams. When the dam went out, Frederick Weyerhauser, who had accumulated several sawmills and logging companies by this time, including the mill at Chippewa Falls and north, without any hesitation, decided to rebuild the dam. The new dam would be built at two angles to give it

This layout of the dam in relation to the village of Little Falls and Holcombe was drawn by Denis Kirkman from a 1920 platt book and reference also made an old drawing by Zac Jardine.

LITTLE FALLS DAM AND CAMP ---1910
(HOLCOMBE)
space for more spillways and reinforcement.

William “Billy-the-Beaver” England was a principle engineer in construction of the dam and he is said to have never lost a dam. The Little Falls dam stood firm as a rock until the final drive in the summer of 1911. (151) Then they opened the gates and let the river run free and little by little the dam washed away. Curly Gygi remembers it being pretty much gone by 1920.

In 1906 a bridge was built below the dam and it was no longer necessary to use the dam as a crossing for horses etc. on the river at Holcombe. The dam took 40,000 feet of planking to build. It also had a main sluice gate, a wannigan gate and a gate for the batteaus to pass through. It also had two “bear trap” gates and fourteen tainter gates along with 16 “rafter” gates, some thirty five gates in all. It was a wonder and the largest wooden dam in the world! James Jardine was the foreman of the dam crew in the early 1900’s. He lived above the “Dam House” kitchen and headed a crew of up to 30 men at times. (155)

Sawmills and logging camps peppered the banks of the Chippewa and its tributaries. Mills along the Mississippi, Chippewa, Duncan Creek, O’Neil Creek, Thornapple River, Flambeau River, Jump River, Main Creek, Birch Creek and just about every town, i.e. Chippewa Falls, Little Falls, Ladysmith, Bloomer, Winter, Radisson, Couderay, Jim Falls, and too many others to mention them all.

Puffer Hubbard Mill, Holcombe

Old Puffer - Hubbard Bolt Mill - Holcombe, WI 1904  
before it burned down
Pictures of typical mills and logging camps follow. Some of the last mills in the area were at Cornell (1960), Stamper Brothers (located about where Larry’s Resort is now until late 1940’s), Cox Lumber Mill (also in Holcombe -1930’s), Chippewa Falls (1911), Edward Hines Co. at Couderay/Winter area. (1929)

Typical scene loading logs or “decking” logs

Wannagan going through sluice way
The Chippewa Lumber and Boom Co. The largest sawmill in the world under one roof. Logs from all the way up the Chippewa River and its tributaries came to this mill to be sawed into lumber. Well over 100 endbrands fell under this company's claim.
DISASTER AT LITTLE FALLS

The Chippewa River was known to be a wild and dangerous river especially for “log drivers” and nothing less was to be on July 7th, 1905. A huge log jam was building up on the jagged rocks some 250 feet below the “Little Falls” dam. A call went out to the rivermen along the Chippewa to help break up the jam. Approximately seventy some log drivers answered the call and took the train on its 75 minute ride north to Little Falls. This was a Sunday and many of the men were in their Sunday suits and had been celebrating in the local saloons. Many had brought their bottles with them which was to prove fatal for eleven of them. There was a strong desire to be first on the “jam” and normal good judgment wained.” Sixteen men jumped into the first batteau with their equipment and shoved off for the log jam. The bowman of the batteau tried to hook his peavy into the first log that he could reach in the jam and almost made it, but the batteau swung 180 degrees and capsized. Just before the boat swung around, three of the men were able to jump onto the log jam. With all the rest of the men standing up in the batteau crosswise in the current, the boat capsized and the men went down. Emil Toutant and Eddie Martin managed to eventually swim to safety and were picked up a mile down river. The three left on the jam were George Dressel and John Kaiser of Chippewa Falls and William Smith of Drywood. The remaining eleven men drowned. They were as follows:

- Saul Bracket, Eau Claire
- Louis Cokey, Flambeau
- Max Billiard, Drywood
- Paddy Lyden, Stanley
- Ole Horne, Chippewa Falls
- Joe Pelloquin, Drywood
- Paddy Lyden, Stanley
- Oscar Berquist, Cadott
- Bert Larry, Anson
- Henry Ferguson, Chippewa Falls
- Adolph Toutant, Cadott

As the story goes on, some sixty men were looking on as the batteau capsized and eight men in another batteau struck off to save the three left on the log jam. This batteau capsized also and six of the eight managed to jump on the jam before the capsizing of the batteau. Eugene Riley and Henry Andrews were swept down river but managed to swim to shore and walk back two miles to the shore where the remainder of the men were unable to bring themselves to act. Riley and Andrews jumped into another batteau and made two trips to the jam to get the nine stranded men back safely. They were the “heroes of the day.” When the news of the disaster reached Chippewas Falls, Mr. Irvine put the flag at half mast and closed the mill to find the bodies of the drowned rivermen. When the body of one of the rivermen accidentally drifted ashore near his own farm and the body of “Whitewater Ole” Horne drifted all the way to Chippewa Falls where he lived, a legend grew that the men all drifted ashore next to their own place, “as if they were going home” according to William “Bo Hoo” Hoyer, a riverman from Chippewa Falls. (Rosholt, 195-97)

The mighty Chippewa claimed many lives in years that men cut the white pine of the Chippewa River and its tributaries, but the disaster at Little Falls was the worst in its history.
As near as this writer can determine there were at least four sawmills in the close proximity to what is now Lake Holcombe. They were the Stamper Brothers Sawmill, Cox Mill, Murray, and the Puffer Hubbard Bolt Mill. At this time little could be found out about these mills. The Puffer-Hubbard Mill (pictures page #) was cutting logs sometime before 1904 when the picture was taken before the mill burned down. It was rebuilt in 1905 and you see in the second picture, the new mill as it existed in 1906. According to Rayland Walters (an old logger in this area) the Cox mill was operating in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Merle Cox and his father ran the sawmill and and snagged old “dead head” logs from the river bottom. The mill was located north of the intersection by the Sport Shop on Highway M. The Murray logging operation was much like the Cox and the Stamper Mills - pulling “dead heads” from the back waters of the Chippewa.

Lawrence Cote, once a lumberjack for Stamper Brothers was able to give a more detailed account of this sawmill. This mill was owned and operated by Henry and Albert Stamper. They ran the operation during the 1930’s and originally pulled sunken logs out of the Chippewa River bottom. They had built a 24 ft. wooden boat with an inboard motor and would snag the logs with a hook and a pike. One of the accompanying picture shows the piles of virgin logs that were salvaged from the bottom of the river. The mill (located at what is now
Larry’s Resort) had plenty of logs throughout the 1930’s but as it became more difficult to snag the logs from the bottom, they purchased timber rights on parcels of land around Holcombe and as far as north of Tony, Wisconsin. In 1940 and 1941, Lawrence Cote signed on for $1.75 per day and board. There were 19 men in camp and two teams of horses. The timber (mostly hemlock, yellow birch and hardwoods) was cut with crosscut saws as no power saws were available yet, at least at this camp. The men stayed in a camp along the Flambeau River both winters. Gus Sunberg was the cook in 1940 and Mrs. George Bateman was the cook in 1941 which he stated was a marked improvement! The men would work from first light in the morning to around 4:30 p.m. or just before dark. At noon a sleigh with a team would bring them lunch but he said that the second year that he worked there, the sleigh would take them all back to the camp for a warm meal. Lawrence also mentioned that the hemlock that he cut was two and one half to three feet at the stump and the bark was two and a half inches thick! This was as big as he had ever seen anywhere! Several pictures of the Stamper Mill operation are printed for your pleasure. Note the one log with 1220 board feet in it alone!
Although the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company was located in Chippewa Falls and was the first and largest operation of its kind in the state and at one time the world, Frederick Weyerhauser (the owner) had acquired many logging companies and brought them under his wing. At one time over a hundred log end marks all sent the logs to the Chippewa Mill. A Mr. William Irvine ran the mill for him and that name remains in the area as Irvine Park is named after him in Chippewa Falls, and a street in Holcombe is also.

As was stated earlier in this research, this area is still a chief source for wood products and many local individuals make their living working in the woods. The great white pines of the 1850’s and throughout the turn of the century are no longer with us and will probably never be seen again.

Rayland Walters, born in a logging camp in the Ruby area, gave me some interesting information about the Walters Brothers Logging Operation. Rayland started working for his father (Pete Walters) in 1932 during the summers when he was still in high school at Holcombe. When he graduated from high school, he worked for his dad hauling mostly hardwood logs until 1944.

Rayland was related to the present Walters Brothers Logging located on Highway 27, north of Holcombe, and in Radisson, Wisconsin. Ed Walters started the mill around 1930 and he and his sons Harold, Howard, and Clinton operated the sawmills for many years. It is presently owned and operated by Harold’s sons, Tim and Bill Walters. The two mills saw lumber and make pallets for sale.

According to Rayland there was another rather famous logger in this area. A man by the name of Butterfield had a large operation (a crew of over 200 loggers.) He was a giant of a man for the times standing over six and a half feet
tall and over 280 pounds. His fists were said to be as big as “hams” and although his heart was as big as he was he wanted everything done one way—“the Butterfield way.” Those who would defy his orders felt the wrath of those fists! Many colorful stories about him and his crew traveled the logging camps of the northeast Holcombe, Estella, and Devil’s Nest area.

The area around Holcombe and “Little Falls,” as it was known before 1902, held the greatest stand of white pine in the world and was gone forever in a matter of a few decades. The mighty Chippewa River made the cutting and transporting of this great pinery possible. All that remains of the great logging days of “Little Falls” and the area are the stories that have stood the test of time and the names of the descendents of the hearty people who lived through it all.
Logging in the Chippewa Valley (what was the original Chippewa Territory) continues today but it is far different from the logging in this area from the early part of the 19th century to the 1st quarter of the 20th century. Where the mighty Chippewa and its tributaries once were the conveyers of the logs to the mill sites, now trucks, trains and machines do the job much more safely and efficiently. Although the great white pine was the prime wood sought by the lumber companies, vast amounts of hemlock, maple, oak, basswood, elm, white, yellow and black birch also fell to the lumberjack’s axe or saw.

From its beginning to where it dumps into the Mississippi the Chippewa drops some 500 feet with Holcombe half-way down its winding trail. The forty-two miles between the mouth of the Flambeau and Chippewa Falls was known as the “Wild Chippewa“ as it fell more than 70 meters and contained the rapids of Little Falls, Brunet, Jim’s Falls, Paint Creek and Eagle Falls. The last logs down the Chippewa were in 1915 and the Flambeau in 1926. (Rosholt)

Some of the men responsible for the great lumbering days and the development of many communities in Wisconsin are of course Jean Brunet, also Frederick Weyerhauser, H.E. Douseman, H.S. Allen, Daniel Shaw, H.O. Ingram, Edward Hines, Wm. Irvine, Ezra Cornell, among the many men involved during the 19th and early 20th century.

The vast, “inexhaustible,” pinery of Wisconsin was gone and will never return to what it was. Perhaps those who capitalized on the pinery could have been more prudent in the cutting and processing of the timber. We know that there was a lot of waste in the way it was done, but the cash was available and the demand created the frenzy to cut the timber as fast as it could be cut.

THE END OF LOGGING IN WISCONSIN
Many wonderful pictures were sent by people whose families are part of the history of the Holcombe area. Those pictures that I did not use in with the narrative of my history, I would like to display below as they all tell a story of days long gone by. It is somewhat difficult to imagine Holcombe, Ruby, Arnold, Donald or Flambeau settlement as bustling communities, but they were!

Holcombe alone was a very sizable town with a grade and high school, two hotels, a cheese factory, a car dealer, livery stable, two grocery stores, a jewelry store, a meat market, churches, two doctors, a dentist, a town hall, a locker plant, a blacksmith, two taverns, a lumber and hardware store, a post office, a vet clinic, a feed store, and a gas station, a railroad depot, just to name a few of the businesses in this little community.

Aside from the businesses, Holcombe was the site of the world’s largest wooden dam and several sawmills. These communities grew with the logging operations in their areas and when the logs were gone, some of these settlements have virtually disappeared making it difficult to realize the majesty of their pasts! According to Curly Gygi, the reason that they are gone today was that in the early days of these communities, there were no fire departments to speak of, and when a building caught on fire, there wasn’t much we could do except watch it burn.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Loggers on the Chippewa (John Taylor 4th from left)
lunch time?

Typical logging scene - Jump River Area

Kib Ecker

Brainerd Camp hauling out the logs N/W of Flambeau
Rapids below “Little Falls Dam” (low water)

Typical winter woods scene --loggers unknown

Old time logging crew near Holcombe (C. Guthman)

Logging crew on the Chippewa - lunch time?
Typical logs of the great logging era of the Chippewa River system. Pictured with the log is the writer of this logging history Denis Kirkman, Holcombe, WI
Brainerd Camp est. 1920’s
Northwest of Flater’s

Note: B.F. Brainerd, related to Harold “Tubby” Flater
Tubby’s mom was
Mary (Brainerd) Flater

The Mudbrook Logging Project 1892

Note: This is from an article on Bruno Vinette’s account of logging off
Mudbook of Whitepine in 1892.
Log reservoirs or “booms”

Log separation - “Starting Gap” on the Chippewa River

Bernier Town “Barney Town” buildings pictured are:
left - Beckwith Lumber Co., Geo. Bernier’s place,
Louis Bernier’s place

Main Street - Holcombe
A special thanks to the following for their help in providing pictures, stories, etc. of the Holcombe area.

Harold Parsons
Ivan Paulson
Lawrence and Carol Cote
Perry Fisk
Curly Gygi
Harold “Tubby” and JoAnn Flater
Ardiss Bucholtz
Lucille (Walters) Guthman
Anson Tainter
Tracy and Lois Brown
Paul David
Rayland Walters
Cindy Henderson
Dave Staudacher
Bob Ewer

The Chippewa County Historical Society
Rusk County Logging Museum

Books:


The author searched and found one lone virgin white pine standing north of Hawkins on County Hwy M. Estimated height: 120 feet and approximately four foot-plus diameter.
A special meeting of the Community Farmers Club at the town hall at Holcombe, Wis. This is just a typical get-together meeting of the farmers and businessmen that occurs in Holcombe once a month. In the picture may be seen about 500 persons with the 8-foot statute of the Chippewa Indian overlooking the assemblage from the far end of the hall. At the above spread, in addition to other feathers were a “great big baked potato” and two fried eggs for each person. The efficiency of the housewives of the Community Farmers Club is evidenced by the fact that it took just 20 minutes for a few of them to fry the thousand eggs, serve the hot potatoes, pour the coffee and add the other trimmings included on the menu of this spread.

The Chippewa Valley Poultry Association was organized in 1923 and includes within its territory the villages of Holcombe, Arnold, Donald and Cornell. The membership of the Association includes practically every old established farmer and new settler in the neighborhood of these thriving villages. The Association is pledged to conduct a clean, honorable business in a successful way, so that it may increase in volume, profits and service each year. There is no more desirable location or climate for the profitable engagement of the poultry business than the valley of the Chippewa in upper Wisconsin, and the Association is determined to hold fast to a policy that will gain for itself new friends and customers as their membership and flocks and product increase from year to year.
The Falbe Hotel

The Falbe Hotel was built in 1904. It was owned and operated by Edward and Mathilda Falbe. The hotel was a three-story wooden structure.

While the hotel was being built the family lived in a tent behind the building site.

Holcombe Farm Exchange Office was located at the Falbe Hotel.
Holcombe Livery Stable (located behind the Falbe Hotel)
Ervin Falbe  Cyril “Cy” Mayhue  Ed Falbe Sr.

Livery Stable, “6 holer”, ice house
East & West St. from RR Depot past Methodist Church to River Bridge
(Falbe Hotel sign indicating the “Holcombe Stock Exchange”)
Events held at the hotel were: German Lutheran Church services were held in the parlor on the second floor. Wedding of Martha Walters and William Falbe

Martha (Walters) & Bill Falbe
11-26-1911
Wedding at Holcombe
(steps are at the Falbe Hotel)

Baptism Certificate
Lutheran pastor held services at the Hotel
Falbe children and spouses are as listed:
Lester Falbe married Sylvia Clark
Ervin Falbe married Dolly Clark
Edward Falbe married Evelyn Redum
Lillie Falbe married William Zinsli
Agnes Falbe married William Stropahl, Sr.
Henry Falbe married Beverly Peterson

Mrs. Falbe would rise by 4am every day to prepare breakfast for hotel guests. It consisted of fresh donuts (which Agnes would make), oatmeal, pancakes and sausage, ham, eggs, toast, etc.

Agnes and Lillie Falbe waited on tables as would Lee and Phylis Butler.
Henry Falbe would wash the dishes.

Henry told how he played cribbage, pool, and poker with the railroad and salesmen who stayed at the hotel, he quickly learned the ropes and became a very good card player.

Falbes’ owned the farm at junction of Highway 27 and Main Street. Ed Falbe would walk up every night for fresh milk for the hotel.

William Stropahl, Jr. was born in the hotel, his parents were Agnes (Falbe) and William Stropahl, Sr.

A sign in the downstairs bathroom as follows:

“Higglety, Pigglety, my fat hen
She laid eggs for the railroad men
Sometimes one, sometimes two
Sometimes enough for the whole darn crew.”

Memories of the grandchildren who visited there:

Grandma Falbe making the grandchildren come inside the hotel when gypsies came to town as they “kidnapped children.” So they would go up to the third floor and would watch them from the window.

Sitting on the porch in front and watching people go by.

Roller skating in the parlor.

Evening of terrible storm - everyone was lined up at the big window on the north side (office side) as it was moving from the wind and they were holding it from breaking.
Armand & Louise Gygi came from Chippewa Falls to and set up a meat market in Lou Bernier’s building in the early
1906 he then moved to Holcombe and set up a meat market there. joined him in 1920. And in the 1930’s another son, Harvey moved from South Bend, Indiana and bought Henry’s share out and be- with his father. Henry then bought Hans Hulla’s farm just outside late 1920’s a line of groceries was slowly added. Armand origi- Switzerland. Eleven children were born into the family. The first a serious illness at 18months. The remaining ten were Henry, Ruth, Lillian, Leon, George, Francis, Raymond and Mary Jean. The

Barney Town 1900’s. About His son Henry to Holcombe came a partner of town. In the nally came from born died from Harvey, Phillip, family lived in the same building as the store and that building stands today and is an apartment build- ing. Armond retired and died in 1959. Louise died in 1969. When Harvey’s wife died, he closed the store. In 1970-71 the store was sold to Art Buswell and he made it into apartments. Later Pete Wolfe bought the building and owns it still. Raymond and George Gygi are still residents of Holcombe and Frances lives in nearby Cornell.

Armand Gygi came from Switzerland in 1893 as an expert sausage maker. This week he and his son are celebrating 50 years of merchandising in the quiet little village of Holcombe.

Gygi, with the formula and know-how of making 16 different kinds of sausage, plus being classified as an expert in the art of slaughtering and meat cutting, first lived in Chippewa Falls. Late in 1906 he and his wife and three children moved to Holcombe.

It was the beginning of 50 years of merchandising. Gygi first operated a meat market in Barney Town, a small settlement in the north part of the village of Holcombe. A year later he moved downtown and has been doing business there ever since.

For more than 20 years he served logging camps and lumberjacks in the Holcombe-Cornell area with choice cuts of beef, pork and mutton. Great slabs of sides of beef hung from the hooks in his shop. Thousands of customers tramped through the thick sawdust on the floor of his market in those years.

Gygi was, by necessity, also a cattle buyer. While buying meat for his own shop he purchased, on the side, cattle for A. J. Edminster, who at that time shipped to the stockyards in the larger cities.
Times began to change along about 1924. People were living in a different fashion, Gygi learned. Housewives were beginning to buy more canned goods, baked goods and packaged foodstuffs.

So, Gygi swept the sawdust out of his shop and put in a small line of groceries. Customers began asking for yard goods, denim, thread and gingham. Gygi also put in a line of dry goods and hardware.

Along about that time it began to appear that the horseless carriage was here to stay so a bright red gasoline pump appeared in front of the Gygi store in Holcombe.

In 1923 a son, Henry, who had been operating a general store in Cornell, sold out and joined his father in the operation of the ever-growing market in Holcombe.

This partnership continued through 1932 at which time Henry sold his share in the store to another brother, Harvey, of South Bend, Indiana and so the partnership of A. Gygi and Son still continues today.

The former store began to get crowded with all the new merchandise so in 1932 the partnership proceeded to enlarge and remodel the old market.

Drugs and cosmetics, notions and footwear were added to the line of merchandise. The old market was now a complete shopping center in Holcombe. The partnership of Armand and Harvey Gygi has been successfully operated for the past 26 years.

Today and tomorrow Armand and Harvey are holding a special sort of open house at the Holcombe store.

“We’d like to shake the hand of every one of our friends and neighbors,” Harvey told the Chippewa Herald-Telegram. “Of course, there are many of our friends missing. Dad’s been in business here a long time,” he added.

During the 50 years in Holcombe a family of 10 children were brought up. There are now 27 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

George and Beatrice Parsons opened up the locker plant in Holcombe in 1948. It was located next to Gygi’s store on Spooner Avenue. They lived across the street with their three children Gale, Gary and Sandra.
Marvin Johnson was a business man that lived in Holcombe. He was married to Sadie Taylor and they had three boys, Howard, Vic and Garold.

Marv had a garage on the corner of Main and Irvine. In 1946, eventually he sold that garage to the Droehls. In 1950 he had a garage built on the corner of Highway 27 and Highway M by Lawrence Cote.

Marvin also had a gas route where he delivered gas to locals and farmers in the area. In later years after Marv passed away, Sadie married Tom Mix. Sadie and Tom had a daughter, Marcia. Tom helped run the garage. He added fuel pumps and did the upkeep on the school busses. Before the garage was torn down in early 2001 Vic and Garold ran the garage.
Holcombe Sawmill to open
(March 29, 1923)

John Cox, manager of the Holcombe Mill, expects to start sawing just as soon as the weather will permit. The work should have been well under way now, but the weather has made the work impossible. The mill will have several months’ work this season for the reason that many Holcombe farmers have logs in for sawing, after which the mill will take care of the logs taken from the river at this point.

M & W Super Mart

Chuck Mich and John Wesley purchased the building on the corner of Irvine Ave and State Highway 27 in the spring of 1967 and started the M & W Super Mart, opening in June 1967. John and Betty bought Chuck out in the spring of 1968 and living quarters were built above that summer.

John and Betty with their family of Susan, Donna, Bill, Michael and Lynn moved in above the store in the fall of 1968. They ran the grocery store, with John also working for the town of Lake Holcombe and then as a postman, until September 1970.
(from John/Lynn Wesley)

Chuck Mich in front of the M & W Super Mart
June 1967

M & W Super Mart Highway 27 sign
August 1979

Betty Wesley, as always, hard at work 1969
John and Betty Wesley’s M & W Super Mart
Christmas 1968

Driven by John Wesley with Randy Know; tp m Hon as a Minute Man
Michael Wesley as Uncle Sam and Lynn Wesley as the Statue of Liberty

Holcombe Mercantile
Margaret & Jack Rank’s Cafe

Realestate Office/Bank

Red & White Store

Pickle Factory
### Telephone Company

In the fall of 1929 two brothers, Carl and Claude Schoonover of Lime Ridge, Wisconsin, purchased the Chippewa County Telephone Company and moved with their families to Chippewa Falls. At that time, the Chippewa County Company consisted of three separate exchanges – Eagle Point, Jim Falls and Holcombe. Three years later in August 1932, Carl and Connie Schoonover moved with their children Lila (Johnson) and Tom, to Holcombe. The telephone office with switchboard was located in the Stafford Jewelry Building. Later the switchboard was moved into their residence and stayed there for about ten years. Two more children were born, Carleen Ann (Aaron) and Bill. The switchboard had twenty lines. One long distance line to Eau Claire, four private lines and the rest were party lines.

For those of you who grew up in the “early days”, remember the old telephone “party lines” with up to a dozen or more families sharing the same telephone line? When the phone twanged, you listed for your designated code number of long rings and short rings to see if the call was for you. For instance, 2 long, one short or one long, one short. And, let’s admit it, when things were dull you might just pick up your receiver and “listen in” on a call that you knew was for one of your neighbors. It’s how you kept up on the “real news” in the neighborhood.

How many times do we now wish we could speak to a live operator and have her find a person or business without an address? In Holcombe before the dial phones, the operator could at times tell you, “so and so isn’t answering her phone because she went to Cornell today to the doctor.” We would like the rates too; $1.75 for a party line and $2.25 for a private line.

In addition to Carl’s telephone work, he was an electrician and he bought and drove the first school bus for the Holcombe School District in the early ‘40’s. He continued to drive a route until the mid ‘60’s. He enjoyed the kids and they enjoyed him too.

The Holcombe Telephone Company was sold to the owners of the Turtle Lake Company in 1962.

### Post Office

Mail deliveries began with the arrival of the railroad. In 1903 Edminster was appointed postmaster and the postoffice was located in a corner of his store. It was moved in 1919 to an addition to the bank building. Rober Zimmerman succeeded Edminster in 1924 and served as postmaster until Louis G. Bernier was appointed in 1933.

**Post office located behind Holcombe Bank**

**Rural mail carrier, 1922**

**Mauice Staudacher retires after 50 years**
WALTER BROTHERS PALLET FACTORY

Walter Brothers, a family owned corporation, saws lumber and produces pallets. The pallets are sold, mostly to John Deere.

They purchase saw bolts and logs from many local loggers as well as others. Their payroll consists of several local people also.

Although the Holcombe Plant has only been in operation since 1969 the familiar Walter Bros. name dates back to 1908. In that year their family came to Holcombe from Sheboygan.

Holcombe was in its heyday as a boom town, boasting two hotels, two banks, several stores and a major railroad depot. The six Walter brothers, Ed, Louie, John, Pete, Art and Bill settled at the “old Jones Farm” with their parents, Ed and Frances Walters. The brothers logged in the local hardwood forests during the winter and built town and state roads in the summer.

The bank contacted Ed and Pete Walters, two of the brothers, to sell them 1600 acres on credit of hardwood timber at Radisson, Wisconsin. That was the origin of the full time lumber business in the Walters family.

In 1936, the Walters family built the mill at Radisson. In 1962 the firm incorporated with Ed and his sons Harold, Howard and Clinton as owners. Later Howard and his sons Dick, Bill and Tim became sole stockholders of the company.

In 1968 the decision by the Town of Holcombe to sell 35 acres of public land along Highway 27 and M to the Walters Brothers Lumber and Manufacturing Company for one dollar. There was an economic dividend for the residents of North Chippewa County.

Harold continued supervising the mill at Radisson, stopping at the Holcombe mill on his way.

Harold’s three sons entered the business at the bottom, working in the mill and wood yard.

Dick, the eldest of Harold and Frances’ sons held a degree in Business Administration and managed a JC Penney retail complex in the Twin Cities before returning to enter the business in 1973. He worked all the jobs at the pallet factory including management.

In 1977 a tornado hit the Holcombe area and caught Dick, on his way home, in its path. He lost his young, energetic life leaving his wife Marilyn and three children behind.

Bill, the second son, is a graduate accountant who spent many years in the Twin Cities working with Honeywell and Medtronic Corp. He also returned to the family corporation. He worked in the mill as well as the accounting and later went to manage the Radisson mill when Harold slowly retired.

Tim, the youngest son, is a graduate of the Lumber Grading School at Memphis, Tennessee. He too worked at the mill and took over the management at Holcombe when Bill started at Radisson.

The Walters name continues to go on. Bill retired in 2004 and Tim took over the ride to Radisson each day placing his son Cory in charge at Holcombe. Cory being the fourth generation. Cory’s other three brothers have also worked at the mill. It seems certain they will remain for many decades more.

Old Train Depot

In 1945 Percy Tonnancour bought the old train depot and made it into a bar with a dance hall in the back. There also was a restaurant in the back. It was a thriving business while the dam was being built.

I believe Margaret Rank operated the restaurant at that time. Living quarters were upstairs where Percy and his wife Maxine and children Rosemary, Patsy, Phyllis, Geri and Arline lived. The bar was sold in 1954.
Bandits Raid Holcombe State Bank

Cutting their way through the vault door and into a magnesium steel safe inside, bandits raided the Holcombe State Bank early this morning and after looting the safe and safety deposit boxes, escaped with fully $3,500 in cash, bonds and securities. Thaddeus Loiselle, the bank janitor discovered the robbery at 5:30 o’clock, arriving on the scene after the automobile bearing the bandits drew out of the village.

The bank’s cash of $1,800 and $1,300 in bonds, added to the safety deposit box holdings, made up the loot which was secured after the yeggs burned a hole a foot and one-half square in the vault door and another six inches in size in the safe. An acetylene torch was used.

Mrs. Ray Cleaves, Holcombe, was one of the heaviest individual losers, $300 in saving stamps being taken from her safety deposit box. French bonds valued at 50,000 francs were burned and damaged by the bandits, but were left behind.

At noon today, Robert Zimmerman, cashier, said that the exact loss could not be determined until a safe expert from St. Paul arrived to open the safe. The lock of the safe was warped by the intense heat of the torch and could not be opened. By thrusting their arms through the hole in the safe, the bank officials could not reach the bottom and for this reason could not determine the total amount of securities taken.

The bandits gained entrance to the bank through a window from the post office next door. Blankets, soaked in water, were used by the bandits to shield their faces from the flames of the acetylene torch, it is believed.

Mr. Loiselle arrived at the bank to make the fire at about 5:30 o’clock and found the floor of the bank covered with water which had been used by the bandits to pour into the safe to prevent the intense heat from destroying the papers inside. Paper, including the French bonds, were partially destroyed by the water.

Spreading the alarm, the janitor ran to the home of A.J. Edminster, president of the bank. Mr. Edminster was preparing to make an early drive to St. Paul and had been up an hour when Mr. Loiselle came to his door. Mr. Edminster and a small number of other men immediately took up the trail of a car driven by the bandits, which was identified by the fact that there was but one chain on the machine and that on one of the rear wheels.

The yeggmen headed south and then apparently changing their minds, backed up in a grove and turned their machine northward. The trail was followed to Bruce, about twenty miles from Holcombe and was lost in the early morning traffic.

Owing to the fact that they would have to carry a large tank of gas to operate their torch, it is believed that the robbers traveled in a large car.

All highways and railroads, especially those leading to the Twin Cities are being combed by authorities from the surrounding towns in response to the alarm sent out before 6:00 o’clock this morning.

The Holcombe bank was robbed 16 years ago, in November 1907, of $300. Capture of the bandits followed a few days later and they were sentenced to prison terms.

Shortly before 12 o’clock Thursday evening R.V. Bell, employee of Clark Grain and Fuel company, saw four men in what he took to be an old model Oldsmobile touring car stop on the Northwestern State Bank corner, and give the bank building the “once over.” The actions of the men aroused Mr. Bell’s suspicion and he watched them for some moments while they looked up and down the street and at the bank building.

Mr. Bell is of the opinion that the men contemplated a raid on one of the local banks but gave it up when they discovered that the only way in which they could gain admittance was from the front or side in plain view of the street.

The car was an old one with a weather beaten appearance, Mr. Bell said. It was painted green.

November 16, 1923
Bernier (Barney Town)

Adolph Bernier came from an area south of Holcombe and built several buildings on First Street. Two were general stores, one was operated by a son, George. One of the stores was erected in 1903. The upstairs served as a meeting hall. This store was known as Holcombe Mercantile Store and was operated until it was destroyed by fire in 1913.

Bernier’s Boarding House, the first hotel in the village was built in 1903 and run by William Graf and Henry Roerick. In 1904 Armand Gygi and Peter Schielder opened a meat market.

Adolph had three sons, George, Louis and Fred. Louis was appointed as postmaster in 1933. Fred operated the pickle factory and also served on the town board. Fred and Louis were the first Ford Model T car dealers in 1914.
Holcombe Farmers Club

The Holcombe Farmers’ Club met on the last Saturday night of each month. This included most of the farmers in the entire district around three to four hundred. A committee that served a three month period would plan the entertainment for the evening. Usually there would be an outside speaker that would discuss farm problems. After this there would be music and other entertainment, followed by dancing.

The Chippewa Valley Colonization Company

The Chippewa Valley Colonization Company, A.J. Edminster, President, R.L. Cleaves, Vice-president; R.L. Zimmerman, Secretary and Peter Robinson, Treasurer, had acquired 20,000 acres of land in the vicinity of Holcombe, and offered it to purchasers who wanted a home in this area.

This was taken from the The Chippewa Valley a quarterly publication at Eau Claire

Rebekah Club

REBEKAH OFFICERS admire tribute presented to Ferne Paulsen, 50-year member of Holcombe Lodge 40. From left, District President Helen Hanson, Independence; Assembly Warden Pauline Moore, Balsam Lake; Past District President Ferne Paulsen, Noble Grand Violet Helgeron, Cornell.

MEMBERS OF HOLCOMBE Rebekah Lodge honor their 50-year member, Ferne Paulsen. Back row, from left, Mrs. George Cygl, Mrs. Gladys Reaves, Mrs. John Johnson, Mrs. Ernest Paulsen, Mrs. Glen Packer, Mrs. Lester Davis, Mrs. Henry Staudacher. Front row, Mrs. Leah Gourdox, Mrs. Otto Helgeron, Mrs. Ralph Donniah, Mrs. Herman Forsman, Mrs. Helen Heufeld, Mrs. Mike Grotte, Mrs. Maurice Staudacher.
The Odd Fellows

The Odd Fellows at least to one story, got its name from the fact that it was a lodge that opened its doors to the working class who at that time did not ordinarily belong to fraternal orders – and were thus “odd”. May or may not be true as the Odd Fellows have been around for a long time. The first documented reference to an Odd Fellows lodge is in the year 1748. The lodge was number 9 which suggests other lodges preceded them. There may also have been predecessor organization. It seems likely that they are nearly as old as modern (Free & Accepted) Masons. Membership in Masons and Odd Fellows has been common as evidenced by numerous pins showing the square and compass conjoined with the three link chain.

The Modern Woodmen of America were the earliest lodge to organize in the community. In 1906 the Odd Fellows were established and two years later were joined by the Rebekahs.

The Odd Fellows Hall was over Ray Willmarth’s home on Spooner Avenue in 1906. The Rebecca lodge was organized in 1908. Like all progressive small towns then, Holcombe had a band stand on the northeast corner of Spooner and Main and had a local band, called the Modern Woodman Band, to play in it. Any settler who could play an instrument was welcomed.

One man, Joseph Cullen Root, was responsible for the founding of no less than 4 fraternal orders. Root, a member of the AOUW, was inspired by a sermon on the clearing of land for settlement and was moved to establish the Modern Woodmen of America, a fraternal benefit society with the goat of clearing away financial problems caused by the death of a breadwinner. The ladies branch, The Royal Neighbors, soon followed.

But within a few years of its founding, Root had a falling out with the leadership of his new order. So he left the MWA and promptly founded the Woodmen of the World. The ladies founded Neighbors of Woodcraft.
A HISTORY OF THE LAKE HOLCOMBE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Collected from eye witnesses and written down Gayle Kirkman
Main written sources: History of Rural Schools of Rusk County 1985 abbrev.” History “
The Chippewa County Chronicle-1995. (abbreviated CCC henceforth)
The Chippewa County Historical Society in Chippewa Falls, WI—school files

INTRODUCTION

To understand the way the schools developed you have to remember what attracted people to this area. The lumber and the river. “The power of falling water to run mills that sawed lumber or ground grain was the foundation of settlement in Chippewa County. The Chippewa River falls 250 feet from the mouth of the Flambeau to Badger Mills in Hallie.” (Chippewa County Chronicle, 19)

Of course the first white man came for the furs in the 1600’s and worked with the Chippewa Indians or “Ojibwe” (named for their “puckered” style of moccasins.) The first white settlement didn’t happen for another 150 years.

In 1850 Daniel Shaw Lumber Company established a settlement at the junction of the Flambeau and Chippewa Rivers and that settlement was called Flambeau. Quite a town sprung up there to support the logging operation including farmers who grew food for the camps. The plat map shows a school was on Tower Road and D on the east side of the river just beyond where Ardees Flambeau Resort is today. The 1915 brick school which is still standing today and has been saved and restored by Joan (Gourdeux) Leary is across the river in the NW corner of land originally (1856) owned by Alex Gourdeux. The Tower Road Flambeau School is gone but it was the first one in Chippewa County somewhere between 1876 and 1900 (although it is now in Rusk County )

Let’s move on to how the schools worked. As civilization came to Chippewa County, things became organized. The local people petitioned the county for a school. When the petition to form a school was granted, the residents elected a local school board. The local school board hired the teacher, built and maintained the buildings, and took an active role in supervising their children’s education. The county hired and later elected a professional educator with the title of “county superintendent” who traveled to each school supervising teacher education and encouraging teachers to take summer training and classes at Eau Claire and Rusk County Normal School. These superintendents could also withhold state and county financial aid to local districts that failed to maintain school houses or supply books, desks and other necessary material.(CCC,26)

In 1860 there were 64 farms working 10,724 acres in Chippewa County which was much bigger than it is now. There were only 10 school districts and only 213 of 508 school aged children attending. (CCC,30)

In 1879 the county population was 8311 and the county had 44 school districts, 71 teachers and 1,359 of 2225 school age children in school. (CCC,41)

By 1880, the county had 96 school districts, 157 teachers and 3,568 of 4987 school age students including 24 high school students. By the way, in 1884 the Holcombe dam washed out because of record high waters and the Indian statue was washed away later to be found in Jim Falls and returned to Holcombe.

In 1890, county population was 25,143 with 125 school districts, 230 teachers and 5342 out of 9509 school age children including 219 high school students. Just to keep things in perspective, William Graf built his Holcombe House Hotel for loggers and river drivers near Little Falls in 1896. (CCC,74)

The Holcombe Elementary School was a large two-story, white, wooden building built on the same hill that the present school is on. We have no exact date or charter for the establishment of the school but we do know that the people met in 1905 in the school house to decide what denomination the Church should be. So we can say for sure that the school was there in 1905. We have heard from several senior citizens that 1904 was the building date. One of the year books states that before the white school was built, they held elementary school in the Legion hall. We have a lovely picture of Holcombe students on parade showing that there was education going on in Holcombe on the grade school level in 1908.
HOLCOMBE HIGH SCHOOL

We do have a charter showing the establishment of the Holcombe High School on September 2, 1916 with eleven students. It was called District #11. (In 1954 the name was changed to “Lake Holcombe.”) According to Curly Gygi, the high school was housed on the top floor of the two story white building, and the first and second grades were on the first floor in the SE corner. The 6th, 7th, 8th grade took up the rest of the first floor. The 3rd and 4th and 5th grades were taught in the second story of the Harold Flater house which was occupied at the time. It was located across from what is now Alice Troupe’s house. This seems like a strange arrangement to us, but Curly says no one questioned it back then except the principal. He did not like the set up. The school burned down in 1931.

When asked about how the school burned down, Curly is evasive, but hints at phosphorous sticks in water in the junky basement. Just rumors he heard at the time. Anyway, the school burned down. So while the new school of brick was being built, the students were farmed out all over town. The 3rd, 4th, and 5th stayed at Flaters upstairs. The High School went over to one of the hotels and the rest were taught upstairs in Graf’s large hall above the saloon.

This brick school was built in 1932 and torn down in 1991 to make way for the new elementary school. The new gymnasium stands where the three story brick building was. Today the district consists of 209 square miles.

The oldest living graduate is Ernest Paulson class of 1927. The first annual was published in 1944 and dedicated to the graduates who answered the call to military duty. The smallest graduating class was in 1917—a class of 1 student, Zag Jardine. A teacher contract for a Miss Ethel M. Clark for the year 1928-29 was for the sum of $1,135.00

Until 1952, the county school superintendent ran Holcombe school officially, but unofficially, there was a high school teacher who was also the principal. From 1946-51 it was J.F. Laundrie. Then in 1952, the school district hired its own first superintendent and he stayed until 1967—Arnold Lambert. From 1968-71 the superintendent was a Don Schneider. Then it goes as follows:

1971-1972: Norbert Krause
1972-1986: John Schomisch
1986-1992: Denis Kirkman
1996-2002: James Schuchardt
2002-present: Thomas Goulet

The Local School and County School Board

With the exception of the Holcombe, Riverview, Wilson and Arnold school buildings, the schools in this area were one room school houses with a single teacher as a rule. There was a local school board who hired the teacher and built the building and maintained it. (I am not sure if that was financed through the property tax or a special school tax or a state tax. The Roberts books show a levy of the townships and some state aid) There was also a county school board whose job it was to supervise all the schools in the county. The Rusk County Board of Education in 1913 was elected for a five-year term and selected the County Superintendent who received $1100.00 that year. It was his/her job to select textbooks, visit every school, attend the two annual meetings each year and any other board meetings, to advise the board, and prepare the state report to the State Superintendent. After their report was filed, the school received $500.00 in state aid. There was a side committee called the “Committee on Common Schools” who had authority in creating school districts and settling disputes about boundaries and compensation. (History, 175)

The oldest rural school in Rusk county (which at the time was Chippewa County—Rusk was not a county until 1901 and was called Gates County until 1905) was the Flambeau or Riverview School. The present one up on Ranch road by the D bridge is not the original school. In 1901, Rusk had 32 rural schools—2151 students; 47 teachers. The first Birch Creek School was started about 1886 and is about as old as the Flambeau school too. The Flambeau school served the children of lumbermen and farmers who supported the Shaw Lumberworks. (History, 175)

To the best of my knowledge, (and no one kept records of the consolidation as it happened,) the following schools were part of the Lake Holcombe Consolidated School District: Riverside (Flambeau); Birch Creek, LaRose, Pleasant Ridge; Arnold, Ruby (Elmdale); Pleasant View (Devils Nest); Jerome; Roberts; Enterprise; Mayflower; MudBrook; Sunnyside; Willard, Wilson State Graded (Dogville), Roy and
Highbanks. Some of these schools closed before consolidation and the students were split among neighboring schools. Some of these schools closed for lack of students and then reopened later when there were more students. I have done my best to get a little something about each school and any omission is purely accidental. Also about spellings of names, some of these records were hand written or oral so I have had to guess at some of the first and last names. Please forgive any misspellings as I had to go by instinct on some of the names.

The school was the heart of the community

Most of the early teachers were single women and in 1901 the salary was about $30.00 a month. These teachers taught all eight grades. Each grade group had their class which lasted 15 minutes and the others did seat work. Joan Gourdeux Leary said that she thought this type of schooling was wonderful because each student could learn at his/her own pace. If you wanted to learn eighth grade geography in fourth grade, all you had to do was listen. She also said that she never got bored hearing the same information over and over each year.

The teacher also had to often be the janitor, build the fire, keep records, walk to homes of students for discussions, go back for more schooling and so on. There was some adult education too, according to the History of Rural Schools of Rusk County, Wisconsin.

“Debating, spelling contests and lectures were held in school houses (in evenings) for the adults of the communities.” (177)

Ardie Flater Buchholtz said that the atmosphere of the one-room school had such a feeling of “community.” It was more than just a school. There was a warm, friendly feeling and the student felt like an individual. The teacher cared about you and your whole family.

In her 1980 essay, Irma Bragg, a teacher in a rural school says, ”What a homey, cozy feeling when all gathered and did their lessons around the old heater in the back of the room on a cold winter morning!...Then the dogs. Old Petey slept peacefully in front of the stove on many a cold day...During noon and recess we played games, such as “Please May I,” made paper kites and flew them, played tag and ball....But there was a serious side too. The 7th and 8th graders went outdoors and by triangulation measured the height of a tree, the width of the Flambeau River. There were field trips identifying specimens of plant
life as well as birds. A beaver colony was visited and seen in action. News items from the local area were gathered, written up and published in the *Ladysmith News*. *(History, 166-7)* There were Christmas programs, lunch box socials, the end of the year picnic and the whole family attended. The women brought food, programs were presented, the fathers organized games and everyone had a good time.

Compulsory attendance law required students to attend school from ages 7 through 14 for five months a year. A child 14-16 years of age had to attend school if he did not have a job. A child was allowed to attend school, if he/she wanted to, from age 4 through age 20.

The state passed air quality laws requiring good ventilation in 1906. In some years the state paid 2/3 of the operating expense of the school. Most starting teachers were 18 years of age in 1906 and there was a shortage so Rusk county opened a teacher training school in 1907. I am reasonably sure that Eau Claire had a training facility by this time too. *(History, 175)*

In 1915, the present Flambeau brick two-room school was built on the north side of the Chippewa River where it stands today. Joan Gourdoux Leary who attended the school as a child, has preserved the upper level to represent the school in about the 1940’s. There were even indoor toilets. Harold “Tubby” Flater remembers attending this school and on some winter days, they could skate down the river to the school. Going down the river was easy but coming back was uphill and a little tougher.

In order to graduate or be promoted, the county superintendent came around and tested the students. Curly Gygi remembers one county superintendent, Mrs. Thorpe, who was very strict and some of the children had trouble reading to her. The lady who came after her was friendlier. To graduate from 8th grade in a ceremony, a student had to travel to the court house of his/her county. Therefore, many students just received their diploma in the mail and that was the end.

**Lucille Guthman’s Memories of Going to school in Holcombe**

Lucille (Walters) Guthman went to Holcombe Grade and High School and graduated as one of 18 in the class of 1935. Now only she and another girl are left—Frances (Gygi) Walters. She lived in the big white house behind the old Methodist Church and only had to walk about a block to get to school. She was one of seven children and they were lucky to be able to go home for lunch. Her mother Mary Russell was a teacher during her single days at one of the rural school houses in the district when she met Peter Walters and married him.

Lucille says that she thinks there were two grades in each classroom. Mrs. Lotz had grades 1 and 2. Miss Adams had 3rd, 4th and maybe 5th. Some children drove into town in horse and buggy in the spring and their horses were stabled in a shed across from Gygi’s store. Lucille guesses that there were 30 to 35 children in each room. This
MUDBROOK SCHOOL
MEMORIES WRITTEN BY RUBY MCEATHRON GETTING WITH HELP FROM JOAN FERRON

(Note: I am going to use Mudbrook school as an example of all the one room schools because Ruby McEathron has done such a great job of putting her memories on paper and has allowed me to share them with you. Gayle Kirkman)

The Beginning

Mudbrook was in Rusk County in the Town of Washington on the corner of Trunk D and Mudbrook Valley Road. It was built about 1912 by Rudolf Ohlfs. Early board members were John Luethi, Sr., Rudolf Ohlfs and Theodore Emmerson. Some early teachers were Ella Crooks, Lottie McCracken, a Miss Graham, and Hector Powell. Families were the John Leuthis, Hans Pedersens, Bill Poolers, Jabot’s, Mattsons and Bruno Geibels. When the school was closed for lack of students they walked to Highbanks or Big Bend. In 1931 the required number of six students was acquired and the school reopened. Lena Sargent Biedron was teaching. The following families attended during the 1931-46 years: John Luethi, Jr., Russell LaBelle, Gayle McEathron, Ben Luethi, Elmer McEathron, Roy Pederson, Bernard Smalley, Pat Powers, Bruno Geibel, Shorty Priem, Harry Flater, Charles Elsner, Floyd Holloway, Guy LaForge, Oscar Cole, Pattersons, Stevens, Rasmussons, and Berges.

The Building Itself

It was a white building with a roofed front porch and a window on each side. The main part of the building had four windows on each side, a flagpole in the front and the traditional belfry on the roof. There was a smaller building behind which held the wood supply. On either side were the girls and boys two-holed outhouses with a wooden privacy wall across the front. That also shielded the girls and boys from the cold north wind in the winter. The school house faced Hwy. D and the River to the north. The water pump and the the playground consisted of the merry-go-round and a softball yard was on the west facing Mudbrook Road.

Stepping inside the building, the students entered a narrow horizontal hallway with a door at both ends and the bell rope hanging in the middle and tied high enough so most children couldn’t reach it. Through the door to the right was a book case and in front of that was the teacher’s desk. A large wall clock with a swing pendulum hung on that wall. Through the left door was the cloak room with higher and lower hooks to fit age groups. There was a crockery water cooler with a bubbler attached and drain tube running into a bucket to catch the extra water. A slate blackboard was attached to the opposite side of the hallway wall as this was the front of the room. In the back right corner was a potbellied wood stove encased in a large round metal jacket to protect us from accidental burns. It was a good place to hang wet mittens or warm your toes after a cold walk to school. To the left was the woodbox that the teacher

Students at Mudbrook School about 1913 or 1914. Anna Luethi (M. McEathron) is the girl in the center of the first row.
Ben Luethi, the second from left in back row.
Walter Luethi, the tall boy in back row right.
and the older students kept filled. There was a shelf above it and on many cold days we would sit on that shelf to have our lesson—music and spelling bees especially. Next to that was the chimney.

In the middle of the room were rows of desks attached to long one-by-fours so they could be moved to the side when cleaning the floor. Each row had four or five desks of about the same size the smallest in one row graduating to the largest desks in the row on the opposite side. There were only four rows of desks. Most of the desks had an open front and a hole for an inkwell although by the time Ruby was in school they were using fountain pens. In front of these, facing the teacher’s desk was a long recitation bench where you went when your class had to have its lesson. It held about eight children at one time. Ruby says that although the building was small, it always seemed to have enough room for the twelve to eighteen students it housed while she was going to school there.

Getting to School

Getting to school was often an adventure and Ruby remembers many shortcuts and pastures and washboard roads in grandpa’s old car. If a blizzard came up, her father hooked up the horses to a bobsled filled with blankets and warm flat irons. They never worried about strangers accosting them and usually accepted a ride home with anyone who offered. The milk truck driver was a cousin, Richard Luethi, and he often let the kids ride on top of the milk cans. The clothing the girls wore were dresses and long brown cotton stockings which were kept up with over-the-shoulder garters or rubber ring garters. “In the spring before our mothers thought it was warm enough to wear anklets, we would roll the stockings down around our ankle. We also wore long underwear during the winter under the cotton stockings!” Then they also wore snow pants, warm caps and jackets. Rubber overshoes with snaps or buckles and later boots were worn over their regular shoes. But their feet would get frostbitten and start itching furiously when they warmed up at school. They called this “Chilblains.” At night their dad had them soak their feet in warm water to which dry mustard was added to “cure the itching.” The school house was not always warm so the girls would pull their feet up on the seat and sit on them.

The School Day

So the school day began when the bell rang at nine o’clock. Students lined up in front of the school house in two columns to raise the 48 star flag and pledge allegiance to the flag and sing “My Country ‘tis of Thee.” On rainy days, students held the flag in front of the room. The flag was always brought in at the first sign of rain. The day began inside with lessons on the board for reading and math. The older students started on that, while the younger students were brought forward for their lesson in Reading. Teacher would spend 10 or 15 minutes with each class and then bring up the next group. “Of course the younger children often listened in when the older children were having their lessons.” Recess was called in the middle of the morning and afternoon. Young grades were dismissed 15 minutes earlier allowing them to have a longer time as they were more restless.
Ruby said that they all carried their lunches in karo syrup pails, although the square lunch buckets with cowboys and movie stars were just becoming popular. They would often swap lunches. Meanwhile the teacher was busy putting the afternoon assignments on the board.

“During the afternoon, Social Studies, Science, Language, Music and Art classes were held and these were combination classes. The first and second grades studied the same curriculum as did the third and fourth and so on. One year the first and second grades would study the first grade curriculum, and the next year they studied the second grade curriculum. As you can see, one year was usually harder than the next, especially for those in the first, third, fifth and seventh grades when they were using the even grades’ curriculum. Art and music were taught to the whole school at once with the expectation that everyone would work at the appropriate level. We were required to study one piece of classical literature, memorize a poem, analyze one art print and learn one new song every month. We also studied authors, poets, painters, and composers of these works of art.” Sounds pretty well-rounded to me. On top of that, the older students helped out the younger students with flash cards, listening to their reading, helping with spelling, but only the teacher taught the lessons. Truly this was a cooperative effort. School was dismissed at 4:00.

To graduate from the eighth grade, a student had to pass a county exam at the county seat. It was to your advantage if you had a older teacher who knew the exam to teach you. Some of Ruby’s younger brothers were able to get 100% on their county exams and you can bet the teachers were likely to brag about this to other teachers. Students in state graded schools did not have to take their test at the county seat.

**Special Programs**

Special Programs were held for most of the holidays such as Arbor Day, Halloween and Christmas and the whole community came. A wire was strung across the front of the room and sheets were looped over to make a curtain. The hallway became the backstage so there could be entrances from either the right or left. “During practices, someone kept an eye out for the county school superintendent. We didn’t want her/him seeing us wasting class time!” There was no piano so all songs were acapella. There would be skits for the occasion and sometimes they would do marching drills. After the program there would be sandwiches, cake and lemonade or hot chocolate provided by the parents.

Christmas was even more exciting as they would make decorations and have a real Christmas tree. After the program, Santa would arrive with bells and a loud “Whoa.” Ruby says that they all knew it was her grandpa or uncle Walter Luethi. There were many presents under the tree and the students would draw names for an exchange and the teacher gave everyone a gift—usually a book to read or coloring books. Also community people and relatives who were wishing to exchange gifts would add to the pile.
Once they had a get-together at night and the teacher, who was sweet on Walter Luethi, talked him into taking all of them for a sleigh ride with matched horses and sleigh bells. They sang all the way to the party and when they arrived at the school, the desks were all pushed back to make room for circle games like “Blind man’s Bluff”, “Drop the handkerchief,” and relays like passing an orange under the chin. “It seemed funny watching our fathers playing those games.”

The biggest party of the year was the end of school party in the spring. It was often held on a Sunday and everyone had to have new outfits to wear. The whole community came and brought food making one of the most fantastic potluck spreads. Lemonade was made in metal milk cans; ice cream was cranked in old wooden ice cream freezers.

Teachers

Ruby writes about several teachers but one in particular fascinated me. Miss Lyilla Prosser (m. Wester) was her third grade teacher and she was young and pretty and blonde. One day a boy was poking Ruby’s sister Betty in the back with a pin. Betty finally had enough of that and picking up her book she turned around and hit him over the head with it. Miss Prosser looked up and said, “If you have to do that again, Betty, hit him harder.” Miss Prosser had a boyfriend who would sometimes stop at school to see her. She always talked to him in the hallway, while some of the kids would peek around the corner to see if they kissed.

Miss Theresa Scharenbrock (m. Franzen) was one teacher who went beyond the call of duty. When Miss Scharenbrock found out that the McEathron children had a new piano but did not know how to play it, she bought a paper keyboard so she could show them some chords to play on it. Then Betty and Ruby would go home a practice them. Ruby said that most of the time, discipline was not a problem because so many children were related that if you did something naughty, your brothers and sisters would tell on you at home and your parents would punish you.
Mudbrook Valley School 1942-43
Back Row: Wana Holloway, Betty McEathron, Patricia Rasmussen, Ruby McEathron, Eva Peterson, Ronald Smalley, Joan LaBelle
Front: Alice Luethi, Merlin LaForge, Earl Smalley, Jean LaBelle, Jack McEathron, Jim LaBelle, Bert McEathron

The End
Mudbrook School closed at the end of 1946. The students were transported to the state graded school in Holcombe about 15 miles away. Ruby attended Holcombe High School but her younger sister Shirley was transported by her father to the LaRose one-room school house which was only six miles to the south and east of their farm.

In 1951 the school house was bought and moved to the Ivan Paulsen farm on County Trunk M east of Holcombe. It is still there today and many former students visit it to take pictures.

Mudbrook Merry-Go-Round: Jean, Jim, Joan LaBelle
“Our well loved swing”

School Picnic, May 1946
L to R: Man with tie unknown, Rhube Smith, Bebe McEathron (girl with white bow)
Kids in front: Harvey McEathron, Billy Luethi, Gorden McEathron, Berton McEathron, Bernice Smalley, Orlie Smalley,
Standing on ground: Grandma Ida McEathron (lady with hat), Gladys Smalley, Olga Per-son, Erna Luethi, Elizabeth LaBelle, Anna McEathron holding Jerry, Ruth Luethi, unknown, Theresa Sarenbrock (teacher, holding child) and her relatives and others.
Next row: Gayle McEathron, Jean LaBelle, Darlene Pooler, Ruby McEathron, Joan LaBelle, ?, ?, Jean Taylor, Betty McEathron, Helen Taylor,
On top: Ben Luethi, Russell LaBelle directly below them: Walt Luethi, Elmer Holloway
RUBY SCHOOLS
MAYFLOWER (FITZEL) SCHOOL

Wilma, daughter of Joe Fitzel, writes, “My dad, Joseph Fitzel, is the man who moved to Arnold in 1912 with five children, no school. So my dad went to the County Court House in Chippewa Falls and asked the Superintendent for permission to build the school across the road .... My mother boarded the teachers who taught at that school for 45 years and I shared a room with all the teachers until I got married.”

According to Vera (Plahuta) Hessler, the Mayflower (Fitzel) school began in 1914 and the first teacher was Bertha Trudell. The County Superintendent was opposed to the school but the town went ahead and built the school anyway. The school was built in the town of Arnold which consisted of a sawmill, a store, the school and a blacksmith’s shop. The school was located on VV and M on land owned by Bernard Leudescher. It was called the Fitzel school for awhile and then Mr. Charley Hilken changed the name of the school to “Mayflower” school.

Vera states that she taught there in 1943 and 1944 for $1000.00 a year. Her training consisted of a two-year rural education degree. She said that all children walked to school —many had to walk three miles in all weather. There was wood heat and the fire was built by a neighbor (Ray Nelson).

The grades were divided in pairs: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8. One year she taught the even grades and the next year the odds. The course content was set by the state curriculum. One teacher taught all classes and classes were about 15 minutes in length. Older children drilled and supervised younger students. Special ed. children were included with the regular class. During Vera’s tenure her student attendance was twenty children from ages 5-16.

Besides teaching, the teacher had to keep the water fountain full, keep the wood fire going, shovel snow, sweep the floors daily, carry in wood, keep outdoor toilets clean, supervise playground. “Discipline was really not too much of a problem as parents were cooperative and children were more afraid of parents.” Teachers meetings were held on Saturdays to write curriculum or any other reason.

Teachers who taught at Mayflower were as follows: Vera Hurlburt; Ethel Kelly; Jenny Dimmick; Dara Bickmore; Ethel Hewitt; Mary Adams; Mary Sugars; Clare Hollenbeck; Louis Ferguson; Anna Larson; Viola Polifka; Helen Hennekens; Agnes Baker; Iola McLeod(6 years!); Dorothy McLeod(5 years!); Ila Ceverson; Virginia Nelson; Vera Plahuta; Florence Ludvigsen; Miss Powers.

The school eventually was sold at auction to Ernie Webster and moved to Donald where it is a tavern today.

RUBY SCHOOL—ELMDALE

The first Ruby school was built around 1905 and was a small building behind the Ruby Store. The teacher hired was paid $12.00 a month with free board. Mr. Olmstead served on the first board along with Ed Chidister and MacColgen. Later the school had to be enlarged and another room was used for the upper four grades. By that time the enrollment was about 8 children. By 1922, there were children ready for high school so the room used for manual training and home economics was divided off and a teacher was hired for the 9th and 10th grades. Additional students also came in from Arnold, Huron, Colburn. In 1929, there were only five students in the two grades so they
discontinued the high school and paid tuition to Stanley and a bus transported them. It was probably at this time that the school was partitioned and some of it was moved down the road to the Hartzells.

There were many people who came to Ruby because they wanted work at the saw mill. Much of this information comes from Lilas Burns’ *A History of Ruby*. Mildred Bonn wrote: "There were about a dozen houses from the store corner up to where the old schoolhouse (Mahalek’s old house is now.) On the other side there were about six houses with a board sidewalk…. We had to walk to school except if a big snowstorm came up. When this happened Fred Olmstead or Ed Anders took the horses and sleigh, and we rode to school.” She tells of two little girls who froze their feet every morning because the horse that pulled their cutter was so slow. The teacher had the older girls thaw their hands and feet with pails of snow!

Some of the teachers Mildred remembers are Alice Hasse, Miss Shootie, Bessie Cox, Mrs. B.O. Brown, Katherine McLead, Ruth Connell, Clarence Booth (high school teacher at Ruby) Alice Hatlin, Grace Raymond, and Elsie Nystrom, Mrs. Walter Leonhard, Forest Mohr, Nordis Solie, Mrs. Forest Mohr.

“Children are very fortunate today to be able to go to high school. I had only the first year and then I had to work out, so I had to quit school.” (41) She says that education is one of the most important things in life.

The following names are the pioneer families of Ruby: Ed Hawns, Martin Bates, Gliddens, Lukes, Crawfords, Grapes, Olmsteads, Friemarks, Gus Vangness, Charles Beedle, Bakers, John Bjerke, Bill Hortons, William Henderson, Hurlburts, Burichs, Winters, Melchors.

When it came time to build the new school, the old school was moved and used as a church. The new school had a wood frame under the brick outer skin and was a two room school with a basement. This school was called Elmdale. I am not sure when it closed. Bob Bayerl tells of having to use the school in 1971 when the high school was being built and wasn’t done in time for school to start. He and Ken Mahalko took the sixth graders out to Ruby and started the school up again. It was
an experience that class still talks about with happy memories. I do know that Don Schultz took it down in 2002 and found some very fine wood in it.
Arnold School as remembered by Anson Tainter

Anson Tainter, who for years published a local magazine called the *Northwest Broadcaster*, remembers that the original school was where the Ruby Town Hall is now in Arnold. Later the brick building was built and was very similar to the Flambeau settlement Riverview 1915 brick school. There were two big rooms on the main floor and the lower level was used for a lunch room on the west side in the later years and a play room on the east side. At one time he thinks that Arnold offered two years of high school there, because students who wanted to go to high school had to have enough money to board in Holcombe and many did not have that kind of money. At one time 60 students were attending both schools. When asked why the brick building was torn down, Anson said that a Burlingame bought it after consolidation closed the school and he took it apart.

Margaret Lompa Ludescher’s memories

Margaret Lompa Ludescher in her comments remembers living about three miles from school and that her school bus was a horse-drawn wagon with an oil burner sitting between them in the winter. It was driven by Fred Kern. She says the school served about 45 or 50 students when she attended from 1937-43. Her favorite teacher was Miss Isaacs from Stanley. She says that punishment was writing “I will not whisper” hundreds of times. Also, students would have to stand in the corner or cloak room and the worst punishment was missing recess!

Recess games were playing ball, tag, racing. In the winter, making snow men, snow angels, snowballs, sliding down the icy back school steps on their bottoms; playing marbles, jacks, and swinging. She remembers chemical restrooms in the basement which were modernized in the later years.

In the 1940’s, Margaret remembers that the state supplied lunch commodities and the 7th and 8th grade girls made lunch, cocoa, heated beans, sliced cheese, etc. and helped serve. In later years they hired a cook—Mary Sinclair was one she remembers. Margaret graduated in 1943 and had to go to Chippewa Falls to take her final exams. She says that two of her children went to Arnold too but by that time they had moved the top four grades to Holcombe High School.
There is a newspaper clipping telling of a spelling bee between Riverview and Arnold schools on Washington’s birthday. Of the second graders Arnold won; Third grade Riverview won; fourth grade was a tie.

Some teachers were Josephine Steinmetz, Theodore Sorenson, Kenneth Borgan, Mary Skory, Viola Dresson (Gygi), Vera Dernovsek. Mrs. Frances Sokolowski, Mrs. Doucette, Mrs. Paulson, Miss Mercer, Miss Moore, Mrs. Morgan, Miss Nelson, Jessie Mouch, Laura Antolak.

Vera Dernovsek Boris tells of teaching at Arnold which she much preferred to Riverview (the Flambeau School) because they had janitor services in 1944-46. She had graduated from Rusk County Normal Teachers’ College in Ladysmith along with two 12-week sessions at Eau Claire. She was only 18 when she signed a contract for $110.00 a month at Riverview. Her father helped her build the fire in the wood stoves but she did the rest of the janitorial jobs. County Supt. Theodore Sorenson came to her and made her feel so guilty for not teaching in her home county that she took the job at her home school, Arnold. “It seemed so strange to go there as a teacher—I was teaching some of the kids I had gone to school with.” She taught grades 5-8 in the big room with a total of 20 students. After two years she married the farm boy who bought her pie at the pie social and “that was the end of my teaching career.” Her sister Mary Dernovsek Porkel taught at LaRose school and she remembers her sewing clothes for her pupils and cutting their hair—besides being janitor!
PLEASANT VIEWS SCHOOL (Devils Nest School)

I was unable to find any information about the school. I do have these pictures and obviously Alice Paulsen taught here. The school was located on Devil’s Nest Road and East Lake Shore Drive (300th Avenue) across from the Melven Buchholz farm. There is a basement still there.
The original school, built in 1886, was located on the little hill south of the present Plagge Brothers farm buildings. It was open until 1901. Some early teachers were Margaret Lunney, Gabrielle Moses, Luke Murphy, Florence Southworth, Anna Grimmer, Effie Raymond. This school was too small to accommodate the increase in school population, so plans were made to build a school about one half mile north on the corner. August Plagge gave one acre of land for the school grounds.

This Birch Creek one-room school was built in 1901. It was built by Charles Oliver for the price of $1000.00. They burned wood until an oil burner was installed. There was no well and the students carried water from spring on County E. There were two terms: Fall went from Sept – Dec: Spring went from Feb. until May. First Board Members: Clarence Lynch, Henry Pake, August Hennekens, Kervin Hall, Howard Russell.

The school was located on the boundaries of the towns of Birch Creek and Washington, County E, since known as the Cholvin home. This change took place at the time Chippewa County was divided to form a new county named Gates (1901) which later was changed to Rusk (1905).

The front door faces west with large windows on both the north and south sides. Entrance to wood shed was reached through an east door. The stone foundation and cement porch were added in 1917.

The County Supt. Mrs. Anna J. Thorpe visited for the first time on April 26th, 1916, when Kate Brown Taylor was the teacher. The County tested the students and if they passed then they could advance.

Some early teachers were 1902- Elizabeth Parker; 1903 Ethel King; 1904- Aura Strong and Chloe Stickney’ 1906- L.N. Jerome; 1907-Leah Sweitzer; Nellie Price (Arts); 1915— Earl R. Fisk; 1921- Kate Taylor; 1922-24— Evelyn Hennekens; 1946-49— Carol Dean Gourdeau; 1950-52— Phyllis Stevenson; 1952-60— Edith Taylor.

In 1948, three schools of the Town of Birch Creek—La Rose, Birch Creek and Pleasant Ridge formed one large district. In 1949, transportation...
started with George Arts and Gertrude Nelson and drivers. Later drivers were Gene Tarnowski and Otto Hennekens.

School board members for the years of 1948 to 1960 were Clarence Lynch, Elmer Holloway, Henry Pake, August Hennekens, Howard Russell, Kervin Hall.
The school was closed in 1960 and it became the town hall for a time.

Birch Creek
Long skirt on teacher with her updo, boys in knickers; year would be about 1912

Birch Creek School now owned by Ken Parejko

Mildred Taylor, Lydia Braden
Birch Creek Dist. #6
Front row l-r: Linda Carlson, Jack Sinette, Jerry Ginter, Mary June Sinette, Myrtle Jerome, George Jerome
2nd row: Roger Jerome, Duane Sinette, Alice Jerome, Helen Taylor, Donna Nelson, Jeane Fields
3rd row: Charlotte Arts, Richard Sinette, Larry Ginter, Ronnie Arts, Cage Fields, Robert Love, Carol Ginter
4th row: Mrs. Taylor, Treffly Sinette, Kathleen Kainz, George Arts, John Taylor, Dennis Nelson, Joe Taylor, Robert Jerome
Class of 1957
The children who attended school a month with perfect attendance are Mavis Tonnancour, Leonard Tonnancour, David Tonnancour, Carl Hennekeens, Carol Roycraft, Mildred Taylor, Bonnie Taylor, Sadie Taylor, Jessie Taylor, Barbara Ferron, Leoni Smith, Melda Smith, Ardythe Flater, Hilda Flater, Earl Flater, Charles Rollins, Arthur and Billy Gourdoux.

Carl Hennekeens spent election day at his teacher's home at Keystone and also visited the Keystone school. Bonnie Taylor also spent the week end with her teacher.

Mrs. Hazel Ferron and son, Richard visited school recently.

The third grade and up are making booklets for pictures, stories and poems. The seventh and eighth graders are weaving on their booklet covers.

The following pupils have neither been tardy or absent for the past month: Dana Mae Ferron, Barbara Ann Ferron, Carl Hennekeens and Henry Hennekeens.

Birch Creek School

(December 29, 1936)

Betty Tonnancour has been on the sick list for the past two weeks.

Due to the cold weather many of the pupils were absent last week. The attendance was nine.

The following pupils have neither been tardy or absent for the past month: Dana Mae Ferron, Barbara Ann Ferron, Carl Hennekeens and Henry Hennekeens.

Birch Creek School

(December 29, 1936)

A program was held at our school Friday, Nov. 20, at 8:00 P. M. There was a large attendance and a short program was given by the pupils as follows:

- Thanksgiving at Grandpa's—school
- November, Hilda Flater
- Puritan Maids, 3rd and 4th grades
- The Busy Editor, Carl Hennekeens, Mildred Taylor
- When the Schoolbell Rings, 1st and 2nd grades
- Most of Us Have, group
- Indian Children, Ardythe Flater
- Thanksgiving Acrostic, Upper Grades
- Turkey and the Pumpkin, Helen Horvatin, Dorothy Planing
- Doctor's Orders, Mavis Tonnancour, Leon Smith

Something to Be Thankful for, Harold Stewart
- Thanksgiving Song, Josephine Horvatin, Gladys Stewart, Clara Planning
- After the Program the Speaker, Mr. Stelser of Bloomer spoke upon poultry and the feeds.

Miss Stewart attended a teachers' meeting at Estella State Graded school last Tuesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Stewart and children, Mr. Horvatin and children, Lynn Palmer, Harry Helger, Clara and Dorothy Planing and Mr. Stelser and son were among the outside visitors at our program.

The following people are on the honor roll for the last two months: Bonnie Taylor, Ardythe Flater, Arthur Gourdoux, Dolly Rea, Carol Ann Roycraft, Leonard Tonnancour, Jessie Taylor, Billy Gourdoux, David Tonnancour, Betty Knowlton and Earl Flater.

The following people who attended two months without missing: Barbara Ferron, Dora Ferron, Billy Gourdoux, Carl Hennekeens, Dolly Rea, Charles Rollins, Carol Roycraft, Leon Smith, Melda Smith, Jessie Taylor, Sadie Taylor, Leonard Tonnancour, David Tonnancour.

The seventh and eighth grades have finished agriculture and the eighth grade is now taking physiology.

Secretary, Mildred Taylor.

Always be sure that the tires are up to the recommended pressure when having automobile brakes inspected, since this will result in more satisfactory equalization of the brakes.
We found a treasure trove of information on the Roberts School thanks to Don Craker and his mother Margaret who saved the record books of the school. Because they saved these records, we can see the life of a one-room school house from its beginning to its sad end.

The first record shows a meeting on July 5th, 1892, in which H. Parsons was chairman and C.E. Shaw was clerk. The electors voted $279.00 for school funds, a slate blackboard ($22.00 + 3.00 freight), an 8 month school year, to clear the school yard of downed logs, brush, stones except “such trees they see fit for shade.” The state and county apportionments for the school was $47.29. This does not look like the first meeting. I am guessing but it looks like the school was already going. In 1893, they voted to build a house for the wood and G. Robert agreed to build it to their specifications 12X14X8 ft. I think Mary Priddy was the teacher in 1892. Then it says “School house to be painted with lime and sand” and Biel Parsons was to do it for $3.00. So for this reason I do think there was already a school house.

In 1893, there was a special meeting to dig a new well, and, on July 2, they passed a vote to build a new school house but adjourned the meeting for one year. The next year, they borrowed $400.00 and decided the building should be 20 X 32 X 12 ft. with 6 windows; 4 lighted doors 14 X 26 doors 2.6 X 6.6 to have transom, 2 lighted 16 in. windows to have stops and blind stops, outside door have 6 in. mortice lock doors to swing out, windows to have shutters and storm windows or doors; roof to be 2 ft. better than 1/3 pitch covered with No. 1 best shingles laid 5 in. to weather; “There was a double floor. The minutes are quite exact.

It looks like Mary Moses taught part of 1895 and Nellie O’Shea took over for the second half. They also had more well problems as C. Roberts was told to dig the well deeper @ $1.10 per foot. They also voted to buy a flag that year.

Bessie Watson was the teacher for 1897. Most of the minutes of the annual meetings deal with who will get the wood bid and repairs needed but once in a while there are notes that show these were real people who felt education was pretty important. Often A.J. Edminister was chairman of the meeting. Here is a note I found at the end of the 1900 minutes: “Sept 10, 1900. Annette Parsons appointed Clerk to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Henry Parsons.” In 1901 “Motion made and carried to purchase a new stove. Mr. Robert to procure one like his.” In 1902: “It became dark and business not completed so we had only a lantern for light. We voted to buy 6 cheap side lamps.”

In 1901, Wilma Van Dalrem taught for $20.00 a month. School started on Oct. 1st or 15th and ended in April. The pail and dipper cost $.40 and all the kids drank from it. In 1903, Olive McKay taught until February and then Martha Frank for April, May and June. There were two terms equaling 8 months: winter was from Oct. until Feb. and Spring was from April until June. A special meeting was held in 1903 to talk about conveying children to school or moving the school house. They decided to convey the children and raised $150.00 and put it out on bids. Burt Parsons got the job. Bessie Murphy taught in 1903.

By 1914, Bernier Paulson was receiving $39.60 a month for teaching. There are records of paying A.J. Edminister’s store and Bernier Store for floor wax, rope, a broom, ink and sweeping compound. Also Board members attended conventions and received reimbursement.

In 1916 in the middle of W.W.I, the electors voted to erect a flag pole. Again the well gave them problems in 1916 as A. Brown was hired to dig a well and put in a pump and casing for $.70 a foot. Addie Bourget taught that year and got $44.55. Frances Andrel taught in 1919-1920.

By 1927 Earl Craker was transporting the children. Margaret Funnemark was building the fire. Muriel Jay was teaching for $90.00 for 20 days which was quite generous for that time. Ruby Fisk taught in 1928. It cost the school $1407.55 in expenses that year and they received $1987.19 in state aid and taxes, so the district was in good shape. In 1934 the electors decided to purchase a new site and build a foundation and move the school for $850.00. This was done because some of the children had excessive travel. They bought some property from Parson’s farm and moved the Roberts school to the intersection of Sauerkraut Road and Fisher Drive. Involved in that meeting were Mr. Leslie Jones, Henry Gygi, Mrs. Funnemark, Mrs. Hatfield, Howard Smith. By now, they were having nine months of school. Here was a funny item from this annual meeting” The old toilets are to be auctioned off but left on premises until new ones

Mrs. Marge Craker remembers attending school at Roberts in the early 1930’s. She remembers how cold it was in the school on those 10 below zero mornings. She said there was a hole in the wall for fresh air ventilation but all it was was a opening for freezing cold air to blow into the room. Her son Don remembers being cold too. He said the dipper would be frozen into the water pail. The ceilings were nine feet high and there was no insulation. The kids had to stamp their feet and clap their hands for the first hour they were there in order to warm up. On a more pleasant note, Marge remembers ice skating on the river and playing in the woods for recess, although she broke her collar bone when she fell through the ice in 5th grade. She also remembers using ice from the Fisher River to keep food cool. She said it was pure enough to use for ice cubes.

In 1949, the electors had a special board meeting which must have been sad. ”After due deliberation a motion was made and seconded that a special school district meeting be held on August 30 at 8 P.M. for the purpose of suspending the school and transporting the children to another district.” At that meeting in 1949, Manley Craker was chairman. “Motion made by Howard Smith and seconded by Mrs. Gygi to operate as a suspended school for one year. Motion carried. Motion made by J. Dressel and seconded by B. Ellis for those to raise their hand if they want to send their children to Cornell. Six families. For Holcombe-two families. Motion made by Howard Smith and seconded by Henry Gygi to turn the electricity off. Carried. “

The 1950 annual meeting is revealing, because they voted to suspend the school for one more year. Someone wanted to sell the fixtures but the motion failed. A motion to protect the toilets passed. This school was very important to the people of this area.

A special school board meeting was called in 1951 to dispose of the schoolhouse and its fixtures. A public auction was held in June 25th, 1951.

The preceding scenario must have been re-enacted all over Wisconsin rural areas from 1940-1972 as the one room country school met its demise. The folks not only lost their school but also their community. The school had long been a gathering place when people needed one. The programs at the holidays, the end-of-year picnics are still fond memories to the people who lived them. This was a time when the area was finding itself and its identity, and the rural school played a major role in that search.
LAKE HOLCOMBE TODAY

So how did this consolidation turn out? What kind of school did we get by consolidating seventeen schools into one. Well, take a look.

The new high school was built in 1972. In 1992, the new elementary was built on the same spot as the white 1904 school and the brick 1932 school. In addition to building a new elementary, a second gymnasium and high school space was added. In 2002, the auto shop and building trades/agriculture addition was done with a wiring update for the computer network. We now have a state of the art facility in which to teach our children. Our drop-out rate is almost zero. We have 469 students as of 2004. We have had a distance learning studio since 1992, allowing students to take Technical and College courses as seniors. In 1998, the high school football team won the Division 6 state football title. (One of our graduates—Russ Rabe—just signed as a free agent with the NFL.) In 2004, the girls Volleyball team won silver at the State Volleyball Tournament. We put on a full scale broadway musical every year. We have a full marching band and orchestra and chorus. We still have our holiday program and our end of the year picnic. Pretty good for a small school. The credit goes to the students, staff, and community supporters of education which has been there from the beginning of the district. This whole chapter shows the community’s high regard for education. Education has always been one of the top priorities in the history of this area.

We benefit from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and the names you have read in the one room schools are still here along with many newer families. We have the names of Arnold—Lompas, Dernovsek, Cynor, Prokop, Wilson State Graded—Mataczynski, Andrewjeski, Zawistowski, Skrypek; and the names of Enterprise—Guthman, Verhulst. The French-Canadian names of the Flambeau settlement—Cote, Tonnancour. The Mudbrook names are still here—McEathron, Geibel, Priem, Pattersons, Poolers, Flater. The Roberts School sent us the Crakers, Hatfield, Smith, Gygi, Jones. Mayflower—Bonn; Willard School—Niteks and Pedersens; Highbanks—Taylors; Ruby—Grapes, Olmsteads, Hurlburt, Cigan; Birch Creek—Hennekens, Arts, Pake. Pleasant Ridge—Holloway, Alix, Willmarth. Holcombe; Gygi, Paulson, Walters, Ewer, Roy School—Kron, Haase. (The above names are just a sampling of the pioneer names that make my point and are by no means complete.)

So in conclusion, the consolidation was the only way to survive into the future. Although it was hard to lose their schools, the fact that these rural schools were able to consolidate into the local district, preserved the histories of all the different communities to some extent, and made a stronger entity out of a number of smaller ones.
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Harold and JoAnn Flater, Louise Kron, Sylvia Haase Leitz, Bob Bayerl, Lucille (Walters) Guthman, Erika Alix, Tracy
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There are literally dozens of people who donated pictures and stories and are too numerous to list
but I want to thank them for their contribution to this book.

Margaret Bateman

1908
On May 23, 1905 a church meeting was held at the Holcombe School House. A ballot was taken as to the denomination preferred for the establishment of a church. Twenty five votes were cast. One was for Baptist, four for Catholic, and twenty voted for Methodist. The results of this meeting were sent to the District Superintendent of the Methodist Church.

Reverend B.C. Barnes was sent to Holcombe from Pennsylvania to help with the founding of the Church. He was a faithful worker and won his way into the hearts of the people. However, because of ill health he was forced to leave the Holcombe community before a church could be built. Miss Florence Moore was sent to take his place.

A church could not be built until they had a site to build on, so Mrs. James Jardine, then Secretary of the Church Board, wrote to the Eau Claire Realty Company, asking them to donate the land on which the Church is located. They did so for $1.00.

On October 9, 1905 Eau Claire Reality deeded this parcel of land to trustees A.J. and Nellie Edminster, James and Christine Jardine and Wilma McIlmurry for the site of the Holcombe Episcopal Church as it was then called.

The first work on the Church building was started October 15, 1905 and the first Church services were held in the new Church on January 7, 1906. Deaconess, Florence Moore conducted the service.

During the summer of 1905, Mrs. Bessie Buck had circulated a subscription paper raising $335.00. It was estimated at the time that a church could be built for $700.00. This was then raised to $1000.00 and later to $1600.00. The cost of the completed Church was a little over $1700.00. Of this they borrowed $250.00 from the Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the State of

Lake Holcombe United Methodist Church
Pennsylvania. A requirement of this mortgage was that the church was to carry insurance on the building in the amount of no less than $900.00

Money and labor was donated and the completed Church was dedicated on August 5, 1906. At the time of the dedication the Church had an outstanding bill exceeding $500.00. When the attendees learned of this, an offering of $724.50 was collected. As you can see a lot of money and labor was donated to make this church possible in a very short time.

Trustees signing the mortgage on the 14th day of February 1906 were James and Christine Jardine, A.J. and Nellie Edminster, and John Gysber
A page taken from the roll of attendees at a quarterly conference. The year was 1912. Churches in the charge at this time included Cornell, Ruby, Jim Falls and Holcombe.

Mrs. Phebe Edminster was the President of the ladies Aid Society. It is recorded that the minister was paid $583.00 for the year. The District Superintendent received $30.00 and the apportionments estimated for this year were - Holcombe $300.00, Jim Falls $125.00, and Ruby $25.00.

The records for 1914 show the conference to include Holcombe, Cornell, Ruby and Jump River charges but do not include Jim Falls. Each of the quarterly conference meetings were held at Holcombe. Holcombe was shown to have 19 members. Records indicate the Ladies Aid Society raised $138.87 during the year.
Deaconess, Florence Moore wrote to her friends asking for donations to buy a bell for the Church. Letters came back from all over the country. Amounts ranged from 10 cents to $2.00 with one donation of $15.00 being made. The cost of the bell was $74.00. The bell bears the inscription, ‘PRESENTED TO THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF HOLCOMBE, WISCONSIN BY THE FRIENDS OF MISS FLORENCE MOORE’.

In 1911 John Dix became the Pastor. A parsonage was purchased for $800.00 across the street and up the block from the church location. The church and parsonage locations are highlighted on the map.
Quarterly conference notes of 1915 indicate they talked about building a barn on the parsonage lot. Also discussed was time of services, alternating morning and evening between Cornell and Holcombe. Services at Ruby and Jump River were to be on workday evenings.

The church was heated with a large box stove until in 1923 when Dr. Rodecker circulated a subscription paper and raised enough money to buy a pipeless furnace. The excavation under the Church was checked and found a furnace could not be installed without digging out more space and building a cement wall. This work was donated. The Ladies Aid bought necessary extra material for the project. The work was not completed until 1924. Water began running down the stairway to the basement. An enclosure was built over the stairway large enough to include wood storage. Most of the wood was donated for use in the box stove and later in the new wood furnace. The wood furnace was later converted to oil.

An addition on the South end of the Church was contracted by Lawrence Cote & Raymond Gygi of Holcombe approximately 1953 or 1954. A bathroom addition was built in 1962 by Merle Wagar. Al Avery helped him.

“Womens Society of Christian Service”
August 5, 1956
By: Francis K. Cleaves

Once upon a time in the early days, a group of women living in the area near the Martin Church formed an organization and called it “Willing Workers”.

These women helped in every way they could to nurse the sick, sew for the needy, and comfort the weary.

They raised money in many ways to support the church and help solve the problems that arose in those pioneering days.

Most of us know little about that. This town was called “Little Falls”, until the railroad was built in 1903. At that time the railroad station was named Holcombe.

Soon the town was laid out and began to grow.

Streets were graded, a school house was built, also several homes and business places, even a photograph gallery. Many of the “Willing Workers”, and their families came to Holcombe to live. It was then that these same women with the help of Deaconess, Florence Moore organized a Methodist Ladies Aid Society to help with the finances and other needs of the new church that was built and dedicated in 1906.

These same women carried on for many years, until they were called to their Heavenly Homes. There are only a few of them left. I am fortunate in having known most of these women and can vouch for their integrity.

The Holcombe Ladies Aid Society has always kept on with good leadership and members who gave willingly of their talents. In 1940 the name was changed to Womens Society of Christian Service. The membership of the first group started with 23 and from that time on it hasn’t changed very much. Some years a few more members,

Holcombe Methodist Ladies aid en route to meeting accompanied by local pastor
however, I do not think we were below the original number. We are grateful that the lord has kept giving us inspiration and new members with talents that have kept our society going. We may not be the most alert society in the district, but we hope we have helped society to a great extent thru our efforts. From a financial standpoint we have helped to keep our church in running order and paid for many repair projects.

Many hours of real labor have been given by our women in all these years and the women of today have kept up the records. The customs are changed from pioneer days. Most every one has money and facilities to take care of their own needs.

Our organization has raised over $3500.00 to pay on the recent improvement of the church building. The remaining amount of $1500.00 was raised from individual subscriptions.

Our society has helped with local as well as Foreign and Home Missions of the Church. Thru the years we have received wise council from former pastors, members and friends of the church.

I have been careful not to mention names of active individuals, because in my opinion each individual is important in Gods plan.

Let’s remember that each one of us is necessary to carry on the work of the Kingdom.

A church library was started in 1979 and maintained by Minnie Seeley. She donated many of the books. Minnie also served as lay leader for many years as well as on various other committees. She was also very active in the U.M.W. She continued actively serving until the time of her death on July 27, 1993.

In 1980 we received a letter from the Community Development Committee of the United Methodist Church stating we had borrowed $250.00 on February 19, 1906 and had never paid the note. They offered to let us pay $180.00 and have the note declared paid in full. This was done.

Fifteen new pews were purchased in 1981 for $3941.85. A rummage and bake sale with lunch netted $490.80. The church continues to hold a rummage/thrift sale each year with proceeds going to various needs of the church. Donations of $4,571.98 were received and $788.37 had been taken from the memorial fund. The old pews were sold with one pew being kept for sentimental reasons.

Many of the activities and traditions started in these earlier years, such as the thrift sale, are still part of the annual church traditions. Ruth Harms was a very dedicated church and UMW member and worker. She donated many crafts and also made the beautiful chrismons which decorate the tree on the altar each Christmas season. Those same decorations are still being used. Irma Alix was a talented quilt maker who always contributed a quilt to the bazaar. Her quilts continued to be featured at the bazaar even after she passed away. Quilts she had started were finished by her daughter Sue Crank and donated for several years. Quilts are still a part of the fall bazaar as well as a spring quilt show.

During 1985 a letter was sent to church members asking for opinions on repairing the present church or building a new one. This was the beginning of a long study/debate prior to the construction of a new church. A pictorial was made that included Jim Falls and Anson congregations. Later years saw more pictorials being made on a periodic basis.

The records indicate that in 1986 Christmas boxes were handed out to area residents. We believe this to be the beginning of a food pantry that was started by the church in 1987 by Reverend Henry and Maxine Clark along with help by LaVerne and Jennie Yeager. The church continues to house and have the food pantry as one of its missions to the community. In later years it was expanded to include other area organizations. Also in 1986 discussion was had and a survey was mailed out regarding whether our church should have its own full time pastor. This discussion continues to be ongoing at this date.

During 1990 a committee was formed to look into placing an addition on the church
More discussion was held in 1991 on getting our own pastor for Holcombe. A special membership meeting was held after services on February 17. After discussion a vote was taken on getting our own pastor. The results were 26 yes, 19 no and 15 undecided.

Work began in earnest in 1994 on renovating and adding to the church. An architect was contacted regarding making of plans. Any changes made would require all areas to be brought up to code. Later discussion changed toward building a new church. A written ballot was taken December 18 with the results as follows: No Structural change 10: Major remodeling 18: Build a new Structure 46. Consideration was given to buying the land next door to the church that was for sale.

We welcomed Pastor Don Drollinger on June 25, 1995. We had been without a minister since October of last year. Work continued on the building project. Some preliminary plans were considered. The Methodist church architect visited us. We began to get serious about raising funds for the new building with several activities being planned and carried out.

Nineteen ninety-six saw a generous donation of land for the new church site received from John and Carol Bell. This was given in memory of Carol’s mother Elizabeth Staudacher. Work was continued on the building plans and the building fund started growing thru donations from individuals.

Finally, in April of 1999 ground was broken and work was begun on the new church located West of Hwy 27 along County Highway M. Church member Dick Aaron was the contractor that built the beautiful and very busy building that our church occupies today. The first services were held in the new facility on the 28th day of November in 1999.

In the beginning of this article we talked of the generous donations that saw the first new church being built and paid for in a minimal amount of time. History should show that this new facility built in 1999 was built and paid for with the same enthusiasm and effort on the part of its congregation and with the support of the entire Holcombe community. The debt on this new facility will be paid in full and a celebration of note burning is being planned on the 100th anniversary of the church in 1906.

An article like this does not and can not give credit to the many, many individuals that have been involved with the successful and ongoing operation and mission of the Holcombe Methodist church. Therefore we can only say thank you to all those unnamed individuals who have given so much to make the Holcombe Methodist church the part it has played and continues to play in the greater Holcombe community.
The affairs and the operations of the Holcombe Cemetery Association were originally organized under the requirements of Chapter No 157 of the Wisconsin Town Laws. The Articles of Organization of the Association were adopted in a meeting held February 12, 1907 for that purpose. They were recorded with the Register of Deeds on the 25th day of February 1907. The original articles were signed by A J Edminster and Bert Glenn.

A President, a Vice President, a Secretary and a Treasurer and three Trustees direct the Association in its performances. Meeting of the Association are held annually. Any person owning a site is a member of the Association.

At this point it should be mentioned that there actually exists two separate and distinct cemeteries’ side by side in the Holcombe area. This article refers to what is commonly called the Holcombe Protestant Cemetery. The other cemetery is known as St. Josephs Cemetery of Holcombe and it is part of the Holy Cross Cemetery Association. Historical information is non-existent for St. Josephs and so this article deals only with the ‘Protestant’ cemetery.

In a letter dated April 5th, 1954 Mr. Bert Glenn wrote to Charles Stickler Attorney at Law in Cornell. He states ‘I held this position (secretary) until approximately 1920, when Mr. R.L. Cleaves took over. During the regime of Mr. Cleaves there are no minutes of the meeting to be located. During the time that Mr. Cleaves was Secretary I think that he kept the minutes and records in the Post Office. During that period the P.O. was robbed, and the records destroyed.’

There does exist a copy of the Original Articles of Organization that were obtained from the Register of Deeds office for Chippewa County in 1950. The original Articles, again, were recorded dated February 25th 1907. There also exists copies of the original bylaws. These bylaws set forth the duties of the officers of the Association along with other rules and regulations pertaining to the operation of the cemetery. It is interesting to note that Sec 16 of the bylaws state that ‘No children shall be permitted to enter the grounds unless accompanied by some person of apparent respectability at least 15 years of age.’ Section 20 also certainly relates to the period of time in which they were living. It states ‘No person shall fasten or tie any horse, horses, team or any other animal of any kind to any plant, tree, or shrub within the enclosed grounds of the Association.’

The first minutes available from any meetings of the Association are dated April 4th 1941. The first paragraph reads ‘The Holcombe Cemetery Association which was originally organized in 1907, having become defunct or torpid so to speak as far as any notice was being given it by the older inhabitants of the community for the operation of it had evidentially been given no attention as far as an Association was concerned, was revived by Mr. Jay Clark, who voiced himself loudly in its behalf at the Annual Town Meeting, which was held on the first day of April 1941. He asked that a
meeting be held Friday evening in the interests of the Association to the end that it be brought back to consciousness and regain its normal operation’. Minutes of the Association are available from that date forward until the present.

Officers were elected at that newly organized meeting and consisted of President, Jay Clark, Vice President, Edw. Birch, Secretary Bert Glenn, Treasurer, Fon Fisk, and Trustees, Walter Johnson and Ed Wesley. Mrs. J.M. Tweet, J.E. Burmingham and G.W. Deuel would all take a turn serving as treasurer from 1942-1952. At a special meeting held in December of 1941 it was decided ‘to notify each property owner that they must contribute the sum of $1.00, such sum or as much thereof as is found necessary, to be expended in the upkeep of the Cemetery’. This appears to be the beginning of annual assessments made to cemetery property owners for upkeep and maintenance of the lots. Beginning in 1948 lot owners were charged more for the lot when purchased and were not charged an annual assessment. The annual assessment was gradually phased out and by the 1970’s there were no more annual assessments being made. By purchasing a lot or site in the cemetery an individual was also granted the right of perpetual care.

A ‘lot’ consists of eight (8) individual burial sites. It appears that early in the operation of the cemetery most individuals purchased a ‘lot’. In more recent years nearly everyone making a purchase only purchases an individual site or two as opposed to the eight sites contained in a lot. In 1941 the price of a ‘lot’ was $20.00. This amounted to $2.50 per site. Today that same site is $300.00 and is reviewed each year at annual meeting time to see if it needs to be increased.

A special meeting was called by Dr. O.M. Enger, who succeeded Stephen Treakle as Association President on October 15, 1947. The meeting was for the purpose of meeting with Northern States Power Company relative to their building of the Holcombe Dam and flowage. It was stated the location of the cemetery would be rendered useless because of the location of the flowage and seepage that would encroach on the cemetery. At that time the cemetery was located in the NW ¼ of Sec 28 Twp 32, Range 6W along what is now West Lakeshore Drive. This would be in the woods just to the East of the present town beach area. Much discussion followed regarding the task of disinterment and the requirements surrounding it. Also a new site would be needed and a committee was formed to look into it.

A site was offered by Dr Enger and the committee met the next day. After discussing various locations they decided upon the site offered by Dr Enger. However the committee did not have final say in the site location as some thought that the Association members should make that decision. A special meeting was held June 19, 1948 at which time the members approved the site where the cemetery is located presently. A warranty deed was recorded on December 2, 1948 transferring property ownership from Otto M Enger and Pearl Z. Enger to The Holcombe Cemetery Association for the sum of $1.00 and other good and valuable consideration. The size of this site is approximately 6 acres.

The original site at the present location dedicated to burials consisted of 150 lots or 1200 sites. Over the years the sites continued to be sold and to be occupied. In 1992 discussion was held on expanding the number of available sites. Finally in 1995 another portion of the cemetery was leveled and surveyed and an additional 928 sites were added. Work on this was done by volunteer labor consisting of Association members, the Army Corp of Engineers and the Town of Lake Holcombe.
Bert Glenn continued to sign the minutes as Secretary until 1954 when he and Fon Fisk were killed in an automobile accident. Fon Fisk had served as an officer in some capacity for several years. These men along with others that have been mentioned were instrumental in operation and upkeep of the cemetery for several years. There are others since that time that have also spent much time and effort towards the ongoing care of the Holcombe Cemetery. In the 1950’s there was E.R. Buswell and Glen Walters that served as President. There have only been two treasurers since Fon Fisk. Harvey Gygi started in 1954 and continued through 1985. Mary Larson was then selected as treasurer and continues to this day. Elizabeth Staudacher served as Secretary following Bert Glen and was succeeded by Yvonne Guthman in 1978 who still holds that position. Similarly Henry Staudacher served as President from 1954 until 1978 and was followed by Ray Guthman the current President. Brothers Walter, Otto, and Carl Guthman are mentioned several times in the minutes as all served as officers in various capacities for many years. Numerous other individuals have also served as Vice President and as trustees.

In 1977 a tornado moved through Chippewa County and included in its path was the Holcombe Cemetery. The cemetery sustained a lot of damage as trees and shrubs were uprooted and stones were tipped over and destroyed. It took lots of volunteer time and effort to remove the damaged trees and stumps and fill those areas in. Resetting of the stones was accomplished with additional assistance from Johnson Monument of Eau Claire who used their equipment for the larger stones.

At the present time all officers serve without pay of any sort. At one time the Secretary and the Treasurer were paid a small fee for their services. In later years their position became volunteer positions like the other offices.

Maps showing the location of each site and the names and dates of those buried have been computerized since 1993. These are updated each year. Mowing and trimming are contracted to an individual providing these kinds of services. This same contractor does the digging and leveling of the graves. Generally a work night is scheduled in the spring of the year to level stones and provide other maintenance required on an annual basis. Memorial day services are held each year and are planned and carried out by the American Legion Post of Holcombe.

The minutes from the 1940’s mentioned several times the need to maintain the cemetery in a neat and presentable manner. This continues to be one of the goals of the present slate of officers of the Association. Our annual meeting is generally held in April of each year and at that meeting we discuss areas in need of maintenance or upkeep and how we can make sure the community can be proud of its cemetery. We hope we have done that and invite anyone with any ownership in the cemetery to join us at the annual meeting of the Holcombe Cemetery Association.
TRAGEDIES AT LITTLE FALLS

On July 7, 1905, 74 log drivers left Chippewa Falls at 7:45 A.M. They arrived at Holcombe at 9:00 A.M. Andrew Jagnon, the foreman and 14 other men climbed into a bateau for the log jam out in the river. The heavy water flow made progress difficult. Three men vaulted to safety on the log jam and they were John Dressel, George Kaiser and William Smith. Drowning victims were Bert Lairy, Saul Brackett, Louis Jokey, Max Dillard, Pat Lyden, Ole Horne, Joe Peloquin, Oscar Barquist, Byron Perorson and Adolph Toutant.

Over 70 years ago at a saw mill, 4 miles from Holcombe, a steam boiler exploded, killing 6 workmen and injuring 3.

On a Thanksgiving a car from Cadott collided with the train at a crossing north of Holcombe on Highway 27. Five people were killed.

In the early 1920’s Jim Martin, Mrs. J. Martin and Mrs. Otto Enger were asphyxiated by a leaking exhaust system of a home light plant.

On July 14, 1919 a teenage boy (Loisell) was killed when some boys applied a match to fumes from an empty gasoline barrel and the barrel exploded.

The Holcombe School house was destroyed by fire in the fall of 1931.

In December 1932 the State Bank of Holcombe was closed by the banking department.

RODERICK GLENN DIES AS HE’S SWEPT INTO WATER WITH BRIDGE

Roderick Glenn, 25, of Holcombe, was swept to his death early this morning when the Fisher River backed up over its banks and washed out the Berniertown Bridge near the northern city limits of Holcombe.

Glenn and his older brother, Douglas, were both standing on the structure watching the flood waters when the tragedy occurred. Douglas jumped from the bridge and landed in the water close enough to shore to grab at several small trees and pull himself to safety. The Omaha’s railroad bridge several hundred feet below the Bernier Bridge went out about six o’clock this morning. A road bridge near Arnold was also reported washed out by the same river.

The river rushed over the concrete on Highway 27 east of Holcombe and washed out several hundred feet of shoulder along the concrete but traffic was able to pass through at all times. The farm homes of Lester Newberry, John Towns, Ernest Parsons and Ezra Parsons were all surrounded by the swollen Fisher River waters but withstood the force of the water.

The Village of Holcombe was cut off from Highway 27 yesteday when the water in the Fisher River raised and rushing down a dry creek bed, flooded the eastern side of the town near the Omaha depot. The depot was surrounded by water early this morning but by noon the water had started to recede and the danger of further damage passed.

The river rushed over the concrete on County M Damaged.

Cars attempting to fjord the water on County M entering the village of Holcombe were forced to turn back today as the water cut a gap in the roadbed and covered the roadway with piles of logs, fencing and silt. Jim Carroll, Holcombe, narrowly escaped tipping over on the flooded road. His car was swept off the road and a truck hauled the machine out before the water swept it down the creek.

Cadott Bridge Threatened.

At Cadott a raging Yellow River flooded the city park and threatened to wash out both the dam and old Highway 27 steel bridge. The fill on the south side of the dam was swept away, while the fill leading to the bridge was badly undermined in spots. The stone abutments of the bridge cracked badly in spots and at noon today the bridge was closed to traffic.
Interesting photos

Fisher River - Hwy 27

Photo courtesy of Ecker family