

William F. Meyer

**THE HISTORY OF
DELTA, WISCONSIN**

**50
Years**

1924 - 1974

[illegible]

We wish to dedicate this book to Mrs. William Meyer. Without all her help and information this book would not have been possible. This dedication is just a small indication of our appreciation.

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INTRODUCTION

You are now looking at the very first written history of Delta, Wisconsin. For this reason, you will find, throughout the book that there may be dates that are only approximations. This was due to the lack of further information on the subject. Therefore, you will only, in some cases, have an idea of the time period of the happenings described.

CHAPTER 1

THE BEGINNINGS

At first, we were all one Town of Mason, consisting of Townships 46-6, 46-7, and 46-8. This township was created in 1884.

On March 22, 1924, the Town of Delta was created. It consisted of all of towns 46-7 and 46-8.

Officers elected for the first year were as follows:

E. Max Glass - Town Chairman

John Visocky - Supervisor

Isaac Gustafson - Supervisor

L. D. Butler - Clerk

The first annual meeting was held upstairs at the Delta Store. This large room was considered the Town Hall, and also had Church and Sunday School held in it for a few years.

The Delta Store was under construction in 1923 and into 1924. Between 1924 and early 1925 a Post Office was established here under the name of Buhl, Wisconsin. Postal authorities would not listen to the name of Delta because there were so many in the U. S. The Delta Store burned down March 26, 1972.

Walter C. Hafner, owner of the store, was appointed the first Post Master. He held this until June 23, 1925, when William and Olga Meyer bought the store from him and Olga Meyer was commissioned as Post Master. Later, during this time, with the help of Nels E. Ledin, Charles Larson, who was Post Master of Mason, Wis., and Ollie and Henry Axness through Governor Bob LaFollette Sr., the name of Delta, Wisconsin was reinstated to the Post Office.

CHAPTER 2

LOGGING

It was in 1880 that logging in the Delta area really started.

The Chain of Lakes from near Iron River, Wisconsin, flowed through Flynn's dam at Delta. From there, logs were flumed to Bluebird Lake. There was another dam near Mud Lake and a road along the lake's edge. The logs finally reached the bridge camp through Lake Delta where there also was a dam, and were entered into the White River.

In the late '80s and early '90s, the South Shore logs were hauled by a "narrow guage railroad," then owned by Hines Lumber Co., to the Bluebird Lake Headquarters. There was a round house here for these logging trains. These limy engines had pistons on the side; they were slow but very powerful. From Bluebird Lake Headquarters, the logs were loaded on the Duluth South Shore Railroad and taken to Iron River, Wisconsin, where there were three mills. In 1913, Hines' last mill burned.

There also was a camp between Lake Belview (then known as Long Lake) and Kern Lake toward Sotherland and Pike River Station.

The White River Lumber Company was the original owner which logged off most of the Pine. The White River Lumber Company sold to the Hines Lumber Company which logged off all the hardwood and denuded this area. A good share of the Hines' holdings were sold to the Bayfield Investment Company, later known as the Bayfield Land Company. This was controlled by Edward F. Swift of the famous meat packing company. In later years, Mr. Swift sold most of his holdings to Mr. Carl F. Weschke of St. Paul, Minnesota.

CHAPTER 3

THE WHITE RIVER

The mouth of the White River starts at the cement bridge at Delta. An old wooden bridge was replaced by the cement bridge in 1927. Bert Kahlier, a contractor from Washburn, Wis. did this work for about \$3800.

All the water from the Chain of Lakes, then known as Upper and Lower Pike Lakes empties into and forms the mouth of the famous White River. The White River eventually goes through the Bibon Swamp, White River Hall, on Highway 13 near Ashland, and empties into the Bad River near Lake Superior.

Water from the West Fork which gets its supply from Spirit Lake and Basswood Lake and the South Fork which was supplied by Spring Lake, both empty into the White River, forming a delta south of the Delta Store.

Hence, that's how Delta got its name. Lower Pike Lake has since been named Lake Delta.

From the cement bridge to the Pike River there were 7 Sluice ways used to back up the water in the winter. Gates were opened in the Spring to float the logs down the river to the Mason saw mill.

Some of the prominent Lumber Companies in earlier days were the White River Lumber Co. and the Hines Lumber Co. In later years, Rueben Wicklund and associates logged in the Long Lake (Belview) and Bass Lake Areas.

CHAPTER 4

TRAINS THROUGH DELTA

At least 50 years ago, the Duluth South Shore and Atlantic Railroads, which ran from Duluth, Minn. to Nestoria, Michigan, passed through Delta. There were 8 trains a day: four freight trains and four passenger trains. There also was a spur siding at Delta. Much freight and wood products were loaded from this spur. One had to flag down the passenger trains in order to get on. One could go to Duluth in the morning, shop, and come back that night. Before the store was built, one would take the forenoon train to Bibon, walk two miles to Mason, buy a weeks supply of groceries, carry them by pack sack on their backs and make it back to Bibon to catch the afternoon train for Delta.

The depot was a box car which stood where Old Highway "H" and New Highway "H" come together. Later, after Delta Store was built, the depot was moved to a location in front of it.

The mail went out and came in twice a day. Outgoing mail was hung from a "Mail Crane." The postal clerk on the train with a kind of iron arm, would catch it on the run. In-coming mail usually was thrown from the baggage car.

This train service was discontinued in 1936. Tracks were pulled up in 1937. The railroad trestle, which went across about where the Snake Trail is, was also torn down. The depot and Delta sign were bought by William Meyer. The sign is still at Delta Store. Much of the railroad grade has been made into Highway "H."

CHAPTER 5

THE C. C. C. CAMPS

Camp Delta was started in September, 1935. The commanding officer was Capt. Eldon C. Grafton, who was assisted by Lieut. Gilbert M. Schucht.

In 1935, Captain Grafton left Camp Delta to go with part of the camp personnel to form a new camp at Twin Lakes. Lt. Kapuscinski then became commanding officer and Lieut. Schucht was replaced by Lieut. Raymond B. Steiner. Lieut. Kapuscinski remained as commanding officer until 1937, at which time Capt. Ralph O. Gilbertson took over.

On the Forest Service side, the first camp superintendent was P. H. McCredin. He was followed by a man named Wangard, and then by Ferris Green. Available information shows that Ferris Green remained at the camp. All the CCC camps were closed down in 1942.

At first Camp Delta was in tents, but barracks and garages were built. At the time the camp was built, there were only a few white pine and a couple of clumps of white birch on the site, which was at Bass Lake. Today all evidences of the buildings are gone and the whole area is heavily covered with trees.

The work that was done out of Camp Delta was varied according to the crew they were on. The men did roadside clean-up, timber stand improvement, building of recreation areas, served as fire-fighters, fish planters, tree planters, and helped foresters and engineers with their technical work. In early 1937 one group went down to Ohio to help there during floods. They built a 110 foot fire tower and did other work toward the control and prevention of fire.

There was also a lot of work done on wild life management. They did surveys of grouse, to find out how many there were, and ran a prairie chicken investigation during which they banded birds, planted food patches for sharp-tailed grouse, and planted wild rice on some of the lakes.

Crews surveyed lakes, mapping the bottoms during winter, and the weed-beds in the summer.

A fish-catching study was done during which fishermen were interviewed to find out what kind of fish they were catching, what tackle and bait were used and what the weather conditions were. There was also a fish food study done on Lake Owen.

Deer drives were made before and after hunting season; these were to determine the deer population per square mile. Checking stations were run during hunting season to make a count of the number of hunters, to weigh deer, to measure and count their antlers and try to determine their age.

A great deal of fish stocking, under an agreement with the state whereby certain lakes were to be kept for certain kinds of fish, was done.

A map was made of the two Delta townships, work done on the telephone lines between the camps and ranger stations at Washburn and Drummond, and a trailer campsite was built on Lake Ruth along with a good many other recreation areas.

There was also a great deal of blister rust control work done out of Camp Delta with Mr. Bud Sorenson in charge of it.

There was a tent camp between Delta and Highway 2 that served as a construction camp. It was occupied by a

crew which was working on the roads in that area. When bad weather came, the camp was closed and the crew worked out of Camp Delta.

CHAPTER 6

SPRING LAKE

About the years of 1918-1919, Spring Lake was established as a Fish Hatchery by the State of Wisconsin under License Number 52. At that time, Spring Lake was owned by C. F. Wiehe, a lumberman of the Edward Hines Lumber Company.

In 1920, a group of sportsmen from Ashland and the vicinity challenged the issuing of the above license. Mr. Wiehe then challenged the commission and took it to Federal Court. After a series of hearings, the Federal Court Judge Luce decided in favor of Mr. Wiehe to retain his license. In this same year, William Meyer was employed by Mr. Wiehe to operate the Fish Hatchery. Upon the death of Mr. Wiehe in 1924, the employment of William Meyer was terminated.

Mrs. C. F. Wiehe then sold the property to a Sportsmen's Club which consisted of the members from Park Falls, Marshfield, Milwaukee, and Ashland.

Later this club disbanded and since the banker, Mr. Kaiser from Park Falls, Wis., had acquired Spring Lake, a club known as the Namagosh Club was formed. Namagosh means "trout" in English.

Mr. John Henry Sykes, father of Robert Sykes, caretaker of the Delta Girl Scout Camps, became manager of the Fish Hatchery.

Namagosh Club later sold the place to Mrs. Ford, an heir of the Abbot Laboratories family. It was under the management of Leslie Combs and later by Mr. and Mrs. Ed Smart.

After the death of Mrs. Ford, the Hatchery was purchased by Stanley Wilcox and Henry Wilson. In

turn, it was resold to the Conservation Commission of Wisconsin.

The Commission tore out the dam; now all that is left is a creek instead of the beautiful lakes that used to be there. Eventually it is hoped there will be a recreation center with walking and snow-mobile trails and hopefully better trout fishing.

CHAPTER 7

THE SCHOOLS

The first Sutherland school originally came from the Hans Reiten's (now Nels Reiten's) place. It was moved from there to below the Sutherland Hill on Jake Westland's field. Later, this school was moved to the corner on the Art Hanson farm. While in this location, it was struck by lightning.

To replace it, a small school was built in the same location. The year Fannie Johnston, from Barksdale, taught there, the air tight heater exploded and the school once again burned.

In 1914, another school was built on the Hanson corner, with Gena Rude as the first teacher. Miss Evelyn Johnson taught there in 1926-1927.

After we became the Town of Delta on March 22, 1924, Delta began having its own school problems.

In the winter of 1924-1925, Miss Agnes Meyer of Washburn taught the Ruby and John Bell children in a cabin on the Bell property. This is now Mullin's Lodge.

In 1923, a small building was built on the present location of the Delta Town Hall, for a church. This also served as a school house with Miss Lois French in charge. While teaching, she stayed with the Frank Schellin family. Between 1925-1927, this building was moved to the E. Max Glass' property. School was held in it for a few more years. Miss A. Larson, who stayed with the Maki family, and Miss Elizabeth Hawkes, who stayed with the E. Max Glass family, and taught about 12 pupils, were the teachers here.

A new school was soon built in the former location

and studies were soon held there. This school cost about \$3000 and was paid for in one year by putting it on the tax roll.

Becker's School (later known as Bulter's School) was located on County Trunk "E" on the corner south of where the Cheese Factory was. This school burned in 1934 or 1935 and the children temporarily went to Henry Horstmann's House to finish the year. The children were transported to the school on Hanson's corner after this. Mr. E. M. Johnson taught these children. Later, when this school was closed, it was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Art Hanson.

Another school was built in the settlement. It still stands in Delta. It was built just north of where Munson's Tavern is now located. All the children of Delta were transported to the school. This was in 1941 or 1942.

The West Mason School, which stood near County Trunk "A" (which runs between Iron River and Drummond), no longer had students, so it never became a part of the new school. The "Jack Pine Settlement" as it was called, closed their school and sold it to William Meyer. The building was moved to Delta and annexed to the Delta Store as a tavern.

All of these schools were only grade schools; high school students were transported to Iron River for one year and later to Ashland.

In 1954, Delta School System was annexed to the Ondossagon School System. First, the grade school children were brought to Benoit but later this was changed to Mason. The high school students went to Ondossagon.

So, all of our progress has left us with no schools at all.

CHAPTER 8

THE DELTA CHURCHES AND MINISTERS

The first religious service held in Delta was an "Open Air" one. It was held at John Bell's place (now Mullin's Lodge), in the summer of 1923, when Rev. Theodore Gehele of Milwaukee and Rev. Ernst were spending their 2 weeks vacation at John Bell's. The only attendants were the John Bell, Walter Hafner families, and Rev. Gehele, and Rev. Ernst.

Later, in the same summer, Rev. William Deihl, who was connected with the Evangelical Home Mission Board, the Evangelical Church Board Colonization plan, and in some way with the Bayfield Land Co., came to the Delta area and finally, with the help of student minister Fred Iseli of St. Paul, Minn., interested the Pike River Area people on a location for a little church. This resulted in the building of a small church on the present location of the Delta Town Hall. Rev. Deihl and Rev. Iseli preached in this church.

While the building was under construction, they tried to have an English Sunday School in the large room upstairs at the Delta Store. Some interested people gave them an organ which was later, in 1924, moved to the little church. In August of 1924, Rev. Gehele was back on a visit and a Baptismal Service was held in the large room upstairs at the Delta Store. Rev. Hafner administered the rites of baptism. At that time, Charles Hall and Charlotte Hafner were baptized.

Sometime between 1925-1927, the little building was moved to the Glass property. Mrs. Frank Schellin was church organist for years. Sermons were for the most

part, in the German Language. Later, German services were abolished and English Services were established.

In 1935, a new church was built. Today, this beautiful chapel stands in the Pines on the Glass property with Rev. Joseph Jenkins of Cable, Wisconsin presently in charge.

CENSUS OF DELTA

1930 - Population - 163
Farms - 31
(taken by Isadore Cohn, Superior, Wis.)

1950 - Population - 145
(We shrunk!)

1960 - Population - 160
(We're growing)

1970 - Population - 168 or 150
(An all time High!)

1980 POPULATION 205

1990 POPULATION 215

2000 POPULATION 235

BIBLIOGRAPHY

William W. Barton	As written in letter	C.C.C. Camps
Ferris Green	As written in letter	C.C.C. Camps
Mrs. Walter Hafner	As written in letter	churches
Mrs. Art Hanson	As written in letter	schools
Elizabeth Hawkes	As written in letter	schools
Robert Sykes	Interview	lumbering
William Meyer and Olga Meyer		Everything else!

Appendix A

The History of Delta, Wisconsin