

Gogebic Range Genealogical Society

Newsletter

November, 2012

Hello again from the North Woods of Michigan and Wisconsin. We are a somewhat unique genealogical organization in that we cover two counties in two states-- Gogebic in Michigan and Iron in Wisconsin. The Gogebic Iron Range roughly extends sixty miles from Lake Gogebic in Michigan to Mellen in Wisconsin. I think some family researchers forget that Iron County, Wisconsin is part of our area. Please know we stand ready to assist you in your search for ancestors on either side of the Montreal River. It's good to keep in mind that many who settled in this area lived on either or both sides of the Montreal during their lives.

Some things don't change. We continue to provide any assistance we can, and will extend our services even further for GRGS members. Some things do change. After leasing a room in the Bessemer Area Heritage Center for several years, the GRGS will be moving out by the end of this year. We want to thank the Bessemer Area Historical society for being such good hosts. Our move is based strictly on the need to reduce expenses. Rest assured, we will continue to fulfill the commitments expressed in our purpose and objectives statement, which is "to assist in genealogical research, to preserve, advance and collect knowledge from the records available on the Gogebic Range, and to promote education and awareness of genealogy." We plan to meet in libraries in each of the communities in the area—We'll keep you posted.

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While researching the January 19, 1918 News Record for material on mining locations in Ironwood, I came upon a heading that caught my attention, "70 Leave Here to Join Polish Army in France." The sub-heading read, "Many Recruits Obtained in this Section for Polish Legion—More Leave Next Week." Continuing with the body of the story, "Seventy young men left Ironwood Tuesday afternoon in the charge of Lt. John Deptale, all of whom expect to join the Polish army that is being recruited in this country for service in France. The party left on the afternoon train on the Soo Line, their present destination being Stevens Point, Wis. At that place they will receive thorough physical exams, and all who are found fit for military service will be dispatched to Niagara Falls, Ontario. At the mobilization camp there they will be outfitted and sent immediately to France, where they will undergo extensive training for service on the western front. John B. Wojeiehowski of this city, who is the local agent for the Polish overseas recruiting service, informs the News Record that about 50 more residents of this section will leave Stevens Point within the next few days, and it is believed that the total contribution of men from this section to the Polish army will be in excess of 150."

The ethnic/demographic breakdown is interesting. "There were a number of American born young men in Tuesday's contingent, but the greater portion of the recruits were natives of Russian Poland, although there were men in the ranks who were born in the Austrian and

German sections of Poland. Reports received here are to the effect that the Polish army in France and at the four mobilization camps in America—Rockford, Buffalo, New York, and Niagara Falls—now number nearly 200,000, and that this figure will be raised to half a million the present year. Before the departure of the 70 men Tuesday afternoon, there was a parade in the down-town district, the Norrie and Newport bands leading the escort of several hundred marchers, including adults and the pupils of St. Michael's through the principle streets of the city to the station."

What is a genealogy newsletter without a list of names. The spelling may be questionable as a 1920 city directory listed similar names, but few with the exact spelling found in the article. Here is a partial list of names. More will be provided in subsequent newsletters.

Szczepan Kuduk, Ironwood	Joe Tabaks, Ironwood
Jan. J. Banaszak, Ironwood	Joseph Bustawski, Ironwood
Michal Iwanski, Ironwood	Stas Czechewski, Ironwood
Pawel Orlewski, Hurley	Frank Mafora, Hurley
Wlaclaw, Krajenta, Wakefield	Stas, Olejniezak, Wakefield
Stas, Krujenta, Wakefield	Joe Pawlak, Wakefield
Jakub, Golza, Wakefield	Joe Kurek, Wakefield
William Pallak, Wakefield	Frank Woniecki, Wakefield
Alex Okrancow, Hurley	Anton Bronkowski, Ironwood
Anton Wasielewski, Ironwood	Pawel Bukrejewski, Ironwood

SHANTYBOY HILL

I was reading a book, "Come and Get it" by Edna Ferber, renowned author, who wrote the novel during a year's stay in Hurley, Wis. in the mid 1930s. Ferber featured the timber industry, and particularly Shanty boys, lumberjacks. The names and descriptions used in the book are only thinly disguised versions of the communities in the North Woods, around the Gogebic Range. Then came a manuscript written by Gladys Hill and provided to me by Diane Egan, One of our GRGS board members and Vice President. I think you'll find Gladys' story extremely interesting and educational. Shanty boys played an important role in the area's early history.

"Isolated on the eastern slope of an ancient hill, close to the Wisconsin-Michigan border, lies Shantyboy Hill. It is the site of an old cemetery where many early residents and the shantyboys were lumbermen who lived in the shanties in the woods. They were the workers who cut the

trees, rode the logs downriver and broke the log jams. Many lost their lives in doing their daily work.

In the 1880's and early 1900's many woodsmen migrated to the pineries of Northern Wisconsin. They came from Pennsylvania and other eastern states already logged off. They also came from Europe—Norway, Sweden, Poland, Russia, Germany, and from Canada, to hew the giant pines. When the big pines were gone, many of the men remained to make their homes and live out their lives here.

Others like my grandfather from southern Wisconsin and many from lower Michigan, found working in the pineries a way to augment their income. Each fall, Grandpa drove a team of oxen from Wyocena in Columbia County to the Park Falls and Butternut area. The trip took days behind the slow plodding oxen.

Grandpa worked in the woods all winter and with the spring breaking-up headed back for the farm in time for spring planting, and had cash jingling in his pockets.

Grandpa loved the pinery and those winters he spent in the woods. He loved the camaraderie and the clean smell of pine chips and rosin.

In my childhood Grandpas sang the songs that were sung in the logging camps each evening after the day's work was over. They were songs of love and adventure, danger and death.

"We hit Notch Rock as we went by

And that's where we left your pinery boy."

The shantyboy was an important frontiersman. His life was as distinctive and as picturesque for the North as the cowboy's was for the cattle ranches of the west. Garbed in heavy wools and bright plaids these men hewed the mighty oak; with a two man crosscut they felled the great pines. Theirs was a way of life that has vanished. The odor of pine pitch and hemlock chips is replaced today with chain oil and diesel smoke.

Franz Rickaby, in his preface to "Ballads and Songs of the Shanty-Boy," states: "The shanty-boy was a striking American Frontier figure, with a mode of life as peculiarly his own, a personality as marked as that of any other frontiersman. He was the product of a mighty industry forced by the sudden growth of a mightier nation. The shanty-boy preserved and contributed to the American population some very desirable qualities.

Up and down and across the country he roamed—chopping, skidding, rolling, and hauling the great logs to feed the snarling saws of a giant industry. It was as if the enormous strength and vitality of the giant pines entered into him and he knew neither weariness nor fear. Neither life nor death was his master."

Shantyby Hill is in Presque Isle Township, Vilas County, Wisconsin. The Northern Highland state Forest begins along the southern border of Presque Isle. The Ottawa National Forest forms the northern boundary, hence Presque Isle is one of the last wilderness areas in the states.

The first community was called Fosterville, named after the then current lumber baron. When William Winegar purchased the logging operation the name was changed to—you guessed it—Winegar. In June 1956, the name was changed again, and Winegar became Presque Isle. Now the name of the township and the post office is the same.

Long before the final name change, the old cemetery fell into neglect and disuse. A new cemetery was plotted—Evergreen Cemetery west of Presque Isle on Highway W. Some of the bodies were moved to the new site and others were removed for burial elsewhere.

Only a few interesting old headstones remain. Chick Spencer, a native of this area, grew up with the logging camps. He commented on the disappearance of some of the old markers and headstones. “Some bodies were removed, but many of them were left. There was a tall marble headstone carved with pictures and verses: another was set apart by an iron fence and iron pickets...They’re all gone today.”

He continued, “Lots of shantyboys were buried here. Accidents were common. Every few days someone was killed in the woods. Nobody thought much about it—just the way it was then.. There’s a Potter’s Field on the south side where men from away were buried. The company didn’t bother to notify relatives...probably didn’t know. Sometimes someone put up a wood marker, but most times they were just buried.”

In searching for more facts about the old cemetery, I learned the original papers had been destroyed. The wife of the town clerk had passed away...later his daughter (in high school) decided to clean house and many papers were destroyed, including any local information about the cemetery. However, Vilas County Highway department has a map showing the relocation of Highway B and the old cemetery. Also, the Department of Natural Resources has a map (1967) done by Robert Ilg, which shows DNR land and incidently the cemetery.

The Presque Isle Chamber of Commerce sponsored a contest among Presque Isle Elementary students studying Wisconsin...Name the Cemetery. Pat Galbrecht, Irma Stein, and myself were the committee to select the best name. Many excellent names were entered. We chose Shantyboy Hill submitted by Brenda Vinal...4th grade.

In the ‘70s and early 1980s while Carl Wolter was town chairman the old cemetery received a face lift. Brush and debris were cleared; hollows where bodies had been removed were filled in; a rail fence was constructed; the grass was mowed. The present sign depicting the Shantyboy and logo was designed and constructed by Terri Tassi; Virginia Brach painted the sign. Terri and Virginia donated their expertise; my husband and I donated the material; Bob Hill assumed responsibility was erecting the sign.

Interestingly, a visitor to Shantyboy Hill commented to Peter Jirikowic (who mowed the grass), “That old apple tree in the area is most appropriate.” (Memories of Johnny Appleseed)

Some years later the old cemetery was again suffering from neglect. The American Legion, Post Winegar 480, has taken over the care and maintenance of the old cemetery as a project. Thanks to the Legion.

Do You Know Who This Is?



-A scan from a glass negative located in the Ironwood Depot archives room.

--Identified as Hazel Linstrom. Could this be the person listed in the 1920 Ironwood city directory, living at 112 Curry Street?

--Please contact us if you know who this might be.

English traditions were alive and well on the range if the article in the Ironwood News Record of July 21 is any indication. A cricket match was played at Central Park (not sure where it is, but apparently in Ironwood) between the first and second elevens of the local club. "...some excellent bowling by both sides, and in the second inning, which could not be finished on account of rain, John Park rolled up a score of 25 runs doing effective work." Some names listed:

Richards, Park, Hocking, Rowe, Willey, Willimas, Askew, MacDunnid, Allan, Clements, Trethewey, McDonald, Townsend, Pellow, Ashim, Whitford, Burns, Dixon, and Blewalt.

Remember periodically to check the GRGS website, Gogebicroots.com—You'll find obit assistance offered, great links to other websites in the area, and a good dose of Range history. We stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Till next time—Happy searching!

Gary Harrington

