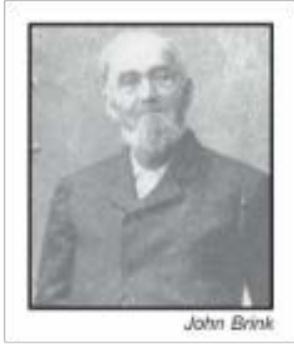


~ History of Williams Bay ~

Part 2 of 3



Arrival of Early Settlers

In part one of the History of Williams Bay mention was made of the survey by John Brink and John Hodgson to determine township lines. They came through Williams Bay in the fall of 1835. In January of 1836 another contract was let for the surveying of the section lines. This job was completed on July 20, 1836 and was the work of Sylvester Sibley, Deputy Surveyor; John Newman and Samuel Hubble, Chairmen; and

Christopher Bate, Marker. This group surveyed Walworth, Delavan, Linn, and Geneva Townships, all of which adjoined just north of Williams Bay on the road leading to the county seat. Similar groups surveyed the rest of the county. This job having been completed, the county was open for settlement.

Israel Williams Jr. made a claim on Sec. 6 in Linn Township. His brother, Royal had made one in Walworth Township. There were settlements that summer in Spring Prairie, Geneva, East Troy, Troy, and Delavan, though they were known by the name of the principal families: Hemenway's, Warren's, McCracken's, Meacham's, or Phoenix's, respectively, whose latch strings always hung on the outside for the newcomer until he could build his own cabin.

At the end of 1836 there were some two hundred men, women, and children in the county; with thirty one families and thirty single men. Among the single men was Palmer Gardner who was the first settler in Spring Prairie and Col. Samuel F. Phoenix of Delavan who with his brother had come to the new country to found a community pledged to temperance, sobriety, and religion, and "where should a poor despised colored man chance to set his foot, he might do it in safety."

By the summer of 1837 there was a constant stream of new settlers which taxed the capacity of the crude cabins of those who had come earlier. In July 1837, Israel Williams Sr. with his wife Lavina, the rest of their children, and Mrs. Williams mother Hannah L. Joy, arrived in Walworth County; first building a cabin across the lake in Linn Township with Israel Jr. and later moved over to join Royal in the building of a cabin part of which would become the Williams homestead.

When the land came into the market, Israel Williams Sr. purchased the claims of his sons. He lived in the homestead until his death in 1846. Mrs. Williams' mother had passed away in 1839. Mrs. Williams lived until 1852. Two sons, Austin and Moses died of typhoid fever in 1844.

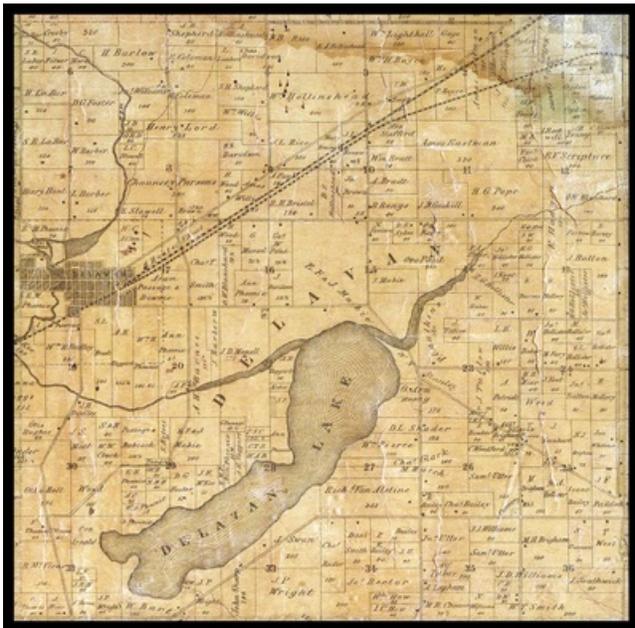


Israel Williams 1841 US Land Office Record

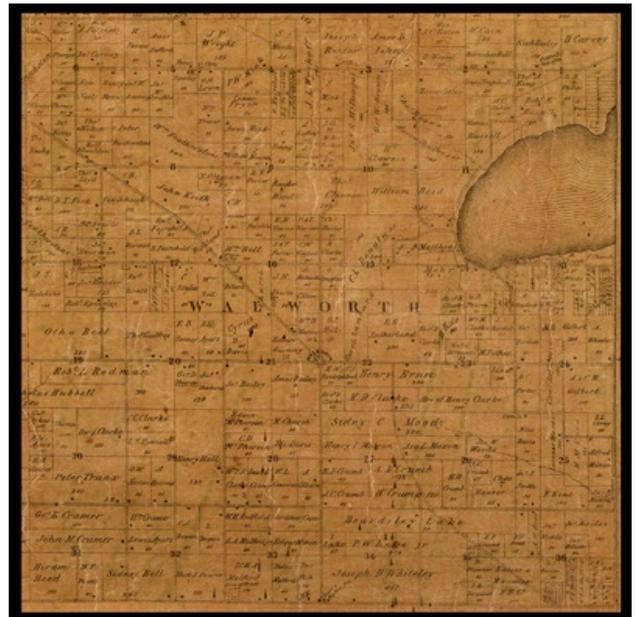
The first marriage in the town was that of Hannah Williams, a daughter of Israel and Lavina, to Robert Russell with the bride's father performing the ceremony as a Justice of the Peace. That Israel was well thought of in his community is attested to by the fact that he was one of the first Justices in Walworth County, ranking with men like Perez Herrick, Spring Prairie, believed to have been the first. Thomas McKaig, Geneva, who with Squire Williams tried the first criminal case in the county. Gaylord Graves of East Troy; Daniel Salisbury, Spring Prairie; Hollis Latham, Elkhorn; Solman Thomas, Darien; Squire Searles, Sharon; Jasper Griggs, Delavan; Perkins S. Childs, Richmond; Christopher Douglass, Walworth. What these dispensers of justice lacked in legal lore, they possessed in good judgment, sterling common sense, and their impartial decisions.

Area Government

Politically Walworth Town was at first part of Delavan Township. In 1839 it was set off together with what is now Sharon as Walworth and in 1843 assumed its present limits when Sharon was set off as a separate town.



Delavan Township



Walworth Township

The first town meeting was held at the schoolhouse near John Bowman's on Big Foot Prairie (now Fontana) on April 4, 1843. The first officers were:

Supervisors

- George H. Loun - Chairman
- Darius B. Mason
- Amos Bailey - Clerk
- James M. Clark - Treasurer
- Joseph Bailey - School Commissioner
- Christopher Douglass
- Amos D. Johns
- Henry Clark

Highway Commissioners

- John Reader
- Jabez H. Smith
- Curtis H. Easton
- Williams Bell- Assessor
- Cyrus Church - Collector

Constables

- Lucius W. Smith
- Cyrus Church
- Levi Lake
- Phipps W. Lake - Moderator

Sixth Regiment of Wisconsin Militia

The statutes of the Territory of Wisconsin were profuse in their provisions for a military force and Governor Dodge had on paper a large state militia.

But with the breaking up of new land and the busy life all were living, very little time was left for training for such service.

However in 1842 there was a war scare with persistent rumors that the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi were forming an alliance to try and invade the Territory and get back the land which they had given up. So persistent was the rumor that Governor Dodge issued a proclamation on June 1st for all the

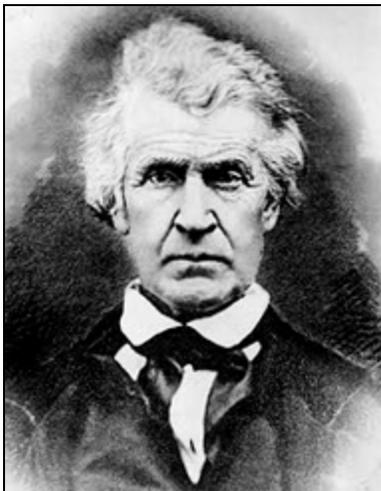
militia to be brought to full strength and drilled and be ready for review on penalty of fines for all who did not report.



Col. Edward Elderkin

The Walworth County regiment was known as the Sixth Regiment of Wisconsin Militia and Col. Edward Elderkin of Elkhorn was the officer in command. After a summer of drilling the big day for the rendezvous was to be on October 5, 1842 in Elkhorn. Every available place was used for sleeping quarters, even the stables. Up with sun soldiers came from their sleeping quarters by companies and as each company reached the rendezvous it was met with a volley of musketry and shouts of welcome. Bravely they marched to the sound of fife and drum. By 10 am all had assembled with some companies from Racine to swell the crowd. Such a military display was never before or possibly afterwards given in the County. In all there were 1200 militia men. They were dressed diversely, and as Prosper Cravath put it "some with hats and some without, some with coats and some without, and those that had shirts wore them, and those that did not have them came without."

The firearms were just as miscellaneous as the dress. Shotgun, long-tom, bell muzzle, rifle, horse-pistol, or other firearm that could be found, yet over half had to go through the drill with broom handle or other substitute for a rifle. What the soldiers lacked the officers made up for with their suits for the occasion, glittering side arms, pompous epaulets, etc.



Brigadier General John Bullen

The reviewing officers, Brig. Gen. Bullen of Racine and Inspector Hutchinson of Rockport praised Col. Elderkin on the soldierly bearing, excellent drill, and fine discipline of his regiment which he affirmed surpassed that of any other in the state. But alas, after the recess for a picnic lunch, though the soldiers came trooping at the call to form again with alacrity, many came with unsteady steps. Some of the soldiers could not find their companies and fell in anywhere and one Captain could not recognize his own men. The Commanding Officers blushed for the condition of the men and all attempts at further marching brought only more confusion, and attempt was made to get the men in line for the final word of dismissal.

A Court Martial was held on November 25 and sat for ten days. Moral indignation was rife, the temperance element was scandalized. The

commissary officers were indicted and nearly the whole regiment was called as witnesses. In spite of the fact that some two hundred had imbibed too much, it was difficult to prove the offense. Those who had been too drunk could remember nothing and those who kept sober knew nothing about it and a nolle prosqui was entered.

Williams Bay

The 1857 village map shown above drew considerable comment and brought to light a few sidelight on some of the land owners in 1857. A large part of the present Village was given as a part of the land owned by D. Carvey. The abstracts of most of the Village north of Geneva Street contained his name as having purchased the land from Royal J. Williams in 1856 for \$3400 making a payment of \$800; in 1858 he resold the land to the Williams family for \$3000. In the abstract is found a signed statement by a Mrs. Hall to the effect that she said D. Carvey and that he was a single man and a bachelor. He apparently did not live on the place.

Prior to the coming of the railroad in 1888, Williams Bay was just a rural community with a beginning of the summer recreation community. Camp Collie had been established in 1874. Y.M.C.A. Camp in 1886, Holiday Home in 1887, and Congress Club was already in its fourth year in 1888.



Looking east from the E.B. Meatyard estate

Royal J. Williams died in 1886 and his widow Lucretia lived in the homestead. Farther up Geneva Street were Joseph Stam, Mrs. Ann Perry mother of Ed Perry, and Kiah Bailey. Lewis Curtis had a home overlooking the lake. Jewell Boat Company had been established for several years. P.J. Healy and W.S. Harbert were already summer residents. The Peter Johnson farm was in the same location as Harbor View Subdivision. To the east on the south side of the road was John Madsen (or Madison), father of Charles and Christie Madison. Across the road was Otis Dodge's cabin. Then came the home of Chris Hansen, Uncle of Vic Hansen. At the Point was Edward B. Meatyard who owned some 1500 acres between Geneva Lake and Lake Como. Festus Williams, son of Israel Williams, lived on the farm that is now part of Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy.