
William Kline Dies

Eagle January 1889 - Last Thursday morning occurred the death of William J. Kline, one of the pioneers of Eagle. He was born in Amsterdam, N.Y. in 1807, was married there and came to this place in 1845 where he has since resided, with the exception of a few years in Michigan. He built the first hotel here and bought and shipped the first carload of grain sent from Eagle, on the Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad. He owned a large tract of land, a portion of which is now platted into a part of the Village of Eagle. A wife, daughter and three sons survive him.

William J. Kline

Like many families back east, William J. Kline heard of the great land opportunities available out west, and in 1845, he, his wife Susanna, and family left New York and moved to Eagle Wisconsin where he purchased 80 acres of land at the heart of Eagle Center. The westward expansion of the United States brought incredible opportunity and freedom for immigrants and others willing to tame the wild frontier. William Kline quickly learned that a man with vision could make a living buying and selling land and he bought and sold several tracts. Kline is listed as a farmer in the 1850 census but had bigger ideas, and in 1851 donated three acres for the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad to build a depot. The new railroad would provide transportation for farm goods to be sold in larger markets; a boom for area farmers. By 1855, he laid out a plat of Eagle for the remaining land he owned and it is still listed today on the Waukesha County land maps as "Kline's Plat of Eagle Centre." William Kline built the first hotel in Eagle (now Suhmers Saloon) and a large home on Waukesha Road overlooking the village. Census records from June 2, 1860 show William Kline to be quite successful, with real estate valued at \$6,750 (over \$1M today) and a personal estate of \$1,200 (about \$400,000 today). Kline was also instrumental in helping two service widows file 160 acre land bounty claims in the La Crosse Wisconsin area. This free bounty land was provided by the federal government to veterans of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. The land was then transferred to both he and fellow Eagle land investor Thomas Pittman, and no doubt resold to new arrivals.

William (b. 1807) and his wife Susanna (b.1811) had four children; John B (b.1841), Sidney P (b.1843), Silas W (b.1844), and Emily M (b.1847). 1860 census records show that Susanna's mother, Susannah Bradshaw, 81 years old at the time, also lived with them, along with twelve boarders living at the hotel. The children were all trained musicians who could read music and play several instruments; making them quite popular their entire lives.

William J Kline and wife Susanna lived in Eagle WI until the late 1860's when they and children Silas and Emily moved to Constantine Michigan. The 1870 census, conducted August 5, 1870, finds William listed as a farmer, and Silas listed as a produce dealer. The move was likely for health reasons for Susanna, as she died September 11, 1870. William moved back to Eagle and buried his wife at Oak Grove Cemetery in Eagle Wisconsin. William married Susan Winne sometime thereafter and is listed in the 1880 census as being married and living with Susan and her 83 year old sister Annie.