

Palestine
by
Alice Baker

The year 1836 lent meaning to the old cliché, "land office business". The people who settled south-eastern Wisconsin must have bulged the wall of that Land Office in Milwaukee as they sought their future homes.

Among those eager seekers were two vigorous New Hampshire men, Henry and Ahira Rockwell Hinkley, Andrew Schofield and Charles Rayness (sometimes spelled Raynous).

This quartette left Milwaukee for Prairieville by ox-team Aug. 18, reached that town the same day; remained there overnight; then left the next day for the region Sugden, Garton, and Coats had designated as Eagle when they were on a previous prospecting tour.

As the quartette came down a trail which is now Hy. NNN, they saw a beautiful spring, farther south a hill topped with big trees, and still farther south the prairie stretched out like the wings of a soaring eagle.

Always a decisive man, A. R. Hinkley reached for his knife and carved his name on one of the trees in the grove. His sudden action made Andrew Schofield, a Quaker, remark,

"Ahira, thee is quick with thy knife".

The Hinkley brothers built a 12' by 12' log cabin a quarter of a mile south of the spring.

One month after the Hinkleys came, Ebenezer Thomas came to land across what is now Hy. NNN and farther south to establish his claim. He built a cabin and settled his family there. For four years, the Hinkleys and Thomases were the only settlers in what was later to be known as Palestine.

Mr. A. R. Hinkley, then twenty-six years old, had left a sweet-heart in New Hampshire, and for that reason, after he had completed his log cabin, went back to Lebanon, N.H.

The sweet-heart, Mary Cutler Daniels, came from a well-to-do family who felt that to come to the wilds of Wisconsin with its Indians and its frontier hardships was little different than signing a death warrant. The young Lochinvar from the west, therefore, required over a year to get consent of his bride and her family. It was then 1838 by the time the young couple returned to the log cabin in their home in Palestine.

Since the Thomases stayed continuously at their location, they always claimed the honor of being the first permanent settlers of the township of Eagle. Thomas built a blacksmith shop in 1837, but where it was located, neither recorded nor traditional history divulges it.

In 1840, Oramel and Phoebe Hinkley took up section 10. Their living descendants who were resident in the Palestine community are Mr. Oramel Hinkley (Waukesha) and Mrs. Pearl West, daughter of Edward Hinkley, who lived for many years on Hy 67 in land now part of the Kettle Moraine Project.

The first store in Eagle was kept by Wm. Harrison in 1842. This store was later owned by Alfred Galpin and was located in the south-eastern corner of the intersection of Hys Triple N, X, and 59. No vestige of that store exists.

In the memorable year of 1848, Mr. Hinkley built his cobblestone house. The building of this house merits a paragraph in itself, but space forbids such deviation.

Thos. Trow came to Palestine in 1845. When the fifth decade arrived, settlers came in fast: Mr. Andrew McCabe took up land now a wayside site of the Kettle Moraine on Hy. 67; Mr. Chas. Hill chose the present Elmer Marty farm; Mr. M.F. Brady selected land southwest of the Mc Cabe holdings; and Mr. Jas. Perry, father of W.W. Perry, who later held highest offices in the Masonic Lodge, chose the former Wm. Markham farm.

During the seventy years that Mr. Hinkley lived in the Palestine area, he was the outstanding man of that region. A versatile man, he could farm, build his cobblestone house by collecting cobble stones, burn them for the lime needed in the mortar, grade them by passing them through a hole in a board, thus securing uniformity in size. He could pull teeth. He always carried an extractor. Seeing a neighbor coming across his

furrows, he stopped the plow, lined the patient against it, and with his dependable forceps removed the aching tooth.

Mr. Hinkley was always active in civic, religious, and political events; hence, he served the public in various school , church, and town offices. He was also a loyal member of the Masonic Lodge. xxx

When the railroad came to Eagle, all hope of forming a town at Palestine vanished. The store was abandoned and razed. The one remaining institution was the public school.

Many people do not know that the first school in Dist. No. 1 was a log one. The writer of this article can testify to this fact from hearing an incident told by her grandfather.

When he came to America (1849), he went to friends who lived on Melindy's Prairie. Leaving Milwaukee by foot he reached Palestine school just as darkness was coming on. He heard peculiar noises, many of them, in different directions. In his reading about America, he had come across very terrifying stories about wolves, how they bayed from various directions, getting closer and closer, finally coming together in their blood-thirsty attacks upon their victim.

Baker was discreet, hence, fearing that these noises were those of wolves, and seeing the log schoolhouse at Palestine, He decided he'd better stay there overnight and finish his journey the next day.

In after years, when he could laugh over his experiences, he told about the terrifying (?) sounds of FROGS.

A second school was built in 1854. A third brick one was built in 1928. There have been many teachers in the many years of its existence. The first one was Mrs. Kate Regan Edwards. Miss Maggie Partridge also taught there many years. After Mr. A.R. Hinkley became advanced in years, his daughter, Mrs. Emmeline Pardee, became a member of the board and took pride in paying the highest salary of any (neighboring district. There were consequently, many outstanding teachers in the school. Mr. Wm. Simmons, Mr. Otto Gilbert became principals of schools in Milwaukee, Mr. Wm. Parker became a Unitarian Minister in Reading and Dedham Mass; Miss Amber McCabe, a

successful teacher in the Waukesha schools; Miss Mabel McFarlane went on to Minneapolis schools. The list is too long for further comment.

The fact that Number One has not been absorbed into city schools is clinching evidence of its continuing worth.