

Bayfield - Progress and Prosperity - 1

177

Part 1

The 1870 census showed a population of 344 in the Town of Bayfield, almost all of whom lived in the community. Of this total, 288 were born in the United States, principally in Wisconsin, and 56 were foreign born, mostly in Scotland and Canada. The most numerous occupation was laborer, followed by fisherman and domestic servant. The only professional occupation listed was civil engineer; no doctor or lawyer was listed. One public school with one teacher and 40 students, and one Catholic and two Protestant churches were shown. There were two sawmills, one owned by R.D. Pike and the other, the Bayfield Mill Company, by Samuel Vaughn; both employed 25 men, and produced lumber and shingles. There was also a brownstone quarry at the south end of Basswood Island that employed 24 men and three women. In March 1870, the Bayfield Hydraulic Company was organized with Samuel Vaughn as president. A reservoir was built in the hills behind the village to collect water, which was piped to the village through hollowed-out logs. There were apparently a number of fountains that discharged water

from this system, and the village was fond of referring to itself as the "Fountain City." In August 1870, the fishermen Nelson and Frank Boutin arrived from Two Harbors.



Lars Larson CS 11/1/12

■ has been a guest columnist for The County Journal for many years.

They brought with them 100 fishermen and their families, and fishing equipment, boats and a schooner named the Alice Craig. The Boutins established the first large-scale fishing operation in Bayfield. A smaller fishing enterprise was operated by Fred Fischer. Barrel manufacturing to meet the demand of the fisheries was established by Fischer, Louis Bachand, and others.

In October 1870, the Bayfield Press was founded by Henry O. and Samuel S. Fifield. In its first issue on October 13th they declared that the paper would be politically independent and "devoted to the interest of Lake Superior," but

in practice this meant "booming" the interest of Bayfield. The advertisements in the first issue listed two dealers in real estate, an attorney (Andrew Tate), a life insurance agent (William Knight), two builders and carpenters, one hotel, a blacksmith, a grocery store and a hardware store, and five general merchan-

dise stores (owned by Samuel Vaughn, Robinson Pike, the Boutin brothers, William Herbert, and James Chapman); while Asaph Whittlesey advertised himself as "General Land Agent, also Agent for Payment of Taxes, Location and Sale of Agricultural, Pine and Mineral Lands And Stone quarries." The second issue reported that R.D. Pike's mill had "sawed eight miles of shingles this season;" that Vaughn's mill had cut 45,000 shingles "one day last week;" that "Mr. Mc Elroy raised 400 bushels of potatoes off from two acres, this year;" that the "Basswood Island quarry" was loading about "600 tons of stone" aboard a vessel going to Milwaukee; and finally that 700 copies of the first issue of the newspaper had been disposed of "in less than three days." There was also considerable shipping activity—for example, as reported in the second issue of the Press, for the period October

13th to 20th, there were five ship arrivals and six departures. Land communication with the outside world was also opened. In 1869, Bayfield County constructed a road from Bayfield to the county line near Brule, suitable for travel by loaded wagon teams. In October 1870, Douglas County completed the road from Brule to Superior, and the following December businessmen in Bayfield established regular stage service between Bayfield and Superior, the trip tak-

ing over two days with stops at stations along the way.

Sam Fifield provided a description of the town for the first issue of the Press. Bayfield, Fifield said, "is magnificent in its surroundings, and perfect in all its details." It is "most beautifully located," with neat houses, shaded streets, gardens, fountains, and "sidewalks in good repair," while a "system of water works supplies almost every house in town with pure spring water." The "public buildings" included two churches and a schoolhouse, and "the best kept hotel on Lake Superior." There were two sawmills, a growing fishing business, and a "Red Sand Stone Quarry . . . on Basswood Island." The principal exports were lumber, fish, and brownstone. Apples and other fruits are

grown, "and in a few years will be raised in great plenty." He described the harbor as large, deep, and sheltered, and as not requiring any engineering work to make it serviceable. In January 1872 the Press published a list of "buildings and improvements" during 1871, amounting to \$40,215. This willingness of Bayfield's citizens to invest what was for the times substantial amounts of money in improving and adding to their property, together with the thriving lumber, fish, and quarry industries were evidence of their confidence in the future of a prosperous community.