

Bayfield: Progress and Prosperity 3 ¹⁷⁹

Part 3

In June 1877, Sam Fifield moved the Bayfield Press back to Bayfield from Ashland. The first issue appeared on June 13, and included advertisements for the Eva Wadsworth, a "steam yacht" which operated for years between Bayfield and Ashland; for general merchandise stores by S.S. Vaughn, J.H. Nourse and A.C. Hayward; and for the "Island House" by William Knight.

John H. Knight and Andrew Tate were listed as attorneys, Robert Inglis as express agent, I.H. Wing as agent, and Albert Cus as a "house, sign and ornamental painter."

The year 1878 opened with a festive visit to Bayfield by an invited party of 30 from Ashland, accompanied by the Ashland Cornet Band.

Departing Ashland early on New Year's Day on the Eva Wadsworth, they were met at the pier in Bayfield at noon by the Bayfield Rifles and a salute from the old cannon. They were escorted to Smith's Hotel where they were treated to a "hearty dinner" and music by the Cornet Band.

Due to threatening weather, they were obliged to return early to Ashland, and so missed the grand ball sponsored by the Bayfield Rifles.

At the end of the month, the "fire fiend" struck again, this time at Red Cliff, destroying an Indian Agency building and all gov-



Lars Larson CJ 11/5/12

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

ernment and personal property therein. The Bayfield citizenry, finally moved to action, organized a fire company in March.

In July 1878, the Press published an article on "Bayfield's Prospects" that reviewed all of the old "facts" about the advantages of Bayfield with the usual prediction about its glorious future as a railroad and shipping center. But by August, optimism had again faded.

An article titled, "A New Hotel," began by stating that, "It seems that there is no hope of [a railroad] through to this place."

The answer to the question of "What else could be done," was the construction of a well-arranged, comfortable hotel on the right location that

could accommodate 200 people. With this hotel and the other hotels and boarding houses filled, 300 "health seekers" could be expected to spend \$1,000 a day, directly benefiting "every producer, laborer, salesman, and mechanic."

Such a \$25,000 hotel could be built if a plan were developed, and people donated labor and materials, and subscribed money.

That the summer tourist business was important to the economy of the village was suggested by a report on port commerce for 1878. It showed that 525 vessels had visited Bayfield during the year, bringing \$71,102 worth of imports, but taking away only \$40,851 of exports.

In April 1879, the Press inspected the fishing and lumber businesses, the mainstays of the village economy. It reported that Boutin fisheries operated more than 30 vessels, and employed 70 people for the summer; and that it had set 1,200 gill nets that stretched some 90 miles in length.

Fresh fish was shipped to the Midwestern cities, while salted fish was expected to fill 20,000 half barrels.

Robinson Pike doubled his lumber mill capacity to meet increased demand and installed a new engine. The mill cut 40,000 feet of lumber a day, and also manufactured

shingles, flooring, siding, and other wood products.

In October, the mill office caught on fire from sparks from the mill smoke stack, destroying the upper story before it was extinguished by the villagers, who turned out in a body.

The fire endangered the entire village but the Ashland Weekly Press reported that Pike refused to install

a spark catcher on the mill stack because it would increase the cost of operating the mill and that there was a strong feeling against him in the village because he "has subordinated the safety of the village to his own interests."

The June 1880 U.S. Census for the Town of Bayfield showed a total of 312 whites and 252 Indians.

The 1870 census listed 344 whites, so the Town had actually lost some population during the preceding decade. Of the 312 whites, 251 were born in the United States, by far the larger number in Wisconsin (124), followed distantly by Michigan (32) and New York (38), and 14 other states (57).

Sixty-one others were born in foreign countries, mostly in Canada (22) and Germany (20), plus seven other countries (19). And 134 of the white population were employed in 34 oc-

cupations, ranging from laborer to the professions and county officials.

The relatively large number of fishermen, sailors, and coopers (9) suggests the importance of fishing in the economy.

Forty-nine of the whites lived in the Town outside of the "Village." Of these, 15 were farmers and seven were farm laborers. The only major industry listed was Robinson D. Pike's sawmill.

The most frequent occupations listed were laborer (18), farmer (15), fisherman (12), and sailor (13).