

Nordeen PJ 1913

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LETTERS FROM WAUPACA RESIDENTS

Waupaca, Wis., May 26, 1913.

To the Home Coming Committee:

Waupaca, Wis., May 24, 1913.

Dear Readers.

At the request of your Home Coming Committee will write a few of the many pleasant recollections of early life in Waupaca. Mr. Nordeen came here in 1851. Worked the first season for Augustus Chandler for \$5.00 a month, taking his pay in seed corn at \$2.00 bushel, seed potatoes at \$1.00 a bushel and the rest in breaking on his father's farm located where John Hom now lives. His share of his summer wages was \$1.50 in money, to last him through for his board and attended school. At that time there was a small Indian village in the grove at the head of Main Street. However, they soon became scarce, though many passed through here, stopping for a short time only. I, with my widowed mother's family, **reached Waupaca May 10, 1855, hailing from Courtland County, New York. We came by way of Chicago. From there to Portage City by rail, and there hired a man and team to bring us the rest of the way, the trip taking two and one-half days. We stopped at a small tavern located where Cristy's store now stands. It was called the Tremont House and kept by a Mr. Higgins.** As we were looking for a farm, we neither cared to buy in town or board at the hotel long (there were six of us.) At the suggestion of one of the citizens, we built a shanty where the location pleased us most, which was about where Charley Roberts' residence now stands. After the shanty was completed another trouble arose. We had nothing to put into it. Our household goods were still on the road, and little could be bought in the furniture line, nearer than Berlin or Oshkosh. We procured a stove and dishes, and with a dry goods box (large) for a table and smaller ones for chairs did very well. Our kind landlord, Mr. Higgins, loaned us two chairs and a bedstead for my mother's and grandmother's use. About that time Peter Grover of Stevens Point happened along, and hearing that mother wanted to buy a farm, thought she would like it better there than here, and offered to take her up there to look at land. She went, but after looking around some, did not agree with him, and found herself in Stevens Point with no way to get back. A stage line ran from there to Berlin, striking Plover. From Plover she walked, reaching home on a pleasant Sunday afternoon but in a weekday state of mind. Soon after, she purchased a farm two miles east of town, of James Cameron, father of Mrs. Winfield Scott, the farm now owned by Mr. Stinchfield. The only building on the place was a double shanty on the bank of the river a half a mile from the road. The cow and oxen lived out in the open. On our trips to and from Waupaca Falls we were more apt to meet a bear than a person. In those days our fresh meats consisted of bear steak, venison, pigeons (when they flew) and suckers (when they ran). When we moved into the shanties my aged grandmother thought we had surely reached the "jumping off place." Soon after, mother built a house, which now stands, I think, on the east side of the present brick residence. After leaving the farm our home for many years was where S. S. Chandler now lives. In 1860 my sister and I planted the row of maples now standing there. They were one inch in diameter when planted, and came from the farm of Mr. Churchill in **1855-6 there were in Waupaca two hotels kept by Messrs. Jones and Higgins, a hardware store owned by G. & C. Chesley, two drug stores owned**

by J. Chesley and Dr. Thayer respectively. Wilson Holt and Charley Bartlett each conducted a general store, and two groceries, one belonging to Nathan P. Judson, the other to two brothers, Reuben and Hiram Luce. There was one newspaper, "The Waupaca Spirit," owned and edited by the Redfield brothers, Joseph B., Charles and Luke. There were no licensed saloons but liquor could be procured at almost any place of business. About this time one citizen was fined for diluting his stock with fifteen pails of water. In case of a death, burial could not take place until a coffin was made to order by Mr. Hampson, a cabinetmaker. On July 4th of that year dinner was served on the rocks on Granite Hill. Three church denominations were represented at that time, the Baptists holding services in the schoolhouse, the Presbyterians, with Dr. Marsh as pastor, in the Gothic Hall which was about where the court house now stands. The Methodists had a church up and enclosed. During the summer, services were held in it with seats of plank held up by nail kegs and a work-bench for a pulpit. In the fall a little more work was done on the church. Among other things a pulpit was built which was quietly removed by the ladies of the congregation during the still watches of the night. It was replaced later by one that suited them. In the fall of 1855 considerable excitement prevailed over election, the location of the county seat being the main issue. In the afternoon a bus-load of men came up from Weyauwega (that place being one of the contestants) to see how election was going. They were promptly drummed out of town. In the winter of '56 everything was very high. I remember that eggs were fifty cents a dozen and scarce. At that time I was looking for some, to make my wedding cake. After some time I located a lady who owned a few chickens and visited her. Upon making my errand known she said to me: "If you want those eggs to make a cake for the Methodist Donation party you can have them; if not, you cannot." The cake was made and frosted without eggs. At a Donation party for Elder Hayward the following winter, I remember that everything was taken from sled-length wood to kid gloves. The winter of '57 will always be remembered for its deep snow and heavy crust over the snow. Man times I walked from my home on Division Street to my mother's home on Main Street over the tops of the fences. The men in getting up wood, would have to shovel the trees out of the snow after they were cut down before they could cut them up. Winters were severe, times hard, living high and wages low. None of the Waupaca people (except the few old settlers) now enjoying the privileges of the prosperous little city, can imagine the hardships of those times, or the ways and means employed to live and enjoy living. I sometimes think that we did enjoy life more under those conditions than the average person of today.

Am sincerely yours,
Mrs. P. J. Nordeen.