

EMPLOYMENT

SUMMARY

Prior to 1900, Town of Norway residents depended almost entirely on farming for their source of income. In 1908, passenger trains on the electric railroad which came through the township brought many city people to the area. To meet their recreational needs, resorts and other supporting local businesses were opened, creating a second major source of income and employment.

As automobiles became popular, more cottages were built on the shores of the lakes. First used only as summer or weekend cabins, many of these cottages became full-time homes for their owners during the great depression era. The movement of people into the town accelerated even more after World War II. The newest residents, generally working in the cities of Milwaukee and Racine, built many new homes. Some of these homes were built along the shores of the ever-popular lakes. Many others, however, have been scattered in subdivisions throughout the remainder of the township.

Through the years, the chief sources of employment and income for local residents have been farming, local businesses, and employment in the cities. Because the latter is a recent development and is too broad for coverage in a booklet this size, only the history of farming and local businesses will be covered further in this chapter.

HIGHLAND FARMING

Farming, the first important occupation in Norway Township, began in the highland areas. At first, much of the farmland was bought and held by the wealthier Norwegians. That these individuals were motivated by the wish to create a Norwegian community and not by the desire for wealth was later proven when they sold land at very

reasonable terms to the poorer settlers. Many of these sales took place during the 1850's and 1860's and were accompanied by rapid development of the land for farming. Between 1850 and 1880, the population increased by one-third, to peak at just over 1,000 people while the number of farms increased from 93 to 156. Improved land during this same period increased almost nine-fold from 2,471 acres to 21,499 acres. During two censuses of this period, Norway ranked number one in the state in the percentage of improved versus unimproved land per farm.

Three notable farming changes have occurred since the beginning of the settlement. These changes were: (1) a shift from growing things for home use to the growing of



Horse drawn binder in a wheat field

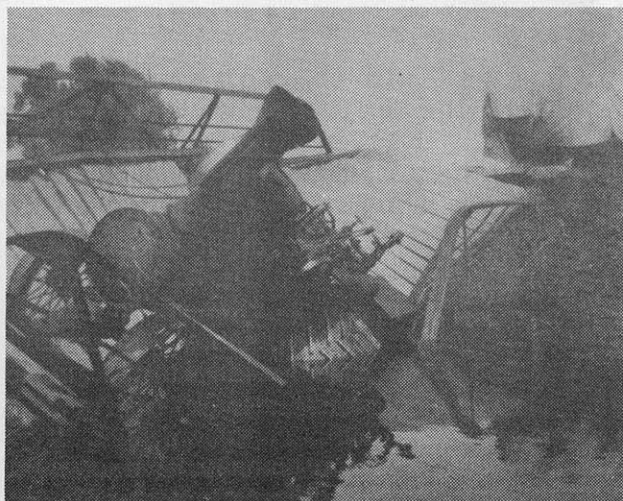
cash crops, mainly wheat, (2) the change from wheat growing to dairy and butter production, and (3) the development of truck and sod farms in the lowland areas.

Early settlers quickly cleared some land during their first year in order to plant a crop. The first year's crop usually consisted of corn, potatoes, turnips, and other table fare. Even then, the food raised often fell far short of the actual needs of a family on even the most rigid of diets. To supplement this crop, the family had to rely on stores of flour and other staples brought with them or turn to hunting for game.

Of course, table crops did not pay for land, animals or supplies. To buy these necessities, farmers had to raise and sell something in order to obtain cash. Because prairie land could be quickly converted to wheat production and because soil conditions were ideal for its growth, wheat was an overwhelming choice of most settlers as a cash crop. However, a few farmers raised corn while even fewer raised pigs.

Wheat was shipped in wagon caravans to Milwaukee or Racine where it was bought on the street, placed in warehouses, and then transported to Buffalo or other eastern cities. With the price as high as 50 cents per bushel as early as 1840, wheat production paid for many of the farms in the area. By 1860, Norway ranked in the top twenty townships in the state in the production of both wheat and corn. At the same time, it ranked extremely low in swine and cattle production.

The great reliance on a single crop, wheat, depleted the soil and led to a decline in yields throughout the state



Steam engine and thrasher collapsed bridge over canal at Wind Lake

beginning about 1870. Norway, spurred by a similar change made by Danish farmers in the eastern part of Racine County, turned to milk and butter production before the decline had drastic effects here. By the census of 1870, Town of Norway farms ranked second in the state in average butter production per farm. The trend to dairy farming continued through the late 1800's and early 1900's. Cost and price considerations have since forced many of the highland farms into raising corn as a cash crop.

LOWLAND FARMING

According to the plat map of 1860, the swamp land in the Town of Norway consisted of about 1840 acres located in the central part of the township, sections 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16. This land remained with the state until April 2, 1861, when a state act ceded the land to the town for the "town to dispose of said land and apply the proceeds arising from the sale thereof to draining the same."

The town board offered the land for sale at \$1.25 an acre, but the land remained useless until adequate drainage was provided.

Drainage was started with the dredging of a major canal from Wind Lake to the Fox River near Rochester that was completed in 1891. Further dredging in 1914 of lateral canals and finally the installation of field tile laid by hand began to open up the land for limited use in the 1920's.



Spinach harvest on Horner Farms in 1939



Horner Farms celery harvest

The drained land proved particularly suitable for vegetable and truck farming. By the 1940's and 1950's, many acres of land were producing vast amounts of vegetables. Because so much of the work was by hand, hundreds of migrant workers were brought in from Mexico and Jamaica for the seasonal work. During World War II, POW's were also a source of seasonal labor.

In a Racine Journal-Times news article in 1953, Everett Horner of the Horner Farms at Wind Lake said that of the 600 acres farmed, most had been swamp less than 25 years before. This formerly useless land produced 75,000 bushels of onions, 22,000 bushels of onion sets, 80,000 bushels of potatoes, 1500 tons of carrots, 1500 tons of cabbage, and 1000 tons of red beets that year alone. The \$40,000 for fertilizer and \$80,000 in wages and salaries spent in 1953 proved what a big business lowland farming had become.

The burgeoning housing growth in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Racine in the 1950's gave rise to a major new crop: sod. The Burmeister Farms cut its first sod in 1957 and sod continues to remain an important crop of the lowland farms. Farmers now rotate sod crops with vegetable production depending on the available market. It was estimated in 1979, that 1498 acres in the town were used for commercial sod production.

BUSINESS

The earliest businesses in Norway Township were directly related to farming. Among the early settlers were a number of craftsmen. One of these craftsmen, Ollie Anderson, operated a blacksmith shop. Another, Ole Hoganson, was a wagonmaker. Still another, a Mr. Hansen, better known for his untiring care of the ill and dying during one of the cholera epidemics, ran a tinsmith shop on the farm of Ben Dahlen.

Any listing of early businessmen would not be complete without mention of Even Heg and James Reymert. The two, as noted in another chapter, combined to publish a Norwegian language newspaper. Heg, an innkeeper in the old country, is reported to have operated a trading post while using his barn as an unofficial inn for newcomers. Reymert set up and ran a sawmill and soda factory near Silver Lake, now called Lake Denoon. In addition he reportedly employed up to 100 men building streets and log cabins for a city that he had planned for the same area.

By 1850, five other men had trades other than farming. These men and their trades were:

Nels Narum	Carpenter
Andreas Johnson	Carpenter
George Lawson	Blacksmith
Ole Heg	Printer
Syvvert Ingebretson	Shoemaker

In 1852, the government established a post office at Wind Lake. Charles Jacobsen, who lived in a dugout and ran a general store, was the postmaster. During the 1880's, two factories were operated within the township. One located in the North Cape area made and sold cheese. The other, located on Wind Lake near the present auto parts store, manufactured drain tile.

The plat map of 1887 shows a general store in North Cape. That store, run by George Spillum, was part of a



Wind Lake drainage tile factory, built about 1885 by Thompson and Eilert Friis

larger business community there. However, many of the North Cape businesses were located within the Township of Raymond.

Another business district was located entirely within the Town of Norway. Like North Cape, this business district featured a nearby church. It is also known that this business district had not one, but two blacksmith shops to



Main Street in North Cape, 1908

serve as additional drawing cards for the patronage of the surrounding farm community. Further featuring two general stores, this business district was located at the intersection of the present Loomis and Pioneer Roads. One of the general stores, begun by Bendick Bendickson and later operated by the Finnault and Krogstad families, was housed in the building that now serves as The Country Kettle Restaurant. Directly across Loomis Road was the second store, Palmer and Thompson's. It is this store that served as the home of the first telephone switchboard operated by Naomi Thompson. On the same side of the street were the two blacksmith shops run by members of the Rasmussen and Knutsen families. One of these blacksmith shops later became a gas station and auto repair shop before it was demolished in the late 1960's.



General Store operated by Bendickson, Finnault, and Krogstad

The same or another member of the Rasmussen clan built a grocery store at the corner of South Wind Lake Road and Loomis Road. This store, like the grocery departments of the previously mentioned general stores, featured goods that could be bought in quantity to suit the needs of the year-around residents. The common sized package of that era, as recalled by Gilma Dukleth, was the keg. If

you bought the standard oatmeal package, you needed the type of kitchen cabinets that still grace many of the farm homes in this area.

The Rasmussen store and most other businesses in Norway have changed hands many times over the years. Indeed, some of the buildings have housed entirely different businesses. Rasmussen's store, as an example, later became a resort and is now a tavern. To list, let alone research and locate all businesses and their owners would be an impossible task. Keep this in mind as you read the remainder of this chapter which attempts to chronicle some, but not all of the business ventures that have called Norway home.

Businesses covered up to this point depended chiefly on the farming community for their support. A second set of business establishments, based on recreation and residential development, started much later in the town's history but eventually became at least equally important.

When and where the first business related to recreation began in the township is a question that is not easily answered. Because fishing and hunting were popular pastimes even among the first settlers, it is likely that the first recreation related business catered to people interested in this sport. Schaefer's Resort fit this description. Located near the intersection of North and East Wind Lake Roads, this resort provided cottages, boats and other necessities for hunters and fishermen. Schaefer's, in an ad placed in the 1939 directory published by the Wind Lake Improvement Association, claimed to have been in business for 45 years. Based on this ad, the resort must have opened its doors in 1894.

Another early resort was Dorne's. Available information places this resort in Section 35. If this information is correct, Dorne's would have had to be in the North Cape area, probably on Goose Lake.

The Wind Lake Hunting and Fishing Club may have spurred building of the first privately owned cottages. Members of the club, which had a clubhouse near the

present boat landing on South Wind Lake Road, were known to have built cottages on both West Wind Lake Road and South Wind Lake Road.



Bathers

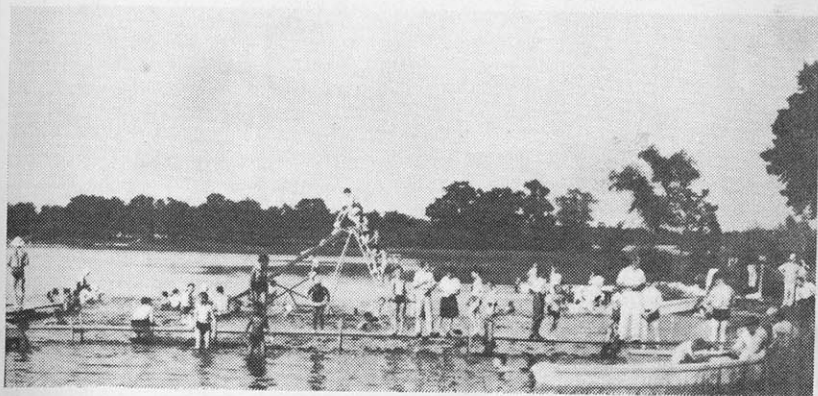
Ellen Thompson Mehring, Ragna Krogstad Fries, Grace Fries, and Anna Fries Jacobson

Access to any cottages and resorts from the city in the 1890's and early 1900's was limited by transportation problems. Mrs. Clara Packard, a summer resident, recalled her parents, the Schillings, talking about their first trip to Wind Lake in 1903. To get to their cottage from Milwaukee, the Schillings took the electric railway train to St. Martins, then a stopping point on the East Troy line. The remainder of the trip from St. Martins to Wind Lake had to be negotiated on the back of a farmer's wagon.

With the completion of the electric railroad from St. Martins through Norway to Burlington in 1908, the transportation problem ceased to exist. One resort, the Edgewater, now known as Shad's, was important enough to warrant its own stop and waiting station. Other resorts in this same area along the west shore of Wind Lake included Hoganson's and Gumpert's. The former was located near Frontage and Loomis Roads while the latter was located on the site of the present bowling alley.

Resorts along the north shore of Wind Lake in 1939 included Zenisek's, Frank Bruck's, and The Idle Hour. Resorts along South Wind Lake Road at the same time period included Krause's, Mengert's, and Peterson's. Mengert's was largely known for its dance hall while the other two featured picnic and beach areas.

The Waubeesee Resort was always the main attraction on that lake. The Tropics (Frank Turna's) at the intersection of South Wind Lake Road and Loomis Road, though listed as a tavern, provided many of the services normally expected only of a resort. In the late 1920's, the Uyvari family began operation of a resort on Long Lake. This resort, since operated by Pagel's and LeMay's, specialized in the hosting of company picnics.



Long Lake Beach, Uyvari's Resort

A typical resort provided cottages, groceries, drinks, ice for the icebox, and other supplies as well as facilities for picnicing, boating, and swimming. The resorts, by drawing people to the area for temporary stays, also created a desire for lakeshore living that quite often culminated in the building or buying of a summer cottage. Later, especially during the depression and the years immediately after World War II, this interest spread to the purchase or remodeling of homes for year-around living. Though it wasn't always love (of the area) at first sight, the case of the Landos, who until recently ran the local bakery, might be typical. As Mrs. Lando remembers, "We came out for a two-week vacation in 1947, liked it, and just never returned to the city."

Combined the summer and year-around residents created the need for another set of businesses that supplemented and even competed with some facets of the resort busi-

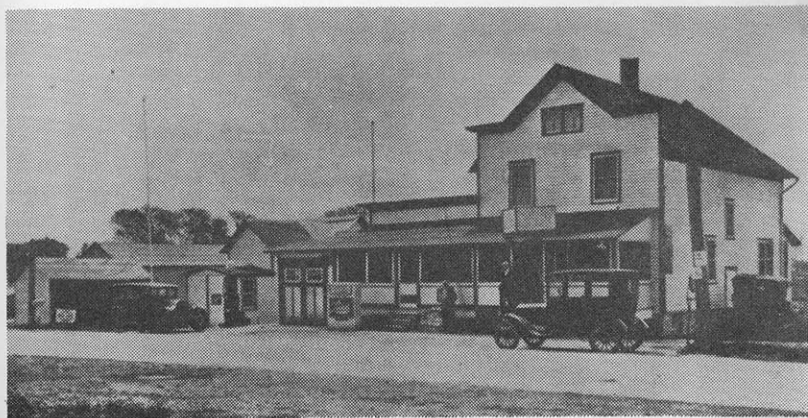
ness. Many of these businesses located along Loomis Road from the north end of Frontage Road to Waubeesee Lake Drive, and thus formed the only true remaining business district in Norway.



Looking west on Wind Lake's main street, 1937

Businesses outside the main district included a service station and restaurant in the Heg Park area. The restaurant, once known as the Norway Inn, was later called Mabel's and is now known as The Country Kettle. The service station was located directly across the road in a former blacksmith shop and was run by Henry Posbrig. Another service station has long been run at the intersection of Loomis Road and Highway G. There were also two grocery stores outside of the main business district. One located on the curve of South Wind Lake Road above the boat landing was run by Benzeka and then by Landos. The other, located on West Wind Lake Road (then Fries Lane), was called the Bungalow.

Two grocery stores were located in the main business district. Both were started by the Kebbekus family. The first, located on the south side of Loomis Road near the present Frontage Road, was destroyed in a fire. Though they rebuilt and operated this store for a short period,

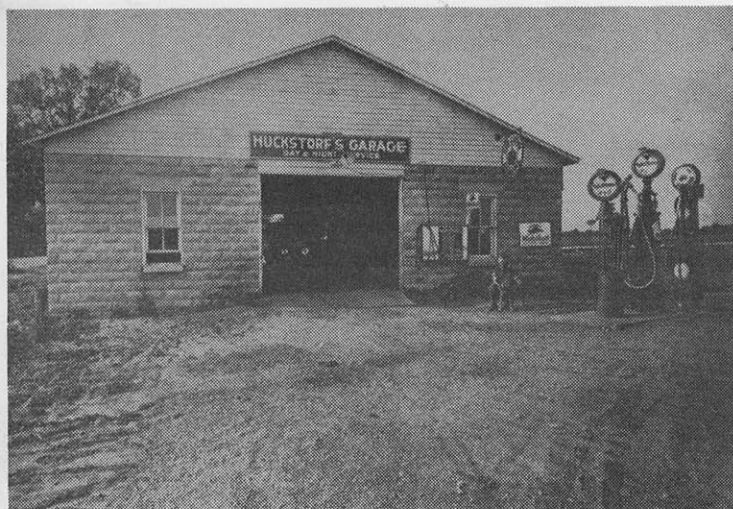


Ircink's General Store

they were not at ease due to the loss of a son in the fire. Consequently, they built a new store directly across Loomis Road from the original store. This new store was later operated by Harts for 35 years and is now known as Don's Wind Lake Grocery. Kebbekus's original store was later run by Ircinks, Hogansons, Geskes, and Johnnie Sorensen. The latter moved the business to a new location near the junction of Highway Y and Loomis Road when new Highway 36 was built and has since converted the store to a beer and liquor depot.



Hart's Store about 1954. Note ladder on side of ice house in rear



Huckstorf's Garage with Wadham's gasoline pumps

Also located in the path of the new highway and forced to move to new locations were Goetz's Wayside Tavern, The Wayside Garage, and a barber shop. Other businesses located in this area included Hoganson's lumber yard and Huckstorf's service station. Today, the business district also includes a bank, home improvement center, beauty shop, bakery, hardware store, bowling alley, another service station, and a restaurant.