

## CRANBERRY HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CRANMOOR

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Prior to the year 1870, for some time cranberries had been raked on the wild Wisconsin marsh lands by Indians and white men and transported to market principally by lumber rafts floated down the Wisconsin river to lumber market towns along the Mississippi river.

In September 1870 the Carey Brothers, a family of Irishmen, notoriously improvident and adventurous had gathered from their hitherto almost worthless swamp near Berlin, 10,000 barrels of cranberries and sold them to H. P. Stanley and Sons, of South Water Street, Chicago, for one hundred thousand dollars. The fame of this fabulous fruition spread, and my father, with an ear to the ground, bought forty acres of marsh joining the Careys, and sent for me to come and help him plant it. I was in Chicago—just twenty-one and on my own; had my grip packed and all I possessed—eight hundred dollars in my pocket and my purpose planned to go to Washington Territory to get possession of some of that big timber on Puget Sound. The habit of heeding my father's wishes prevailed and I returned to Berlin, planted cranberry vines, boarded with a farmer named Balch, listened to his talk and tale of thousands of acres of cranberry marsh good as Careys that could be bought for fifty cents an acre while that joining Careys would cost fifty dollars an acre.

The cranberry craze was catching and I caught it. Balch and I went exploring Juneau, Jackson and Wood counties. We drove a team and lumber wagon from Berlin west through Wautoma, Coloma and Friendship, across the Wisconsin River at Petenwell Rock to Necedah. Here we turned north on the almost impassible winter tote road of the Kingston Weston and Miner lumber company to Thompsons Landing, then a log banking point on the Yellow River about three miles north of where the station of Finley is now.

This part of the country was then a vast uninhabited wilderness of level wet marsh of spongy peat of two to twenty feet depth interspersed with islands of say two to two hundred acres of higher, harder sandy land, covered with pine, tamarack and tangled brush shading off to spaces of open marsh where patches of wild cranberry vines could be seen with their crop of ungathered red berries hanging on awaiting the coming of adventurous, fortuitous pioneers such as we.

All of Thanksgiving Day, 1870, I tramped on foot these watery wastes to find a spot on which to stake my fortune and my future. I got separated from Balch and Thompson and was lost in that trackless desolation. I was out all night, soaked to the waist and frozen stiff, and hungry. Luckily, I remembered the sun rose in the east so I turned that way—thought I could out-fame Robinson Crusoe.

In spite of this dampening dejection I bought in with Balch ten forties, 400 acres of State swamp land near where the station of Daly came into being in later years. The earthworks we made in 1871 are still discernable on the J. O. Daniels farm.

I became dissatisfied with my location and partner. After playing the game for eight months I walked out without a cent, although the experience gave me some additional common sense.

About that time Hank Beatty, an old surveyor and timber cruiser, who first bought the choicest fortys of the Arpin marsh and of the Thomas E. Nash marsh and who knew the country like a book told me to stop snivelling over my hard luck; that he could show me cranberry marsh so much better than the stuff I lost that I would be glad I lost it. He showed me to my present location in August of 1871. The only neighbors then discernable of kindred calling—cranberrying

—were Theodore Bearss, a Berlin man of high ideals, located a mile south of me and Ralph Smith, a collegian, lawyer and secluded gentleman two miles north of me.

There were no railroads, no wagon roads, and the walking was terrible. We had heard there was a place on the map somewhere called Grand Rapids but we had never seen it. We knew Necedah, but we did not know it was our most inaccessible point.

Early in 1872 people began to filter in hunting the cranberry Eldorado. William Skeel from Pine River and the Warner boys, brothers of Mat Bearss, Dayton R. Burr, Biggest and McNish and Kendall and Blackstone, from Berlin—the plague center.

Arthur Bennett, a freckled faced boy just out of school at Appleton, and his illustrious sire with Cape Cod information and perhaps experience, had started a transformation in the sage brush and moss just south of Ralph Smith in 1880, and heralded A. C. Bennett and son. M. O. Potter, a slender scion of those early days has outstripped most of us as his early purpose planned. The Gaynors succeeded or supplanted Biggest and McNish and Blackstone and Kendall. J. J. Emmerick grew up with the Gaynors. Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Scott were early settlers, so were the Rezins, Robert, Richard and Dan. The Searles brothers were pioneers and their shadow never grew less.

In 1873, H. W. Remington, who dispensed the destinies of the community on the Yellow River, a few miles west of us, came in from Tomah with the Wisconsin Valley Railroad, almost by our door. We got a side track and station. They named it Bearss, in honor of our leading citizen. Later years Mrs. W. H. Fitch disliked the name because wits and wags persisted in writing an extra vowel in the word where it would do the most mischief. Mrs. Fitch persuaded the Railroad and the post office department to change the name to Cranmoor.

John Arpin the venerable could drive a horse drawn vehicle from his city home to Pine Lodge, my log house, then he must walk a mile or two to his marsh. He used to leave his two little boys, Dan and Ermon with Mrs. Whittlesey, and she would play the piano for them while the father was gone. They said they had never seen a piano before. Will wonders never cease?

Railroad rivalry was rife and first we knew the Green Bay and Western had built a line across our cranberry kingdom from east to west.

One day the writer, being still young and unencumbered, assayed to walk to the county seat, via Ralph Smith's wooden railroad built on stilts and the Green Bay and Western railways. At a domicile beside the track we met Andrew Searles, who apologized for not inviting us in to eat because a girl baby had just arrived, and not yet been given audience with strangers, but had been given the name of Mayme Searles. It must have pleased her for we have never heard that she ever found one that pleased her better.

To you looking forward it may look a long way from youth to old age, but looking back it seems too brief. On the whole, it is good, as good generally as we choose to make it. Co-operation helps a lot.

Cranberry growing in Wisconsin is not a snap. I have been at it for nearly 63 years. I have found it necessary to put back into the plantation for upkeep and improvements all the returns I get over a very modest living. Most of us are still in debt, and without our very efficient marketing organization that every grower is in duty bound to join, we could not even live.