CRANMOOR

THE CRANBERRY ELDORADO

Mid-Wisconsin History

BY DAVE ENGEL

River City Memoirs-Macrocarpon
5597 Third Avenue
Rudolph, Wisconsin 54475

***April 14, 1905**: I have come to the conclusion that a ~~little~~ book covering the whole cranberry business would meet a much needed want, and would command quite a good sale at the outset, and would be a credit both to yourself and the University. It should cover the whole field of interest to the cranberry growers and be put in simple language,—something on the style of Prof. Goff's work on Horticulture.*

John A. Gaynor

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River City Memoirs
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OTHER PUBLICATIONS BY DAVE ENGEL

River City Memoirs (A series in the *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* 1980-2002)
River City Memoirs I-VI (books based on the *Tribune* series)
Age of Paper (Founding of Consolidated Papers, Inc., Wisconsin Rapids)
Home Mission (History of Congregational Church, Wisconsin Rapids)
Shanagolden: An Industrial Romance (Ashland County, Wisconsin, history)
North Woods Journal of Charles C. Hamilton (Wisconsin logging history)
Just Like Bob Zimmerman's Blues: Bob Dylan In Minnesota
Calumet: Copper Country Metropolis (U.P. mining town in its prime)

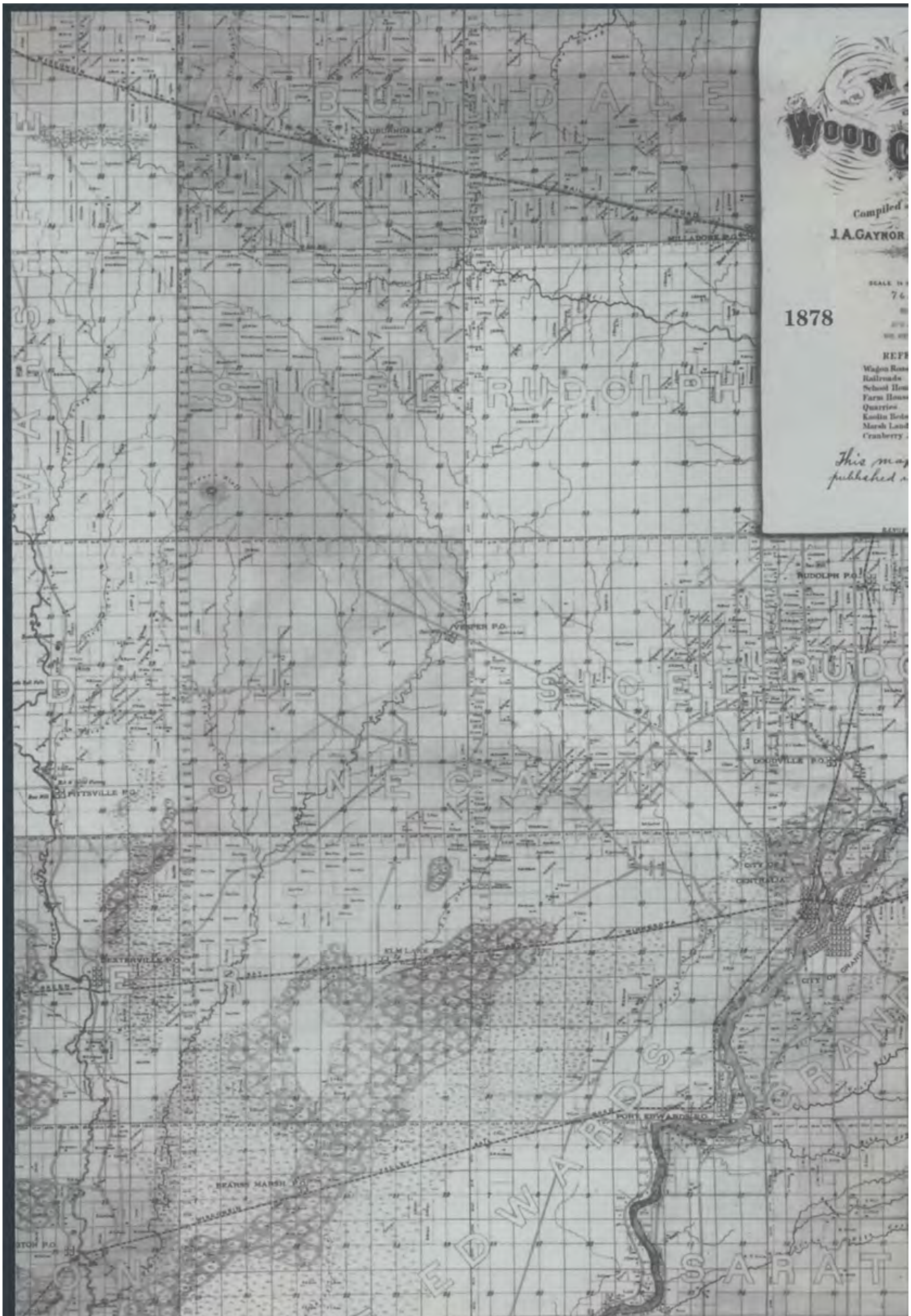
Hepcat's Revenge (Mid-State Poetry Towers periodical)
Ring Them Bells (Mid-State Poetry Towers Anthology)
The White Vicuna (Music CD)

Summer meeting books 1991-2003, Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association

D.E. is City Historian of Wisconsin Rapids.

Contents

Cover: Annual summer meeting of Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association on the Gaynor marsh, Cranmoor, 1904. Front row, left to right, from back cover and continued on front cover: James Gaynor and dog, Ermon Bennett, the small boy. Jimmie Gaynor, Melvin Potter, S.N. Whittlesey (beard), Jerome Potter, Jake Emmerick, John Gaynor, William Fitch, Asa Bennett (full white beard), Charles Briere (beard, hat in hand), Joe Bissig, Charles Lester. Beginning second row? George Corriveau, Mr. Bandon, George Hill, Eli Grimshaw, Herman Gebhardt, Henry Fitch, George Paulus, John King, Joseph Fitch, Tim Foley, Robert Skeels, Harry Whittlesey, O.G. Maulde, Mr. Porter, Mr. Lynn, Dave Burr, Ben Lynn, Marion Lynn, Fred Kruger, Ed Gebhardt, Ralph Smith, Alvin Day, Steve Warner, Albert Viertel, Minnie Kruger, Dr. Humphrey, Mrs. Humphrey, Ivy Lewis, Harriet Whittlesey, Helen Taylor, Caroline Fitch, Guy Nash, Tom McGovern. *Wisconsin Cranberry Growers Centennial Heritage Book.*



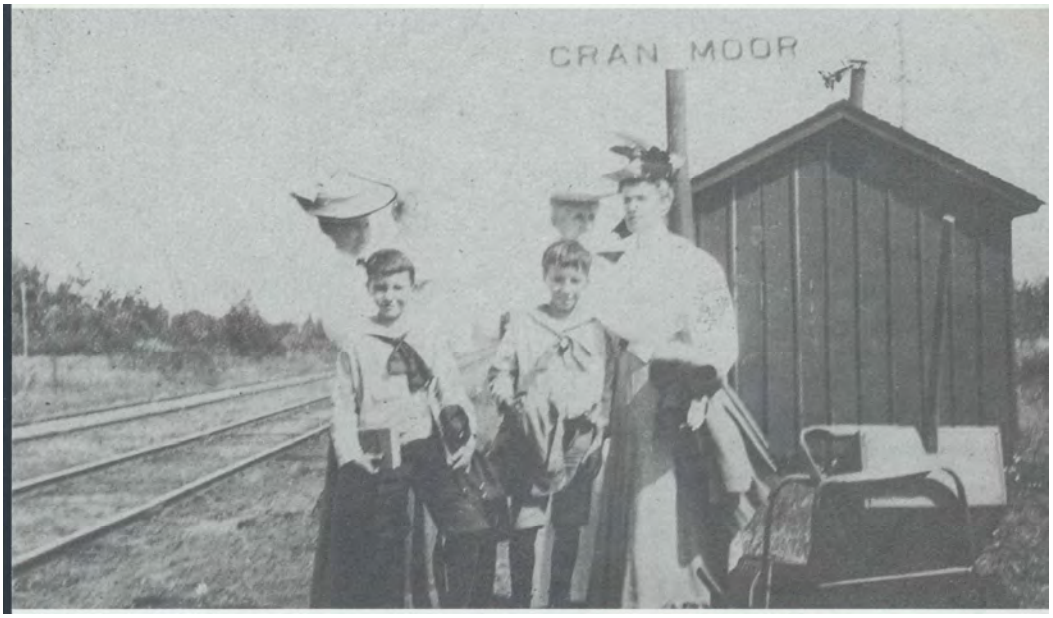
AUBURNDALE
AUBURNDALE P.O.
MILLADORE P.O.
1878
Compiled
J.A.GAYNOR
SIGEL
RUDOLPH
RUDOLPH P.O.
VESPER P.O.
SIGEL
SENECA
DODGEVILLE P.O.
PITTSVILLE P.O.
CITY OF CENTRALIA
DEXTERVILLE P.O.
PORT EDWARDS P.O.
EDWARDS
CRANBERRY MARSH P.O.


1893
Wisconsin
Medford
Antigo
Pine River
Wausau
Stetsonville
Abbotsford
Dorchester
Colby
Unity
Marathon
Schofield
Mosinee
Knowlton
Marshfield
Auburndale
Junction City
Stevens Point
Plover
Amherst
Grand Rapids
Centralia
Dexterville
Pittsville
Neillsville
City Point
Babcock
New Rome
Plainfield
Hancock
Wautoma
Friendship
ADAMS
JUNEAU
Mauston
Necedah
Camp Douglas
New Lisbon
Kendall
Elroy
Wonewoc
La Valle
Reedsburgh
Baraboo
Portage
Montello
Kilbourn Cy.
Packwaukee
Westfield
Coloma
Wild Rose
Waupaca
Jackson
Orange
Hillsborough
Wilton
Lyndon Sta.
Delton
Pardeeville
Cambria

CRANMOOR
THE CRANBERRY ELDORADO

A book that wouldn't have happened without the inspiration, assistance and support of

Phil Brown
Clerk, Town of Cranmoor



Eldorado

Its history is almost a romance. Nowhere on the American continent, except in the choicest irrigated districts, has wild and apparently worthless land been taken from the state of nature and developed and made so valuable. A.E. Bennett

Can this be the fabled city of gold? At a remote wayside on Wisconsin Highway 54 west of Port Edwards, the "cranberry culture" historical marker says a lot of visionaries came, looking for something valuable.

Among those dedicating the site in 1959: Clarence A. Searles, Wood County Board chairman; J. Marshall Buehler, South Wood County Historical Corp. president; and John M. Potter, Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association president. The principal speaker is Dr. George L. Peltier, cranberry historian and author of the inscription on the plaque.

During the decade 1870-1880, a few hardy souls literally carved out by hand the bogs in this area and, in spite of many hazards such as fires and lack of water, succeeded in establishing a new crop. At the turn of the century, hand picking predominated. Later, improved rakes replaced the colorful family groups, together with their nightly entertainment. Today the 'machine' has replaced 'hand labor' in the operation of the bogs and many of the simple pleasures and intimate associations accompanying the laborious tasks on the cranberry bogs are now only memories of the past.

Sherman Whittlesey, one of the first to head for the big swamp, whimsically christened it "Eldorado" to signify the promise of easy, profitable pickings. Here, in Cranmoor, some sourdoughs successfully unearth precious ore and some don't. Some pan gold and lose it and find it again. Nearer to our time, the latest "cranberry craze" inoculates new seekers, who match wits more with supply and demand than Mother Nature; something to write about in 2104.

But hey, Mr. *Cabeza de Vaca*, it's not just about the money. Somewhere, under the rainbow, the New Millennial prospector finds another kettle of stuff, the plot of a late summer night's dream.

Eleven months of the year, the hound of the Baskervilles has the moor to himself—but on the twelfth, what a party! Here, in the name of *vaccinium macrocarpon*, treasure seekers babble in a score of tongues. At dusk, a thousand pickers and rakers, who earlier straggled ragged from the bog, now assemble as smartly-dressed revelers ready to trip the light fantastic—dance time on the marsh.

Next morning, berries barreled and shipped, the swamp is abandoned to memory and imagination; all quiet in Cranmoor.

So it plays out, like a verse from the pen of Pat the Ditcher. A tough and funny idyll, part tragedy, part farce, part method, part madness; this is the romance of the cranberry Eldorado.

Launching a cranberry marsh, 1880s. *Wisconsin Cranberry Growers Centennial Heritage Book*

Wild Marsh 15,000 B.C.-1861

Why cranberries? The answer, like so many in America's cranberry land, is "the glacier," a sheet of ice that once covered much of North America. The melting of the glacier floods what we know as the central Wisconsin counties of Wood, Adams, Juneau, Jackson and Monroe.

The glacial lake never quite dries up; it leaves a great swamp between Wisconsin Rapids, Camp Douglas and Black River Falls. Here, acidic soil and plentiful water supply happen to be just right for wild cranberries.

If any featherless biped of the post-glacial period can claim the pre-Columbian crop, that would be the "Indian." The early resident finds cranberries good for food and medicine and, compared to other wild fare, not intolerably tart. For dessert, they can be sweetened with maple sugar. A durable product, cranberries can be stored fresh, frozen or dried and transported a fair distance. Relatively valuable per pound, they become a viable currency.

When fur traders arrive from Canada, they trade with Chippewa (Ojibwa), Winnebago (Ho Chunk), Menominee, Potawatomi, and others, offering beads, knives, blankets, whiskey and other items, in return for cranberries.

In 1845, Amable Grignon, a French-Canadian trader at Point Basse (Nekoosa), writes to his nephews for trade goods and also requests a cranberry treat. "They [local Indians] have the custom of harvesting the cranberries around the 10th of September. That is why if you wish to have pelts it will be necessary to go to the Indians' hunting grounds to obtain the pelts."

But Grignon is already an anachronism. English-American entrepreneurs soon dominate the fur trader's former territory and provide an eager market for the Native American harvest. Shortly before Wisconsin statehood, Daniel Whitney of Green Bay invests in a saw mill at Point Basse. His employee, Ebenezer Childs, transports eight loads of cranberries from the crop of 1827 to Galena, Illinois, as barter for provisions.

In 1849, diarist Rev. Cutting Marsh, a Congregationalist circuit rider, notes that, "Mr. Miner of Grand Rapids [Wisconsin Rapids]" estimates about fifteen thousand bushels of cranberries have been gathered in the "Pinery."

Indians continue to enjoy free picking rights and are able to trade berries, along with ponies, mittens, moccasins and maple sugar for such items as pork, flour and vegetables. But, soon, their only access to the better bogs will be as seasonal laborers. Through treaties, several Indian communities are forced to give up almost all their land to the U.S. government, some of which, under the 1850 "swamp land grant," is forwarded to the newly-created state of Wisconsin so it can be sold to individuals.

The acreage is surveyed immediately by government representatives such as Erskine Stansbury and Levi Sterling. Their field notes describe a typical tract as "a large marsh containing innumerable small islands from one to five acres. Timber on islands [is] thickly set with small pine, tamarack, aspen, and oak.

About three fourths of township [is] covered with water from 6 to 40 inches deep. The marshes are destitute of timber, covered with grass. The marsh edge next to islands abounds in cranberries."

In 1856, Wood County, named for Joseph Wood, is set off from Portage County, named for the portage at Portage. The first township, Grand Rapids, includes the entire county of Wood. From Grand Rapids, are drawn the townships of Rudolph, Centralia, Saratoga, Seneca and Dexter.

In Wood County, *Vaccinium macrocarpon*, the "large" or American cranberry, continues to be a mainstay of commerce, on a par with maple sugar and shingles, says an 1858 *Wood County Reporter*. Resident Jesse H. Lang recalls: "We would load our wagons with shingles and cranberries and go down to Sun and Columbus Prairies and around Madison, and exchange our Pinery products for corn, oats and feed in general."

French-Canadian immigrant John Baptiste Arpin in 1860 rakes cranberries along "Cranberry Street" in Centralia, a "twin" village across the Wisconsin River from Grand Rapids. (The two will become Wisconsin Rapids). The berries are placed in boxes and barrels and loaded on lumber rafts to find a market at Dubuque, Iowa.

Like the Forty-Niners to California, opportunists rush to the yet un-owned cranberry moors. Some are "men from Adams County," a timeless phrase synonymous with "outlaws," who, in 1860, carry off 400 bushels from the vicinity of Centralia. According to a newspaper: "A man was found dead on the Big Marsh last Monday. Appearances indicated that he had been shot. He carried with him a blanket, cranberry rake and other camping utensils. He was a stranger."

The early bird gets the berry; but premature picking perturbs shippers by preventing crimson color, keeping qualities and concupiscent tartness. A public meeting, August 12, 1861, at Hurley's Hall in Grand Rapids results in a plan to drive off "invaders." Deputy sheriffs are appointed by Sheriff Lavigne, who declares any and all persons "hereby forbidden to gather cranberries within the limits of this county until on and after the 5th day of September." Within hours, nasty Dick Shay is nabbed for snatching 30 bushels of green berries.

Protected marshes are looking good. In October, after the harvest, Grand Rapids editor H.B. Philleo writes, "Cranberries are becoming very plenty in market. The old store formerly occupied by Lang & Co. probably contains 2500 bushels."

J.H. Lang, in 1857 a resident of French Town (later, Port Edwards), hires a likely Frenchman, Louis Savall, to explore for cranberries, which he finds a few miles west of the Wisconsin River. "Thinking to add a little to my income I hired him to go out and pick the berries for me, fitted him out with provisions and camp outfit and sent a team to carry him to the marsh. The first day he reported to have picked thirty bushels.

"The marshes were very dry and the following night, fire was discovered approaching his camp and my man and many others had to flee for their lives.

Louis came in dirty and smoke begrimed and just about played out. Everything we had on the marsh was lost and that was the end to my cranberry speculation that time."

Lang says that few of his neighbors actually farm or till the soil, "it being generally supposed that when the pine timber was exhausted all the good was taken out of Wood county. We had little thought that a railroad would ever reach that God forsaken land or that any timber except pine would ever be made available.

"No thought was given to the cultivation of cranberries and what fruit was gathered was found in its native state and it was quite a business each fall to search the vast stretches of swamp and marsh in the southwest part of the county for cranberry marshes."

A few years later, after Lang settles upstream in Grand Rapids, there is another good crop out in the swamp and a company is organized, consisting of himself and local residents John Compton, Levi Powers (the county's first district attorney), Fred Case, and others. Lang, as surveyor, will locate lands to "pre-empt," thereby securing exclusive right to the crop.

"Our first point of attack was the marshes lying west of French Town and Nekoosa. Not being satisfied with what we found there we pushed on farther west. We camped one Saturday night on a dry island under a large spreading pine, cooked and ate our supper and laid down to the sleep of the just and to our pleasant dreams."

But a rainstorm forces a wet retreat under the tree. Come daylight, the soddenly-needy nabobs ponder how to scratch up some grub. A flock of sandhill cranes might answer but no guns have been packed. Determining the big birds, "too wet to fly," the partners take turns trying to chase them down.

Finally, Powers tackles a quarry and bears it "in triumph" back to camp, where the carcass is boiled with salt pork. Before Powers is able to enjoy the feed, he stirs, grabs one shoulder, then the other; cuffs an ear and the other, and dives into the bosom of his shirt—to find a million lice, more or less.

In the autumn of 1861, soon after the breaking out of the Civil War, known locally as the "rebellion," another good crop ripens. Lang, with "Pierson, Howell and Powers," purchases a thousand bushels of berries, has them packed in barrels and boxes and sends them to a commission house in Milwaukee. Unfortunately, the war has raised the price of sugar so the sweet-needy product will not sell at all.

"We stored them in a cellar and let them remain until spring and so far as I know they are there yet for we never received a dollar for our investment and if the commission man got enough out of them to pay freight he did better than we did." It is Lang's final cranberry venture and "wound up my seeking after wealth by investing in the fruit and I decided like the fox in the fable, that they are poor sour things anyway."

The *Wood County Reporter* surveys "The Berries" after the "furor."

"Our streets present a more cheerful aspect. Many of our citizens still remain on the marshes picking from one to three bushels per day. The number of bushels gathered is estimated at ten thousand, with as many more wasted or destroyed.

"Certainly we have been favored the present season with bountiful crops of nature's spontaneous products. Our wilds have teemed with burdens of black and red raspberries, blackberries, and whortleberries; and our marshes have been crimsoned with a sea of cranberries hitherto unknown to the oldest residents of the county.

"Nearly everybody has fruit to keep and to sell, which is a God-send in these war times. Let us be thankful."

Fairchild 1861-63

Letters.

They travel between Cassius and Charles Fairchild at the family-owned Yellow River sawmill in central Wisconsin—and their father, J.C. Fairchild, in Madison.

Jairus Cassius Fairchild, a New York native, who spends a scant fifteen months in school; becomes a partner of John Brown, the abolitionist; and insists on rising late; yet he becomes one of Wisconsin's leading figures.

Three Fairchild sons are born in Ohio: Cassius, Charles and Lucius. In 1846, the Fairchilds move to Madison, Wisconsin, where Jairus, in 1848, becomes the first State Treasurer and the first mayor of the capital city, Madison. He buys a sawmill up north in the Pinery—with a cranberry marsh attached.

Cassius Fairchild, his father's business manager, is elected a member of the Wisconsin legislature in 1860. In September of that year, J.C. writes to Cassius, who is up on the Yellow River, feeling "oppressed" because "ungovernable rabble" made off with most of that year's cranberry crop. Says father, "We must get along the best we can until we have a fence and house and dog to make a full settlement and occupancy of the ground."

The following month, Fairchild's Madison associate, H.W. Remington, says Cassius should bring down what berries he can. "I can sell a wagonload at three dollars a bushill by pedling them out, a bushill or so, in a place. Your mother wants a bbl. of nice ones for her own use…I hope you will press the making of lumber all you can so as to have, if possible a small fleet to come down with before it freezes up if the [Civil] war will permit."

New Years Eve 1860: J.C. from "Town 21 Range 3," to his wife in Madison: "Everybody up here says that if we ever get a crop of cranberries to grow and can protect them and pick them, we can make more than enough to pay all the outlay of purchasing the lands and erecting the mills."

Cassius: "I think with no bad luck that about the first of April you will see me at Madison, on my way to the Mississippi River, to sell a fleet of lumber to any man or woman that has got the cash to pay for it." But nothing is easy on the northern frontier. The Fairchilds, especially Charley, clash with powerful

local families: Neeves of Grand Rapids and Hiles of Dexterville. Charley tells his mother he will depart quickly if danger erupts because his life is "worth infinitely more than all the cranberries in Christendom."

While barrels are being constructed, the crop continues to be picked, cleaned, cured and stored. "The risk of trespassers has entirely stopped so that we shall complete the fall work in peace," says Charley, figuring 1,200 barrels have been gathered.

"We have lost a great many berries by letting the land to shares but…if I had not insisted on the share pickers being let in and allowed to pick the berries as quickly as possible and take as many of them as we could get from our share, we should probably have had them all stolen from us by outsiders like Hiles."

Charley estimates that the expense of keeping back "the rush of outsiders," building roads, and suing Hiles, will not exceed $700. With the crop selling at the sawmill for $1 per bushel, he predicts a profit.

Visiting his properties, J.C. Fairchild writes from "Dexter," that he hopes to take some berries on rafts of lumber to the "railway" and make "a few thousand dollars." That is, if they are sold immediately and do not have to be stored in bins, where they will shrink or worse, freeze and be rendered instantly worthless.

About that time, Charley's brother, Cassius, receives a major's commission in the 16th Wisconsin volunteers of the Union army and prepares to leave the bog behind. "I think he will like that kind of life much better than he did pine logs, oxen bob sleds, steam mills & Remington," opines Charley.

As the family considers closing out its Pinery properties, Charley ruminates on the purchase for a female acquaintance of a pair of gloves made by an Indian woman.

"They'll be yellow and perhaps so unique that she won't wear them, but they will smack of the woods and my present life" in what he calls the "Hotel de Cranberry Swamp."

But first comes the complaint of September 1861 against George Hiles and Co. for unauthorized harvesting of the Fairchild berries. Attempting to "replevin" the berries, in company with an officer of the law, Charles Fairchild fires five shots in the direction of Hiles, presumably in Hiles' own company town of Dexterville, Wisconsin. When Charley and the officer with him are arrested and taken to Grand Rapids, they counter with a complaint against Hiles and others for resisting them in the discharge of their duty. Hiles continues to attempt to incarcerate Charley for assault.

"The justice before whom the case was tried was owned by Hiles," Charley writes as he makes plans to skip from the Portage County seat of Plover for Madison and then leave the state.

In February 1862, Charley, in Chicago checking on cranberry prices (retail $2.50 per barrel), must cross the street to dodge Sam Hiles. "I am running not because I fear conviction but because I dread being dragged around in attendance upon courts for six months or a year," he tells his mother.

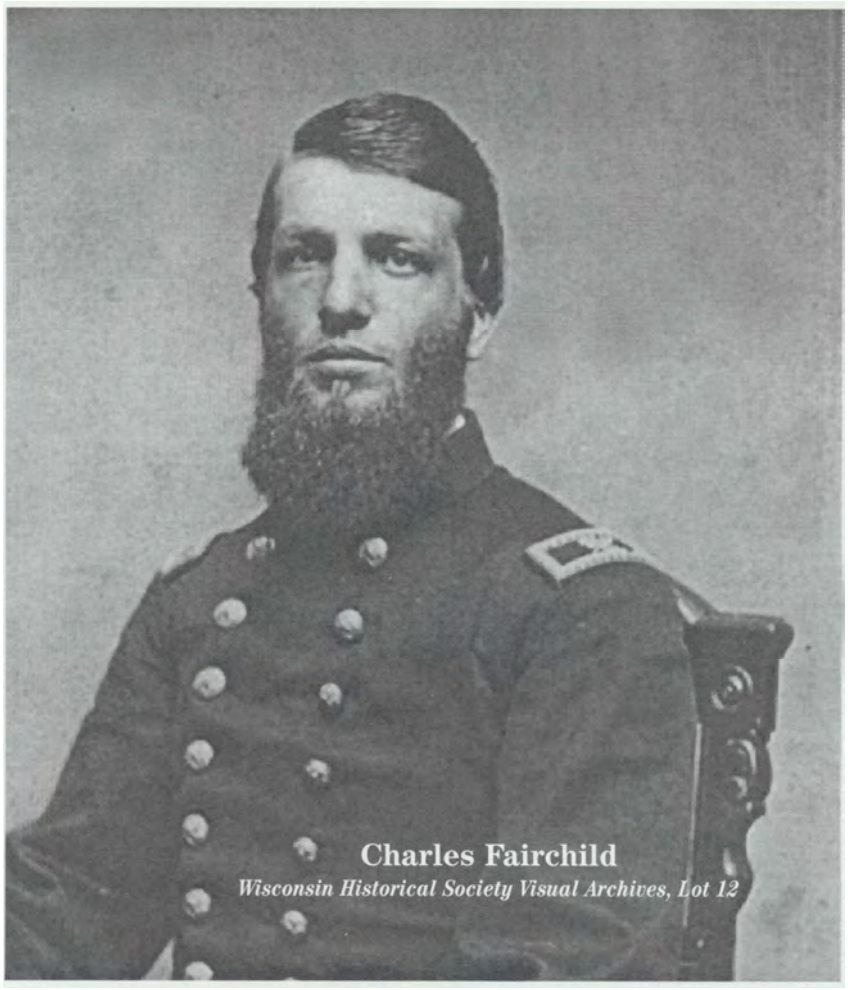
His father, says Charley, means to close out "the Northern enterprise" and devote himself entirely to his affairs at Madison. In spring, their enemies, Remington and Hiles, intend to run the Fairchild lumber to sale but the cranberries themselves by then are of little value, having frozen and spoiled.

April 1862: Cassius is wounded at the battle of Shiloh. After recuperating at the family home in Madison in the bedroom adjacent to his ailing father, he returns to battle (dying after the war from the reopening of the original wound). The father, J.C. Fairchild, succumbs on July 18, 1862.

Still on the lam, now from a grand jury indictment for assault with intent to kill, Charley enlists in the U.S. Army but resigns to seek a better appointment with the Navy. Among his assignments is the armored gunship, *Monitor*.

The youngest brother, Lucius, who loses his left arm with the Iron Brigade at Gettysburg, is about to become governor of the state of Wisconsin, where, among other accomplishments, he will be active in building the Wisconsin State Historical Library.

In 1863, all the Fairchilds have checked out of the Hotel de Cranberry Swamp.



Charles Fairchild
Wisconsin Historical Society Visual Archives, Lot 12

Cable plow and hand planting at Kruschke's, Berlin. (See p. 88.)
South Wood County Historical Corp.

Berlin 1860-71

Trade in wild cranberries in and around Grand Rapids is well underway when, 60 miles to the southeast, near Berlin, Wisconsin, a bigger "boom" sounds.

Like Wood County, Green Lake and Waushara counties are made up of land that had been the bed of an Ice Age lake. As in the northern moors, cranberries have been coin of the realm, first realized by the opportunistic inhabitant who plucks the harvest as it comes and then by the Anglo-American immigrant, who almost immediately begins to modify natural conditions to his benefit.

The concept of commercial growing dates to Barnstable County, Massachusetts, where "Cranberry fever" spread across the Northeast in the 1850s. Hyperbole urged landowners to convert worthless swamps into productive cranberry "yards." Like any pyramid scheme, the sequence is most lucrative to those who got in early.

This and similar early American Eldorados spread east to west, enabled, in many cases, by the extension of "the railroad" to Chicago, and a branch or two beyond. As cranberry chronicler Sherman Whittlesey puts it, "Pioneers were pouring into the new country, towns springing up overnight like mushrooms, real estate booming." His father, Abner, "got the western fever about 1854."

Also moving west is Edward Sacket, originally of Sackets Harbor, New York. Now of Chicago, Sacket invests in a "shaking bog" in the township of Aurora, north of Berlin, Wisconsin.

When most of his cranberry plants are killed by flooding and the intense summer heat that follows, Sacket bears down with Yankee problem-solving powers and the resilience that will become a hallmark of cranberry growers for some time to come. He begins by clearing brush, building dams and digging ditches.

Sacket's efforts rewarded, production increases. In 1865, a thousand 100-pound barrels of berries are shipped by train and sold for about $15 per bbl. When Edward Sacket dies in 1866 on a trip to Chicago to sell cranberries, his sons, Hobart S., Frederick W., and George B., of the Sacket and Fitch bank, carry on.

Growers such as Sacket, often influential merchants and industrialists, are quick to secure special privileges, most notably an act passed in 1867 that states, "It shall be lawful for any person or persons owning or occupying lands within this state adapted to the culture or growing of cranberries, to build and erect, keep up and maintain such dam or dams upon and across any stream, ditch, sluice, slough or any other body of water, as shall be necessary for the purpose of flowing said marsh land."

By 1869, the Sacket marsh produces a $70,000 crop. *Berlin Courant:* "Cranberry picking has commenced in this locality, and every available man, woman and child has been set to work by the cranberry men." Payment is "six

shillings" per bushel. A good woman can pick from three to five bushels per day.

According to the *Courant*, when grower H.S. Sacket calls, "Come up!" the able-bodied men, women and children of his 400-picker crew rush forward to receive their pay—leaving the weak, lame and old to the rear. Then, most of the pickers "plod back" to Berlin, same as they "tramped down" in the morning, a distance of four or five miles.

The next Berlin-area marsh of value is that of the Careys, producing its first crop in 1868 and reaching a production high in 1872 of 10,000 barrels. Other area speculator-growers are: Mason & Ruddock; Mather, Heazlett & Henderson; Heazlett, Ruddock, Mather & Smith; Floyd & Bellis; Lloyd King; Kimball, Warner & Mather; J.D. Walters; Ruddock, Mason & Co.

A November 1870 *Courant* diagnoses "Cranberries on the Brain." The outcome of this kind of brain fever can be beneficial. The Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad ships thousands of barrels of cranberries from Berlin station and local businesses enjoy a positive cash flow.

Courant: "Large quantities of swamp and marsh lands, that have heretofore been considered worthless, have been purchased in the adjoining towns, and are now being put in condition for growing this fruit; and as they prove to be natural cranberry lands, these thousands of acres heretofore neglected, will prove to be of greater value than any other lands and to the owners, with proper management, a source of wealth, adding largely to the business of our thriving city."

During five years of "magical" development by "cultivators," the "breadth of land in cultivation" has dramatically increased. It is now selling at $100-300 per acre.

In 1871, *Cranberry Lands and Cranberry Growing Near Berlin, Wisconsin,* written by G.N. Smith, is published by Smith & Hathorn, Berlin, and printed by Blackstone & Arnold. "We have before us a market, the limitless West, with its rapid growth of population…also the cities of the South as well as those lying along the great highway to the Pacific."

Not coincidentally, Smith and Hathorn are ready, willing and able to buy and sell cranberry lands, machines and equipment.

Andrew Searls: "We had all heard of the immense crops of berries grown in the Berlin district without any great outlay of money, only a few ditches to be dug and some patient waiting." But there is a problem: Berlin area land has been pretty much taken up by 1870.

Adventurous eyes look toward the frontier of western and northern Wisconsin—the Pinery. Berlin is the nearest railroad connection for north woods lumbermen and many loads of provisions and feed leave every day.

A joint stock company is formed to purchase and improve a large tract of cranberry land somewhere to the northwest of Berlin. "It is expected to throw Aurora completely in the shade in the course of a few years," says the *Courant*. "Several old cranberry men and some amateurs, are concerned in the plot."

However, the "Cranberry Company" returns this time without purchasing any promising land. "They found plenty of it – too plenty."

Wood County 1870

Of the central Wisconsin cranberry moors:
"The whole country there was one vast uninhabited wilderness of wet, level, open marsh of spongy peat soil of two to twenty feet depth, interspersed with islands of two and two hundred acres of higher and harder sandy land covered with pine forest, tamarack and tangled brush shading off to the wider 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." *Sherman Newell Whittlesey*.

The great Ice Age swamp of Jackson, Juneau and Monroe counties. And Wood, of which Grand Rapids/Centralia is the hub, with a population of 3,300 and a state tax assessment of under $1 million—a third of Berlin's Green Lake County population and one-seventh of Green Lake county assessment value.

Wood County Reporter, November 9, 1870: "Several parties from Berlin and vicinity have been exploring the southern part of this county for the purpose of entering [filing claim to] the marsh and with an idea to cultivating cranberries upon it. We have no doubt but that some day this will be as valuable land as we have in the county."

Sherman, the son of Abner Sheldon Whittlesey and Harriet Newell Whittlesey, followed the Eldorado trail west from Unionville, Connecticut, with his family, prior to graduating from Lockport, Illinois, high school in 1867. A year at a Chicago business college, some odd jobs, and soon, with $300 of wages saved and a $500 legacy that "trickled down" from his mother, Sherman, at age 21, feels "quite a capitalist." He is about to set off for Washington Territory to land some big timber on Puget Sound.

But a letter convinces him to join his father at Berlin, Wisconsin, where Sherman finds "a cranberry craze raging because the Carey boys, a family of Irishmen, notoriously barefoot and ragged, had that September gathered from their hitherto almost worthless swamp 10,000 barrels of cranberries and sold them to H.P. Stanley & Sons of South Water Street, Chicago, for $100,000."

Abner purchases 40 acres adjoining Carey's and his son, Sherman, helps him plant vines. Father and son board with John Balch, "an old farmer," who promotes the mother lode: thousands of acres of wild marsh "up north"—as good as that near Berlin and 50-cents rather than 50-dollars per acre. Acting on this tip, Sherman and party, in November 1870, cross the Wisconsin River by ferry near Petenwell Rock. At Necedah, they turn north on a tote road to "Thompson's Landing." There, the Weston, Kingston & Miner lumber company is banking pine to be floated downstream to the company's sawmill at Necedah.

Supposedly to drive deer out where they can be shot, Balch and Thompson, "hardened timber cruisers," send Sherman into an island woods to bark like a dog. "After chasing my bark so far alone—," Whittlesey realizes his guides

have disappeared. He wanders the icy swamp until past midnight, then builds a fire and catches a few winks. An overnight snowfall allows him to view, in the morning, tracks of wolves he says had gathered around him as he slept.

Sherman can see South Bluff and decides to hike to it, arriving cold, famished and wet. But he has been to the swamp and has seen the Eldorado: "vast acres" of cranberry vines and berries under the thin crust of ice. "There kindled in my breast a dream of avarice."

In late 1870, the Whittleseys and John Balch buy ten 40-acre parcels "of this cranberry gamble," in the vicinity of what would be Finley, Wisconsin, expecting a future railroad to provide an outlet to market. In the meantime, if there is a crop of berries, Sherman plans to get Indians to help with the harvest. He will transport the crop to the Yellow River where he can float it to a railroad shipping point further south.

After the winter of 1870-71, "studying cooperage," Whittlesey returns to his homestead with a cook stove, kettles, pans, tin plates, iron knives, forks and spoons, "and we were equipped for business." He begins building ditches, dams, flumes and roadways, setting a pace for his workers nine-and-a-half hours a day. "I required the half hour from eleven-thirty to twelve to get dinner on the table, fried salt pork and flapjacks, frequently potatoes or beans."

Throughout the hot summer, gnats and mosquitoes become unbearable and inescapable. "We smeared our exposed cuticle with axel grease, looked like caricatures and felt worse than we looked. We lived through it and wondered if some sinister motive or mistake could have marred a fair creation with such exquisite tortures."

When Sherman has suffered more than enough and after he has come to despise and distrust his partner, he tries to sell out to Balch. "I wanted just my cash back, throwing into the bargain my summer work and vision of opulence."

Balch not only takes the cash buyout offered but presents another bill for the same amount which he claims represents Sherman's share of expenses. Subsequent frontier justice in a courtroom at Balch's new home town of Necedah, results in Sherman's loss of both land and loot. So much for his first go at the great cranberry gamble. He says, "I was broke—I meditated murder."

The Fever 1870-71

Heavy traffic. On Berlin streets, wagons carrying empty barrels to the marshes and returning loaded with cranberries. The *Berlin Courant* challenges neighboring Ripon, Wisconsin: "Figure on it, Riponites, and see how many acres put into wheat would give a clean profit equal to the net profit on 20,000 barrels of cranberries at $10 per barrel."

The elusive "clean profit." As wild fires burn north and west of Berlin, they wreak havoc in epic proportions in and around Peshtigo, Wisconsin, at the same time the more famous Chicago fire destroys a great number of barrels filled with cranberries that had been shipped from Berlin.

The flames also threaten the life and livelihood of Sherman Whittlesey. The short-term Berlin resident has nothing left from his first foray into the cranberry Eldorado but a box of 24 two-quart tin cans filled with huckleberries he had picked, canned and sealed with pine pitch. At the junction of the Yellow River and Hemlock Creek, he stores the huckleberries with an old one-armed man who promises to keep them until Sherman returns, which he never does.

Where the nag goes is a mystery. A September 1871 *Berlin Courant*, notes that a horse belonging to Abner Whittlesey, when hitched to a stake near Whittlesey's cranberry marsh, breaks loose and starts home for Berlin with the son of Mr. Whittlesey in hot pursuit on foot. The son "keeps track of" the horse all the way to Grand Rapids and is last heard of at Coloma, Wisconsin.

A reward is offered for the horse. The son, presumably, returns on his own.

Balch gave him a rotten deal, Sherman soon relates to old Hank Beatty, a surveyor and timber cruiser who makes a specialty of locating cranberry lands.

Says Beatty, "Stop your sniveling, Bub. I can show you where you can get a cranberry marsh so much better than what you've lost that you'll be glad you lost it."

Much of Wood County can be purchased cheaply under the Swamp Land Grant or for payment of back taxes, according to Beatty. Big lumbermen (Hiles, Arpin, Woodman, Kingston, Severns, Hurlbut, Pitts) have already bought, sold or abandoned thousands of cut over acres and will continue to do so.

A few actual residents have moved to the edge of the wet lands. The federal census for the Wood County township of Seneca shows William Trahern, 44, a lumberman, originally from the District of Columbia, more recently from the town of Oasis, Waushara county. Trahern happens to own some pretty good cranberry land.

Of the other "outsiders" who flock to Trahern's neighborhood for cranberries, resident Edmund P. Arpin mentions, as first comers, the Whittleseys, Ralph Smith and Theodore Bearss, all of Berlin.

After Sherman and Beatty pass through a patch of nice-looking berries owned by Beatty, the timber cruiser, equipped with a compass and chain, runs lines for six forties in sections 3 and 4, Township 21 North and Range 4 East. With legal description in hand, the Berliners "walk, wade and wallow" west to a general store at Remington, where they can file a claim. There, H.W. Remington questions them a little too sharply.

So Beatty and Whittlesey do not file at Remington. Instead, they hurry south to the state capital at Madison to secure title, with financing from Sherman's father. It seems suspicions are justified. Remington's application for the same lands arrives by mail the following day. The Whittlesey purchase of six forties is made in July 1871.

Sherman's father stakes him the necessary supplies, which are purchased at Necedah: a yoke of oxen, a wagon, a load of lumber, ditching tools, hammer and saw, and cut nails. With his brother, Henry, a druggist by trade, Sherman arrives at the high ground of his "island" and is surprised to find several men

camped there. Throughout the night, he can hear a wagon at work and at daylight hurries to his best berry patch. The harvest has already been reaped.

Sherman follows a fresh wagon track about a mile east, across Cranberry Creek, and finds, seated atop 100 two-bushel sacks of cranberries, Wilkes Lewis—with a gun in his hand.

Lewis operates under the old scheme. Until now, the moors have been open land and cranberries belong to anyone with the gumption to gather them. "Those who were on my land thought I was trying to bluff them off when I said that I had bought it," says Sherman.

Sherman watches the three or four wagon loads depart for Berlin and determines to pass them on the way, so he can "replevin and recover" the berries at Berlin. But he reconsiders, not wanting to be burned out in revenge. Instead, he hires the same thieves to rake the remaining berries for a dollar a bushel, paying some of them $25 a day.

"We built the house, dug some ditches, watched over the patches of cranberries that were left, and all that saved us from being lynched was our lumber and ditching tools, for nobody ever before went into that country with anything but a cranberry rake and a sack."

About that time, in the month of October, according to Sherman, Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicks over the lantern in Chicago. Something similar happens at Sherman's homestead. It starts with a marsh fire to the west. A west wind blows and smoke darkens the heavens with ominous portents.

He and brother Henry clear a circle of brush around the cabin and locate all personal property inside the "charmed circle." Then they stick Beatty in the well, where he stands in three feet of water, his head barely in sight above the surface. Beatty dips water furiously as Henry and Sherman grab the pails and throw water on the fire and on themselves as needed.

The moss chinking and the pine board roof of the cabin both catch fire frequently and the paint on the wagon blisters off, but the building is saved.

Thankfully, the marsh itself is damp enough that only the grass on top burns. The cranberry vine tips are singed, however; the next year's crop is ruined and maybe more after that. "But we were young and could afford to wait."

After the end of the season, the three Whittleseys return from Wood County to Berlin. Having got a paying yield of berries the first year of its "cultivation," Abner tells the *Courant* he believes he has a potential fortune in the marsh.

He says his sons intend to return to Wood County in a few weeks to get out lumber to fence in a quarter section taken up under the homestead act. It is Abner's intention to go into stock raising, considering the large amount of "grass marsh" in that locality.

Chronicling the cranberry craze is Dodge P. Blackstone, a former teacher and scholar of Herkimer, New York, and now editor of the *Berlin Courant*. With Berlin's ex-mayor "Warner," he travels west to Neshkoro, Wisconsin, concluding tongue-in-cheek that it is tip-top property for speculation but only if

customers for resale are already available—a practice he compares to selling building lots in the ocean.

"There is doubtless a good deal of valuable cranberry land in Wisconsin, and as much more called such that is almost valueless. If a man desires such for cultivation, he should use great discrimination in making a decision."

Editor Blackstone heads for Wood County in October 1871. At Coon's hotel in Wautoma, he asks the way to Grand Rapids. Accompanying the reply: guffaws.

"In search of a cranberry marsh, eh? You are not the first man from Berlin that has inquired the way to Grand Rapids here, and they have lately made a rich harvest for the hotel keepers along the road."

The undercover cranberry seekers make excuses: friends to see or real estate to look after. "But not one of the immense throng had acknowledged symptoms of cranberry fever."

Following suit, Blackstone himself does not divulge his real intention, rationalizing that an editor has to write up matters in which his readers are engaged.

"On what subject could he write that would interest so many readers in Berlin, if the well beaten roads between here and Grand Rapids are any indication. The large amount of business lately done in the office of the Treasury of State, corroborates the testimony from the roads."

At Port Edwards, Blackstone says, he has about ten miles to go to reach the camp of "Mr. Whittlesey of Berlin."

"Real estate agents of this city [Berlin], who had attempted to get on to these marshes and had become so tangled in foot and bewildered on the way that a mud hole, a sand hill, a patch of sage brush, or a good cranberry marsh seemed to be the same thing, told the ink-spatterer that he never would be able to get over this road, across which the late wind-fall left the timber strewn in every direction. The land seeker would soon get confused among the little islands, patches of timber on hard ground so numerous in these marshes."

But, according to Blackstone, a typical traveler abroad on the moor is "not himself." He is "like a woman," imagining bears and wild animals. Blackstone himself has no trouble finding his way through the Wood County swamp, the compass being a "faithful guide" in the hand of him who knows how to use it.

The next day, accompanied by Abner Whittlesey and a surveyor who has lived and traveled over that county seven years, probably Henry Beatty, "a good many lines were traced out and the qualities of the marsh examined." A scattering of pickers is found but the crop has been mostly gathered.

The Indians, Blackstone says, have picked many berries. The government sale of the marsh land will be a great loss to them. "The wigwams of the Indians are scattered through the timber about the marshes. The trails of their ponies are numerous, running hither and thither to the different cranberry patches. They carry their berries to market on their ponies, tying a two-bushel bag to each side of the saddle."

Yes, there is good cranberry marsh in Wood County, Blackstone says, but less than estimated, "and the writer of this has no fears that the business will be overdone from cranberry culture in Adams and Wood counties. The people in these counties have just waked up to the business. The excitement there over it is not less than in Berlin."

He says a cobbler from Berlin goes to a Wood County marsh and tries to employ a resident to hunt up marsh and report back to him. The shyster shoemaker explains that the quality of the marsh is not important; he just wants something to sell. The greediness in Berlin, says Blackstone, is so great that anything called a marsh will sell for ten dollars more than the entering price.

But the prospecting is arduous. "In our trip to Wood County, three nights on the marshes nearly used up a horse, and a man finds himself in not much better condition. Such a trip is a good specific for the cranberry fever. It is useless for a man to deny having that disease if he is seen traveling on the well beaten roads west of Berlin." In fact, among the marshland buyers of 1870 are James A. Biggert, James Macnish and D. P. Blackstone.

Even after their trials, the Whittleseys come out all right. Abner and Sherman sell their crop for $1,500.

"At the end of that eventful year, I could indulge the reflection that I had a better marsh, a best partner, and part of $800, small part, but I was hopeful and happy. We spent the holidays in reunion at Father's home in Berlin."

His only neighbors in 1871, he says, are "Theodore Bearss, a Berlin man of high ideals a mile south of me, and Ralph Smith, a collegian lawyer and secluded gentleman two miles north of me."

●Ralph S. Smith, a native of Schoharie County, New York, attends elementary school among the cranberry marshes of Auroraville, Wisconsin. After three years of Civil War soldiering, he enrolls at Ripon College and soon qualifies as a lawyer. His interest in cranberries is reinforced by his lawyer employer, E. E. Browne, who owns several acres of wild marsh near Waupaca, Wisconsin.

Smith wonders, "Why couldn't a man make a living just by growing cranberries?"

He puts that notion into practice when his health fails him and he has to give up the practice of law. Smith and Sherman Whittlesey drive with ox teams from Berlin to Wood County, where Smith takes up 380 acres of government land in Sections 22 and 27. Five of those acres are planted with vines dug up from adjacent wild land.

●Also from New York State, the Jerald and Fredericka Ohlmsdahl Potter family settles in Wisconsin. Two of their children, Jerome and Melvin Potter, like Smith, attend grade school in Auroraville. They first purchase a plot of snow-covered cranberry vines near Wautoma, Wisconsin, that proves worthless. They also work for the Berlin jeweler, D.R. Burr, on his cranberry land.

●Cultivation of cranberries in Wood County was instigated previously by Reuben Lyon and Emanuel Dutruit, who ditched and irrigated several sections of marsh just north of Centralia, hyper-valued at $50,000-100,000.

The *Wood County Reporter* of September 7, 1871: "Ever since the settlement of our County, the cranberry in its native growth has been an important item in the trade and commercial business of the county, and with each year's product, our people acquainted with the nature of the fruit, and the requisites of a bountiful crop, have predicted that the time would come when the cranberry would be as much, and as successfully cultivated in Wood Co., as in any section of the United States.

"We expect to see in a few years all the available marsh land which has been considered valueless, made valuable, and consequently a vast source of profit and wealth, either directly or indirectly, to our County."

It could be a Whittlesey to whom the *Reporter* refers in November 1871: "Several parties from Berlin and vicinity have been exploring the southern part of this county for the purpose of entering the marshland with an idea to cultivating cranberries upon it." Among the early buyers is Augustus G. Cary, who purchases several parcels for Berlin's Biggert & Macnish.

George Wood: "About 1871, my father and an attorney, Levi. P. Powers, now deceased, of this city, commenced to cultivate the wild cranberry marshes running from the Wood road and west of the Lutheran Church northwest to Lynn creek [at Nekoosa]. They built a house and dug a ditch from the river where the paper mill now is up to the Lynn creek and built a dam across the creek to turn the water down the ditch. Powers and Wood leased a part of the marsh of Mr. Strong. This cranberry venture was not a success as fire destroyed the marsh and buildings and the venture was finally given up. I worked on the marsh several seasons at that time."

"In 1871 when we commenced operations to build the cranberry marsh we found a very substantial beaver dam…Nearly all the land in the extensive wood yard of the Paper Company and west of the Lutheran Church was where we picked our cranberries."

●John A. Gaynor arrives in Grand Rapids, upon graduating from the University of Wisconsin, as principal of the Union high school.

●H.W. Remington enlists the support of Judge L.P. Powers, John Rablin, Seth Rivers, R.C. Lyon and John Edwards in establishing the Wisconsin Valley Railroad.

Wood County 1872

Jelly.

In Berlin, Capt. A. Tyler experiments with the manufacture of cranberry preserves. No fruit is better adapted to supply the acid essential to good health than the cranberry, Berliners agree, with enthusiasm born of self-interest.

There are a lot of berries to promote. This is the year of the biggest crop in Berlin's history, 35,000 barrels shipped over the "St. Paul" railroad. The

Courant suggests rival Riponites change "stale appellations" of Berlin as "Huckleberry Town" and "Huckleberry Train" to "Cranberry Town" and "Cranberry Train."

Will the cranberry craze be overdone? So wonders the *Milwaukee Journal*.

Not likely. The amount of available land has been overestimated, argues the *Courant*. All the cranberries that can be produced in Wisconsin undoubtedly will continue to find a ready market at a good paying price.

●Sherman Whittlesey and his brother, Henry, depart Berlin on January 1, 1872, with a pair of horses, heavy bobsleds and a large wagon load of feed and tools for their winter's use. They are going to cut logs and poles on Green Grove Island, future site of the "Bennett" schoolhouse, and haul the timber to their farmstead for log buildings and pole fences.

At Green Grove, Johnny Greeno, already logging, gives the Whittleseys all the small Norway trees they want. They drive the logs to Trahern's sawmill which, Sherman says, cheerfully, is "denuding that region of its pine trees." After an overnight stay at Trahern's, Sherman purchases lumber for a shack with six-foot sides and a gable roof. He wants to move his home site to "high, dry land, that we could get away from or get to easily and on a trot from the outside world." Built in a day, the shanty accommodates horses on one side and humans on the other.

Continuing to cut timber, by March the Whittleseys have accumulated a pile of logs and tamarack poles they can't see over. They take a few days off to drive home to Berlin. When they return to the prospective home site, they find the ground bare and black, the house and jack pine grove burned and the pile of logs and poles in ashes.

"We were still young, though growing older and wiser. We abandoned our halfway homestead idea and concentrated on production and development of the cranberry marsh and a passable road to it." There is a lingering question, says Sherman, "whether I were wasting the flower of my life in that benighted place."

Besides Ralph Smith and Theodore Bearss, Sherman has named others who join him in the "cranberry Eldorado" of Wood County: William Skeel, a wagon plant operator who brings his vines with him; the Warner boys of Pine River, brothers-in-laws of J.T. Bearss; Dayton R. Burr; and "Biggert and McNish and Kendall and Blackstone," all from Berlin, "the plague's center."

In May, *Courant* editor D.P. Blackstone leaves his Berlin office for Wood County in a two-horse lumber rig loaded with a barrel of crackers, half a barrel of fish, pork, hams, sugar, eggs, canned fruits, oysters, lobsters, sardines, salmon, bottles of "the invigorator of life," a transit, and level instruments boxed in carpet bags. The load is topped up with sacks of oats and a transit tripod projecting above all.

Occupants of the high spring seat are: Abner Whittlesey; Whittlesey's son Henry; and Blackstone. Getting past Plainfield and "Little Pinery," the wagon overtakes an ox team loaded with farming implements for the Whittlesey

homestead, already three days out of Berlin—with Sherman Whittlesey at the helm.

In Grand Rapids, the entourage calls on L.P. Powers, president of the "Grand Rapids & Tomah RR" (to be known as the Wisconsin Valley line), who feels confident the railroad will be built that summer. Blackstone obtains field notes from Powers for surveys made on the marsh. "Our" property, he says, is crossed on the east by Cranberry Creek. In the southwest, Little Cranberry Creek arises. By the corner of the "Whittlesey Homestead," an opening three rods in width has been cut through timber for the railroad.

On the way from Centralia to the marsh, Blackstone's crew must lead the oxen across a flooded Moccasin Creek. The Whittlesey boys man the forward end of the wagon, wielding cudgels to control the oxen. Abner uses a long punching stick to whip the wagon across.

Blackstone is damp, cold and, most of all, in haste to get to the end of the journey, when Abner suddenly jumps from the wagon, shouting, "Game!" as he and the dog make for the bushes. A startled Blackstone thinks the emergency "demands a bear" but the result is one chewed-up squirrel meant to satisfy four hungry men.

Blackstone and Sherman W. spend most of the next day surveying, in water from six inches to three feet in depth covering a "shaky marsh which frequently gives way and allows one to sink into an almost bottomless depth of soft muck." On the last day of his tour, Blackstone removes useless boots and socks and continues "partially in a state of nature."

Blackstone refers to an 800-acre marsh owned by Biggert & McNish of Berlin. Among the first investors on the Wood County cranberry moor, they are dealers in agricultural machinery who advertise in Blackstone's newspaper, the *Berlin Courant.* Their land is north of Blackstone's and enjoys the "same advantages of overflowage and drainage." The previous year, "hundreds of bushels" were picked and the prospects are good.

When his brother, Henry, quits to return to the pharmacy game, Sherman Whittlesey is left isolated with "this wild, wet gamble with nature in the rough" from April until November, except for rare intervals in which his father, mother or sister visit. And the day his Aunt Emily Wadsworth and little cousin Alice from Chicago walk in on him. "I have always figured that Aunt Emily must have loved me a lot to take all that grief to visit me. She was a distinguished, lovely woman."

●Another early cranberry man is William C. Trahern, a landowner at "Elm Lake," in Seneca township. Most of his living comes from hauling lumber from his sawmill across country to the Wisconsin River at Point Basse, to be sawn or shipped downstream.

Wood County Reporter: "Mr. Wm. Trahern of Seneca has been from time to time importing suspicious looking castings—heavy and ponderous, and taking the same into his mill; and now the truth flashes upon us that Mr. T. has established a factory for making barrels, which is another industry that will

prove of immense benefit to the County. M. Trahern's Cranberry interests alone, will make a large demand on the manufacturing capacity of the Factory."

Trahern's prospects are propitious. A gang of hands are at work grading the Green Bay & Lake Pepin Railway between Grand Rapids/Centralia and Dexterville. It will pass through his property.

In September, Trahern has brought in pickers and they are busy. *Reporter*: "Mr. Trahern will have over a thousand barrels, and has already about a thousand barrels gathered. The other marshes are being picked over with all possible dispatch."

The *Reporter* counts 100 cranberry barrels standing by the Rablin House hotel barn in Grand Rapids. Some rascal has stolen six full barrels belonging to Trahern that were to have been shipped to bigger markets from Stevens Point.

●With pickers hard to find, some growers panic and offer $1.05 per bushel plus board just for picking cranberries that have been known to sell for $1.25 and even less. "Let us ask these crazy men: Where are your profits?" says the *Grand Rapids Tribune*.

●Emanuel Dutruit stops in the *Reporter* office to give the editor a stem of cranberry vine bearing over a hundred berries, picked on the Lyon & Dutruit marsh north of Centralia. "The culture of the cranberries is indeed becoming a business of moment in Wood County," concludes the editor.

Lyon & Dutruit, who have expended large sums of money for canals and water control, have about 130 pickers who gather 2,000 bushels that year. A visitor from the *Reporter* passes along a canal bank for two miles, turns west for another mile along another canal, then traverses the marsh in various directions, beholding "what we never before saw": thousands of bushels of cranberries in rich profusion growing amid damp grasses, and on mossy knolls in some spots so luxurious it seems as though they must have been emptied upon the ground.

●Way out west at Remington, J.T. Kingston & Co. authorize "Mr. St. Germain" to engage "Indians" in and around the company's farm to pick cranberries. When the pickers arrive at Remington, they are informed by "Mr. McGlynn" that "the company" doesn't want them. He sets them to work for Mr. Remington instead.

When St. Germain arrives, the Indians are informed that McGlynn's statement is not correct and they rally around St. Germain "for whom they have a strong attachment" and propose to depart for other picking grounds. McGlynn and his comrades become so enraged they attack St. Germain, who defends himself with a broken pocket knife.

Responding to the fracas, Wood County Sheriff Compton visits Remington but makes no arrests.

●The first meeting of the reorganized town of Remington is held at the store of H.W. Remington.

●Newcomer J.A. Gaynor, while teaching at Union School, is credited with organizing Grand Rapids High School.

●A crowd of fifty men, mostly Norwegians and Germans, pass through Grand Rapids en route to work on the Green Bay & Lake Pepin railroad. They are engaged in a seventeen mile contract of grading the rail bed west of Dexterville.

●Vine and Amanda Wales, typically New York natives, arrive in Remington where Mr. Wales works as section foreman for the railroad and Mrs. Wales cooks for railroad workers. A practicing nurse, she is often called upon to care for the sick, both whites and Indians.

Mrs. Wales says Indians come in great numbers at the opening of the blueberry season and remain until after the cranberry season during which they are hired as pickers. To her dismay, they camp without asking permission on grounds owned by herself and her husband and pitch tents wherever and whenever they choose.

When an Indian comes to the house and asks for something to eat, Mrs. Wales gives him a piece of bread—without the butter she is saving for the paying boarders.

The Indian asks for butter. She says she has none.

He proceeds to investigate the larder. She points to the door but he is not inclined to leave and, according to her account, she takes him by the nape of the neck and pushes him out of the house.

After the harvest, she says, the Indians "fold their tents and silently steal away."

Railroad Rivalry 1873

Not until after the Civil War does the Wisconsin Central railroad reach the Wisconsin River—at Stevens Point. But investors are taking aim at the rest of central Wisconsin.

"Railroad rivalry was rife and first we knew the Green Bay & Western had built a line across our cranberry kingdom from east to west," says Sherman Whittlesey. Then dubbed Green Bay & Lake Pepin Railway, it reaches Grand Rapids/Centralia in 1872 and continues to be built westward toward Winona, Minnesota. A convenient medium for shipping berries and a better way to town, the Green Bay train initially puts stops at Walker Station and Elm Lake Station. As a result, Elm Lake post office is established on April 15, 1873, in southwest section 14, T22N, R4E, with William C. Trahern as postmaster. That year, Trahern marries, as his second wife, Matilda Tennant, 40.

●Trahern's newly-arrived neighbors are Jacob and Andrew Searls. Their father, Samuel Searls, a native of Duchess County, New York, and their mother, Hannah, had come earlier to Necedah, Wisconsin, looking for land upon which to grow wheat. Unsuccessful in that search, the Searls family, in 1857, moves to Oasis township, Waushara County, the former home of Trahern.

Andrew and Jacob strike out from their father's farm to get a job. In Grand Rapids, they hire on with a railroad gang, cutting pilings for bridges. They save their earnings to buy 80 acres along the right of way, which will then divide

their holdings. Walker Station, named for a railroad man, is located on their premises.

Andrew Searls: "After cutting a few ditches to put our first venture under way, we bought a farm to put in our spare time, for of course, there must be a lot of spare time.

"After a couple of years of waiting for our cranberry venture to get well under way, coming up every fall to harvest our berries, for we had a few patches of wild cranberry vines upon our land, and being regularly disappointed in the harvest, we looked about to see what was the matter.

"We realized that we did not have enough cranberry vines to produce much of a crop; that we must plant vines, or buy more land with cranberry vines already growing upon it; so we bought more land and cut more ditches and built more dams, and planted vines." The method of planting: select a piece of marsh free from brush or trees, gather some wild vines and stamp or "stomp" them into the ground, hoping they will grow.

●As one anecdote has it, W.C. Trahern buys a three-wheeled handcar to travel between Walker station and Grand Rapids. Older than the average cranberry man, his hearing is not so good, which the rail men quickly learn; so, for fun, they bring the slow-moving locomotive close behind him and pull the whistle cord.

Startled, Trahern looks over his shoulder, sees the locomotive and tumbles off the velocipede. The jokesters stop the train and apologize but the incident troubles Trahern so much he decides to sell that piece of land to Jacob and Andrew.

●About the time the Green Bay & Lake Pepin comes through, several lumbermen at Grand Rapids organize the Wisconsin Valley railroad. Its primary purpose is to connect the adjacent lumber region with markets in Iowa and Minnesota but cranberries will be a welcome seasonal supplement. Its track will be south of and parallel to the Green Bay road, stopping briefly at a side track and station at the Bearss' marsh.

Grand Rapids judge L. P. Powers, frequent cranberry speculator, is chosen Wisconsin Valley president. According to Sherman Whittlesey, "H.W. Remington built the Wisconsin Valley railroad that year from Tomah to Centralia, passing within one mile of our place and giving us a fine shipping outlet for our cranberries and inlet for pickers and supplies. We began to feel contact with a developing outside world."

The Valley road is graded by the fall of 1872, but the planners don't have the means to finish the job. A contract is made with James F. Joy of Detroit, through which Joy furnishes capital to "iron" the road with track and equip it with rolling stock—trains. Consequently, Joy's name is prominent on Wood County plat maps. Dexterville lumber king George Hiles is involved in both the Green Bay & Lake Pepin and the Wisconsin Valley railroads, in part as a local contractor for construction.

●Remington post office is established on the Valley line, west of the cranberry moors, named for H.W. Remington.

●The John Arpin lumber company of Grand Rapids buys land between the Green Bay and Valley railroads. The founder, John Baptiste Arpin, had come to Wisconsin from Quebec with his twin brother, Antoine, in 1848, but left for the California gold rush. Upon John's return, the brothers engage in logging along the Wisconsin and Yellow rivers, assisted by John's many sons.

Some of the Arpin cranberry land is purchased from the familiar surveyor Hank Beatty, who sometimes boards with members of the Arpin family.

●Also arriving in 1873 is Asa C. Bennett of Appleton, Wisconsin, a salesman for Compton & Brooks crockery who travels via the Green Bay railroad. At Dexterville, the story goes, Jim Hiles sells Bennett 40 acres along the railroad for a reported $500. If accurate, the price is considerably higher than the 50 cents per acre a Berlin farmer had quoted S.N. Whittlesey in 1870. Bennett's deed for Section 27 east of City Point and Dexterville shows that Bennett, of Appleton, pays $200 to Thomas Brody of Otsego, Columbia Co., for 40 acres.

Getting rich in the Eldorado is a little more complicated than Bennett had thought. "Whoever goes into the cranberry business," he concludes, "needs a well filled pocket book, an empty skull and a magnifying glass. His pocket book will soon be empty and he will need the empty skull to put his experience into and magnifying glass to find where his money went."

As he rides the Green Bay line selling crockery, Bennett dickers with grocers along the way. Later, he receives orders via postcards for a barrel or two, maybe three.

The Bennett family had emigrated from Victor, Ontario County, New York. Asa had been born in the same house as his son, Arthur Ervin. In 1868, the family moved west, first to Iowa, then to Kansas, and, in 1872, to Appleton, Wisconsin, where Arthur E. graduates from high school.

●The cranberry crop of 1873, promised to be immense, is threatened in July by "scalding." "The extreme heat, together with unlimited rainfalls, are threatening, if not the destruction of, at least a very material damage to the whole crop," warns the *Wood County Reporter*. If it's not fire, it's ice. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* of September 7 says severe frost has "destroyed" the cranberry crop in Juneau and Wood counties, causing a loss of $750,000.

The *Sentinel* notes that the remoteness of the marshes always causes loss of much of the crop because of the difficulties in getting pickers in and berries out, though the problem has been mitigated by the building of the Green Bay and Valley railroads.

D. Bearss & Son solicits 500 pickers at $1 per bushel, offering good accommodations and provisions "at Grand Rapids prices" rather than the usual inflated on site version. *Wood County Reporter*: "Cranberry picking has commenced and hired girls are as scarce as timber on a prairie." Just as sparse are newspaper workers. The *Grand Rapids Tribune* suspends publication when

two compositers absent themselves to the marshes for pickers' bounty. As the 1873 season progresses, frosts ruin much of the crop and suddenly there are too many pickers and not enough berries.

●*Andrew Searls*: "We all bought many good acres, dug many ditches and put in many days of weary waiting only to find we must go farther and do some better thinking than had been done."

●Familiar with the cranberry fields of Auroraville, Jerome and Melvin O. Potter snowshoe to a Berlin general store to meet a cranberry grower, who, to the delight of the cracker barrel philosophers in attendance, sticks a $5 bill into the pot belly stove and lights a cigar with it. The wide-eyed Potter boys decide they better get into the business.

Unsuccessful in their first attempt at starting a commercial cranberry property in Waushara County, they head north into the Pinery. For several years, they work as lumberjacks in winter and in spring hire on to log drives down the Wisconsin River.

A family story tells of them riding up on the railroad to City Point, where a salesman wants to show "better land at a cheaper price." In a hot train car, the orator takes off his shoes and later, can't find them and has to deliver his spiel in bare feet.

In November, 1873, Jerome and Melvin, still of Waushara County, buy land from George Maertell of Necedah in the City Point area.

●H. Floyd, Berlin, chronicles "cranberry culture" from 1849 forward in *Transactions* of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society. He discusses the system as practiced in the area of Berlin.

"The results following the improvements on the Sacket marsh stimulated all parties owning cranberry lands to active measures in making improvements, and investing largely in this comparatively new and productive branch of industry."

Floyd recommends "scalping" problem areas of competing vegetation and suggests that he has invented a machine for the purpose, capable of scalping five acres a day.

● About 1873, Ralph S. Smith marries William C. Trahern's daughter, Emma, and records a land purchase on the cranberry moors.

New Fortunes 1874

Grand Rapids Tribune: East of the Remington depot, "we find a small settlement commenced three years ago, by four or five persons, without money or anything to assist them but their hands, courage, pluck and perseverance. What is the result? They dug a few shallow ditches, made a few sod dams, lived in their little cabins and watched their premises.

"Several parties have failed to get crops, owing to negligence or trying of experiments, but I have not been able to find a single case of failure where the parties lived on the land and kept the water on their marshes the proper time in the spring."

No marshes near Remington have been under cultivation for more than three years, according to the *Tribune*. "S. Whittlesey" began three years previous, and made improvements "and has not lived on the premises or watched it with sufficient vigilance, except during picking time," yet Whittlesey in 1874 gathers 550 barrels worth $36,000 on which net income is ten percent, or $3,600. It is stated that the premises cost him less than $700, land included.

It has been two years, says the *Tribune*, since David and Theodore Bearss, father and son, harvested a $400 crop. In 1874, the income is $24,000 from 2,000 barrels, making the Bearss operation worth an estimated $50,000.

The first two Bearss have been joined by N.D. Bearss. The three Bearss, according to the *Tribune*, operate in fine, conservative fashion. They make improvements with their own hands, never incur debts and continue to support their families from the proceeds of the cranberry operation.

The *Tribune* says no other spot can be found that offers so sure and great reward for honest toil. Admits that churches, school houses, good highways, "downy beds of ease &c." are not plentiful but that there are good places to locate them. The dreary, lonesome, desolate and forbidding landscape can have a bright side.

"Were it not so, there would now be no chance here for poor people, new-comers, new homes and new fortunes." He that has ambition, industry, pluck and perseverance can step forward "and he that has money need not tarry behind."

"Let them get their cranberry marshes and other fruit fields, hay and grass lands, corn and hop fields, potato and garden patches. Put them in order, help put up the schoolhouses, churches, bridges, &c., harvest his fruit crops which grow spontaneous and improve by culture, and sell at his door at from $2.50 to $4.00 per bushel, and yield from 50 to 600 bushels per acres, his hops at 30 cents per pound, and breathe free and enjoy life, where every woman and half-grown child can earn more than the strong man elsewhere, during the summer months, and need not lack when sharp winter comes."

The writer happens to mention that H.W. Remington, "formerly of Madison," offers two thousand acres for sale, on easy terms.

One buyer who steps forward is George W. Merrill of Auroraville, the Berlin, Wis., suburb, who buys marsh land in Seneca township, Wood County, and moves up with his immediate family, his wife's parents and other members of her family. A New York state native, he had arrived at Berlin in the 1850s.

By this year, maybe earlier, William Fry Skeel, in partnership with his son-in-law, Edward McIntee, purchases land near Whittlesey's. Yet another New York stater, Skeel has most recently lived in Pine River, Waushara County, where he had operated a wagon plant.

In 1872, Skeel sells his properties in Pine River, buys vines from the nearby Williams marsh and moves to Centralia, where he supplements cranberry culture with work in the wagon shop of F.J. Moore, himself a cranberry grower.

Moore's father, John L. Moore is in the process of improving a 400-acre spread when he dies, in 1873.

A *Grand Rapids Tribune* claims a farm of 100 acres can be worth a fortune to any careful man, particularly if it includes 20 acres of cranberry land: "The yield of cranberries can safely be estimated at from 500-5,000 bushels per year and some years, they are worth as high as $2 per bushel, unpicked."

But isn't there always a catch? Cranberries, like gold, have a way of not panning out. The predations of a "ravenous worm" cut the 1874 crop to a quarter of what is expected. W.C. Trahern has harvested only about 100 barrels when he discharges his pickers, while the good news is that the Bearss bunch has gathered about 2,500 bushels, according to the *Tribune*.

●Centralia. When W.H. Getts and his Mrs. arrive in the closest "civilization" to the cranberry moors, he says the west bank of the river is nothing but a high bank with no road.

The center of town is a big mud hole in which the cows and horses of the neighborhood are often stuck. Deer and bears are abundant and sometimes a wolf strays down from the timber. Cranberries grow abundantly in the village.

Eli and Lorenzo Taylor, who own one of the first teams of horses in Centralia, often travel as far as Janesville with four horses and two wagons loaded with cranberries which grow wild and are so plentiful that thousands of bushels rot on the ground each year.

Good News, Bad News 1875

Love.

Sherman Whittlesey's courtship of Annie Downs is interrupted by travels with his father, Abner.

At Washington D.C., Sherman visits his cousin, Joseph R. Hawley, U.S. Senator from Connecticut, and happens to view President Grant pass by in a horse-drawn carriage.

A funny thing happens when, traveling through South Carolina, Sherman W. is "hypnotized" into buying a 2,000-acre plantation, on which he intends to grow rice. The main house has been burned by General Sherman of the Union army, leaving only two tall brick chimneys.

Failing to hold tidewaters off the fields, despite mighty and prodigious efforts, Sherman tells "the negroes" he must go to Charleston "and for aught I know, they still look for my return." He has only enough money left to get back to Annie in Chicago. Soon they are engaged.

"To be so suddenly and so intimately and so permanently related to such a beautiful, gracious, and gifted woman was a new and rapturous experience." Sherman's marriage to Annie Downs, May 10, 1875, at Hyde Park, Illinois, is reported in the *Courant* as the newlyweds head for a reception in Berlin.

"I guessed that my wife would be happy with my folks and without me, but I guessed wrong. She informed me that she had decided to live with me in Pine

Lodge. That log house that had no floor, nor windows and a door that you must enter endwise because the sill was so high and lintel so low that you could not enter standing up. 'Till then we had been going into that house or stable same as our horses did—head first."

So Sherman raises the roof by shoveling out a foot of earth below, puts in windows, enlarges the doorway and installs a bedroom. He returns to Berlin, starts Sam Beardsley ahead with an ox team loaded with Annie's piano. Sherman and Annie follow in a lumber wagon filled with household necessities pulled by horses down the dusty roads to the Eldorado.

With the two tall pine trees that signal their Pine Lodge home in sight, the wagon gets stuck in Cranberry Creek. As dark falls, Sherman has to leave his bride in the wagon, while he goes for a log chain and lantern, not returning for two hours, finally pulling the wagon out with horses.

It isn't so awfully lonely for Annie at Pine Lodge, with Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Bearss nearby. John Arpin drives over, sometimes leaving his two little boys, Dan and Ermon, with Annie, who sings and plays piano for them. One day, H.W. Remington himself calls, with a contingent of Chicago gentlemen who marvel to see a Chicago girl "broadcasting such harmonies on that desert air."

Unfortunately, after picking and packing season, Annie falls sick. Sherman carries her to Berlin on a bed of hay and feathers laid in the bottom of a wagon box. He leaves her in the care of her "folks" at Berlin and returns to the marsh.

But L.M. Nash, the telegraph operator in Centralia somehow gets a telegram out to Sherman.

Dear Lord, Annie is worse.

So Sherman hires a pair of ponies from Otis Wakely and lights out for Berlin. The feverish pace provokes plenty of mishaps. Sherman injures one horse and wrecks the buggy. He jumps astride the other horse and hurries off toward Berlin.

At the end, he finds Mrs. D.R. Burr standing guard at the bedside. Good news. Annie is much better; but she does not return to the marsh this time, instead lives that winter in Paxton, Illinois, with her parents.

●When the *Courant* begins referring to the Sackets and Careys as "cranberry princes," the *Grand Rapids Tribune* follows suit. It seems that James K. Cary, "the cranberry prince," and his brother, celebrate the Fourth of July on the Wood County marshes, in company with James Gray and A.G. Cary of Green Lake County and Mr. Blackstone of Berlin. "They speak in laudatory terms of our marshes and the improvements already made."

●With typical city slicker slyness, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* correspondent, September 26, 1875, describes the cranberry region between Remington and Centralia. He says the cranberry boom is held in the same regard by his guide as "Rockerfeller's" petroleum boom in Pennsylvania.

The guide points to a building that "narrowly escaped being a shanty" and claims the resident had made $16,000 that year from cranberries. Next, he

points to, with some pride, "about as hopeless a looking piece of swamp as one need wish to see, with three or four squaws still at work picking the acid berry that suggests turkey and Thanksgiving."

●In September 1875, Wood County judge and Grand Rapids entrepreneur L.P. Powers tells the *Chicago Commercial Advertiser* that central Wisconsin contains the widest extent of country in the world suited to cranberry culture—half the swamp covered with cranberry marshes and one fifth "susceptible of" high production.

Yield per acre, anywhere from one to 400 bushels at $3 per bushel. Net profit of 60% adds up to fabulous incomes. Cost of improving and flooding: about $5 per acre. Value of improved marshes through draining: $100-$1,000 per acre.

The soil, Powers believes, is full of seeds that have accumulated for ages. Within two years after flooding, the vines begin to crowd out the native grasses and a carpet of fruit-bearing foliage appears.

The *Advertiser*, in company with Judge Powers and Dr. George Witter, visits the "partly improved" marshes of Lyon & Dutruit and finds promise of a bountiful crop.

"If the great petroleum fields of Pennsylvania and the Virginian City silver lodes are excepted there is no other district in the world, of equal extent, that possesses equal essential value, with this cranberry range of Northern Wisconsin. The wild marshes selling at $10 and $20 per acre today will exchange ownership, many of them at no distant day, at from $500 to $1,500 per acre."

●The most prominent Wood County property is that of the Bearss family. The *Wood County Reporter* of August 1875 features "A Day Among the Cranberries; A Walk Over D. Bearss & Sons Marsh."

"The culture of the cranberry as a staple commodity of commerce is engrossing the attention of people today who a few years ago would have laughed outright at the broaching even of a subject apparently chimerical and void of profit…and we look forward to a time when the bulls and bears upon the [commodities ex-] Change will yell 'cranberries' with all the vehemence of the monied Modocs who now shout 'wheat!'"

"A few years ago," roaming bands of pickers gathered berries wherever they chose and the spoils went to "the fortunate ones who claimed in a sort of freebooter style, the spoils." However, at the time of the writing, it is impossible to find a marsh without a valid owner whose title is recorded. Since the advent of the Wisconsin Valley railroad, the marshes have become dotted with buildings. "The cranberry lands are building them, and settling up the country, which otherwise would be almost barren of population."

Of those properties, "That they will improve is no longer a question. Each year adds to their value. The vines, by proper care, are spreading and running out the wire grass and foreign growth, and, in a short time, the marshes will have become a perfect mat of fruit-producing vines yielding an income which

will be enormous. It is a fact that Wood County will be known ere long as the wealthiest county in the state."

When the journalist travels to the "famous marsh of D. Bearss & Son," thirteen miles "south" of Centralia on the Wisconsin Valley Railroad, he is on board about forty minutes, landing at an improvised station that gives no inkling of the "wealth of beauty" beyond.

Theodore Bearss leads the way to an "island" of somewhat elevated land on which are erected the Bearss' residence and buildings.

"Mr. D. Bearss, with his two sons and their families, selected the marsh, which has since become so famous, in 1870," says the *Reporter*.

Because the marshland is impossible to negotiate by ordinary means, Bearss uses a canal eight fee wide and several miles in length, over which team and wagon, families and household goods are transported in a boat prepared for the purpose. On the east and north boundary lines, Bearss has constructed a dam sufficient to flood his entire marsh at will. A ditch connecting with Cranberry Creek furnishes an unlimited supply of water.

Walking the banks of ditches totaling 12 miles, the *Reporter* describes "a sea of vines suspending millions upon millions of large, glistening berries, some richly green, others just tingeing, and all presenting a sight that was fairly enchanting."

Stepping on the marsh and poking away the vines gives the impression that some careless person had spilled a peck or more, "but the fact is, nature had done the spilling, and we never saw spilling done so evenly. In looking up some of the narrower ditches, straight as a line, the berries seemed hanging in clusters, festooning the slight walls of grass and moss, and looking upon their beauty in the dark waters below."

The crop on the Bearss marsh is estimated at 2,500 barrels and will require 600 pickers, who will be housed in several buildings still under construction. A supply store will be operated by Spafford & Cole of Grand Rapids, and a bakery by Albert L. Grosse of Centralia—as the speculative metropolis develops that is called, by the *Reporter*, "Bearssville."

Berries will be measured on the marsh and carried by wooden railroad to a 66-foot long two-story "house" that would dry the berries in tiers of boxes rather than by spreading and raking as previously. To contain the product, Mr. Root of Tomah is manufacturing 2,500 barrels on site.

South of Bearss & Son proper is the marsh of Newell D. Bearss, son of D. Bearss and brother of Theodore. N.D. Bearss has 100 bearing acres that had yielded 400 barrels the previous year. He is also in the process of erecting buildings on a 25-acre island.

●Good news for 1875. The Eldorado seems to be panning out for the following growers:

Bearss & Son, largest at 1700 bushels; S.A. Spafford, second largest at 1500 bushels; Whittlesey, third largest at 1000; followed by Newell Bearss, Rozell & Sprowl, Biggert & McNish, Gray, Cary, Maxwell, Wood, Phil. Ward, Merrill,

Bennett, Ferguson, Skeels, Pitts Brothers, Frank Hiles, Jim Hiles, G. F. Witter, John Arpin, Lyons & Dutruit and Nash & Brother, who have two marshes.

Bad news. Too much rain.

"Flat marshes have had from four to twelve inches of water upon them, still the girls and boys have persisted in their work, many picking one and two bushels a day." Frost seems to have knocked out corn, buckwheat, vines, late potatoes and…cranberries.

Growers listed and their expected losses:

Lyon & Dutruit, of Centralia/Rudolph, 3,000 barrels. Geo. Hiles, Dexterville, 3,000 barrels. Messrs. Bearss, losing 3,500 of 5,000 barrels.

Lesser losses expected by Gray, Carey & Maxwell; Whittlesey, Joy & Remington; F.J. Wood; John Arpin; Barnes; Ferguson; Biggert & McNish; Blackstone; C.J. Kruger; Trahern; S.A. Spafford; Duncan; Merrill; Phil. Ward; and Geo. Hockenbull.

But wait again. Good news. In September it seems that $200,000 worth of the crop will be saved. "The great cry among cranberry growers is 'pickers wanted.'"

A month later, better news! More cranberries have been picked in Wood County than ever before. On the Arpin marsh, Joseph Lavigne picks 5 ½ bushels in one day, and wagers he could pick six.

To handle the burgeoning produce, the companion industry of barrel making expands. In 1875, Reuben C. Lyon adds coopering tools to his planing mill in Centralia and begins turning out cranberry barrels in quantity.

Bad news! So many cranberries, a glut on the market. "The cry of the growers is 'buyers! buyers!'" John Arpin advertises 1,000 barrels of late-picked cranberries "as the market affords."

Panorama 1876

Thousands of pilgrims travel to the cranberry land, as described in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*: "The depot in Centralia reminded one of Castle Garden [site for processing immigrants, New York City]. The rough chests, sacks and satchels of every conceivable shape and value, and the old and young of both sexes, all clad in the worst garments that could be found, made an interesting study for the observer.

"About 540 tickets were sold at the depot alone on that day. I understand that some families propose closing their houses and boarding at the hotels during the cranberry harvest on account of the scarcity of servant girls, nearly all whom go to the marshes to pick berries for two or three weeks in September."

Two years earlier, a Berlin, Wisconsin, journalist had described a similar scene there: crowds of immigrant and Native American pickers flocking to the Sacket and Carey marshes. "Now the cranberry fever rages and servant girls are a necessity of the past and future," said the *Courant.*

The problem of 1876 in Wood County is fire worm. Marshes along the Green Bay railroad seem to have suffered worst. Those further south and along the Valley line fare better, especially Bearss' Marsh, expecting two to three thousand barrels. A fine lot of berries is also being barreled by John Arpin, says the *Grand Rapids Tribune*: "He has a score of women and youths hand-picking them over and leaving out the unfair berries."

An "enormous crop" is predicted by grower "Judge" L.P. Powers, who explores the "Big Marsh" and places the aggregate value at $200,000. "In a section where, years ago, only small patches of vines existed, now whole 'forties' are covered with them," says the *Grand Rapids Tribune*.

As always, harvest will commence in September and "thousands of pickers" are offered reduced fare on the Wisconsin Valley line. From Bearss station, a three-mile "horse railroad" is being built toward the north to furnish transportation for growers and pickers. Wagons with flanged wheels are run on wooden rails.

About this time, the Arpin marsh begins to yield, expecting 1,200 bushels. John's son, Edmund P., a diarist, is 12 years old. He views a lively crowd of Indians and other pickers congregating at Bearss Marsh.

Gambling is active at night and on Sunday, when visitors come in from the neighboring marshes.

Early one morning, E.P. Arpin hauls a load of cranberries to the station to be unloaded and has to wait several hours. To pass the time, he watches the nearby Indian tents and marvels at the children coming out barefooted, wearing calico dresses, at a time he felt cold in heavy clothes.

●One of the high school teachers of E.P. Arpin is John A. Gaynor. Previously, Gaynor had helped publish the *Waukesha Democrat* newspaper. In 1876, the Gaynor Blackstone Co. is incorporated by James Gaynor, John Gaynor, Judge Chas. M. Webb and George R. Goodwin—on the former Biggert, McNish, Kendall and Blackstone property.

●Charles Kruger from Princeton, Wisconsin, in the vicinity of Berlin, starts his Wood County cranberry marsh.

●Charles Sherman Whittlesey, son of Sherman Newell Whittlesey and Annie Downs, is born. Sherman gathers and sells a fair cranberry crop and just before Thanksgiving, hurries back to Paxton, Illinois, where his new son and wife are living with Annie's family.

●On November 6, 1876, "F.A.J." of the *Berlin Courant* visits the Wood County marshes.

"To the uninitiated, cranberry culture is regarded as a business hedged 'round with mystery, and presenting, save in its profits, but few attractions for the man of capital and energy; yet the Golden God of wealth has furnished the required incentive for the solution of the enigma, and wherever suitable marsh is found, capital and labor are busily engaged in introducing, preparing and cultivating the fruit."

A few years previous, attention was called to the great marshes of Wood County. Men of all grades were infected with the cranberry fever and in a short time the marsh was being reclaimed.

Now, the Wisconsin Valley railroad provides an "outlet" for hay, cranberries and lumber. All land of value has been taken up, the writer believes, and, along the railroad, owners are busy erecting rough shanties and making improvements for the pickers that convene by the hundreds every successful year.

But what is a house here?

A pile of lumber with a cavity in the middle, an old stove, tin dishes, a few rough pine benches and tables, and horse blankets for bedding.

"Grub" consists of pork, potatoes, butter and tea. After supper, all hands, fatigued by a hard day's work, lie around a fire until bedtime, "enlivening fleeting hours with songs and story." "Bye and bye" an unbroken silence settles on the cranberry moor, save for the "melancholy sighing of the wind in the tall pines, keeping their eternal vigil."

There is a recurring problem along the railroad: fires that start when trainmen on the coal-burning locomotives shake grates to remove ashes. Hot coals hitting the ties often bounce into the grass and set fires that sweep over at frequent intervals, destroying vines and making a general wreck of timber, giving a "desolate and uninteresting appearance to the country."

Some of the marshes have ditches and dams sufficiently advanced to draw off the water, says "J" with the whimsy common to cranberry pioneers, "to get the full benefit of the first frost." On those marshes that could not be drained because of inadequate ditching, berries are not injured.

One of the difficulties of running a marsh is that provisions must be hauled from the railroad to the shanties.

"The appearance of two men, human at that, packing eighty heavy cranberry barrels half a mile through the marsh, might arouse an incredulous smile upon an uninterested party; but upon the participants the effect was much different, and the smile was very apt to assume the ghastly character.

"Another scene in the cranberry panorama is hardly more interesting to the actors. The writer of this article, although having spent some years in the pursuit of knowledge, unfortunately neglected to master the Indian character and language in all its complete variations.

"In consequence of which oversight, he labored at great disadvantage in concluding satisfactory bargains with them relative to necessary work. This ignorance was most felt when pay-day came, and a crowd of Indians of all ages, sizes and sexes, ignorant, suspicious and cunning, presented small bills for settlement.

"To those who think the game of life and business is a game the noble Red man does not understand, let me refer life in Wood Co., during the cranberry harvest. Yet they are good pickers, and if watched carefully are indispensable to the cranberry grower and will be for many years to come."

Pickers 1877

For many months, the train station cannot boast the arrival of a single passenger. By contrast, in late August, it brings in hundreds each day, "the chief objective point with pickers for miles around," according to the *Milwaukee Sentinel*.

Bearss Marsh, the "village" that scarcely held the population of a country crossroads, now boasts upwards of 2,000 residents, who seem to represent nearly every part of the globe. They come by rail; they come piled in wagons; on horse back and on foot, each with a bundle of bedding, a trunk and many with a string of cooking utensils. Among them are Potawatomi, Winnebago and Menominee, numbering about 200.

Some pickers are assigned to quarters in "board shanties" or in boarding houses. For the *Sentinel* reporter and many others, nights are spent on the "soft side of a board," mattresses being an unavailable luxury.

At the beginning of the work day, pickers are divided into crews of 25-100, each crew assigned to a certain tract. They are assigned positions two feet apart in a line and required to pick straight ahead with no trespassing right or left.

The pickers come in from work at about 4 p.m. Berries are measured and tickets issued for the amount picked. Tickets are later exchanged for cash or groceries at area stores. One bushel at 75 cents per bushel is an average daily pick.

After "refreshing the inner man" and with darkness gathering round, it's time for fun—the real reason many of those in attendance went cranberry picking.

"Each person who ever drew a fiddle bow is pressed into service, and the dancing begins, in the boarding houses, dry houses, on platforms specially erected and, in fact, in every smooth place…the 'light fantastic' tripped on till the wee small hours; while off in some secluded nook, a brace of gamblers are plying their easy victims with poker, chuckoluck, three-card monte, etc., winning in the one-sided games the earnings of the day."

Whiskey "of the poorest kind" finds ready purchasers at 50 cents or a dollar a pint after dark, causing considerable trouble between Indians and whites. The picking and partying lasts a few days before the camps break up and the marshes, which had teemed with so much life, become "as deserted as a camp-meeting ground in the days of the circuit rider."

That's how it's supposed to go, anyway.

When the berries do not ripen by September 1, some of the growers discharge their pickers, asking them to return in a week. Some trek home in disgust. Others protest.

The *Reporter* of September 6 says the Bearss' marsh is in an uproar. A riot is threatened by the multitude not permitted to pick and party. A Bearss spokesman says he doesn't propose to gather 50,000 bushels of green fruit to

throw away at an expense of $50,000 just to keep the pickers busy. The laid-off pickers, according to the *Reporter*, react "more like a Pittsburgh mob than a gathering of the orderly people of the Pinery who had met to 'pick' and 'turn jack' after dark."

●Other bad news of 1877: fire that plays "sad havoc" with half the marshes in the Wood County district; worms that mount an attack; and, in September, frost that destroys berries on a third of the marshes. Not to mention a disagreeable odor emitted from decaying fish that had come up during high water to breed but had been stranded by an ensuing drought.

●In the early days, they say, when cranberries first become a saleable commodity, the marshes produce two crops per year. In September, comes a crop of cranberry berries and in June, a crop of cranberry babies.

●M.O. Potter and his brother, Jerome, buy land in City Point area in a continuing process.

●In spring, Sherman, Annie and baby Charles Whittlesey travel from Paxton, Illinois, to Berlin and drive a team of horses from Berlin to Pine Lodge. They bring Joe Wier along to make a wagon road more than a mile from the railroad at Cranberry Creek to the house—by hand, with shovels and a sod knife and hook.

In summer, Annie is taken sick again and is sent to Berlin for treatment, this time leaving the baby with Sherman, Joe and the maid, Helda Lewis. After the end of harvest, the Whittleseys ask Albert Abrams to take care of Pine Lodge during the growing and harvesting season and they buy a house in Centralia.

Sherman gets a job at the Coleman Jackson milling company, located directly in front of the Whittlesey house, delivering flour and feed and unloading cars of grain.

1878

Emma dies April 3.

Emma, daughter of William C. Trahern and wife of Ralph Smith.

On May 31, Lottie May.

Lottie May, daughter of Ralph Smith and Emma, who had just died, passes away in the house Ralph, who previously had lived alone in a log cabin, had built for them.

Little Lottie, now buried next to her mother in East Oasis cemetery, Waushara County, Wisconsin. Maybe that's why Ralph Smith serves his term as a lone wolf in the wilderness.

Already buried at East Oasis, the first wife of W.C. Trahern, Prentha A. Trahern. She died February 19, 1871, at age 34.

●Born: twins, Harry Frank and Harriet Frear Whittlesey, to Sherman and Annie. They join brother Charles Sherman, born in 1876.

●Melvin Potter. With his brother, Jerome, he had tried the cranberry game earlier. Now, he gets married and moves, in 1878, to the farming township of Rudolph, north of Centralia.

Melvin's wife is Ada Woodruff of Richford, Waushara County, where Melvin had also lived, while his father ran a farm and taught school at Coloma.

Ada's relative, Nathanial Woodruff, from Richford, Vermont, is credited with naming Richford, Wisconsin. He is also the founder of Southport (Kenosha), Wisconsin. Another relative, Wilford Woodruff, treks west with the Mormons, transporting in his carriage an ailing Brigham Young. Woodruff becomes the fourth president of the church.

●Andrew and Jacob Searls move from Oasis, Waushara County, to Wood County, to improve the cranberry land they had purchased in 1873.

Andrew relates that neighbor R.S. Smith had read a book on cranberry culture and advocates surfacing the marsh before planting. Smith is regarded as the first in Wood County to "scalp" existing vegetation and to spread sand on bogs.

The method of transporting the harvest on the Searls' "plantation": crates are placed in a boat, which is pulled by a horse to the warehouse. A rail track takes the berries to the Green Bay & Western siding at Walker Station. Because the siding is on the far side of the tracks, the berries must be carried over in crates or rolled in barrels.

●Sherman Whittlesey buys Archie Weaver's half interest in the stock and store of Frank Garrison, east of the Bank of Grand Rapids.

This greatly pleases Mrs. Whittlesey. A dry goods department is added at which she and Mrs. Garrison are enlisted as saleswomen. George M. Hill continues his employment as clerk [and will become an owner in G.M. Hill & Co. and Johnson & Hill Co.]. Sherman quits teaming for the grist mill.

●C.T. Purdy and John Gaynor publish a map of Wood County [see page 4] as an aid in buying and selling of land. Prominently shown, crossing the cranberry moors, are the Green Bay and Wisconsin Valley railroads. A wagon road connects Port Edwards with Bearss Station and, further west, Remington Station on the Yellow River. The only land owner of the cranberry district named is Robert A. Campbell, another import from Green Lake County.

1879

Shot and killed. John A. Gaynor's partner, Henry Hayden, on Cranberry Street, Centralia, by W.H Cochran, a jealous husband. Gaynor replaces Hayden with George R. Gardner. Gaynor is elected district attorney of Wood County.

●Jerome Potter marries Martha Trahern, daughter of William.

●George Baird McMillan, Civil War veteran, Republican, Great Plains farmer and Saxeville, Wisconsin, businessman, takes over the marsh owned by his brother, Daniel, who heads west and doesn't look back. George doesn't marry but lives with the Archie McMillan family.

The McMillans came west more recently from New York but were born in England. Because Archie McMillan as a boy was kicked by a horse, he has

always been crippled. During surgery at Manchester, England, Archie was one of the first patients to whom ether was administered.

Previously a prominent Saxeville farmer, Archie buys a partnership in a Wood County cranberry marsh.

●A plat for the village of Bearss Marsh in Port Edwards Township is surveyed January 16, 1879, by E. Newman, under the direction of J.T. Bearss and Philip Alexander.

Described as the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 9, Town 21 N, Range 4 E., "Bearss Station" is the nearest point on the Wisconsin Valley line for shipment of cranberries from the Bearss family marshes.

●Dexterville reports only a small crop of good berries due to the many heavy frosts during the season. Some of the best are from the S. Hiles marsh and that of "Mr. Maynard" of Oshkosh, who, for the season, pitches a tent a mile from the depot.

The crop of 1879 is generally considered a failure. Some growers try lighting fires at intervals along the dikes to prevent freezing but quality is poor.

"Those who have good berries and a fair yield are elated, you bet," says the *Grand Rapids Tribune*.

Census 1880

Americans, English, French, Germans, Scandinavians, Indians, and some we would call a conglomeration of all nationalities.

Every train brings to Grand Rapids cranberry pickers by the dozens on their way to the marshes of southwestern Wood County, a large portion stopping at Bearss Station. Most want to have a good time, and at the same time pick enough to pay their expenses, says the September 2, *Wood County Reporter*.

Bearss & Co. begin picking early, on August 26th, paying 64 cents per bushel. The Bearss & Alexander marsh yields 3,600 bushels, according to A.E. Bennett's account.

●Daniel Arpin informs a reporter that the berries are farther advanced than the previous year at the same time. The crop is large but the total 400 bushels picked is much less than the 1200 bushels harvested before the fire of 1877.

Among the best pickers on John Arpin's marsh are the Felton boys, according to the *Reporter*. "Jo picks 3 bushels per day, John 1 ½, and Willie 2, which is better than average picking."

●A reporter tours the Hiles cranberry marshes near Dexterville but is more impressed by 500 acres of blackberries as far as the eyes can see.

●Al Scott and Clinton Newbery: arrested on Warner's cranberry marsh for stealing blankets valued at $15. The general belief is that the boys are guilty but sufficient evidence is not found to convict them.

●Asa Curtis Bennett goes into partnership with his son, Arthur E., under the name A.C. Bennett & Son. A.E., who, as a schoolboy, built a shack on the marsh with a friend, manages the property while Asa continues his profession of crockery salesman, meanwhile selling cranberries along the route.

An anonymous account in a Grand Rapids newspaper, apparently written by A.C. Bennett, tells of a small boy, his son, stepping off the train on the platform of the Green Bay railroad station at Elm Lake with a little ax and a little shotgun and a little satchel of clothing.

A few years before, the boy's father (Asa) bought a single forty acres of cranberry marsh nearly two miles from the station and engaged a man to do some work. This small boy is to meet the hired man and go with him to the marsh which is without a road or trail through thick woods.

The following weekend, the father arrives and, not seeing his boy, speaks to the depot man. "Yes, he was here last Monday but your man didn't come."

"Where is the boy?"

"He went to one house and got some meat and bread and started toward the marsh and that is the last I saw of him."

Knowing bears, wildcats and wolves lurk in the woods and there is only a rude shanty at the marsh, the father starts off to find his son, whom he soon meets—on his way back to the depot to meet the father.

The boy says the designated man did not come but that the boy has been working at clearing the way for the tram track and tells how he killed two big snakes longer than the ax helve and about other things. He says he stayed day and night all alone and has been hard at work every day. This was a city boy spending his vacation in the country!

A year or two later, this boy and another school boy go to the marsh to spend all the long summer vacation. There is only one neighbor, "batching it" a half mile from their shanty. The tram track is completed.

When the boy's father and mother come over the tramway to visit, they find unwashed dinner dishes on a rude table outside the shanty. The father finds the boys with bare feet and pants rolled above their knees, down in the bottom of the ditch, shoveling it out.

Here, the father sees elements of success; but the mother sees the darling boy she expected to make a preacher, a lawyer or judge or even a President. The kid seems to take to the water and mud like a duck and is equally happy.

●Marsh owner George Ferguson, 33, drowns when his hardware store is swept away by the Grand Rapids flood of 1880.

●Abner Whittlesey, father of Sherman, moves to Crete, Nebraska, where he plays the mercantile game.

●Melvin Potter's wife, Ada Woodruff Potter, dies, following the birth of a daughter, Ada.

●Emanuel Dutruit, the one-armed Centralia entrepreneur, moves to Merrill to work for the T.B. Scott lumber company. "During this period he also spent much time and money in the cultivation of cranberries, doing more to promote that enterprise than almost any other man in the state, but his labor did not meet with success, and on his failure he gave up his entire property."

●The Wisconsin Valley line is sold to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad company.

●*1880 federal census*

In the town of Seneca—Andrew "Searles," 28, "cultivating cranberries" with his wife Ella, son Clarence and daughter Maude. Andrew had married Ella Gustin in Waushara County in 1876. Jacob, at age 24, "works for his brother."

Their neighbor, William C. Trayhern, 54, engages in "cranberry culture" with his wife, Matilda, 47, daughter, 17, and son, 3. In 1875, there had been one male and five females in the Trahern family.

Wm. L. Sprowl, 37, raising cranberries. He had also been listed on the 1875 state census, with two males and one female.

George Merrill, 61, wife Mary, 65. He is listed as a farmer in "cranberrying."

Ralph Smith, 36, cultivating cranberries. No wife or children listed.

In the town of Port Edwards: Daniel Wakely, 40, a farmer. Descendant of one of the county's first families, he owns cranberry land.

In Centralia, Sherman N. Whittlesey, 31, with wife Anna D., son Charles S., son Harry and daughter Hattie. Sherman is a "grocer." The servant is Minnie Augustine. Two boarders are Frederick Grosse, a clerk, and Alfred C. McComb, a teacher.

William Skeele, 54, with wife Margaret. He works in a wagon shop. His son, Jasper, works in a hub and spoke factory. Daughters are Adalade E. and Ada. A younger son is Horace.

In Grand Rapids: William Scott, 48, county surveyor; Seth Spafford, 47, "Keeps Gen'l Mdsc." Charles Webb, 46, a judge whose family includes daughter Mina, 22.

At another address, John A. Gaynor, husband-to-be of Mina.

Levi P. Powers, 52, lawyer and log jobber, wife and daughter.

John Arpin, 52, children at home: Daniel, Armine, Georgiana, Elvina, Adelia, Joseph, Arsane, John, Albert, Arthur, Emma.

J.E. Ingraham, with wife, Hattie, and two daughters.

Geo. A. Ferguson, the drowned man, hardware dealer, wife and daughter.

In the town of Rudolph: Jerome Potter, 29, wife Martha and baby daughter, Laura A. He is a farmer.

Melvin Potter, 27, and Auril Woodruff, 23, his sister-in-law. Ada Potter, infant daughter. Melvin's wife, Ada, died in April.

Daniel Rezin, 48, farmer. Wife, Matilda, 42. With sons Richard, Robert, Daniel, daughter Matilda.

Thomas Rezin, 42, farmer. Jane E., 44, wife.

●E.P. Arpin needs to deliver an address at his high school graduation but confesses to a problem speaking in public. He consults with John Gaynor, his former teacher, and they select the subject, "Education." Arpin writes out his speech and Gaynor helps him with presentation, "and it went through all right."

In Grand Rapids, District Attorney Gaynor's apartment is entered by burglars as he sleeps and his pockets are emptied of valuables, namely $3 and a watch. Yet, he is able to write in the autograph book of Georgiana Arpin:

If you would make a friend,
Be a friend.
Be not quick to take offense,
Let it pass.
Anger is a foe to sense.
Let it pass.
Your friend
J.A. Gaynor

1881

Cranberry culture—booming.

In 1876, according to the 1881-published *History of Northern Wisconsin*, "there were more than 7,600 acres used for cultivation of berries and in 1880, more than twice that area.

"Beyond that, twice more is used as wild marsh where the berry grows to as high a state of perfection but yield cannot be as great because of inaccessibility. Wood county has some of the best marshes in the state and more attention is being given this year to the berry than any preceding."

At the top of the list, on the line of the Wisconsin Valley Railroad, is Bearss' Marsh, containing 120 acres all under cultivation. The yield in 1880: 3,600 bushels. Proprietors Bearss and Alexander have warehouses and permanent picker shanties, the *History* says.

However, probably because almost all their business occurs in the one month of September, the Bearss Marsh post office is discontinued October 11, 1881.

●A September *Reporter*: Geo. B. McMillan of Wautoma made us a short call Monday. He is "interested in" our cranberry marshes. He has lately received the Republican nomination for member of the state Assembly from Waushara County.

●A.C. Bennett, in July, visits Berlin, "head quarters of the cranberry men of Wisconsin." He finds the Sacket marsh the only one with a prospect for a crop.

Sacket's partner, Fitch, provides a tour over what Bennett figures is destined, with plenty of capital, to be one of the finest marshes in America. A ditch to the river is planned and will be pumped when and where necessary.

Unfortunately, only the vines that had been by chance treaded into the muck by pickers seem to have lived through the winter. The Sacket marsh has been neglected for a long time and is covered with old vines, rubbish, sage and willow. To pull weeds, Polander women are hired at 60 cents per day.

●The Wood County crop is estimated as follows, by grower and politician T. E. Nash:

Spafford & Trahern, largest at 3,000 bushels, followed by J.T. Bearss, Nash brothers, S.N. Whittlesey. H. Lefebvre and Eugene Warner (brother-in-law of Theodore Bearss), all over 1,000. The remaining 20 growers include W. Skeels,

D.R. Burr, John Arpin, Powers & Blackstone, Searls Brothers and (Edgar) Warner & McMillan.

●A September fire on G.W. Merrill's marsh destroys three buildings, household goods, tools and $250 in cash. The origin is unknown but the wind was "blowing a gale." Merrill's uninsured loss is $800. "He takes it very cool tho' and will go to work again right away to replace his dwelling."

●The name of the Green Bay & Minnesota Rail Road is changed to Green Bay, Winona & Saint Paul Railroad.

●Melvin Potter marries Auril Woodruff, sister of his deceased wife, Ada.

●Edmund P. Arpin attends the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is also assigned to sell cranberries, receiving a fresh box of same on October 1. He doesn't finish the first semester, having returned to work with his father "barreling up" cranberries. "Bearss said to send them tomorrow."

Arpin attends midnight mass on Christmas Eve in Grand Rapids and finds that his former teacher, J.A. Gaynor, and Mina Webb were "married on the sly…Judge's daughter."

John Gaynor's older brother, James Gaynor, marries Margaret McGovern in Olmsted County, Minnesota. James and Ann move to Wood County.

●Mrs. S.N. Whittlesey and Mrs. F. Garrison now clerk in Garrison & Whittlesey's store. "They both seem to be at home, in a dry good store, and from what we could learn of Mr. Whittlesey they give good satisfaction." *Reporter.*

1882

Frost! Spafford & Trahern, who gathered over a thousand barrels of cranberries in 1881, this season have 17, the smallest crop ever and this proportion seems to hold across the board.

J.T. Bearss, one of the "heaviest" cranberry men in the county, had over 1,900 barrels of berries the previous season and this year, only a trifle over 100. Some have virtually none, while a few will harvest perhaps a tenth part of a usual crop.

●Thomas Pitts of Pittsville is building a dam across the Yellow River prior to the building of a grist mill. Cranberry grower and Grand Rapids storekeeper Sherman Whittlesey hopes to sell supplies to workers while the mill is being built.

Visiting with his wife's brother, Usmar Downs, who is managing Sherman's interests in Pittsville, the two discover a leak in the Pitts dam. They begin to fix the leak, using a wheelbarrow, a pick ax and a shovel.

Usmar comes up with a wheelbarrow and leans over, just as Sherman changes his stroke, in such a way that the point of Sherman's pick jabs into Usmar's eye.

They rush to Milwaukee for treatment but to no avail. Usmar will have to manage with an artificial eye.

1883

On low marshes unprotected from frost, a complete failure. Blackstone's and Bearss' marshes in the town of Port Edwards, berries all frozen. On the Green Bay line, a better crop at $9-$10 a barrel, offered at railroad stations.

Or, as the *Enterprise* now says, the crop—not so bad as first supposed. Many marshes will have more than ever before, except for those in Remington and Port Edwards, which suffer from lack of good drainage and can expect a very small crop…if any. The usual garbled predictions.

Barrels gathered: D.R. Burr, 1,000; A.C. Bennett, 800; Nash Brothers, 500; S.N. Whittlesey, 500; Searl Brothers, 400; Jas. McGrath, 350; J.E. Ingraham, 300. All the rest, 200 or less, including D.T. Bearss, 100.

●Cranberry production in the Berlin area, which in 1874 had been 30,000 barrels, declines to 3,000 barrels.

●"Mr. J.A. Gaynor is now for a time chief editor of the *Grand Rapids Tribune*, and seems to take kindly to his calling."

●When J.O. Peak, a railroad engineer from Green Bay, marries Sadie Trahern, second daughter of William C. Trahern and his first wife, Prentha, a splendid wedding is held at the Trahern marsh at Elm Lake on the Green Bay line. The noon train arrives, "weighed down" by friends of the pair, who are married in the parlor, ladies handsomely robed in white, gentlemen in black. The home is decorated with evergreens, the work of Mrs. Bennett, a personal friend of the family.

A tea set is received from A.C. Bennett of Appleton, glassware and lace pillow shams from Mrs. A.C. Bennett. Silver forks from A.E. Bennett. A silverware set from Mr. and Mrs. Potter. Toilet set from Mr. and Mrs. S.A. Spafford. Hanging lamp from Wm. Sprowl.

●Sherman Whittlesey, in company with Clark Lyon, Uriah Hill, George M. Hill, John and Martin Conway, Louise La Vigne and Lucy Sexten, depart for Faulkton, Dakota, to take up homestead claims. He buys a 960-acre piece of land a mile-and-a-half long and one mile wide for $8,000.

At the end of three months, Lyon and some of the others return. "That was the land of promise then, and pioneers were pouring into the frontier," says Whittlesey. "I think I never knew how much this move grieved Annie, for she never complained."

A newspaper describes a picnic held by S.N. Whittlesey and wife at their new home in Faulkton, near "the mountain." A short distance from the merry picnickers playing baseball, the cone-shaped tents of railroad surveyors signify promise for a future Eldorado, not of the cranberry kind.

Working for the Railroad 1884

Reader, if you want to sustain election corruptions and railroad monopolist candidates, vote for T.E. Nash. Mr. Nash is bound hand and foot and you well know it…

"If any bastards wish to oppose me because I am working for the railroad company, I want to move out of the county." Those are "nearly" the words of T.E. Nash at a Grand Rapids hotel, as reported by the *Reporter*. Oh yes, Tom wants to be fair, and he wishes to be honest, says the Republican paper about the Democratic stalwart, but he can't.

Tom Nash, Ohio native, ethnic Irishman and partisan politician, arrived in 1875 as station agent of the Centralia depot for the Wisconsin Valley line, now the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul road. With his brother, Lawrence M., he owns a marsh formerly owned by Hank Beatty, near Bearss Marsh and also the "West Marsh" near Remington.

To be near his properties, Nash transfers to Port Edwards and Remington as station agent for the Valley line.

A story told by Nash's son: "Jobbers" or buyers from the larger cities come out to inspect crops before making their order. On these occasions, buyers can be finicky so finalizing an order is very desirable.

It seems T.E. and a prospective customer are walking out to the West Marsh to inspect the crop. After a heavy rain, they have to go around puddles, walk along logs and jump from tussock to tussock.

Tom and the buyer finally reach a pond with no way of getting around. Tom says they must get their feet wet. Buyer demurs, preferring to let the berries go "to plumb." Rather than lose a chance for a sale, Tom, a "slender but husky" young man, agrees to carry the buyer across on his back and does so.

After a while, they come to another watery place and the buyer says, "Well Tom, I'm sorry but I am afraid you will have to carry me across again."

"Oh no, I agreed to carry you across that first puddle and I did it even though you are on the heavy order, but I didn't agree to carry you over any other puddle nor back over that one and I'm not going to."

Since he has to get wet anyway and knows if he continues to the marsh, he can get a dinner that would be hard to find in Remington, the nearest settlement, and no train out until night, the jobber opts to get his feet wet.

And Tom sells him the cranberries.

A colleague of Nash, Col. W.F. Vilas of Madison, appears at the new opera hall in Grand Rapids to speak in favor of another friend, Grover Cleveland, for President. About 1,500 assemble to hear "Wisconsin's most talented orator." Introduced by J.A. Gaynor, Vilas, for two hours, describes the corruption of the Republican party.

On another occasion, J.A. Gaynor and George L. Williams address a Democratic convention held at the Court House after a torch light procession.

●Sherman Whittlesey hires others to run his marsh most of the year while he builds up his farm in Dakota Territory, returning to Wisconsin for the harvest.

Whittlesey also spends part of the year in Nebraska, where he buys a 320-acre half section of Platte Valley land from the Union Pacific company "on the installment plan."

The newspaper takes note when Whittlesey, a former partner of F. Garrison in a mercantile establishment, "has re-appeared among us. After he gets through answering all the questions of enquiring friends about Dakota, we shall try to interview him in regard to his estimation of Logan and Hendricks."

From Centralia, Sherman drives three yoke of oxen, a wagon, lumber, tools, feed and provisions to Ashton, South Dakota, for a business associate, George M. Hill, who is holding down a claim near Sherman's. He finds Hill digging for water in a hole 80-feet deep and six feet in diameter. George digs down below while his blind uncle pulls the earth up in a tin pail with a windlass. Sherman jokes about losing a number of cows in that hole before it caves in.

Centralia Enterprise: John Conway, who moved to Dakota from Rudolph, and is located there near Whittlesey, loses his entire Dakota crop in a hail storm and plans to return to Wood County. The *Enterprise* reports that the hail also destroys Whittlesey's crop.

●Jacob Emmerick arrives from Germany, intending to send money earned, back to his parents. Employed on a farm near Rochester, Minnesota, by the father-in-law of James Gaynor, he becomes interested in cranberry culture when he visits the Gaynor marsh in Wood County. Jacob attends school at Rochester, where he learns to read and write English.

●G. Kniffen publishes "Cranberries in their Wild and Cultivated Condition" in *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society:*

"If cranberries could be produced in sufficient quantities to be retailed at one half the price now sold at and so become a staple fruit instead of a luxury, it would be a benefit to producers and consumers as well." The early settlers find the marshes covered with cranberry vines and loaded with fruit in season, says Kniffen, but the area of naturally-growing cranberries rapidly diminishes with the introduction of railroads, destruction of forest and frequency of "running fires."

Kniffen suggests that the popular practice of ditching be undertaken with caution. "Thousands of acres have been ruined in the attempt to improve them as cranberry meadows, by the owners digging numerous ditches that carried off all the water and left the ground dry in summer with no possible means of a supply when needed."

Would big companies with marshes of several hundred acres squeeze out the little guy?

Kniffen: "A small holder need not fear to improve a few acres, remembering that two hundred bushels per acre on a small, well cultivated marsh is quite among the possibilities."

In fact, there is an advantage to the smaller operation.

"The owner should be the manager himself and bring that love and zeal to his labor that will always woo from nature her munificent and golden fruition. Couple with some other occupation to employ the time, and bridge over the long spell required to produce a paying crop, and there is no reason why the

cultivation of cranberries may not be extended with pleasure and profit to those engaged therein."

●The agricultural produce of 1884 for Wood County: 16,000 bushels of wheat, 46,000 of corn, 96,000 of barley, 80,000 of potatoes, 118,000 of butter, 100 of cheese, 403 of apples, 384 of cranberries. The latter usually can be counted on for about 20,000 barrels at $8 a barrel.

Centralia Enterprise: Pickers, male and female, come by the hundreds over the Green Bay and St. Paul lines. "We are of the opinion that these poor people will be badly disappointed as the cranberry crop is an almost total failure."

The Lively Marsh 1885

Ebony cane: Presented to T.E. Nash by fellow Irishman and Democrat J.A. Gaynor and friends at the office of Gardner & Gaynor—a token of appreciation for his service to the legislature.

President Cleveland names Col. William F. Vilas to the office of U.S. Postmaster General. Nash had met Vilas in the Wisconsin assembly, where the two, as state representatives, promoted University of Wisconsin appropriations that resulted in several buildings.

After Vilas' federal appointment, he summons Nash to Washington as chief clerk of the post office department.

According to the Republican *Wood County Reporter*: "The Nash Bro's are looking after the interests of their Irish brethren in Wood county pretty closely in giving political patronage. Thus far none but the radical Irish-Democrats have been recognized. No German need apply."

●J.A. Gaynor and Edward Huban, with camping outfits, take the evening train on an August Monday for Gaynor's marsh. Gaynor will be absent from town only a brief period. Indeed, he has greater responsibilities. Marshal Carey's 26 cases for cranberry stealing will keep District Attorney Gaynor "on the go."

●Gaynor's former student, Edmund P. Arpin, on a February excursion to New Orleans and Lake Funiak, Florida, is joined on the tour by fellow lumberman and new cranberry growers, L.S. Cohn and wife of Wausau.

In Nashville, Arpin refuses to pay for some bad cigars and is saved by Cohn from a possible roughing up. The two also indulge in some "sporting" in New Orleans.

On a July visit to look over state land and cranberry prospects, Arpin inspects the Whittlesey marsh and stays overnight at Bearss Marsh station. It's so crowded, he has to sleep on a kitchen table.

●At Clintonville, Arthur E. Bennett marries Fannie June Clinton, whose family provides the village's name. A.E., an Appleton high school graduate, met Fannie at Lawrence University. The newlyweds make the Bennett cranberry marsh, which he has managed since 1880, their year-round home.

Swiss immigrant Joseph Bissig, 15, becomes a regular employee of A.E. Bennett, having been engaged the previous season as a picker.

●Eight weeks after a broken leg, the bones of grower Andrew Searls are pronounced perfect by Dr. Lockwood of Grand Rapids. Fellow citizen Will Carey of Centralia is laid up with a bad ankle. While Carey is working on a cranberry marsh, the limb becomes chaffed and then "poisoned."

●For the first time in many months, grower J.T. Bearss is seen on the streets of Grand Rapids/Centralia. In ill health, he is obliged to use a cane. Old friends are glad to see him.

●The "government" completes arrangements for frost warnings. Signals are telegraphed from Milwaukee to Berlin, New Lisbon, Necedah, La Fayette and Tomah. From Tomah, signals are telegraphed to Valley Junction, Mather, Dexterville Junction and Centralia, the only cranberry stations on the Valley Division.

Copies of the bulletin are sent by train from Dexterville to Remington and from Centralia to Bearss Marsh. From the stations, the warnings are distributed by telephone, when available, to growers.

●*Enterprise*: "Blueberries have been quite an important item among the exports of Wood County this season, and still they come. Everything helps, and we do not know but what blueberries, cranberries and other small things combined are better factors of solid wealth for a community, than lumber, lath, pickets and mouldings."

Bad news, good news. The crop of 1885, according to the *Enterprise* of June 22: what had been "extraordinary" is now predicted to be a failure because of frost. In town, the outlook for fall trade is "discouraging." But Eldorado auguries are nothing if not ephemeral. If the weather remains fair for fifteen days and if the cranberry crop can be gathered, trade will be stimulated, business will be good.

Raking, which has been restricted to uneven marshes, replaces picking in many cases, because of the ability to gather more berries in a short time. Being made, 550 rakes, as follows: A. Bezaillon, 150; J.F. Moore, 200; R. Lyon, 200. Also in preparation for the harvest, John R. Spear makes 558 barrels for John Arpin, 895 for D.R. Burr and 715 for J. Vaness.

Picking and raking begins on the first Monday of September, as customary. "If the weather remains fair for fifteen days a bountiful crop of fine berries will be harvested in Wood Co."

On the other hand, frost has done much damage to cranberries near the traditional cranberry capital of Berlin, Wisconsin. Palmeter & Fitch lose two-thirds of their $20,000 crop. Sacket's marsh is saved by the new system of water pumps.

On their way to Bearss Station, 500 cranberry pickers, mostly Polanders from Stevens Point, pass through Grand Rapids.

At Bearss, a disturbance breaks out as Polanders try to compel others to assist in a strike, wanting 80 cents per bushel for picking when the going rate is 50 cents. Mike Henry is stabbed in the head and seven Polanders are arrested.

The annual recap for 1885 lists 57 growers. At the top, Spafford with 4,000 barrels. Other familiar names are Whittlesey, Burr, Nash, Nash & Bro., Ingraham, J. Balch (in Remington), Grand Marsh Co., Daniel Wakely, J.A. Gaynor, Searls, Merrill, Arpin, Bearss, Bennett.

A reporter dines with the Searls brothers, noting that Andrew has been recently treated for a broken leg. Among the buildings on the marsh are a two-story 20-by-40 foot "cranberry house" and sleeping apartment for workers.

Andrew and Jacob own 1600 acres at their residence but only six forties have berries and are being harvested. The 28 men who rake are paid $2 per day and board. The 63 hand pickers receive 65 cents per bushel. The expectation is 600-800 barrels at a cost to the two Searls of $3 per barrel.

The nearby Spafford & Trahern marsh contains 1,200 acres, on which 16 forties produce berries, mainly the eight lying north of the railroad track, completely surrounded by water controlled by dams. Here, 40 men are raking and 225 men and women picking by hand under the supervision of William C. Trahern. Also "working like a beaver" is Mr. Spafford—measuring berries, paying pickers and waiting on customers at the store.

A month earlier, the visitor notes, Dr. Robinson had been called out from Grand Rapids to attend to Mrs. Trahern.

The berries, a solid mass and beautiful sight, are coming in at 1,000 bushels per day and will amount to not less than 4,000 barrels, to be shipped to Chicago.

As the new cranberry house fills up, the cost of labor is $400-500 per day. There are five large houses for sleeping purposes, several small shanties, a small store and a small warehouse.

At the "cookery," rakers are boarded under the charge of William Sprowl, a pensioned Civil War veteran living in Centralia, who owns a nearby marsh of his own.

The G.W. Merrill marshes, about two miles east of Elm Lake station, consist of four forties, two of which are cranberry lands. Here, 30 men have raked 325 barrels, expecting a total of 600 barrels. H.W. Lord is in charge and acts as paymaster. The berries, contracted to J.E. Ingraham, are headed for Denver and St. Louis at $5 per barrel.

James Edward Ingraham is a native of New York state, a Civil War vet and former partner with his brother-in-law, H.B. Philleo, in the *Wood County Reporter*. Ingraham carries on a wholesale lumber business in Madison, and invests much of his large estate in the Wood County cranberry business.

South of Elm Lake and the Green Bay line is the "St. Paul railroad" where, in the vicinity of Bearss Station, are located thousands of acres of cranberry marsh in its natural state, besides a small portion that is cultivated.

Along the St. Paul line, the writer first visits the W. Skeels marsh, beginning with a dinner that is "a credit to any hostelry."

William Skeel has purchased the interest of his partner, Edward McIntee, in 200 acres of which 60 are in vines. A few rods from the railroad track, Skeel has a fine system of ditches and dams. He expects a crop of 600 barrels.

At Bearss Station itself are found "all the concomitants of a live town." There are four stores: those of A Besaillon; N. Meunir; and F. Meunir and Fred Kruger, the latter run by A.L. Gross, who also operates a bakery. Among "plenty of gamblers and whisky" is a faro table at which ten Indians play against "Daddy Ryan."

A tramway leads north to the 240-acre Whittlesey marsh, where "Mr. and Mrs." are busily keeping a tally of berries, superintending the work and paying off the 200 pickers with an expectation of 1,000 barrels. Charles Quinn is in charge of 80 pickers. Stephen Demarais operates F. Kruger's second store.

●Sherman Whittlesey has Joseph Kinney of Merrill and Arthur Sickles and Albert Meunier of Centralia arrested and charged with stealing from a freight car cranberries already billed and ready for shipment on the WVRR track. Meunier and Sickles plead guilty and are fined $10 each.

Besides assisting with the harvest, Mrs. S.N. Whittlesey occupies a few rooms in their homestead, "doing up her sewing aided by Miss Louise Lavigne." The Whittleseys will return to their Dakota home as soon as their affairs are closed here.

But Sherman Whittlesey soon takes leave of Dakota, "and some hopes we had cherished there" for a 320-acre farm in Aurora, Hamilton County, near Grand Island, Nebraska, intending "to grow corn and other crops and to prepare a habitation or home suitable for my family whom I had left to rustle as best they could without me on that South Dakota ranch."

He writes from "Aurora Farm, June 5, 1885."

Dear Wife,

More rain today and we had too much before. Can't get on to the fields. I went to the office again and got your letter of 31 May.

Hungry and homesick, he promises to get home as soon as he can and sends "bundles of love."

Abrams and Burr both write me that cranberry prospects are splendid. I told Abrams to keep the water on…no frost have hurt us yet.

I am glad you have a good cyclone cellar. How does sod roof and walls bear rain and time? …I will take care of myself for your sake. I have been pretty hard on my self so far I confess.

How it pours! The horses are all out on picket ropes. The little colt don't enjoy this. It is warm though I whish it would stop.

The water is 2 inches deep on hill and hollow…

Old Tom stands over on the hill where we are going to build our fine house some day. I do not think he will wash away there but it is terrible and it is beginning to blow and hail.

S.N. Whittlesey

Altdorf 1886

Sparks. The noon freight going south on the C.M. & St. P. railroad sets fire to weeds along the track at the Arpin marsh. Section men extinguish the flames and move to a fire further along. Upon their return, the first fire has broken out again and spreads with such rapidity that the railroad workers cannot check it. Even though John Arpin has taken the precaution to send a crew with teams and plows to erect fire breaks, the marsh burns for two days until rain comes.

E.P. Arpin visits the family's cranberry marsh in July and writes in his diary that five men have plowed 25 acres. Arpin measures ditches dug by the Potter brothers and guesses that plowing will be a success.

After the sod is plowed, vines are planted upright in small bunches, one foot apart in furrows. D.J. Arpin and E.P. Arpin have 20 acres of similar cultivated marsh, where vines are cut 1.5 inches in length with a hay cutter, sown over the ground and dragged and rolled in.

●In one of their numerous cooperative efforts, J.A. Gaynor is elected secretary of the Saints Peter and Paul Catholic church of Grand Rapids, and his former student, E.P. Arpin, named treasurer.

●J. Searles stops in the *Reporter* office in July and says the outlook for a large crop in the county is poor, though some portions of his marsh indicate a fair crop. A marsh owned by "Gaynor" and A.G. Carey promises a good crop.

Picking begins the first week of September with typical cool weather and possibility of frost. W.L. Scott takes charge of Mr. Vaness' marsh. Wm. L. Sprowl of Elm Lake reports a crop of 1,000 barrels, 400 for S. A. Spafford and 250 the Searles brothers, all having been picked. D.E. Carey returns from Whittlesey's marsh where he has charge of a crew of pickers and acts as paymaster. He reports a crop at 1,300 barrels.

S.N. Whittlesey of Aurora, Nebraska, is noticed by a reporter on local streets, "looking hail and hearty." Whittlesey reports a crop of 1,000 barrels.

By now, Sherman has taken his family from Dakota to Nebraska in a big covered wagon with beds made up inside, a gasoline stove, provisions, feed and utensils—pulled by a powerful pair of horses. He brings also a light wagon loaded with a crate of chickens "mother" had developed. Always ready for an adventure, the Whittleseys plan to "make a life" in Aurora raising pigs, while continuing to go back and forth to Dakota and Wisconsin. "We had our eggs in too many baskets. But we were young – what else mattered!"

●Elm Lake post office on the Green Bay line—discontinued August 11, 1886.

●A new Swiss community just north of the cranberry moors at Altdorf, named for the Swiss location of that name, assembles a Catholic congregation and erects St. Joseph's church. The Wipfli family arrives. Seeing all the flat country, Anton Wipfli wishes he could go back to the Alps.

1887

Switzers: Arnold, Bissig, Huser, Schilter, Steiner, Wipfli, Viertel. Swiss immigrants to Altdorf. They support the effort spent grubbing out dairy farms by logging in winter and harvesting cranberries in fall.

Frank and Barbara Zurfluh arrive from Switzerland and build a farm near the Elm Lake train station. Frank carries mail from the station to Altdorf. The mail is exchanged as the moving train passes through.

●Daniel and Matilda Rezin, owners of a farm in Rudolph township, north of Grand Rapids/Centralia, purchase their first parcel of cranberry moor land.

●In summers, Jerome and Melvin Potter dig ditches for D.R. Burr, of Berlin; Melvin buys land from Burr on a land contract at "Ripley Island" along the "turnpike," about ten miles east of their City Point land. The Potters continue to work Burr's marsh and their own, walking between them twice a week.

●Harvest, estimated at 15,000 barrels of large and well-ripened berries bringing $6 per barrel. Of 23 growers counted, the Nash brothers' 2,500 barrels is the largest, S.A. Spafford next with 2,000, S.N. Whittlesey, 1,000, Searles Bros., "Kohn" and Alexander, D.R. Burr, all at 1,000

●Assault of a very questionable character: by a man residing in Pittsville, upon a young lady, while picking cranberries. She has him arrested.

●The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association holds organizational meetings at New Lisbon and Tomah, Wisconsin. Most of its founding members are not from Wood County. J.T. "Bearass" is chosen as secretary for Remington and Chas. J. Krueger for Dexterville. Light attendance is attributed to a preponderance of forest and railroad fires. A summer gathering is held at Mather.

A Good Year 1888

"The cranberry business calls many foreigners to our fair city and those who have strayed from our precincts during the winter succeeding each harvest are sure to find their way back to Berlin as the harvest season returns." *Berlin Courant*.

Among late comers, Leopold S. Cohn of Wausau. The lumber and granite magnate expands his cranberry lands from Berlin north to Wood County. In June, E.P. Arpin looks over Cohn's property and finds new plantings growing nicely.

At his own family's marsh, Arpin finds prospects equally promising. New buildings, dams and plantings, all in effect. He consults with Dexterville's "King" George Hiles about land for a dam site and sends teams to plow the Daniel J. Arpin marsh, noting that, "Dad went down on freight with J. Andrews."

In October 1888, the Arpins pursue their usual occupation: fighting fires on the marsh. They save what E.P. calls the "Hoffman" buildings.

●Matilda Isobel Rezin, daughter of new grower Daniel Rezin, marries Stephen Warner, a Rudolph farmer, beginning another cranberry genealogy. The Warners move to their marsh.

●Melvin Potter sells his share in the City Point property, in the western moor, to his brother, Jerome. He and his second wife, Auril, mortgage their Rudolph farm and move to their marsh for the summer. Melvin adds adjacent property bought from Edwin Garvin of New York state. The Potters will spend winters in Centralia, so Oscar, Guy and Russell, can attend school.

On their marsh, Melvin finds masses of cranberry vines and other vegetation, 18 inches to two or three feet thick. A walker sinks three or four inches at every step. In some places, the bogs float on water.

●Death: Abner Whittlesey, Crete, Nebraska. An early partner in the Wood County marsh, Sherman's father never made it his home.

●Death: Judge L.P. Powers, long in poor health. The Vermont native settled in Grand Rapids in 1852. A Democrat, he served in the 1863 Wisconsin legislature. Was Grand Rapids mayor and Wisconsin Valley railroad president.

●J.E. Ingraham moves from Madison, Wisconsin, to Daly, near Remington, where his cranberry interests are located.

●As the number of Wood County growers increases, their representatives to the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association include corresponding secretary J.A. Gaynor, Grand Rapids; C.J. Kruger, Dexterville; L.M. Nash, Centralia; and Andrew Searles, Elm Lake.

At the meeting of the WSCGA at H.O. Krueschke's hall, Deuster, Wisconsin, August 11: Bad news. The crop will not be large, due to so much territory being burned over. Good news. Growers expect fair prices at about $8 per barrel. Price set at 50 cents per bushel for hand picking and $1 per day and board for men raking berries.

As it happens, the 1888 crop is a big one for Wisconsin—about 50,000 barrels shipped. Of these, 8,000 from Berlin, 5,000 from Bearss Marsh and 3,379 from Elm Lake.

T.E. Nash, for "Nash Bros.", addresses this letter on September 18 to Messrs. Egan McLaughlin, Ottumwa, Iowa.

Forwarded ten barrels good cranberries by todays freight. We did not commence picking till late as we do not believe in picking green fruit. $6.50 per barrel in car load of lots is todays quotations and we bill you the ten barrels at same rate. The market is jumping as it has been since the frost.

T.E. Nash to S.G. Lebhardt Commission Co., Denver, Col., September 34, 1888:

Your telegram asking that we do not brand the berries we are to ship you is rec'd and will be complied with. We commence picking today and will try to get a car out by Friday or Saturday and will dispatch by fast freight. The best authorities estimated this years Wis Crop at 59,500 Bbls. And a frost Friday might have reduced this 20 to 25%.

A few growers commenced gathering ten days ago and are about ready to send first car loads to Chgo. They are getting out a poor lot which will have to be used immediately or spoil on dealers hands. We were not willing to put such stock on the market so have delayed in order to have the berries well ripened.

To Daniel Cox, Duluth:

We have no hand picked berries this year. We use rakes exclusively and think they are just as good keepers.

To Messrs Sprague Warner & Co., Chicago:

We are surprised to hear you are not satisfied with the car of berries you bought from us, for they are as good as are grown in this valley this year. They were carefully packed & handled and we don't think it right to ask us to cancel the trade you made six days after the berries were shipped, because forsooth they are not as large as you would like them.

We have no one in Chicago to whom we could turn them over. Our experience in consigning berries to Chicago Commission houses has been such that we would go out of business rather than be dependent upon such an outlet for our berries.

Cranberry Bank 1889

Water, water, water. The great want of this country, according to Mr. Bennett.

"Give me water, sand and vines, and I can grow cranberries in these streets or on the house tops. To obtain this water, some of us are constructing large reservoirs, and trying to pond water on a skimmer, with holes below, and sun and wind licking it up from the surface, and at the same time are letting all the water of the early spring pass on through our ditches without a single effort to hold it back in the vast body of the wild marshes. Until there is some general effort in this direction, our marshes will grow dryer and dryer."

The remarks are given to the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association January meeting in Grand Rapids at which the WSCGA adopts its constitution and bylaws and calls for an annual meeting on the second Tuesday of each year. At a second meeting on the second Tuesday of August, a convention will receive reports from the Statistician and adopt a scale of prices for gathering the crop. Annual dues to be $1. Balance on hand, $8.56.

Association president-elect T.E. Nash: Outside of Cape Cod and New Jersey, he estimates, Wood and Juneau counties of Wisconsin are growing about 70 percent of the national crop.

However, "unless the berry can be gathered and sold at a profit, people will not embark in or continue cranberry growing." Two or three commission houses make a specialty of cranberries, along with two or three wholesale grocery houses. Their interests are not those of Wisconsin growers at the mercy of a few commission houses who think they can make more money by handling the eastern crop. Nash proposes organizing a Cranberry Growers Bank and Commission House in which every local grower can subscribe.

The result is that a bank committee is appointed to report back at the August meeting. The winter meeting moves on to other issues.

Mr. Gaynor: "I would like to hear from experienced growers how to raise cheap berries. I think six dollars per barrel is above the normal price as cranberries stand in relation to other fruit, and I think we must raise cheap to sell cheap in order to sell at all; that the object should be to make berries cheap instead of dear."

A resolution asks that the several railway corporations passing through cranberry districts be asked to use greater precautions to prevent the spread of fire from their engines during hot, dry weather.

Mr. Bennett presents a paper on the raising of cranberries on Cape Cod. He discusses how to water small tracts by means of a windmill, tank and cisterns.

The August convention is held at Bennett & Son marsh. When Nash asks for Mr. Bennett's experience in cultivating the marsh, A.C. says, "I can give it very easily. I have only furnished the money." That leaves it to "Mr. Bennett Jr." to explain.

At the meeting, Ralph Smith discusses his experiments with spreading sand on growing areas to cut down on weeds and disease, James Gaynor introduces his scalping plow and sod knife and requests are made to the state legislature for assistance. Professor Goff of the University of Wisconsin becomes interested.

●Melvin Potter of Rudolph and John Granger sign a land contract for adjoining property at "Ripley Island."

●After what *he* counts as 24 proposals of marriage, perhaps because *she* didn't understand English, Ralph Smith marries Pauline Marion Wipfli, a Swiss immigrant who had arrived at Altdorf from Switzerland in 1886. Smith clears, sands, levels and plants six acres of vines, primarily to test the benefits of spreading sand on the beds before and during growth. He also builds a frame house to replace the log house he has been living in.

●Bearss post office is reestablished on December 21, Michael O. Donovan, postmaster.

Babcock 1890

J●Theodore and Ellen Warner Bearss drop off a family *Bible* at Eugene Warner's place. The Bearss are lighting out for California and do not have room for all their belongings. Of their 1,200 acres of cranberry moor, a portion is sold to Richard and Daniel Rezin, brothers from Rudolph.

●L.M. Nash sells his interest in the marsh owned by Jones & Nash to John Daly, a prominent local lumber speculator and fellow Irishman, for $5,000.

Lawrence Nash had learned railroad telegraphy from his brother, Thomas, while dabbling in commercial ventures, including, with co-worker William T. Jones, a ferry, a hardware business and cheese factories at Rudolph and Sigel. Jones, a Democrat of English background, becomes mayor of Centralia.

●William F. Vilas, U.S. senator, Cleveland cabinet member and prominent lumberman, collaborates with his friend, T.E. Nash, to buy cranberry land, preferably that he can buy for back taxes.

"It will surely be desirable to get the original title before expending much money on the lands, and yet I shall wish to crowd their development as fast as may be feasible…I can have no hesitation in spending whatever shall be requisite to make a cranberry marsh to rival yours."

●At the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association annual meeting, T.E. Nash admits his cranberry bank idea will have to wait; hard times make it impossible to get enough grower-subscribers.

J.A. Gaynor suggests it will be a good idea to build, at some central point, a cold storage room to hold half the crop for better prices. A committee is appointed.

The summer WSGA meeting is held at "Millsonia," where Prof. Emmett S. Goff of the University of Wisconsin discusses techniques for obtaining assistance for a state-operated experimental cranberry bog. Gaynor advertises in the 1890 WSCGA publication for new and unusual as well as superior varieties of cranberry vines to be cultivated and tested without charge at Experimental Station No. 1 of the WSCGA.

Other ads in the WSCGA booklet: A.C. Bennett & Son, *growers and dealers in the largest and best keeping variety of cranberries known as Bennett's Jumbos and other varieties*. John Grather, Centralia, *cranberry barrels a specialty in the season*. C.J. Kruger, Centralia, *grower and dealer in Wisconsin cranberries*. James Gaynor, *scalping plow, sod knives*, "by means of which the cost of preparing marsh for planting is reduced by more than 50 percent" and a cranberry mill that "cleans and grades berries and removes the soft ones without bounding or bruising."

●John Arpin and his sons, Daniel J. and Edmund P., organize the John Arpin Lumber Co. at their new village of Arpin, Wisconsin.

●M.O. Potter purchases the Commercial hotel, Centralia. The family of his first and second wife, sisters, had operated a hotel in Richford, Wisconsin.

●G.W. Paulus organizes Centralia high school in the Lowell School building. He also casts an eye to the cranberry moors.

●Shipments of blueberries from Grand Rapids/Centralia total 12,500 baskets at 75 cents each, a value of almost $10,000 "to the poor people of the twin cities which was scattered among the families of this immediate vicinity," says the *Wood County Reporter. "*We don't believe the cranberry crop will prove of as much benefit to the poorer classes of this vicinity."

●In the year 1890, Whittlesey sells 2,000 barrels of berries for $14,000.

●"Babcock," a new village at a junction of the Wisconsin Valley railroad, is named for its planner, Joseph Weeks Babcock. Located on land owned by Babcock and Co., it displaces nearby Remington.

●Will Brazeau opens a barber shop at Bearss Station which he will operate during cranberry time. Johnson Hill & Co. builds a general store at the same location.

●After picking cranberries at Bearrs Marsh, an Indian named Black Cloud heads for camp at Scranton but is detained when a white man attempts to exchange a jug of whiskey for some time with "a squaw." After arguing with Black Cloud, White Thunder and others, the white man fires a shotgun through a tent, injuring several within, and runs toward "the station." The white man is charged with attempted murder but acquitted.

Following: From a collection associated with the cranberry experimental station, located across State Highway 54 from Gaynor Cranberry Co. *SWCHC*

This page: Transport by horse and boat on the Andrew Searls marsh. The canal runs from the beds, a mile south of the Green Bay & Western tracks, to a warehouse.

P. 62, Top: Work shown will probably accommodate a water lift pump, part of a system of dams, dikes and bulkheads

Bottom: Clearing or "scalping" an area of natural vegetation to prepare for planting.

P. 63, top: Planting vines with a "spud."

Bottom: Test beds of the experimental station. Gaynor house at left.

P. 64, top: Men and women picking cranberries.

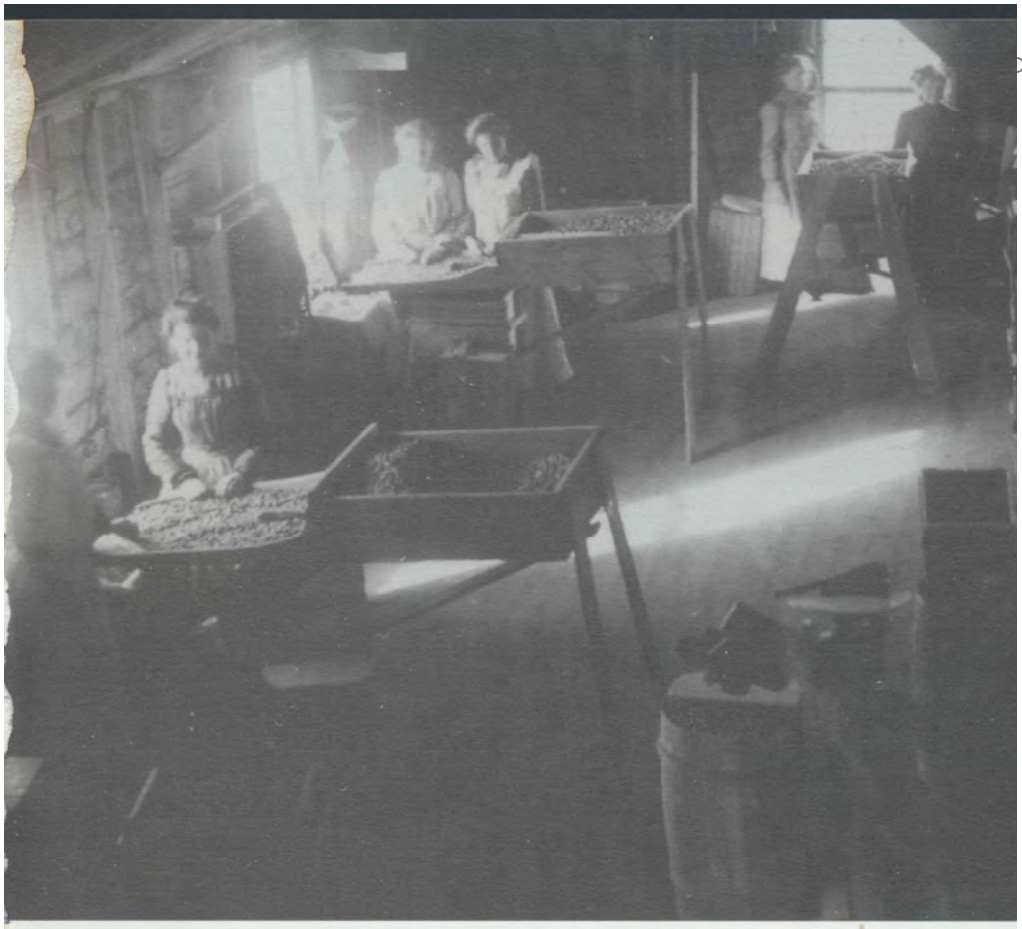
Bottom: Transporting boxes of recently-picked cranberries via moveable "railroad."

P. 65, top: Sorting cranberries by window light.

Bottom: Sorting room on the marsh.

P. 66, top: The experimental station, seen from Gaynor Cranberry Co.

Bottom: Red gold arranged after harvest, probably for an experiment.

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Vilas 1891

Ads: Preston Bros., wagon maker, *soft ground clogs for use on cranberry and hay marshes*; Johnson & Hill, *special attention to cranberry growers with a branch store on marshes during picking season*; J.F. Moore, *wagon maker and cranberry grower, cranberry rakes and tools a specialty*.

●William H. Fitch Jr., Madison, purchases the remainder of the J.T. Bearss marsh, including the house.

●Archie McMillan sells his Waushara County farm and moves to Centralia as a partner with his brother, George, buying and shipping farm produce.

●Edward A. Kruger purchases 30 acres from his brother, Charles Kruger, an industry veteran. Edward, born in Princeton, Green Lake County, of German immigrants, has been farming in St. Croix County, Wisconsin, another cranberry area, where, he says, he got starved out but had $100 left to try again in Wood County.

●German immigrant Jacob J. Emmerick moves from Minnesota to work on the Gaynor marsh.

●An Altdorf Switzer, Joseph Bissig, and his brother, Andrew Bissig, purchase, from A.C. Bennett & Son, 920 acres of wild cranberries in Remington Township. No part is under cultivation. If there is a large crop they will make some money; if none, they're not out a great deal.

●T.E. Nash helps establish the Wood County National Bank, Grand Rapids. It serves many cranberry growers.

●A small schoolhouse is built at Bearss Station, Addie Skeels, teacher.

●Sherman Whittlesey moves back from his Nebraska farm to the cranberry marsh, "Pine Lodge," for what he considers a temporary residence. "We thought with that kind of a gold mine, we could live in Madison, Wisconsin, a beautiful city, and put our children through the university and make governors or great men of the boys." He brings from his western ranch a dozen horses and a carload or two of corn, oats and wheat.

●The 1891 Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers summer meeting is held at the warehouse of C.J. Kruger at Bearss Station. Putting together an exhibit for the 1893 World's Fair is discussed.

Published: *Cranberry Culture On A Western Plan with Valuable Items and Recipes from Growers and Members of the Wisconsin Cranberry Association by Augustus G. Cary, Grower, and Member of Wisconsin Cranberry Association*.

According to Cary, the cranberry, of the heath family genus *Vaccinium*, is named for the appearance of the bud stage resembling the neck, head and bill of a crane.

He says that, more than 16 years previous, Wood County had thousands of acres of wild marshes for sale. "To-day, where is there a forty acre marsh adapted for the cultivation of cranberries? Inform me and I can readily find a customer at an advanced price."

Maybe some of the first investors had more capital than brains. “Money was spent lavishly and ignorantly, marshes were supposed to be improved with ditches and dams etc. and pretty thoroughly dammed at that.”

Larger growers “missed it” when they employed “the man of muscle,” instead of the man of brains. Marshes deteriorated for want of proper management, until the owners “rusted out, disgusted.”

The marshes then passed into the hands of the industrious, hard-working, intelligent owners who “to-day” reap the reward of labor and industry, pouring thousands of dollars annually into towns and county coffers.

Those who have gone thousands of dollars into debt have paid the debt out of returns from crops. “It requires a stout heart, a liberal one, a good muscle and lots of brain, and success is certain.”

From Cary: *How to Stop or Prevent Fire*: “When you want to burn marsh, or see a fire at a distance approaching, take two or three men, mow a space of three or four rods wide then get tubs which you ought to keep on hand, fill them with water at every twelve rods, then wet your blankets that are attached to a stick and drag over the mowed grass, it will surprise you to see how long a tub of water will last, you then stand back when fire first approaches a few minutes and then you can conquer it.”

Cranberry Wine: Scald five quarts of cranberries with the skins burst, then strain through a thin cotton cloth, do not press them, simply let the juice drain off; then add two pounds granulated sugar; make a syrup with enough water to make one gallon of the whole. This makes a nice drink fully as refreshing as lemonade.

●Col. Wm. F. Vilas, Democratic Wisconsin U.S. Senator-elect, receives full title for his cranberry property from Roman A. Bissell of Wayne County, Michigan, by way of Gardner & Gaynor, attorneys.

He writes to his friend, T.E. Nash. “You know I do not turn back after entering on an undertaking, and I mean to be a good neighbor to you in the cranberry business.”

The spacious tract is located in Town 21 Range 4 East, south of Bearss Station, near the Juneau County line, straddling Cranberry Creek. The west side has been “machine-ditched” from the county line nearly two miles to the north and a reservoir dam will soon be constructed.

“I want to go up during the time of cranberry picking,” Vilas says to Nash, “which I think will be peculiarly interesting. I intend to go to the marsh next Monday for a day or two and shall hope to see you, either at Babcock or at your marsh where I suppose you will be engaged in picking what is left of the crop this year.”

The first bad news comes when an employee, Sam Griffith, opens up a ditch and submerges the marsh.

Vilas sends another employee named “Henry,” possibly Henry Beatty, to Babcock. A third employee, Jesse A. Dickerman, is to join Henry to receive lumber for a house and other buildings.

"It is very desirable indeed," Vilas adds, "that we should get to work on the road from Babcock as soon as possible." The road would extend east to the village of Port Edwards, on the Wisconsin River.

When Dickerman receives supplies at Babcock, he writes back to Vilas. "Where is our beef? Where is our blankets? Where is our lumber for tramway?"

Following up on Vilas' orders, Dickerman visits with "Mr. Mennet," chairman of Port Edwards township, who tells Dickerman the town supervisors seem to find the projected cost of $500 excessive. Only "reference to the law" will convince Mennet to cooperate, Dickerman says, providing Vilas has a survey and petition in hand.

"I am bound to push that road to a finish unless you holler enough," vows Dickerman. When he surveys a road from the "station" west on the section line to the town of Remington and then to the "state road," a half-mile of soft marsh makes the going tough.

Port Edwards agrees to build its share of the road but the town of Remington refuses, though Vilas offers to bear at least a third of the cost, arguing, "The road will be of real value to the Village of Babcock because it will open the country lying east of my land, and parties living there have already begun to move to get the advantage of it."

The Remington town supervisors probably know that working with the poorly-drained muck and "quicksand" will be a tribulation. "Mr. Cleveland," an employee, hooks up his team to a plow and moves about ten rods when both horses go down, belly deep.

The other man, "Griffith," decides to try using oxen, saying he will break some marsh or die trying. So Griffith gets two yokes of steers but still can't break the wet spots. He hires another yoke of cattle and buys a bigger plow.

Dickerman admits in October that the road has proved to be impossible to build according to contract because the ditch banks keep washing away.

Another source of misery is a stove that is late in arriving; Dickerman's feet are cold and he will be shopping in Grand Rapids for a pair of arctic shoes. When groceries finally arrive, there is occasion for celebration. Dickerman's head aches and he has not eaten since "night before last." He is perpetually wet and chilled, a condition that breeds neuralgia, he tells Vilas.

The arrival of the stove inspires some good cheer but the fool who made the door put the latch on wrong-side-up and the door will not stay shut.

The struggle with the saturated earth continues. "The hauling and putting in the tileing is a mean job and a heap of extra digging and bailing…this is pretty bad marsh to break, I guess, but it can be done. The fact is Mr. Griffith is too d…d lazy to break or do anything else but smoke and find fault."

From Babcock, October 27, Dickerman reports that a fire has broken out on Mr. Love's marsh and "hurt it so badly that he can furnish us no vines." The promised beef arrives in Babcock but, bad news, because he is on horseback, Dickerman can't take it home with him.

In a separate letter, grower Love explains his dilemma to Col. Vilas and suggests Dickerman try Bearss, C.J. Krueger and/or George McMillan for vines.

Further woe and wickedness! Dickerman's cook quits in November, "all through his desire for Tice's whore."

Four men also terminate their employment and call for their wages, leaving four. Dikes fall in, ditches overflow, water pours over and under dams, roads wash out and bad weather predominates; there will be no planting that fall.

Dickerman will go to Bearss Station and try to secure vines for spring. He ventures into a saloon for a glass of beer and finds "a number of men there quite anxious to contract vines. One thing I have found out for sure is that a man who has a dilapidated marsh wants to sell you vines enough to repair his marsh – a good scheme if it works.

"P.S. I shall have to get home next week or get married again."

Gaynor 1892

Dickerman writes next from his home in Verona, Wisconsin, a suburb of Madison, discussing plans for a house and barn on the marsh. In return, Vilas advises him not to try to buy "professional vine vendors" but to buy land instead and dig out his own vines.

"I am a little troubled," Vilas writes to his grower-friend, T.E. Nash, February 15, 1892, "to know just what is the best way to carry on my operation up there on the marsh. I don't quite like to build a house and have a foreman and let him go on and buy the provisions to maintain a family and hired men at his pleasure. Of course, last year's operations were necessarily expensive. We had no road, and we had a poor means of getting to and from the work, and the work was very much heavier, and I think will always be, than was presupposed."

Later, a blizzard provides good conditions for lumber to be hauled from Babcock. "I think I will have Mr. Dickerman go up to the marsh at a pretty early day in April…and open up the camp at the present house, and receive Mr. Dustin and party to put up the new building. I very much desire that the house now there shall be moved over to the island where the new house is to be built, or to the neighborhood of it, if it can be moved on the frozen marsh."

Vilas asks Nash to go down and help Dickerman place the house. But he continues to worry. "I feel very anxious about this, fearing that we are going to get the location of the house too far away from the dam and bridge. I particularly approve the choice of a location near the Cranberry Creek; for I have always thought it desirable to be near enough to the bridge and gates there to be able to get to them if the occasion should suddenly require."

Next, Vilas says he will telegraph Dickerman to stop the construction process until Nash has the opportunity to contact Dickerman. "This house is going to cost me more than I expected it would. I was astonished at the lumber bill…but I do not want it in the wrong place, and would rather wait two weeks."

Vilas says he is too busy with public duties to attend to the marsh personally. Many of his letters are written from the U.S. Senate in Washington D.C.

The troublesome road has, by April, been badly cut up by running water. There is no way to repair it except to build a boat to haul sand. Faulty bulkheads and water pouring over sluices have allowed the area to be submerged again.

No fire in the house, the wind howling, rain beating on the roof, men snoring like so many pigs and a chill a heavy overcoat can't dissipate, Dickerman feels like he lives in a "city of desolation." There has been so much rain that a man might almost believe the story of the big boat, he says.

Although the barn has been enclosed, the roof cannot be applied because no shingle nails have been sent and "you know what a trip to Babcock is now."

"Mr. Rasen," the path master, says that "in 20 years of marsh life, ours is the d…dst road – wouldn't drive his horse over it for $25," writes Dickerman.

On June 27, temporary dams are built but not much can be accomplished. "We cannot plant without vines, and we cannot haul them without the cattle can touch bottom."

In August, vines arrive and men lay down sand in preparation for planting. Dickerman plans to go to Centralia for scalping tools.

Frost that morning ruins the crop up and down the line, which doesn't affect the Vilas marsh because it has no cranberries to freeze. And Dickerman is happy with his new house. "Wife says it beats camping out." He tells Vilas he finally begins to think he knows "a little of something about planning a conventional cranberry marsh."

Pride goeth before what? Of six "stompers" who should be "stomping" vines into the soil, Dickerman finds one drunk in bed and three he does not find at all. Then, he comes home from Babcock to find the creek has gone dry. Mr. "Kohn," has built two dams upstream and stopped the water.

Planting again comes to a halt.

The next letter Dickerman cannot write but, instead, dictates through his wife that he's "near crazy with my teeth." Actually, it is his mouth that hurts. His teeth have already been pulled out.

At least the horses are getting used to it all, "and will be able to do our business without any trouble…if the flies and mosquitoes do not eat them up."

●*Gaynor*. The family of James and John emigrated from County Longford, Ireland, to New Orleans in the winter of 1849. They soon moved to Lisbon, Waukesha County, Wisconsin.

Older brother, James, traveled the Pacific slope and has been a farmer, proprietor of a sawmill, and owner of a deer park in Sussex, Wisconsin.

E.P. Arpin says both Gaynor brothers deserve mention for creating a hearty fellow feeling among all the growers.

But it is John to whom attaches greatest homage. A poem by "M." explains that the ardor for social justice in John Alexander Gaynor, the youngest boy, was fanned by stories and tears of his mother, older brothers and a sister who

rehearsed the wrongs of the English landlord system. The Gaynor family had been thrown out of a home in winter because six month's rent could not be paid in advance.

John comes to Grand Rapids as principal of the high school, earns a law degree from the University of Wisconsin, returns as an attorney and is soon elected Wood County district attorney. He also serves as a judge, an editor of the *Grand Rapids Tribune*, and, elected in 1892, a member of the Wisconsin assembly.

A.E. Bennett: "One of these early problems was the question of water supply and drainage. Here Judge Gaynor's legal training stood him well in hand. He saw that the rule of common law would prove ruinous to the industry, but that the water must be handled according to the rules of civil law; and to this end he succeeded in placing a law on our statute books for the benefit of the growers…

"He knew that brains mixed with the soil were the best fertilizers, and used to say that if a grower lost a crop he ought to be able to sit down in the middle of his patch, examine the vines, then tell what had happened and when and why, and what could be done to prevent it, and he often demonstrated his own ability to do this."

G.W. Paulus: "Mr. Gaynor believed that cranberrying should be made comfortable, attractive and convenient…Isolation made men narrow and suspicious. Neighbors should know and love each other."

"No one ever heard him speak at our meetings or talked with him in private, who ever doubted that his heart and soul was above all in the cultivation of cranberries. No other thing so thoroughly absorbed his mind and heart during the last thirty years of his life as that of our industry."

"In the matter of water supply…the theory of looking out for yourself, first, last and all the time…was most prevalent in those earlier days. Mr. Gaynor knew that a farmer could do this in a way, but the cranberry men could never do this except at their own loss ultimately. These growers must work together, give and take, must receive and divide, they must co-operate, be just, exercise fair play.

"In the earlier days growers as a whole were a distrustful lot of fellows often emphasized by envy, hatred and malice. Cranberry men were all acquainted with Mr. Gaynor and naturally went to him for advice. What a fine field for litigation, for an unscrupulous lawyer. John Gaynor thought it was the business of a lawyer to keep people out of trouble and not to promote discord and strife.

"Nearly all of the important contracts and deeds and concessions for water and outlets, and there were many of them, were drawn by Judge Gaynor."

Andrew Searls: "Judge John A. Gaynor should receive credit for keeping the growers of cranberries heartened up; he was a firm believer in the ultimate success of the cranberry industry."

E.P. Arpin: Says that, when a banker calls at the offices of Gaynor and Arpin, who occupy rooms in the same building, he finds, as usual, that both are out. The banker remarks to the bookkeeper: "It seems to me, that these men

ought to hire someone to look after their business while they are working for the public."

●At the WSCGA annual meeting, President Braddock calls the previous year the most disastrous in history for cranberry culture in this part of Wisconsin. The worst drought in 30 years, combined with the most killing frosts and the most destructive fires "have certainly taught us one thing…that to grow cranberries, we must needs have water, and more water and still more water."

A "distribution system" for frost warnings has been inaugurated through the weather bureau and the railroads, using reports of trained observers and signals, "to put us on our guard." The cost to the WSCGA for train signals is $32.83.

Reporting to the meeting is A.C. Bennett, born 57 years previous near Canandaigua in western New York, "in the finest fruit growing section." At age 13, he learned apple culture and by 19 had planted a small nursery.

Says he sent a barrel of berries to his sister in Massachusetts. "She had always used the eastern berry, and finding the ones I sent her of better flavor she distributed them among her friends and acquaintances, and she wrote me back that they all pronounced them the finest flavored cranberry they had ever tasted."

Always progressive, Bennett asks, "Why haven't cranberries been canned?" and answers, that there have been no canning factories near the cranberries.

Now, a factory at Berlin offers a "safety valve" for extra product. Confident that the low price of sugar has come to stay, he suggests a canning factory at Centralia, Grand Rapids, Babcock, Necedah or Valley Junction and offers to go on the road, selling cans of cranberries, working for free if they don't sell.

Bennett's son, A.E. Bennett, estimates 3,000 acres of "cultivated" bogs in Wood and adjoining counties with 15,000 more acres used for reservoirs.

●Despite a terminal illness, John B. Arpin, 67, personally attends to his last harvest. His death leaves nine of 16 children surviving, including growers Daniel J. and Edmund P.

●Charred remains: in June, of a man found in the ruins of a "cranberry shanty" on Frank Russell's marsh eight miles west of Centralia, one mile north of the Green Bay & Western railroad track. The building, half-a-mile from any other residence, has been used as a living and sleeping apartment for pickers but is unoccupied the rest of the year. The victim's clothing and flesh are nearly consumed and the body burned beyond recognition though in evidence are a necktie pin, silver watch and chain and pocket knife.

Season of Terror 1893

Wisconsin cranberry grower: for two successive seasons he has occupied a position very similar to that of the Republican party immediately after the election: knocked down, trampled upon and run over; but after he gathers himself together and painfully removes from clothes and countenance the dust marks of the disturbance, the thought uppermost in his mind is, "How in the world did this happen?"

So President Braddock tells the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association's January meeting at city hall, Grand Rapids.

Old settlers say the country is drying up and it's true. Many growers have ditched and drained too much and, notes Braddock, the clearing of timber may also have had an effect. He suggests damming the spring flood and allowing swamps to be restored.

Despite the small crop, $5 is levied on every grower for an exhibit at the "Chicago Columbian Exposition," the World's Fair. It will include a working model of a cranberry marsh and the first paper machine to be used at T.E. Nash's brand-new Nekoosa paper mill. A cookbook is to be distributed, along with cranberry sauce. And cranberries, scattered throughout "Expo '93."

Wisconsin growers join the American Cranberry Association in sending a man to England to distribute berries free at some of the principal centers of British trade, together with instructions for their preparation. The association pledges three percent of its entire crop for this scheme.

●A "water law," passes the state legislature through the efforts of John A. Gaynor. It allows streams to be dammed, reservoirs to be enlarged and water distributed to growers, in an effort to make future fires less likely.

Gaynor also gets $250 for experimental stations of one-quarter acre each to be located at F.J. Hoffman's marsh at Mather; C.J. Kruger's at Bearss Station; and Gaynor Bros.', north of Bearss. Consequently, Prof. Emmett Stull Goff, professor of the University of Wisconsin horticultural department, publishes the first station bulletin focusing on cranberry culture.

The $250 is enough to raise a strong protest from state Progressive leaders, who refer to the bill as "class legislation" that could set a dangerous precedent. Gaynor agrees that such "industries" should be helped only when young. But other horticultural enterprises have netted handsome sums and developed into permanent resources of the state since the establishment of the College of Agriculture in 1889. Why not the cranberry?

A.E. Bennett: "He knew that the state sometimes went into the charity business. It certainly was pitiful to see our poor infant industry struggling when a few hundred dollars from the great state of Wisconsin could put it on its feet."

●The summer meeting of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers is held at the Bennett & Son marsh. Tables are spread in a dining hall to feed the 69 who want to eat.

●Andrew Searls discovers a prolific vine found in a small patch of wild vines in the woods near Walker and propagates the Searls Jumbo, a large berry of deep red color that commands a high market price.

●R.C. Treat, "who occupies the exalted position of meteorologist of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association," takes a dismal view of the year's prospects. Frosts, fire and a depressed market leave "little room for mirth in the hearts of the cranberry men."

●In the spring of 1893, Jesse A. Dickerman's problems on the Vilas marsh continue. A worker named Charlie comes down with pneumonia and

Dickerman's wife has Charlie "done up in mustard. We are in hopes to fetch him out all right in a day or two."

The search for vines to transplant continues. "I was up at Bars [Bearss] and saw Mr. Burr but could buy no vines. He wants to sell them on the ground at two prices. There is too much water up about there for anybody to pull vines."

But he feels good in June. "Our road is done and it improves the place in great shape, which left time for fencing, clearing, cleaning out ditches and repairs. There was plenty to eat and the chickens were doing nicely.

"Mrs. D. is happy and still she is not. She has got paint or something else on the brain. Bed bugs and lice worry her. She thinks paint will stop them for awhile. Our vines are looking well. Some of the late dry planting started slow but they are coming quite nicely."

In June, Dickerman returns home from the brand new town of Nekoosa, which owes its creation to T.E. Nash's paper mill. "I think I never rode in such misery in my life. The wind died down and the gnats, flies and mosquitoes just got those horses crazy and they were covered in blood from end to end."

Dickerman checks a dike flue and finds what he had expected, "a [musk]rat hole on the west side close to the plank the whole length of the bridge."

After so much time with too much water, the summer brings a drought. Dickerman tries to raise water in areas where the vines are driest.

"I saw a man yesterday that said the fire worms had put in their claim to the crop out about south bluff and that the marshes were as red as if the frost had been there and that they had no water in their ditches west of Babcock that he knew of. For eight miles crop totally eat up."

Through the summer, Dickerman hunts for vines with "pretty good success, but it is pretty near perdition to contend with them infernal flies and mosquitoes with the extreme heat. Charlie and Dick pulled [vines] two days and we have quite a lot in the shanty and more to go in. No man could live to clean them where we get them."

The summer just gets drier and hotter. Dickerman nearly passes out from the heat and is advised by his wife to carry an umbrella.

The contract for the road from Babcock to "Baars" is let on July 11. "I would like those papers or a town law book so that we could go on with the P.E. [Port Edwards] road. I saw Mr. [banker and industrialist Lewis M.] Alexander the day I went to the Rapids. He had no time to talk with me."

Dickerman advises Vilas that, when he comes up, he should "bring a coat of mail with you. The house is full of bugs. We have washed it with turpentine twice beside put on poison. Nobody sleeps in it but wife and I and we don't sleep much.

"I suppose you are anxious to hear about the [July] fires. The damage is extensive." A heavy rain "last night…put it out and saved the country."

"While at the depot yesterday, I saw John Love. He was crying for water the same as we are. He says that he told you a long time ago of a plan to get water from the Hemlock crick … into Cranberry crick."

●August: The *Centralia Enterprise & Tribune* editor travels with E.P. Arpin, to the Arpin brothers' marsh near Bearss Station.

After a fine dinner at the "Delmonico," prepared by Emma Arpin and Mabel Hathaway, a tour results in enough berries for a sauce. Frost has damaged part of the wild marsh but the cultivated section escapes. Recent fires swept over about six acres of vines but, good news, saving rains make cranberry men "dance on the dikes" with promise of a splendid crop.

Pickers begin to arrive for the harvest. The Arpins arrange with a neighbor, "Mr. Hoffman," to connect their system of ditches with Hemlock creek by a main ditch. This could make their marsh one of the best and largest in the state.

●"Only a few days ago our cranberry men were jubilant." *Centralia Enterprise and Tribune:* September 2, 1893. "The recent rains had relieved them of all danger of fire overrunning their marshes and the vines gave promise of a splendid crop. Pickers were beginning to arrive, provisions were shipped to the marshes, and everything was gotten up in readiness for the harvest.

"But, alas! It was not to be. With one fell swoop, the bounteous harvest was all but totally destroyed. The work of the frost Monday and Tuesday nights was complete.

"Thus in a few hours the hopes and expectations of many were blighted. The prospect to many families of remunerative employment for a few weeks is destroyed. The country will lose thousands of dollars…"

But that's just the beginning.

In August, Dickerman, who has been watching fires for three days and digging holes for water, writes, "but our most important work was done four weeks ago. Our marsh was burnt [to form a firebreak] from the 16-ft ditch on the west to the crick on the east, south of the planted marsh, thence north to the reservoir dam, all that we could safely burn."

That work was good and wise but now there is "not a gallon of water" between the Vilas planting and "Nash and Loves" marshes. "It is a bad place to be without water and our well is nearly dry. We have had to lower it twice lately."

Dickerman says he has a shanty full of vines he cannot keep wet. "The way fires are raging is terrible and the country dried up. I shall make an attempt for a well as soon as I can. Our well at the barn is dry today or nearly so. I was up to Nashes Marsh last Thursday and looked at his vines...His marsh is suffering with the drouth as well as ours. The fire worm is general all over."

Wood County Reporter, September 7, 1893: *All day yesterday and Tuesday, a dense black smoke hung over the city and settled over the horizon in the direction of the big cranberry marshes. Investigation showed that an immense fire was sweeping all that section of country lying on the south side of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St Paul R.R. from Babcock to Bearss Marsh, sweeping hay, cranberries and buildings off the face of the earth.*

A special train is run out from Grand Rapids/Centralia to Bearss to help fight the fire but the efforts are futile. Numerous "cranberry houses" have been

built on the several marshes for the accommodation of pickers and laborers, and are dry food for the flames.

The Fitch marsh is the only one "saved." About half of the Kruger marsh escapes. All of T.E. Nash's big marsh, Cohn's and the Vilas marshes suffer complete loss of the present year's crops and improvements. Whether the roots are totally destroyed or not is yet to be determined.

Fire also sweeps over the Gaynor Brothers wild marsh. "And it was only after almost superhuman efforts that the fire was kept off their cultivated marsh and their buildings, all the rest being overrun completely by the fiery element." The Arpin Brothers property continues to hold off the fire with a large crew of men.

Towns and villages fear for their safety too, lacking water to fight the fire. "Never in the history of the white man has the timber, grass and earth been so dry and scorched. Never in the white man's memory has the Wisconsin River been so low, or so many of its tributaries dry."

The *Enterprise and Tribune,* September 16, depicts "seasons of terror."

The previous night—a gale wind driving dense smoke and flying ashes, a lurid light in the northwest and southeast. For two days, fires, moving from Elm Lake south toward Bearss, "working disaster to nearly all of the cranberry growing districts of this county." A dense smoke over Grand Rapids/Centralia as families pack for flight. Fires reported, threatening Pittsville, Dexterville, Vesper, Rudolph, Marshfield and Junction City. So much smoke, that darkness comes at 3 p.m. along with ashes, dust and a few raindrops lashed along by a furious gale.

A general alarm sounds and a large crowd gathers at the northwest part of Centralia to fight the fire. A special train of firefighters is run out to Elm Lake and Bearss–futile.

September 21, 1893. More "forest fires," with dense clouds of smoke, a dark horizon, dry and scorched terrain, dry river beds. Families awake all night, packed and ready to go as the "fire fiend" rages around them. Cattle and other stock—perished in the conflagrations.

"Mr. Eugene Warner lost all the vines and berries on seven forties of cranberry marsh. Messrs. John Schnable and M.A. Bogoger lost all the vines on four forties. A.C. Bennett & Son lost fifteen acres of planted vines and the crop thereon. A.G. Carey lost all his vines, including buildings and berries already picked, off of ninety acres. A total loss." All the Blackstone marsh consisting of fifteen forties, burned over.

Steven Warner saves his home and about 50 acres of marsh out of 280. C.E. Lester saves 30 acres of 120.

The story of "Cranberry Jim" Gaynor: When fire breaks out at his marsh, Indian harvesters try to flee. He stands them off with a shotgun, then talks them into fighting with a backfire. Much of his large crop is saved, and the flames don't touch any building. Yet, Gaynor Bros. lose all 2,000 acres, except about 30 of scalped marsh.

The Potter story as told by Lela Potter Winn: A large firebrand flies over and drops to the ground three-quarters of a mile away. The wind now is sweeping from that direction toward the buildings. In no time, the men are astride heavy work horses, whipping them to a gallop.

Melvin Potter directs the others to gather brush to beat out any sparks as they come. At the buildings, the pickers are so frantic they climb into wagons with no horses, ready to go home.

Melvin yells, "You'd better get down and fight this fire or you'll never get out alive."

Others fall on their knees in the middle of the big garden.

"Praying won't help," says Melvin. "It can't get above this smoke."

After three exhausting days, rains save the warehouse and the half-crop inside, for which Potter eventually gets $2 a barrel.

The doubtful future doesn't prevent Melvin and Auril from making their planned visit to the Columbian Exposition. Upon return, M.O. goes to work with teams and men and rebuilds the burned out beds.

M.O. Potter recalls that it happened on September 15. From "Bennett's Island," fire jumps three-quarters of a mile; he supposes the wind must have carried a burning limb from some tree. "Anyway the fire burned me out."

E.P. Arpin says Tom Nash's property is mortgaged to Vilas for $25,000 when they become partners in the development of the Nekoosa Paper Co. After Nash's vines are destroyed by fire, his cranberry growing enterprise is abandoned. Fortunately for Nash, the paper mill that was paid for in part by profits from the marsh is now productive enough to return the favor.

Dickerman to Vilas. "This country is on fire and we have fought it since Sunday morning with all the help we could get. I was in hopes to save the marsh until about four o'clock this morning when my heart failed me. The wind began to blow strong from the south and west, and our chances are looking pretty slim. I have just made a tour of inspection on horseback across the south end of marsh and feel that with great luck we can back fire and head it off."

The same day, he says, he dug a fire ditch that saved the shanty. "It was a miracle we saved the house and barn. We lost several tons of hay on the marsh and was lucky to get the mower and rake out. I think it is safe to say that our planted marsh is all right but we cannot tell how soon or where the fire may break out.

"Nashes man has been up and down our road with a load of men twice but has not done a d…d thing but plow around his hay stack. He said he had lived through a fire such as he never wished to see again but now they were safe. Our men fought like tigers."

What seemed to be safe is not. "The wind shifted and stirred up the smouldering fires in our dams and, before we could head them off, it took about ten acres. If we could have had a little water but, oh God, such a fire and no water.

"My men are played out. I shall try to get some fresh hands today to try and save some of our sod dams. The destruction north of us at Bars is complete. I hear that Nash lost everything, not a shingle left. Kohn and Kruger the same. I still think we were lucky."

Vilas chides him for not doing more back burning. Dickerman answers, "I mean we could not burn the whole plantation around and this fire that we have had was no ordinary fire. Where there was no grass or material to make fire, the earth burnt."

King Fire 1894

Again. Fires raging west of the city. *Enterprise,* July 28: Great heat and hot winds. Dr. G.F. Witter's marsh east of Elm Lake run over, also Spafford & Merrill's, some of Spafford & Trahern's—and the fire still blazing. Geo. B. McMillan's, the Daly & Sampson sawmill. "Huge volumes of smoke" in the western heavens: the fire is approaching the city…

Enterprise, August 7: Not since 1890 has a cranberry crop been a success in this county. Failure of wild marshes almost complete. Partial crops from cultivated acreage. Frost: on the Gaynor marsh all available water is utilized and intentional fires are kept burning all night; berries are saved this time.

Enterprise. August 18: The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association meets at the Grand Rapids city hall with few present, owing to fire danger. The only business is the organization of the Wisconsin Cranberry Trade Company to handle the crop of the stockholders and promote the interests of cranberry men generally. Dispensed with: services of Chicago commission merchants. Berries no longer to be rushed on the markets at ruinously low figures.

In August, the C.M. & St. Paul, formerly the Wisconsin Valley railroad, sends an extra force to patrol the track above and below Bearss Marsh, "on account of the extreme dryness." Cranberry and hay marshes that usually show standing water are so dry that even the reservoirs and deepest ditches are empty and have been for several weeks. Fires in both the timber and marsh districts have been "running in every direction," according to the *Wood County Reporter*, "until millions of dollars in property has been wiped out of existence."

"The cranberry marshes of Samuel Dufrane, M. Potter, Daly & Sampson, and others near Scranton suffered the common lot by the fires of Sunday and Monday. Dwellings, cranberry buildings and a good many acres of cultivated vines were included. Pickers had already commenced to arrive on some of the marshes but King fire gathered the harvest and quickly barreled them in smoke."

Burned over this time: Daly & Sampson, James E. Ingraham, M. Gordon. W.T. Jones, Lon Scribner, Wm. Boden and A.N. Cross. Buildings in most cases are saved but, in the view of the newspaper, "every cranberry marsh in that vicinity has been destroyed by the recent fires."

Sherman Whittlesey: "We did nothing all summer but fight fires. Cranberries ceased to grow and the vines nearly all perished in the winter of 1894 with no water and no snow. We plowed 100 acres of burned over marsh…and planted oats and potatoes."

●The fires move John Gaynor and E.P. Arpin to unite the growers in building a telephone line, defying the competing Bell Telephone Co.

●M.O. Potter rebuilds his marsh and readies 22 acres for planting. The vines start well but the hot dry season kills them. He replants 17 acres.

●One of the few resident growers, Andrew Searles, moves his family from Elm Lake to Grand Rapids/Centralia in late September so that his children can attend school during the winter.

●Lines are composed by R.E. McFarland on the death of Miss Orinda Cleveland and Mrs. Katherine Quinn, which occurred on the Valley Division of the C.M. & St. P.R.R., November 24, 1894. Retta Cleveland, a Port Edwards resident, was the second teacher at the Bearss school.

We started out to make the run
On freight train number ninety-one.
To Bearss Station soon we drew,
Past the sand-cut we fairly flew.
…
The bell it rang, the whistle blew,
A farmer's team appeared in view,
And close along the railroad side
Two ladies and a man did ride.
…
Right on the fiery monster went
As if on deadly mischief bent.
…
And from the track the horses threw,
High in the air the wagon flew.
…
Soon the trainmen gathered around,
Miss Cleveland's lifeless body found
Upon the ground, so young, so fair,
Her life's blood trickling through her hair.

Madness 1895

J.A. Gaynor and E.P. Arpin to A.E. Bennett & Son, Bearss, Wisconsin. The letter encloses a committee report on the cost of the recently-completed construction of a Wood County Telephone Co. line from Grand Rapids to Bearss.

The only way to succeed against Bell Telephone, says Arpin, is to tie up all users in an association and pledge them to stick together even if Bell offers free service—and, if necessary, to form their own cooperative company.

A.E. Bennett's daughters, Ruth and Beulah, are asked to speak into the new phone. Beulah finally comes up with something. "Have you broken your da da yet?" Ruth wonders what a "da da" is.

●Items from "Bearss Marsh."

Wood County Reporter, July 1895. S.N. Whittlesey observes the Fourth of July patriotically and pleasantly. Guests are Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Gaynor, E.E. Warner, A.E. Bennett, Wm. H. Fitch, Ed Kruger, S.A. Warner and families.

Others mentioned in the same issue are Tim Foley, D.R. Burr, C.E. Lester, Geo. and John Scott, Frank Austin, Wm. Skeel (who arrives to look over his marsh), Anton Brost and Jas. McLaughlin. "Under the efficient supervision of our recently appointed road overseer Ed. Kruger, we are glad to note the marked improvement in the roads in this vicinity."

August socials: a visit by Frank Daly of Centralia, and John Gaynor, who spends Sunday with his brother James Gaynor and several friends. A surprise party for Mr. and Mrs. C.E. Lester, attended by members of the Whittlesey, Bennett, Warner, Fitch, Skeel, Kruger, Foley, and Downs families. The John Baker family of Grand Rapids occupies the residence of Charles Kruger at Bearrs Station—Mr. Baker working for the St. Paul railroad.

Mrs. Stephen Warner, visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Rezin at Rudolph. Messrs. Snyder and Case of Grand Rapids, harvesting timothy, oats, and buckwheat on the Arpin marshes.

County superintendent R.A. Havenor, visiting district schools. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Rezin Jr. of Rudolph spending a few days on their marsh. Mrs. S.N. Whittlesey and her sons, Charlie, and Harry, driving down from Centralia for a night.

A.G. Carey, former resident and marsh owner, surprised to see threshing machines at work. John Arpin and Oscar Hathaway, out from Grand Rapids.

●A second school is built in the district. Ralph S. Smith, clerk, Eugene Warner, director and A.E. Bennett, treasurer. Teacher Maud Griffith is hired at a salary of $25 per month. The house of A. Bissig and A. Barger is leased for the first year's classes.

●James and John A. Gaynor lease land for use as a cranberry experimental station to the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, for three to 15 years at $12.50 per year. The Gaynors agree to board any employees of the station.

●*Because of fires*.

Ed Kruger is at the Vilas marsh attending to road matters. Recent fires have burned out bridges and culverts on the Babcock road. M.O. Potter, his plants killed again, has replanted. Mather and Bearss train stations are abandoned. J.A. Gaynor calls for the formation of a fire department and a resolution is written.

Tomah Journal. G.H. Kruschke of Cranberry Center asks for government aid. Of forty miles of cranberry land from Valley Junction to Grand Rapids, 90 percent is ruined. Land that was worth $100 an acre, now worth $1.

The future of cranberry growing hangs in the balance. In midsummer 1895, commentary "purporting to be written by Geo. Hiles," the Dexterville timber king, is published in the *Wood County Reporter*.

Hiles says he does not consider cranberry land worth one cent per acre. A success cannot be made in Northern Wisconsin because of frost that comes too late in spring and too early in fall, because of fires and fire worm and because no water can be depended upon to avoid those calamities.

His 3,000 acre marsh near Dexterville was "as nice a cranberry marsh as there was anywhere in the country," at a time when the only cost was to gather the berries and that was done by the Indians. Then, there was some profit. But, marshes get drier every year.

About twenty years previous, he figures, the Eldorado craze struck–the delusion that cultivation of cranberries is as good as a gold mine. But every man that went into the business "to his sorrow now sees where he was mistaken." Hiles says he knows the growers well; if they have no other business to depend on, nine out of ten are dead broke.

Like the others, Hiles begins to cultivate cranberry growing areas, but, after spending $15,000, gets sick of it. With nearly all the marshes well-drained and dry, undesirable grasses invade, vines dwindle and many marshes burn.

Hiles experiments by planting hay and grain and advises his friends to cultivate their marshes at once for farms "and you will soon retrieve the losses you have sustained trying to raise cranberry crops."

The *Reporter* responds that, if Hiles tries to buy out some of the growers in Wood County, he will learn his money will go but a short way.

"The fact is that Messrs. S.N. Whittlesey, A.C. Bennett & Son, Gaynor Bros., Arpin Bros., Searls Bros., Spafford & Trahern, T.E. Nash, Geo. B. MacMillan and many others that we could mention have made thousands of dollars in cultivating the cranberry. It is true that the cranberry crop for the past three years, due to excessive drouth, fire and frosts, has been a failure.

"But…if the cranberry man gets a good crop of berries once in five years he will make more money per acre than Mr. Hiles can on the best hay or farming land in the state of Wisconsin.

"There is no doubt but what the higher cranberry marshes would make better hay and farming lands than for the cultivation and growing of cranberries, but the heavy black peet marshes are best adapted for the cultivation of cranberries with a proper water supply."

The sage of the moor, A.C. Bennett, counsels his colleagues. During the past two years, he says, extensive fires have added to the dark side of cranberry growing a cloud that will remain forever.

"Some of us seek to compel the railroads to pay us for a few acres of burned vines, but this is as nothing compared to the burning of the thousands of acres of wild marsh with its thick covering of moss, and the hundreds of acres of thick tamarack and tangled alders which had been until now a protection for water

over which the winds could not sweep and the piercing rays of the sun could never penetrate to the soil."

Now…thousands of acres will be frozen like rock; the waters of early spring will glide over this hard surface. Winds will sweep over the burned district and howl through the dead tamaracks and alders, licking up the last drop of moisture and whirling it into thin air as it did the ashes last fall.

For those who have no water supply, he says, the sooner they quit the business the better.

On the bright side? Working with the experimental station, growers should be able to replant with better vines. There will be no "slush," by which he means poor-quality fruit, from the wild marshes. Fewer berries mean a high price.

And what about the millions of worms, millers, crickets, katydids and insects destroyed? That's gotta be good news.

Method 1896

Wood County Telephone Company organized. President: J.A. Gaynor. His former student and fellow cranberry grower, E.P. Arpin, treasurer. What had been a cooperative marsh line replaces Bell Telephone for the entire Grand Rapids/Centralia area.

●*Bearss Marsh correspondent to Wood County Reporter, summer 1896*: Mr. L.S. Cohn returns to his home at Wausau after a week on his marsh, supervising improvements. Chas. Kruger of Grand Rapids spends most of a week on his marsh. John Nash, also of Rapids—out to look over his marsh lands. A party at A.E. Bennett's includes the Clinton family, Mrs. Bennett's family. Mr. and Mrs. S.N. Whittlesey entertain her brother, George Downs, of Troy, N.Y. and Osmer Downs, a former Centralia resident, now of Chicago.

Timothy hay, harvested on the "Cohen" marshes. A.E. Bennett, visited by his father, A.C. Bennett. The new bridge over Cranberry Creek—a great improvement.

Richard and Dan Rezin spend a few days putting their marsh in shape for winter. "The cranberry marshes are all well protected with water and snow for the winter and conditions are most favorably for a good crop next season."

Richard Rezin has described growers who depend on "signs" during harvest season. If a whippoorwill calls at twilight, it's a sure sign of no frost. Sounds from the South, the low sounds—welcome to the ears; but the high sounds from the North, tinkling of a cowbell, ringing of an ax, barking of dogs, scolding of birds—all hands out for a night flooding the marshes.

●The crop of 1896 is miniscule, the effect of droughts and fires. The Berlin vicinity produces 9,000 barrels, Wood County, 500.

●The name of the Green Bay, Winona & Saint Paul Railroad is changed to Green Bay & Western Railroad.

●At the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association annual meeting in Grand Rapids, J.A. Gaynor speaks in favor of sinking a well at the experimental station, to be powered by a steam engine at a cost of $106.

Andrew Searles is authorized to make a map of the station and buy a record book to keep track of activities.

Five acres, a cranberry nursery, two twelve-foot windmills and an irrigating pump are added to Experimental Station Number One. About 80 varieties of cranberries have been planted.

Prof. F.H. King of the University of Wisconsin reads a paper about possible water supplies for the district, an area formerly wet, now too dry for cranberries.

Should it be abandoned to general farming? And why so dry? A general lowering of the water table by three to six feet.

One reason, King figures, is the falloff in annual rainfall, a deficiency of about five inches per year. Second, destruction of moss, humus and undergrowth from fires and the ax. Third, increased evaporation due to slight rain and hot summers. Fourth, an increasing number of wells sunk into the sandstone to supply nearby cities.

King concludes that marsh lands, if properly drained, can be productive for a while but sandy lands will be of value only if irrigated. Drainage systems in the works will lower the general level of ground water and make matters worse. What is needed is irrigation, not drainage.

Should farmers develop five-acre marshes on their homesteads? Expense will be high, but if done judiciously with a well and a windmill, it can be done.

President H.O. Kruschke: It was another year of drought, frosts and fire, like several preceding, remarkable in severity. “Evidently we are going from bad to worse, so far as cranberry growing is concerned. The abnormal climatic conditions have struck the cranberry grower harder than any other class of soil toilers. Our worthy vice president made the statement (and we all thought he was right) that a good crop of cranberries could be grown whenever a good crop of corn could be grown.

“It looks now as if Mother Nature had taken this statement as a challenge and to show that Mr. Spafford had figured without the host, she produced the greatest crop of corn in our history, while cranberries are scarce as hen’s teeth. Mr. Spafford neglected to put in this proviso, ‘if you have plenty of water.’

“We have emerged from the ‘barbaric state in cranberry culture’ as our friend Gaynor justly termed it. What we do from now on must be done systematically, based on scientific principles.

“We will commence at the bottom, from water to vines, then we will find berries to pick, and a market to dispose of them in.

“We will not seek to plant a thousand acres, but confine ourselves to such acres as we can properly control, and bring this up to its maximum productiveness. Then our best record of yields will be put in the shade.

“Our children will have reason to be thankful for these droughts and fires which brought method into cranberry culture.”

Saranac 1897

Saranac. July 8, 1897.

Through the influence of L.S. Cohn, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad changes the name of the station previously known as Bearss Station, to "Saranac."

The Bearss family has sold their marsh and moved to California, so naming rights are open. No one could spell or pronounce Bearss anyway.

"Saranac" would be familiar to a large number of the growers, who hail from the Empire State. Other known locations in the area have already taken New York names, such as Seneca, Saratoga, Friendship and Berlin.

Leopold Cohn and his son-in-law emerge in the newspapers as leading citizens of Saranac, Wisconsin, though Cohn is primarily a resident of Wausau and Haskell Bick lives in Milwaukee. Cohn's business trip to Hartford, Wisconsin, and Berlin, Wisconsin, the erstwhile cranberry capital, is duly reported.

Previously, a picturesque accident reported in a Grand Rapids newspaper introduced the Bick name to local readers. A "Mr. Bick," presumably Haskell's father, an old acquaintance of Mr. Silber of Grand Rapids, attempted to board a passenger train at Junction City but missed his footing and fell between cars. His right leg was crushed as a car wheel passed over it.

When Mr. Bick was taken to the Witter hotel in Rapids, "his people" came down with two physicians from Wausau. The limb was amputated below the knee by Drs. Witter and Lockwood of Rapids in the presence of Bick's Wausau physicians and friends.

Against local medical advice, the patient was taken to Wausau by special train. The injury proved to be fatal to the something over 60-year-old Bick.

●The harvest estimates are well under way in mid-September, the price being 40 cents per box. Growers are thankful for at least a partial crop, following all the bad years and burnouts. An estimate from an August growers meeting predicts the following:

A.C. Bennett & Son, 1,000 barrels; Searls Bros., 800 barrels; Pomainville & Briere, 500; Gaynor Bros., 200; C.E. Lester, 200; Ralph Smith, 100; M.H. Lynn, 100; E. Bessig, 100; John Andrews, 100; H. Oleson, 100; Arpin estate, 50; Wm. Skeels, 50; Rezin Bros., 50; Mrs. Wm. Stout, 50.

No mention of Cohn or Bick.

●The WSCGA summer convention is held at Gaynor marsh, 60 attending. Estimated crop, 16,000 barrels, 2,000 of this in Wood County. A.C. Bennett, of Appleton, speaks.

Senator Vilas introduces a bill for a tariff on European berries and a reciprocal treaty with Canada.

Kruschke says the prospects of the cranberry industry around Berlin, thought to be a thing of the past, have received a new lease on life "and bids fair

to be as great in the near future as in its palmiest days." Reconstruction of dams and replanting of vines; water supplied by a pumping plant on the old Sacket marsh now owned by Stanley; it's an industry awakening from its Rip Van Winkle sleep.

H.W. Remington tells growers he wants to create large reservoirs for growers through a company yet to be organized; but his bodily infirmities hinder him.

"I am aware that these spasms, pains and aches of mine are the jingling of the bells that soon may call me to the doom awaiting all, but I hope that by care, caution and quiet I will be able to delay the final summons long enough to see cranberry culture well enough under way in the right direction to insure its final success."

Cranmoor 1898

Cranmoor.

After May 28, 1898, it's the name of Bearss Marsh post office—what had been, for a short time, Saranac.

Some say it's coined by Julia (Mrs. William H.) Fitch of the Cranmoor Cranberry Company by combining "cranberry" and "moor." There is already at least one "Cranmoor" in the United States, a rural location in the cranberry growing region of New Jersey with which the Fitches are familiar.

In June, 1898, "Cranmoor" correspondence replaces the former "Bearss Marsh" and "Saranac" columns in the *Wood County Reporter*.

Some familiar names: Fitch, Dodge, Lester, Whittlesey, Smith, Bennett and Potter. Mr. and Mrs. L.M. Alexander, of banking and paper mill fame, visit Mr. and Mrs. A.E. Bennett. Former resident John Theodore Bearss—now in Tulare County, California, interested in citrus growing.

●J.A. Gaynor is elected county judge, henceforth commonly referred to as "Judge Gaynor."

●At the August meeting of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, the industry is characterized as "live and important." At least 30 marshes are represented, with predicted crops ranging from 80 to 1,500 barrels.

The *Reporter* describes teams hurrying over turnpikes to Gaynor's marsh, each with its carriage load of men "interested in the wholesome, pretty red fruit that nestles deep in the moss bogs."

At Gaynor's, the growers gather in little knots to compare notes and exchange ideas or they tour the marshes, while wives and daughters arrange a long row of white, flower-covered tables in the "cranberry house."

"The cranberry growers and their friends are kings among men, certainly the ladies treated them as such."

Judge Gaynor discusses a new plan for marketing berries that would have one general agent representing all dealers. Selling berries is a business that has to be learned as a separate art from growing, he says. Individual growers cannot apply their whole time to marketing their crop.

Gaynor says the sizes of picking boxes, barrels and bushels should be standardized and that pickers be paid 40 cents per box, adding 10 percent to those who stay on the same marsh throughout the season.

James Gaynor and others show growers the Busby mill and graders, a process based on the principle that sound berries will bounce over barriers and bad berries will continue down the line.

A.E. Bennett notes there has been plenty of water in the present year and philosophizes on the tendency of nature to restore itself to a healthy, normal condition.

●Estimated crop from shipping points for 1898: Berlin, 8,000; Mather and Meadow Valley, 3,700 barrels; Cranmoor, 2,720; Elm Lake, 2,450; Valley Junction, 1,400; Cranberry Center, 1,350; City Point, 580; Black River Falls, 150; Nekoosa, 80.

●A stock company for selling general merchandise is incorporated under the name of Johnson & Hill Company. Nels Johnson, George Hill and Jere Witter are joined by Charles F. Kruger, August C. Otto and Daniel McKercher.

●A school building is built by B.P. Clinton on land purchased from A. Bissig for $20. The six pupils enjoy the services of Maude Griffith as teacher.

Profits 1899

His friends in Cranmoor are shocked—when Leopold S. Cohn dies of Bright's disease at his Wausau home, as reported June 22, 1899.

Although ailing for some time, he had been at Cranmoor only the week previous with his wife and planned to return for the summer, but was taken sick and sent to Wausau for treatment.

In April, Cohn and his son-in-law, Haskell Bick, also of Wausau, had been at Cranmoor, shipping water from their "Oak Lane mineral spring."

L.S. Cohn: a Prussian native, immigrated to the U.S. with his parents. Settled at Berlin, Wisconsin, in 1856, as the cranberry craze flared up. In 1858, moved to Milwaukee. After two years, went into business, buying furs, wool and produce.

Cohn makes Berlin his headquarters to buy and sell land and lumber in 1869 as the Wood County cranberry district is targeted for marketing to area investors. In 1872, he marries Idella Bick, moves to Milwaukee, then to Wausau, becoming one of the first developers of granite quarries at "the Heights," north of the Marathon County wood burg.

More from the Cranmoor Correspondent: W.H. Fitch, secretary of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, is visited often by relatives from St. Louis, Louisville, and Massachusetts. He corresponds with New Jersey growers and tabulates a table of crop forecasts for the entire United States. His son, attorney Henry Fitch, travels to Madison and Milwaukee on business.

S.N. Whittlesey: "drives" to the "twin cities." Richard Rezin: builds a new house. Thos. Rezin: work progresses on his residence. O.W. Dodge comes out

from Port Edwards to look at his marsh. School opens in Cranmoor with full attendance, Miss Lillian Smith of Centralia in charge. D.R. Burr brings a car load of cranberry vines from his Berlin marsh. Wm. Skeel of Centralia, out for a few days. A.R. Kruschke, to Necedah.

D.J. Arpin, E.P. Arpin, and the Arpin estate sell their cranberry lands to their brother, John B. Arpin, and sister, Mrs. Mary de Nevers, 1,600 acres of which 50 is in "planting marsh."

The oldest inhabitant of Cranmoor has been New York native Samuel Hopkins Downs. The former Chicago contractor and architect dies at the home of his daughter, Ann D. Whittlesey, as reported August 31, 1899.

King George III had given Downs' grandfather a tract of land known later as Snow Hill, Maryland. His maternal grandfather is credited with being one of George Washington's bodyguards.

Downs always had firm faith in the cranberry industry, according to the *Wood County Reporter*, even after fires and dry seasons that seemed to have delivered a death blow to cranberrying and caused many to propose draining the land for other agricultural purposes.

●*January, the twelfth annual meeting of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, in the city hall council chamber at Grand Rapids.*

Among those attending from out of town are past president H.O. Kruschke of Berlin, W.H. Gebhart of Black River Falls; and Judd Wait of Embarrass, Waupaca County.

President A.C. Bennett being absent in Orlando, Florida, Vice President Charles Briere presides. A Montreal native, Briere had come to Wood County in 1866 as a carpenter, working with mill owner Francis Biron, later moving into general merchandise. The Briere & Pomainville cranberry marsh is located near the new Green Bay railroad village of City Point, west of Cranmoor.

Charles Briere recounts a visit to Berlin in July 1897 with E.P. Arpin. Briere and Arpin meet with James Cary, post master and former cranberry man and visit H.P. Stanley Co. now owner of the former Sacket marsh and the Fitch, Palmetier & Co. marsh. They inspect a large steam plow invented by Kruschke and view crews of girls planting and weeding new vines. The Palmetier marsh has been overwhelmed by weeds and "foul stuff," according to Briere.

J.A. Gaynor, Andrew Searls and A.E. Bennett are to secure enactment before the state legislature of changes to the standard barrel, crate and bushel. The "Cape Cod barrel" will be 100 quarts; the crate or picking box as used in New Jersey—32 quarts; a bushel—32 pounds.

A vote of thanks is extended to the Wisconsin and Milwaukee weather bureaus for weather reports sent during the growing season.

J.A. Gaynor shows 60 varieties of berries grown at Experimental Station No. 1. His report to the Wisconsin State Horticultural society shows that a quarter acre has been scalped, sanded and divided into squares for planting.

Vines have been collected by writing to Massachusetts, Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin—looking for anything that

might replace or supplement the local Searls Jumbo. One Eastern variety is doing pretty well: McFarlin.

J.A. Gaynor reads the report of his brother, James Gaynor, regarding Experimental Station No. 1. The University experimental station at Madison is interested in planting a few square rods of cranberry vines which will be studied for insects and disease. Andrew Searls, manager of nearby Experimental Station No. 2, also presents a report.

A letter is presented from A.C. Bennett, Orlando, Florida. In the old days, he says, wild marshes poured "slush" on the market, berries that had been raked roughly and handled improperly, without sorting or grading, thus compelling all growers to accept a low price.

"Some of us sought to establish a personal reputation…by the use of certain brands and trade marks," Bennett says, naming Standard, Bouquet, Metallic Bell and Star. But unscrupulous rivals apply the same brands to bad berries. Standards in marketing and price should help solve the problem.

"I hope the association will express its gratitude to the weather bureau of Milwaukee for their kindness in furnishing special reports to the Marsh Line Telephone Co.," urges Bennett, "and also to the faithful operators at the central office who so kindly forwarded them."

Crop report of past season: at Bearss—Bennett & Son, 2,200 bbls.; Rezin Bros., 720; Surrounding marshes, 285; Arpin, 150; S. N. Whittlesey, 50.

At Elm Lake, 2,400; Daly, 165; City Point, 637; Nekoosa, 150; Berlin, 13,000; Black River Falls, 165; Millston, 40; Warrens, 415; Dr. Standberry & Co., 1,000.

WSCGA officers elected: President, Charles Briere; Vice-President, S.N. Whittlesey; Secretary, W.H. Fitch; Treasurer, M.O. Potter.

The August convention, at Gaynor marsh, is now referred to as the Annual Summer Meeting.

●The dry years of the early 1890s seem to have passed. Heavy June rains, "have kept the marsh lands well filled up this season and marsh owners are busy getting the water off and down on the cranberry sections of the marsh."

Enough of M.O. Potter's vines survive from his 1895 planting that he harvests 96 barrels. The largest crop in Arpin marsh history is expected for 1899, "if frosts keep away."

A correspondent for the *Chicago Record* reports that berries have never been gathered under more favorable conditions. Although, in previous years, forest fires and drought damaged or destroyed 90 percent of the vines, the crop has rebounded and will be nearly as large as that of 1890, the banner year.

As will be reiterated by numerous observers, the fires have caused a major shift in the approach to cranberrying: the bulk of the crop in 1890 was from wild marshes; most of the 1899 crop comes from cultivated varieties, "of much finer flavor and appearance."

Essentially starting from scratch, the industry continues to develop under "serious scientific consideration." Furthermore, prices are good. Considering

the bullish pronouncements, the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, through secretary W.H. Fitch, encourages expansion.

Wood County Reporter: You can tell the cranberry grower on the streets of Grand Rapids/Centralia, "by his hustling activity, by the numerous mail orders he carries in hand for the fruit which his marshes have produced in large crops proportionate to the acre investment and the yield of other years. His purse is bulged with the golden reaping and his success is directly felt in business circles. The picker, transporter, the merchant and the community have all been benefited more or less by a good crop with good profits."

Spafford & Trahern at Walker Station harvest about 1,500 barrels: Searls Brothers, next door at Elm Lake, 1,400 barrels; Lipke & Williams, 300 barrels; Pomainville & Briere at City Point between 1,100 and 1,200 barrels. Missing are many familiar pre-fire names, not to be seen again in the Eldorado.

Chicago Record special correspondent, E.J. Dean, the guest of W.H. Fitch, makes copious notes. The crop of the cranberry district, which is about two miles wide and seven long, is nearly all secured in the cranberry houses, he says. At the lowest estimate, the net profit will be at least $100 an acre.

"There is probably no business today in the farming line in Wisconsin that pays so well as raising cranberries. A.C. Bennett & Son, whose cranberry marsh is five miles north of Cranmoor, raised, this season, on seventy acres, 2,400 barrels of cranberries, which are now gathered and in their storehouse, and, if sold at present prices, would bring about $14,000, and as the expenses of raising the 2,400 barrels would not exceed $5,000, he will realize a good profit."

All other cranberry growers in the district have done proportionately well this season. Gaynor-Blackstone company, 1,600 barrels on thirty acres; C.E. Lester & Co., 800 barrels on twenty acres: Arpin Cranberry company, 1,000 barrels on thirty acres; W.H. Fitch & Son, ninety barrels on…"

Less bad news than usual. The problem that reduced output, Dean says, is blight, caused by leaving the water over the vines after the buds had begun to open. "Mr. Gaynor" estimates the loss to be 600 barrels out of 2,200. And on to the rest of the enemies list: insects, grasshoppers, fire and fruit worms, forest fires (diminishing) and hard economic times during which cranberries are seen as a too-pricey luxury.

Dean dubs Judge John A. Gaynor of Grand Rapids the premier cranberry authority. Gaynor explains that northern Wisconsin has produced more wild cranberries than any equal area "and they are the best of the kind of any in the world."

The dry seasons of 1893, 1894 and 1895 contributed to forest fires that wiped out 90 percent of the wild vines. Since then, the great bulk grown had been in planted vines.

Gaynor tells Dean there are three leading species of berries in Wisconsin, two of which are marketed; 140 varieties have been collected at the experimental station. The hope is to produce new varieties by hybridizing.

●WSCGA secretary W.H. Fitch compiles a list of all cranberry growers in the U.S. who cultivate 2.5 acres or more. The thousand names are provided to the U.S. census bureau and will be printed for merchants and dealers.

Fitch estimates that production for 1899 will be: New England, 190,000 barrels; New Jersey, 70,000; the West, including Cranmoor, 35,000. Shortly, Fitch receives a letter from a New Jersey grower, who says the 70,000 figure is too high. Bad news. Just like happened so often in Fitch's own back yard, early frosts have taken a toll.

●Telephone book. Customers of Wood County Telephone Company, Grand Rapids and Centralia Exchange, Cranberry Marsh Line:

Arpin, John, Estate; Bennett, A.C. & Son; Central Telephone Office; Gaynor, James; Kruger, Edward; Lester, Chas. E.; Warner, Stephen; Whittlesey, S.N.; Poor Farm, Wood Co.

All answer to the same number, "99."

World of Change 1900

"We live in a world of change.

"I expect to live to see the day when we will use a specially constructed automobile to mow our woody vines with a band saw, burn up, change the rig and use it to prune out vines and later change the platform and use it to pick cranberries with at the same time, delivering them all nicely cleaned into boxes behind the machine, while we ride around like gentlemen and later visit the eastern marshes in our private air ship taking our friends along with us." *A.C. Bennett*

Low Prices and Possible Combinations, by Judge John A. Gaynor in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*:

"There is nothing strange in the low price of cranberries during the past season. This phase of the industry has been gradually approaching for some years past, and it undoubtedly has come to stay. Of the many wild fruits that have been domesticated, and brought into general use during the past quarter century, the cranberry is among the latest, and it is but following the path taken by the banana, the lemon, the orange, the plum and the grape.

"Every man whose memory reaches back over forty years has witnessed the enormous increase in the production and consumption of all kinds of fruits, and in many kinds that were almost unknown to his grandfathers. The cranberry is only one of the hundred that might be named. The history of the development of one is the history of all.

"At first the cranberry yielded to the growers' large profits. This led to increased production. The supply has at last overtaken the demand.

"The market price has sunk to the level of the cost of production, and is likely for awhile to pass below that point, but it cannot possibly remain there long. It will soon reach its normal level, which is a fair compensation for the labor and skill engaged in producing it.

"The industry is now in the hard school of adversity, from which it will emerge shorn of its speculative features. Those who survive will survive on account of superior skill in producing and marketing the fruit, and I think that the western growers have a decided advantage over their eastern competitors.

"In the first place we have cheaper land, and it costs less to prepare it for planting; we have a slight advantage over them on freights and we shall soon be able to place upon the market superior varieties.

"Cranberry growing admits of unlimited increase in production, and any organization, combination or trust formed for the purpose of increasing the price and profits, carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction; but if this industry follows the path pursued by other fruit growing industries, combinations will doubtless soon be formed for the purpose of lessening the cost of production, and the cost of marketing.

"Already the effort has been made to combine the growers upon the Wisconsin valley, in the matter of grading, packaging and marketing their fruit; but the degree of organization reached is much inferior to that already secured by the fruit growers of California, or the grape growers of New York; but we have every reason to believe that the increase of skill and intelligence will lead to higher and higher organization for the above purposes but nothing in the nature of an ordinary trust is possible in this industry."

●Two of three experimental station plantings are abandoned. The one at Gaynors' continues, under a program of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association.

●In an attempt to characterize the cranberry as a healthful food, a Grand Rapids observer notes that, although they labor in cold, wet conditions, pickers seem seldom to fall prey to illness.

●A tourist train stops "at the big cranberry marshes at Cranmoor" but precipitation prevails and the party doesn't leave the train. A basket of vines covered with green berries are passed through the cars, a novelty to many of the party who have never viewed a cranberry plant.

●C.E. Lester, a Grand Rapids/Centralia livery man, purchases a bog from Steve Warner. Lester is a partner with realtor George Paulus and with Nels Johnson and George Hill who are also joined in the mercantile firm of Johnson & Hill, founded the previous year.

●Picking continues into mid-October, because of the scarcity of pickers and superabundance of water. Some growers adapt by raking "in the water."

"Higher Prices and Quick Sales Make Growers Feel Foxy." President Charles Briere of the growers association reports the crop has been almost all sold and shipped, to Kansas City, St. Paul, Minneapolis, La Crosse, Chicago and Western markets.

●Heavy rains and high water take their toll on local roads, which seem to be in a continual process of rehabilitation. So many miles of bad road for so few land owners and taxpayers.

The general belief is that the owners of high land in adjacent properties are reluctant to fund the needs of the sparse swampland residents. Movements are afoot to form various townships. Petitions are heard by Wood County government and a committee on town organization is formed.

●*Notes from the federal census (often illegible)—*

Town of Port Edwards:

George Scott, 52, born in New York, owner of home, wife Mary, 47, Pennsylvania. Son-in-law Timothy Foley, 34, born in Wisconsin of New York parents. His wife, Frona, 34, Wisconsin. Their seven children.

Charles? Zirbel?, 27, cranberry grower, 1874 immigrant from Germany, three laborers living with him.

James Gaynor and Maggie [McGovern], his wife, born in Minnesota: Thomas Mcgovern, 46, Minnesota, "cranberry grower" and two Irish laborers, Hugh Clancy and Charter Broughton. One Swiss farm laborer, Jacob Gardiner. Of German background: laborers John and George Finger; Bertha Denske, 15, servant; Charles Denske, 12, a laborer. Jacob Emmerick, 31, cranberry grower immigrated in 1883; Henry Goetzinger, 17, laborer.

Edward Kruger, cranberry grower, wife Gemima? Germany, and Florence, Charles, Edward, Clinton, Minnie and Harrison.

Robert Skeel, cranberry grower, Pennsylvania, wife Alvilla?

Sherman Whittlesey, cranberry grower, Pennsylvania, wife Annie D. and Charles S., a schoolteacher, Harry, a cranberry grower and Harriet, a school teacher.

Daniel Rezin, cranberry grower, wife Flory?, and Pearl and Roy?

Richard Rezin, cranberry grower, wife Pearl, and Edna, Lloyd, Isibell and Lesslie.

Thomas Rezin, Canada, cranberry grower, wife Jane.

Robert Rezin, cranberry grower, wife Mary, and William, Robie, and Ruth.

William H. Fitch, Indiana, cranberry grower, wife Julia. And Joseph W. cranberry grower, Julia, school teacher, his mother from Ireland, and his sister, Caroline.

Arthur Bennett, his wife and children, Eva, Emory, Ruth, Raymond and Ermon. And Andrew Bissig, a laborer who had come from Switzerland in 1885. Boardman Clinton, Arthur's father-in-law.

Charles Lester, his wife, Margret, and children Roy and Bernice, mother-in-law Elizabeth Shafer, and Maud Griffith, 24, school teacher.

In Seneca, Swiss including Antonn Whipfli, Adam Kundert, John Ritz, Joseph Shelter. Of Frank and Barbara Zurfluh's ten children, four are laborers in a paper mill. One is a farmer, two are farm laborers and one a saloon keeper.

Ralph Smith, wife, Pauline and Clara, Edna, Mary

Eugene Warner, wife Mary, and Lillian and a son.

Also in Seneca, Albert Viertel and family.

●Grand Rapids merges with Centralia as "Grand Rapids."

Drainage District 1901

Remington, Henry Williams.

Death of a pioneer. Remington lived and died near Babcock, in the township of Remington, named for himself. Instrumental in building the Wisconsin Valley railroad, he had also been a partner with Judge L.B. Vilas, father of Col. William F., the U.S. senator and Cranmoor-area cranberry grower.

An Ohio native experienced in mishaps, Remington found himself captured by both sides of the Mormon War in Illinois. As a speculator, he made some money and lost as much, through ill health, mishaps and a miscellany of problems. His wife, insane from typhoid fever; his property, destroyed by fire; a bank, failure; and the railroad he had invested in, gone to new owners.

●*Grand Rapids*. Mrs. A.C. Bennett purchases a corner lot on Oak and Sycamore across from the M.E. (Methodist) church, planning to build a residence the following year. She and A.C. are winter residents of DeFuniak Springs, Florida.

●*Camping*. Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Whittlesey spend ten days with friends from Dexterville and Tomahawk. While Harriet Whittlesey is home alone, lightning strikes a pine tree, splintering a large joist in the house, knocking plaster off the wall and giving Harriet a severe shock. Fortunately, a Mr. Jasperson rides to the marsh on a bicycle equipped for the train rails, affording the comfort only a future husband can provide.

●Father and Mrs. Kroll visit the home of Thomas Rezin in Cranmoor to baptize Jone (?) and Glenn Weiser, niece and nephew of Mr. and Mrs. Dan Rezin. Father Kroll hopes to establish a mission in the vicinity.

●Some 1,400 acres, owned before 1873 by Seth Spafford of Grand Rapids, have been sold to Ed Lipke, a merchant, and George R. Williams, a lawyer. Spafford owns a store in Rapids and marsh land with Lipke, Williams and Dr. G.F. Witter.

●Mrs. L.S. Cohn, and Mr. Bick stop at their marsh for a few days, in order to ship a quantity of their Oaklane mineral water.

●Albert Viertel, an Altdorf resident from Germany, weds Mary Wipfli from Switzerland. Mary is a sister of Pauline, wife of Ralph S. Smith, and Hattie, wife of Nicholas Wirtz. Viertel manages the Elm Lake Cranberry Co.

●At the office of Judge John A. Gaynor, four grower neighbors—Gaynor, Bennett, Lester and Smith—incorporate a fifth property, Elm Lake Cranberry Company, to insure rights to Hemlock Creek. Stockholders are A.E. Bennett, Ralph Smith, C.E. Lester, G.W. Paulus, a realtor, and G.M. Hill, a partner in the Gaynor, Lester and Emmerick marshes and in the Rood dredging company.

Also named stockholder/partner is Nels Johnson, Hill's partner in the Johnson & Hill store and a founder of the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. in Grand Rapids.

Lester owns a livery in Grand Rapids and is a stockholder in the Lester Cranberry Co., managed by himself. C.E. Lester & Co. pays $2,000 for Geo. B. McMillan's 240 acres of cranberry land, south of Lester's other marshes.

The *Wood County Reporter* finds Mr. and Mrs. Lester at their "pleasant" home, set upon a mound from which they enjoy "an impressive vista."

The Lester company now owns 19 forties, plus half of four other forties and one-quarter of 29 more forties. About 65 acres are planted to vines.

"Charley" Lester expects to have 300 pickers for whom he is adding a "cranberry house." The hope is a harvest of 3,000 barrels.

The writer is astonished to see acres of vines loaded with big, beautiful berries that form a carpet over the top. To realize that one night's frost might "wipe them off the earth is enough to make a man's turn gray."

According the *Reporter*, old timber jacks wondered what people would live on when the pine was gone. "By certain wise-acres the early experimenters with cultivated cranberries were looked upon as visionaries whose only profits would be that derived from the fleeting pleasure of indulging their day dreams.

"Today only the grower of cultivated cranberries is making any money out of the business. They have no fear of draining the marshes because they have a system of reservoirs that would not be effected by the drainage system.

"But there is a wise-acre abroad today who says the soil of the marshes is sour and no amount of draining would make it productive. The visionary should be patient with these wise men and teach them by actual demonstration that their fears of failure and disaster are groundless."

●*Remington Drainage District.* Now that rainfall has returned, the land returns to its normal state. The few roads that wind from island to island are often impassable and are used mainly in winter and in cranberry harvest time.

Judge Chas. Webb, father-in-law of J.A. Gaynor, and cranberry grower, grants a petition for a drainage district expected to transform 27,000 acres of "worthless swamp land" into a valuable agricultural district.

●The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association summer meeting is held at the Gaynor brothers' marsh. Visitors spend the morning inspecting the experiment station. A "feast," presided over by Mesdames A. Searles, R. Rezin, E. Warner and F. Moore, is held in the first-floor "long room" of the Gaynor storehouse. Waiters are young men and ladies of the community.

A visitor from Cape Cod tells the meeting that the Massachusetts bogs are almost clear of grass and weeds and thus less costly to harvest. Ernest Peycke, a buyer from Kansas City, says Wisconsin berries are better flavored, better keepers and weigh more per barrel.

In the evening, young people, many of whom have come out from Grand Rapids, are invited to Bennett's "ranch" about a mile distant—where a jolly dance ensues until an early hour in the morning.

●At harvest: whole German farm families from Sigel—Brehm, Hafermann, Schultz, Zieman, Koch, Schilter. "Four-Mile Creekers" from Kellner, Nekoosa-

ites. Poles from Stevens Point and Junction City. Altdorf Switzers. Oneida from the Green Bay area.

But 1901 is a bad year for the Winnebago. Quarantined with smallpox at their "reservation," near Black River Falls, Wisconsin, they are destitute, dependent for revenue on work in the blueberry, corn and cranberry marshes.

For the more fortunate, picking season is considered a summer outing. Many large marshes have dance halls, featuring the music of fiddle, accordion, organ—provided by the grower and concluding at 10 p.m., or midnight on Saturday.

Warrens Index: During picking season, the brick oven at Warner's attracts a lot of attention with 69 loaves baking at once. *The pickers shall be well fed.*

By October, the picking season has closed. The output for the Cranmoor and Elm Lake districts appears to be 18,260 barrels, exceeding the previous high in 1890 of 13,400. Maybe, maybe not.

Photo this page: Sept. 1, 1901. Rear left, A.E. Bennett, Ruth Bennett (Corey), Mrs. A.E. Bennett, Erm Bennett (child). Standing, left, Eva Bennett (Potter). Right, Em Bennett, Ray Bennett. *SWCHC*

Photo on following two pages: 1902 Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association Summer Meeting at Bennett's marsh. *SWCHC*

Cranberry Idyll 1902

Coming by rail to Grand Rapids, from the south or west, the traveler is unfavorably impressed by the long stretches of low, flat, uninhabited lands on either side so far as he can see. And well he may be, for a more dreary expanse of country is hard to find.

This is the *Wood County Reporter's* view of the cranberry moors of a few years previous: swamp interspersed with small, higher "islands" that have been logged off, lots of little tamarack and spruce trees, marsh grasses. In wet seasons, it's one big, flat, floating bog—a 450 square-mile triangle from Grand Rapids to City Point and south to Camp Douglas.

After the advent of the Green Bay and Valley railroads, the vast marsh changes character.

The trains provide "good carriage" for the cranberries growing so profusely. Once in market, high prices are to be had. The result is that marsh land is eagerly purchased from the state by those who see promise of the Eldorado.

For the first twenty years, cranberry men seek to improve the wild marshes by digging elaborate systems of ditches and building hundreds of miles of surface dams. But, after the ditching, comes a sequence of dry seasons, during which the floating bog converts to solid marsh. Then, fires destroy the surface vegetation. For several more years, the burned-out land is too dry on top for wild cranberries.

With nothing of commercial value growing, owners seek profit from property too dry in the short term but too wet much of the time for farm crops. A better drainage system is needed for anything more than marsh hay and moss.

Other areas have applied for the status of drainage district. Land owners in the town of Remington, adjacent to the Cranmoor district, follow suit.

Petitioners from Remington are represented by lawyers John A. Gaynor and B.M. Vaughan, before Gaynor's father-in-law, Judge Chas. M. Webb, in Grand Rapids. When Webb decides in their favor, the land owners, "confidently expect to change this uninhabitable, worthless, useless, miasmatic swamp into the finest, richest and most productive farm and garden land."

Thus, the Remington Drainage District, organized September 2, 1902.

●The Wisconsin Cranberry Growers Association meets in January, led by C. Briere, W.H. Fitch, M.O. Potter, A.C. Bennett and J.A. Gaynor. In attendance, former president H.O. Kruschke, now of Dexterville, where he has moved to start a marsh for J.K.P. and Frank Hiles.

The group wants more state money. The $250 for the experimental station at Cranmoor pays a small part of the expense, the balance borne by individual members of the association.

J.A. Gaynor writes to Prof. A.R. Whitson at the University of Wisconsin and invites him to the August meeting of the association at the Experimental Station: "While it is largely a 'picnic' outing for our wives and children, several

topics of interest to cranberry growers will be discussed at a session of the members."

The 16th annual summer meeting takes place at the Blackstone-Gaynor marsh, "at which time they give out their best estimate of the prospective crop, and enjoy a social time and spread a most attractive banquet to members of the association, their wives, children and friends." About 300 attend the picnic dinner under the management of Mrs. M.O. Potter and Mrs. Andrew Searls.

Charles Briere presides for the fifth time, recalling that, after drought and fires destroyed the wild marshes, "quite a number of us did not feel as joyful as we are to-day. We encouraged each other to replant our bogs and we have devised some means by which we now all get as much and some more water than we had before the big drought."

Briere credits John A. Gaynor for the Experimental Station "now in a satisfactory state." A dozen or more varieties of vines have been selected from over 100, based on shape, size, color and keeping qualities.

Association secretary W.H. Fitch praises the women who put on the feed.

"It goes without saying that whatever the Wisconsin Cranberry women put their heads, hearts and hands to must be an unqualified success. For of all women, the Wisconsin cranberry women stand at the head, purified as it were by fire and having had so many bright anticipations frosted…"

The "moral support" of the organization is given to a "journal" of cranberry growing to be published by its secretary, William H. Fitch.

A.U. Chaney attends the summer meeting, representing Peyke Bros. Meeting John A. Gaynor on the Grand Rapids bridge is the first time he has come face to face with a cranberry grower, he says.

"Looking for someone?"

"I am enroute to find Judge Gaynor."

"I am your man, and we are late, so jump in and we'll be going."

On the way to the picnic and back, Gaynor mesmerizes Chaney with an introduction to the story of cranberries in Wisconsin.

Later that fall, Chaney returns to buy berries, beginning in Tomah and working toward Grand Rapids.

Growers listen politely but will commit to nothing. They ask whether Chaney has bought the Gaynor crop and when he answers in the negative, the growers always seem to say, "We'll let you know."

Chaney, trained to buy cheap, does not expect to pay the same "for all I bought." But now he realizes he must procure the Gaynor crop first. So, he calls on the Judge, who in lawyerly fashion pumps him dry, how much he ought to make on the crop, etc.

Chaney meets with Gaynor several times, trying to get a lower price, but no luck. He has to buy Gaynor's berries at full market price and, what's worse, Gaynor reserves the privilege of telling the other growers what he sold for—and suggests they should hold for the same price. Furthermore, Gaynor speaks to Chaney about organizing a sales company of their own.

●C.L. Shear, assistant pathologist in the agriculture department "at Washington," arrives to study diseases of the cranberry plant.

●The first chemicals used in Cranmoor for weed control are iron and copper sulfates.

●*Undated commentary of A.C. Bennett.*

"I came here in 1869 and soon caught the cranberry fever and I bought the forty acres where our buildings now stand, and expected to get rich enough in four or five years to retire and live on the interest of my money. But alas, I am at it yet, and like the cotton planters in slavery times, borrowed money to pick our crops with.

"I took my son in as partner when he was under seventeen.

"Neighbors came in fast and we soon found that we had to buy (as the saying is) all the land that joined us to keep them from cutting off our water supply and to protect ourselves from fires.

"Not one in sixteen of the cranberry growers of Wisconsin have made a success of the business.

"In the commercial reports for the early seventies we find twenty-two parties at Berlin, Wisconsin, reported as cranberry growers and worth from $5,000 to $250,000 each. Today there is not one. The main marshes are owned by Mrs. Mary P. Stanley, of Chicago. There are other parties there that grow cranberries, but they have other businesses that so far over shadow their interest in cranberries that they are not rated as cranberry growers.

"In nearly every county in the state of Wisconsin we find abandoned cranberry marshes of large extent.

"In Winnebago county, in one township alone, there are over 1,000 acres that were once entered for cranberries, and most of it ditched and dammed; and about 100 acres planted. In 1894 and 1895, I sold about 900 acres of these marshes at $5 per acre after the parties had held it twenty-one to twenty-five years, with all the improvements thereon. The owners were living in New York city, some in Illinois and Beloit, Wisconsin…

"Colonel Vilas, whom you know as a smart business man, in the early 90's invested some thirty-five or forty thousand dollars in Wood county, and abandoned it after planting eighty acres or more. The muck lay on top of quick sand, and when the drought came all his vines dried up and died.

"Hundreds of acres of marsh near Grand Rapids, Wisconsin, used to produce cranberries where not a vine can be found now.

"In 1893 at our annual convention there were 84 present now we get about 35.

"On the experiment station itself we find a large amount of tree moss, the result of sanding it from the nearby low lands. To pull it out disturbs the cranberry roots so that they do not do well. To leave it in means to abandon the whole thing. The result is that the selected varieties on the experiment station considering the high quality of the vines, have produced the poorest lot of berries known anywhere.

"If the one who planned the station had known what they know now, they would sooner have hauled sand forty miles than to have used such as they did. The berries are not near as fine as the ones raised on the old experiment station from which they were planted…"

"The fires of 1893 and 1894, driven by cyclonic winds, burned over one of the finest cranberry sections of Wisconsin, ten miles wide, by twenty miles long. The cranberry vine seems to burn with an intense heat and like a celluloid collar.

"I have watched it approach upon young scattering vines and only a year old, believing that the green growing vines would not burn, but after once afire, they burned as though they had been soaked in kerosene…

"Up to the present year the method of selling cranberries was expensive and ruinous. The commission man bled the moss back growers without mercy. I know one grower that lost his entire crop when berries were high, and his crop was worth about $15,000. He sent them to Chicago and never received one cent…

"Now like a drowning man, we have shown you our precarious environment. I know that neither the state of Wisconsin nor the United States have any one man trained in the cranberry business, that knows any more about the general cranberry business than we growers do. We know that you have expert plant doctors, bug detectives, weather guessers, learned scholars in botany, philosophy, agriculture, horticulture, and every other industry except cranberry culture.

"Will the state of Wisconsin or the United States see us drown in our infancy, or will they establish and maintain a life saving station where such as are now in the business can receive post graduate instructions?

"We need to concentrate our growers on less territory and work like we do in the town of Cranmoor for the general good of all. Let us help along our Experiment Station which in time will help us."

●The *Marshfield News* reports that the great industry that has employed so many hundreds of pickers near Grand Rapids will soon be a thing of the past. The level of water in marshes is declining year by year and it is thought unprofitable to irrigate by other means.

●Drought and fires from 1893-1895 destroyed 90-95 percent of the vines and the output for the whole state collapsed from 80,000 barrels to 3,000. Now, enough time has elapsed for vines to bear again.

●Richard Rezin later reminisces that he picked wild cranberries as a boy, making as much as three dollars a day. After the fires, berries are planted, but a new bed takes about four years to produce a crop.

In the fifth year, with luck, a grower might harvest 25-30 barrels of berries to the acre, and by the seventh year 50 to 60 barrels an acre. The year after the best harvest, a blight can and will ruin the crop. And again, promise is dashed when a dam breaks and cold water ruins the blossoms. The perils of cranberries.

The 1901 crop, locally: 15,000 barrels, more than the largest previously shipped, which was 1890's 13,400 barrels.

Unusually fine weather promises a good yield for 1902, but pickers are harder to find than ever. Growers must contract with railway companies for pickers from more distant locations, paying the fare to and from the marsh.

Consequently, rakers must be substituted for pickers. A state crop estimated at 60,000 bushels would require about 2,500 pickers. Introduction of rakers is expected to reduce the number needed, to 1,300.

In a related discussion, it is noted that 1902 cranberry production was 45,000 barrels, far less than 1892's 150,000 barrels.

●"Centralia Poet Laureate" Rufus McFarland provides a picturesque account at the growers' annual meeting. McFarland, a New York native, had arrived in Grand Rapids in 1855, where he became a river rafting pilot prior to going into real estate and cranberries.

Cranberry Picking Time

All day long the pickers go,
Until the sun is getting low.
For when the sun sinks in the west
Then nature hails the time of rest.
...
Their daily labors being done.
The boys and girls must have their fun,
To the bower house they then will go
And trip the light fantastic toe.

Till the foreman comes at ten each night,
In a stern voice, "Put out the light."
Each tired picker seeks their cot,
And soon their troubles are all forgot.

Not to be outdone, "Pat the Ditcher" creates "A Cranberry Idyll" for the summer meeting. It is published in the *Grand Rapids Tribune*, August 27, 1902.

...when you run a cranberry marsh,
You are at it day and night.
For when you think you will have
A good night's sleep
You roll over with a groan,
Half asleep and half awake,
You thought you heard the telephone,
And when you have said your, 'hello,'
Did I hear that voice aright?
'The flag was on the train today;
there will be frost tonight.'

Then you jump into your overalls,
And your blood begins to boil,
And you gaffle on your lantern
That is always filled with oil.
Then you look at the thermometer
And you say 'confound my pate;
It was fifty-two four hours ago
And now it's twenty-eight.'

And at the convention…
They come from all creation;
Some in rubber tired buggies
To Gaynor's marsh
And the experimental station…

In September, growers
…hustle after pickers to…stand in water all day long and never wet your feet. And my shanties are the best, I don't care what you say; And every night a place to sleep, upon the best of hay.
You get the promise of a hundred…you might have 54…
Finally, the…*foreman shakes the barrels well for the buyers say they should not rattle, then he puts in "Cultivated Cranberries…Finest in the land, Warranted not to shrink, And all climates they will stand."*

Experimental Station 1903

W.H. Fitch. A man who exhausts any subject and who makes it necessary for people to come to him for any knowledge not to be found in the great reference libraries.

From Cranmoor, where he is postmaster, Fitch, with newspapermen A.B. Sutor and W.A. Drumb of Grand Rapids, publishes a four-page tabloid entitled *The Cranberry Grower*.

Volume I, Number 1, Cranmoor, Wisconsin, January 1903.

Contributed by Mrs. S.N. Whittlesey: "With the exception of the gardens and small fruits for individual users, the people of this locality are exclusively cranberry growers. When a few years ago, a change in our railroad station being deemed necessary, a name was desired expressive of our bogs and business.

"Cranmoor suggests two things—cranberries and marshes. The contraction of cranberry marsh to Cranmoor originated with Mrs. W.H. Fitch, who gave that title to their home when they came to live in this cranberry country, but out of deference to the wishes of the neighborhood, kindly consented to its transfer to our station and postoffice."

●A good crowd attends the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association annual winter meeting at city hall, Grand Rapids, compared to 20, eight years previous and 50, four years previous.

WSCGA Secretary Fitch reports that prospects for the national crop are about the same as the previous year, 1902. The banner year of 1.3 million bushels had been 1901.

New England, in 1902, had contributed 60 percent of the national crop, New Jersey 30 percent and Wisconsin 10 percent. Wisconsin and New Jersey often traded places, depending on the weather.

The growers association tells the Wisconsin state legislature that nearly 100,000 barrels were marketed from wild marshes in 1890, for $5 a barrel and up. The cultivation of cranberries in Wisconsin is still in its infancy, according to the WSCGA, and, to become one of the greatest industries of northern Wisconsin, needs significant scientific experimental work to be funded by the state.

Land rendered practically worthless for agriculture, with a proper supply of water, will yield from $100-500 worth of cultivated cranberries per acre anywhere wild berries had grown, Fitch claims.

●*The Farmer's Sentinel*: King Cranberry will again ascend his throne, and, if present plans do not miscarry, the cranberry industry of Wisconsin, a great one in its day…is to be revived by the state through the Wisconsin experimental station.

J.A. Gaynor writes to scientist A.R. Whitson at the University of Wisconsin.

"I am glad to know that you have a little interest in my 'little bill.' I have not neglected it or forsaken it. I have written to 30 of the leading growers of the state asking them to write to their representatives, and urge them to favor it. I will be at Madison when it comes up."

At the request of Gaynor, assemblyman Cady and senator Wipperman of Wood County introduce a bill appropriating $5,000 annually for cranberry experiments to be carried on under the direction of Dean W.A. Henry of the University College of Agriculture. Dean Henry, already involved in a station for dairy farming, ventures to say the proposed cranberry venture will make Wisconsin number one state in production.

Accordingly, the legislature on May 10, 1903, appropriates $5,000. The WSCGA leases land, vines and water privileges from the Gaynor-Blackstone pond, to the University regents for fifteen years at annual rental of $30. If work is discontinued, the property will revert to the growers association.

The station is assigned to Prof. A.R. Whitson, agricultural physicist of the state university and Prof. E.P. Sandsten, horticulturist. "Messrs. Ramsey and Haskins" will staff the station and expect to spend all their time there.

A May 30 letter from Gaynor to Whitson says the plots will yield $200-300 worth of berries and perhaps $50 of vines that year. He hopes the university will erect a "neat little building" that will afford comfortable quarters for about three men with storage for tools.

Gaynor, in August, hopes Whitson has recovered from an eye problem and confides, "I have my heart set upon the development of our cranberry experiment station."

At the August growers meeting, the only cranberry experimental station in the world is a center of attraction. Then, a feast "fit for kings and gods," served to the "merry crowd" by Mrs. E.E. Warner and the other wives and daughters of growers.

Andrew Searls: "I put up a couple of mills at the experiment station. At that time we had not even heard of the gasoline engine.

"The windmill was a failure. We could not get a well large enough to supply the mill. We found the wind had the habit of loafing around in the morning, usually laying off early in the afternoon, and if there was a frost in sight it probably would not blow at all that day."

The windmill is sold for $31.

Searls drills wells "at my place at Walker" and strikes granite at 22 feet. In other locations, he finds dark red clay, sand and soft rock, but little water.

He also describes battles with the black-head fire worm. Having read an article by a man in New Jersey, he follows the advice and puts the whole marsh under water for 36 hours, killing the worms.

Another professor, W.D. Carlysle, horticultural editor of the *Chicago Packer*, tells the growers a story.

"You know," he says. "I had been led to believe that Cranmoor was a great place. I received Mr. Fitch's *Cranberry Grower* and it was dated at Cranmoor.

"I was the only one who got off at Cranmoor and I noticed that the trainmen looked queerly at me. I began to look around for a post office and the printing office but found none.

"I asked someone where Mr. Fitch lived and the answer came, 'O, he lives five miles down the road!' I thought of taking the first train back to Babcock.

"I reached Mr. Fitch's house at length, however, and I am not sorry for my trouble. Talk about your Virginia hospitality—you have it right here. Mr. Fitch is an embodiment of hospitality."

Later, in the evening—a dance at the Bennett marsh "in a large building erected for amusement purposes on the famous marsh of A.C. Bennett & Son, adjoining that of the Gaynor-Blackstone property. The young ladies and gentlemen of the community apparently enjoyed the festive occasion and continued it until the wee small hours of the night."

Prof. Carlyle says the growers' meeting is not ordinary because growers are not ordinary business men. They are scholars, students, philosophers, men of wealth and mental activity, merchants of fortune and lovers of nature.

"It is remarkable that so many who are owners of cranberry properties are members of the different professions." The berry has distributed much wealth amongst those engaged in it, he says, enabling the grower to maintain a degree of comfort, elegance and education, superior, perhaps, to that enjoyed by any other class of people engaged in fruit growing.

"Within an area of about 5 square miles from this point are to be found the cranberry marshes that have made Wisconsin famous, ranking it on a level with

the Cape Cod and New Jersey marshes, with one decided advantage in favor of the Wisconsin berry, its keeping qualities."

The *Packer* then publishes an article about the WSCGA meeting and singles out three growers for "greatest renown": Gaynor, for starting the experiment station; W.H. Fitch, secretary of the WSCGA and editor of the *Cranberry Grower*; and A.C. Bennett, the "Cranberry King" who for 30 years had studied cranberry growing—"Great lines which thought had made, great brawn that labor had developed, and great brain that nature wreathed with the silvery locks of age."

●Bad news. A June 11 frost takes many by surprise. Those who save a good share of their crops do so by a timely covering of "winter" floods.

Prominent growers, primarily of Cranmoor, report anything from "no damage" to 75 percent: Briere & Pomainville, Elm Lake Cranberry Co., Searles Bros., Ralph Smith, Bennett & Son, Gaynor Blackstone Co., Chas. E. Lester, J.B. Arpin, Jean Warner, S.N. Whittlesey, Robert Rezin, M.O. Potter, Dan Rezin, W.H. Fitch, Robert Skeels, Edward Kruger, W.C. Trahern, Bissig Bros., Christ Nelson.

Previously, frost warnings were telegraphed from Chicago to railroad stations. White warning flags were flown over the station and on the passing locomotive. Now, reports are sent to the experimental station, from which they are relayed by wire and phone to individual growers.

Yet, an unpredicted frost occurs. J.A. Gaynor's letter to Willis L. Moore, Chief of the Weather Bureau, Washington, D.C., calls for better results.

The three enemies of cranberries, he says, are insects, fire and frost, with the greatest being frost.

In the early years, growers were 95 percent dependent on the wild vines destroyed by the forest fires of 1894-95. Now, 95 percent of the crop is grown on vines planted so they can be protected from frost by flooding from an adjacent reservoir.

On a clear still night, the temperature on the marshes is 8-10 degrees colder than the surrounding farm land. Forty degrees at Grand Rapids will predict a light frost in low places in Cranmoor.

If growers keep the water high, in anticipation, Gaynor tells the Weather Bureau, they can flood in five or six hours, but if the water is allowed to get low it might require 25 hours.

"Our university has established an experiment station at that place and their well trained scientific observers, with the co-operation of your department, can do a great deal for the cranberry industry. Prof. Whitson of our university is in charge of that station."

In response, Moore directs Prof. W.M. Wilson of the Milwaukee weather bureau and Prof. Cox of the Chicago weather bureau to come to the Gaynor marsh for the summer meeting of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association.

●Growers approve $1.50 a day plus board for rakers and 40 cents a bushel for hand pickers with a raise of 10 cents a bushel if the picker remains all season.

●*At Berlin, the Sacket marsh*. In 1872, it consisted of hundreds of acres and raised 7,000 barrels of berries but later became exhausted. Now, it is considered partially reclaimed. The University agricultural college is keeping tabs on Berlin-area cranberry culture too.

●*The Cranberry Grower* announces the death of Mary Joslin Scott, wife of George H. Scott and mother of Mrs. Timothy Foley. Mary Joslin, born in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, had moved "with the westering movement" to Juneau County, Wisconsin.

Also deceased, Matilda Tennant Trahern. Pallbearers are almost all cranberry growers: Wm. Brown, Robert Farrish, E.P. Arpin, Frank J. Wood, Andrew Searls and A.E. Bennett.

Born in Beekmantown, New York, she married William C. Trahern in 1873, as his second wife. They resided in Grand Rapids, Appleton and, finally, Walker, "in their comfortable home at the cranberry marsh on the Green Bay railroad." She is survived by her husband and one son, William.

●The Gaynor-Blackstone company, Grand Rapids, engages a crew of Oneida Indians to work on their marsh. One of the Oneidas brings his wife and family along and will board the entire crew.

●Thomas Rezin and nephew, D.R., are busy planting a scalped section of cranberry marsh.

●Sons Jacob Jr. and Clarence Emmerick take over from their father, Jacob, and incorporate J.J. Emmerick Cranberry Co. on the former Bearss property purchased from Dan and Richard Rezin. J.J. Emmerick is president; Charles Dempze of Gaynor Cranberry Co., vice president; and George M. Hill, secretary treasurer. Grand Rapids merchandise man Hill owns stock in the Gaynor, Lester, Elm Lake and Emmerick marshes. George W. Paulus is also involved.

●Lester Cranberry Co. is started, in 1903, by the original owner, Charles E. Lester, with G.M. Hill, William Johnson and G.W. Paulus.

The *Reporter* describes Lester's beautiful home with its fine bird's eye view of the surrounding countryside. C.E. Lester reports making many valuable improvements, including sanding fifteen acres and building dams.

The *Reporter* notices new buildings at M.O. Potter's and A.C. Bennett & Son's. "A big crop of cranberries always proves to be a good thing for Wood county, as the money all remains at home."

●J.B. Arpin, manager of the Arpin Cranberry Co., is a frequent visitor, his automobile greatly shortening the time between Grand Rapids and Cranmoor. The Arpin dredge continues a canal, begun the previous fall, as a feeder for a water supply from Hemlock creek.

●The A.U. Chaney company buys out the good will and interest of the firm of "Peycke Bros. and Chaney" of Des Moines. Cheney will be buying Cranmoor berries without Peycke.

●Gustavus Kruschke of Cranberry Center, formerly Deuster, places a bouquet of cranberries upon his son's grave in the New Lisbon Cemetery. It's his entire year's crop.

●The latest method to make a living off "the widely diversified lands of Wood county," is the project of George Lyons of Babcock, who harvests and markets sphagnum moss, used for mattresses, bedding and plant-packing material. Moss is dried in sheds, then baled in forty-pound bales.

●Petitioners for the Remington Drainage District include J.D. Potter, Frank Pomainville, Daly & Sampson, George W. Paulus, South Bluff Cranberry Co., E.P. and J.B. Arpin, John A. Gaynor, A.C. and A.E. Bennett, R.C. and C.R. Treat, and H.W. Remington (who had died two years previous).

●Clarence A. Jasperson, in June, "wheels" from Port Edwards and spends Sunday ostensibly with Harry F. Whittlesey, son of Sherman and Ann. Harry and his twin, "Miss Whittlesey," accompanied by Mr. Jasperson, call at the Fitch home.

Jasperson, son of a Neenah mill owner and businessman, came, in 1899, to Nekoosa/Port Edwards, as a stenographer with the John Edwards Mercantile Co.

●In 1903, Dorothy Fitch, daughter of W.H. Fitch, marries Harry Whittlesey. The newlyweds plan to make their home in Cranmoor. Harry and the ubiquitous George M. Hill purchase the Warner-McMillan marsh, considered by some the best single "forty" in the cranberry district. "Modern improvements will be freely utilized and a harmonious understanding with conjoining properties gives it additional value."

●In November, M.O. Potter returns to Grand Rapids from his marsh, looking after business. He has shipped everything but a few pie berries—1,135 barrels, much better than anticipated.

●Jacob Searls purchases the Trahern Cranberry Marsh at Walker Station and establishes the Jacob Searls Cranberry Co., Jacob Searls, president and general manager; Grand Rapids physician O.T. Hougen, vice president; banker F.J. Wood, treasurer; realtor George W. Paulus, secretary; and John A. Gaynor.

It is located on both sides of the Green Bay & Western track at Walker Station and adjoins the Searles Brothers marsh. "Searls" and "Searles" become variables of the same name.

●The clerk at the north school is directed to put up four good posts to tie horses to—and to buy an encyclopedia at a cost of $13.23.

●*Charles Dempze*, born 1887, walks with his mother and sister from Pittsville to pick cranberries on the Gaynor marsh. They bring enough bread to last a week, then walk back for more.

Charles hangs around watching Jim Gaynor, as the old Irishman operates the flood gates—until one day Gaynor says, "You've been following me around for two years now, watching how it's done. Now, you do it!"

●September 1. D.M. Rezin tells a reporter that the harvest is about to begin; he has engaged 75 hand pickers and 35 rakers.

The harvest *should* take two weeks, beginning the first Monday in September. More often than not, growers can't get enough pickers in time or frosty nights compel them to flood and interrupt the process. And those rainy days slow things down. So, in reality, the whole month of September is consumed.

The German, Swiss and Polish families previously available for picking would rather stay home and work on their own farms. On the other hand, only men are employed in raking and they can be had in sufficient number.

Pickers are usually paid 50 cents a bushel and a good picker can pick three bushels a day. Rakers get $1.50 a day and board and a raker will rake from eight to twelve bushels a day. Some rakers have gathered as high as 29 bushels in a day but also have averaged four bushels a day, depending on the marsh.

A reporter catches up with an Indian named Tom Pine as he and his two sisters pass through Grand Rapids with a team and camping outfit. Pine, who is blind, says he is traveling to Wittenberg from Mather, where 100 Indians are gathering berries. He will come back to Wood County and pick cranberries to earn a little more money.

When the season closes, the county has produced 18,000 barrels, about half the crop of the state, valued at $6-7 per barrel. County growers will receive about $100,000.

W.H. Fitch tells the *Reporter* the result has been about the same as the previous year with the same difficulty getting pickers. He has an idea. "There are plenty of men and women in the cities who need a month's outing every year and there is no better place than the marsh for recreation."

Raking is described by the *Cranberry Grower.*

Fifty men "scoop" under the eyes of two foremen. Each raker kneels on the mattress of vines and moves ahead on a swath about a yard wide in parallel lines, but the area is not roped off as it would be for hand picking.

The scoop or rake has strong hickory teeth and no mechanism to get out of order, says Fitch. It's heavy but doesn't have to be lifted until full.

Astonishing to see how easily the operator pushes and rocks his tool forward, how few berries he misses, and how little he tears the vines. Scoops are emptied into boxes scattered over the bog and collected again by the squad with the wheelbarrows.

●TOWNS LOSE THE GOOSE THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGG.

November 10, 1903, Grand Rapids Court House.

The Wood County board of supervisors, including E. Eichsteadt and A.E. Bennett of Port Edwards and Martin Jackson, Seneca, in annual session, considers a petition from Bennett. The board returns on November 12 to pass, by a vote of 37-1, an ordinance that establishes the Town of Cranmoor. Jackson is the negative vote. E.P. Arpin and T.E. Nash are absent.

The first town meeting will be the first Tuesday in April, 1904.

November 13, 1903, *Wood County Reporter*: The new town of Cranmoor is created out of the towns of Seneca and Port Edwards, containing practically all the cranberry marshes of Wood County, according to a petition signed by:

C.D. Searls, H.F. Whittlesey, W.H. Fitch, Ed. Kruger, Thos. McGovern, D.M. Rezin, Robert Skeel,

R.W. Rezin, Thos. Rezin, M.O. Potter, Albert Viertel, Jos. Schilter,

Frank Patterson, E.E. Warner, J.J. Emmerick, A.E. Bennett, J.A. Gaynor, Haskell Bick, Henry E. Fitch,

A.C. Bennett, J.W. Fitch, Oscar Potter. James Gaynor, Frank Zurfluh, S.N. Whittlesey,

B.P. Clinton, Nick Wirtz, Tim Foley, Ralph Smith, C.S. Whittlesey, F.J. Wood, G.W. Paulus,

Jacob Searls, S.A. Spafford, E.P. Arpin, E.E. Moor Co., G.M. Hill, C.E. Lester, Alfred Scheurer.

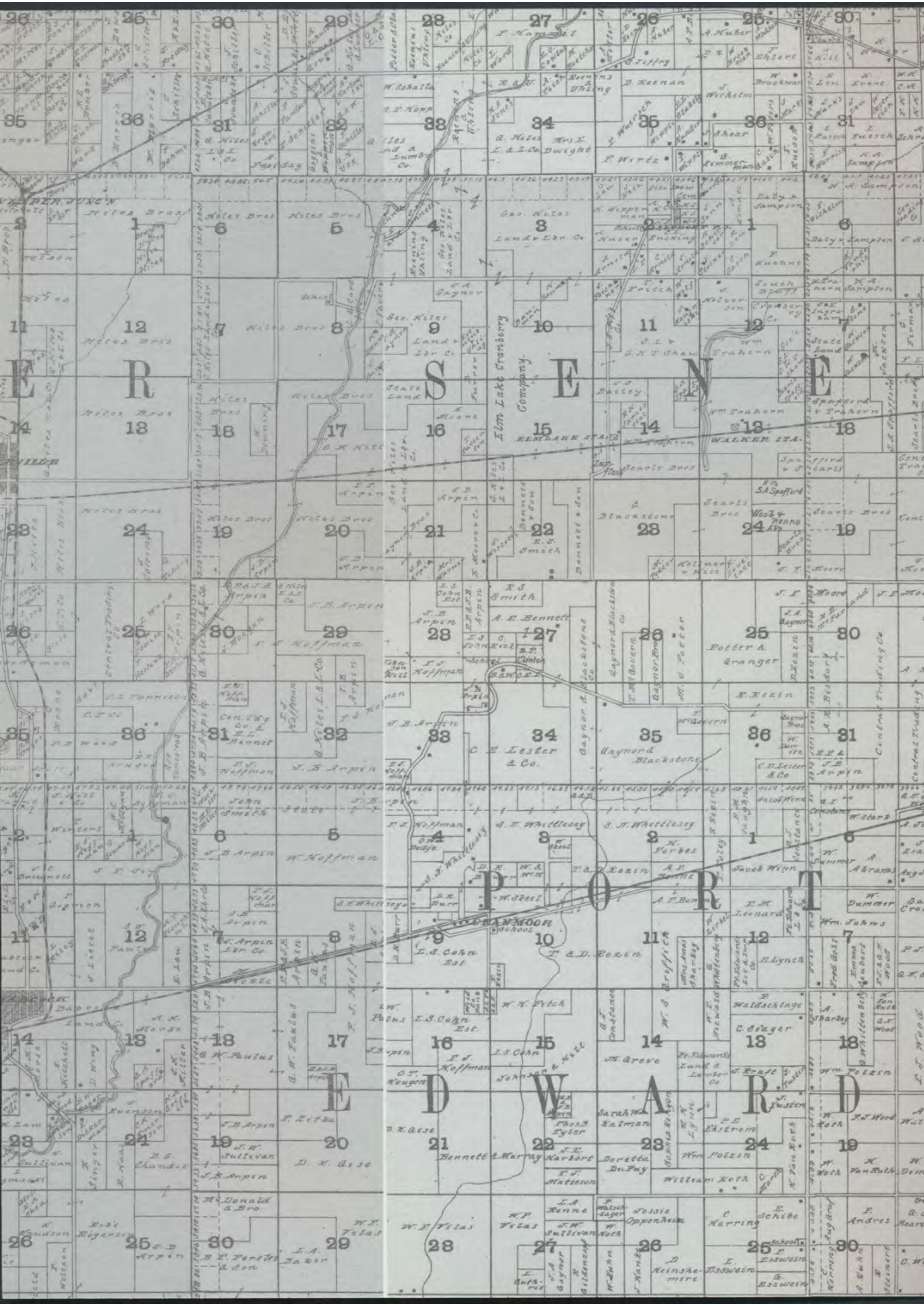
The Cranberry Grower, relying on the *Grand Rapids Tribune*: residents wish to be set aside so that they can construct their roads with a view to handling the water in an intelligent manner.

"The average town builds its roads and ditches so as to get rid of the water but the cranberry men need ditches that can retain or get rid of water as the case demands.

"Cranberry culture is like any kind of agriculture where irrigation is employed. The growers of a district must work together or else each will suffer at times from the others carelessness or obstinacy.

"And the desire to be set aside in a town by themselves marks a step in advance of the old conditions as they have existed here for many years, and as the cranberry men themselves consider, no doubt the change will result in benefit for all concerned."

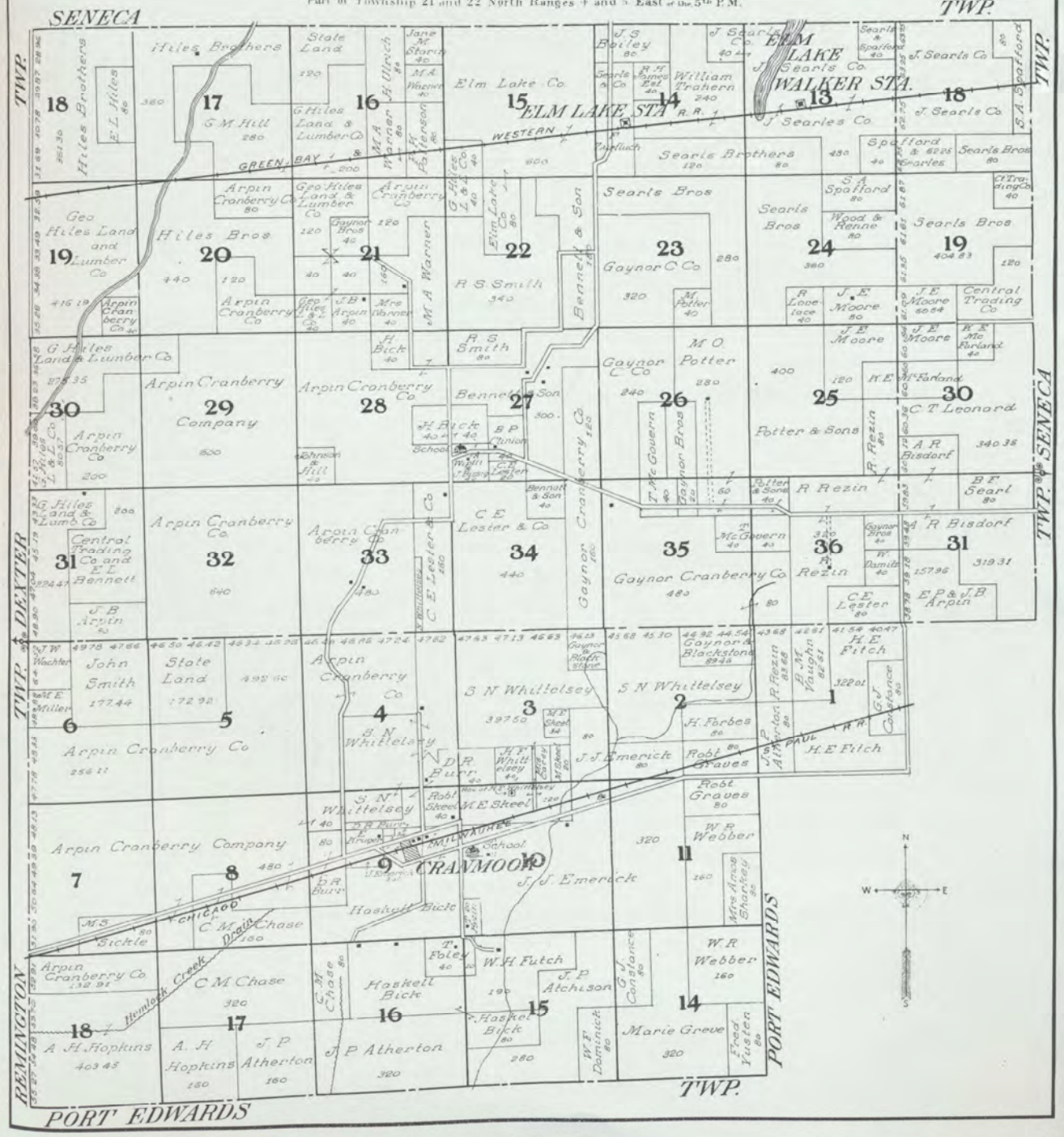
Maps



E R
S E N E
P O R T
E D W A R D
ELMLAKE STA.
WALKER STA.
Elm Lake Cranberry Company.
Hiles Bros
Geo. Hiles Land & Lbr. Co
Blackstone
Searls Bros
E. S. Smith
A. E. Bennett
Potter & Granger
C. E. Lester & Co.
Gaynor & Blackstone
S. N. Whittlesey
T. & D. Rezin
J. B. Arpin
P. J. Hoffman
L. S. Cohn Est.
W. Hoffman
W. H. Fitch
Johnson & Hill
Waldschlage
C. Seager
Bennett & Murray
W. F. Vilas
Jossie Oppenheim
William Roth
W. Dummer
Wm. Johns

MAP OF CRANMOOR TOWNSHIP

Part of Township 21 and 22 North Ranges 4 and 5 East of the 5th P.M.



●Frank Patterson, commonly known as the "Marsh Poet" or "Pat the Ditcher," creates a great deal of amusement at the growers' summer get-together. He has gone out of the poetry business because there is not enough money in it. "I am now a doctor—Doctor Patterson sounds better than Pat the Ditcher.

"Now, I am not an allopath, homeopath, osteopath, cowpath or a bridlepath—but a pathfinder. I can find anyone the path to health and happiness—it lies here on the marsh…this is the healthiest place in America. We haven't had a case of fever for the last fifteen years—not even a case of small pox…

"This is a place for the sportsman. He can come here and not be molested by the game wardens, for there is no law prohibiting fishing with sod hooks.

"I have seen the hunter with his pockets as large as a balloon come here and stay three days and carry away one chicken. Indians catch muskrats here and sell their tails to Secretary Fitch for five cents a piece.

"Our water is fine. I have never sent any away to be analyzed, nor do I want to, for if I did I do not think I would like to drink it again.

"Cranberry men are not satisfied with their own water; they go to their neighbors. We have the mineral water put up by Mr. Bick, of Wausau. It cures all diseases. There is a picture on the bottle of a man walking out with his girl in an oak grove. It makes you thirsty to look upon it.

"If Ponce de Leon were alive today he would never have gone to Florida to look for perpetual youth but would have come here to drink Bick's water…

"The state agricultural school has brought a change to the farmers. They have learned the art of making butter until there are factories everywhere.

"The cranberry men have not been forgotten. We have seen the fruits of their labors this summer. Those instruments that are taking the evaporation—who knows but that they may scare away the frost. We can now raise twice as many berries to the acre, thanks to the agricultural school.

"Did you ever stop to consider how a few years ago, when the fire swept over this marsh, how women and children had to jump into the ditches to protect themselves. When the fire died out and the curtain fell upon the scene, the last act of wild marshes was over.

"The cranberry men went at it and scalped and were careful about planting their vines until today they have made these lands blossom as the rose.

"Changes have also gone on in Grand Rapids. Not so many years ago the water stood on the streets and the frogs croaked. Now you hear the laughter of children. These changes are largely due to the many railroads that pass through the city.

"And now before we meet here again at the next convention, we, the people on this marsh, will see another line of smoke ascending into the sky and we may look and wonder for a while until the explanation comes through the smell of sulphite—then we may know it is the new paper mill."

The Town of Cranmoor: 1904

Now it is official.

The minutes of a Special Session of the Wood County board, May 1904, show the Committee on Town Organization, E. Eichsteadt, chairman, Wm. J. Conway and John Bell, has done its work.

Something new has come into existence: the Town of Cranmoor.

At the first "special" meeting, April 5, 1904, at Bennett's Schoolhouse, A.E. Bennett, chairman of the town of Port Edwards, is elected chairman of the meeting. For the election, to be held as soon as the special meeting is over, Ralph Smith and W.H. Fitch are to be inspectors; C.D. Searls and H.F. Whittlesey, clerks; Eugene Warner and Ed Kruger, ballot clerks.

Notice is posted on the door that the schoolhouse meeting is adjourned to Bennett's store building. Alf. Scheurer is appointed to stay and tell voters where the meeting went.

The second meeting is called to order at ten a.m. by Bennett. Voters who find their way to the Bennett store cast ballots for town officers. All the "candidates" receive 30 votes except S.N. Whittlesey; he probably didn't vote for himself.

For chairman, A.E. Bennett; supervisor, Ed Kruger; clerk, Andrew Searls; assessor, E.E. Warner; justices, Joe Fitch and R.S. Smith; constables Tim Foley and B.P. Clinton; treasurer, S.N. Whittlesey, 29, Harry F. Whittlesey, 1.

Now a real, genuine town meeting is held. A motion carries to levy a tax of $1,000 on taxable property to pay for salaries and general expenses. Supervisor's pay will be $2 per day plus $3 for services on a board of review. Assessor: $3 a day; town clerk: $100 per year.

Finances are sorted out with the towns of Seneca and Port Edwards, and Cranmoor is given the right to use Seneca's "road machine."

To fulfill the reason for Cranmoor as a governmental body, the board approves $1,000 for improvement of roads. A petition for a "highway" is presented to a board of review in June and a meeting held at the southwest corner of the District No. 6 school grounds to lay out said highway.

The last act of 1904 is the board of audit meeting of A.E. Bennett, Ed Kruger and A. Searls, at Bennett's Hall, where they receive bills from Centralia Hardware Co., Johnson Hill Co., Kellogg Brothers Lumber Co. and bills for labor from Cranmoor residents.

A large attendance of voters and young people meet at A.E. Bennett's place for the first caucus of the new town of Cranmoor, followed by a dinner and a dance. It's all one big, happy family. Only one ticket is put in the field and it is elected without a dissenting vote.

●About the time the town of Cranmoor comes to life, the Wood County township of Cameron is created. Two years earlier, it had been Cary, Arpin and Hiles townships.

●George Peltier and his two younger brothers daub the Gaynor sorting mills with red paint at ten cents an hour for ten hours, pretty close to a buck a day. Peltier is fed by Mrs. James Gaynor, assisted by Bertha Dempze, while Bertha's brother, Charlie, keeps busy with the fuel supplies and other diverse chores. James Gaynor sometimes drives the boys to Grand Rapids over rutted roads in his springless, horse-drawn wagon.

●Some residents of Cranmoor, connected with the cranberry industry, as listed on the 1905 state census:

Andrew Searls, 48, born in Canada; his wife, Elvira Robinson, born in Wisconsin; and children Maude E. and Mayme E.

Arthur Ervin Bennett, New York; wife Fannie June; and children Eva, Emory, Ruth, Raymond, Ermon Ernst and Ethel.

Asa Curtis Bennett, 71, New York; wife Amelia Sewell, 69, New York.

Eugene E. Warner, 54, Pennsylvania; wife Mary Anna, Vermont; and Lillian Mary, 23, and Gillman E., 17. Franklin Patterson, 50, born in New York—boarder.

Ralph Sweep Smith, 61, New York; wife Pauline, 44, Switzerland; and Clara, 10; Edna May, 8; and Mary E., 5.

Boardman P. Clinton, 64; wife Sarah. Living with them, Nicholas Wirtz and his wife, Hattie Mary.

Sherman N. Whittlesey, 56, Connecticut; wife Anna D.; and H.F. [daughter].

Robert Wilson Skeel, 53, Pennsylvania; wife [Cililla?], 49, Wisconsin.

Harry F. Whittlesey, 27; wife Dorothy J., 26, and daughter J.V.

Jacob Emmerick, 36, Germany; his wife, Anna, 39; and Sarah, John J., and James A.; Nicholas Thiel, Germany, is a laborer on the marsh.

Thomas Rezin, 65, Canada; and wife Gem Elnor, 68.

Timothy Joseph Foley, 43, Wisconsin; wife Martha Belle, 20; and George Herold, 14; Chas. Hubert, 13; Mary Margorite, 12; Evelon Barbara, 10; Elois, 8; John J., 6.

Wm. Henry Fitch, 61, Indiana: wife Julia Crangle, 58, Ohio; and Joseph Wm., 33, born in Illinois, and Caroline E., 44. Also Teresa Jo, mother, 83, born in Ireland, and Esther Alquist, a Swedish servant girl.

Edward A. Kruger, 46, Wisconsin; wife Jennie, 50; and Myra Florence, Edward C., Clinton Wm., Minnie and Harrison. John Wm. Sierbel works on the marsh.

Oscar O. Potter, 22.

Robert Wm. Rezin, 42; wife Mary Alice; and Thomas Wm., Robt. Elva and Ruth Mary.

Elbert Franklin Searl, farmer.

James Gaynor, 65, Ireland; wife Margurite, 44, ; and Thomas McGovern, in-law; 50, Bertha L. Demsey, 19, Germany, servant; Ole Gustave Malde, 25, Norway, boarder; Martin Potaski, servant.

Frank Zurfluh, 64, Switzerland; wife Bertha, 21, Germany; and Tobias Baumann, 67, Switzerland, boarder.

Albert H. Viertel, 37, Germany; wife Mary J., 35, Germany; and Herman, Edward, George, Carl, Josephine and another daughter.

●At the winter meeting of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, vice president S.N. Whittlesey says the previous year's light crops assured good prices but growers need better equipment to exclude small or pie berries and soft or unsound berries. Furthermore, berries must be pressed into the barrel firmly enough to stand transportation without a rattle.

Whittlesey says growers should be like beavers and build dams across the fall of water and thus preserve in reservoirs the supply coming from clouds or small streams. The water will be for protection in winter, but, if supply is near, and drainage good, it is possible to protect from frost; but, he cautions, unless drained quickly, the flood will do as much damage as the frost.

At the August 18th annual summer picnic, the crowd is small, maybe because attendees must bring their own lunch baskets. Nearly everybody walks out to view the state's experiments. A business meeting follows and an address by S.N. Whittlesey. "While our occupation has risen in the estimation of good business men, from a condition that elicited only pity to one that commands respect, we have achieved no triumph of which we can gracefully boast. No fortunes have been made—some have been lost—and probably very few cranberry growers are now out of debt."

Probably not one tenth of the people of the United State know what a cranberry is, he says, and only one tenth of this tenth buy them in any appreciable quantities. "It might pay this association to load a car with cranberries and ship to some chosen centers of population; load peddlers wagons and sell at five cents a quart. They would go like 'Hot Cakes' to people who never ate cranberries before."

●*The Cranberry Grower*, March 1904: "There are a good many people who associate the cranberry business with the old days," says F.W. Sacket, Berlin. Almost all Berlin-area marshes are owned by the Stanley estate of Chicago which bought out Fitch, Sacket and Carey. "I remember the time when thousands of pickers were employed gathering berries: now it is difficult to get labor…Up around Grand Rapids an effort is being made to put cranberry growing on a scientific bases and progress is being made along that line."

●Death: Assemblyman Frank A. Cady of Grand Rapids. A lawyer and member of the state legislature for two terms. Through his efforts and those of Senator Wipperman, the appropriation for the experimental station was secured. Ill and delirious, Cady jumps out of his bed at Hot Springs, Arkansas, rushes to the hall, leaps into the rotunda of the hospital and strikes the floor three stories below, killed instantly.

●June: Miss Jennine Berard has been teaching at "South District School of Cranmoor." At a farewell party at the home of Robert Skeels, she is presented with a handsome meat platter as evidence of the esteem in which she is held.

●Mr. Fitch is off to the World's Fair to supervise the installation of a miniature cranberry bog. Sod containing roots is transported to St. Louis intact to show cranberries both cultivated and wild in all stages of development.

●*Wood County Reporter*: September. When a telegram is received from the Chicago Weather Bureau by Judge Gaynor, warning of heavy frost, he telephones cranberry marshes. The Whittlesey marsh is immediately flooded; the thermometer reaches 29 degrees. At the experimental station, there is no flooding, though the thermometer reaches 23 ½. In neither case is there frost damage.

●A.U. Chaney—in Grand Rapids with an option on all cranberries grown in the section. Later, he purchases the entire crop in Wisconsin. A.U. Chaney & Co. is one of the largest cranberry dealers in the world.

●*Wood County Reporter,* September 9. Of 1,500 picking cranberries in the county, about 100 are Indians. A few years previous, the *Reporter* says, the entire crop, or nearly so, was picked by Indians. "It was not water on the marshes that caused this change but fire water."

●*Stevens Point Journal*. More than 300 men, women and children depart on the Green Bay & Western for the cranberry marshes near Grand Rapids. They are hired by agents for the owners and sent forward in parties of 50 to 100. The fare is paid by the owners who furnish shanties equipped with stoves. The pickers bring their own food and bedding. At 50-75 cents per bushel, the previous year, one woman and her two children brought back $100. Very few men make the trip and then usually as rakers for $2-$3 a day.

●W.A. Drumb, the *Grand Rapids Tribune* publisher, writes in *The Cranberry Grower.*

Harvest, he says, is the time to visit a marsh if one wants to study human nature "in its many phases." The ground that before looked like a desolate waste of bog is now dotted with pickers that creep along on their hands and knees and gather the beautiful berries. On a good-sized marsh will be found about two hundred or more, lacking only the nationalities of Negroes and Chinamen.

Besides a house to live in, the owner has a boarding house, sleeping houses, cranberry houses and other buildings. The marsh store can vary, says Drumb, from a board across a couple of barrels for a counter to a neat building where everything is kept clean and in order.

In sleeping houses, rows of bunks adorn the wall with only cracks in the wall for ventilation. Pickers, stored like sardines in a box, sleep well nevertheless. They get up at 5 a.m., eat breakfast and start for the picking grounds.

Bosses are generally of the same nationality as pickers: Germans in one section, Polanders another.

Most remarkable, he says, are the Indians, who associate with no one else either at work or play. They often travel long distances by team, the entire family and household effects contained in a rickety wagon pulled by one or two ponies "generally the worse for wear." "They are very good workmen, and they

pick their berries very clean and do not make any attempt to cheat their employer on measure as is often the case with other nationalities."

The Indians start work at nine in the morning and by 4:30 p.m. the men are getting their muskrat traps together; soon after they may be seen wending their way toward the store for a few links of bologna sausage and a loaf or two of rye bread.

The Indian, Drumb notes, draws his salary every night, never allowing it to accumulate. He is very difficult to photograph and "while the writer got a few snap shots by stealth the Indian knows a camera at long range and never allows one to get a bead on him if he can help it."

All the pickers are hard to get along with, says Drumb, as they shift about looking for growers who pay a little more or whose berries are better, but the Indians are the worst in this respect. When something goes wrong, the leader simply gets up from his hands and knees and utters a "guttural sound" and, with a motion of his hand, the entire outfit rises and leaves the premises.

Other pickers present a motley crowd of men, women and children, from babes-in-arms to young ladies, as they come trailing in, barefooted, bedraggled and wet to the waist.

At supper time, fires crackle and sputter. Women and girls hurry with kettles and basins. A smell of frying bacon, steaming coffee and other delicacies precedes a lull for eating.

The evening is a magical transformation. Who would suspect it is the same motley assemblage that was seen but an hour before, wending its weary way in from the cranberry marsh?

Groups of old women stand about and gossip in one language or another, while men play cards or sit and smoke, talking about the crop or telling stories. Young ladies appear, neatly clothed in bright, clean shirts and skirts and a neat pair of shoes, hair done in the latest style.

A little later, the scrape of a fiddle is heard. There follows, a stir of interest among the young folks and the crowds hurry to the dance hall—for every marsh has a dance hall. Indeed, the young people will not work at a marsh that is not properly equipped with a fiddler, hired to stay during picking time.

The dance begins at eight and continues till ten when the fun is over for that night and now the thoroughly tired begin to think of retiring. On Saturday evening, they dance until midnight or later.

That's the way it is on the cranberry moors in the days of the Eldorado.

Photo Experimental Station

20th Century: A Few Notes

1905 Ralph S. Smith in the *Grand Rapids Tribune* compares the long and roundabout trip to town when he came into the wilderness in 1871, with the marvelous 20th Century version. Besides that, he can pick up the telephone day or night, and communicate with, not only his neighbors, but many of the surrounding cities. The rural mail delivery system also stops by and he has the daily papers delivered at his door.

1906 Judge John A. Gaynor and A.U. Chaney form the Wisconsin Cranberry Sales Growers Cooperative or "Company." Gaynor encourages similar sales cooperatives in Massachusetts and New Jersey.

1911 Inspired by Gaynor, American Cranberry Exchange is established, a national marketing agency controlled by growers.

1915 John A. Gaynor dies, "nearly penniless," at the Cranmoor home of his brother, James. Friends and associates pay tribute to a lifetime of service by purchasing land for a park in Grand Rapids. "M.G." writes:

Place his name among the sages,
Counselor and leader true and tried.
Grand Rapids' cause has lost a hero
When brave true hearted Gaynor died.

1916 O.G. Malde makes a poor impression on the President and Regents of the University during their visit to the experimental station at Gaynor marsh.

1917 When their house catches fire, Joseph W. Fitch carries his invalid father, William H. Fitch, to the outdoors. Neither survives, nor does housekeeper Pearl Sawin, a sister of Mrs. William Rezin. Lost too, are the records of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association from 1899, of which both Joseph and William Fitch had been secretary.

●James Gaynor dies, recognized for his contributions in developing tools, methods, devices and machines.

●In part because the University of Wisconsin budget has been slashed, funds are withdrawn and the Cranberry Experimental Station closes. O.G. Malde, at the station since 1904, has complained about the remoteness of the station, the lagging development of the industry and his own part-time status.

1923 Value of Cranmoor township real estate: $377,670. Personal property, $13,230, the smallest total in any township in Wood County.

●*A.E. Bennett*: "Thirty years ago much of this land could be purchased for the back taxes at 50 cents an acre. Today the best marshes are worth $500 an acre. In early days, there were no roads, no telephone, no free delivery, no homes in this seemingly worthless, marshy country. Today it has all the modern improvements, splendid roads, and every cranberry grower has the telephone and the free rural delivery at his door. Many have become wealthy and own

magnificent homes in the city, though they work on their marshes during the season.

●Total value of property: Grand Rapids Township, $914,316; Port Edwards, $591,543; Rudolph, $1,460,168; Dexter, $460,656; Cranmoor, $390,900. Only $13,000 of Cranmoor's valuation is personal property; the remainder is real estate.

1924 Annual raking contests culminate in a record when Ed Gebhardt of Warrens and Henry Westfall of Cranmoor rake 500 boxes in ten hours

1929 John Theodore Bearss, whose family name had been given to Bearss Station, is buried in Porterville Cemetery, California. It is believed he was instrumental in developing the Bearss Lime in 1895 from a seedling of Tahiti Lime.

1933 Conceived by G.M. Hill, a stockholder in several marshes; George W. Mead, president of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co.; and T.W. Brazeau, attorney and cranberry man, the Cranberry Water Company is incorporated to build a 12-mile ditch from the Wisconsin River above the Wisconsin Rapids Consolidated dam. Water will pass under Moccasin Creek through an inverted siphon, flow to Cranmoor, and, after use, discharge to the Yellow River and return to the Wisconsin below Nekoosa. The infusion of H_20 is necessary due to drought conditions similar to the 1890s, although without the fires.

The original subscribers, in the order of shares: Gaynor Cranberry Co., B.C. Brazeau, S.N. Whittlesey, J. Searles, Potter & Sons, Lester Cranberry Co., A. Searles, J. Emmerick, L. Rezin, Mrs. Otto (daughter of William Skeel), E. Kruger, T. Foley, Ward & Son.

William Thiele of Consolidated and Bernard Brazeau plan the ditch. Carl Cajanus oversees construction. Guy Potter secures the contract and goes to work. The ditch and pumping station are completed in 1934.

●Personal income tax rolls: A.E. Bennett, $3,568; Ermon E. Bennett, $3,378; Margaret P. Wirtz, $855; Mrs. Pauline M. Smith, $2,751.

Corporation tax: Central Cranberry Co. (Brazeau), $3,394; Elm Lake Cranberry Co. $2,354; J.J. Emmerick Cranberry Co., $3,049; Gaynor Cranberry Co., $17,824; Lester Cranberry Co., $1,128; Jacob Searls Cranberry Co., $9,771.

In Port Edwards village, paper mill executive incomes listed for tax purposes: John E. Alexander, $19,276; C.A. Jasperson, $12,612; Franz Rosebush, $4,779.

1935 The Town of Cranmoor applies, through the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, for a loan and grant to help construct a Town Hall. It designates Hougen & Henderson, architects, to furnish such information as the government may request.

1936 Central Cranberry Co. harvests the largest crop in the state at 5,300 barrels.

●At the "first annual" Cranberry Harvest Festival" in Wisconsin Rapids, attended by thousands, master of ceremonies John Roberts pays tribute to local growers. "When we think of the cranberry industry…names that are synonymous with the business spring spontaneously to our minds, such names as Arpin, Bissig, Gaynor, Bennett, Rezin, Potter, Whittlesey, Searls, Smith and many others—"

1937 For 75 years, railroads transported 90% or more of the cranberries produced in Wisconsin. With the ascendancy of the trucking industry, less than 5% of berries are shipped by rail. The "St. Paul" railroad abandons the line from Babcock south. The right of way will become State Highway 173.

1939 Acres in cranberries: Waushara County (Berlin area), 31. Wood County, 796.

1941 Central Cranberry Co. installs equipment of the East Side Quick Lunch of Wisconsin Rapids to serve meals for their help and any others. The company also builds new bunk houses.

1943 Eight growers in the Cranmoor area engage Robert Case to build a mechanical picker.

1948 *Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture, Bulletin 290*

Cranberries in Wisconsin

●1900: 1,200 acres @ 15 barrels per acre.
From 1900-1910 it varies from 7-35 barrels per acre.

●1910: 1,700 acres @ 9.4 barrels per acre.
From 1910-1920, it varies 9-25 barrels per acre.

●1920: 1,800 acres @ 19.4 per.
1920-1930, 12-40 barrels per acre.

●1930: 2,300 acres @ 15.7.
1930-1940, 15.7-47.9.

●1940: 2,400 @ 50.4.

●1947: 3,400 acres @ 45.6 barrels per acre for 155,000 total barrels compared to 18,000 total barrels in 1900.

Searls Jumbo is by far the most popular berry followed by McFarlin and natives. The average number of laborers per farm during harvest season is 19. Twelve of those are employed as rakers. *Crop reporting service bulletin*: "Any increase in production will in the long run have to be offset by an increase in consumption."

WW II A gradual growth in output since the 1890s increases further in the 1930s. With the need to supply the U.S. military in World War II, prices inflate to $35 for a 100-pound barrel. The industry experiences a boom.

War-related labor shortages cause growers to bring in Jamaican and POW workers.

After the war, the consumer market is flooded with a surplus, prices break sharply and the challenge for the next fifty years and more is how to expand the

market. Acreage in 1948 is about 2.5 times that of 1900 but production is 13 times higher.

Cranmoor remains a concentrated center of growing, while new areas to the south in the Warrens area and north to Hayward, Three Lakes and Little Trout Lake, are developed, in many cases by members of Cranmoor families.

1952 Leonard Getsinger obtains a patent for a cranberry picking machine. The original invention later goes on display at the South Wood County Historical Corp. museum.

1954 April 6, the 50th anniversary of the "carving out of the Town of Cranmoor from the Town of Port Edwards": coffee and cakes, served all afternoon. Pictures are taken by the *Tribune* and the attendees talk over old times.

1955 Record harvest in Wood County, over 100,000 barrels.

●National Cranboree, a festival celebrating *vaccinium macrocarpon*, cancelled due to lack of support. Held in nearby Wisconsin Rapids since 1949, it has attracted as many as 80,000 spectators for a big parade, displays and entertainments.

1957 Unable to work with private processors for distribution of processed fruit, the nation's oldest cranberry marketing agency, Eatmor Cranberries, Inc., originally American Cranberry Exchange, goes out of business.

●Town of Cranmoor school district forms a joint district with Village of Port Edwards.

●90% of crop is being harvested with mechanical pickers.

1959 The cranberry industry plans to greatly increase efforts to promote Christmas sales, according to Richard Brazeau of Indian Trail. Cranberries are not moving fast enough from warehouses. He says the government should purchase the surplus.

●**Black Monday.** It promises to be the greatest year ever. But less than half the crop is in the hands of consumers by November 9, as Thanksgiving approaches, when the story breaks. Shipments of berries from the West Coast are found to be contaminated by Amino-triazole, a weed killer. Sales are banned in Chicago and tons of Wisconsin berries are seized. Many more tons are dumped.

In a Presidential campaign year, Richard Nixon enjoys four helpings of cranberry sauce at a testimonial dinner for Congressman Melvin R. Laird, while Sen. John Kennedy of Massachusetts, a cranberry state, stoutly quaffs a cranberry cocktail at a dinner in his honor the same evening at Marshfield.

A special indemnity program by the Agriculture department the following year pays out millions to growers for the unsold crop of 1958-59. Cranberry producers use increased promotional efforts to bring their product back to popularity. Production and marketing of juice greatly expand the market.

●Historian and cranberry scientist Dr. George Peltier helps dedicate the historical marker on Highway 54 in the town of Cranmoor, August 8, commemorating, "A small group of sturdy, tough-minded men, with an everlasting stick-to-itiveness, who in spite of numerous trials and tribulations, due to the continual hazards of frosts and fires, floods and drought, plus the ups and downs in prices, managed to build an industry despite the vicissitudes of a harsh and raw environment."

1963 Dramatic increase in production leads to surpluses, set-asides and federal marketing orders. Peltier says the inefficient grower, producing less than 100 barrels per acre, is doomed. Orderly marketing has not kept pace with production and the industry will face embarrassing surpluses. The main reason, mechanization: "Thus, the machine in all of its aspects has revolutionized all the steps in the cranberry industry from the building of new bogs through the final preparation of the berries for the market."

1965 Indian Trail, distributors of fresh, canned, frozen and juice cranberry products, is sold to Dean Food Co., Chicago. Indian Trail sales offices were in Wisconsin Rapids, processors in Waupun and Ripon. The 24 growers—mostly in Cranmoor and Warrens-Mather.

1966 Biggest crop of all time…again…at 491,000 barrels. Cuts in prices and profits, freezes on commercial acreage. Ocean Spray and independent and small growers battling over production controls.

●First of its kind in the industry, the Ocean Spray plant at Babcock is under construction, to operate in 1967. The centralized receiving and screening station reduces the need for sorting crews and equipment on marshes of individual member growers.

1968 Two separate hailstorms deal a deadly blow to the cranberry harvest but…growers are covered by insurance.

1970 Ten percent of crop to be withheld in 1970 after 746,000-barrel production in 1969.

●George Peltier, 82, suffers a stroke that forces him to stop working on his book, *History of the Cranberry Industry in Wisconsin*. It is finished by Guy Potter, who himself dies before it can be published. Peltier says, "Somebody can take it and, with more research, write a sequel."

Peltier worked for Gaynor Cranberry Co. in 1904, and at the experimental station. As a college student, he studies cranberries and receives a Ph. D. from the University of Illinois. He returns to Wisconsin Rapids in 1954 after retiring from the University of Nebraska.

Peltier says the most impressive change is the use of the machine over manpower. Two old hazards almost forgotten are fire and lack of water. The lingering number one problem is weeds.

1977 All wetlands are to be mapped and regulated regarding their development. (Cranberry growers have been exempt from many laws.)

1980s High prices and expansion. Non-resident investors and new owners. The rise of Northland Cranberry Co. of Wisconsin Rapids.

1990s Overproduction and low prices. Continued expansion, often by absentee owners on upland, irrigated operations.

2002 Annual production, 2002: Massachusetts, 1,452,000 barrels; New Jersey, 430,000; Oregon, 432,000; Washington, 162,000; Wisconsin, 3,208,000.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Rezin 53rd Wedding Anniversary

Seated: Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Rezin, Mr. and Mrs. B.P. Clinton.
Standing: Mrs. and Mrs. A.E. Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. M.O. Potter, Mr. and Mrs. S.N. Whittlesey, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Searls, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rezin, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Searls.

Updates

Bennett Cranberry Company, Inc.

Contributed by Bennett Cranberry Company

In 1873, Asa Bennett bought 40 acres in what is now the town of Cranmoor. Asa and his son, Arthur, formed A.C. Bennett & Son. Arthur's son, Ermon joined him and it became A.E. Bennett & Son. When Ermon's sons joined him, it became E.E. Bennett & Sons.

Ermon (1899-1963) married Edna Hammond. They had four children: Bradley (1923-1983) who married Edna Schafer; Irving (1925-) who married Mary Jane Fischer; Joyce (1926-2001); and Celia (1932-) who married Ted Grande.

Now, Bennett Cranberry Company, Inc. is owned by Ermon's son, Irving (Chuck) and family. Irving and Mary Jane have retired and spend summers at Minocqua and winters in Florida. They have four children:

Deborah (1950-) who married Richard Rohr (deceased). Children: Mike and Christopher.

Michael (1952-) who married Vicki Ketelle. Children: Jamie and Asa.

Rebecca (1954-) who married Gary Sabo. Children: Candace, Clinton and Ruth.

Randale (1955-) Randale has a son, Erik. Randale and Cheryl have a son, Ben.

Cran-Lan Cranberries

Contributed by Marge Brockman

David and Marge Brockman bought 100 acres of farm and wood land along Highway 54 from Fred Peaslee in 1988, fulfilling a lifelong dream of Dave Brockman, who has been working in cranberries since he was fifteen years old.

We planted our first bed in 1989 and one every two years. We now have a total of ten acres, with two more beds ready to plant—all in Stevens.

We consider Cran-Lan Cranberries a "mom and pop" operation, which we really enjoy. This also gives Dave something to do in his retirement years.

Cranmoor Cranberry Company

Contributed by Colleen Villars

Richard Rezin (1798-1895) and his wife Isabella, both born in Ireland in 1798, moved to Canada in 1827. They had eight children. Two of their sons, Daniel and Thomas, settled in Wood County near Rudolph and took up farming and logging. They were active in the Grand Rapids Episcopal church.

After the death of his wife, Isabella, Richard and his daughter, Elizabeth, came to Wisconsin to be with his sons. Richard died at the age of 97 in Rudolph. Richard Rezin is the ancestor of all the cranberry-growing Rezins in Wisconsin.

Daniel (1831-1913) married Matilda Gilkison in Canada. They raised five children in Rudolph, four of whom survived to adulthood. Thomas Rezin (1838-1922) married Jane McCarthy and they remained childless.

Daniel and his children became involved in the beginning cranberry industry. The first son, Richard, along with the third son, Daniel, bought land in Cranmoor in 1890 from George Purdy and F.O. Wyatt. Purdy and Wyatt had bought it originally from T.D. Bearss, one of the first to acquire marsh land from the state in the 1870s. The marsh was known as the Rezin Bros. Cranberry Co.

The marsh that Richard and Daniel bought together in 1890 was sold in 1900 to Jacob Emmerick, except for a 20-acre parcel which was sold, in 1899, to their uncle Thomas Rezin for $95. Thomas and Jane Rezin built a home on the acreage and grew cranberries. Thomas started the endeavor at over 60 years of age.

Lloyd (1893-1957) and his wife, Iva Stallard Rezin (1896-1991), and daughter, Helen (Gottschalk 1918-1996), moved to Cranmoor in 1919 to live with and help out great-uncle Thomas Rezin with his marsh. By this time, Thomas was over 80 years old. Jane McCarthy Rezin had passed away in 1916. In Cranmoor were born Douglas Stallard Rezin (1919-1944), Jane Rezin, Leonard (1921-2003), Muriel Rezin Bender (1923-) (my mother), Daniel Bruce

Rezin (1925-1997), Koral Rezin Lewis (1926-), Patricia Rezin Miller (1930-), and Susanne Rezin Hill (1938-2003).

Lloyd grew up on a cranberry marsh in Warrens with his father, Richard, and mother, Pearl, along with five brothers and sisters (who also went into cranberry growing). Soon after joining with Thomas, Lloyd purchased 190 acres of marshland adjoining his great-uncle's property, which was known as the old Fitch marsh. By 1921, Lloyd owned over 200 acres of marshland, 10 of which were planted in cranberries.

William Fitch came to the Cranmoor area in 1891 and bought part of the marsh and the home of J.T. Bearss. Fitch had been active in the State Growers Association from 1899 to 1907. His son, Joseph, was secretary from 1907 to 1917. Mr. Fitch called his marsh Cranmoor Cranberry Co. When Lloyd Rezin bought it, he carried on the name, making it official in 1949, when the marsh became a corporation under the name Cranmoor Cranberry Co.

Another piece of property purchased by Lloyd Rezin was owned by "Pat the Ditcher" Patterson. From all accounts, Frank Patterson was a colorful character who hired out for ditch digging in Cranmoor. The land is still referred to as the Patterson Piece.

Jacob Emmerick retained possession of the land purchased from the Rezin Bros. in 1900, until 1961 when he sold it to Dan Rezin, son of Lloyd. Emmerick had come from Germany in 1891 and worked for John Gaynor as foreman for Gaynor Cranberry Co. before purchasing the property from Richard and Daniel Rezin. On this property was the first school in Cranmoor and a Johnson & Hill store.

Dan Rezin died in 1997. Douglas Rezin (1972), John Villars (1981), Carter Rezin (1986) and Ben Rezin (1998-6th generation) have joined the company.

Elm Lake Cranberry Co.

In 1923, N.J. "Joe" Wirtz became marsh manager of Elm Lake Cranberry Co., which was incorporated in 1901 by a group of investors. Joe had come with his parents to Altdorf, where he married Rose M. Kundert.

He left Elm Lake in 1946 but returned in 1953, when he bought 51% of company stock. His son, Jerry, and Jerry's wife, the former Susan Tritz, became owners of Elm Lake Cranberry Co. in 1959.

In 1984, Jerry and Sue's daughter, Diane, and her husband, Michael Moss, moved to the marsh and subsequently became owners. Diane and Michael bought out Gaynor Cranberry Co., the last of the original four owners, in 1998, making Elm Lake completely family-owned.

Gaynor Cranberry Company

The former Biggert, McNish, Kendall & Blackstone property was acquired by John and James Gaynor in 1876. After the death of the last Gaynor, James' wife, Margaret, in 1926, Charles Dempze bought her interest in Gaynor Cranberry Co., which he managed until his death.

Charles' son, Gordon, who was born in the old experimental station house at the Gaynor marsh, in 1921, assumed control of the company in 1968. He was succeeded in management by his sons, James and Gary, the latter primarily responsible for the Cranmoor property.

Glacial Lake Cranberries, Inc.

Contributed by Mary Brazeau Brown

The property now known as Glacial Lake Cranberries, Inc., on the north shore of what had been Glacial Lake Wisconsin, has been producing cranberries since 1873, when John B. Arpin, a prominent lumberman, acquired the land. Basically, the same water reservoir system is maintained as when the Arpins first tamed these wild lands. Through the years, additional reservoirs, ditches, dikes and roads have been added to meet the needs for increased efficiency in the cultivation and harvest of cranberries.

Of 6,100 total acres, roughly 3,000 acres of water reservoir support 330 acres (96 beds) of producing vines, with 1,200 acres in a forestry management plan and the balance in diverse support land.

In the early 1920's, the Arpins, also involved in farming, lumbering and dredging operations, went through financial reorganization. In 1923, the cranberry property was sold to the newly-organized Central Cranberry Company. Stockholders included seven members of the Arpin family, Theodore W. Brazeau (the Arpin family's attorney), Guy Babcock, Wood County National Bank, and nine others. Records show that pioneer cranberry men and neighbors A.E. Bennett and M.O. Potter gave much assistance to the group.

By 1931, Central was owned entirely by T.W. Brazeau and his sons, Bernard and Richard. Bernard Brazeau took over the management and continued to operate the property until April 1, 1960, when he sold his interests to another newly-formed corporation, Winnebago Cranberry Company, headed by his brother, Richard S. Brazeau, also an attorney.

Richard, with the help of his father, had established approximately 30 acres of cranberry beds on the southern part of Central in 1939 and leased equipment from his brother for the maintenance of his cranberry beds. In 1967, Richard purchased the 600-acre Sahara cranberry property to the north and formed the Wilderness Corporation.

Upon Richard's death in 1968 at age 54, his widow, Virginia took over management of the three contiguous cranberry marshes and incorporated them, in 1970, as R.S. Brazeau, Inc. Virginia's brother, Eugene Wheary, became a one-third owner in RSB in 1972.

In 1989, Eugene's share in the business was bought out. From 1989 until 1997, Virginia and her two daughters, Mary Brazeau Brown and Anne Brazeau Hausler, owned the marsh. Virginia died in August 1997 and since then the marsh is solely owned and operated by Mary Brazeau Brown. Mary and her husband, Philip, have two children, Stephen Gilbert, born in 1983 and Mary Allison, born in 1990.

Gottschalk Cranberry, Inc.

Contributed by Guy Gottschalk

Gottschalk Cranberry, Inc. began in 1940, when Robert Gottschalk purchased from Tim Foley a small marsh that had been owned by the Bearss family. The Ward Brothers marsh to the west, also a part of the Bearss holdings, was acquired in 1956 and in 1964, the marsh to the north, originally purchased from the state by William Skeel in 1871, was added. In 1997, the marsh attained its present size with the acquisition of part of the neighboring Norris & Son property to the west.

Bob Gottschalk liked to joke that, as a young bachelor, no sooner had he set foot on the property than his neighbors, Lloyd Rezin and his daughter Helen, showed up and suggested he board with their family. The visit resulted in the marriage of my parents and the births of my brother, Jon, in 1945, and myself in 1949.

The neighboring Cranmoor Cranberry Co. has been in production and in the Rezin family since its founding in 1890. Bob's grandfather, R.E. McFarland, also owned a marsh in Cranmoor in the 1890s.

Over the years, the native vines have all been replaced with Searles Jumbos and then Ben Lear, Stevens, Pilgrim and LeMunyon varieties. Hand raking gave way to mechanical harvesting with the Getsinger picker in 1956 and flooding for frost protection ceased in 1965 with the introduction of sprinkler irrigation systems. Early problems with weeds, grasses, insects and diseases were aided by close cooperation with the University of Wisconsin agricultural researchers. They deserve credit for helping clean up the marshes and increasing production from 50 barrels to 200 barrels or more per acre.

In 1991, Bob and Helen repaid a debt of gratitude to the University by endowing the Gottschalk Family Chair in Cranberry Research, the first ever Distinguished Chair in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the UW-Madison. The holder of the "Cranberry Chair," Dr. Brent McCown, has engaged in biotechnical research on the cranberry, and has recently introduced "Hyred," the first new hybrid variety in decades, combining the productivity of Stevens and the good color of Ben Lear.

The family's fortunes in cranberries have grown from Bob's humble beginnings with about ten acres in 1940. Today, Jon and his family own and operate the Cranberry Lake Corporation

in Price County, which was acquired in 1981. Guy and family own and operate the home marsh and the Biron Cranberry Company, acquired from the Nash family in 1991.

Its founder, Guy Nash, was a namesake of mine, along with Guy Potter, both of whom were admired by my parents. Although our businesses are separate, the family's combined holdings of cranberry vines now total more than 700 acres.

In Cranmoor, Guy and Kathy have been joined in the operation of the marshes by our daughter and son-in-law, Fawn and Dennis Laack, and by their son, River, who was born in August 2002.

If River chooses to follow in the footsteps of his Dad and Granddad, he will become the sixth generation in a direct lineage of growers who have practiced sustainable cranberry agriculture in Cranmoor for more than a hundred years.

Hemlock Trails Cranberry Company

Contributed by Warren Brockman.

Hemlock Trails Cranberry Company was started in 1947 by Raymond P. Brockman with the construction of three beds in northern Cranmoor on 960 acres purchased from the state of Wisconsin, Wood County, and a local dentist. The beds consisted of about five acres, planted with Searles Jumbo vines. Three more beds were added in 1949.

During 1958-59, ownership was transferred to the next generation when Bruce, Morris, and Nathan Brockman formed a partnership. Morris Brockman managed and worked on the marsh for the next 42 years.

Between 1959-79, Morris expanded producing acreage from 10 to 22 acres. "Hemlock Trails" was incorporated in 1987 with Morris as President and Treasurer, Bruce as Vice President, and Nathan as Secretary.

During 1988-90, a 10-acre expansion was planted with Stevens vines. Three more acres were added in the early 1990's after Bruce sold his shares to Morris and Nathan.

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Morris' son, Warren, came onto the marsh full time in 1995. Morris and Warren worked together on the marsh until Morris retired in 2001 and sold his half of the company to Warren and his wife Jennifer.

Currently, Hemlock Trails Cranberry Co. Inc. consists of 38.5 acres of cranberries. It is owned by Warren as President, Treasurer and Manager; Jennifer as Secretary; and Nathan as Vice President.

Lester Cranberry Company

Contributed by Dick Getsinger

Lester Cranberry Co. was incorporated in 1903 by Charles Lester, G.M. Hill, William Johnson and G.W. Paulus. In 1905, Oscar Potter bought Lester's shares.

Carl Getsinger, the former foreman of Bennett Cranberry Co., moved his wife, Lena, and only child, Leonard, to the Lester marsh in 1914. In 1917, Andrew Searles purchased Potter's shares and Carl Getsinger purchased the shares of Paulus. In 1929, Carl bought William Johnson's shares. In 1947, Carl's son, Leonard Getsinger, bought G.M. Hill's shares.

In 1952, the Getsinger cranberry-raking machine was patented.

When Andrew Searles died, his shares were inherited by his daughter and his grandson, Clarence Searles. Carl Getsinger's son, Leonard Getsinger, purchased the daughter's shares.

Carl Getsinger died in 1962 and Leonard, an only child, inherited his father's shares.

Leonard sold 25 shares to his son, Richard Getsinger, in 1962. Leonard died in 1972. Richard and his wife, Selma, purchased shares from Leonard's wife, Laurabelle, in 1973. Richard and Selma purchased the A. Searles & Son stock. Later they purchased Clarence Searles' stock from his estate and the remaining Laura Getsinger stock in 1983. They sold shares of stock to their son, Timothy Getsinger, in 1995.

Richard and Selma lived for many years in the house on the marsh that had been built in the 1890s. In 1999, Richard and Selma, along with Timothy, sold all shares of stock to William Wolfe, who is the present owner of Lester Cranberry Co.

Potter & Son Cranberry Company

Melvin Orwin Potter began purchasing land for this cranberry marsh in 1887. After older sons Guy and Oscar left to start their own cranberry marshes, Roy M. Potter joined his father and took over as manager in 1920. After M.O.'s 1931 death, Roy managed the property alone until 1954, when his son, the founder's namesake, Melvin O. Potter II joined him. Since the death of Roy Potter in 1969, Mel has been the sole manager.

Henry H. Westfall worked at Potter & Son from age 14 until he retired at age 82 in 1980, at which time Len Purvis became foreman, a position now held by Michael Troyanoski. John Harter is office manager.

A majority share of Potter & Son is owned by Mel Potter of Marana, Arizona, who continues to manage the property. Other shareholders are Mel and Wendy Potter's daughters, Josephine Lynn Alexander and Sherry Jane Cervi, and the sons of Mel's older brother, John Potter: Kevin, John Jr. and Gregory. Sherry Cervi is a well-known rodeo performer.

Earl W. Rezin & Son Cranberry Company

Contributed by Chris Rezin

Earl W. Rezin & Son Cranberry Company was established in 1946 by Earl W. and Marie R. Rezin after purchasing the land from Earl's parents, William T. & Mabel A. Rezin.

During the marsh's early years, Earl worked full-time in the Nekoosa paper mill. At the same time, with his wife, Marie, he started carving a cranberry marsh one bed at a time out of the swampland. By the mid-1960s, the marsh had about 25 acres of producing vines. During the early 1990s, more planting occurred and today, the marsh consists of about 32 acres of vines.

The marsh has always been family-owned and operated. Earl and Marie have four married children: Marlene (Ray) Stys, Janet (Jim) Eichsteadt, Sandra (Robert) Harrison and Chris (Lisa) Rezin. Today, the marsh is jointly owned and operated by Earl and Marie Rezin with their son, Chris, his wife, Lisa, and their three children, Adam, Ashley and Anna.

The single most significant event in the history of the marsh was the introduction of irrigation in the late 1950s. Applying commercial fertilizer was also a notable event.

The most notable historical fact about Cranmoor was the wildfire of the early 1930s. Earl, at that time, was a young teenager residing on his parents' marsh, currently Ken Rezin Cranberry Co. The fire started southwest of Babcock on a hot, dry, windy April day and threatened their cranberry beds and buildings. The family managed to hold the fire off, but it did burn a dance hall/building and two small houses used by workers. The intense fire was finally stopped near Port Edwards.

Ken Rezin Cranberry Corporation

Contributed by Karen Rifleman

Kenneth Rezin's great-grandparents, Daniel and Matilda Rezin, in 1887 purchased the first parcel of Town of Cranmoor land which would later become part of the Ken Rezin Cranberry Corporation. Their son, Robert William Rezin, and his wife, Mary, lived with them on a farm in Rudolph at that time. Each summer, Mary and Matilda stayed in Rudolph to run the farm, while Daniel and Robert homesteaded the original 40 acres in Cranmoor.

Near the turn of the century, Mary and Robert built a home on the marsh for approximately $500. They raised three children: Robert ("Robbie"), Ruth, and Thomas William (W.T. or "Willie"). In about 1930, they moved to Port Edwards.

W. T. Rezin was given one-half interest in the cranberry marsh in 1928 and bought the other half from his mother and sister in 1932. He and his wife, Mabel, raised their thirteen children on the marsh in the home they built in 1921. Their children's names are: Gladys Vehrs, Doris Walker, Earl, Kenneth, Arthur, George, Donald, Edward, Gerald, Geraldine Hanneman, Marilyn Kampen, Leonard, and Shirley (Anderson) Moore.

Kenneth worked on his parents' marsh while developing his own marsh on adjoining land, which he purchased in 1945. He built his 11-acre marsh with a wheelbarrow, a "number two shovel," and a hand planter.

In 1956, Kenneth and his wife, Anne, purchased W.T.'s 40-acre marsh and developed it into what is now 67 acres of cranberries on over 1,100 acres of wetlands and forestland. Ken and Anne built a home in 1960 on the former site of Robert and Mary's house.

Over the past 47 years much of the marsh has been replanted. Ken installed irrigation and aluminum bulkheads and implemented other modern crop procedures. Crop yields have improved dramatically, as a result, from the 500 barrels per year yields in the late 1940s.

In 1959 Ken and Anne donated land for the Cranberry Culture Historical Marker on Highway 54.

From 1968 to 1974, Ken and Anne's daughter, Kathleen, and her husband, Thomas Clark, worked on the marsh. Their daughter, Sera (Clark) Maloney, and her husband, Ian, are both civil engineers in Minnesota. They have two children, Kyrie and Aiden. Kathleen now lives in Wausau, Wisconsin.

Ken and Anne's second daughter, Karen, and her husband, Russell Rifleman, have been involved in the family business since 1984. They replaced Mabel and W.T's home on the marsh in l985. Russ has been the Town of Cranmoor Chairman since 1990 and is active on the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association Board. Karen is a social worker with Wood County Department of Social Services.

Russ and Karen have two children. Their daughter, Peg Vittoria, is a bank vice-president in St. Paul and the mother of two children, Avery and Tyler. Their son, Douglas, recently married Sara Salentine and moved to Cranmoor to help with the family cranberry business. Doug is the sixth generation to be part of this century old cranberry marsh, which became incorporated in 1985 as the Ken Rezin Cranberry Corporation.

Kenneth Rezin passed away in September of 2002. Anne continues to live on the marsh, next door to Karen and Russ Rifleman. For 116 years, a member of the Rezin family has owned, lived on and worked this cranberry marsh in the Town of Cranmoor.

A. Searles & Son

Andrew Searles moved from Oasis Township in Waushara County to Wood County at the age of 26 with his brother, Jacob. The two spent several years working for Mr. Trahern.

In 1873, they bought 80 acres of Trahern's marsh property and continued purchasing acreage until they owned 200 acres. Their partnership dissolved in 1906 and the property was divided into two marshes, which are still in operation.

The two Searles marshes are located in the Northeast corner of the Town of Cranmoor at a former railroad flag stop, known as Walker Station.

In 1893, Andrew discovered a superior wild vine. Through careful cultivation, he was able to expand the quantity of the vines. The Searles Jumbo cranberry vines was the predominate variety in Wisconsin throughout the 20th century.

Clarence D. Searles, the eldest of the three children of Andrew and Ella Searles, was the next generation to run the marsh. His sisters, Maude and Mayme, were born on the family marsh. Clarence D. Searles and his wife, Clara, had six children: Clarence, Arleigh, Ermma, Margaret, Harold and Robert.

Clarence A. Searles, son of Clarence D. and Clara Searles, was born June 10, 1905, on the marsh. He would become the third generation Searles' to run the family marsh. Upon his retirement, his eldest son, Clarence L. (Clare) Searles managed the marsh. During Clarence A. Searles' "retirement" years, he managed what is now Glacial Lake Cranberries, Inc.

In 1989, Arleigh's son, David Searles, took over management of A. Searles and Son until he passed away on March 9, 2000. Since David's death, the marsh has been run by his widow, Joan Searles.

Jacob Searls Cranberry Company

Contributed by Robert Duckart

Jacob Searls was born in Ontario, Canada in 1848 and at the age of seven moved with his family to the Town of Oasis in Waushara County. Jacob and his brother, Andrew, moved to

Wood County in 1873 to cut timbers for the Green Bay and Western Railroad and to work for a cranberry man by the name of William Trahern.

Jacob and Andrew started purchasing property and established the marsh that is now known as A. Searles & Son. In 1903, Jacob Searls and four partners, O.T. Hougen, F.J. Wood, George W. Paulus and John A. Gaynor incorporated the Jacob Searls Cranberry Co. on lands north of the Searls Brothers Marsh and along the Green Bay and Western Railroad at Walker Station.

In 1906, the partnership between Jacob and Andrew Searls ended and the Searls Brothers Cranberry Marsh became the A. Searles & Son Marsh.

Jacob and his wife, the former Lottie Horton, had two daughters, Beulah and Fern. Jacob managed the marsh until his death in September of 1925 and his wife held the position of Board of Directors President until her death on January 5, 1942.

Beulah Searls married Henry F. Duckart on August 17, 1917. They had six children, Donald, Richard, Wayne, Patricia, Francis, and Charlotte. Donald S. Duckart was elected president and general manager of the marsh following the death of his father, Henry, on July 3, 1958.

Donald S. Duckart and his wife, Dorothy (Dubison), had four children, Dennis, Diane, Daniel and Dwight.

Wayne (Took) Duckart and his wife, Helene (Johnson) also had four children, Thomas, Robert, Debra and Lynn.

Wayne and Donald were partners in the Jacob Searls Marsh until Donald's retirement in 1980. At that time, Wayne and Helene bought out Donald's interest in the marsh. At the same time they bought out Richard Duckart's interest in the marsh as well.

Wayne was active in the marsh until the time of his death on December 22, 2001.

Wayne and Helene's son, Robert, has worked full time on the family marsh since 1973 and is currently the sole owner. Robert has two sons, Erik and Jon.

The Jacob Searls Marsh consists of 2,500 acres of land of which 180 acres are planted in cranberries in two locations. The home marsh in the Town of Cranmoor and the other located 1.5 miles north in the adjoining township of Seneca.

The crop is marketed through the Ocean Spray Cooperative.

The Jacob Searls Cranberry Co. has prospered for over 100 years and four generations due to the hard work and positive contributions of many family members and excellent employees.

Walker Cranberry Company

Contributed by Pamela Walker

Walker Cranberry Company traces its history to land purchased in 1945 by Harold and Doris Walker from William and Mabel Rezin, Doris's parents. Originally from Illinois, Harold Walker had moved with his parents and siblings to a farm in the Babcock area. As a young man he worked as the manager for Bennett Cranberry Company in the town of Cranmoor.

Harold met Doris J. Rezin and they were married in 1941. They had seven children: Beverly, Barbara, Donna, Roger, Ryan, Mary and Nancy. Harold continued in his position at Bennett Cranberry Company until he purchased a parcel of land from the Rezin homestead and began developing his own cranberry marsh. By the fall of 1947, Harold harvested and delivered his first crop of Searles cranberries.

Under the tutelage of Harold Walker the marsh grew to 50 acres and maintained a focus on quality fresh fruit production. An earth-bermed warehouse was constructed during the summer of 1959 in preparation for the fall harvest. With the warehouse full of fruit, growers were subjected to the Black Monday cranberry scare and the Thanksgiving market was ruined. Although the fruit was kept until the following March, it was apparent that the fruit would have to be removed from storage and destroyed.

Harold employed a variety of innovative cultural practices including the installation of one of the first sprinkler irrigation systems created by Hal Roberts in 1962. He planted new hybrid vines developed by Dr. Bain from the University of Wisconsin, which have continued to produce McFarlin cranberries.

Articles of Incorporation were filed in Wood County in November 1976, and by January 1, 1977, the company did business as Walker Cranberry Company, Inc. The officers included President Harold Walker, Vice President Roger Walker, Vice President Ryan Walker and Secretary Treasurer Doris Walker. Daily operations were assumed by Harold and Ryan, until Harold's death in July 1981. Ryan Walker became President and manager overseeing a modest vine expansion in 1984, and warehouse renovation in 1986.

Ryan and Pamela Walker currently own and operate the cranberry business along with their sons Andrew and Tyler. Walker Cranberry Company focuses on producing quality fresh fruit from 71 acres of vines planted in several varieties. The original Searles and McFarlin varieties remain although other hybrid varieties including Stevens, LeMunyon, and Pilgrims have been planted. Each fall fruit is screened, dried and stored at the warehouse facility on Highway 54. An optical sorting machine in tandem with a team of seasoned employees sorts and packs fruit for the Thanksgiving and Christmas markets. As sixth-generation growers, Andrew and Tyler apprentice for their father, sustaining the time-honored family tradition of fresh fruit production.

Whittlesey Cranberry Company

Contributed by Jo Ann Detlefsen

Sherman Whittlesey died at his Cranmoor home in November, 1935, at age 86. According to his obituary, he saw the cranberry industry grow from a meager cultivation of wild vines to its present position of importance and was one of the most successful Wisconsin growers. Whittlesey cranberry grew to 1,200 acres with 55 acres of vines during the first 64 years.

Sherman's grandson, Newell D. Jasperson was born November 4, 1918, in Port Edwards, Wis., son of Clarence A. and Harriet Whittlesey Jasperson, daughter of Sherman and Annie. Clarence was secretary and treasurer of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. Newell graduated from Port Edwards high school in 1935.

When "Grandfather" Sherman Whittlesey died, Newell was offered the opportunity to operate the marsh upon graduation from college. With that in mind, he entered the College of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, graduating in 1939 with a degree in Entomology.

While Newell was at the University, Clarence and Harriet Jasperson operated the marsh, constructing what a 1937 newspaper called "one of the most modern bunkhouses of its kind in the country…a new experiment in housing both Indian and white harvest help under one roof equipped with all the modern conveniences of the modern home."

At Madison, Newell met Helen Hernlem of Red Wing, Minnesota. They were married January 25, 1940, and moved onto the marsh. Their children are: Stephen, a physics professor at Worchester Polytechnic Institute, Worchester, Mass., William, a meteorologist and professor at Augsburg College, St. Paul, Minn., and Jo Ann (Jasperson) Detlefsen, treasurer of Whittlesey Cranberry and actively involved in marsh operations.

The Whittlesey marsh was a charter member of the Wisconsin Cranberry Sales Co., formed in 1906. Newell was elected a director in 1945 and held the position of president when the Sales Company was dissolved in 1956.

The Midwest Cranberry Co. was formed in the 1940s by a group of Wisconsin growers who left the Sales Co. and joined Ocean Spray. The inability of the American Cranberry Exchange to provide a reliable canner for the Sales Company's processing berries led to the dissolution of the Exchange in 1956, and thereby the Sales Co.

Whittlesey Cranberry became a member of Ocean Spray Cranberries in 1956.

Newell Jasperson was also active in the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, serving as president in 1950 and hosting the annual meeting at the Whittlesey marsh in 1953.

Whittlesey Cranberry experimented with overhead irrigation sprinklers as early as 1953. The marsh was entirely protected with overhead sprinklers by 1967. Whittlesey Cranberry introduced the beater system of harvesting to central Wisconsin in 1968.

Vernon Woods joined Whittlesey Cranberry in September, 1967, and is currently marsh manager. Newell Jasperson continued his active involvement within the industry, serving on the Board of Directors of Ocean Spray from 1971-85.

The neighboring Havey marsh was purchased in 1977 and major renovation was begun that lasted several years. Total acreage of Whittlesey Cranberry was brought to 1,372 with 135 acres in vines. In 1979, the last native vines on the original acreage were replaced by hybrids. Two more families moved onto the marsh as Harvey Woods joined the crew in 1985 and Tom Andres in 1988.

When Whittlesey Cranberry marked 125 years July 28, 1996, with a celebration on the marsh, three generations were present: Newell and Helen Jasperson, Steve and Ann Jasperson, Bill and Kathy Jasperson, Guy and Jo Ann Detlefsen and grandchildren Amy and Laurie Jasperson and Robert and Kristen Detlefsen.

Robert N. Detlefsen graduated from UW-Madison in Agricultural Business Management in 2000 and joined the family business as the fifth generation grower. Robert married Lisl Hornig in 2002 and they live in Cranmoor.

Cranmoor Town Officers

The first meeting of the Town of Cranmoor was held April 5, 1904 in the schoolhouse and the residents present immediately adjourned to Bennett's Store to hold the first election.

TOWN CHAIRMAN	TERM OF OFFICE
Authur E. Bennett	April 5, 1904 to October 26, 1945
Ermon E. Bennett	November 3, 1945 to March 31, 1950
Clarence A. Searles	April 4, 1950 to April 3, 1979
Daniel B. Rezin	April 3, 1979 to April 10, 1991
Russell G. Rifleman	April 10, 1991 to present

SUPERVISOR	TERM OF OFFICE
Andrew Searls	April 5, 1904 to June 29, 1914 Resigned "not being a U.S. citizen"
Ed Kruger	April 5, 1904 to April 6, 1920
Joe W. Fitch	March 25, 1913 (sworn in for one day)
Robert W. Rezin	June 29, 1914 to January 4, 1930 (date of death)
Sherman N. Whittlesey	April 6, 1920 to 1935 (date of death)
Ermon E. Bennett	Appointed March 29, 1927 (one day)
Andrew Searls	March 25, 1930 to June 27, 1932
Carl Getsinger	June 27, 1932 to January 2, 1963 (date of death)
J.J. Emmerick	December 3, 1935 to 1939 (date of death)
John J. Emmerick	May 22, 1939 to November 19, 1959
Bradley Bennett	March 22, 1960 to April 2, 1963
Leonard Getsinger	January 16, 1963 to April 6, 1971
Ken Rezin	April 2, 1963 to March 29, 1989
Daniel B. Rezin	April 6, 1971 to April 3, 1979 (elected chair)
Jerome "Jerry" Wirtz	April 3, 1979 to March 29, 1989
Russell G. Rifleman	April 12, 1989 to April 10, 1991(elected chair)
Ryan Walker	April 12, 1989 to present
Robert J. Duckart	April 10, 1991 to present

TOWN CLERK	TERM OF OFFICE
Clarence D. Searles	April 5, 1904 to March 30, 1920 (last record)
Lloyd N. Rezin	March 29, 1921 to October 10, 1957 (date of death)
Daniel B. Rezin	December 2, 1957 to April 4, 1961
Irving "Chuck" Bennett	April 4, 1961 to April 4, 1967
Jerome "Jerry" Wirtz	April 21, 1967 to April 1, 1975
Richard "Dick" Getsinger	April 5, 1975 to April 6, 1977
George W. Bartels	April 12, 1977 to June 28, 1991
Philip M. Brown	July 1, 1991 to present

TOWN TREASURER	TERM OF OFFICE
Sherman N. Whittlesey	April 5, 1904 to March 31, 1906
Oscar O. Potter	April 3, 1906 to April 2, 1912 (last record)
Guy N. Potter	March 25, 1913 (paid $100. treas. salary)
William T. Rezin	April 1, 1913 to March 31, 1919
Emory C. Bennett	April 1, 1919 to (died in office)
Roy M. Potter	February 4, 1920 to April 2, 1935
Theodore A. Wirtz	April 12, 1935 to April 3, 1945
Kenneth Rezin	April 13, 1945 to April 7, 1959
Harold Walker	May 29, 1959 to April 1, 1975
Morris R. Brockman	April 5, 1975 to April 5, 1983
Pamela L. Walker	April 12, 1983 to April 6, 1993
Vicki Bennett	April 13, 1993 to present

TOWN ASSESSOR	TERM OF OFFICE
E.E. Warner	April 5, 1904 to April 6, 1909
Sherman N. Whittlesey	April 6, 1909 to April 2, 1912
J.J. Emmerick	April 2, 1912 to April 13, 1935
Bernard C. Brazeau	April 13, 1935 to April 2, 1940
R.P. Damme	April 2, 1940 to March 9, 1946
Harrison H. Kruger	March 28, 1946 to April 26, 1948
Robert A. Gottschalk	May 6, 1948 to April 5, 1983
Guy A. Gottschalk	April 12, 1983 to December 2, 1985
George Bartels	December 2, 1985 to April 14, 1992
Guy A. Gottschalk	April 14, 1992 to June 13, 2001
Fred Grorich	November 28, 2001 to present

EARLY JUSTICES OF THE PEACE: Joe W. Fitch, Ralph S. Smith, Carl Getsinger, William T. Rezin, Clarence D. Searls, M. Smith, Clara Smith – Last recorded Justice of the Peace – April 15, 1931

EARLY CONSTABLES: Tim Foley, B.P. Clinton, H.F. Whittlesey, Nick or Nic Wirtz, Tim Foley, Joe Schilter, Harry Whittlesey, Emory C. Bennett, Carl Getsinger, P.T. "Pete" Brown, N.E. Sarvin, Jack Emmerick, R.P. Damme, Harrison H. Kruger, Harvey Ward, Mayme Searls, Clarence A. Searls – Last recorded Constable – April 8, 1938

ELECTION WORKERS

Over the past 100 years, the Town of Cranmoor has had a multitude of election workers, too many to mention here. The town had up to seven people manning the polls on election day. According to Irene Rasmussen, a long time election worker, during presidential elections, if a Republican was in the White House, there were four Republican election workers and three Democrats.

Elections in a small township were often social events. Pot luck meals were available all day, the coffee pot was always on and voters would often bring in their freshly baked treats. After they voted, they often stayed for a little bit to socialize.

On Tuesday, November 8, 1966 the Town of Cranmoor was recognized by the Hagerstrom-Rude Post No. 9, American Legion Post for consistently turning in the earliest election results in Wood County. This was due to the fact that the polls closed at the Cranmoor School at 5:30 and the election board usually had its report completed by 6:00 p.m.

Over the past one hundred years, there are probably three election workers that deserve recognition. According to the November 8, 1966, *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, Mrs. O.J. Hammond and Mrs. William Peaslee were recognized for working together for twenty-seven years on the town's election board. Mrs. Hammond is the grandmother of Irving "Chuck" Bennett who was the town clerk in 1966. Mrs. Peaslee's daughter, Irene Rasmussen has been on the town's election board since September 9, 1958. Mrs. Rasmussen recalls that her mother was asked by Town Chairman, Arthur E. Bennett, in 1931 to first serve on the town's election board. Mr. Bennett asked Mrs. Peaslee if she wanted to earn some money to buy a new hat. At that time, elections workers were paid $3.00 per day, just enough for a nice new hat.

The above names and dates were taken from the Clerk's and Treasurer's records over the past one hundred years. The author cannot be responsible for the total accuracy of these records. However, I think they are pretty accurate.

Philip M. Brown, Clerk
Town of Cranmoor (July 1, 1991 to present)

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Dave Engel interviews 1980-2003, including: E.P. Arpin Jr., Chuck Bennett, Randale Bennett, Clarence Brovald, Mary Brazeau Brown, Ruth Bennett Corey, Gordon Dempze, George Huser, Casper Huser, Newell and Helen Jasperson, Edmund Lincoln, Jean Nash. Philleo Nash, Thomas Ruesch, John Potter, Bruce Potter, Clinton and Ellen Potter, Melvin Potter, Clarence Searles, Clare Smith (recorded), Luella Teeters, Henry Westfall, Lela Potter Winn, Jerome Wirtz.

Archives: Berlin Historical Society, Berlin Public Library; McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids; South Wood County Historical Corp., Wisconsin Rapids; Steenbock Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin, Madison; Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison; Wisconsin Historical Society Area Research Center, Stevens Point.

Editorial consultant, Kathy Engel.

Suggested museums: *South Wood County Historical Corp.,* Wisconsin Rapids. *Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center, Warrens*.

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Cranberry pickers:
At Bearss' Marsh *circa* 1885. T.W. Brazeau, born March 12, 1873, second from right, with check mark.
Glacial Lake Cranberries, Inc.