

THE FIRST 150 YEARS

The land which is now the Town of Maple Grove was once owned and occupied by the Indians. In 1673 Marquette and Joliet were sent to map the shoreline from Green Bay. They may have been the first white people to pass through this area.

As a result of the French and Indian War, this land passed to Great Britain from the French in 1763. At the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, it became a part of the United States. Then in 1787, it was the Northwest Territory, in 1800 the Indiana Territory, and in 1809 the Illinois Territory. From 1818 to 1836 it was the Michigan Territory.

In 1836 the county of Manitowoc was created. It then became Wisconsin Territory until Wisconsin became a state in 1848. The Town of Maple Grove had its start in 1850 as part of Manitowoc County when it was originally comprised of a territory twelve (12) miles square including the present towns of Maple Grove, Franklin, Rockland, and Cato. It was set off from the Town of Manitowoc Rapids and organized in September 1850.

The first election was held at the home of A.E. Sherwood in Section 31 of what is now the town of Franklin. At the first annual meeting on April 18, 1851, M.C. Brown was chosen chairman and L.W. Dunham was chosen clerk.

Ava Smith, who in 1848 settled in what is now the town of Franklin, suggested the name Maple Grove for the town and it remains to this day.

The early settlers were mostly Irish, German, and Bohemian. Because of the potato famine in Ireland in the late 1840s, a million Irish people migrated to the United States. Thomas Morrissey was one of the first Irishmen to settle in Maple Grove in 1850. He soon after started a small store and saloon which is now on the corner of County Trunk G and Hillcrest Road, north of Maple Grove.

Charles Krueger was one of the first Germans to settle just north of what is now known as Reedsville. This occurred in 1852. Daniel and Michael Jantz, John and Fred Maertz, and Gottfried Krueger and sons came in the early 1850s and settled here also. Henry Horn located land in the south half of Section 6 in the Town of Maple Grove in 1855, later known as the Kasson area.

Most of the German immigrants who settled in the Town of Maple Grove came from Pomerania and West Prussia, Germany. Some Bohemians migrated here also. Word is they were seeking religious freedoms. They bought the property which is now Menasha Street in Reedsville in 1863 and built a log church in 1865 where the cemetery is located. The present church was built in 1907.

When settlers arrived here, all they found were narrow trails through the wilderness. Some located log huts to live in until they could cut trees to make a log home. Although the soil was fertile, they had to clear the land of trees to plant some crops for food to eat. They also trapped, hunted, and fished for food to survive. At that time, the lime kilns in Grimms was a booming business. It provided jobs for many of the early settlers.

Farmers in the area provided the kilns with firewood which was hauled to the kilns with horse-drawn sleds in the winter. The wood brought them 75 cents a cord.

From time to time, as various parts of the county developed and were settled, petitions were presented to the Board of Supervisors asking that certain tracts be set off and established as separate townships. By 1855 the Township of Franklin including Cato was set off from the Town of Maple Grove. In 1856 the Township of Cato was set off of Franklin. Also the Town of Rockland was set off from the Town of Maple Grove in 1856. Each of the four are a township of their own and elected their own supervisors and went about their business.

The early supervisors were kept busy dividing the townships into sections and building roads. This area was rich in gravel deposits brought down by the continental glacier. Farmers would then haul gravel with horse and wagons or sleds to build their roads.

The first settlers met in homes for worship until they could build churches. Missionary priests and pastors walked from place to place and later came by horseback as circuit riders to preach the gospel. They also formed school districts in the 1850s since farmers were deeply interested in the educational welfare of their children. The first schools were built of logs.

As trees were cut and land was cleared, people began to plant corn and potatoes. Although the soil was fertile, the crops were not very abundant due to poor cultivation. Sawmills were built which enabled the landowners to saw their logs into lumber and also provided jobs. Railroad tracks were built through the township and completed in 1872.

Reedsville village was incorporated in 1892. The south one-half of Section 35 of the Town of Maple Grove was taken from the town and now comprises the northern half of Reedsville.

In the early 1900s frame barns and homes were being built with lumber sawed from logs cut from personal property. By 1905 Rural Free Delivery of mail came about. Telephone lines were built and some residents had telephone service by 1911. Power lines for electricity were beginning to be built through the township in 1920. The population actually decreased in the late 1800s and early 1900s. For example, the Town of Maple Grove census showed a population of 1,585 in 1890, 1,214 in 1900, and 1,151 in 1910.

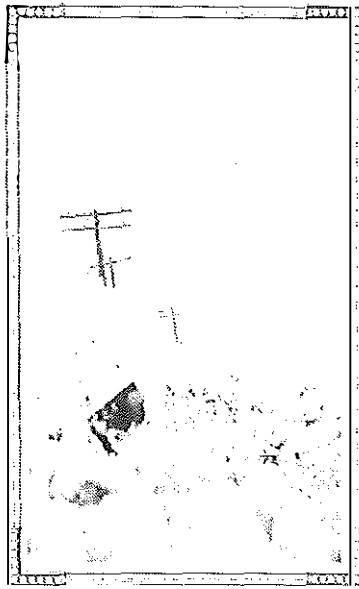
On February 22, 1922, a terrible sleet storm occurred. Everything was covered with ice. Telephone and power lines were down and trees also toppled because of the heavy winds.

Dairy farming began as more land was being cultivated. Small grains, corn, forage, and grasses were raised. As cows produced more milk, cheese factories sprung up. Farmers raised cash crops such as sugar beets, peas, sweet corn, green beans, and red beets. Pea vines and canning factories were located close by. Since this was a big clover seed growing area, it was also a beekeeper's paradise as honeybees provided a very vital pollination service to the seed grower, while the honeybee gathered nectar for honey from the flower.

Some older residents can remember the Great Depression in 1929 and early 1930s. Farmers survived by growing and canning their own vegetables and fruits. They butchered a hog, a cow, or a chicken. Cereal was cooked from their own grain. Many people wore second-hand clothes. In the drought in the 1930s, the cattle ran out of grass to eat so some ate leaves off the trees.

A storm which assumed cyclone proportions on July 12, 1934 broke into the southern sections of the Town of Maple Grove about 8 o'clock in the evening with disastrous effect on property and crops. The outlook for a fine crop had been excellent due to the plentiful rains of the past weeks. However, such hopes were diminished after a half-hour's work was done by the destructive elements. The wind and rain were accompanied by hailstones of immense size. Some having a diameter of one inch were still picked up the next day. Due to the high winds, much damage was done to buildings in the area also.

The winter of 1936 has not been forgotten by those old enough to remember that year. There were huge piles of snow, roads were closed, and special equipment had to be brought in to open the roads. At times, men had to go in front of the plow to help shovel a path.



During World War II, from 1939-1945, factories stopped building civilian materials and went into war production. As men went into the armed forces, women took their places in war plants. There was rationing of meat, butter, sugar, coffee, canned goods, shoes, gasoline, and other things. After the war was over, people rejoiced and sons came home! Once again, people could buy automobiles, tractors, machinery, and many other things which they were unable to buy during the war.

From the beginning of the township in 1850 to 1947, each town officer was elected each year. Then in 1947 it was ruled all town officers were elected for a 2-year term. Each town chairman represented his/her township on the county board. In 1965 the Supreme Court ruled a county board supervisor shall represent as nearly as possible, an equal number of residents according to the population. The Town of Maple Grove is in the 20th supervisor district. That supervisor represents the Town of Franklin (Ward 1), Town of Maple Grove, Town of Rockland, and Village of Reedsville (Ward 1 and 2) on the county board. Marion Nate has been newly elected. Robert Wenzel has served us well for the past 26 years.

Other changes were evident by the late 1950s. Local cheese factories were closing and milk was transported to larger plants. Also, the little one-room schools closed by the 1950s and 1960s, and children were transported by bus to integrated schools.

Town officers have made many resolutions and ordinances over the past 150 years. Those listed below are only a few:

By May 1971, a resolution was made that an attendant needed to be present when the town dump was open. The facility would be open the first and third Saturday of each month from April through November, and from December through March, it would be open the first Saturday of the month.

November 1971 - An ordinance to regulate and license mobile home parks and trailer campgrounds was made.

August 1, 1972 - A resolution was made to require a building permit to build or alter anything over \$300.

April 10, 1973 - A contract between A.C. Long and the town was made to furnish and place road identification signs.

June 6, 1989 – The board agreed to start a recycling program. Aluminum, tin cans, and glass by the color were sorted. All materials had to be taken to the dumpsite.

March 5, 1990 – Final day before closing the dumpsite. The new transfer station is at the town hall on Marquette Road.

September 10, 1990 – The Wayside Fire Department asked permission to organize a fire well in the Town of Maple Grove.

November 4, 1991 – A concrete slab 24 x 40 was built using money received from a recycling grant.

February 3, 1992 – A public meeting was held to get recommendations for a building to collect and store recyclables. The building was built in 1992.

During the summer of 1992, fire numbers were placed at each residence or business to help fire departments and ambulance personnel.

The town adopted the mandatory recycling ordinance. Recycling was made mandatory on a statewide basis as of January 1, 1995. The officials of the town are continuing to upgrade and blacktop as many roads as possible.

Future plans for the Town of Maple Grove are either to renovate the present town hall or build a new facility.

Good luck to the Town of Maple Grove in the next 150 years!