

Town of Russell to cite 150th anniversary in '02

New Holstein Reporter
BY STEPHEN GROESSEL

of the Delta Publications, Inc. staff

The Town of Russell will be marking an important milestone in 2002.

The township which began in 1852 will celebrate its 150th birthday, town officials announced at the town annual meeting recently.

The Town Board, along with other select residents, will be responsible for planning the anniversary events.

An earlier birthday is taking place as well. The 150th birthday (founding) of St. Ann Catholic Church in St. Anna is being celebrated this year on Aug. 5.

Looking ahead even more, the town board is exploring steps leading up to a Smart Growth plan that must be in place by the year 2010. Town officials agreed that it is wise to get started now and not wait until the last minute, said town clerk Larry Kempf.

Smart Growth is an initiative whereby municipalities work with one another to make government more efficient and cost saving. The Town of Russell already contracts with Sheboygan County for snow plowing services and cooperates with the bordering townships of Marshfield and New Holstein in clearing boundary roadways.

Town officials will check into the availability of grants to facilitate Smart Growth plans. In addition, town officials will contact the Sheboygan County Planning Department for help.

Through the town's quarterly newsletter, town officials will soon begin asking town residents to volunteer to serve on a Smart

Growth committee. If a weak response warrants it, town officials will appoint individuals.

Kettl Commission

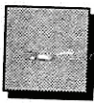
Discussion took place on the recommendations offered by the Governor's Blue-Ribbon Commission on State-Local Partnerships for the 21st Century, more commonly referred to as the Kettl Commission. The 32-member Kettl Commission panel came up with 130 recommendations. Some of these recommendations will be included in the 2001-2003 state budget. Viewed as a road map for the 21st century, the recommendations suggest moderate to radical changes in county, town, village and city government. Areas targeted include shared revenues and the packaging of services, and state aids and shared services in the justice and human services areas.

An annual inspection of town roadways will take place. Continued work is likely needed on Sexton Road, especially its ditches. The town has adopted Pacer, a computer program that provides electronic reports to the state on road conditions in the township.

The town's recycling center remains open each Saturday from 9 a.m. until noon.

The results of the April 3 election are as follows: Incumbent #1 supervisor Eldridge Schnell beat out challenger Terrance Winkel, 45-28. In the six-person race for three positions on the town Planning Board, top vote-getters were Herbert Dickman (61

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Russell

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votes), Stanley Meinnert (39) and Terrance Winkel (36). These three will occupy the vacant seats on the Planning Board. Other vote totals were Charles Kraus, 35; John Kiehnau, 24; and Dennis Frederich, 13.

Incumbent Leo Dickrell was returned as Town of Russell chairman with 71 votes. Incumbent supervisor Ray Poch received 69 votes, and incumbent Larry Kempf garnered 72 votes. Marlene Dickrell was re-elected treasurer with 72 votes and Don Turba was named constable with 67 votes. Turba took the oath of office at the April 10 meeting.

Next year's annual town meeting will be held April 9.

Town of Russell recognizes officers for service tenure

A certificate of appreciation from the Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) for their many years of service was presented to Leo Dickrell who served as chairman for the town of Russell for 26 years and Marlene Dickrell for serving the township as treasurer for 24 years.

2006?

New and current members for the town board were sworn in at the annual meeting, April 12. Current officers are chairman Herbert Dickman; clerk Larry Kempf; treasurer Jane Turba; supervisors Terry Winkel and Donald Turba, and planning board members Dan Schmahl, Bill Kraus, and Stanley Meinert. Donald Turba and Joe Mierzejewski also make up the planning board.

Smart Growth survey results examined

by Jed Buelow
of The Review staff

ELKHART LAKE – Citizens of the Kettle Moraine area would like the region to remain predominantly open/green space with agricultural areas and small villages, or a balance of residential development, tourism/commercial development, and open/green space.

Results of the citizen input survey that will be used for the long-range Smart Growth plan for the villages of Elkhart Lake and Glenbeulah, and the towns of Greenbush, Rhine, and Russell, are complete and ready for further public input.

"This is a major step in the process," said David Such, community resource development agent for the county UW-Extension office. "People have this opportunity to decide how the area is laid out over the next 20-years. If done right, we shouldn't have people coming out of the woodwork."

A total of 967 surveys were completed out of 3,053 sent to homes in the region.

"A 34 percent return rate is very respectable and the numbers weren't skewed because we had a good cross section," said Such. "These are how visions are built."

The next step for putting the results into a format that can be used for future planning and development will be done by developing a "vision and goal statement" for the area.

With five different towns and villages combining to share the same vision, public input becomes vital to the process.

"How do we manage growth so everyone has some ownership in the shared vision?" Such asked. "There may be spillover of things that happen in the towns that are different than things that happen in the villages."

"The challenge is going to be getting people to think about the regional connection," he said.

One reason the towns and villages are combining to have a

unified Smart Growth Vision is from the combined revenue working together will bring to the region.

If each were to have completed the process alone they would have received \$5,000 apiece from the county-run Stewardship program. A stipulation in the program encourages regional communities to work together by doubling the funding for each community.

The five towns and villages in the region will receive \$50,000 instead of \$25,000. The money can be used to build or improve trails and parks.

Other questions in the survey reflect different ways people in the communities would like to see the region grow.

Condominiums and multi-family residences were rated as places that should be built in Elkhart Lake, while hobby farms gained the highest ratings for the towns of Rhine and Russell.

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Smart Growth data reviewed

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Agriculture, recreational services and tourism received the highest ratings of how people want employment opportunities in the area to progress. Survey respondents overwhelmingly opposed heavy industrial manufacturing to create jobs.

Open space and preservation of farmland scored high as objectives for the region.

Intergovernmental cooperation between the villages and towns was also viewed as important to deal with issues such as surface and groundwater protection.

Land use and zoning is seen as the most important issue for the communities to cooperate together on, while public protection is also

viewed as important.

Citizens who would like to be heard who weren't randomly selected to fill out the survey may still do so. If enough requests are made for more information, Such will offer a presentation.

"This is a chance to have an impact on the quality of life for citizens in the area," said Such. "It's as simple as that."

The Smart Growth survey can be viewed at the Elkhart Lake library, or the village office. To hear Such present the information, contact Elkhart Lake Village Clerk Jeanette Moioffer at 876-2122.



Celebrate Thanksgiving With Us!



In the Beginning

*Native Americans and the
White Settlers*

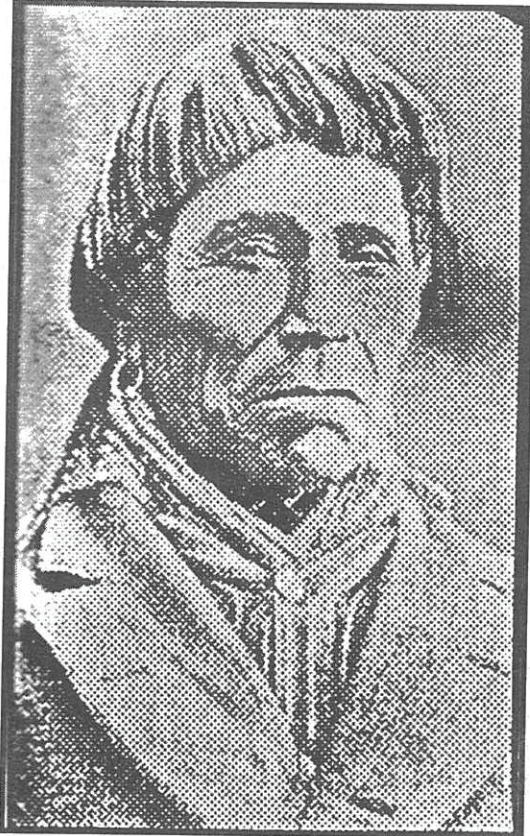
*(Taken from The Centennial Book
- available at the Village Hall)*

INDIAN SOLOMON

was a member of the Chippewa tribe, who for many years made his home near the Sheboygan Marsh and was well known to the early settlers of Russell, Rhine, and Plymouth.

'King' Solomon was born near Chicago and died about 1889 at Keshena, an Indian reservation.

Indian Joe is another famous character described in the centennial book.



Native Americans used the north slope of the Sheboygan Marsh as a campground and settlement. Also, native Americans were found to be inhabiting the area around the outlet of Elkhart Lake, according to a U.S. survey made in 1835. The tribe which mainly settled around the are of Elkhart Lake was Potawatomi. There was also a scattering of Chippewa, Sauks, and Menominee, the "Wild Rice People."

The women of the tribe which remained around Elkhart Lake until the mid 1930's, so the story goes, would walk to town with their young children wrapped papoose-style on their backs. They needed to pick up supplies or do shopping. So, they would hang the papoose on a tree limb outside the shop, collect their needs inside, and when finished, pick their children from among the many hanging on the trees outside, and be off to their home. It was not an uncommon sight to see at least a dozen of these "cocoon" hanging from the trees on any one particular day.

Since the Native Americans moved from the area, many people have walked the fields near the Sheboygan Marsh and River looking for arrowheads turned up by the plow. These collections have either ended up being passed along, generation to generation, or donated to local museums.

In recent years, the Henschel Farm located in an area to the northwest of the village, off Sexton Road, has established a museum of Indian artifacts that they have been able to collect. Also, the State Historical Society has had excavations in that area, finding burial sites, pottery, arrowheads, and other remnants of the early civilization.

Native Americans were very much a part of the life and times of early Elkhart Lake. Attributed to the Potawatomies is our lake's name as well as the name of the river on which they travelled and settled – Sha-wa-wa-goning – meaning underground rumbling waters. Today we know the river and city as Sheboygan.

A wealth of information on John Sexton's life

Q. Please provide me with all information available concerning my paternal great-great-great-grandfather, Johann (John) L. Sexton. I do not have many details concerning him. (MIS-SOURI)

A. John L. Sexton was born Jan. 12, 1825 in Orwell, Vt., the son of Charles and Lemira Sexton. When he was six, his family moved to Whiting, Vt.

He described his travels as an adult in 1905: "In the autumn of 1847 I came from Vermont to Milwaukee and went west from there to spend a little time in the counties of Rock, Jefferson and Dane, and then started to return to my home again. While waiting in Milwaukee for a steamer going to Buffalo, I met an old Vermonter who had been visiting a sister in Janesville. He persuaded me to go with him to his home near Akron and teach school in his district during the coming winter.

"I did so the next fall (1848). I came to Sheboygan and from there tramped over the horrid road, carrying a pack on my back, to Plymouth, where I found a comfortable resting place at the Cold Springs House. After exploring the county I returned to Ohio. "The next spring I went to Columbus and after visiting some friends I went to Vermont, but returned to Wisconsin again in September, 1851, and settled in the Town of Russell."

There is no record of his marriage to Mary Almyra, but it

Jan Hildebrand



Faded Genes

probably occurred in Sheboygan County. The couple had four children: Franklin (March 27, 1853), Charles (May 10, 1855), Barton (May 9, 1857) and Lemira (June 10, 1860). John was appointed postmaster of the new Russell post office in 1855 and, at the same time, he was the town clerk and head of the Russell school.

During the 1870s, the Northern Pacific Railroad was building a railroad into North Dakota and provided land for new settlers. In 1873 John and Mary's sons headed to the Dakota Territory. Lemira remained with her parents. Lemira married Jacob Diehl and the couple lived in Sheboygan.

After their sons were settled in Dakota, Mary moved there homesteading a quarter claim next to her son Frank's land. On Jan. 30, 1904, Mary died in Wolsey, N.D. Son, Charles, caught a cold at her funeral and died April 19, 1904. John did not attend either funeral nor visit his wife and sons after they had moved. Barton Sexton died Feb. 15, 1913 in Huron, S.D. He never married.

John was known to have "the terrible Sexton temper." His children described him as "long

on temper and short on patience and not always good to his family." For whatever reason John remained estranged from his family the rest of his life.

During the 1880s and '90s he was active in the county agricultural affairs. He wrote letters on farming advice for the Sheboygan newspapers, attended meetings of the County Pioneers Association and visited friends throughout the area.

He was a popular figure in the county, a friend to the Native-American Indians who still visited the area, a naturalist and a collector of local geological specimens and curios. His rude log cabin was stuffed with newspapers, magazines, books and papers.

Although his home was stuffed to the ceilings with his collections, Sexton knew where to find everything. Because he lived alone in a sparsely section of the county, he was rumored to be a hermit with a hidden stash of money.

On June 28, 1911, John Flath of Glenbeulah came to look after Sexton's bees and was surprised to find the gate open. Sexton was particular to always make sure the gate was closed. The door was locked and no one answered his calls. Alarmed, Flath sought out Peter and John Kraemer and together they forced the door and found Sexton bruised and wounded with his long beard partially pulled out. There were cuts on his cheeks, a bruise on his forehead and a cut on his hand

showing his last struggles.

The murderer was identified as Tony Umbrelino, an Italian worker at the nearby marshes. Umbrelino escaped back to Italy and a police detective from Sheboygan and a deputy sheriff were dispatched to Rome to arrest him. Italian authorities refused to cooperate and the men returned home alone. In July 1916, Umbrelino was tried for the murder in an Italian court. He was found guilty and imprisoned. Umbrelino died in prison without ever admitting his guilt.

In 1941, a historical marker was erected at the site of his home near the Sheboygan County Marsh. The marker read: "Former home of John L. Sexton. Pioneer school teacher, a friend of the great outdoors. Born 1825, Died 1911."

In 1952, students from Elkhart Lake High School planted trees in Sexton Memorial Forest. The memorial forest was planted on a part of the 80 acres of land formerly owned by Charles E. Broughton, Sheboygan Press editor. Broughton donated the land in 1938 and the Broughton Sheboygan County Marsh was created. In the deed the site of Sexton's home was set aside to be made into a park or memorial forest. The tract contained four acres of land which the students, under the direction of the Elkhart Lake Study Club, planted.

Of the sons of John Sexton, Charles married Mary Montgomery June 8, 1878. They lived in Delavan, where two of their

children were born: Otis (Sept. 20, 1879 to April 29, 1971) and Charles (July 2, 1882 to Oct. 26, 1918). The family moved to South Dakota in 1883. They had four more children: Isadore (December 1885; died June 3, 1943); Harry (Feb. 9, 1889, died August 1975); Nellie (August 1892 to July 1907) and John (Jan. 6, 1900 to Feb. 21, 1938).

Frank went to South Dakota circa 1883/84. His wife's name was Emma and their children were: John L.; Arthur; Orville, Gaylord and Kate.

Lemira married Jacob Diehl Sept. 1, 1880. They had seven children with three surviving- childhood: Manne, Stillman and Ivan

The children and grandchildren of John and Mary Sexton are now deceased but their descendants are scattered throughout the United States.

Much of this information was provided by Peter Laun from his research on the Sexton family for his book "A Photographic History of Elkhart Lake" published in 2002.

Jan Hildebrand is a member of the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, 467-4667.

Town of Russell - 150 Years

At the April 2002 Town of Russell Annual Meeting, Chairman Leo Dickrell reminded attendees that the Town of Russell is officially 150 years old this year. The Sheboygan County Board gave official township status to Russell in 1852. It was suggested that we prepare a short document about the Town of Russell, particularly the years 1976 to 2002. A more complete history story of the Town of Russell can be found in an excellent "History of Town Russell" published by the Marsh Maids Homemakers Club, covering the history and activities of Town Russell from its inception to 1976, the year of our nation's bicentennial.

So this essay, about Town Russell, covers the time that has elapsed since the completion of the Marsh Maids booklet in 1976 until now, 2002. Incidentally, copies of the Marsh Maids "History of Russell Township" are still available at the Henschel Indian Museum. (920-876-3193)

POPULATION—In 1875, a census showed a population of 850 residents in Russell. Now, about 150 years later, the 2000 official census shows a population of 399. Yet, many new homes dot the landscape. Ken Turba, who issues building permits, states that since 1976, 44 new homes were built in Russell. A count of all the homes in Russell reveals about 150, with just about everyone occupied. The reality then, is that families are much smaller than they had been.

HOMES----With 44 "new homes" since 1976, there are also 100 plus older homes, of various sizes and ages, with some being over 100 years old. Why do new homes proliferate in Russell? The reasons are many and varied, suffice to say it was not to live close to a large employer. Many residents travel considerable distances to their place of employment. However, they enjoy the scenery and topography and "peacefulness" of the township.

SIZE—While there hasn't been any change in Russell's size since the 1800's, we should make note that Russell is not a "full" township. We have 24 sections of land as opposed to a full township of 36 sections. Instrumental in making this happen is the proximity of the Sheboygan Marsh. Residents immediately south of the Marsh considered it rather difficult to get to the north side of the Marsh, where its post office, tavern, town hall and blacksmith shop were located. County board action ratified their request and then they became part of Greenbush Township.

AGRICULTURE—Probably one of the major changes in agriculture in the Township in the last 26 years is the decline in number of dairy farmers. Yes, the change is no different than throughout the rest of the state. About 50 years ago, there were 80,000 dairy farmers in Wisconsin. Today, it is less than 18,000. The actual number of dairy farmers in Russell today is 10. So, is dairy farming on the way out? By no means. These 10 dairy farmers have as many or more total milk cows as we've ever had in Russell. The average dairy farm is much larger, with cow numbers ranging from 40 to 700. In addition, there are several farms that raise heifer calves, to be sold to these larger dairies. With fewer dairy farms, there have been changes in crop production. Alfalfa, for hay or haylage, remains, as a principal crop needed by dairy farmers and fits in well in soil conservation rotation. More corn and winter wheat are being raised, and soybeans are becoming increasingly popular. Canning crops, such as peas and sweet corn, are also being raised, though acreage is limited to the needs of the canning company. More of the wooded land in Town Russell is now eligible to be enrolled in the revised Forest CropLand Law. This legislation has been modified recently to allow as little as ten contiguous acres to come under the program. While program participants sign a 25 year agreement to improve their woodland, the property tax advantages are substantial.

INDIAN AFFAIRS—As spelled out in the Marsh Maid booklet, Russell is unique with its history of Indian habitation. Since the printing of that booklet, diggings on the Gary and Rosalie Henschel farm, conducted by the Archeological Rescue Society of Milwaukee have taken place. This organization is associated with the Milwaukee Public Museum. Major findings of the diggings were household tools, made of stone or bones, hunting arrowheads, spears, and Indian skeletons. Human remains were not disturbed or removed. The diggings proved beyond a doubt, that the Henschel site was indeed an Indian Village. Farmland bordering the Sheboygan Marsh, is still yielding an occasional arrowhead, as this writer discovered a perfectly preserved arrowhead while cultivating this spring.

INDUSTRY—As mentioned earlier, Russell has no major industry. However, the Bremer Foundry, just west of St. Anna in the Town of New Holstein, is a thriving aluminum foundry, and Schwarz' Supper Club, also in the Town of New Holstein, in the village of St. Anna, is a thriving Supper Club. K & K (the corner tavern in St. Anna) has the distinction of being the oldest establishment in the village, having even served as a post office in the

1800's. Wedding receptions and dances, basketball games, rooms for rent, and a grocery store are part of its history. A list of previous owners is in the Marsh Maid booklet, with Charlie and Kathleen Kraus buying it in 1982, and are the present owners. The Thome Garage is across the street from K & K's, specializing in car and truck repair. The former Heiderer Blacksmith shop is not in business today. There are other several small "industries" in the township. A handicraft business that operates out of a home, a clothing alteration and seamstress shop, custom farm crop harvesting business, machinery and vehicle repair service, mink farming and a pet grooming service are a just a few.

To end this dissertation on a lighter note, you can observe that the "Russell" side of St. Anna has overhead street lights, while the Town of New Holstein side in St. Anna has no street lights. Russell voters voted to install street lights 20 some years ago while Town of New Holstein voters rejected that proposal, presumably for budgeting purposes. One dark evening in May, after these lights were installed, this writer offered Reverend Suess a ride from Schwartz' Supper Club, after the annual Fireman's Dinner, back to the rectory. The rectory and church are in the Town of New Holstein. Father Suess' response to my offer of a ride was "No thanks. I live in the low crime section of town, where we don't need street lights."

Wilfrid Turba