

## Thomas B. Scott, Lumberman, Was City's 1st Mayor

About 1871, Thomas B. Scott, first mayor of Merrill, purchased the Andrew Warren mill, the only sawmill in the city at that time.

He was born in Roxburghshire, Scotland, Feb. 8, 1829.

When 11 years of age he came to America with his parents, who settled first in Ossining, N. Y.

At the age of 17 he came to Dehorra, Wis., and established a sawmill, selling goods to lumbermen. Later he entered the lumber business on the Wisconsin river near Wisconsin Rapids.

Besides being active in the lumber business, Mr. Scott took an active part in politics and while a resident of Wisconsin, Rapids he served as county clerk and county treasurer in Wood county. He was elected to the State Senate and served for five terms, once as president pro temp.

He helped T. P. Matthews to get the legislature to create Lincoln county. After he moved to Merrill and became a resident here, he devoted his time to getting the railroad to Merrill. He was an incorporator of the first National Bank, and helped to organize the Wisconsin River Improvement company, which set out to improve the river for floating logs and lumber to market. In 1876 this corporation, with O. B. Smith in charge, built several dams on Grandfather Falls.

Mr. Scott built the mansion near the Holy Cross hospital, with the intention of making it one of the most beautiful residences in upper Wisconsin. He passed away before it was completed.

The sisters of the Holy Cross are carrying out what Scott intended to do.

Mr. Scott left \$10,000 to the Methodist Episcopal church in Merrill and \$10,000 to found a library. With this to start with, and help from the Carnegie Foundation, Merrill's extensive and beautiful library was made possible.

Mr. Scott was an active Republican all his life. He served his party as delegate to national, state, and congressional conventions.

## Gus Goetsch Changed Businesses With Transportation Transitions

The Goetsch Garage, 201 Merrill street, wasn't always a garage, and the story of how it became a garage is part of the city's history.

Gustave C. Goetsch was born in a pioneer house and his boyhood was spent in the woods way back before there was much of a Merrill.

At the age of 16 years he got a job with a road crew and even in his youth was so adept with horses that he was made a full-fledged teamster and given \$25 a month when the scale was only \$18. He worked as a teamster, and in the woods around Merrill, Schofield and Mosinee.

Mr. Goetsch saved \$115 and saw a chance to go into business for himself. He purchased a horse, harness and rig and set himself up as one of the first busmen in the then sprawling community.

The franchise for the first street car line in Merrill was granted in 1889 and Mr. Goetsch realized that his business was doomed. He took his savings and bought a small piece of land with a team on it, and four or five horses, becoming a liveryman.

In 1895 he built a new and larger barn to shelter his increased number of horses and additional equipment. For 20 years he continued in the livery business and as the number of automobiles increased yearly he realized that this business, too, was doomed.

So, over night, he called in a construction crew, ripped the stalls out of his livery barn, put in a concrete floor and transformed his place of business from a livery stable to a garage. It was in 1928 that he sold his horses and buggies, after a lifetime of working with, and handling horses. He was 65 years old then.

Gus was born in Hartland, Wis., on July 28, 1861, and came to Merrill in 1883.

He was married in Merrill in 1885 to Louise Rubow, who, born in Germany, had come to Marathon county when 12 years old.

Mr. and Mrs. Goetsch are active physically and alert mentally despite their advanced years.

In fact, Mr. Goetsch didn't retire from active participation in his garage until a year and a half ago. The business is now operated by a son, Den, of this city.

When he operated a livery stable he had from 12 to 20 horses and rented out a variety of vehicles such as buggies and carriages, hacks and mailcoaches, carriages, and a horse. A new horse cost \$1,500 in those days and Mr. Goetsch sold the running gear of his last horse—though the vehicle was like new—for two dollars and the rest of it just disappeared for the most part. Hacks cost from \$1,200 to \$1,500 when new, and \$500 when second hand.

When he sold out his livery business he sold some of his vehicles, gave away others—and some just got swiped.

Mr. and Mrs. Goetsch are the parents of Ben and Walter Goetsch of this city and Mrs. Wm. (Nora) Fitch, Milwaukee. Their oldest boy died when 10 months old and a son, Martin, died April 4, 1943.

This fine pioneer couple enjoy reminiscing about the early days though still taking an active interest in modern events.

Mr. Goetsch says he enjoyed the transitions in his businesses as transportation methods changed, but was glad to retire before going into aviation.

## A. C. Norway, Was Pioneer Resident

Another pioneer was Alanson C. Norway, who came to Merrill in 1851 and engaged in lumbering from that year until 1866, when he gave up that occupation and purchased the only hotel in town, the Jenny House. Later the name was changed to Merrill House.

A. C. Norway was born in the state of New York on June 11, 1824.

While a resident of this community he was county judge and held other positions of trust and honor. He died June 22, 1900.

## J. N. Cotter Was Early Citizen, Civic Builder

John N. Cotter, who for a half a century played an important role in the organization of Lincoln County and its development, was born in Franklin County, New York, April 11, 1848, of Irish-American stock. When yet in his teens young Cotter acted upon the advice of Horace Greeley and came west, and in November 1867, he landed at Big Bull Falls—Wausau now. The first winter he worked for H. G. Plummer, then a leading lumber manufacturer at Wausau, in a logging camp a few miles south of Merrill.

The next year, 1868, he came to Jonay, and remained here up until his death, one of the leading citizens of Merrill. The first ten years Mr. Cotter spent in the woods logging in company with James O'Connor, also an old-time citizen. They operated together until Mr. O'Connor died, when Mr. Cotter continued the operation of logging alone.

Later the Cotter-Close Lumber Company was organized. This company built a saw mill at Black Alder Lake on U. S. Highway 51. The company continued in the manufacture of lumber until all the timber around there was cut.

In public office Mr. Cotter served as Mayor of Merrill; member of the city council; member of board of education, member of the county board of supervisors, and was the county board chairman on several occasions. He served as chairman of the building committee of the present court house, was a member of the county board when the county home was built, was a member of the board of education when the fifth ward school building was erected.

Mr. Cotter was state leader of the Democrats for many years and in 1890 was offered the Democratic nomination for governor, but refused.

The only time he bolted the party was in 1896 when he refused to support Bryan and backed Palmer and Burkner.

## First Predecessor Of Hotel Merrill Erected In 1863

The first predecessor of the Lincoln Hotel which was destroyed by fire in November, 1944, was erected in 1863 by Jules Posey, Sr. It burned in 1872 and he built the first Lincoln House. That also burned later and Mr. Posey built the second Lincoln House. This also burned and was replaced by the Lincoln which burned three years ago. The Merrill Hotel, now on this site, was opened November 1, 1948.

When the old structure known as the "Lincoln House" fell a victim to the flames, the loss was keenly felt, because many memories of the past were associated with its history for those who were interested in its development.

The blackened ruins served as an impetus to those financially interested, as well as those whose interest was municipally inclined, because the need of a public hostelry was a matter of much importance to the present and future welfare of the city.

Among those who were sufficiently insistent in the matter and willing to "back up" their interest in the project mentioned, were Jules Thielman, Wm. F. Peterson, Sig. Heineman, J. N. Cotter, L. N. Anson, and E. F. Hanf, with the result that a new building was erected, furnished in the modes of the day, in the years 1900-1901, and the "Lincoln Hotel Company" organized.

## O. B. Smith Came Here In 1847

The name of O. B. Smith is associated with practically all of the earliest activities of this community, to which he came just 100 years ago. He was born in Erie, Pennsylvania on September 10, 1810. Mr. Smith walked from Chicago to Wausau in 1844.

He engaged in the lumbering and mercantile businesses in the pioneer days. When he first came to the pines he worked chopping in the woods for \$15 a month.

The present name of the city of Merrill came from S. S. Merrill, general manager of the railroad when the city was incorporated.



The Lincoln Hotel, on the site of the present Hotel Merrill, was gutted by fire in November, 1944. The fact that the heavy lumber here for the opening of the door season, had left the building early in the morning, prevented a possible loss of life.