

Wrote Of Village Hacked From The Forests Of Pine

The historians who wrote the first sketch of the growing village of Merrill were faced with a new kind of history. They wrote of a new, enterprising settlement that had been hacked out of the majestic forests of pine, a village that had doubled in population in one year from the 1880 census count that listed 882 residents.

The greatest glory for Merrill lay in the future and the residents looked forward with confidence that had been reposed in its growth and permanent prosperity.

Merrill was ready for the demands of increased industry and a larger population after the winter of 1881 when S. S. Merrill, Alexander Mitchell, J. W. Carey, T. B. Scott, C. K. Pier and M. H. McCord obtained a charter for a boom which was to be on a comprehensive scale under the name of the Merrill Boom Company.

The organization of the boom company, together with the advent of the railroad, was the impetus needed to obtain the new lumber companies. Following its organization, five new lumbering establishments were started in the city.

With the future of their community insured, the residents could look back on their history which started just 33 years before when Andrew Warren Jr. made the first permanent settlement.

During the first eight years of growth the settlement that was to be Merrill became an active logging camp. In 1855 there were 17 board shanties which housed the logging crews during the winter. In the spring, after the river opened, the men worked in Warren's mill and took the lumber rafts down the Wisconsin.

The year 1855 marked a new change in the character of Jenny, for not only loggers and lumbermen came to the city, but there were settlers that came and chose to remain.

There was George Townbridge, one of the first to make Jenny his home after that time. He built his house near the spot where the first spot stood on River street. He was followed by Capt. Space and his wife, Margaret A. Shankle, who came to run a boarding house for Cooper and Smith, part owners of Warren's sawmill.

Together with A. C. Norway, Henry Goodrich, Orville Jones, O. E. Smith, George Stronbridge, Joseph Newcomb, and William Averill, all of whom had been in Jenny since 1851, the village got its start.

The growth of Jenny was most remarkable during the '70's. When the ice broke out of the river in the spring of 1875, six million feet of lumber was sent down the Wisconsin to the growing markets along the Mississippi. Scott and Andrew's mill started cutting on March 15, and in June the first two pianos were brought into town.

In the same year on July 1, the first daily mail service began; in September the land sales for the county were figured and 57,672 acres were sold for \$175,155; during the winter, Dan Scott began to run a daily line of stages to Wausau, having been tri-weekly before that time.

In 1876, the centennial celebration of the United States of America was not neglected in Merrill. On the Fourth of July Dan A. Klein led an appropriate procession of fantasists, a glee club sang patriotic songs; M. H. McCord was the orator; E. B. Donaldson was the chaplain; and Charles O'Neill read a centennial poem.

The lumber cut in 1876 was: lumber, 4,173,135 board feet; shingles, 2,040,000; hardwood, 175,000 board feet; pickets, 131,000; and lath, 100,000. In the winter, hardwood was worth from \$2 to \$3 a cord.

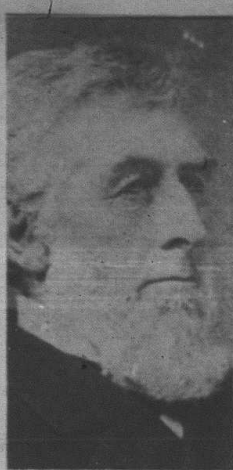
In July, 1877, part of the temperance cause, called the "Murphy Movement," struck Merrill, and had an ephemeral effect.

Improvements in Merrill in 1878 were assessed at about \$40,000.

Figures showing the growth of the village at the time it was changed from Jenny to Merrill were: dwellings erected in 1880, 35; business buildings 6. In 1881 the dwellings erected numbered 102, business buildings 30.

The organized part of Merrill in the '70's was fairly limited to the section of the East side known as the original plot of Jenny. Although streets were laid out in other sections of the town, many of them were unnamed. The numbered streets from the river north, ran in the same order as they do today; however, there were different names of those running from east to west.

The streets at right angles to the river, beginning in the east were: German, Prairie, Cornish, Park, Court House, Cedar, Pine and Poplar. The two islands in the Wisconsin river were known as Hay island, later the Gill-Anderson island, and Potato island, on the lower part of the river.



Sherman S. Merrill, son of Moses and Sally (Worthing) Merrill, was born in Alexandria, Crafton County, New Hampshire, July 28, 1818. He rose from foreman in a construction crew, becoming general manager of the C. M. St. P. R.R. Mr. Merrill was engaged in railroad activities for about 33 years. He died in Milwaukee, Feb. 8, 1885 and was buried in Forest Home Cemetery.

Mr. Merrill was general manager of the St. Paul road when it extended into Jenny and the village name was changed to Merrill in his honor.

The West side was just beginning to spring up and the various planned plots were called the juvenile suburbs of Merrill. Houses were built on only choice hill lots and only paths through scattered stumps and slash connected them with the neighboring homes.

The strong lumbering business began to expand soon after the village became Merrill. First of the new establishments to be erected was the Merrill Manufacturing Company finished in 1881. The company was owned by Col. C. K. Pier, Charles Mihill, and Mr. Skinner, who was the manager. The mill later became the Mihill mill and finally the Stange Lumber Company.

Other mills built during the same period were the 'Champagne' and Woodcock sawmills located on the river at the foot of Chippewa street, and the Lincoln Lumber Company mill, located in the Sixth Ward on the west bank of the river across from the Champagne mill. Later it became the Merrill Lumber Company.

The mills built during that period were larger and more modern than their predecessors. The Lincoln mill was built to handle 100,000 feet of lumber a day. The mill-plant was 40 feet wide and 150 feet long, and had a machine shop attached. For cutting the timber there were double rotary saws.

The mill was steam powered and had six boilers which were each 42 inches across and 24 feet long. Machinery was driven by three steam engines, each with 18 inch cylinders.

Other mills in operation before 1881 was the T. B. Scott mill, formerly Warren's establishment, and the Jenny Lumber company mill run by M. H. McCord and M. E. Howe, located on the West Side, below the east Sixth Ward bridge.

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One of the most remarkable experiences in Merrill was the great flood in 1880 which was known as the "Great June Freshet." A long rain raised the level of the Wisconsin and tributaries and came down with such force that it tore up booms, washed out bridges and sent millions of feet of logs down the river.

Advertised Their Wares, Services Over 67 Years Ago

The following professional men and business concerns advertised in the January 7, 1880 edition of the Northern Wisconsin News, Jenny, Wis.:

Doctors, D. E. Blodgett and J. F. Whiting; lawyers, S. M. Hoyt and Bump, Hetzel and Canon; E. H. House, carpenter and builder; Jenny House, A. C. Norway, prop.; Empey House, W. J. Empey, prop.; Van R. Willard, real estate, abstract and tax paying office; Averill and Co., dry goods, groceries, crockery and provisions;

Chas. Archibald, carpenter and joiner; M. W. Sweeney, druggist and apothecary; Edward Kuets, general mechanic; Dr. C. J. Wiley; Miss Mary Annin, millinery; Mrs. H. Streeter and Miss Cusick, dressmakers; Wm. Hackbarr, bakery and confectionery; Chicago Weekly News; Boettcher Bros., merchant tailors, groceries, hats and caps, boots and shoes; Knudt Larson, plasterer and bricklayer;

Fuller and Rusch, meat market; C. E. Searis, jewelry store; Lincoln Co. Flouring Mill, Lysen and Spiegelberg, props.; A. Vail's Gallery, photographs John B. Sypher, furniture; B. B. Kimball's Harness Shop; T. De Vail, white and blue; City Bakery, D. O. Chandler, prop.; Green Bay and Minnesota R. R.; Strickland's, jewelry; C. Strobridge, groceries; H. H. Chandler, dry goods, groceries, clothing, flour and feed, boots and shoes, provisions, lumbermen's supplies, etc.; The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul R. R.; Wisconsin Central Railroad; H. Bachman, blacksmithing; T. P. Mathews, tax paying agent.

Patent medicine ads offered to cure about anything. They included: Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound; Burnett's Coccaine for the hair; Sun-Sun Chop Tea; Mustang Liniment; Tutt's Pills; St. Jacob's Oil.

Professor E. F. Chandler, who came to Merrill in 1883, organized the first annual musical festival. The enthusiasm which followed his coming to this city led to the formation of the Tuesday Musical Club, the city's outstanding musical organization, for many years.

In 1879 there were two mills in Jenny and the population was 830 persons. In 1903 the population had grown to 10,425 and there were 13 mills.

Frank White cut the first timbers for a bridge at Jenny. It crossed the river near Riverside park. Before that the people had to ferry across by boat.

The first buildings to be erected in Merrill were a boarding house and barns, built in front of the present Citizens American bank building.

They Served Their Country During Times of War

Merrill's sons and daughters, like those of other communities throughout the nation, have served their country in time of war.

The records show that the residents of this community served during the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II.

Many paid the supreme sacrifice in following their country's flag; many suffered wounds.

Men from Merrill saw action in every branch of the service in every theater of war and their record is a glorious one. Many women of the community saw service, especially during the last war.

We take this opportunity to pay tribute to both the living and the dead who rallied to their country's cause in times of peril.

ERRATA

In the general history story, first in this edition, it should read that the Champagne mill ran from about 1882; and "building the dam across the Wisconsin river by Andrew Warren in 1847."

In the story by Mrs. Martha Rouleau, the head should read "In Year 1884."

In the story by Mrs. John Hook, reference to roller skating rink should be 55 dance hall.

Cut lines under the picture of the Jenny House refer to the Jenny Hotel, now the Rohde apartments. The Jenny House was located at the present site of the telephone company office.

With the depletion of the supply of pine timber, which was formerly the basis of Merrill's industrial life, a wide diversity of industrial enterprises sprang up.

The first store in Jenny was one built by Andrew Warren, and located near his mill. This store was built in 1849.

The area of Lincoln county today is 902 square miles.



The late J. W. Cotey, early pioneer of Merrill. Mr. Cotey had the distinction of having built and sold more homes in Merrill than any other man.



A picture of the employees of the Merrill post office, taken about 1900. They are: front, left, Ralph Collier, Jacob J. Hoffman, and C. Johnson; back, left, Ervin Hamlin, Miss Nellie Olson, Henry Pietras, Clara Hannemann and Herman K. Rueger.